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Introduction

This is the last session of the Fourth World Policy Conference, which I think has been by far the most intellectually and intensely challenging that we have ever had. From the beginning to the end, it has been remarkable. For two and a half days, we have felt the cure of optimism. We arrived in a world that seemed to be in tatters and suddenly, perhaps because the subjects were partly chosen for their content of optimism, we feel that the world is lighter and the air purer and, to a large extent, this last session is mainly contradictory to what we have heard. We have been told that the West's days are over and we have four very distinguished European speakers. In fact, looking at three of them, I feel 10 years younger, waiting for Madeleine Albright and Robin Cook to appear on the horizon and resume their conversations.

In addition, I think that when you look at the content of our discussions, perhaps with the slight exception of the last session, we feel rejuvenated. Thanks to Jean-David Levitte, we now feel that there is a Europe Plus on the horizon and thanks to Maarti Ahtisaari, the former President of Finland, we have a model for the reinvention of the West along the lines of the Nordic lights and we know that Africa is going to be the continent of the future. What we have also learned in this fourth edition of the World Policy Conference is that there are new key actors in the world of governance. You have the markets on the one hand, and the markets made possible the exit of Mr Berlusconi, the consolidation of Greece and the re-strengthening of the European Union. We also have the people, and we will hear from Igor Ivanov whether the Arab Spring is reaching the streets of Moscow or whether, on the contrary, the Russian winter will be tougher.

We decided among ourselves what we were going to discuss. Hubert Védrine, whom I should not need to introduce here and was for a long time the Foreign Minister of France, will introduce our debate with some remarks on the evolution of the international system and what it means for Europe. Joschka Fischer will take a German view of the same subject and answer the remark made by Radek Sikorski, the Foreign Minister of Poland, in Berlin a few days ago when he said that Germany was now the indispensable nation of Europe. Madeleine Albright should have been here to answer him on the concept of indispensable nation. Joschka will have to say whether Germany is the indispensable nation of what Kishore Mahbubani would consider a dispensable continent. We will then have Robert Badinter, who will contribute to a topic that he himself has been a historical figure in. The former Justice Minister of France and the man who played a decisive role in the abolition of the death penalty, Robert Badinter has also been a key figure in the birth of international justice. We will end with his remarks on sovereignty and ethics and the immense progress, yet limits of international justice in the world.

I will give the floor immediately to Hubert.