

Welcoming words for the Inauguration of the One Day Seminar
CLARIFYING REGIONAL HUMAN SECURITY PRIORITIES

By Karen Olsen de Figueres (former First Lady, Ambassador and Congresswoman)
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Good Morning!! And a very warm welcome to the city home of Jose Figueres, who, in 1949 was the first in the world to abolish a National Army to invest all the Army's budget in education and health!!

Thank you for coming to this one day Seminar in this garden environment of Peace... where Don Pepe thought and worked. I invite each of you to think and word, sitting at Don Pepe's favorite oak table, where so much history was discussed and written by Don Pepe and his Ministers of State.

I wish to repeat a few reflections that I expressed on the occasion of the Conference we held on the Peace Boat in July 2009 in Puntarenas, Costa Rica.

“IMPOSSIBLE THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, BY DOING THEM. Don Pepe said this in these prophetic words:” THE ONLY WAY TO DO THINGS IS TO DO THEM”.

“Today is a new day. A new opportunity to become more aware, to create a new and deeper individual and collective consciousness of Peace. As each of us raise our concept of consciousness, the world raises its level of consciousness. If we are not consistently and constantly part of the solution, we continue to remain as part of the problem. It is a marvellous day – we are alive. Let us fully understand the importance that each of us is here for a very special purpose. We are all connected with a creative energy. Therefore, never permit anyone to try to convince you that your own personal Peace Vision and Peace Mission is unrealistic, or too idealistic, or hopeless. Peace is not a dream. Peace is possible. The “culture of peace” means work... but... what a great work! And we are privileged to be the workers. You are not alone, no matter where you are. There is an ever growing measure of swelling of many more voices each day united against nuclear arms.”

“Peace is not born. Peace is built. Peace is not passive, it is active. Peace demands thought and continuous reflection. Introspection and retrospection. It is attitude. It is a way of life. It is a “culture of peace”: What we think. How we speak. Actions we take. However, Peace cannot exist alone. It is inseparable from liberty, democracy and justice. Intrinsic is BUILDING TRUST. We must trust, or bust”.

“We are here today to share ideas and innovative strategies about how we can more effectively think wiser and act better in creating, establishing and securing a “peace culture” where a child, a young person, an older individual, can walk with a book under his arm rather than carrying a weapon. Peace is building bridges and not burying minefields. No army, no arms especially no nuclear weapons, can ever, ever give us the security, the moral force that is our best defence. We do not need strong armies. We do not need strong men. We do need STRONG DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS that is the turning point. That is the EMPOWERMENT of our peoples”.

“We need to shift our priorities. We need to know our “north”. Don Pepe said, “We need to change our “escopeta”. In other words, we must acknowledge and assume the

social responsibility that we must solve the economic-social educational crisis caused by greed and hatred and egoism, which sows and reaps exclusion , misery , poverty.. Poverty and war. War and Poverty. Which comes first? They are linked inseparably. Both are extreme forms of violent terrorism. We must be aware of, and alert to, the “empty places” that dangerously breed the outright terrorism of crime, drugs and traffic of armaments. We can neither excuse nor justify ignorance. We must insist on continuous education. We must strengthen the middle class, which promotes balance and the non-polarization equality of progress. We need to extend basic public services. We need to give minimum wages. We must encourage our youth to dream and help them to make their dreams a reality, and interest them to choose the exciting banner of this cause and not be lured to adopt the false drama of the bullet of the canon.”

“Our seemingly present reality: the greatest scandal of extreme poverty is not that it exists but that it still persists, when precisely there exist the means to eliminate it. Are we aware of the statistic that every 2.3 seconds a person dies of hunger. The individual has such a low intake of calories that they can neither work productively nor even take care of themselves. Worse is the fact that millions of persons are BORN POOR each day. Outrageous it is to know the statistic that the production of just 20 super bombers is the equivalent amount that it takes to feed, for one year, half the whole continent of Africa.. There are unending numbers of equally shocking statistics, too lengthy to enumerate here, but all indicate clearly that the cost of armaments, their production and their very existence of “stock piles” is rapidly DESTROYING ALL THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF MANKIND AND THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEPRIVE THE HUMAN RACE OF THE MOST BASIC AND DEAREST RIGHT OF All: TO LIVE, TO EXIST.”

“We must not, we cannot, wait for things to change. We cannot wait for the “other one” to do it first. We must change NOW! But we must first change ourselves and assume individual responsibility. Anonymous saying: “All of the significant battles are waged within the self.” RISE to the challenge. STAND firm. STEP forward. TODAY, HERE, let us RENEW OUR PLEDGE TO PEACE.!”

I respectfully propose as part of our final document that we agree to send a message of support and gratitude to President Barack Obama for his honest vision and extraordinary strength in recently calling all nations to the Conference against Nuclear Weapons.

José Figueres announced both the immediate conversion of Costa Rica’s national main military arsenal into the actual National Museum and the abolishment of the National Army to invest the army’s budget in education and health. Figueres said, with a FIRM voice: “THE ONLY WAY TO DO THINGS IS TO DO THEM”. We CAN do it. Yes, we can. IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BECOME POSSIBLE BY DOING THEM”.

I give a warm embrace to each of you, and add my gratitude for your individual and collective work.