

ADDRESS TO THE MODEL UNITED NATIONS  
Naples Council on World Affairs/Florida Gulf Coast University

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ALAN VAN EGMOND, SENIOR U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE (RET)

THANK YOU FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF SPEAKING TO YOU TODAY ON A SUBJECT THAT TOUCHES OUR LIVES EACH DAY – THE UNITED NATIONS. I HOPE YOU LEARNED MUCH AND HAD SOME FUN IN THE PROCESS. I CERTAINLY DID. ALSO, OUR HEARTFELT THANKS GO TO THE NAPLES COUNCIL ON WORLD AFFAIRS AND FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY FOR HOSTING THE MODEL UN. FOR MY FELLOW JUDGES AND COACHES – TO SUCCEED IN LIFE WE ALL KNOW HOW FUNDAMENTALLY IMPORTANT IT IS TO SPEAK WELL, WRITE WELL AND REASON WELL – BY NURTURING THESE SKILLS YOU ARE HELPING STUDENTS FOR A LIFETIME.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF STUDENTS HERE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. WELCOME TO THE U.S.!

IN THE SHORT TIME WE HAVE TOGETHER I WANT TO CHALLENGE YOU TO DO A FEW THINGS – JUST A FEW THINGS BUT FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIVES. ACT. THEN ACT AND LEAD. THEN ACT AND LEAD ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO DO THE SAME. ALSO IN THE PROCESS, OFFER A VISION OF HOPE THAT ADDRESSES PEOPLE’S FEARS. LASTLY PERSIST – DO NOT LET FAILURE DETER YOU FOR THAT IS HOW WE LEARN TO DO THINGS BETTER.

AFTER ALL, THE UN BEGAN AS A FAILURE – THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS. PARTLY THIS WAS CAUSED BY THE INABILITY OF PRESIDENT WILSON TO WORK

CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH CONGRESS TO SECURE U.S. MEMBERSHIP IN THE LEAGUE. THE FAILURE TO SECURE A VIABLE PEACE AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR PAVED THE WAY FOR WORLD WAR II. THE UN WAS THEN FOUNDED TO TRY AGAIN BUILDING ON LESSONS LEARNED EARLIER.

IF YOU ARE ASKED WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE I HOPE YOU WILL SAY IT IS TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE – THAT IS WHY YOU ARE HERE AND IN FACT THAT IS WHY THE UNITED NATIONS EXISTS. LIFE IS ABOUT PASSING ON THE BATON TO A YOUNGER GENERATION. SOON IT WILL BE PASSED ON TO YOU. HOW ARE YOU GOING TO USE THIS TRUST?

IF YOU ARE ASKED WHAT GOOD THE UNITED NATIONS DOES YOU SIMPLY NEED TO SAY THE UN DOES A WORLD OF GOOD BECAUSE ALL OF US ARE THE UN. THE UN REALLY IS NOT A BUNCH OF BUILDINGS OR STRUCTURES. THE UN IS COMPOSED OF PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME TRYING TO MAKE THIS A MORE PEACEFUL AND BETTER WORLD FOR THEIR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN TO COME.

WE ARE A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS FOUNDED ON VALUES ENSHRINED IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE CONSTITUTION THAT EVERYONE IS CREATED EQUAL AND ENDOWED WITH FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS SUCH AS LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. THE UN CHARTER IS BASED ON THESE SAME VALUES AND PRINCIPLES. LIKE US AS INDIVIDUALS, LIKE THE UNITED STATES AS A COUNTRY, AND LIKE THE HUMAN RACE, THE UNITED NATIONS IS A WORK IN PROGRESS.

HISTORICALLY THE U.S. HAS A CONTRADICTORY ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.N. IN RECENT DECADES WHEN THE U.S. WAGED WAR IN FAR AWAY PLACES

LIKE KOREA, VIETNAM AND IRAQ THE COMEDIAN BOB HOPE WOULD TRAVEL TO ENTERTAIN U.S. TROOPS, WITH A GOLF CLUB IN ONE HAND AND LOTS OF JOKES IN THE OTHER. ONE OF HIS MOST FAMOUS ONE-LINERS IS “ I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOUR COUNTRY BACK HOME IS FIFTY PERCENT BEHIND YOU WITH OUR SUPPORT.”

