

Initiative Report
on

THE CHALLENGE OF STRENGTHENING THE PEACE

Guatemala City, Guatemala
November 30 - December 2, 1999



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INTRODUCTION

The Project on Justice in Times of Transition of Harvard University organized a conference in the Fall of 1999 to address issues related to strengthening the peace in Guatemala. At the three-year anniversary of the signing of the peace accords and in light of the impending change in government, the conference was designed to analyze the state of the peace process and consider new strategies for moving forward. Utilizing The Project's proven methodology, a group of distinguished international leaders from countries as distinct as Poland, South Africa, Argentina, and Israel were brought together to share their experiences in dealing with post-conflict transition and peace-building. This two-and-a-half day program gathered Guatemalans from various sectors of society and many regions of the country to learn from their international counterparts and to engage in discussions aimed at identifying common concerns and devising and implementing sustainable solutions. The conference was a historic event, as it presented an opportunity for individuals from polarized groups, most notably indigenous communities and the army, to come together in one room to tackle the repercussions and unresolved issues which have resulted from the 36-year conflict in their country.

The program was organized at the suggestion of Guatemalan President Alvaro Arzú in hopes of bringing national attention to the peace process and providing a final impetus for peace and reconciliation at the end of the 20th century. As The Project's first initiative in Guatemala, the conference was developed to focus on the country's key issues of concern as it undergoes the difficult transition from civil conflict to a peaceful society. The program was designed to present myriad perspectives and experiences from around the world on a broad spectrum of topics. Speakers from throughout the world focused their presentations on a range of relevant subjects, including the transformation of weakened and ineffective economic and political institutions, how to build a strong and effective civil society, leadership in times of transition, memory and acknowledgement of past crimes, and bridging the gap between communities.

Each speaker brought with them unique insight which was often inspiring and directly applicable to Guatemala, a country with numerous economic and social inequities that is struggling not only due to the legacy of conflict, but also as a result of its problematic economic, political, security, and justice systems. For example, many Guatemalans were captivated by Lech Walesa's discussion of leadership based on his experience with Poland's Solidarity Movement and the subsequent post-communist transition to democracy. Ana Guadalupe Martinez's analysis of the current state of affairs in El Salvador, as well as the challenges which her country faced during the past eight years after civil war, proved particularly analogous to the situation in Guatemala. Both Branka Kasej of Croatia and Robert Conway of South Africa presented practical models which have been used to strengthen civil society in their countries and could help to develop and coordinate the civil sector of Guatemala. The presentations of international guests were complemented by national panelists, such as Rigoberto Quemé, the Mayor of Quetzaltenango, and Hector Mauricio Lopez Bonilla, columnist for Prensa Libre, who shared their opinions on peace-building and spoke to the issues raised within the Guatemalan context. The panels included a range of distinct, often opposing, viewpoints which was useful for addressing some controversial topics rarely discussed in Guatemala. For example, Fermina Lopez of the indigenous organization CONAVIGUA (National Association of Widows of Guatemala) and General Edgar Leonel Godoy Samayoa sat together during a session, grappling with acknowledgement and forgiveness of the bloody crimes committed against members of indigenous communities by the armed forces during Guatemala's long-running civil war.

After the speakers of each panel gave their presentations, the forum was opened to the audience for questions and a period of discussion. This represented some of the most intense moments of the conference, when Guatemalan individuals expressed their concerns and sought practical ideas and solutions from the international and Guatemalan panelists. It was clear that the topics discussed by the speakers were compatible with the concerns of the Guatemalan participants, as evidenced by the many conversations between conference attendees and speakers that continued into coffee breaks and other informal events.



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Conference Structure

The conference agenda was divided into six panels according to a number of broad, overarching themes. This framework served to unify the varied viewpoints of the speakers and provide a foundation for ensuing discussion. The panel themes acted as a starting point, and often presentations touched on other ideas which were important, though not directly related to the theme of the specific panel. The topics of the panels were the following:

- Transforming an Intractable Conflict into a Durable Peace
- Memory, Acknowledgment, and Overcoming Divisions
- The Role of Civil Society in Countries in Transition
- Creating the Institutions Necessary for Political and Economic Stability
- Bridging the Gap Between Communities
- Guatemala in the Global Context

In addition to the six major panels of the conference, a special presentation was given by keynote speaker Lech Walesa, Nobel Laureate and former President of Poland, on Developing a Vision for the Future: Leadership and Overcoming Obstacles. This

presentation came during the middle of the conference, after the third panel, and was followed by an extensive series of questions and answers.

Informal events throughout the conference offered speakers and participants the opportunity to converse on a personal level and discuss topics in greater depth. Coffee breaks were held every morning and afternoon, and buffet lunches were also served.

