



José Manuel Barroso

The European Commission President

(...) It is a pleasure to pay homage to the key protagonist of a chapter of history that changed the face of Europe forever.

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Lech Walesa here in Gdansk recalls that unique combination of an individual destiny and a collective adventure that distinguishes major historical events. Solidarnosc's rightly became a worldwide symbol of freedom and resistance to oppression. Struggling here in Gdansk for the values of democracy, freedom and solidarity, the Polish people once again took on the mantle of defenders of Europe's cultural, religious and humanist heritage. I like to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to the Pope John-Paul II for his great contribution of the cause for Europe.

You, Lech Walesa, stand before us today as the very embodiment of this struggle. In your 1983 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, read by your wife Danuta, you said: "We desire peace – and that is why we have never resorted to physical force. We crave for justice – and that is why we are so persistent in the struggle for our rights. We seek freedom of convictions – and that is why we have never attempted to enslave man's conscience nor shall we ever attempt to do so". Peace, justice and freedom: three pillars of the community of shared values, under the rule of law, which today constitutes the European Union. But there is also a fourth pillar: solidarity. Lech Walesa, I see your invitation today as recognition that Europe stands for solidarity. Firstly, a solidarity within Europe, between our countries and regions. Structural funds, for example, represent a major redistribution from the richer to the poorer parts of Europe, and we are developing solidarity around the theme of energy security as another example. Secondly, a solidarity with European citizens, which will become more important in these troubled economic times. We express this solidarity via the social funds and the new globalisation adjustment fund-helping workers and the most vulnerable in society. Thirdly, solidarity between generations. Climate change is perhaps the most important long term challenge we face and we must preserve this planet for our children and future generations to enjoy. But finally, we must also never forget Europe's solidarity with the rest of the world. In the forum of development and the fight against poverty, hunger, disease. We must not use the financial crisis to postpone solidarity with the poorest people on the planet. Approval of the €1 billion food facility is a good sign. Achievement of the millennium development goals would be better. Do we need more solidarity? Of course we do. Because of interdependence, because of globalisation. Once again the financial crisis makes this clear. What can any of us achieve alone, at a purely national level, in the face of the challenges of globalisation? Now, more than ever, Europe needs the strongest links of solidarity. (...) Lech Walesa and Solidarnosc's hugely ambitious strategy brought a whole new world. In these critical times, the European Union can draw inspiration from this, and take action against today's challenges with renewed energy. As the world once again stands on the brink of radical change, it is more necessary than ever to reaffirm the value of solidarity that will build our common future. Peace, justice, freedom and solidarity: the four pillars of Europe.

The speech "Solidarity for the future" on 6th December 2008 in Gdansk, in the conference on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Peace Nobel for Lech Walesa
Photo from Reuters Pictures

Barack Obama

President of the United States of America

"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.(...) It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled – Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America.(...) It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.(...) This is your victory.(...) You did it because you understand the enormity of the task that lies ahead. For even as we celebrate tonight, we know the challenges that tomorrow will bring are the greatest of our lifetime – two wars, a planet in peril, the worst financial crisis in a century. Even as we stand here tonight, we know there are brave Americans waking up in the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan to risk their lives for us. There are mothers and fathers who will lie awake after their children fall asleep and wonder how they'll make the mortgage, or pay their doctor's bills, or save enough for college. There is new energy to harness and new jobs to be created; new schools to build and threats to meet and alliances to repair.(...) The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America – I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you – we as a people will get there.(...) This is our moment. This is our time – to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth – that out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes We Can. Thank you, God bless you, and may God Bless the United States of America."

From Barack Obama's Victory Speech at 4th November 2008
in Chicago, USA



It was said...



