



2011 ANNUAL MEETING

September 19 - 22, 2011 ★ Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers

Opening Plenary Session: The World at 7 Billion: A Member Conversation with President Clinton

Tuesday, September 20, 2011: 10:30 – 11:30 AM

I. Session Objective:

This session will include insights from CGI members on commitment successes as well as a unique question-and-answer exchange between President Clinton and the CGI community.

II. Summary of Discussion:

MODERATOR:

Nicholas Kristof, *columnist, The New York Times*

PRESENTERS:

President Bill Clinton, *founder, The William J. Clinton Foundation; 42nd president of the United States*

Reeta Roy, *president and CEO, The MasterCard Foundation*

Milton Ochieng, *co-founder, Lwala Community Alliance*

Ashok & Amrita Mahbubani, *co-founders, The EKTA Foundation*

President Clinton: What advice would you give to the people who are here for the first time?

- **Ms. Roy:** The most important thing is to concretely know what you want to achieve, which will allow you to understand how you can add value to other organizations and their current work.
- **Mr. Ochieng:** Know and meet the community and the people you are working with and want to help. There are multiple synergistic interventions, and in order to find what works, you must talk to the locals.
- **Mr. Mahbubani:** Whatever you think or dream you can do, begin it, and this is a great place to start.

Mr. Kristoff: We have an economic crisis at home. Is it valid to argue that we should be focusing on nation building at home and not worrying about global concerns?

- **President Clinton:** America has a real interest in what happens in other places. We cannot afford to become isolationists. We know that not all Americans have been disabled by the economic crisis, and there are other places that have it worse than the United States. We can still help the U.S. while simultaneously helping globally. One of the biggest problems is not that Americans are greedy but that they are misinformed and think that we spend about 15 percent of our budget to help foreign countries. In reality, we only invest about 1 percent of our budget.

Mr. Kristoff: In regard to political polarization and gridlock, there are many ways to do public service such as through government, NGOs, and corporations. Given that gridlock, would you suggest people pursue other avenues?

- **President Clinton:** Government matters. The world is still organized in nation states. People do not need to run for office but they should not run from government.

Nicholas Kristoff: There is a sense that poverty, whether at home or abroad, is a bottomless pit. Do you agree?

- **President Clinton:** Yes, you can make a difference; no, it does not all get swallowed up. While there is inherent merit in what aid organizations and NGOs can accomplish, if you want to change the country there must be a focus on empowering the locals so they do not need you anymore.

Audience Member: What set of actions should people following the meeting online take today to make an impact?

Turning ideas into action.



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- **President Clinton:** Using climate change as an example, if you are an American, the best thing you can do is to make it politically unacceptable to engage in denial.

Audience: In regard to the Girls and Women action network, what do you think are its next steps?

- **Mr. Kristoff:** Women are the solution, not the problem. Educating women is a way to reduce conflict, improve health care, and it is a great way of leveraging change.

Twitter: How can we prevent and respond to the violence against girls on the way to school?

- **President Clinton:** There are no easy solutions to this problem for countries that do not have good law enforcement. Effective solutions will only come by working with the local country and its government. This problem is made more difficult when the people in the country foster a culture that does not stand against abuse.

Audience Member: I feel like partnership is the most important thing in development. How can we make the best partnerships with the locals?

- **Mr. Kristoff:** We need to listen to and empower local people, because locals will be able to find the solutions that are most effective.
- **President Clinton:** Anybody who thinks they can swoop in from the outside because they are smart and caring and have money is living in a dream world. For example, in Kenya, the demolition of forest cover is a significant problem; however, in order to foster change, we need to find a local way to solve how to restore and prevent the destruction of forest cover.

III. Opportunities for Action:

- Figure out exactly what you want and find partnerships that will allow you to use your skills to add value to their organization.
- Begin and continue to work with locals. They must be empowered in order to achieve lasting change.
- Ensure there is an evidence base for whatever program you are implementing.
- Display specific examples of what works and how it is fostering change.
- Government remains critical, so either running for office or working with government is a powerful way to create change.
- People whose wealth has not been too diminished by the economy should continue to make contributions to society. People should also raise awareness about how small the aid budget of the United States is compared to how it is perceived.

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