

Presentation by Mr. Soedjatmoko  
Rector, United Nations University  
to the Subcommittee on Diplomatic Issues  
House of Councillors  
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Honorable Members of the House of Councillors;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Please allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation for your invitation to participate in these deliberations on "The International Year of Peace and Japanese Diplomacy". I am impressed by the importance of this Committee's attention to this topic-- and indeed by the interest of the Japanese government in general in the peaceful management of the international system. For it is clear that Japan's well-being depends, to a degree that is perhaps unique among the major powers, on the smooth and cooperative functioning of an interdependent system of nations. The Committee's interest in today's topic reflects a keen awareness of these realities.

My position as an international civil servant makes it inappropriate for me to enter into the domestic political debate of any country, nor would I wish to do so. I can offer only my personal observations and thoughts about the preconditions for peace in the contemporary setting and the kind of arrangements that are conducive to peace. Of course, the organization to which I belong, the United Nations, has peace as its primary goal and the centerpiece of its mandate.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his most recent report to the General Assembly, has spoken of the danger of a slide into international anarchy, and expressed a widely shared bewilderment at the apparent intractability of the problems that confront us. The prevalence of fanaticism in many different forms, combined with the easy availability of arms, has raised the level of violence in international political affairs.

There is no question but that the world has become a more dangerous place for all peoples and nations. The deterioration of detente has brought us closer to the threshold of a superpower confrontation. While the recently concluded summit meeting in Geneva may have represented a step back from the precipice, the level of tension remains perilously high.

Our still-imperfect but growing understanding of the long-term effects of a major nuclear exchange-- the so-called "nuclear winter" effect-- gives us good reason to believe that a superpower military confrontation would mean the end of civilization as we know it. This probability gives every country in the world a direct and immediate interest in the resurrection of detente, and in the preservation of the other fragile structures that have so far prevented the outbreak of a third world war.



The threat of nuclear destruction is so overwhelming that it tends to obscure other concerns; but it must not be forgotten that hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in conventional wars during the past 40 years. Regional wars have exacted a terrible price in human suffering and destruction-- even extending to the destruction of whole societies, as we have seen in Lebanon and Kampuchea. It would be a mistake, therefore, to confine our concern with the maintenance of peace to nuclear issues alone.

The factors that endanger the security of individual nations and the international system are, in fact, as much social and economic as political matters. Foremost among these factors is the persistence of desperate poverty among at least one billion of the world's people.

The slow growth of the world economy, which is likely to persist for the foreseeable future, is a threat to the security of industrial and developing countries alike. The grave disarray of the international financial and monetary system permits the more powerful economies to engage in an undisciplined and self-defeating scramble for economic advantage, through protectionist measures, exchange-rate manipulation, and irresponsible fiscal policies.

In the meantime, many of the developing countries are having the economic breath squeezed out of them by increasing debt burdens on one side and shrinking international markets on the other. To adjust to the harsh new economic realities, many of the debtor countries are cutting their imports, their standards of living, and their development programmes to the point where the resulting social and political tension are a serious threat to stability.

The disarray of the international economic system reflects and interacts with the political system. I think it is no exaggeration to say that we are sliding toward a state of anarchy, which is manifested in the unilateral actions of states, the growing use of terrorism, the spread of extra-legal activities such as drug trafficking and arms smuggling on a huge scale, the proliferation of groups (many of them armed) who recognize no allegiance to any established government and are totally alienated from the political system.

The challenge to diplomacy under these circumstances is daunting. For the major powers, war has simply become too destructive to be a meaningful instrument of policy. Even large-scale interventions are unlikely in the future, I believe, since it has been made obvious-- in Suez, in Vietnam, in Afghanistan-- how costly they are in political, economic and human terms. So the challenge of managing contemporary conflicts and problems fall to diplomacy. It is through diplomacy that we must discover how to avoid destroying ourselves, how to live in civility with eight-to-ten billion other inhabitants on this planet, how to develop a viable and ecologically stable economy to sustain so many people. For this task, a major conceptual effort is needed as well as skill, commitment, and political will.