Hans-Gert Pöttering
the President of the European Parliament

"(...) We sometimes forget that water is not just another resource and certainly not one which is available in limitless quantities: without water there would be no life on our planet. All human activities are dependent on water in one way or another - and too many parts of the world, too many people on our planet, are feeling the effects of water scarcity. Water is a vulnerable and scarce natural resource. However much some countries and the European Union may boast about the abundance of their water resources, this shared feature of our planet's heritage is coming under increasing threat from accelerating climate change. When countries with abundant water refer to their 'white gold', these two words alone suffice to give an accurate idea of the value of this ever more scarce resource. By comparison with the situation in other parts of the world, the threat to the European Union's water reserves is clearly less serious than it is, for example, in the Middle East or Africa. Nevertheless, the European continent is in no way immune to the effects of water shortages. Water scarcity and droughts affect us all and for that reason our political thoughts must turn to the task of guaranteeing fair access to water supplies in the future as well. (...) As a result of the increasingly tangible impact of climate change, in the future up to 3.2 billion people around the world could be affected by water scarcity. For that reason, the work of protecting water resources, the aquatic ecosystems and drinking and usable water must have the highest priority. (...) It is our responsibility and duty, in the European Union and throughout the world, to encourage the sustainable use of water, with a view, on the one hand, to safeguarding economic and social development, and, on the other, to ensuring that the future of our planet is not jeopardised by excessive water usage, waste and pollution. (...) As citizens we must also change our habits and learn, by means of small, everyday gestures, to save water. (...) Peace, security and the prosperity of future generations will depend on our ability to reduce water wastage substantially and to bring water use down to a level which is sustainable in the long term."

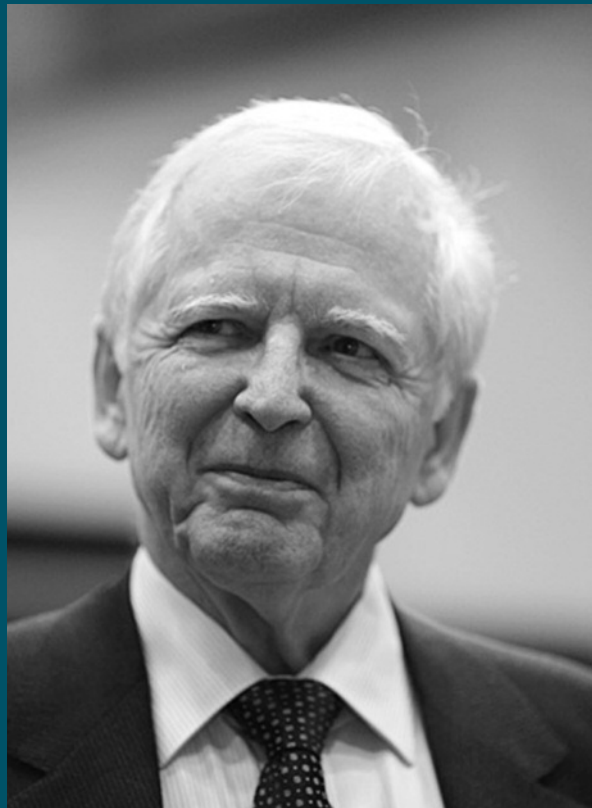
From the opening speech at the conference on "Peace with Water" on 12th February 2009 in European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium.

Professor Harald zur Hausen

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2008

"(...) Particularly in medicine a large number of awards exist, yet none of them has a similar reputation or is as vibrant as the Nobel Prize. This was even instantly recognized by my 3 year old granddaughter; Hanna. When her parents told her about the Nobel Prize and that her grandfather is receiving it she started to cry. With tears in her eyes she told her parents that she wants the Nobel Prize, too. When I told this to one of my colleagues, his face became thoughtful and he then stated: "Your granddaughter expressed the desire of a multitude of scientists, except that they usually don't cry in public and are reluctant to talk about it. (...)"

From Professor Harald zur Hausen's speech at the Nobel Banquet on 10th December 2008 in Stockholm, Sweden



Orhan Pamuk

The Nobel Prize Winner in Literature 2006



Professor Wangari Maathai

The Nobel Peace Prize Winner in 2004

"(...) I reflect on my childhood experience when I would visit a stream next to our home to fetch water for my mother. I would drink water straight from the stream. Playing among the arrowroot leaves I tried in vain to pick up the strands of frogs' eggs, believing they were beads. But every time I put my little fingers under them they would break. Later, I saw thousands of tadpoles: black, energetic and wriggling through the clear water against the background of the brown earth. This is the world I inherited from my parents. Today, over 50 years later, the stream has dried up, women walk long distances for water, which is not always clean, and children will never know what they have lost. The challenge is to restore the home of the tadpoles and give back to our children a world of beauty and wonder.(...)"

