



Address

**The Honorable
Ambassador Constance A. Morella
U.S. Mission to the OECD**

**“Model United Nations Club Annual Conference”
Opening Ceremony**

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I'm delighted to be here to address you during the opening ceremony of your Model United Nations Club annual conference. I want to congratulate Sciences Po and the organizing committee for its first-ever annual conference, and for putting together a very exciting and challenging agenda over the next few days. I also want to thank Aaron Levy-Forsythe for extending to me this wonderful invitation to speak with you today.

As a former professor myself, and now U.S. Ambassador to the OECD, I like to take every opportunity to put on my academic hat, to reflect broadly on the issues of the day. So this afternoon, I want to talk about an idea -- an idea that has defined the modern era since the dawn of the Enlightenment, an idea that has now captured the imagination of a majority of humanity, and made our world more secure as a result, and that idea is liberal democracy.

What do I mean by "liberal" democracy? Well, first of all, I mean capital "L" in Liberal, as in Liberalism, the theory of politics that took shape in the minds of Englishmen like Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke, and even a Scot or two, like Adam Smith. The ideas of Liberalism were, of course, later refined and applied and written into the American Constitution by men like Hamilton, and Jefferson and Madison. And all of these individuals were trying, in their own way, to solve one of history's oldest quandaries: How can individuals with different interests, and different backgrounds, and different religious beliefs, live together peacefully and avoid the evil extremes of politics: civil war and tyranny, or as they would have said, the extremes of the state of nature and the oppression of the state?

In their answer to this question, the theorists of Liberalism transformed politics forever. They declared that all human beings possessed equal dignity and certain natural rights -- among these, the right to live in liberty, to enjoy security, to own property and to worship as they pleased. These universal rights, established and embodied in institutions and enshrined in law, would then impose principled limits on state power. But that was not all. They had another equally bold idea: For government to be truly legitimate, they argued, it had to be blessed by the consent of the governed.

Now, those were truly revolutionary ideas, and not surprisingly, they inspired revolutions. You made yours here in France in 1789. We made ours, after a few false starts, in 1776 and 1789. And I do not, therefore, mean to imply that there is only one model of liberal democracy. There is not. Even two countries as similar as France and the United States embraced liberal democracy on our own terms, according to our own traditions and our cultures and our experiences. That has been the case for every country and every people that has begun the modest quest for justice and freedom -- whether it was Britain in 1688; or Germany and Japan after World War II; or nations across Asia, and Africa, and Latin America during these past decades; or in countries like Ukraine, and Afghanistan, and Iraq today.

The appeal of liberal democracy is desirable, but its progress has not been even nor has it been inevitable. There's a reason for that. The challenge of liberal democracy is always to ensure majority rule and to respect minority rights, to strengthen communities and to liberate

individuals, to empower government and to limit that power at the same time. And for societies accustomed to thinking in zero-sum terms, or for diverse communities that have never shared power among themselves, liberal democracy can seem difficult and frustrating and even threatening, and that feeling is entirely understandable.

Too often, we forget how long and hard liberal democracy has been for us. At times in our history and cities like Paris and Washington for that matter, the challenge of liberal democracy seemed so severe that it would split societies in two.

So even today, we know that we are still wrestling with the challenges of liberal democracy. Consider, for example, our efforts to strengthen national security and to protect civil liberties at the same time. In the attacks of 9/11 in the U.S. or 7/7 in Britain, the United States and Britain saw the true threat of global terrorism.

These difficult issues still affirm for us the value of liberal democracy. But from our present and past experience, we know that liberal democracy is no panacea. It is a living principle, a never-ending conversation, a perpetual struggle to balance democratic demands within the limitations of Liberalism. This is genuine liberal democracy and this is its genius, its flexibility and its dynamism, how it helps diverse societies and diverse peoples reconcile their differences peacefully. Even for mature liberal democracies like ours, with centuries of experience, these balancing acts are often painstaking and time-consuming and frustrating. So when we talk about young

democracies, like those emerging today, we must do so with great humility and with great patience and with great sympathy for their historic undertaking.

I think that we in the West need to reflect long and hard before we write off entire societies as inherently despotic because of some notion of their cultures. Remember, cultural determinists were once so certain that democracy would never work in Asia because of "Asian values," or in Africa because of tribalism, or in Latin America because of its military juntas. Similar excuses were found, in my own lifetime, to deny African Americans their due as full participants in our own liberal democratic tradition.

The criticism assumes that human beings are the unwilling subjects of their culture, not the authors of it. Liberal democracy is unique because it is both principle and process, an end toward which people strive, and the means by which they do so. The daily work of negotiation, and cooperation, and compromise, the constant struggle to balance majority rule with individual rights -- this democratic process is how people create a democratic culture.

International diplomacy, which you will engage in over the course of the next three days, is full of negotiation and compromise. But remember that the ultimate goal, the end game if you will, is to build partnership. Partners share common values and common goals, even though they can at times disagree about tactics.

You will also learn to develop your diplomacy skills: to be tactful, understanding, a troubleshooter, an advisor and negotiator. You will conduct foreign relations on behalf of your governments. You will encounter differences and the only true way to overcome these, is through constant dialogue and discussion.

The United Nations, like many international institutions, is critical in its contributions to global harmony. The OECD, another international institution -- to which I happen to be Ambassador -- creates an environment where 30 of the world's most advanced democracies can pursue economic freedom and make the world economy work better.

Like the UN, the OECD is undergoing somewhat of a reform, making it more relevant to the 21st century. As a world institution that is rules-based, we hope to integrate more countries into this organization, enabling the OECD to have greater effect in the policy decisions that affect globalization.

Finally, I would like to briefly make mention of the Marshall Plan, 2007 being its 60th Anniversary. The Marshall Plan, or European Recovery Program, as it was officially named, has been heralded as one of the true great examples of international diplomacy. The Marshall Plan had two important ingredients for success: first, the program's content enabled Europeans to lead their own development rather than having it imposed upon them, a certain recipe for disaster.

Second, it was lead by a consummate diplomat, George C. Marshall, then Secretary of State of the United States.

A man of quiet character, he had an unshakable desire to serve his country and to help others. His vision has left an indelible mark on history. So powerful was the Marshall Plan, that diplomats today still call for a Marshall Plan response to many of the world's problems.

It gives me great comfort to see so many young people here today, representing so many countries throughout the world and to know that you could possibly be part of tomorrow's diplomatic corps. I have spent the better part of 27 years in public service to my country and can attest to the endless rewards I have experienced.

My advice in the days ahead: enjoy your conference, debate the issues well, see the world from a different perspective, and be prepared to compromise. Remember, you all have common goals and the only true means of achieving lasting results is in building strong partnerships.

(Choice of quotes)

I leave you with a quote by Isaac Goldberg, the American writer and critic, who said that, "Diplomacy is to do and say the nastiest things in the nicest way."

Or

As John Kenneth Galbraith once said, “There are few ironclad rules of diplomacy but to one there is no exception. When an official reports that talks were useful, it can be safely concluded that nothing was accomplished.”

Or

As American novelist Caskie Stinnett once wrote, “A diplomat is a person who can tell you to go to hell in such a way that you actually look forward to the trip.”

Thank you.