The history of the past decade demonstrates very clearly that the most pressing political and economic issues of today defy unilateral or bilateral



solutions, even when undertaken by a superpower. It is ironic, and potentially tragic, that the period during which this fact has been so conclusively demonstrated should also be a period characterized by a retreat from multilateralism.

The United Nations system is beleaguered as never before, both by the big powers who treat it as a scapegoat for their inability to control a highly pluralistic world, which is reflected perhaps too faithfully in the United Nations; and by the small powers who use the stage of the United Nations to act out a politics of frustration and rhetoric. Yet the United Nations is the only globally inclusive forum we have for attempting to arrive at solutions for the problems that threaten peace and security. And indeed, the United Nations has been consistent, through not always successful, in addressing the challenges of a rapidly changing, tumultuous world, including the three kinds of threats that I have referred to: namely, nuclear weaponry, conventional war, and economic and social disarray.

The polarization of the United Nations system between the indifference of the big powers and the shrillness of the small powers has allowed a real crisis to develop within the system. Yet I hope that the opportunity that resides within the crisis is beginning to become apparent. The vacuum in the center creates an opportunity for the major middle powers-- like Japan, some of the European states, and some of the larger and more influential developing countries-- to play a vital role in reinvigorating the practice of multilateralism.

These major middle powers have important international interests independent of the superpowers. Their scope for unilateral or even bilateral action is circumscribed. They recognize the limitations of bilateralism in a multipolar world. And they are especially dependent on the health of the international system. In short, they have a particularly high stake in effective multilateral institutions.

Those countries that have an interest in the revival of multilateralism must realize, however, that the practice of multilateralism is a very particular diplomatic skill. It is not simply the sum of many bilateral relationships. Rather, multilateral diplomacy has-- or at least needs-- its own rules, its own psychology, its own time-frame, its own dynamics, and its own institutional structures and negotiating techniques. Today, all of these are in a rather primitive state of development. They require the conscientious application of innovative diplomatic minds.

I expect it is obvious to you that I regard Japan as potentially one of the most important actors within the group of countries that may revitalize the practice of multilateral diplomacy, based on an acceptance of the reality of interdependence. I say this for several reasons. Japan is by far the most economically powerful among the major middle powers. Japan is also a non-Western country, with deep cultural ties to the other ancient civilizations of Asia as well as close economic and scientific links with the industrialized West. Japan is thus in a unique position to bridge the gap between the



modern industrial societies and the developing countries-- an extremely important role in an era of global transformation, in which the interests of large and powerful countries are inextricably tied to the interests of the small and emerging states.

The homogeneity of Japanese society has made possible Japan's very rapid and creative responses to the challenge of modernization. It has carried Japan a very long way without having to pay the price of cultural discontinuity and social fragmentation. But homogeneity combined with success also carries with it the risk of reduced sensitivity to other societies and other peoples. A keen sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of other nations is a tremendous diplomatic resource, worth cultivating in a very deliberate manner. The lack of it is not only a diplomatic handicap, but an obstacle to the exercise of leadership and a sure way of keeping alive historical suspicions and tensions.

This moment of history, I believe, carries with it an opportunity for the major middle powers to draw upon their particular strengths to develop a new kind of leadership, to be exercised within a multilateral framework. The old kinds of leadership-- based on the ascendancy of one nation's self-interest, based on military power and on competitive rather than co-operative relations -- have proven to be dysfunctional and terribly dangerous. For Japan, which has committed itself to strict limits on the development of military capability, the shape and direction of a new kind of leadership has special relevance.

How can the major middle powers shape a more secure international environment without reliance on military capacity? How can the most powerful among them turn their economic and technological strength into diplomatic strength? The U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt advised "Speak softly and carry a big stick". I think the appropriate prescription for today is to speak softly and carry a big carrot-- that is, to rely on a big incentive rather than a big threat. The incentives that the middle powers can offer are the benefits of cooperative relations in the economic, political and social spheres. In particular, those countries that have the capacity to claim the high ground of leadership in the basic sciences and high technology will be able to multiply their diplomatic effectiveness if they are willing to cooperate with other countries.

