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THE KIND OF WORLD WE LIVE IN **
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Madam President, colleagues from near and far, good morning. We thought we would show you the best of Washington, so that is why we had for you a brilliant day yesterday full of sunshine, to remind those of you who come from other places how beautiful Washington can be in February.

This, as the President said, is one of my first official activities and I am very grateful for the invitation because there can be no better place to say some few words at the beginning of my term of office than at a Federation of Associations. Both of the words Federation and Associations have great meaning for me and I considered two options when I received your invitation. Either to just utter some formal platitudes, say how nice it is to have you here, etc., etc. and leave, or the other option would be to present some ideas that have been turning over in my mind, for the last couple of months I would say, about how associations might function and what they might think of themselves in the future. I took the liberty of adopting the second approach so these remarks of mine will not be just the formal platitudes that might accompany an opening of a meeting like this, but I hope will present to you some of my thoughts on how associations might function.

As I reflect on your Federation, as I see it or I have read about it -- because I took some time to read about it -- I think it is important for the UN system as a whole that the Staff Associations be successful. Similarly there is strength in the coming together of these associations to present a common front. Therefore the concept of a Federation of Associations to me is very attractive. When I reflect on the past, present and future of this Federation, I cannot delink it from the state of the whole UN system or from the state of associations of workers in general. I thought it important for me to begin with these general concerns before speaking about my own organization.

I am sure that all of you are very aware of the changes in the United Nations System and what we perceive as the threat from outside and the threat from within and I will be probably telling you what you know already when I speak of the various phases through which we have passed. There was a phase after the war when it seemed possible that Aldous Huxley's brave new world would become a reality, when there was the idea that success in achieving this brave new world would be predicated on each nation giving up a portion of its own sovereignty for the

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common good. A few of you -- although not many -- are old enough to remember the famous statement made by President Truman in 1948 at his inaugural address, when he pledged the support of the well endowed nations to those who were less fortunate. One only has to read the Charter of the United Nations to appreciate the lofty ideals that were put forward then, and that motivated men and women to feel that a new time was coming. But we all know how over fifty years the scenario has changed. We know of the perverseness of the differences based on competing ideologies. We know of the growth of the numbers of nations which threw into confusion the concept of equality among sovereign powers. We saw recently the warming of the cold war and the unleashing of the worst of the spirit of belonging which has translated itself into numerous small conflicts based on perceptions of disadvantages derived from differences.

At the creation of the UN, with the dominance of a spirit of sharing, the international civil servants were to a large measure citizens of the advanced countries and the concept was that they would spend some time working elsewhere and then they would return home. When I read the discussions at that time in the United Nations, I have a perception of the United Nations Civil Servants as something akin to missionaries, transferring their knowledge and information and those technologies and the skills that they had to the less fortunate. The non-political work of the United Nations was focussed on technical assistance conceived as the transfer of know how to the less fortunate. This was common to all agencies.

But let me make a point here about the slight difference that existed between the United Nations System and my own Organization. As I said on Tuesday afternoon, when this Organization was founded, it was not founded on the spirit of the transfer of know how from the well endowed to the less well endowed; it was formed in a cooperative spirit, and as a cooperative venture among equals. All had to give--all had to receive. So when we became part of the United Nations, we rather towered our thinking into the concept of assistance and we were in a sense kicking over the traces of our original formation. I would like to think that in the next four years we are going to return to what were the pristine concepts that underlay our foundation and try to create the feeling that we are all part of a hemispheric venture and that we all share and contribute.

I believe that the current questioning of the UN is based essentially on frustration and skepticism. There is frustration that the promise of a brave new world without conflict has not been realized. The persistence of poverty and the images of desolation and destitution that come pouring into our homes make it clear to us that all is not well with the world. We see that in many parts of the world the ideal that the practice of democratic governments would be the norm has not been so realized. Part of the problem with the system derives from the fact that the idea of introducing into the workings of the UN the same principles of democracy that theoretically were part of the underpinnings of the organization has led to some frustration with the slowness of how we work.

There is skepticism that this worldwide system will ever work or that any form of a worldwide system can respond to the numerous challenges. It is part of the nature of frustration -- it is part of the nature of frustrated persons -- frustrated communities and frustrated nations that they focus on what does not go well and not on what does go well. We tend to take for granted what does go well and tend to find scapegoats for what does not. There is partial blindness to the tremendous progress that has occurred in various areas, and if I may speak only

for our hemisphere, we can indeed say that there has been tremendous progress over the past fifty years.

Almost all of our countries have a democratic form of government. The economic situation in our countries has rebounded and improved. There has been a tremendous unleashing of outward growth and we see groupings of nations that would never have been possible in the past. We are re-discovering hemispheric relations in this part of the world and the free trade agreement with Mexico, Canada and the United States is just one example of this re-discovery. In the Region of the Americas in 1993 there was a 3.5% growth rate and to the surprise of everyone, there was a 43% rise in foreign direct investment. The health status of our countries is improving; the concern for the environment is passing from rhetoric to action. It is not that everything is completely alright, but in this region, as I am sure in others, much of this progress, much of this development has been helped by the constant and unflagging dedication of the international civil servants. Sometimes when we see the progress and hear the criticism -- we international civil servants -- also become frustrated.

