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(text)

INTERDEPENDENCE AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,
mes chers amis,

The American columnist George Will once wrote that "few things are as stimulating as other people's calamities, observed from a safe distance". Mr. Will's insight into human nature is one we all understand. But the lesson of today's interdependent world is that there are no more "safe distances".

All has changed, as Einstein said, except our way of thinking. We have yet to come to grips with the new age in which we live, the age of interdependence. Our international institutions, the mirror of our attitudes, were designed in simpler times, when the United States dominated the international economy, when the Third World was scarcely thought of, and when nuclear strategic parity was unimagined.

In matters nuclear, we are now learning that the West's security is the East's security, that we depend on each other for survival. We are learning that old attitudes do not go with new technology, that notions of fighting and prevailing in a nuclear war are very dangerous delusions. But we have not yet found a sure way of bridging the gap between new understanding and age-old instinct. And so we risk the ultimate Darwinian test.

Economic times have also changed. OPEC has taught us all, in its school of hard shocks, that interdependence between North and South is a reality. The debt crisis has reinforced that perception in terms that everyone, and not only commercial bankers, can understand. The debtors' problems have also become the creditors' problems. We really are our brother's keeper. That it is now an economic necessity that we be so, as well as a moral imperative.

Carlos Fuentes, the Mexican poet, once said that he began to understand interdependence in the fifties when he came upon Mexican villagers praying that the Korean war would not end because it would affect their sales of hemp to American companies.