Beyond that, the major middle powers have a role to play in fashioning what one might call the social architecture of peace, based on, for example, regional arrangements for collective security and development, confidence-building measures such as co-production of defensive arms, joint oversight of nuclear power plants, and shared information about military planning and strategic assessments. Beyond this, the harmonization of economic policies is a further condition of successful cooperation in the long run. Some cooperative arrangements may best be constructed within the framework of the United Nations, while others may function most effectively outside of it.



The peace-keeping activities of the United Nations have in several instances provided a safety-valve for conflicts that threatened to escalate beyond control. With the collective support of a broadly-based group of influential member states, United Nations peace-keeping could be an even more important mechanism for the containment of conflict. The most technologically advanced nations could make a much-needed contribution to the technical infrastructure of peace-keeping--by, for example, reviving the proposal for a satellite-based system of communications and surveillance of conflict areas, and taking the first steps toward its implementation.

As important as the institutional and technical aspects of peace-keeping are, the human aspect must also be kept in view. Diplomacy is sometimes referred to as a lost art. Certainly, the kind of diplomacy that is required in this complex and multi-polar world is a skill and an art that cannot be expected to appear spontaneously. The countries that wish to enhance the functioning of the international system should take it upon themselves to train a pool of experts in the arts of conflict management and institution-building.

Such people are not born, but made, and would be a great resource for their own countries and the international community as a whole. They would have to command a broad range of diplomatic skills as well as expertise on issues as diverse as nuclear strategy and development economics. Intercultural understanding would also be an essential tool of their trade. Above all, the diplomats of this age must be capable of seeing, and acting upon, interconnections-- between local or national issues on the one hand and international issues on the other; among economic, ecological, technological and social problems; between security concerns and development concerns.

In all efforts to enhance peace and security, considerations of development are as important as strategic and military concerns. Many conflicts in the developing countries involve a cycle of political, ecological and economic instability that, if it is not interrupted, leads to the crises of war, famine and mass-exodus that have become all too familiar in recent years. Relief for the victims of these catastrophes, and particularly for refugees, is an important aspect of international cooperation. But we need to learn how to do much more to anticipate and prevent these crises from recurring.

Japan's re-emergence as a world power has been extremely rapid. There is something of a time-lag between the augmentation of its strength and its assumption of the leadership role that is commensurate with its economic and technological prowess, its strategic position and its intellectual resources. This is, as I have mentioned, a period of retreat from multilateralism on the part of some of the big powers. It is vitally important that this tide be turned.

Japan, with its particular strengths and vulnerabilities, has a major part to play in a partnership to reinvigorate international cooperation, through the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations as well. Foreign Minister Abe's address to the Fortieth Session of the General Assembly, in September of this year, was a most comprehensive demonstration of Japan's



commitment to the integrity of the United Nations system and Japan's realistic approach to taking the difficult but necessary steps to make the system function efficiently and effectively. I very much hope that his proposal to establish a "Group of Eminent persons for a more efficient United Nations" will meet the enthusiastic support it deserves from the other member states.

The thoughtful and independent stance that Japan appears to be formulating in the face of withdrawal or threatened withdrawal of some member states from UNESCO is another indicator of the importance Japan attaches to the UN system.

Of course, Japan has also played a crucial role in a United Nations initiative to which you will understand my assigning particular importance: that is, the establishment of the United Nations University. The kind of global diplomacy that I have been referring to requires intensive study of global issues, their implications and their interconnections. It also requires independent forums for the dispassionate, non-ideological discussion of emerging global issues; for the expression of diverse opinions across ideological and cultural boundaries; and for the articulation of views held by people in various countries.

In its way, the UNU provides both of these-- academic studies of global issues and a forum for diverse views. Since the UNU has now established a worldwide research network and progressed quite far in the study of global issues, I hope that it will increasingly be recognized as a resource for Japan, which played such a major role in its establishment, for the people and governments of the other members of the United Nations, and indeed for the United Nations itself.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.