HEINZ FISCHER

President of the Republic of Austria

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Let me begin by thanking you all for coming to Vienna and for attending this important conference. Special thanks are due to Professor de Montbrial, President and Founder of the World Policy Conference, not only for his opening remarks but also for the idea to hold this fourth session of the World Policy conference in Vienna, a traditional venue for international meetings.

In the next couple of days you will discuss and examine various aspects of global governance.

I welcome this because today, nothing can be addressed any more in an isolated way. Our global agenda is, however, not only international but also interdisciplinary and encompassing all levels of governance.

In my view there are two core challenges on our Global Agenda: One is related to the needed development of our institutional framework and of the decision-making and -implementation processes at all levels. The other deals with the new societal dimension of our response.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

We have all become aware that the traditional Westphalian system of sovereign states has begun to be partially replaced by new patterns of interstate and non-state interaction and information flows. Sovereign state rights have become relativized with a growing spectrum of decision-making transferred to international structures and transnational processes. Related to this "withering away" of the states' spectrum of responsibilities is the emergence of non-state actors who increasingly shape our patterns of interaction, objectives for joint action and their implementation.

Governments still have to carry the burden of political public responsibility. But if we look at our Global Agenda we will notice, that other institutions have assumed an increasingly significant role in the definition of our global affairs. The emergence of new actors and partners has been the profound change in global policy processes.

While ever since the Congress of Vienna multilateral diplomacy used to play the key role in global affairs, we do have today processes which are somehow rather comparable with politics at the national level - starting with "issue identification", then "issue articulation" leading to decision-making.

And the different partners in Global Governance assume different roles in these processes of global politics. It is interesting to note that today many issues are identified by civil society and by academic institutions. Once a problem has been raised with a broad commitment to its significance, our global elders, congregated in Global Commissions or Panels and supported by academia, are called to articulate the issues we face and the policy options available. The Global Reports presented to the international community then form the basis for international decision-making on specific issues.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

Civil society today plays a very important role as bearer of values and of certain visions of which issues are to be addressed by the international community. Civil society institutions also provide us with assessment and judgements on specific problems and issues. Academia in turn has become the indispensable provider of knowledge and understanding of our increasingly complex and inter-related agenda. The private sector has understood the fundamental infrastructural significance of international issues and is today a partner in the pursuit of global issues. Parliamentarians are the fundamental bridge between the Global Agenda and national politics and its priorities.

The question is: How can we realize a coordinated and complementary process of Global Governance with so many different actors, interests, visions and capacities? Global Governance cannot be achieved with command and obedience.

Institutionally, some creative modes of interaction and consultations have evolved. One example is the United Nations Security Council inviting non-governmental organisations for informal consultations on issues on which they can provide especially qualified information and opinions to the Security Council such as on the role of women in armed conflicts.

Yet the challenge is in the political implementation processes at the various levels and with regard to the different sectors of governance - peace and security, economic and social development, environmental sustainability, climate change etc.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Modern industrial management has provided us with a useful model for addressing the inherently fragmented spectrum of profoundly different responsibilities, capacities and institutional settings. I am referring to the concept of "management by objectives" which evolved for company structures where a large number of different actors share the same objectives and contribute to their achievement with different normative frameworks and operational responsibilities. The fundamental element of "management by objectives" are the shared objectives. And this fits very well with the limited operational capacities of our international system.

An important soft power element of the United Nations are the common values, principles and objectives of international peace and security, human rights, equity in economic and social development and with regard to the need for a sustainable development and use of our natural and environmental resources endowment. Just let us remember the resolution of the General Assembly containing the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Today the tools available to the international community are very much in line with the concept of management by objectives, using the convening of international conferences and summit meetings to approve the articulation of global objectives.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

An Austrian idea to empower the United Nations Secretary General to coordinate the multiple reports prepared by the various organisational entities of the United Nations System with different time frames, substantive and geographic coverage and to integrate their data and analysis into a "State of the World Report" of the Secretary General has regrettably not yet been adopted. Such a report would provide the international community with a coherent framework for the decentralized implementation of our global action by the different interstate, national governmental and non-state partners in global affairs.

At the same time the central object of our global policies has undergone a profound reorientation, from state-focussed policies to citizen-focussed approaches to global affairs. The human being has in fact become the core object of our agenda. This new focus is reflected in the central role that human rights, human development and human security have assumed in our agenda.

This new focus of our Global Agenda is also to be understood as reflecting another dimension of our challenges. The citizen has become an important defining element for economic and social development, environmental sustainability and for peace and security. The citizen is not only primary victim but also actor and perpetrator in the defining of our societal quality.

In fact, most societies are living today a process of societal disintegration. Growing inequality is accompanied by processes of societal exclusion and humiliation leading to civil wars, intra-societal violence, organized crime and economic insecurity.

Concrete experience in the different regions of the world, in particular also in post-conflict areas, has put attention to the needed processes of "dignity building" through learning and understanding of one's own and the other's human dignity as assured by our system of human rights.

Human rights cities are something relatively simple communities where the municipality in partnership with civil society, the private sector and academia, agree to assure that through processes of education, learning and socialisation, everyone in the community should understand and live his or her dignity as granted by human rights.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In the beginning of my talk I was referring to the increasing role of non-state actors in global governance. Today, it seems to be widely accepted that in the financial area the influence of private actors has gone much too far. The shift of regulatory competences from state authorities to private networks with their self-defined sets of rules and forms of self- regulation is one of the major causes of the financial crisis. Private institutions have become important economic policy authorities.

And unregulated financial markets have weakened the power of parliaments. They drastically jeopardize the primacy of politics. Governance by private sources of authority has undermined traditional nation-state based mechanisms of democratic accountability.

Reinstating the primacy of politics is one of the major challenges – we cannot afford to waste this opportunity. By the end of 2008 the G-20 started with an ambitious initiative to re-regulate financial markets. Thousands of pages of legislative texts were drafted. But it seems that the rules of the game have remained largely unchanged. Powerful private interests have blocked major reform. Parts of the civil society are responding with anger and with a sense of helplessness. In parallel, as a consequence of the crisis, we are observing a break of the social bond and a process of declining solidarity.

Let me finally say a few words on Europe. Since its very beginning, the European Union has experienced episodes of setbacks and of major progress where the European project was driven forward. To give an example, the break-up of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in the early 90s of the last century was a major impetus for the creation of a single currency.

In recent months we have seen last minute compromises on the minimum necessary to tame markets – at least temporarily. But I do believe that, finally, the European ideal has so much power that the crisis in Europe will set in motion a fundamental overhaul of the European governance arrangements. It is my hope that more Europe and not less will be the response.