



# THIERRY DE MONTBRIAL

## President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be opening this 4th *World Policy Conference* and I would like to begin by expressing my thanks to His Excellency Herr Heinz Fischer, President of the Republic of Austria. I would like to say how grateful I am that when I came to see you a few months ago, you agreed to welcome us here to the magnificent city of Vienna, and to this magnificent Hofburg. I would also like to express my warmest and sincerest thanks to President Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey. President Gül had agreed to attend the first conference in Evian, three years ago, but unfortunately a serious incident affecting his country forced him to return home on the day of the conference itself. Mr President, I thank you and I am delighted, at the same time, to announce that the 5<sup>th</sup> *World Policy Conference* will take place next year in Istanbul. The applause I hear from the audience is an excellent indication of how pleased we all are at this decision.

I would also like to thank all the leading figures who are here with us today – I won't mention them all – President Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, who also took part in the first of these conferences, and His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I, who also does us the great honour of being here with us. I welcome Prince Turki Al-Faisal, another friend of this conference, who is attending for the second time. I thank Mr Il Sakong, who is here as the personal representative of the President of the Republic of Korea, and Mr Peter Praet, whom I shall introduce in a moment and who is here to replace Mario Draghi, who is needed all day today at the European Council. You will appreciate that he is dealing with vital issues for the future of the European Union, a topic we will be returning to on several occasions during this conference. I welcome President Ahtisaari, former President of the Republic of Finland and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, who will also be with us throughout the conference.

I would like to say a few words about the substance of this conference. The subject matter of the *World Policy Conference* is global governance. In my judgment, there is no subject as important as this one, not only for our immediate circumstances, but also for many years, if not decades, ahead. I would like to stress three points.

The first point is that globalisation means more and more interdependence, which leads to more and more complexity. With complexity comes uncertainty. The characteristic of complexity is that very small causes can have immense repercussions all over the system. These repercussions are fundamentally unpredictable. This year, this has been borne out in the case of the so-called Arab Spring, which we will discuss in depth later on this afternoon. It starts with a poor man who commits suicide in the centre of Tunisia, and it ends up with the global destabilisation of a whole critical region. As of today, we do not know what the ultimate consequences of this destabilisation will be.

To take another example, in the economic realm, when the bubble burst, it was something fundamentally unpredictable as far as the particular circumstances are concerned. When bubbles burst, it can lead to situations such as the present one, which affects the whole European Union. If the European Union were to start to dismantle, that could be a major factor of destabilisation for the whole world. This problem of complexity is a major one. By the way, economists should now be much more humble than they used to be because not so long ago, most economists, Nobel Prize winners and so on, thought that they had resolved the basic problems of economic policy. This is not the case.

My second point is that because of this growing uncertainty, governance is essential. Without governance, our highly interdependent system is likely to explode. The current governance organisation is extremely weak. G8 and G20 are weak organisations. Not only are they weak, but they are relatively poor, both in terms of efficiency and legitimacy. This is what we have to work on. We know that the balance of power all over the world has shifted in the direction of the emerging countries. By the way, I would rather talk about BRITS than BRICS. The T stands for Turkey. I think Turkey is too often neglected when we talk about the emerging powers. I say this because we are going to listen to President



Gül in a few minutes. I think Turkey today is a major country, not only in the Middle East at large, but in the world. At the same time, it is also true that the diminishing leadership of the West has so far not been replaced, and certainly not by a country like China. China does not have a history or experience of world matters or leadership at a global level, and I think China is much more concentrated on its own affairs and development at the moment. This leaves a huge leadership gap and I think this is part of our problem of global governance.

How we shape more sustainable global governance is key, and paradoxically today we can say that the experience of the European Union is one that can be discussed as a role model possibly for the whole world. I say that on the very day when there is extremely high uncertainty because of the outcome of the European Council meeting.

My third and last point is to stress the importance of values. This is a fundamental subject. The world is not homogeneous. We have different cultures, different religions or religious traditions and we have different kinds of experiences. I think this should be seen as a source of wealth, not as a source of difficulty. At the same time, we are not accustomed to working in a cooperative way with countries with highly different values, while no country is pretending to prevail on the others. There is a great deal to be learned from that viewpoint.

I will conclude by expressing a wish. There is the famous Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I dare to say here that, in my judgment, this declaration of human rights is not fully universal. It is not universal because of the way it was drafted and it is also not universal because the cultures and traditions of non-Western countries were not taken into account when it was drafted.

At some point, I wish we could draft a declaration of universal values. It seems to me that in all major traditions, including religious traditions, it should not be so difficult to identify really common values, such as human dignity, or perhaps even something like consent. People should not be forced to act in a way that they do not accept for themselves. Maybe at some stage, the *World Policy Conference* could be used in an instrumental way to launch the drafting of such a declaration of universal values. That might probably be the best condition for developing a new sustainable global governance system.

It is now my pleasure and honour to invite President Heinz Fischer to give his introductory speech, after which I will call President Gül. Thank you very much for your attention.