Given the frustration of those who see us as not doing what should have been done, given our own frustration, it is a matter of concern that the message of what we do is not getting across and there are basically two options that I think we international civil servants might adopt. We can close ranks, adopt the embattled hedgehog type of approach and repel the attacks against us when they occur. That is one option. Or, we can look at ways to change some of the perceptions of what the international civil service is about and what it does. I would submit that the former is counter-productive and a sure recipe for suicide for various reasons which we will not discuss now. So I will try to make some suggestions as how we might approach this latter option.

I would propose that there are two basic concepts we might explore. First is the concept of social partnership. When the Caribbean Heads of State met some time ago, and described what was the recipe for any significant social change in any part of the world, they said that for such social change to occur you needed to have strong social partnerships. We have identified the key social partners that should be involved in any great venture as the public sector, the private sector, the workers, non-governmental organizations, organized labor, and the media. Let us examine some of these factors that might militate for or against organized labor, such as your associations, forming part of a strong social partnership. The first thing is that the partner itself must be strong, must be strong in numbers and probably even more importantly, strong in terms of principle. Unfortunately, the trend in the labor movement as a whole is towards a static situation or even reduction in numbers. Two years ago when I had to give the keynote address to the Caribbean Congress of Labor, I went to various sources and tried to determine why this might be so. Indeed, I tried to examine why people join organizations at all. The main reason is because they wish to ensure security that is personal or for their families. The other is really because they think that they are contributing to some noble cause and are satisfying some part of themselves all of us need to satisfy. It is a sense of doing something good or something useful. All mankind has that need.

There is a great debate in this country sparked by a Harvard Professor, Robert Putnam -- some of you might have read some of his writings -- over the concern that people have stopped joining groups and there is a swing towards individualism. As President Clinton said in his State of the Union address -- there is a swing away from what de Toqueville found so good when he visited his country in 1830 or thereabouts. I would propose that for associations like

yours to flourish and to buck this trend against joining, there has to be concern for wider issues than that of individual security. I agree that you must be concerned with the crucial issues like the loss of purchasing power of salaries and pensions, and the issues of representation. I believe that you must continue to be concerned about the issues of security that were the bread and butter of associations of workers from the time I began to learn about organized labor. But I have also learned that the dustbin of history is filled with discarded and discredited generals who prepared to fight future battles with strategies of wars past. Therefore, I would urge that you try to include in your discussion and debate some other issues that will make you stronger social partners, issues that demonstrate your concern for the wider aspects of the meaning and direction of the system as a whole. Article 2 of your Statutes state as your first purpose and I quote: "The purpose is to ensure the closest cooperation at all levels, with the aims of achieving the purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations". There could be no more lofty purpose.

I was very taken by a statement your President made in your Rome Meeting when she quite properly said and I quote her: "That the us and them syndrome which exists between staff representatives and management within their own organizations was not appropriate in FICSA." You may call me a dreamer and in the words of the old song, maybe I am, but I would wish to see the us and them disappear entirely, not only from FICSA, but from our own lexicon and be replaced by a spirit that does not seek to demonize one part of any organization. Instead, that spirit would be looking for a genuine partnership that allowed you to be indeed powerful social partners.

There is a second principle on which I would invite you to reflect. I note that you give a lot of attention to lobbying those whom you perceive to be key leaders and I asked myself if this is really the best or the only strategy to change the perception of what we are about. Would it not be equally or more effective to seek to change the public opinion that will be reflected in the posture of the decision makers? Have you thought of a specific pro-active strategy of creating an informed public opinion about the United Nations System and the role of its workers? I have learned that many times when we lobby key political figures we forget that they are but the creatures of the people and we forget that access to and creating opinion among the people is perhaps the best and most effective way of lobbying their leaders. You might think about the fundamental marketing strategy of targeted intervention.

Since this meeting is being held in PAHO at the beginning of my term, perhaps I might finally address a very few brief remarks about how I intend to proceed. As I have indicated, the concept of partnership is a concept that is very near and dear to me. I embrace the possibility that ideas may come from various parts of the Organization and when I speak of ideas and involvement, I would wish not to have the petulant reactions about the formal aspects of involvement. Experience has taught me that you cannot silence the interested and the involved and that is what I want to see the interested and involved offering their ideas, offering their suggestions of how we might do things better. As I have said before to many of you, I believe in the fundamental right of association, but the fundamental right of association gives a responsibility and that responsibility must be translated into a concern for the whole and not only for the part. Responsibility implies not taking a denial of a request as a rejection of all that is good and right about the association.

One of the first things I did was to invite all our members of staff towards the end of last week to participate in an exercise of creation -- the creation of a statement of a mission for our Secretariat. What drives us? How we go about doing the people's business?

As I have said before, our strength lies in the competence and professionalism of our staff. I am proud of our record in staff development and I have already indicated some of the plans for doing even more in that particular area.

Madam President, let me close by wishing you well and I hope that your meeting goes very well. I hope that the facilities we put at your disposal are such as to favor good debate and discussion and I look forward to seeing your report. Your discussions on the parochial issues will be very important to me, but let me repeat what I said when I spoke to the Caribbean Congress on Labor sometime ago. I quoted from the legendary George Meany, and there was no one who was more acutely aware than George Meany of the origins of the labor movement; what it had achieved and what it might achieve. When he assumed the Presidency of the joint AFL and CIO 40 years ago, and spoke of the problems of the unions he said: "As we face the future, we should give some sober thoughts to the kind of world that we live in." I hope for your own growth and your success you also continue to give more sober thoughts to the kind of world that we live in.

Thank you very much.