



INTER ACTION COUNCIL

Established in 1983

InterAction Council

20th Plenary Session

Greetings

**by Kiichi Miyazawa, Co-Chairman
at the Opening Ceremony**

**8 June 2002
Berlin, Germany**

Chancellor Schroeder, Dr. Scherf, Dear Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to greet you at the outset of our memorable 20th anniversary meeting.

Let me first of all thank, on behalf of the InterAction Council, the Germans – both the executive and legislative branches of the Government, all the sponsoring corporations and all the people whose tremendous goodwill and enormous efforts have made this meeting possible.

My task here is to very briefly explain to you how the InterAction Council came about and what it stands for.

The Council was created in 1983 under the initiative of my respected predecessor, Takeo Fukuda of Japan. It was during the height of the Cold War, when nobody ever thought that we could meet in Berlin in this fashion two decades later.

Mr. Fukuda was very deeply apprehensive that mankind may not enter the 21st century; and he wondered if the collected experiences of former heads of state and government from all the five continents could not produce wisdom to address long-term global issues that mankind was facing then and, indeed, now.

To his delight, a couple of dozens of leaders agreed that his idea was unique and innovative. Among these leaders were the intellectual heavy weight, Helmut Schmidt, the egalitarian leader, Jim Callaghan and the indomitable freedom fighter Olu Obasanjo, who honors us with his presence today.

At the inaugurating session in Vienna, the Council identified the following three priority areas to focus on: peace and disarmament, economic vitalization and the ethical questions related to population, environment and development.

In other words they understood firsthand the central message of “On Perpetual Peace” by Immanuel Kant, the great philosopher of your nation in the 18th century. They knew that peace is not a natural state but something that has to be made. To the Council, “the maintenance of peace is not solely a dictate of politics, of justice, but a moral duty absolute.”

Myopic minds may question “what power and authority do you have?” But more rational minds with a longer-term vision increasingly consider our group as something like a “moral authority” of the world. This is particularly true since our publication of the “Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities” in 1997 after 10 years of soul-searching effort.

Over the past two decades, the world has undergone spectacular changes. The end of the Cold War stands out, as it has completely transformed the world’s political and economic fabric. At that time, we felt that a more optimistic view of the future might be possible, putting the bloodshed 20th century behind us. But we now find ourselves facing new sets of complex uncertainties and undaunted challenges, which I trust Helmut Schmidt will dazzlingly analyze and describe to you in a few minutes.

The Council itself has changed much over the two decades. Its membership has grown from 22 to 45. Some of the brilliant leaders have passed away, including Fukuda, himself, and Pierre Trudeau. We miss not only their mind but also their human warmth.

But we are happy to welcome a new generation of “graduates” into the Council. This generation change will ensure that the Council will go on with its commitment to help create a better world for our posterity.

Lastly, but most importantly, I would like to express our profound appreciation, on behalf of the InterAction Council, to Helmut Schmidt for his exceptional and dedicated leadership throughout these two decades. Without his historical perspective and global view, the Council would not have been where we are today.

Thank you Helmut, and thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, for your attention.



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Tokyo Secretariat

Address: 3-16-13-609 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0032, Japan

Tel: 81-3-5549-2950 Fax: 81-3-5549-2955

e-mail: interact@estate.ocn.ne.jp

website: <http://www.interactioncouncil.org>