

**Jeffrey Sachs**

**Reith Lectures 2007: Bursting at the Seams**

**Lecture 5: Global Politics in a Complex Age**

Recorded at The Assembly Hall, Edinburgh.

SUE LAWLEY: Hello and welcome to the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh, the erstwhile home of the Scottish Parliament, for the last in this year's series of Reith Lectures. We've chosen Edinburgh as a finishing place because this was the city where the economist Adam Smith, one of the leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, set out his ideas on how to create free markets for the benefit of us all. Our lecturer, Jeffrey Sachs, takes some of his inspiration from Smith's ideas, and tonight this connection comes into full view as he explains how the countries of the world must find a new political framework in order to manage the business of international co-operation.

So far in these lectures he's explained how we should re-balance our world as the economies of the East rise to match those of the West, and how we must eradicate poverty and improve the environment, measures which are essential, he argues, for our survival. Tonight he turns his attention to the processes required for achieving all of this. He's calling for a new politics for a new age. Ladies and gentlemen will you please welcome the BBC's Reith lecturer 2007, Jeffrey Sachs.

JEFFREY SACHS: The arc of the Reith Lectures began in the Royal Society in London, under the gaze of Isaac Newton, and in the presence of some of today's leading scientists. More than any other force, science has created the modern world. And today, science-based technologies link the world together and fuel the economic ascendancy of the ancient civilization of China, the site of our second lecture. But globalization brings the risk of new conflicts as well, and the hope still unfulfilled of a world at peace, the aim of the United Nations, in my own home city of New York, where I gave the third lecture. Only solutions to the great gaps of rich and poor will save us from war. London, the capital city of the first Industrial Revolution and where conscience stirred 200 hundred years ago to abolish the slave trade, was the site of last week's lecture.

It is therefore fitting, indeed some might say the work of an invisible hand, that we conclude the Reith Lectures here in Edinburgh. For here in Scotland, in the 18th century, globalization was first perceived for all its transformative potential, and also for its potential dangers. Here lived the most brilliant exponents of the radical idea that an interlinked world could produce unprecedented material wellbeing and rights for all. Edinburgh and Glasgow were still in the early stages of their new vocation as great centres of global commerce, offering an early window on the emerging global economy and global society. And none gazed so wisely and so humanely on the world as David Hume and Adam Smith.

Here is one of Adam Smith's astounding insights on globalization:

"The discovery of America, and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of

mankind... By uniting, in some measure, the most distant parts of the world, by enabling them to relieve one another's wants, to increase one another's enjoyments, and to encourage one another's industry, their general tendency would seem to be beneficial."

Yet, Smith noted, while Europe thrived, the native inhabitants of the East and West Indies suffered under the burdens of European conquest and impunity. Smith looked forward to a day when an "equality of courage and force" would lead all nations into a "respect for the rights of one another." He judged that:  
"nothing seems more likely to establish this equality of force than that mutual communication of knowledge and . . . an extensive commerce from all countries to all countries . . ."

Globalization, in short, would empower the weak and protect their rights. Smith's genius and decency inspire us two-hundred and thirty-one years later. Rather than glorying in the benefits of globalization for Britain - a kind of self-help book for early empire -- Smith took a global view, and looked forward to the day when free trade and the spread of ideas would eventually produce an equality of courage and force around the world, so that the benefits of globalization would be shared by all.

Our challenges today are the same as in Smith's day, though even greater in range, scale, and intensity. The world is bursting at the seams, in population, environmental stress, cultural clashes and the gaps between rich and poor. How can globalization be made to work for all? What kinds of politics are needed for an interconnected world? Since our politics have veered off course, what can bring us back to safety for all?

In a much more interconnected world than Smith's, we will need much more than an equality of force to see us through. We need active cooperation on three fronts: to curb our destructive effects on the environment; to prevent war; and to address the needs of the poor, and especially the poorest of the poor. What politics can accomplish all of this?

The markets alone won't suffice. Nor will the fear of a balance of power. We need active cooperation, but in a world that lacks a single political center of gravity, and with the pervasive limitations of international institutions. Our current correlation of political forces and institutions is not delivering. Until recently, much of the world may have looked to the U.S. for such leadership, but those days are past. The U.S. and E.U. together are a mere 11 percent of the world's population, and will diminish significantly in relative economic weight in the coming decades.

Some in the world long today for a global government, but this too is no answer. With a single global government -- even if it were somehow achieved -- there would be no safety valve from global despotism. We want global cooperation but not through the straightjacket of a single sovereign power.

