

## An Unbalanced and Endangered Planet

Remarks on Friedrich von Metzler Being Named an Honored  
Citizen by the City of Frankfurt

By  
[James D. Wolfensohn](#)  
President  
The World Bank Group

Frankfurt, Germany, September 5, 2004

Herr Bundespräsident Köhler, and Mrs. Köhler, Frau Roth, Minister Wieczorek-Zeul, and representatives of the states, and distinguished guests and friends.

When my friend of 35 years or more asked me to address this gathering, I was both delighted and a little scared. A little timid, because I am not used to speaking to audiences of such distinction. And because this is one of the first speeches I've ever made on the subject that I am about to address you on.

But I thought that it was too good an opportunity to miss. And Fritz said to me, "This is not to be a speech about me. I want you to talk about some issues that we both care about. Because it is more important to talk about issues than it is to talk just about me."

I will try to do that, but I must start by saying that one of the great joys of my life, and that of Elaine and my family, has been to know the Metzler family. And not so much in the terms that Frau Roth has described, in terms of the contribution that they have made to the city over the centuries, their distinction in banking and their distinction in social and charitable activities. More in terms of a family that is unaffected by their history and who have developed into remarkable human beings.

I look at the group that is here, Fritz and Sylvia, and Franz and Elena, and I think so warmly of Jakob who is with us in spirit today. I see Renate and think of Christoph who sadly is also not with us physically today but who is here in spirit, along with Leah and Peter, and when I think of Barbara who's also not here, I see in my mind a family that has influenced me very much, and which as people, as human beings, set an example to all of us. And it is an example of friendship, of loyalty and values. It is an example of the very best type of citizenship, and I just want you to know that I came here because I love this family, and I love Fritz and Sylvia. And it's in that spirit that I am now going to take advantage of all of you to tell you about the things that I think we care about.

Let me say it is an honor to speak in this location which is in so many ways the center of republicanism and liberalism in this country. And which itself is an historic place as is Frankfurt which is so remarkably led by the mayor, whom I have had the privilege of meeting on several previous occasions. Let me say that I come to this gathering not just to lecture and not just to tell you what I think about the global imbalance, but in a way to engage each and every one of you in something that is an extension of the activities of this city. First as a city, then in the state, then in the region, then in the country - and now in the world. Frankfurt citizens have not in the past been people who just look on.

Now is a time when really all of us need to be thinking about how we can both understand and participate in the challenges we face. Much as Fritz and his family have participated in the challenges of this city. Because we no longer look just at the city, or even just at the country. Although this country under the Chancellor and under Minister Wieczorek-Zeul and under your predecessors have taken an exceedingly important role in the issue of development since World War II with initial contributions already in the early fifties with a trip by Ludwig Erhard, in '58 I think it was to the Far East, to reach out to that part of the developing world. The recent trip of Chancellor

Schröder to Africa is an indication of continuing interest. Your country has nothing to be ashamed of in terms of your contribution to global development and to global peace.

Let me say that I miss very much the Bundespräsident and his wife in Washington. And because you have in Horst and Eva Köhler two people who not only conducted their job with impeccable skills but understood, intuitively and instinctively, and in their hearts, the real issues that the world faces today. And I just want to say we are all very lucky to have them here, because they are great people, and I miss them very much.

As I came to put down a few remarks for today, I thought that it would be a good idea to look back at a report that was done on the subjects that I want to address, by a great German statesman, Willy Brandt. I had not read the report for quite some time, I was looking for a single quotation so that I could impress you that I had read the Brandt Commission Report. And I had hoped that I could get a German translation and I could impress you that I could say a few words in German.

The tragedy was that when I started reading this report, I discovered that Willy Brandt 25 years ago was addressing the very same questions that I would like to address you about today. Willy Brandt had the temerity to say 25 years ago all the things that I thought I had discovered. And in the report which I am not going to read extensively, but feel I should read a little bit, he already pointed on page 1 to the fact that his report discusses North/South relations or as we call it developed/developing country relations as the great social challenge of our time.

