

II. Schiller Institute Conference

On the Precipice of a New World

by H.E. Naledi Pandor

Her Excellency Naledi Pandor has held several cabinet posts in the Republic of South Africa, including in the fields of education, and science and technology. Most recently she was the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, 2019-2024.

On May 24, Dr. Pandor addressed panel one of the Schiller Institute conference “A Beautiful Vision for Humanity in Times of Great Turbulence!” Below are her opening remarks to the panel, followed by her response to a question during the discussion period. The full video of panel one can be viewed [here](#).



The Schiller Institute
H.E. Naledi Pandor, former South African
Minister of International Relations and
Cooperation.

Efforts to create multilateral organizations that will promote positive values and principles need to intensify, as we have not yet had a result of effective counterweights to the impact of an influential dominant United States of America view of the world; a view that might is right, and might is all that matters.

The recent emergence of the BRICS, the growing economic progress of member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and of the African Union all need to be harnessed and directed toward framing a plan and strategy

We are living in a very difficult, toxic geopolitical environment. What is of great concern is that it is negatively affecting all areas of human advancement, advances we have achieved since the early years of industrialization: from positive migration to the protection of human rights; protection of academic freedom; protection of the right to free expression; protection for legitimate redress of inequality; and protection and respect for constitutional law. All of these elements of progressive development face threats today. Included in this global decline is a significant growth in right-wing populism, chauvinistic nationalism, and a growing belief that I am not my sister’s keeper. I am her enemy, or even worse, I am her boss. These reversals threaten our four decades of broadly peaceful coexistence, and require all progressive organizations to work together on a well-constructed strategy to restore multi-polarity and a focus on our real global challenges. These are poverty, under-development, oppression, insecurity, climate degradation, and the growing arms race that threatens world peace.

that will assert multilateralism and development as key global objectives. And that will openly act to secure freedom for Palestine, security for Israel, peace for Ukraine, peace for Russia, and development for Africa—and efforts that will end the external malign activities that we see in resource-rich African countries.

The Need for a New World Order

I call for this united collaboration because I am aware that there are many efforts globally to counter the negative developments that are part of the toxic global environment. However, due to the dissipated nature of the efforts, and resistance and response, we are not achieving the outcomes we desire. It is tragic that we’ve allowed over 18 months of slaughter of the people of Palestine, and that as we watch today, thousands face starvation, and we may very well have in a few years, some of our organizations mopping up the skeletons of Palestinians who starved due to our inability to act cohesively and decisively.

I believe the likelihood of a new world order de-

depends on our open acknowledgment as UN member states that the world is today at a precipice. Determined robust action is required to restore sanity and open the space for action that will contribute to a safer world. This action for a new global order appears increasingly impossible, given the significant global leader role the world has attached to the United States of America. In a sense, the king we have crowned is the one causing the problem we face today. We need to act to reverse that.

Meetings such as this one, and many other conferences, should be more steadfast and focused on setting out the value of positive global principles such as integrity, cooperation, democracy, equity, freedom, and inclusion. Ordinary citizens must be alerted to the danger of losing individual civil liberties, and of the destruction of institutions that promote and support democracy such as our judiciaries, as well as our legislatures. These are being rendered impotent by the actions we see from leaders today.

Initiatives that have been promoted by the Schiller Institute, such as the development of the Oasis Plan, or the African Union's Agenda 2063, and of course the recent [Open Letter](#) by the Schiller Institute and the many others to His Eminence Pope Leo XIV provide important foundations for a values-led and principles-led global initiative. I hope that the Institute in partnership with many other organs of civil liberty will continue to focus on drawing increased attention to initiatives such as these, and play a critical role in reasserting multi-polarity and a new political logic of a caring, rational global leadership.

We Need More 'Adults in the Room'

As has been said before, what we require today is an adult in the room, and we are sorely missing that quality. We perhaps need to turn to the growing importance of BRICS countries and the role that they may play through a keener focus on key global tensions, and on opportunities that the growing BRICS membership could play in promoting the role of the United Nations as the premier multilateral body, as well as in ensuring that we do work at the key reforms that are necessary for a more efficient, effective, and impactful United Nations, and a Security Council able to execute its role of ensuring peace and security in the globe.

We should call for the convening of organizations of the South in particular, as well as the broader Non-

Aligned Movement, into a powerful new institution for progressive ideals, sustainable development, peace, and security. There is no merit in us appreciating the population numbers of the BRICS countries, or the inherent GDP value that they hold as they come together. What we need to see is a political BRICS that begins to play a role in effectively changing the world order, and in ensuring that we do focus on humanity and addressing the key challenges confronted by humanity today.