John Kennedy, you will recall from an earlier lecture, called peace a process, a way of solving problems. I want to consider global cooperation in the same way. Global cooperation is not an event, a strategy, or a set of treaties. It must be a process, a way of life.

There is no full blueprint for cooperation in the 21st century, nor can there be. But here is how I propose that we start. In the past fifteen years, the world's governments agreed on a set of goals. They agreed to protect the environment, to fight the spread of nuclear weapons, and to fight poverty. Six specific agreements stand out as crucially important. Three were signed at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio - to fight climate change, to fight the loss of biodiversity, and to combat desertification. Two nuclear agreements came a few years later - to extend the ban on proliferation, and to ban nuclear tests. Last came the Millennium Development Goals in September 2000, to slash extreme poverty, disease, and hunger by the year 2015.

Taken together, I call these six commitments our Millennium Promises. They were undertaken in the shadow of the new Millennium, when the world yearned for meaningful commitments by our leaders.

My proposal is simple. We should pursue global cooperation by fulfilling our Millennium Promises. These promises must be our compass. They enable us to steer in an age of complexity. Our most basic task is to hold our governments, each other, and of course ourselves, accountable to our mutual commitments.

Yet most people haven't a clue as to what we've promised. This is no accident. Many of our leaders also do not care to remind us. Our governments do not know how to deliver on these promises, and so they mainly shirk them. George Bush, for example, in six years of office, has run away from the challenge of climate change. He has never told the American people that the U.S., like 190 other countries, is already committed by international treaty law to stabilize greenhouse gases in order to "prevent dangerous anthropogenic [that is, manmade] interference with the climate system," under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. That treaty was signed, ironically, by the President's own father in 1992. The U.S. public doesn't realize that such commitments are already U.S. law.

Or consider the financing needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals. In 2005, the G8 promised to double aid to Africa by 2010, in support of the goals. Yet the newly released data on aid to Africa show that aid is stagnant, not rising, after correcting for flawed accounting of debt relief. Worse still, the G8 has resolutely been unwilling to set a specific year-to-year timetable for the doubling of aid, so that recipient countries cannot plan ahead on how that aid can be used. One senior official even suggested to me that to do so would be wrong, because it might make the recipients too habituated to the aid. In other words, it's okay to announce the doubling of aid, and then to leave it as a riddle, lest it be taken too seriously by the intended recipients.

Or consider the commitment in the nuclear nonproliferation treaty for all nuclear powers to work toward complete disarmament. The nuclear powers honour the parts of the treaty limiting the spread of weapons to others, but reject the parts of the treaty that apply to themselves.

Or consider, finally, the commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity, "to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss . . . as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth." This crucial goal, undertaken in the shadow of a massive extinction of species caused by human destruction of habitats, is probably the least known of all our Millennium

Promises. But isn't my argument empty then - to propose that we solve the problems of global cooperation by taking seriously the very commitments that we have so far ignored? I think not. The key for us, the world's citizens, is to hold our governments accountable to the Millennium Promises, to understand why governments are paralyzed, and to clear the logjams in our path.

Our governments ignore the goals mainly because the political leaders don't understand how to achieve them. They hide out of fear, ignorance, short-sightedness, and the sway of vested interests. Meeting the goals requires the expertise of science and the mobilization of technology, yet our leaders are cut off from the requisite expert knowledge. The second step, therefore, is to bring global scientific expertise to the service of global problem solving.

This very approach is already proving itself in the case of climate change. Despite powerful vested interests that have tried to obscure the global scientific consensus on climate change, a rigorous process of scientific review known as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, has proven to the world that there is a strong scientific consensus that manmade climate change is serious, real, and accelerating. The IPCC is in the midst of unveiling its fourth major report, and the power of the scientific consensus is forcing the world's businesses and politicians to take note.

A similar commission was run, though on a one-time basis, in the case of biological diversity, in a project known as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. It documented both the human-made destruction of biodiversity, and ways to address the crisis. And in the case of the Millennium Development Goals, I myself was honoured to direct the UN Millennium Project on behalf of former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. The U.N. Millennium Project brought together more than 250 experts in development - in food production, malaria control, AIDS control, water and sanitation, education, and more - to show how the Millennium Development Goals can be accomplished. These recommendations were adopted at the 2005 U.N. World Summit.