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Conference Speakers and Participants

International Speakers

The international speakers who attended the conference came from various countries, each having dealt with his or her own unique set of challenges and obstacles. Though every individual held a distinct perspective, the experience of having lived in a society in transition was shared by all of the panelists. The speakers were dynamic and inspiring reformers, with experiences ranging from former guerrilla fighter to university professor, economist to civil society activist. They included the following individuals:

Hasan Abdel Rahman - Palestinian National Authority Chief Representative in United States

Shulamit Aloni - former Member of Israeli Parliament and government Minister, founder of the Civil Rights and Peace Movement in Israel

Paul Arthur - Professor of Politics, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland

John Biehl - former Chief of Staff for Government of Chile, former Ambassador to United States

Jan Krzysztof Bielecki - former Prime Minister of Poland

Robert Conway - Chair, Peace and Reconstruction Foundation, South Africa

Lars Franklin - Resident Coordinator for the United Nations in Guatemala

Konstanty Gebert - former dissident and Editor-in-Chief of Midrasz Magazine, Poland

Robert Hutchings - Assistant Dean, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University

Branka Kaselj - Director, Center for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights, Croatia

Ana Guadalupe Martinez - Vice President of the National Assembly, El Salvador

Roelf Meyer - Member of Parliament, former chief negotiator for De Klerk government, South Africa

Luis Moreno Ocampo - former Public Prosecutor and District Attorney of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Silvia Rueda de Uranga - President, Conciencia Association, Argentina

Lech Walesa - Nobel Laureate and former President of Poland

Guatemalan Speakers

One or two Guatemalan speakers also spoke on each panel, sharing personal experiences and voicing the concerns of their nation in the aftermath of civil war. Hearing from these individuals was an essential part of the conference and helped provide insight into the intricacies of the Guatemalan transition. The Guatemalan panelists represented many sectors of society, such as non-governmental organizations (including indigenous groups), the military, the government, academic institutions, and the media. These Guatemalans spoke to issues relevant to their country:

Mario Antonio Ardon Aguilar - Colonel, Guatemalan Army

Hector Mauricio Lopez Bonilla - Columnist, Prensa Libre

Carlos Chocoj - Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation

Edgar Leonel Godoy Samayoa - General, Guatemalan Army

Fermina Lopez - Founder, CONAVIGUA (National Association of Widows of Guatemala)

José Roberto Lopez - World Bank

Gustavo Porras - Private Secretary to the President of Guatemala

Rigoberto Quemé - Mayor of Quetzaltenango

Renzo Rosal - Secretary General of Rafael Landívar University

Eduardo Stein - Foreign Minister of Guatemala

Raquel Zelaya - Secretary of the Peace of Guatemala

International Moderators

Every panel was led by an international moderator with significant experience working in Latin America and extensive knowledge of the pressing concerns in Guatemala. All moderators were fluent in Spanish, which allowed them to focus questions and facilitate effective discussion during the sessions. As well, several individuals offered comments and introductory remarks. The conference moderators and introducers were the following:

Linn Hammergren - Public Sector Specialist, World Bank Latin America Regional Department

Philip Heymann - James Barr Ames Professor of Law, Harvard Law School

James LeMoyne - Chief Political Advisor for the United Nations Development Program - Latin America

Wendy Luers - President, The Foundation for a Civil Society

Beatriz Manz - Professor, University of California, Berkeley

Tim Phillips - Co-founder, The Project on Justice in Times of Transition

Susan Kaufman Purcell - Vice President, Americas Society

Guatemalan Participants

Efforts were made during the conference development to ensure that a wide range of individuals would be invited to the program and that they would feel comfortable and safe attending the conference. **Over 400 Guatemalans participated**, and this group was inclusive of many regions of the country and representative of most sectors of Guatemala's extremely divided society. Many of the nation's 21 indigenous communities were present, as well as a large contingent from the army. Members of civic organizations and the government also attended, however the private sector and the church were not as well represented.

The Guatemalan participants were the backbone of the conference, as they responded to the speaker's presentations and contributed their thoughts during the open period of discussion at the end of each panel. Many participants exchanged ideas with speakers during informal sessions, and there was also a great deal of discussion among various groups of participants, who reflected upon the topics presented in light of the challenges confronting Guatemala.

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PRESENTATIONS AND ISSUES RAISED

Introductions and Opening Address

On the evening of November 30, the conference began with an opening address by *Professor Philip Heymann* of Harvard University, followed by opening remarks from Guatemalan *President Alvaro Arzú* and *Eduardo Stein*, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala. Professor Heymann welcomed all conference speakers and participants, outlined the upcoming panels and events, and explained that the conference would serve as an important opportunity for the exchange of experiences and ideas. He noted that countries in transition need not see their challenges as a lonely burden, for many of the problems are shared by other nations, such as impunity, how to address the issue of security files, the role of the military and the police forces, and the increase in crime during the post-conflict period.

