



## **The Future of the World Bank: A CGD Symposium September 23, 2005**

**Opening Remarks by Nancy Birdsall, President, Center for Global Development**  
[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM A TAPE RECORDING.]

**NANCY BIRDSALL:** [in progress] old friends, especially from The World Bank. I'm looking forward to what I know will be a very exciting morning, a rich discussion of one of the world's great global institutions, one of our precious assets in what is an increasingly global system.

We have very distinguished speakers who are leading thinkers and actors on the global, economic and political challenges we all face, and what is the role that the World Bank could take in addressing those challenges.

The purpose of our sessions this morning is very much to generate a conversation and it is good to see how many people here, amongst you, can contribute to that conversation.

The idea is to have a combination of a conversation and a debate, and we've done that by trying to ensure we bring, amongst the speakers, different perspectives, maybe not opposing perspectives but different perspectives on each of the issues, and that seems particularly important, given the mission of The World Bank. The question of whether business as usual at the Bank will be sufficient, given the tremendous changes going on around us, and the new emphasis around the world, not only on an increasingly integrated global economy, but on the problem of disparities in living standards between the rich and poor within countries and also of course between the richest countries and the poorest countries.

So words like democracy, empowerment, representation, are taking on increasing force in terms of global norms.

So all of that puts The World Bank at the center stage. Yesterday, along with other, I'd say the United Nations of course, the IMF and the WTO--yesterday, we had Kemal Dervis in this same room, speaking about the role of the U.N. and I think that's one of the challenges we face in thinking about The World Bank. How does it fit with the role of some of the other global institutions?

We do plan to put together a symposium publication based on what our speakers have to say today and including several essays of people who were not able to be here, and if our speakers and authors honor their commitments, I hope that we'll have that available for all of you late this year or early next year, and the idea is that it will complement and build on the report that we issued in June, which Paul Wolfowitz was referring to, and I was pleased to see holding in his hand the hardest job in the world, five crucial tasks for the next World Bank president.

I would like to acknowledge, quickly, a few people who are here amongst our speakers, but more than that, who worked with us on that report. Pierre Jacquet, who's going to be speaking later. John Hicklin [ph] who is a visiting scholar at the Center. Steve Radelet, over in the corner, was working with us on that. Is there anyone I've missed? Ariel Baweer [ph] I think will be here later. Jo Marie Griesgraber [ph], are you here? But is coming later, I guess.

So with our thanks to them. Is there anyone else that I've missed? I don't think so.

Okay. Now I have the pleasure of sitting down, actually, and introducing Lawrence MacDonald, who is going to facilitate, moderate the rest of the morning. I'm very proud and pleased to introduce Lawrence. Some of you know that he spent some time at The World Bank. He has come, about a year ago, to the center to be our director of communications and it is because of him that many of you know about our existence.

He's done a terrific job managing a revision or a reconstruction of our Web site, so I invite all of you to go to our Web site, I hope in the next few days. Maybe mid next week, we'll have on our Web site some of the material from this session today.

So Lawrence, thank you very much and good luck with an interesting, obstreperous and enriching set of debates today.

I should add, I wanted to say and I forgot--it's debate based on rigor as well as wisdom. We have tried to bring to you today people who have thought about these issues and worked on them analytically. So it's that combination of rigor and wisdom that I know Lawrence will help bring out for the rest of the morning. Thank you, Lawrence.