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Thank you. We will continue our tour around the globe and arrive in India with Toby Simon, who is the founder and chairman of the Synergia Foundation.

Toby Simon, Founder and Chairman, Synergia Foundation, India

Thank you. I would just like to share with you my thoughts. The discussions that we have had over the last three days rightfully focused on the issues of key global governance in North Asia, North East Asia, Eurasia, Europe and the Americas. I would now like to expand the and speak about a smaller part of the world, which is home to circa 1.8 billion people and constitutes 40% of the Asian population. It is a region that comprises Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives.

Why is this important? In a globalised and wired world, strategic issues that affect about 2 billion people from very diverse backgrounds, both cultural and religious, and home to two of the largest religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, would naturally affect the region and the globe. In addition, we have had a very strong Islamic footprint for more than 1,000 years. Going forward, there is an equally important factor. The centre of gravity of the internet and cyberspace is moving to Asia. In the next 10 or 15 years, there will be a larger number of internet users in India and China than in the rest of the world put together.

I would like to focus on two issues which I believe are core to global governance these days. The first is human security, which means protecting the fundamental life and value of the individual. If we are to look at the ten threats that John Manley alluded to yesterday from a report of the World Economic Forum for 2015, it is very interesting. I will state them once more. They are : deepening income inequality, jobless growth, lack of leadership, rising geostrategy competition, weakening of democracy, pollution, severe weather events, increasing nationalism, water wars, and health. More than 70% of the threats have to do with the security of the individual. It is no longer about territorial issues, but more about the individual. All the above challenges are threats that South Asia has been facing for the last two decades and more from the start of the twenty first century.

Let us also look at the interconnectedness of these issues. I will take logging, which is a basic industry in this part of the world, as an example – especially logging along the Burma Road. What has happened? There has basically been a loss of forest cover, which affects watersheds and causes flooding later on. Drugs are smuggled in the logs. There is HIV and AIDS, as truck drivers visit prostitutes while travelling. We find malaria and other communicable diseases, which are spread during logging and deforestation. There is also industrial pollution and organised crime associated with mining along the road, and that further raises military concerns. Logging roads provide connectivity, which is a problem in most border areas.

It appears to be one event but when we look at holistically, we can see that it has a larger geopolitical impact. Let us take another example – counterfeited pharmaceutical drugs. Today, counterfeited drugs are one of the biggest threats to national security for a number of countries.

The second point that I would like to focus on is the need to build trust in politics, which we heard from the President of South Korea, Madam Park Geun hye during he key note address. This is most needed in South Asia. If we look at the inter trade relationship in Asia, we see that it is about 56 60%. However, in South Asia, the trade figures are less than 5%. The reason for this is the issue that we heard yesterday - the conflict of interest between trade and politics.



Let us look at the larger geo political issues that can have global impact, the first being Afghanistan. Stabilising Afghanistan should be in the immediate interests of everyone because the country has been the epicenter of number of conflicts from the time of Alexander's invasion in 321 BC. The second is the Persian Gulf and the Middle East region. Regional stability here is quintessential and the success of moderate regimes are important to ensure that there are no avenues that can lead to potential 'clash of civilizations', a possibility that has been outlined by a number of speakers during the conference. We can see the consequence of events in Syria, unfolding in Bombay. Just the day before yesterday, we had five young engineers in Mumbai, who, without telling their parents, went off to Syria. They were all bright young people who regularly played sport and had local friends. They may never have met religious extremists in India, but they just left. Something they witnessed on the internet disturbed them and they flew off to Iraq and entered Syria.

Moving on, in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, there have been several incidents and it will do well for us to get a better handle on why there is an increasing tendency for the youth to develop such deviant behaviors. If we continue to just patch one leak, we will open up another.

In the case of Sino Indo relationship, the talks are about border issues, but there is a bigger concern, which is the damming of the Brahmaputra River, the source of fresh water for both India and Bangladesh. Over the last eight years or so, the Chinese have been damming rivers at a very high level, which can cause flooding, and this could affect the entire Asian region.

From a climate change perspective, it is estimated that by 2050, eight of Asia's most densely populated areas, including Mumbai, Colombo, the Maldives, parts of Bangladesh and Karachi, would be submerged. This will primarily be due to global warming and rising waters. What about healthcare? Due to global warming, we have a larger concern here. Most of the diseases that were proprietary to the Southern Hemisphere are moving into the Northern Hemisphere. A befitting example would be tuberculosis (TB) and malaria. There are strange, multi resistant strains moving into these countries, which are difficult to cure.

Let me conclude by saying that challenges that seem to be very endemic to a region can have a significant geopolitical impact and wish to reiterate that we should pay adequate attention.