Eduardo Stein acknowledged the role that the international community has played, and will continue to play, in Guatemala's peace process and noted that as the international speakers provided a global framework for the peace process, they would be of great assistance to Guatemala. He recognized the many challenges faced by newborn democracies as they aim to strengthen problematic institutions and instill them with democratic values. He also expressed concern that frequently citizens are not adequately engaged in the peace process and cited the conference as a significant step to improving civic participation.

President Arzú expressed his gratitude for the timely conference in Guatemala, which occurred before the change in government, at the third anniversary of the peace accords, and in a post-cold war global environment which is supportive of peace in Central America. He stated his conviction that a lasting peace does not mean solely an end to armed conflict, and that there must also be an effort to construct a society with institutions that ensure that individuals may live peacefully together, regardless of existing divisions or distinctions. According to President Arzú, both a compromising government and a committed society are essential elements to achieving peace.

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Transforming an Intractable Conflict into a Durable Peace

The first panel, moderated by *James LeMoyne* and including speakers *Roelf Meyer* of South Africa, *Hasan Abdel Rahman* of Palestine, and *Ana Guadalupe Martinez* of El Salvador, addressed the broad theme of how to create a peace that is sustainable for the long term. Each looked at the peace process in their country retrospectively, assessing the successes of recent years and the difficult obstacles that were tackled in efforts to achieve a lasting peace which could be shared equally by all members of society. Ms. Martinez noted quite accurately that two of the speakers were currently at a similar point in the post-conflict experiences in their countries, with South Africa at 10 years since the beginning of negotiations and El Salvador in its eighth year after civil war. The circumstances surrounding the conflicts have been distinct, however each speaker shared experiences and perspectives which were relevant for Guatemala's current position as a nation in the early stages of post-conflict transition.



Roelf Meyer gave insight into the last 10 years of transition in South Africa, pointing to leadership as an essential component of completing the constitutional and political changes necessary for true progress. Without F.W. De Klerk, President during the apartheid era, who Mr. Meyer described as a man with high respect for democratic values and the rule of law, and Nelson Mandela, the nation's first post-apartheid President, who showed no signs of revenge after his release from many years in prison, the negotiations from 1990 to 1994, followed by a transfer of power and a new constitution, would not have been possible. Mr. Meyer noted that risks and audacity were necessary for both sides, along with the willingness to sacrifice and a deep commitment to advancing the process despite deep divisions and misunderstandings. According to Mr. Meyer, leaders are crucial to a peace process as they set ideals for the people, provide a sense of hope, and remind citizens that the process is an essential recipe for improving the nation.

Mr. Meyer shared his personal experience with the Guatemalan participants, expressing the difficult times of uncertainty he faced during the years he spent as chief negotiator for the De Klerk government. Despite accusations by whites of being a traitor and feelings of

guilt due to his past as a beneficiary of the elite apartheid system, Mr. Meyer maintained the overarching conviction that true democracy needed to be established. He and many other white South African reformers experienced a paradigm shift in their way of thinking, which was a necessary step to opening communication, dispelling distrust, and narrowing divisions between polarized groups. Mr. Meyer's remarks were marked by hope and optimism, and he explained that 10 years ago he never would have envisioned South Africa as a model for exporting peace. He now sees his country as a success story and suggested that Guatemala, also characterized by great ethnic diversity and ruled by an elite minority, could learn from South Africa's experiences and utilize their strategies for reform.

Hasan Abdel Rahman provided historical background into the complex and deeply-rooted conflict in the Middle East, arguing that although many essential components of the crisis are yet to be resolved, a great deal of progress has been made during the last decade. Like Mr. Meyer, he stressed the role of leadership in conflict resolution, noting how crucial both Yitzhak Rabin, former Israeli Prime Minister, and Yasir Arafat, Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, were in exchanging armed conflict for the negotiation table. To open communication and achieve mutual understanding, both Palestinians and Israelis had to acknowledge the rights and existence of the other, as well as the suffering and injustices which had been endured by their adversary. This was very difficult for the Palestinian nation, which still has not achieved legitimacy due to a lack of access to land, as well as other resources such as potable water and health care. Mr. Abdel Rahman explained that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is at a crucial, irreversible stage marked by a new dialogue and committed individuals, and the biggest obstacle that must be overcome is the dangerous fundamentalist groups on both sides which threaten to undermine the reconciliation process.

Ana Guadalupe Martinez shared her optimism that even the most difficult crises could be resolved, pointing to the successes of El Salvador in surmounting deep divisions and seemingly insoluble problems after a prolonged civil war. Recent years have seen two democratic elections, leaders of the FMLN (former guerillas) entering the legislative assembly, the reform of the national police, and extensive rural construction. However, she said that problems persist, including post-conflict delinquency and violence and the lack of free speech, which demonstrates that El Salvador has by no means completed its transition. According to Ms. Martinez, the fact that she could openly share her experiences with an international audience, something that she never could have imagined possible eight years ago as an FMLN guerrilla combatant, was a true mark of progress for El Salvador. Although she did not claim El Salvador's situation to be identical to that of Guatemala, she stated her conviction that valiant reform and reconciliation initiatives would push Guatemala along the road to a durable peace in much the same way as they had in El Salvador.