From the Nobel Lecture after receiving the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize in the Oslo City Hall, Oslo, Norway on 10th December 2004

Why do you write? This is the question I've been asked most often in my writing career. Most of the time they mean this: What is the point, why do you give your time to this strange and impossible activity? Why do you write... You have to give an excuse, an apology for writing... This is how I have felt every time I've heard this question. But every time I give a different answer... Sometimes I say: I do not know why I write, but it definitely makes me feel good. I hope you feel the same when you read me! Sometimes I say that I am angry, and that is why I write. Most of the time the urge is to be alone in a room, so that is why I write. In my childhood I wanted to be a painter. I painted every day. I still have that childish feeling of joy and happiness whenever I write. I write to pursue that old childish happiness and that is why for me literature and writing are inextricably linked with happiness, or the lack of it... unhappiness. In my childhood, I felt happy, painted a lot, and all the grown ups were constantly smiling at me. Everybody was gentle, polite and tender. I wrote all about this in my autobiographical book, *Istanbul*. After the publication of *Istanbul*, some people asked me this question: Aren't you a bit young to write your autobiography? I kept my silence. Literature is about happiness, I wanted to say, about preserving your childishness all your life, keeping the child in you alive... Now, some years later, I've received this great prize. This time the same people begin asking another question: Aren't you a bit young to get the Nobel Prize? Actually the question I've heard most often since the news of this prize reached me is: How does it feel to get the Nobel Prize? I say, oh! It feels good. All the grown ups are constantly smiling at me. Suddenly everybody is again gentle, polite and tender. In fact, I almost feel like a prince. I feel like a child. Then for a moment, I realize why sometimes I have felt so angry. This prize, which brought back to me the tender smiles of my childhood and the kindness of the strangers, should have been given to me not at this age (54) which some think is too young, but much much earlier, even earlier than my childhood, perhaps two weeks after I was born, so that I could have enjoyed the princely feeling of being a child all my life. In fact now... come to think of it... That is why I write and why I will continue to write.

The speech at the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm, Sweden on 10th December 2006





Professor Horst Köhler

Federal President of Germany

Re-elected for this function at 23rd May 2009

(...) Now, the big wheels have broken down and we are experiencing a crisis, the outcome of which may define the 21st century. I believe this could be for our good, provided we are able to learn from our mistakes. At present, however, the recession continues to unfold. It has reached every continent. The financial crisis has hit the real economy, at lightning speed and hard. (...) So let us face our responsibility. This is in our interests, as we sell half of our economic output abroad. The global economy is our destiny. That is why we must now involve ourselves, actively and constructively, in the efforts made all over the world to overcome the crisis, and must bring our weight to bear. This crisis offers a unique opportunity in that now, it is clear to all of us that no-one can permanently create advantages solely for himself. We, all of humanity, are in the same boat. And people in the same boat must help each other. In the 21st century, self-interest has come to mean that we must take care of one another. In particular, we in the North must learn to rethink. Currently, about 6.5 billion people live on our earth. A mere fifteen percent of them live in the same circumstances we do. More than two billion people live on two dollars a day, and one billion people must make do with one dollar a day. We should stop fooling ourselves into thinking that this is just. Security, prosperity and peace – they will be assured for the industrialized nations only if we achieve greater equity throughout the entire world. We need to have a development policy for the whole planet. This means that the industrialized nations – including Germany – must find out what changes they need to make, in order to ensure there will be a good future for the world. (...)"

