

Remarks by His Highness the Aga Khan

Annual Pluralism Lecture
by Kofi Annan
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Member, Board of Directors, Global Centre for Pluralism

Ottawa - May 23, 2013

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Your Excellency the Governor General
Mrs. Johnston
Ministers
Excellencies
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome all of you to the Global Centre's second annual Pluralism Lecture. And I am especially honored to introduce today's lecturer - Kofi Annan - the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Nobel Laureate, and global peacemaker.

J'ai le privilège de connaître Kofi Annan depuis de nombreuses années et je considère que, dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, peu de personnalités ont eu une carrière diplomatique aussi brillante que la sienne.

Ce remarquable diplomate a su concevoir des principes de solutions négociées aux crises auxquelles il a été confronté, mais aussi, très souvent il est arrivé à convaincre les protagonistes à tous les niveaux politiques de les mettre en œuvre avec ses conseils. Il doit ces succès non seulement à la finesse de ses analyses mais aussi à la façon éminemment personnelle avec laquelle il sait toucher les cœurs et les intelligences.

Pour préciser mon propos, je dirai que, par sa réflexion et sa façon d'analyser les problèmes, par sa capacité à identifier les équilibres justes entre les positions de chacun et à marginaliser les faux arguments et les positions extrêmes inacceptables, il a porté dans de nombreux pays une nouvelle philosophie de la diplomatie.

Notre Centre mondial du pluralisme est donc particulièrement honoré de ce que Kofi Annan ait accepté de devenir l'un de ses administrateurs fondateurs. Je suis heureux de dire qu'au

cours des deux années et demie qu'il siège à notre Conseil d'administration, il a largement contribué par ses sages conseils au développement du Centre et à son envol.

As you know, Kofi Annan retired from his official post six years ago. But he has in no way retired from his role as an active global statesman - tirelessly working to foster peaceful dialogue around the world.

I remember vividly - and I know you do also - the role he played when violence erupted in Kenya after the 2007 election. He led the way in bringing clashing voices together, and the result was a successful power-sharing arrangement which ended the crisis and paved the way for major constitutional reform.

Now, six years later, another election in Kenya has recently come and gone - this time without major violence. I think we all have recognized and remembered - as the Kenyan people do - how important have been the foundations that Kofi Annan did so much to build in 2007.

We also recall the political violence in Cote D'Ivoire in 2011, when Kofi Annan, in his capacity as an Elder, once again pressed for resolution. And these dramatic moments are only particular examples of his continuing efforts - day by day and year by year - in the service of global harmony.

Our honoree also leads the Kofi Annan Foundation in dealing with critical global issues such as food security, governance, climate change, drug-trafficking and HIV/AIDS. And you may know as well about his leadership role in chairing the Africa Progress Panel.

The Panel - just this month - issued a deeply stirring report. Its study testifies eloquently to Africa's profound potential for development, but it also squarely identifies the scourge of corruption, and calls powerfully for a new strengthening of transparency and accountability, nationally and internationally, in the public and private sectors alike.

In welcoming Kofi Annan this evening, I want to emphasize what his personal example has meant to all of us. He has truly been an inspiration - demonstrating the power of patience and persistence - of a willingness always to listen - and a refusal to give up hope.

Our Global Centre for Pluralism was founded here in Ottawa in 2006 to address what I believe is the central challenge of our time - learning to live peacefully and constructively in a highly diversified - and rapidly shrinking world.

As Kofi Annan has taught us, pluralism requires constant dialogue, a readiness to compromise, and an understanding that pluralism is not an end in itself, but a continuous process.

The Global Centre for Pluralism was established in partnership with the Government of Canada, and was inspired in part by Canada's experience as a highly diverse society. We want the Centre to be a place where we can all learn from one another about the challenges of diversity - and where we can share the lessons of successful pluralism.

And on evenings like this, we also help realize the Centre's potential as a destination for dialogue, a place where we can exchange ideas with true champions of global pluralism, like Kofi Annan.

Ladies and Gentlemen, together with you, I eagerly look forward to hearing from the Centre's honored Lecturer for 2013, Kofi Annan.

Thank you.