After hearing the international speakers' perspectives on achieving a lasting peace in their countries, *Raquel Zelaya* and *Hector Mauricio Lopez Bonilla* expressed some thoughts about achieving a durable peace in Guatemala. Based on her experience as Peace Secretary, Ms. Zelaya noted that one of the biggest obstacles to the process has been the problematic public institutions and lack of effective leadership to bring about necessary reform. She explained that there must also be a collective effort to reflect upon the value of the peace process, because if democratic, peaceful efforts are not appreciated, it is likely that people will yearn for



authoritative regimes as they have known in the past. From the perspective of a former colonel in the Guatemalan army, Mr. Lopez Bonilla described the series of events which preceded the signing of the peace accords in 1996 and cited leadership, courage, and conscience as contributing factors to this momentous occasion. It was when the military and guerilla fighters began to see the human face of their enemy that the fighting finally ended, trust began to develop, and lines of communication were opened. Mr. Lopez Bonilla considered the continued efforts to build trust and reconcile the past to be essential for Guatemala's progress.

A number of compelling issues were raised by the Guatemalan participants during the subsequent question and answer session. Mr. Meyer was asked how South Africa dealt with the issue of racism during the development of the new constitution. He responded by stating that it was an inclusive process which depended on the feedback and participation of all of the nation's minority groups. Today South Africa has one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, officially recognizing the 11 indigenous languages, as well as the traditional leadership and customs of all of its citizens. The issue of how to confront post-conflict delinquency was also raised because of its relevance to Guatemala. Ms. Martinez expressed her view that there should be non-governmental organizations which address this problem through investigation, educational programs, and extensive civic participation.

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Memory, Acknowledgement, and Overcoming Divisions

Another theme which was addressed in great depth was how to deal with the painful history of violence and loss in a manner which would promote personal recovery and the reconciliation of adversaries. In the second panel, *Luis Moreno Ocampo* of Argentina and *Paul Arthur* of Northern Ireland spoke of their country's experience in confronting the legacy of conflict and gave specific examples of how memory and acknowledgment have been brought to national attention. *Fermina Lopez* and *General Edgar Leonel Godoy Samayoa* gave Guatemalan perspectives on the issue, and the dialogue which ensued as a result of their presentations represented a critical moment of the conference. Moderator *Linn Hammergren* helped synthesize the relevant points and bring closure to an extremely productive session.

Luis Moreno Ocampo spoke of the wide-spread repression imposed on the citizens of Argentina during the 1960's and 70's, and he provided a detailed description of a group of students who were mentally and physically tortured by agents of the military. As Public Prosecutor during the trials of 1983, Mr. Moreno Ocampo was witness to the incrimination of many of the military generals responsible for war crimes, however this alone could not heal the nation's wounds. Phantoms continued to re-appear for many Argentineans, and Mr. Moreno Ocampo believes that due to the magnitude of the conflict it is likely that the legacy will be felt for the next 50 years. He noted that both military personnel and civilian victims suffer, and new problems have arisen in the post-conflict society, including excessive corruption, violence, and poverty. For a number of years Mr. Moreno Ocampo has worked with a private NGO focused on the prevention of street violence among youth. Accordingly, he has seen the powerful role that civic organizations can play in confronting the past and helping people to move forward, and Mr. Moreno Ocampo recommended that Guatemala look upon their community groups as mechanisms for change.

Paul Arthur continued with a presentation detailing the ways in which Northern Ireland has facilitated the process of memory and acknowledgement after more than 30 years of civil war. He cited the Good Friday Agreement, adopted in April of 1998, as an important moment in which the government publicly acknowledged the need to recognize the victims of violence as a necessary element of reconciliation. Lost Lives, a book which chronicles all of the lives lost during the war, and "Legacy," a radio show which allowed victims to talk about their losses, were also useful mechanisms for healing wounds. According to Mr. Arthur, for many people there is no other choice than memory, and it is impossible to reconcile the living without first reconciling the past.

The panel continued with remarks by Fermina Lopez, a representative of the indigenous organization CONAVIGUA, and General Edgar Leonel Godoy Samayoa. Ms. Lopez described how profoundly the indigenous communities of Guatemala have suffered, and she spoke of the personal loss she continues to feel due to the unresolved kidnapping of her husband by the army. She called for public acknowledgment of the violations committed by the armed forces and urged the government to develop a national reconciliation project to help overcome divisions and begin to restore trust. General Godoy Samayoa spoke from the perspective of the military, defending the position of the army as a professional institution devoted to upholding the values of democracy and committed to the peace process. He did not acknowledge the crimes committed, such as the kidnapping of Ms. Lopez' husband, but stated that history must be remembered so that it is not repeated in the future.