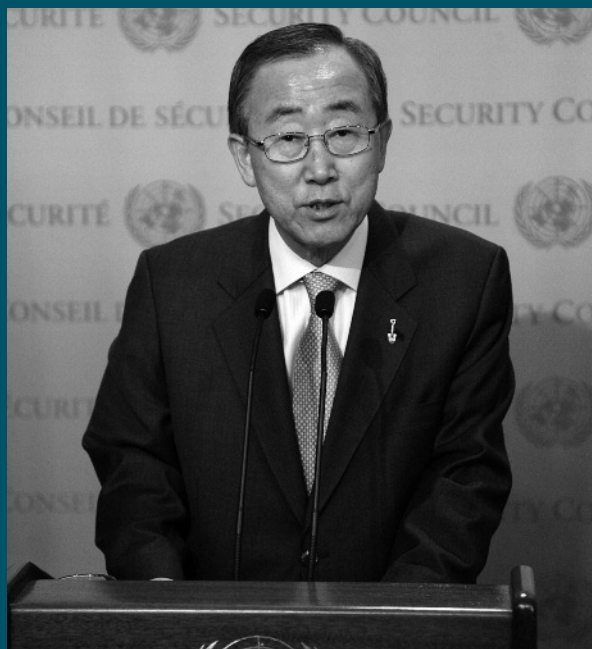
From Berlin Address by Federal President Horst Köhler on 24th March 2009 in Berlin, Germany

Ban Ki-Moon

Secretary-General of the United Nations

(...) We meet at a critical moment in human history. Our planet is warming to dangerous levels. (...) We are enduring the worst economic downturn since the 1930s. (...) Climate change is the defining challenge of our time. I also believe it is the most potent game-changer for business over the next century. It is an opportunity we must seize. Today, I want to challenge you. I want to see you in the vanguard of an unprecedented effort to retool the global economy into one that is cleaner, greener and more sustainable. (...) We know that the safest way of reducing climate risks is to reduce emissions. We know that taking early action makes good business sense. And we know the cost of inaction will be much bigger than the cost of action now. (...) As business leaders, you must make it clear to your leaders that doing the right thing for the climate is also the smart thing for global competitiveness and long-term prosperity. We may never get a better opportunity. And if the world's scientists are right, we may not get a second chance. (...) Climate change affects every aspect of society, from the health of the global economy to the health of our children. It is about the water in our wells and in our taps. It is about the food on the table. It is about energy security and international security. It is at the core of nearly all the major challenges we face today. (...) Investing now in green solutions is cheaper – and ultimately more profitable – than spending more, later, in a catch-up race for global competitiveness. Polluting industries have successfully cleaned up their act in the past. That is part of the dynamic tradition of private-sector innovation. There are good examples today of industries in the developing and developed worlds cutting emissions. I welcome such steps, and call for more. (...) The smart money is on the green economy. Many of you are already showing the way. You have shown that energy efficiency and green technologies can drive profitable performance. (...) Continue to push for private-sector solutions that reduce climate risks – in health, water and natural resources, in insurance and investment and economic development. This, my friends, is the essence of business statesmanship in the 21st century. (...) Seal the deal to power green growth. Seal the deal to protect our planet. Seal the deal to build a more sustainable, prosperous global economy that will benefit all nations. Your customers and your shareholders will reward you. And your children will thank you one day. (...)"

From Opening Remarks to the World Business Summit on Climate Change on 24th May 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark





Lee Myung-Bak

President of South Korea

"(...) I sincerely pledge to you that I will dedicate my body and soul to this historic mission of the time.

These are my promises to you:

I will serve the people and bring peace to this nation,
I will invigorate the economy and unite our society,
I will enliven our culture and advance our science and technology,
I will strengthen our security and lay the foundation for peaceful unification.
I will faithfully carry out our duties to the international community and contribute to the prosperity of all peoples.(...)
We fought for and regained our land that had been taken from us and established our nation. We gave our best to our day's work.
As a result, our great nation achieved what no other nation ever achieved in history. In the shortest period of time, this nation achieved both industrialisation and democratisation. Never before seen in human history, we achieved all this with only our own fierce determination and sheer fortitude. That is how one of the poorest countries in the world has come to bid for its place among the 10 largest economies in the world. A country that lived by the mercy of others is now able to give to others in need and stand shoulder to shoulder with the most advanced countries. Some say this is a "miracle". Others say this is a "legend". But we know what it truly is. This is not a miracle but the shining crystallisation of our blood, sweat and tears. This is not a legend but a genuine testimony to how each and every one of us has lived.(...) The miracle will continue. The legend will go on. I will reignite the engine of growth that once marveled the whole world and make it pump harder. I will take the lead, and with you beside me as one, we can do it. (...) Beyond the miracle of the Han River, let us now embark together on creating a new legacy (...). I (...) will take the lead. When we march together as one, we can do it. We will do it."

