

Session on “What the New US President and the World Will Face” with Ambassador Richard Haass

New Delhi, 23 April 2008

Richard Haass, President, Council for Foreign Relations and a former policy adviser to then US Secretary of State Colin Powell, said that this was the beginning of an extraordinarily good era for expanded India-US relation, as both sides have a stake in tackling a range of issues from climate change to terrorism. He added that it was a possibility and a necessity for both countries to find ways to cooperate to find solutions to global and regional challenges. He also expressed concern about the current rise in economic populism and protectionism. He was speaking at a session on 'What the new US President and the world will face', organised in New Delhi by the Aspen Institute India and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

While admitting that he did not know who the next president of the United States would be, he spoke of the world that that President would have to deal with. The twenty first century, he said, was different from the twentieth in that major powers were more likely to cooperate instead of engaging in a great power conflict. He also said that today the world has moved from bilateralism during the Cold War era to unilateralism for while after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and is now in a state of 'non-polarity', where power centres are diffused and not always vested in states - global corporations, and international institutions like Medicins Sans Frontieres and even Al Qaeda are points of power. He also spoke about Asian dynamism.

The two sets of challenges for the twenty first century, according to him, are the 'greater Middle East', including North Africa and Afghanistan, and the emergence of Iran as a nuclear power. He also spoke of the current patterns of energy use as unsustainable and spoke of the urgent need to reduce energy use. It was also essential, in his view, to bring young men within society and interrupt the recruiting pattern for terrorist organisations.

He spoke of the need for suitable international institutions in order to narrow the gap in global challenges. Current institutions like the UN are inadequate for this task, according to him, so we either need to design new institutions or adapt and tailor the current ones. "Problems are numerous and severe, and will not solve themselves or through unilateralism or military force", he said.

Introducing the speaker, L. Brooks Entwistle, managing Director and CEO, Goldman Sachs (India) Securities Pvt. Ltd., said that India was very important for the Council for Foreign Relations. To set the scene, he quoted from one of Ambassador Haass's writings, " The US will no longer have the luxury of 'either you're with us or against us' foreign policy."