As noted by a number of individuals in the audience, the fact that representatives of the indigenous community and the military were sitting side by side on a panel was a rare and significant occasion for Guatemala. A question was posed to General Godoy Samayoa about how he felt after hearing the detailed description of the pain experienced by Ms. Lopez. Although he did not share his personal feelings, he stated that the army had made numerous efforts to facilitate the healing and reconciliation process. During this session an important conversation was begun, yet it became clear that Guatemala has a long way to go in terms of acknowledging the past and openly conversing about these difficult issues.

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The Role of Civil Society in Countries in Transition

The third panel, moderated by *Wendy Luers*, focused on the ways that civil society can effect change in countries in transition. The presentations of *Silvia Rueda de Uranga*, *Shulamit Aloni*, and *Konstanty Gebert* described civil initiatives in Argentina, Israel, and Poland, and remarks by *Rigoberto Quemé* and *Gustavo Porras* turned the discussion to civil society in Guatemala and the challenges it is currently facing.

Ms. Rueda de Uranga described the influential role of non-governmental organizations in allowing individual citizens to become involved in helping their country recover from many years of silence and oppression. As President of the Conciencia Association, she has developed various programs to promote civic education and the advancement of democratic ideals, such as inter-religious seminars, workshops for women and youth, and initiatives for the reform of public education. During the past 20 years, she has seen a decline in corruption and commitment to democracy in her country, and she attributes these achievements to a more vocal and focused civil society. She agreed with Mr. Moreno Ocampo that NGOs have helped Argentina through its difficult transition and

stressed that Guatemala should also rely on community organizations to provide a voice for citizens and push for institutional reform.

Shulamit Aloni described civil societies as powerful communities with their own language, culture, tradition, and solidarity which should be supported by a legal system that ensures equal rights for all individuals. She discussed the "Outside Office Hours" radio show that she ran in Israel during the 1950's, which allowed citizens who felt discriminated against to openly discuss their problems and look for realistic solutions. Ms. Aloni brought in government officials who could provide explanations for and, in some cases, propose changes to existing laws. She pointed out the importance of the government's role in providing a legal backbone for civil rights and support for civil initiatives, and she cited the establishment of independent bureaus for human rights and the Supreme Court of Justice as critical achievements for Israel's civil society.



Konstanty Gebert, a dissident journalist during the era of martial law in Poland, also had an inspiring story to share of civil society at work. When thousands were jailed by the government in an effort to shut down the underground newspaper network, crippling solidarity and threatening freedom of speech, many Poles united to ensure that the newspaper continued to be circulated. As the papers were normally delivered in large bags, hundreds of people began carrying these bags to make it impossible for the government to regulate distribution. In essence, it was civil society making its own informed decisions that broke the government monopoly over the press. Furthermore, Mr. Gebert explained that without a strong civil society backing the 1989 Round Table discussions between the communist regime and the trade unions, Poland's smooth transition to democracy would not have been possible. He urged Guatemalans to consider whether freedom of speech had been attained in their country, for, according to Mr. Gebert, without a free and independent media, there cannot be true democracy.

Through the presentations it became clear that civil society takes shape in various ways and can express itself through many different forums. Rigoberto Quemé, newly-elected Mayor of the Quetzaltenango province and highly-respected indigenous leader, noted that in Guatemala civil society is represented not only by NGOs, but also by strong, organized indigenous communities. Mr. Quemé also explained that the concerns facing civil society in Guatemala are remarkably different than those of his international counterparts. While groups in Poland, Argentina, and Israel have worked to secure greater freedom of speech and the protection of civil rights, in Guatemala civic groups struggle for subsistence and cultural survival. As the government is not representative of the country's majority, citizens must fight against racism to attain rights which are not secured by the nation's institutions.

Gustavo Porras, Private Secretary to the President of Guatemala, held a different perspective as a result of his experience working with the government, rather than directly with civic groups. He addressed the role of the populace in the peace process and maintained that greater civic participation was necessary to advance democracy in Guatemala. Mr. Porras noted that while the government needed to communicate more openly with the Guatemalan people about realizing the goals set out in the peace

accords, it was also imperative that the citizens of Guatemala show a greater commitment to the peace and reconciliation process.

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Leadership and Overcoming Obstacles

Lech Walesa, former President of Poland, gave a presentation which was regarded by many Guatemalan participants as one of the most influential portions of the conference. The participants listened intently as President Walesa described his experiences of leading the Solidarity Movement in Poland, playing an instrumental role in overturning the communist regime, and acting as his country's first democratically-elected president.



President Walesa began with a note of optimism, sharing his belief that the new world order will allow for solutions to be found for problems facing nations like Guatemala, and he stressed that civic participation, backed by strong leadership, was an essential component of this process. According to President Walesa, a leader can be born in two distinct ways. One is as a career politician, who establishes a set of goals and focuses clearly on methods to attain leadership and power. The other method involves simply working hard, setting high standards for success, and keeping promises, and individuals who do this become leaders without ever intending to be.