From President Lee Myung-bak's Inaugural Address on 25th February, 2008 in Seoul, South Korea

Prof. Charles Kuen Kao

Former Director of Engineering of Standard Telecommunication Laboratories in Harlow, UK and former Vice-chancellor of Chinese University of Hong Kong
The creator of fundamentals of the transmission of light in fibres

"I'm an engineer, so my real purpose is something that is useful, and it is interesting to extrapolate how improvement can be made and if it is made; and if it is made, how important it is to serve mankind. Communication, at this moment of my life, I still feel that it is not the invention of something that is important. It is how we can utilize that then to improve life that is important. Unfortunately, these days, we are contaminated by the use of the competitive forces to say, "You must say, 'I did something better than the other,' so the advertising people will generate things that boosts sucking up to possibly beyond what one should claim. In some ways I feel that for instance we now can use computers to do very, very many things. You can do many, many things that are weird and wonderful, but to what extent we need them is still not clear. The bubble burst recently of technology, particularly the IT bubble, was overloaded, so it has collapsed. Obviously it is very important that we push them, but I think the peripheral ways that people look at it and get very excited are based on very thin evidence. And so I think we all should say, "Here are some useful tools. Are they going to be really helpful for us?" And we should question these carefully and use them appropriately. But that is sort of the typical way or engineering way of answering questions."

From Charles Kao: An Interview Conducted by Robert Colburn, IEEE History Centre, The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc, 26th February 2004



Notice:

It was already after the publication of the issue of Archives of Materials Science and Engineering on 6th October 2009 when it was announced that Prof. Charles Kuen Kao was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2009



Dr Angela Merkel

Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

(...) When in May we spoke of 60 years of the Federal Republic of Germany, we had of course to remember that while this was a 60-year success story for one part of Germany, it was not for another part of what is today's reunified Germany. (...) On November 9 this year we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. On that day – which is something many people in Germany are hardly even aware of – we will have spent almost one third of the Federal Republic of Germany's history together, as a reunified Germany. Of course this raises the question of how those partnerships develop that have made us, the Federal Republic of Germany, strong but which, I believe, are also important for our partners? In other words, how are transatlantic relations to develop in future? (...) I know that the interplay between the United States, Europe and, in particular, Germany must be revamped in the 21st century. The world has changed, and is continuing to do so, and for that reason it is essential that we continually renew our partnership. (...) I believe 2009 will be a decisive year for the question of how the world is to live together in the future. We face numerous challenges, and I would like to repeat(...): today, no country alone can solve any of the great challenges. This is why it is so important that we cultivate partnerships and also try to understand what is so special about our transatlantic partnership. For me, the special feature of this transatlantic partnership is our sharing of the same fundamental values, meaning we do not have to endlessly debate our interpretation of human rights and respect for the dignity of the person. (...) The dignity of every individual human being is our benchmark. (...) I would therefore like to thank all those who believe in our transatlantic partnership and to give my special thanks to the Atlantik-Brücke (...).

From the speech on receiving the Eric M. Warburg Award in Washington on 25th June 2009

Professor Jerzy Buzek

The President of the European Parliament

« (...) I spent most of my life in an enslaved country. Twenty years ago Poland was a very different place. But change had already started to come to Poland, we had already managed to be a free country by the time the Berlin Wall symbolically fell in 1989. The demolition of a wall which had for so long divided a city in a divided country was in many ways the end point of a huge surge by the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. A surge for freedom. For basic human rights. For liberty. This desire for freedom that resides in every human heart, could be found in the Solidarnosc trade union in my own country, in the writings of artists and intellectuals such as President Vaclav Havel (...). The people to the East of the Iron Curtain only had big hearts and great faith and determination to face the tanks. But they won! It started in front of the gate of a Gdansk shipyard and ended at the Brandenburg gate. November 1989 also was a fresh new beginning.(...) »

From the speech "What does Europe mean to me?" on the discussion between 89 young people born in November 1989 in Brussels at 11th November 2009