SOMETIMES THAT IS HOW IT PROBABLY SEEMS TO AMERICANS SERVING IN THE UNITED NATIONS AS WELL! MANY AMERICANS ARE WORKING FOR THE UN IN COMBAT ZONES SUCH AS SYRIA AND YEMEN, OR HELPING TO ERADICATE THE SCOURGE OF POLIO OR MALARIA, OR PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN COUNTRIES WHERE CHILDREN ARE PREYED UPON AS SEX SLAVES OR ATTACKED FOR NO REASON THAN THEY WANT TO GET AN EDUCATION FREE FROM FEAR.

NATIONS HAVE INTERESTS. IT IS PEOPLE THAT HAVE RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE SO VITAL TO EFFECTIVE DIPLOMACY. OFTEN BECAUSE OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AGREEMENTS ARE FORGED ON COMPLEX ISSUES SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE, MAKING SURE THE PLANES YOU FLY IN DO NOT COLLIDE IN THE SKY, ENSURING THAT SHIPS CARRYING PASSENGERS AND VALUABLE TRADE DO NOT COLLIDE IN THE SEA, AS WELL AS MANAGING IF NOT RESOLVING A RANGE OF COMPLEX SECURITY ISSUES SUCH AS NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION. REMEMBER THAT YOU HAVE MUCH MORE IN COMMON WITH THE PEOPLE YOU MEET AND WORK WITH FROM FOREIGN LANDS THAN DIFFERENCES.

THE REALITY IS THAT NATIONS ARE BECOMING MORE DEPENDENT ON EACH OTHER FOR OUR WELFARE THAN EVER BEFORE – I THINK THIS IS A GOOD THING BECAUSE SO MUCH MORE CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WHEN WE WORK

TOGETHER. AND PROGRESS IS NOT A MYTH. MOST INDICATORS SUGGEST WE ARE MAKING INROADS ON HEALTH, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND PROSPERITY. EVEN THE LEVEL OF VIOLENT CONFLICT HAS GONE DOWN OVER TIME EVEN THOUGH CURRENTLY IT MAY NOT SEEM LIKE IT.

SO ACT! RUN FOR STUDENT COUNCIL, REGISTER TO VOTE AS SOON AS YOU CAN, TRAVEL TO OTHER COUNTRIES, INTERN WITH THE STATE DEPARTMENT OR UN, JOIN THE PEACE CORPS UN VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OR EVEN YOUR COUNTRY'S FOREIGN SERVICE!

LEAD! NOT WITH WORDS BUT BY WHO YOU ARE AND HOW YOU ACT. HUMILITY IS A PRECIOUS TRAIT TOO FEW OF US DISPLAY CONSISTENTLY. WHEN YOU TRAVEL OVERSEAS SEEK TO LEARN, EXPRESS APPRECIATION FOR WHAT OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE TO OFFER, SPEAK AS MUCH OF THE LOCAL LANGUAGE AS YOU CAN.

ENCOURAGE OTHERS EVEN WHEN HOPE SEEMS A POOR ALTERNATIVE TO FEAR. NOT TOO LONG AGO A WOMAN IN THE UK DEMONSTRATED GREAT COURAGE MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS IF NOT MILLIONS. AT THIS POINT, WHO IS NOT AWARE THAT PRINCE HARRY IS GOING TO MARRY THE AMERICAN ACTRESS MEGHAN MARKLE IN A COUPLE OF MONTHS AT WINDSOR CASTLE? MAYBE ONE OR TWO YOU WILL EVEN WATCH THE WEDDING IF YOUR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS LET YOU. DON'T TELL ANYBODY, BUT I PROBABLY WILL AS WELL – I AM A SUCKER FOR FAIRY TALES!

