

JIM HOAGLAND & SAMIR AITA

Jim Hoagland, Associate Editor and Chief Foreign Correspondent, *Washington Post*

I am Jim Hoagland of *The Washington Post* and it is my pleasure to welcome you to the fifth plenary session. This fifth plenary session is going to concentrate on the G20, the organisation that has come into being somewhat haphazardly, but providentially. We are looking at an organisation that is perhaps finally large enough to answer the question of legitimacy, to be a legitimate voice for the regions of the world. It is also perhaps small enough to be effective, to make decisions and perhaps to implement them in a short period of time, in a world that is moving much more rapidly than it ever has before.

It is amazing that the G20 has, after an initial period of some doubt, gained enthusiasm in my home, the American capital of Washington. It is clear that the United States has not always been at the forefront of those countries working for global governance. However, both President Obama and his predecessor, President Bush, have welcomed the G20. President Bush was prodded very effectively about the G20 by the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy. They have put American resources into promoting G20 leadership. It was the United States that effectively suggested that the G20 should become the international forum that deals with international economic matter as a matter of primacy.

The question of leadership is very important. We have two distinguished guests today and I think their presence explains a little bit of the American enthusiasm for the G20. In South Korea, we have an American ally, a country that is very efficient in many, many ways. It has been able to lead the formation of the G20 this year. It will soon be passing the baton, as in a relay race, to Jean-David Levitte, who is well-known in Washington. He was Ambassador to the United States, during one of the most difficult periods of French-American relations, that is, the build up to, and conduct of, the invasion of Iraq.

I have to say, I am a student of diplomacy practised in the United States, in Washington. If you had to choose a performance under fire, under pressure, as the best one in the last 10 years, it would be Jean-David Levitte's. He played a role in representing his country, whose views were not particularly popular with the American administration. He remained very effective at the same time.

To launch us, I am going to turn the podium over to Samir Aita, who has actually reversed a famous French dictum. This was that journalism is a fine career if you can get out of it. Samir started out as an engineer and somehow found his way into the world of journalism. He is now the editor in chief of the Arabic edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

Samir Aita

Editor-in-chief of *Le Monde diplomatique éditions arabes*, and Président of the Cercle des économistes arabes

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to give a very quick introduction. We have two eminent persons here today. There is Mr. Ahn Ho-Young, the Korean Ambassador at Large for the G20. He is the Deputy Minister of Trade in the Ministry for Trade and Foreign Affairs and it is important that the two ministries are mentioned together. He knows Paris; he served at the OECD and also served in Geneva, at the WTO and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I understand.

A friend of mine who is involved in the G20 told me that Korea did an excellent job, as a recent entrant to the G20, in leading the G20 during the year. The personal skills of Mr. Ahn Ho-Young were very important. Without him, the thing



would have been different. This is what he told me. He said, 'We expected that he would tell us about the types of structural policies Korea had promoted during its presidency. This includes sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth.' *Le Monde Diplomatique* is very sensitive to the inclusive growth issue.

Then there is Jean-David Levitte, who was the diplomat for His Excellency. He did the diplomatic work, both in the UN and in Washington. We expect him to tell us what the priorities are for the French presidency, especially since, as has been said, France will be President of the G20 and the G8 at the same time.