Scientific processes like the IPCC, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the U.N. Millennium Project, and a similar effort for nuclear non-proliferation, should become a basic feature of global good governance. Scientific panels on each major promise should report regularly to the world on risks, progress, and possible solutions. Politicians should be briefed by these expert communities each year when the politicians gather at the United Nations. Our governments should be reorganized so that they can absorb this expert knowledge, rather than operating on hunch and political calculation. And the world's public should use the results of the expert processes to hold our politicians accountable, and to push away the logjams caused by vested interests.

Once the problems are recognized, and the deep science is understood, it is far easier to come up with solutions, which typically require the application of new technologies at a scale to address the challenge. Those technologies exist, or can be developed. Public policies will be needed to get them into place.

Fortunately, governments will not need to do all of the heavy lifting. Individual

champions of solutions can make great headway in demonstrating what needs to be done. New technologies for specific problems can be proved at a small scale and then taken to global scale. Social entrepreneurs from every sector can step forward with proposed solutions. The main role of government is stand prepared, with checkbook at hand and policy brief ready, to take working solutions to the needed scale.

Consider the case of public health. Countless advances in public health in recent years have combined global goals, social entrepreneurship, and public finance. The control of polio, down by a factor of more than 100 in the past 20 years, has been championed by Rotary International, in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The control of African River Blindness has been led by a partnership of Merck pharmaceutical company in conjunction with the World Health Organization and the World Bank. President Jimmy Carter and the Carter Center have championed an alliance to eliminate Guinea Worm disease. And the list goes on.

Once a technology is proved - a new drug, an improved seed variety, a long-lasting bed net -- the challenge is scaling up. Markets will rarely suffice. In the case of extreme poverty and disease, the poor are too poor to pay for these solutions. In the case of the environment, green technologies often add to production costs, but in amounts much lower than the environmental benefits to society. Such costly technologies will be adopted on a large scale only if special public incentives are offered, such as a tax on greenhouse gas emissions, or a subsidy for clean energy, or a tradable permit to limit emissions.

I have described, in short, a practical process of global cooperation. Overarching goals are made - to curb climate change, save species, fight poverty, and more. Scientists then provide regular and systematic reviews, informing political leaders and winning the confidence of the global public, both through the international composition of the scientific bodies and the rigor of their work. Social entrepreneurs are encouraged to promote prototypes and working models - through a promise of glory, or prizes, or patents, or the joy of public service. Governments are required, under the weight of global treaties and public pressure, to scale up working models to meet the global goals. This might mean development aid, or permit systems, or direct regulations, or spending on research and development, or in the case of arms control, new methods of verification.

In recent years, the public has solved some mammoth problems in a decentralized manner - for example, producing an on-line encyclopedia that is updated in real time, and an open-source and non-proprietary computer operating system that is now used worldwide. I am arguing for open-source global cooperation as well, meaning a system in which all sectors are invited to offer solutions, under the guidance of an agreed set of targets. Starting with shared goals, backed up by regular and rigorous feedback from expert reviews, we can engender a worldwide outpouring of ideas, actions, and commitments from all parts of society - business, non-governmental organizations, and international agencies. Governments can stand ready to bring solutions to scale, through public finance and other kinds of incentives.

I am constantly asked whether corruption will defeat any such attempts to help the poor. I often convey my own experience, of the relative ease of getting bed nets and anti-malaria medicines and fertilizers and high-yield seeds to the poor, with a

minimum diversion of resources. My own experiences inform my optimism, and give specific ideas about how to get the job done. But in the global approach that I am proposing, there is a better answer. If you don't like my solution, try to prove yours. Let us encourage any group to show a working model, against the backdrop of a global political commitment to take successes to scale. The International Red Cross, for example, has invented a new system for the mass distribution of bed nets in impoverished countries. Their system works. Now the budgets of the major donor countries, with a sense of urgency, should support the International Red Cross in scaling up its proven methods.

FDR said that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. John Kennedy said that to believe that war is inevitable is a dangerous, defeatist view. I say that cynicism is our worst enemy today. We must build on our successes, not feed our doubts. We have declared our goals and commitments, our Millennium Promises, but we lack the confidence to implement them. We have been flying blind, but expertise - and proven experience - can restore our sight.

The costs of addressing climate change, I have noted, will likely be less than 1 percent of our annual world income, and perhaps much below that. The costs of ending extreme poverty, too, are below one percent of rich world income. Biodiversity conservation, the studies have shown, is far below the first two costs, a slight fraction of a percent of income, if that. And disarmament, when based on global trust and treaties, will save money, lots of it, that is now directed to the useless and dangerous stockpiling of weapons, nuclear and other. We easily waste more in mistrust and military outlays than the costs of achieving our Millennium Promises.