Brandt said we wanted responsible world citizens everywhere to realize that many global issues will come to a head during this next period. That period being the period that ended at the beginning of this century. And we also, he said, want to raise problems to be dealt with at once, long before they come to the end of the century, which sadly, we did not do. He then goes on to say that what we need to do, all of us, is to deal with the questions of equity, of social justice, of development, not just as a sense of charity, but because the future peace and welfare of our planet depends on dealing with that issue. And of course he goes on to describe, as I might do briefly also, some of the imbalances in our planet today. He issues a call to all of us that time is running out, and that the future is in ourselves. And indeed, the future is in yourselves, both as citizens of Frankfurt and citizens of our planet.

What is the planet we face today? It is a planet in which over the last 25 years since Willy Brandt we have seen improvements in the lives of people. We have seen an extension of life expectancy in the last 50 years, globally of 20 years, more than in the previous 200 years. We have seen great gains against illiteracy. We have seen some improvements in health. We have seen some improvements in education. This period has not been one of complete loss, and may I say that we have passed through the East/West conflict in that period of time and have a resolution of that, and we see the emergence of more and more democracies and more and more freedom. But most of us, me included before I took this job, look at the world in terms of developed countries.

Every time I come to Europe, I am impressed by the focus on European unification on the issues associated with the European Union, very properly so. I'm impressed by the discussions of transatlantic relations.

I hear about Japan, and while I am here I should also add that the Metzler bank was formed 100 years before the American Revolution, 100 years before my predecessors were chosen by British judges and sent to Australia, my country and my home. So I just want you to know that I am conscious of the history very much. I am also conscious, by the way, of the history of this city and the history of the Metzler bank. Indeed, Fritz showed me their new building which, by the time they built it, was too small for his expanding empire. And noted that it was opposite the Jewish Museum, and I just want briefly to comment that the history of Jews in this city was also not trivial in terms of the richness of this city and this country.

But let me come back to the main point. The main point that I want to say is that although there has been progress, few of us have come to recognize that the world has changed from that luxurious world of talking to each other about Europe and talking to the other side of the Atlantic and talking about Japan, because the world is getting and has become different.

It is now a world of 6 billion people. Only 1 billion live in the world that we historically talked about. That world of 1 billion has 80 percent of the income, our global income of \$35 trillion. And we, who are lucky to be in the billion, have \$28 trillion of that income. The other 5 billion has \$7 trillion dollars of that income. So you have 80 percent of the world with one fifth of the income. And you have 20 percent of the world, that's us, with 80 percent of the income. That is the first primary imbalance as my topic suggests.

The second imbalance is that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer; there is a large divide between the rich and poor. Not just between the countries but within the countries. And we also should know and notice that as we in Europe look at the future, and the rest of the world looks at the future, it is not static, because in 25 years the world moves from 6 billion to 8 billion. And all but 50 million of that growth goes to developing countries. So that, by the year 2030, we'll have a world in which 7 billion out of 8 billion live in developing countries. And by 2050 or so, it'll be 8 billion out of 9 billion. And Europe, and indeed your country, will not have grown and be quite conceivably smaller.

It will certainly be older, Europe will be older, and we will see an extension in the rest of the world of youth. We have today almost half the world under the age of 24, we have 1.8 billion people, 30 percent of the world, under the age of 14, and the next 25 years 2.5 billion children will be born. And only 3 percent of the net will be in the developed world. We will face issues of migration, we will face issues of work, we will face issues of how we meet our pensions, we will face issues about growing social benefits, and all this is known already; all this is known, and all this was discussed at the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations in the year 2000. When every leader of the world made an almost identical speech, in which they said, "It's not the conflicts that we are worried about, it is poverty that we are worried about - it is imbalance, it is inequity". And everyone said, "We can fix this ", and they had a couple of more meetings as everyone knows in Monterey and in Johannesburg, and I am happy to say that the Bundespräsident and I participated in a number of these discussions. Everybody agreed that we could fix it. That we could fix it much in the way that Willy Brandt said we can fix it.