President Walesa also articulated the qualities which he believes to be essential for effective leadership. In addition to having a voice which is reflective of and responsive to the concerns of the populace, a good leader must act as a fortune teller, foreseeing problems before they occur and taking action to prevent them. He noted that one of the biggest problems of humanity is being too late with solutions. If a leader has strong analytical skills, clearly calculated goals, and a realistic vision for the future, he will have a profound impact on the strengthening of the nation. Conversely, poor leaders pose a threat to a country's well-being and progress, and President Walesa expressed his fear that the rise of demagogues with personal agendas and simplistic solutions could instigate a reversion to archaic systems and problems of the past.

During a lengthy session of questions and answers, the issues of regionalism and institutional reform were addressed. President Walesa noted that small countries should strengthen regional ties to improve their power within the global environment. Poland has

made gains as a part of the European community, and he suggested that Guatemala could also benefit greatly from a close affiliation with other Central American countries. In addition, he stressed that the political institutions of a country must be reflective of its social structure and representative of all sectors of society. As a nation made up of many distinct indigenous communities, Guatemalans must embrace this plurality and ensure that their democratic institutions adequately give a voice to all individuals.

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Creating the Institutions Necessary for Economic and Political Stability

As the panel on civil society drew attention to the role of the populace in creating change, this portion of the conference focused on institutional change as a necessary element of reform in post-conflict society. With Susan Kaufman Purcell as moderator, the session included Jan Krzysztof Bielecki of Poland and John Biehl of Chile who explained the significance of political and economic reform and gave Guatemalans some suggestions for facilitating this process. Lars Franklin discussed institutional reform in Guatemala based on his experience as Resident Coordinator of the United Nations. Colonel Mario Antonio Ardon Aguilar concluded with remarks about the successful reform of the national militia, which provoked a lengthy discussion on the role of and justification for the Guatemalan armed forces.

Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, former Prime Minister of Poland and Executive Director of the London-based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, addressed both economic and political reform, citing the transformation of the economy as the basis for all other institutional changes. He said that frequently politicians skirt the issue of economic development due to its complexity and unattractive quality for political campaigns. However, he maintained that without economic recovery it is difficult to attain democracy, strengthen civil society, or establish political and social justice. Mr. Bielecki stressed that small and medium-sized businesses are the driving force of recovery and helpful in combating unemployment, yet their success is often hindered by vested interest groups. He asserted that competition within political institutions was necessary for loosening the power of these interest groups and ending the era of technocratic rule, in which leaders are isolated from their citizens. Mr. Bielecki challenged Guatemalans not to be afraid of political change and urged the government of Guatemala to have the political will to implement new laws which reflect the needs and demands of the people.

According to John Biehl, peace and democracy have become luxuries enjoyed only by the richest, most developed nations. These values need to be universally protected, and Mr. Biehl agreed with Mr. Bielecki that political and economic reform are mandatory for the attainment of this goal. He pointed out Latin America's long history of violence, persecution based on race and culture, and human rights violations and described the specific problems which Chile, as well as Mexico, Colombia, and Guatemala, have confronted. By using a great deal of imagination and innovation, Mr. Biehl suggested that Guatemala would begin to overcome the legacy of the past and instill its institutions with democratic values.

Lars Franklin discussed what he saw as the recent progress and future challenges with regard to institutional reform in Guatemala. Positive changes have included the dismantling of the police force, the assessment and reorganization of the army, and the

passage of amendments to various unjust laws. However, he said that many additional steps must be taken to improve the country's archaic structures. Currently, the institutions do not reflect the needs of civil society or the multi-culturalism which defines Guatemala. Due to the fear of losing power, politicians often make decisions for their personal benefit, rather than for the welfare of the country. Furthermore, an open culture of participative democracy which encourages political pluralism is not supported by the current political structures. In terms of economic practices, the government has committed to neither productive investment nor long-term planning, and Mr. Franklin asserted that the promotion of free markets and the re-assessment of foreign assistance must become a priority.

Colonel Mario Antonio Ardon Aguilar's presentation focused on the reform of the military, which he maintained was a good example of successful institutional change in Guatemala. He claimed that in the three years since the signing of the peace accords, reforms have been initiated which include the demobilization of troops, improved educational standards and procedures for soldiers, and an increase in female participation. Colonel Ardon Aguilar said that a new level of confidence and respect has been built and that the army can now work to strengthen democracy, peace, and human rights. His point of view was extremely controversial and triggered some emotional responses from the audience. Colonel Ardon Aguilar was asked how the existence of an army responsible for such a vast quantity of human rights abuses could be justified, and he responded that throughout history the armed forces have been imperative for the protection of the rights of civilians. Another person raised the issue of the army's training procedures, which, he said, have notoriously included teaching soldiers methods of torture. Colonel Ardon Aguilar stated that such methods were under assessment but in general the military training programs currently employed were necessary and reflective of the needs of Guatemalan society.

