

Views on the Current Global Geopolitical Situation

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**Speech by
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Dear Ambassadors, dear Members of the GCSP Foundation Council, dear Director, dear friends,

It is wonderful to be back in Geneva, in this beautiful building, and to meet all of you in person! I am back in Geneva with one strong conviction: more than ever, we need the GCSP. Let me explain why.

In just a few years, the world has changed profoundly. We are experiencing an unprecedented deconstruction of the world order, with three major developments combining to drive this change:

- First, the return of war on European soil, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And of course the GCSP must fully take this new situation into account in its activities, be it in terms of dialogue, training or advice.
- Second, the return of the Cold War on a global level. But an inverted Cold War: during the first the United States opposed the USSR, which had an underdeveloped China by its side, reeling from the upheavals of the end of Mao's reign. Today, the new Cold War features the United States opposed to a powerful and ambitious China, with a weakened Russia by its side.
- Finally, the return of a version of the Non-Aligned Movement, which is today called the “Global South” and which practices “multi-alignment” rather than “non-alignment”: countries like India, Brazil, South Africa or even Saudi Arabia do not want to have to choose between Washington, Brussels, Moscow or Beijing. They want to develop the most interesting partnerships with each of them.

These three major changes mark the end of five centuries of Western domination of the world. It started in 1492 with the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus and Magellan's circumnavigation, it was marked by the construction of huge colonial empires, two world wars and the creation of international organizations all based in Western cities: New York, Washington, Geneva, Vienna and Rome. Their charters reflect the Western vision of international law based on the equality of sovereign states.

The peak of the Western influence lasted for ten years from 1991 to 2001. 1991 was the end of the USSR, driven by Boris Yeltsin, after Gorbachev's decision in 1989 to the end the Soviet empire. During this decade, market economics spread throughout the world, and particularly in China, which was going through profound economic and social reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping. The globalization of the economy was accelerated by the invention of container ships. China became the world's factory and joined the World Trade Organization in 2001.

But 2001 was also the beginning of a downward spiral for the West. On September 11, 2001, the Twin Towers of New York were destroyed in the most terrible terrorist attack in history. The war in Afghanistan followed, and, unfortunately, the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Then, in 2007-2008, a serious financial crisis occurred, starting in the United States, and quickly reaching the entire world.

As a result, the perceptions of non-Western countries changed. These countries, of course, continued to modernize their economies. They continued to encourage globalization. But they refused to be “westernized” any longer.

The “Global South” reflects this “de-Westernization” of the world, but also a clear refusal to belong to one camp or another. We saw this during the vote of



the UN General Assembly days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine: invited to condemn this aggression which clearly violates the Charter of the United Nations, 45 countries chose to abstain and not least: China, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, South Africa, Algeria...

This new global geopolitical landscape obviously has a significant impact on Western players of the global economy. The days of “just in time” for supply chains do not exist anymore: we are moving to “just in case” and “near-shoring”. We are not going as far as “de-coupling” but we are seeking to “de-risk” supply chains. The Covid crisis has accelerated this rebalancing.

We can add to this the impact of the Cold War between the United States and China, with an increase of the American sanctions and retaliatory measures affecting players in the global economy well beyond the borders of these two countries.

These different views of the world, views of the countries of the “Global South” and of Europe, China and the United States, should not prevent us from cooperating. In fact, this cooperation is essential to take up the immense challenges of climate change, drastically different demographic developments depending on the continent, but also the current serious regional crises.

I am thinking of the crises on the African continent, whether it is Sudan, the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo or the countries in the Sahel.

And I am also thinking, of course, of the crisis in the Middle East, of the confrontation between Israel and Hamas and of the real risk of extension of the conflict to Lebanon, or even to Iran.

Between Israelis and Palestinians, in 1993, we were on the verge of a two-state solution. Who does not remember the photo of President Clinton with Rabin and Arafat by his side, on September 13, 1993 at the White House? That day peace was, indeed, reachable based on the Oslo Agreements. Unfortunately, two years later, an Israeli extremist assassinated Rabin and, with him, the hope of peace. Today the two-state solution remains the only path to a just and lasting peace. To achieve this, several Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, are ready to bring their contribution to the peace process. Alongside the United States, Europe must be more involved. It can and it must!

At the end of this sketch of a geopolitical journey, I have one conviction: more than ever, we need the GCSP, a unique institution which provides not only the best training for diplomats and officers of dozens of countries, but also a unique expertise in discrete negotiations. When the diplomatic paths towards political solutions for the most entrenched conflicts seem closed, the GCSP is there, available with its experience and expertise. We need it also for innovative reflections on security architecture, on arms control and on the necessary regulation of new spaces of conflict.

Yes, more than ever, we need the GCSP, its director and its wonderful team!

Thank you