

From Johannesburg, South Africa ...

Colin Powell's speech to the WSSD



September 4, 2002

It is fitting that we meet here in Johannesburg, a city that is a symbol of hope to men, women, and children everywhere. South Africa's remarkable journey over the past dozen years inspires us even as it reminds us that the best formula for development is freedom.

I would like to thank President Thabo Mbeki and the Government of South Africa for the masterful job they have done in organizing and hosting this meeting. We also owe a great debt to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, Summit Secretary General Nitin Desai, and Dr. Emil Salim of Indonesia.

Ladies and gentlemen, President Bush and the American people have an enduring commitment to sustainable development. The American soul has always harbored a deep desire to help people build better lives for themselves and their children. We have always understood that our own well-being depends on the well-being of our fellow inhabitants of this planet Earth.

Perhaps President Bush expressed this American passion best when he asserted that including all the world's poor in an expanding circle of development is a great moral challenge.

The facts scream out to us. In developing countries, nearly one person in four still ekes out a bare existence on a dollar a day or even less. Entire generations are at risk from AIDS and other infectious diseases. Drought, wasteful land use, and economic mismanagement threaten to create famine.

In one country in this region, Zimbabwe, the lack of respect for human rights and rule of law has exacerbated these factors to push millions of people toward the brink of starvation.

In the face of famine, several governments in Southern Africa have prevented critical U.S. food assistance from being distributed to the hungry by rejecting biotech corn, which has been eaten safely around the world since 1995.

Disregard for the environment threatens the world's natural resources, and all who depend on them for food, fuel, shelter and livelihood. Our challenge, then, is to widen the circle of development and include those who are left out.

Here in Johannesburg, we have recommitted ourselves to achieving, by 2015, the development goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration. We further dedicated ourselves to improve sanitation, rejuvenate fisheries, promote biodiversity, and encourage renewable energy. We have reaffirmed the principle that sound economic

management, investment in people, and responsible stewardship of our environment are crucial for development. We have insisted that women act as planners, implementers, and beneficiaries for all of our initiatives.

Johannesburg is an important key milestone on the road from Doha and Monterrey to the future. Last March, world leaders at the Monterrey Summit on Financing for Development pledged themselves to provide new resources for development and to adopt the policies needed to ensure that these resources are well-used.

In Monterrey, President Bush underscored the link between good governance, good policies and human well-being when he put forward his Millennium Challenge Account. This new type of assistance will go only to developing nations that are governed wisely and fairly, are strongly committed to investing in health and education, and which follow sound economic policies that encourage entrepreneurs and that spur growth.

Under this initiative, President Bush will be seeking funding from Congress to increase America's development assistance by \$5 billion per year within three years, a 50 percent increase over the \$10 billion in assistance we provide now every single year. And developing countries are stepping up to this challenge. For example, the New Partnership for Africa's Development is a welcome pledge by African leaders to the people of Africa to promote peace, to promote security, and to promote people-oriented development.

Official development aid alone is not enough. Countries must also be able to attract the trade and investment that account for 80 percent of the money that is available for development.

The needs of developing countries have been placed for the first time at the heart of world trade talks in the Doha Development Round. As President Bush has stated, "Trade is the engine of development." The United States will work with our partners for an agreement to spread the benefits of freer trade as widely as possible. Already, the United States has announced proposals to slash barriers to global trade in agricultural products.

This Summit has cemented a new vision of sustainable development. The Johannesburg Plan of Action consolidates our work plans into one common agenda that includes our best thinking on sustainable development. Plans are good. But [only] actions can put clean water in the mouths of thirsty girls and boys, prevent the transmission of a deadly virus from mother to child, and preserve the biodiversity of a fragile African ecosystem.

The United States is taking action to meet environmental challenges, including global climate change, not just rhetoric. We are committed to a multi-billion dollar program to develop and deploy advanced technologies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

President Bush is also helping to create effective partnerships to unleash the talents and resources of developed and developing countries, civil society and the private sector. For example, our South African Housing Initiative will help private contractors build 90,000 houses for a half million people in over the next five years.

We have unveiled at this conference four new "signature" partnerships in water, energy, agriculture, and forests. These programs will expand access to clean water and affordable energy, reduce pollution, provide jobs, and improve food supplies for millions.

We have also reaffirmed President Bush's commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Our support for the Global Fund and the International Mother-and-Child HIV Prevention Initiative will combat the devastation wrought by infectious diseases.

We invite other countries to join in these partnerships and in the 15 other partnerships that we have brought to the table. Good governance and practical partnerships work together. President Bush and I want to work now to achieve the goals we have all so proudly proclaimed at this conference.

Ladies and gentlemen, my African ancestors would have understood what brought us here to Johannesburg. They would have called it ubuntu, the name so aptly given to the site of the exhibition taking place during this conference.

Ubuntu is something you understand with your heart more than your head. It's the idea that we are all on this planet, and all in this life, together. Ubuntu means that when one of us is hungry, all of us are suffering. When one of us despairs, all must look to others for hope.

We have plans to end despair and offer hope. Now it is time to put those plans into action and expand the circle of development to all God's children.

Thank you.