



Martti Ahtisaari

Forum för talare
Oktober 2009

Ett nyhetsbrev från Talarforum

Contributing to World Peace

Background

Martti Ahtisaari was born on 23 June 1937 in the city of Viipuri, in Karelia, then still part of Finland. Finland lost Viipuri to the Soviet Union during the Second World War, and along with more than 400 000 fellow Karelians, Martti Ahtisaari became an eternally displaced person, as he often says. With his mother, Ahtisaari moved from one household to another before finally settling in the city of Kuopio, in the Eastern part of Finland. For Martti Ahtisaari, this experience of homelessness marked him profoundly and which explains his strong drive to build his life in the advancement of peace and helping others with a similar fate. For the past 45 years, his career has been intertwined with development aid issues and promoting peace in the world's conflict areas. For much of his career, Martti Ahtisaari was a senior civil servant in the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as serving under five Secretaries General of the United Nations.

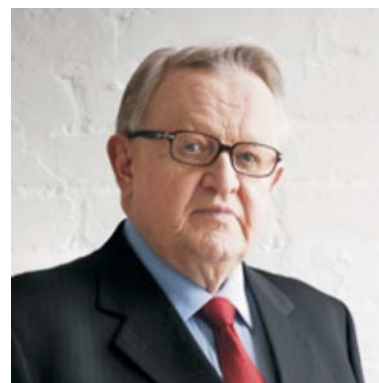
Martti Ahtisaari was elected the President of the Republic of Finland in 1994. He held the position until the end of February 2000, and during his term steered Finland through its accession to the European Union, amongst many other important developments. Upon leaving the office, Ahtisaari has had several major international assignments, continuing his previous work in international peace-mediation and conflict resolution.

Martti Ahtisaari's post-presidential activities have included facilitating the peace process between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement, chairing an independent panel on the security and safety of UN personnel in Iraq, and appointments as the UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and Personal Envoy of the OSCE CiO for Central Asia. Between 14 November 2005 and 29 February 2008, Mr. Ahtisaari acted as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the future status process for Kosovo.

On December 10th, 2008, Martti Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for his important efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts". The Norwegian Nobel Committee also highlighted the role of the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), an independent non-profit organization Ahtisaari founded after his presidency in 2000, as having provided the necessary support for his many important international assignments. Today, Ahtisaari acts as Chairman of the Board for CMI.

Conflict resolution

In his Nobel Peace Prize lecture Martti Ahtisaari emphasized his belief that peace is a question of will. He firmly believes that all conflicts can be settled, and that there are no excuses for allowing



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them to become eternal. It is intolerable that violent conflicts defy resolution for decades causing immeasurable human suffering, and preventing economic and social development. In turn, the passivity and impotence of the international community make it more difficult for us to place our faith in jointly built security structures. Despite the many challenges, even the most intractable conflicts can be resolved if the parties involved and the international community join forces and work together for a common aim.

If individuals work together, they can find solutions. Martti Ahtisaari urges us not to accept any excuses from those in power for not actively engaging in the resolution of conflicts. He argues that conflict resolution begins from the recognition that wars and conflicts are not inevitable. They are caused by human beings, as there are always interests that are furthered by war. Therefore, those who have power and influence can also stop war.

To achieve sustainable peace, a peace process needs to be inclusive. One party can always claim victory in a conflict, but building peace must involve everybody: the weak and the powerful, the victors and the vanquished, men and women, young and old. However, peace negotiations are often conducted by small elite. In the future, we must be able to achieve a broader participation in more inclusive peace processes. In particular, there is a need to ensure the engagement of women in all the stages of a peace process.

All of Martti Ahtisaari's peace assignments have taught him that a peace process is largely a matter of cooperation and partnership between different actors, parties to a conflict, peace mediators, governments, civic society and international organizations.

Peace processes and the agreements resulting from them can end violence, but the real work only starts after a peace agreement has been concluded. The agreements reached have to be implemented. Social and political change does not happen overnight, and the reconstruction and establishment of democracy demand patience. These require the adoption of a comprehensive approach to peace building, and support for civil society.

Peace mediation

Mr. Ahtisaari often highlights the fact that mediators do not choose the conflicts they became involved in, as the parties to the conflict themselves choose the mediator. The participation of a peace mediator as intermediary has to be based on the trust of all the conflicting parties. The task of the mediator is to help the parties to open difficult issues and to nudge them forward along a peace process. The mediator's role combines the roles of a ship's pilot, a consulting medical doctor, midwife and teacher.

However, Ahtisaari also feels that there tends to be too much focus on the mediators themselves. This can dis-empower the parties to the conflict, and creates the wrong impression that peace can come from the outside. The only individuals that can make peace are those who are involved in the conflict: just as they are responsible for the conflict and its consequences, so too should they be given responsibility and recognition for the making of peace.



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Transatlantic cooperation

Martti Ahtisaari is an ardent promoter of transatlantic co-operation. The United States and the European Union enjoy an exceptionally broad and deep commonality of interests and values.

Whether our democracies can overcome the global challenges facing them will depend on our ability to build more ambitious transatlantic co-operation. It is in the common interest of both Europe and the US to promote global stability and peace. The US and the EU are currently presented with an ideal moment to strengthen their co-operation in conflict prevention and resolution. Both sides now agree to a large extent on the major challenges facing them.

Multilateralism remains the legitimate and often also the most effective foundation for conflict resolution. The US played an instrumental role in establishing the multilateral organisations that today work to maintain peace, stability and manage emerging crises in the world. Multilateralism strives for common security. Some issues are inherently multilateral and cannot be managed without the help of other countries. This holds true for a long list of security threats: the instability of global financial markets, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, trafficking of humans and drugs, international organised crime, transnational terrorism, the spread of pandemics and climate change.

The United Nations provides the right framework for international peace efforts and solutions to global problems. It is important that the UN member states work resolutely to strengthen the world organization, and provide its missions with adequate resources and political support, instead of what has often been the case in recent years.

Poverty reduction and youth employment

For Martti Ahtisaari, one of the most acute problems of today is the growing rich-poor gap. Three billion people now live on less than \$2 a day. The physical, political, psychological and moral consequences of this disparity are enormous.

The current global financial crisis has further increased the risk of growing inequality. Many of the regions and countries most affected by the withdrawal of capital from emerging markets and the collapse of international trade are already fragile, with many only just emerging from years of conflict. Growing inequality between countries and within society exacerbates existing cleavages.

The loss of welfare and employment opportunities leads to a loss of hope and faith in the future among the most vulnerable. If the present trend continues, hundreds of millions of young people will be out of work in countries that are in early stages of development. This in turn fosters the rise of fundamentalism and violence, and creates breeding-grounds for crime, terrorism and war. We risk losing a generation to the financial crisis.

And with globalization and increased interdependence among countries, violence in one region will have an impact in another part of the world.

One of Martti Ahtisaari's current objectives is the promotion of youth employment and entrepreneurship, with a view to teaching young people to contribute to their own future and to the future of their communities.



T A L A R F O R U M

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Conflict settlement also requires the injection of optimism and hope born from employment and economic opportunities. Otherwise, fragile peace agreements can rarely be sustained. Over the long term, only the private sector is capable of growing new enterprises, creating investment opportunities which provide employment and enduring economic security. Attracting private-sector investment into war-torn areas requires innovation and ways of mitigating risk. A mix of non-economic and economic incentives will have to be devised. Similarly, the involvement of the private sector in the larger work of formulating strategies and programs for post-war recovery and reconstruction will require innovative thinking, and a broader dialogue and co-operation between the private and public sectors, and other actors involved in the post-conflict phase.