There are countless ways for you to get involved in solving the great challenges of our time - the end of poverty, the protection of the environment, or the control and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Some of you will contribute funds to buy bed nets and medicines for the poor. Many students will volunteer their time in an impoverished country, learning lessons for a lifetime about our mutual interconnectedness. Each citizen should press his or her government to fulfill its obligations, and our Millennium Promises. Businesses can share their path-breaking technologies with the poor. Professional organizations - of lawyers, doctors, architects, scientists, athletes, artists, musicians - can reach across political lines to deepen friendships and understanding with people in Iran, or Palestine, or other places of high tension today.

The internet and videoconferencing can make all of this connection and problem solving vastly easier. Classrooms can be global, connecting children in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the U.S. in common learning. Our parliaments can and should be linked by videoconferencing, so that we can have global parliamentary sessions and even global votes. Perhaps a synchronized vote by dozens of parliaments in early 2003 would have helped to keep the U.S. and U.K. out of the terrible blunder of the Iraq War.

Great cities, such as this one, must also play a role. Global society is ever-more organized around a network of regions rather than nations -- centers of learning, science, trade, and tourism which connect disparate populations. Great creativity, architectural energy, and economic dynamism are associated with cities and their

environs. And therefore the people of Edinburgh, New York City, Barcelona, Dubai, or Beijing, can take on special challenges of making connections and seeking solutions with the people of Nairobi, La Paz, and Timbuktu.

What I can tell you, with certainty, is that there is a role for everybody and every community, and a need for everybody to become engaged. You must be the peacemakers, development specialists, ecologists, all. Do not lose heart. Remember, as John Kennedy told us, "our problems are manmade - therefore they can be solved by man." And remember what his brother Robert Kennedy reminded us:

It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against an injustice, he sends forward a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

I hope and believe that from Edinburgh, this great home of the Enlightenment, the energy for a globalization of justice, peace, and prosperity will radiate to all, and in Adam Smith's humane vision we truly will learn to "relieve one another's wants" in all parts of our world.

(APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY: Jeffrey Sachs, thank you very much indeed. Let me invite our audience now, here in the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh, to examine and question those propositions. So let's begin then with John Curtice, who's Professor of Politics at Strathclyde University. Professor Curtice your question please?

PROF. JOHN CURTICE: You've emphasised more than once in your lecture the importance of publics holding governments to account in the delivery of the various goals such as climate change that you talked about, but can I suggest to you that perhaps that rather than necessarily being the solution, the public might actually be the problem. What guarantee do we have that publics will necessarily sign up to these various objectives, perhaps particularly the publics of countries such as India and China, who might say to themselves, well actually what's most important to me at the moment is not necessarily reducing the problem of the climate, which the United States and Europe is responsible for, but actually finally achieving the material wealth that we've for so long been denied?

SUE LAWLEY: How do you overcome self-interest, Jeffrey, in the interests of the common good?

JEFFREY SACHS: Interestingly, I come from a country where the business community is way ahead of the politicians, and the public also is now clamouring for action. Now in the case of India and China, they have every reason to take this issue seriously. I would argue that the environment is actually right in the front here, it is probably the most decisive issue that both of those mega-populations will face in the challenge of achieving the economic development that they seek. In India the absence of water has become a top issue, with the suicides of farmers in the drought-stricken areas, and this is as painful and dramatic and headline an issue as one has. So I

believe that what has paralysed this process is not an intrinsic lack of interest or a sense that self-interest should keep one away, but if there is that sense of self-interest I'm arguing that it's basically because of ignorance of the underlying facts.

SUE LAWLEY: Does that explanation work for you Professor Curtis?

PROF. JOHN CURTIS: I think it does help but it is worth bearing in mind, I mean you are currently in a city which not recently its public rejected the idea of charging motorists to come into the city in order to reduce congestion, so even in a relatively well-educated city, the short-term interest overcame what I suspect you might regard as the general interest of reducing the level of traffic. I mean the public doesn't always force politicians to go down the track that you're suggesting.

JEFFREY SACHS: That's why we felt it was especially urgent to have the last lecture here.

(LAUGHTER)

SUE LAWLEY: But the general point is there, isn't it? I mean how can you expect these vastly different countries in the world that have such deep and strange differences to co-operate in any kind of period of time that's worth talking about?