PRINCE HARRY'S MOTHER, PRINCESS DIANA, MARRIED PRINCE CHARLES WHEN SHE WAS 20 YEARS OLD, NOT MUCH OLDER THAN YOU. SHE QUICKLY

ENTERED THE VERY FRIGHTENING GLARE OF MASSIVE PUBLIC ATTENTION. RATHER THAN BUILDING A PROTECTIVE COCOON, PRINCESS DIANA DID THE OPPOSITE – SHE REACHED OUT TO ORDINARY PEOPLE. NOT LONG AFTER HER MARRIAGE PRINCESS DIANA BECAME LEADER OF EFFORTS TO PROHIBIT USE OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES WHICH IS A MAJOR KILLER OF CHILDREN IN WAR ZONES. SHE UNDERScoreD HER COMMITMENT BY WALKING THROUGH MINEFIELDS IN AFRICA TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM.

PRINCESS DIANA WAS ALSO COMMITTED TO COMBATting HIV-AIDS. FOR MANY YEARS PEOPLE IN FEAR THOUGHT AIDS WAS CAUGHT BY TOUCHING ONE ANOTHER, LIKE LEPROSY. PRINCESS DIANA WENT THROUGH WARDS SHAKING HANDS WITH PEOPLE DIAGNOSED WITH HIV, NOT WEARING GLOVES OR SHRINKING AWAY FROM THE ILL AND SUFFERING. SHE KNELT DOWN, SHOOK THEIR HANDS, AND LOOKED IN THEIR EYES, SAYING “...HIV DOES NOT MAKE PEOPLE DANGEROUS TO KNOW. YOU CAN SHAKE THEIR HANDS AND GIVE THEM A HUG. HEAVEN KNOWS THEY NEED IT.” DIANA, THE “PEOPLE’S PRINCESS” IS A MODEL OF COURAGE FOR US ALL.

AS A LEADER OF AMERICA’S FOREIGN AID PROGRAM OFTEN I AM ASKED WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE OFFER. IT IS NOT MONEY OR SKILLS WE THINK WE POSSESS, AS IMPORTANT AS THESE ELEMENTS ARE, IT IS HOPE. WE ARE FUNDAMENTALLY IN THE HOPE BUSINESS AND A LEARNING ORGANIZATION. WE FREQUENTLY LEARN FROM OTHERS JUST AS MUCH IF NOT MORE THAN THEY LEARN FROM US.

HERE IS ANOTHER HERO AND CHAMPION OF THE UN WHO DISPLAYED TREMENDOUS PERSISTENCE IN THE FACE OF FREQUENT FAILURE AND CRITICISM. LISTEN TO THIS. *"NEVER GIVE UP. NEVER GIVE UP. NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER – IN NOTHING, GREAT OR SMALL, LARGE OR PETTY – NEVER GIVE IN, EXCEPT TO CONVICTIONS OF HONOR AND GOOD SENSE."*

THIS WAS ONE OF THE SHORTEST COMMENCEMENT ADDRESSES IN MEMORY DELIVERED BY FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER WINSTON CHURCHILL AT HIS FORMER HIGH SCHOOL HARROW IN 1941. WHAT MAKE THIS REMARKABLE IS THAT CHURCHILL WAS A FAILURE IN SCHOOL, IN COLLEGE AND AT LEADERSHIP IN VARIOUS POINTS IN HIS LIFE. YET CHURCHILL BECAME AN INSPIRING SPEAKER, AN ELOQUENT WRITER, AND A COURAGEOUS LEADER. HIS PERSISTENCE PAID OFF IN A BIG WAY LEADING GREAT BRITAIN TO VICTORY IN WORLD WAR II. SOME OF YOU WHO MAY BE WATCHING "THE CROWN" OR THE MOVIE "DARKEST HOUR" ARE AWARE THAT MANY IN GREAT BRITAIN WERE PREPARED TO THROW IN THE TOWEL AND NEGOTIATE A SURRENDER WITH ADOLPH HITLER DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF WORLD WAR II.

SO THE UN IS A WORK IN PROGRESS. IT IS ABOUT THE ALL IMPORTANT WORK OF BUILDING BRIDGES AND BONDS OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING. MANY CAUSES WORTH FIGHTING FOR REQUIRE SUSTAINED EFFORT OVER GENERATIONS. SO IT IS NOW TO YOU THAT WE ENTRUST OUR FUTURE, TO CARRY THE BATON OF FIGHTING FOR WORLD PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND RISING PROSPERITY FOR US ALL.

THANK YOU. I LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR QUESTIONS.

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