This panel demonstrated the urgent need for Guatemalan policy-makers to address institutional reform and was helpful in providing some specific ways to aid this process, such as greater competition within political institutions and progressive economic transformation. The presentations produced valuable discussion that continued among small groups during lunch, which ensued immediately thereafter.

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Bridging the Gap Between Communities

As the most culturally diverse nation in Central America, Guatemala has struggled with the issue of how to build consensus among groups with various ideologies and perspectives. Not only has the society been divided between indigenous and ladinos (predominantly white and western-oriented), but there are also many distinctions between the 21 indigenous communities. In the fourth panel, moderated by Beatriz Manz, Renzo Rosal cited polarization in Guatemala which is supported by deep economic bases as one of the country's largest obstacles, and Carlos Chocoj asserted that multiculturalism needed to be embraced by Guatemala. Branka Kaselj of Croatia and Robert Conway of South Africa shared with Guatemalan participants the methods they had used to bridge the gap between communities in their own countries, noting that their techniques were readily transferable to Guatemala.

Branka Kaselj began with remarks about the deep divisions which have characterized Croatia for centuries and still pose a threat to the unity and stability of the nation. She said that as a member of the Serbian minority in Croatia and part of a mixed marriage, she understands the difficulties that arise from living in a divided society. To combat the ethnic, religious, political, and ideological divisions during the war, Ms. Kaselj helped found the Center for Peace, Non-Violence, and Human Rights, an organization which works to create a civil society based on a culture of non-violence, tolerance, and security. The programs of her organization are focused on peace education, promotion of human rights, and community development, and give individuals the necessary tools to manage conflict and trauma, as well as build healthy relationships. She discussed the "Listening Program," in which over 600 women participated in an initiative that involved knocking on the doors of neighbors to discuss problems and break down barriers. The program was highly successful and has been used as a model by various international development organizations. Ms. Kaselj concluded with the message that persistent, grass-roots initiatives are effective mechanisms for bridging gaps within divided societies like Croatia and Guatemala, as well as essential components for constructing equitable, democratic nations.

Robert Conway was emphatic that the model he had used in South Africa to mediate conflict and unify divided groups should be assessed as an option for Guatemala. He described the similarities between the two countries: distinct rural and urban populations, vast cultural and linguistic differences, and power in the hands of a small minority while the majority of the populace remains marginalized. As a private mediator for the past 10 years, Mr. Conway helped establish peace committees comprised of people from various political and racial affiliations who work together to mitigate conflict, negotiate peaceful relationships, and encourage civic participation in institutional change. Peace committee members played a critical role in reaching the South African peace accords and helping the government to see that by listening to civil society it was not giving up power, but rather working in a more efficient and democratic way. At the onset, relations within the peace committees were marked by distrust, however individuals learned to acknowledge differences, transcend self-interest, and give up power in order to address larger, more universal problems. Mr. Conway argued that Guatemalan peace committees could strengthen civil society by creating a mechanism for diverse groups to work together, establish trust, and effect widespread change.

Renzo Rosal, Secretary General of Rafael Landivar University, stated his perception of the Guatemalan reality: deep societal divisions which threaten national unity and seriously limit the nation's progress. He said that there needed to be more discussion on how to remedy the country's stratified social structure and create widespread support for reconstruction and peace-building. He cited the impending change in government as an appropriate moment to focus national attention on this issue, as well as to promote institutional reform and heightened civic participation. According to Mr. Rosal, Guatemala must develop a sustainable vision and a realistic plan for embedding peace into the nation.

Carlos Chocoj, an active member of the indigenous community, spoke of the urgent need for Guatemala to reconstruct embittered relations and ensure dignity and rights for its people. He said that there must be a recognition of Guatemala's multiculturalism, as well as greater appreciation of the Mayan communities, which have been persecuted and severely wounded by the long-standing civil war. Mr. Chocoj noted that nearly 90% of the 42 million victims of war were indigenous, and many continue to suffer from the terror of the massacres and institutionalized racism. In his opinion, an official apology from the government, as well as efforts to reveal the truth and search for the disappeared, would greatly aid the healing process. They would also allow opposing groups to come to terms with the past and begin to build peaceful relations.

A number of significant issues were raised in the questions which followed. Mr. Conway was asked how South Africa officially recognized its diverse languages and cultures, and he pointed out that the progressive new constitution ensured that the rights of each community were protected. The causes of Guatemala's civil war were also addressed; an individual wondered if the war had been instigated by an external agenda (anti-communist sentiment during the Cold War) or by internal factors (the racism against Mayan communities). Mr. Chocoj said that both internal and external forces had been influential, however it was the internal societal divisions and unequal distribution of wealth which had provided the appropriate environment for the events which unfolded.