JEFFREY SACHS: My essential proposition through these lectures has been that in these three crucial areas, of environment, war and peace, and extreme poverty, we are facing life and death issues. We are not facing normal politics. We are, as I called it, facing a world bursting at the seams. And I think that we recognise that much in having a whole world adopt these goals. Then we, in our lazy manner, or in our fearful manner, or in our ignorant manner, or in our cynical manner, somehow slide away from them, and the proposition that I'm making is, let's take seriously what we have said, because we said those things for deadly serious reasons.

SUE LAWLEY: I see Professor Sir Bernard Crick, the political theorist, putting his hand up here.

PROF. SIR BERNARD CRICK: It seems to me that this is sort of H.G. Wells re-born - that scientific wisdom can replace politics. These are surely political problems, and you seem to have you know skipped entirely from the logic of politics into, if you don't mind my saying, standing with both feet firmly planted at mid-air of the wisdom of scientists.

JEFFREY SACHS: I think when you review the words carefully, I certainly did not say that scientific wisdom could or should replace politics. What I said is that science should inform politics. We do need science. The idea that we can somehow intuitively find our way through these challenges I find to be completely off the mark. With six and a half billion people in the world, with the ecological pressures that we face, with the challenges of extreme poverty, we'd better invoke expertise, because I see what happens when only hunch is used, and the results are miserable. We need to get science systematically into policy thinking and policy knowledge, and that's why I'm trying to think of processes and institutions that can help the public to understand. After all we did not say that the IPCC, this inter-governmental panel on climate

change, should decide our climate policy. Indeed they're not even allowed to make policy recommendations. They are to inform the public. So I'm looking for science that informs politics, not science that replaces politics.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to take a couple more points on this area and then I'm going to move it on. Sir?

JOHN HALDANE: John Haldane, Professor of Philosophy, University of St Andrews. This is a very ambitious range of goals, that it's hard to see how these could be realised by anything other than global agencies, but this at a time when there is declining participation in the political process, particularly in Western countries. And my concern here would be that in the absence of largescale political participation on behalf of these kinds of goals, the danger is at the end of the day that there's a kind of utopianism that may turn itself into either a mass bureaucracy or a certain kind of global tyranny.

JEFFREY SACHS: Well I explicitly argued against that approach. What one needs in almost everything that I talked about, whether it's environmental action or help for the poorest of the poor, local solutions, often that require international finance, but not large bureaucracies. We need indeed to find mechanisms along Smith's market lines, but understand that we can't just do this in an undefined system without goals. It is precisely to mix global goals and local solutions.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to take a point there.

KHADIJA BAH: My name is Khadija Bah, and I was the ... advisor to the Millennium Project. I just want to again raise the issue of the self-interest and politics of the donor. In 2005 we worked very hard, and there were African countries who were ready, and yet despite all the promises it's still business as usual. I just want you to comment - what has happened since the two years we worked so hard?

SUE LAWLEY: Jeff, briefly if you would because as you know only too well, and as our listeners will know, we covered this subject very thoroughly in our last lecture.

JEFFREY SACHS: Briefly, promises of importance were made and have not yet been delivered. But we can't give up, and we should understand politics is hard, this is a fight, and two years is two years too long for millions of people who died in the interim because the help did not get started. But on the other hand we still have all to work for, we still have time to achieve these goals.

SUE LAWLEY: Let me bring in Pat Kane, who's a musician and a writer. Mr Kane, your thought.

PAT KANE: Hi. Jeffrey, you've talked about open source global co-operation and you gave two examples of those kinds of information networks - Wikipedia and open source but also things like email, blogging etc, which are crucial to this new mass decentralised political awareness that you invoke, that you think is so necessary, I mean how we will form this global citizenship is through these means. But are you aware of how vulnerable these networks are to vested interests, whether they're government interests, commercial or corporate, who would seek to reduce that

openness? I mean I think the most obvious example are the restrictions that Western search engines agree to in places like China. Do you have any ideas about how to defend not just the open structures but the open values of the net?

JEFFREY SACHS: Well that's a great question. I think we are in a period, fortunately, where the technologies are running ahead of the would-be controllers, and while China and others block internet sites, new ones pop up a lot faster than they can be blocked. What my colleagues in science, and one of the colleagues that I revere in science, down the block from me, Nobel Laureate Harold Varmus, has done, is champion public access for all scientific information, in what's called public library of science. And he is taking that on, and has turned the publishing world upside down in a way by massively increasing the free availability of this vital knowledge for the world. You're right that we have to watch out in these values. We have to protect that, we have to defend it, but fortunately the technology is giving us a huge push forward, and I think we can keep ahead on this one.