It was agreed that the rich world could help the developing world not just as a moral issue, although that's probably enough, but as an issue of self-interest, as an issue of interdependence and the leaders of the world said, "We've all got to recognize that we are no longer island states, we no longer have a wall around us". For anybody who didn't believe that, 9-11 in the United States probably proved that there was no wall.

I hope today that all of us feel the pain of the parents in Ossetia, because they are part of our community; and that we feel the pain of the tens of thousands of people who are being slaughtered in Sudan, because they are part of our family. We feel the fear of terror wherever it is. We are linked by environment and we are linked by trade, and in this city we are linked by finance, and we are linked by health, and we are linked by environment, and we are linked by crime, and we are linked by drugs, and we are linked by terror. All this was pointed out in the Millennium Assembly. But somehow it hasn't percolated down. With all respect to the Development Minister and to those that ply the trade in development it was somehow important for a few minutes, but we are at the end of the line. And for domestic politicians not unnaturally domestic issues prevail, whether it be your local budgets or local unemployment or local pensions or local whatever it is.

But the thing that everybody in the year 2000 assembly has recognized, was that you can't take that option. You can't just think locally and ignore what is happening in the rest of the world. We live simultaneously as citizens of Frankfurt and as planetary citizens. And we have to think about that because the imbalances today are just too great. And the symptoms are coming out. Young people are blowing themselves up. You read in today's paper of the problems around the world that concerns the terror, that concerns the areas of the world that are problematic; the famine, even famine today; and it is not something that is distant, not something that is distant from this location. It is something that we need to think about and about which we can do something.

At the time of Willy Brandt, he made all these points better than I do. He said we must now act, we must now act as governments, as individuals. For a short time it prevailed, and then we got diverted into the East/West conflict. And I fear today that recognizing this again in Monterey and in Johannesburg where meetings were held, we are diverted again into combating terror; without thinking of the causes of stability and terror. Those causes can be found in the lives of people without hope, lives of people without hope who today know about the people that have hope.

Communications has linked everybody. There are no longer secrets. Young people, in almost any part of the world, have access to some form of communication; and so we have become not just a city, we have become a planet. What we need, as Willy Brandt pointed out, is some way in which we can manage our planet. Some way in which we can get the G8 leaders to understand that meetings on development are not just once a year, and they are not just following a fairly straightforward pattern.

I was present years ago at the Evian Summit. In Evian, we had the G8, we had the President of China, we had the Prime Minister of India, we had the Prime Minister of Nigeria, the President of Brazil, and the President of Algeria, and the Prime Minister of South Africa, and a few people whom I felt they had to ask, one of which was the Bundespräsident, one of which was me, and one of which was the Secretary General.

What was fascinating is - you, Horst, may remember - President Lula came in representing Brazil, and he said, "You know my parents would be thrilled if they knew I was here with President Chirac, the Prime Minister, and the President of the United States, and so on". But he said, "You know it's interesting that you are the G8, because maybe next year President Hu of China, the Prime Minister of India, and myself, and the President of Nigeria, maybe we should be the G8. Because we represent 5 billion people."

For me, it was an incredible observation that our world has changed; and that the future, in fact, is not just with us, the future has to be global; and we have to have our children educated. To learn something about China, to learn something about India, to learn something about Africa, to learn something about Islam. Islam is 1.2 billion people, more than the rich countries, and growing fast. And we come to Islam with very little knowledge.

So we have much to do, we must educate our children, we must open our minds, we must give this priority, because the imbalance that exists must be dealt with, if we are to deal with the physical threats of terror, and if we are to deal with the questions of growth and the questions of opportunity. We have to give hope to all those young people.

We have to come together to address the imbalances, as Willy Brandt said, as our leaders say. The analysis is done, the time is now for action; the time is now for us to switch that attitude of mind and recognize that if we are to have peace on our planet, we need to address these imbalances.

I feel privileged that Fritz gave me the chance to say this to you. We have talked about it ourselves many times. I hope we can use his example in this city as an example of inspiration - not of charity, because poor people don't want charity. They want a chance, they want an opportunity, they want recognition, they want voice, they want peace, and they want to fix the future themselves, and if they do, all of us will lead a better life. And more importantly, our children will live in peace.

Thank you.