At the end of the session a conference participant fervently stated that this was the first time he had been witness to the open discussion of problematic issues on Guatemalan soil, rather than abroad in Norway or Mexico. He said that this gave him hope that progress was being made and that the deep societal divisions in Guatemala would someday be overcome.



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Guatemala in the Global Context

Eduardo Stein, José Roberto Lopez, and Robert Hutchings provided interesting insight into Guatemala's current position in global affairs, in the aftermath of the Cold War and in light of the new technological advancements and changing power structures. Eduardo Stein presented an insider perspective of Guatemalan foreign affairs, while Robert Hutchings discussed how other nations, namely the United States, have interacted with Guatemala. José Roberto Lopez of the World Bank touched on Guatemala's position in the global economic environment, making predictions and recommendations for the future.

Eduardo Stein explained that although many people expected to witness a short transitional period, the resolution of Guatemala's complex problems and integration into the globalized world is a slow and tedious process. Guatemala is currently struggling with the dichotomy between internal and international demands and finding it difficult to both solve national problems and match global advancements in technology. Institutional weaknesses and the after-effects of previous administrations' corruption and mismanagement of resources greatly impede the process. According to Mr. Stein, the

legacy of the Cold War remains in Guatemala, and questions of sovereignty are currently under debate. While recognizing Guatemala's need for international support, Mr. Stein asserted that Guatemala must have the freedom within the international community to make its own decisions and create its own path for the future.

Robert Hutchings did not dismiss Mr. Stein's notion of independent decision-making power, however he stressed the importance of foreign assistance for Guatemala's economic recovery. He expressed concern about the trend of cutting foreign assistance packages to developing nations and said that there must be a paradigm shift and renewed commitment worldwide to aiding countries like Guatemala through their difficult transitions. He also noted that international aid should be supportive of the process of political, economic, and social reform, rather than of specific political regimes. Mr. Hutchings conveyed his opinion that greater integration into global institutions, as well as efforts made to improve regional cooperation within Central America would greatly benefit Guatemala's economic progress.

José Roberto Lopez also provided his perspective on the country's economic future based on his experience working with the World Bank of Guatemala. He noted that as the world economy gains momentum and coffee prices are on the rise, Guatemala has the potential to make substantial economic progress. In his opinion, the approach which the new government undertakes during the first 180 days of office will be the determinant of the level of economic acceleration, and he called for a solid fiscal plan free of excessive expenditures to ensure growth of the national economy. Mr. Lopez's detailed economic analysis provided conference participants with useful information about Guatemala's current economic status, as well as projections for future growth within the world market.

Interesting questions were raised on the topic of Guatemala in the global context. A conference participant asked the panel what Guatemala could do to become more competitive internationally, and Mr. Lopez cited improving educational standards, especially in the areas of science and technology, as an essential component. The issue of how to attain regional cooperation in Central America was also addressed, and Eduardo Stein recommended that an increase in mobility of individuals between neighboring countries, as well as heightened government attention to the topic and resolute efforts to create regional alliances would aid the process.

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Conclusion

The three-day conference allowed for a diverse cross-section of Guatemalans to come together to listen to lessons learned from other transitional societies around the globe and to critically assess the specific challenges for embedding peace and strengthening reconciliation efforts in their country. The conference was deemed a very positive experience by many Guatemalan participants, who stated explicitly that the program was useful in opening dialogue among members of their divided society. Speakers shared both philosophical ideas and practical solutions, tackling a wide range of difficult issues in a relatively short time frame.

The presentations conveyed that effective leadership, an active civil society backed by catalytic NGOs, political pluralism, institutions supportive of participative democracy, and the inclusion of marginalized groups are essential elements for making the transition from a violent, destructive past towards a stable, democratic future. Complex problems without easy solutions were addressed, such as how to over-come post-conflict violence and delinquency, reconcile polarized sectors of society, and heal the wounds of individuals

victimized during many years of violence and repression. Speakers recommended that Guatemala make a concerted effort to embrace multi-culturalism, reconstruct institutions to reflect the nation's ethnic diversity, publicly acknowledge past crimes, and devise a national reconciliation program. It was also suggested that strengthening regional ties within Central America and clearly defining Guatemala's role within the international community would prove beneficial.

There was consensus among speakers and conference participants that the Challenge of Strengthening the Peace conference acted as a powerful forum for discussion on peace-building in Guatemala and that follow-up programming in the country would provide additional momentum to continue the process and help instigate change. The Project on Justice in Times of Transition is currently assessing a number of viable options for future work in Guatemala, including a program focused on strengthening the role of women and a workshop which would bring together Guatemalan indigenous groups and South Africans to discuss mechanisms for embracing multiculturalism and securing equal representation for all communities. It is likely that The Project will develop and implement a new programmatic initiative in the coming months.