SUE LAWLEY: Any points on that before I move on? No? Okay, I'm going to call in here Trevor Royle, a writer and historian and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Scotland.

TREVOR ROYLE: I was very impressed by what you said about global hegemony. You described it almost as an interlinked world. It's an ideal I think which we'd all probably want to aspire to. But isn't it true, when push comes to shove, that two other factors come into account? The first of these is national interests, and the second of these is geography. I attended the G8 at Gleneagles and it seemed to me that the politicians there were very very long on promises and very short on action. Isn't that always going to be the case? I'm thinking in terms of Darfur, Zimbabwe and other problems in Africa.

SUE LAWLEY: It's been a theme of these lectures really hasn't it, this scepticism about big promises never being translated into action, Jeff, and as you said yourself in the lecture just now, you know the OECD countries are just not putting their money where their mouth was in 2005.

JEFFREY SACHS: Of course, my whole theme was that we have to badger our governments to get them to follow through on their words. Now let me also add quickly that I believe that some of these situations are not simply as transparent as they look, and that's where I would invoke again expertise as being vital, and I'll take Darfur just as an example. What is in essence happening in Darfur, in my opinion, is that seven million Darfurians do not have enough water, and enough food, to survive. That problem needs to be addressed first and foremost, in my opinion, as recognising that those people are among the very most desperate in the world. They are hungry, they are desperate, and what they don't need, in my view, is simply sanctions and peacekeepers. That will never solve these problems. What they do need is a development approach. One of the odd things about this world I've found in my twenty-five years of work on economic development, is that the war and peace community, so called, and the development community, almost never speak. There are no links between them. If there's a conflict, call in the generals, never call in the hydrologist. Of course we need to hold our governments accountable - that's my theme. Let's focus on our core goals and demand and demand and demand follow

through, but realise they don't know what they're doing. So we have to help our governments at the same time as badger them, to get the job done.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to come to a question here on the front row. Sir?

MR BRAMS HOFMANS: My name's Bram Hofmans, a final year politics student at the University of Edinburgh. Professor Sachs, basically you describe what you believe to be a blueprint for world action on all these global challenges that you described at the beginning of the talk, and in response to a previous question you mentioned that by 2015 these global challenges could be tackled by the global community. Do you still think that a timescale of 2015 is realistic? Thank you.

JEFFREY SACHS: Thanks a lot. Let me give an example. We're working in a project that I have undertaken with a number of colleagues in villages across Africa, that are hungry, and where people are dying of undernourishment and infectious disease. It takes just one growing season, just one growing season, to triple the food supply. Why? Because the reason that people are hungry is that they're too poor to get the kind of seed and fertiliser that could actually give them enough to eat and to earn an income, and to get them started on a path of development. It's not ten years of work, it's three months of work. It takes just a day, incidentally, to cover a district with bed nets. I'm not talking about ten years, twenty years, thirty years of utopian processes, I'm talking about very practical things right now.

SUE LAWLEY: But Jeff when you go to meetings, as you do regularly, in the UN, with the G8, in governments around the world, are you encouraged by what you hear? Do you have any kind of sense that the kinds of processes that you've been advocating here this evening could be brought about, that you might even begin to be pushing at an open door, or do you sense that you've just got to keep shouting from the rooftops in the way that you do if anything is going to be achieved in the timescale that it needs to be achieved?

JEFFREY SACHS: There is no guarantee we will honour our promises, that's for sure. This world has every capacity to go way off the rails. We have every capacity to create incredible damage in the world. I am not predicting success, I am not predicting failure. Rather than trying to make a forecast, I'm encouraging us to get on with the job of getting it done, because in the end this is not about a prediction, and it is not a spectator sport, it's about our choice, how we view our lives, how we view our responsibilities, how we view the fate of the planet.

SUE LAWLEY: Jeffrey, your lectures have been an inspiring call to arms if I may say so, one which has been listened to intently as we've travelled with you around the world. Inevitably people will go on having questions and criticisms about the ideas that you've put forward, but nobody doubts that the world in which we live is on the brink of fundamental change, and you've certainly provided us with a thought provoking and highly original framework for the important debate about the future for all of us on this planet. And so I'd like to say very much, Jeffrey Sachs, BBC Reith lecturer 2007, thank you very much indeed. (APPLAUSE)