We need world leaders to stand up; we need world leaders who are genuine when they commit resources to addressing climate change. We need world leaders who are genuine when they articulate sustainable development goals; leaders who ensure that financing follows those commitments. Leaders who ensure that when they speak of ending nuclear weapons proliferation, they are active in ending such proliferation. Leaders who ensure that they do not initiate an arms race as we are seeing today, but end the proliferation of arms throughout the world. We need leaders who will ensure that arms do not get into African countries and initiate civil wars in Africa; initiate ethnic wars; initiate extremism; initiate danger for women, and reversal of gender equality. One of the apparent characteristics of the current geopolitical environment is a serious danger of reversal of the achievements women have made in women's equality and empowerment. We see today that the very virulent negative voices are primarily male, and that their message is chauvinistic, it's patriarchal, and it is therefore important that women's organizations play a key role in reversing this trend. We are very encouraged that young people have tried to stand up, and have begun to have a voice in rejecting the current unipolarity and the dominant world order that seeks to rule over us rather than entrench cooperation and development.

So, we believe that our strategic challenges relate to development, to world peace, and to a sustainable world. We think that through the Schiller Institute and several other progressive initiatives, we could begin a march toward creating a new world order that helps to enhance the value of positive principles for the good, the value of the interests of humanity rather than the driving force of angry individuals who do not seek a positive outcome for the globe.

I thank you for your attention, and I wish you well in the conference. Thank you very much.

The Role of Youth

Moderator: This is a question from a group of young professionals in Equatorial Guinea in Africa: “The world is moving toward global instability caused by different conflicts and faced with the fear of a possible war of unpredictable dimensions. What role could the youth of the world play for the awareness of a culture of global peaceful coexistence?” That’s the first part of the question. The second part states: “The world economy is also going through a critical situation, where the Western powers only look at Africa as a place to be exploited and condemned to consume. In this regard, how could that situation be reversed so that the famous win-win philosophy becomes a reality?”

Pandor: Thank you very much to the young people for the first question. I think it’s a very important question, and I would say to them that the world is actually in a context of global instability. It is my view that young people have an extremely important role to play in engendering a new culture in the world. A culture directed at peace, at security and development. Young people have a very close connection to technology; they make great use of social media. I think the manner in which they utilize social media and youth organizations needs to be directed much more purposefully at addressing the problems that we’re discussing in this global forum.

So, I think young people should become activists for change; should become more knowledgeable about the world; should seek to hold up the positive values of freedom, justice, democracy, and full enjoyment of human rights. I think if they could take up the world’s challenges in these areas, we have the potential to create a very different world. So, there are youth formations in most of our countries. We need to really encourage the establishment of a global youth forum where young people work together to advance positive goals.

With respect to Africa and changing its economic trajectory, one of the areas we need to address is the

matter of corruption within the political, the public, and the private sector spheres. I think President Biden did a great deal to assist in this regard with the Executive Order which he signed which prohibited American companies from being involved in sourcing contracts through bribery and other negative means. The fact that that law has now been repealed, I think, is a very serious reversal; because it had been done to ensure that leaders in the private sector were far more alert to the need to avoid bribery and corruption and not to secure contracts through utilizing such negative criminal actions.

We in Africa need to ensure that we directly confront the blight of corruption; it’s a cancer in many of our societies. But in addition, we must exert control over our resources and really look at value addition to our mineral resources in our countries rather than using them as a means of generating economic benefit, extraction of minerals and export for value addition elsewhere. So, greater attention to beneficiation, and particularly a new approach with respect to the critical minerals which are not yet the subject of a large number of old contracts on existing old minerals on the continent. We need to act in a different way and educate our young people to be the new mining engineers, technologists developing equipment for mining activities, mining business sector. We need to become active in beneficiation. This could build a very important industrial and manufacturing base on the African continent. We need to think about mineral wealth as a resource for our countries and for the continent.

And finally, Africa must learn to trade with Africa. We have far too little intra-African trade. The vast amount of goods produced in Africa is exported elsewhere. The trade among ourselves is of such a low level as to be one of the most negative factors in our inadequate economic growth. So, full implementation of the Africa continental free trade area is an important step towards strengthening intra-African trade, greater productivity in manufacturing on the continent, and increased positive livelihoods for the people of Africa. Thank you very much.