

# 2005-2006 World Leaders Forum Explores Global Development in Yearlong Event Series



In September, heads of state who are in New York for the UN General Assembly will visit Columbia to participate in the World Leaders Forum (WLF), a unique opportunity to join in an open exchange of ideas with students and faculty as well as leading members of the greater New York City community.

Said President Bollinger, "The World Leaders Forum events help realize the purpose of having Columbia University in the City of New York serve as a center for the discussion of important economic,

political, and social issues facing the world."

This year, the Forum has been extended to a yearlong series of lectures, panels, and conversations with world-renowned leaders, and the definition of "world leader" has been expanded. Speakers now include figures in the economic, cultural, and religious arenas. There will be an address by the Dalai Lama, several concerts featuring major performers from around the world, and a film series exploring the influence of American films abroad.

The particular focus of this year's

Forum is global development. Beginning with a series of campus addresses by heads of state attending the UN General Assembly, the exploration of this theme continues with discussions of topics ranging from exporting an American-style free press, to meeting rising global health challenges.

A number of symposia will discuss key priorities of the United Nations, especially the goal of grappling with the issues of poverty and hunger throughout the developing world. "Columbia faculty have played central roles in creating the

*Lisa Anderson, James T. Shotwell Professor of International Relations, and dean of the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), one of the main sponsors of the 2005-2006 World Leaders Forum*

## In Conversation with Lisa Anderson and Jeffrey Sachs

The Record asked the dean of SIPA about the thinking behind this year's World Leaders Forum, and her plans for next year's event.

**The Record:** *This year's World Leaders Forum is focused on global development. Why did you and President Bollinger choose that theme?*

**Lisa Anderson:** Global development is an issue in which Columbia has invested substantial resources, and it seemed appropriate to recognize that. There is hardly a school at Columbia, from SIPA to Public Health and Nursing, from Business to Law, that does not have significant programs in developing countries. And, of course, the Earth Institute's involvement with the UN's Millennium Development Goals is enormously important.

*What kinds of development issues will leaders be asked to address?*

Each country has its own agenda when it comes to development. For some, the highest priority is post-conflict reconciliation; for others, it is democratization and the extension of the rule of law; and for still others, it is the need for a thriving private sector or for the eradication of childhood diseases and decreased infant mortality. As you can see from those examples, Columbia's various professional

schools—SIPA above all, but also the Law School, the Business School, Public Health and many others—speak to various aspects of development; and we hope that our visitors will reflect on some or all of these aspects—and perhaps even suggest how Columbia can contribute to addressing the critical questions they raise for their countries.

*This year you have expanded the definition of world leaders to include those in the cultural, literary and religious arenas; and reflecting this, music and film programs will be offered for the first time. What was the thinking behind this?*

When we think of world leaders, we typically envision political and economic figures. While they are certainly important, the reality is that people in many walks of life are influential in shaping how we understand and work in our world. Think of the critical roles that Archbishop Desmond Tutu, playwright Václav Havel, philosopher Hannah Arendt, filmmaker Ang Lee, and singer Bono have played in defining our world. These kinds of people ought to feel at home at Columbia, and

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The Record spoke with the Earth Institute director about his prescriptions for ending world poverty.

**The Record:** *The Earth Institute is closely associated with poverty relief in Africa. But then why is it called the "Earth" Institute?*

**Jeffrey Sachs:** When we consider extreme poverty, we tend to think first of sub-Saharan Africa, which is the epicenter of the world's interlocking crises of poverty, disease and environmental degradation. Yet the Earth Institute aims to fight poverty and promote sustainable development around the world, in both the short and long term. Earth Institute scientists and researchers work in five core areas: earth sciences (including climate change), ecology and agronomy, engineering, health sciences and social sciences. Our activities put special focus on the needs of the planet's poorest inhabitants, but more generally aim to help the entire planet to work towards sustainable development. Earth Institute scientists are working in all parts of the world, from the Arctic to Antarctica, and all major regions in between. They are also heavily engaged in studying the ecology and economics of our own region.

*In addition to leading the Earth Institute, you direct the UN Millennium Project, a multinational task force of economists, scientists, and development experts. What is the advantage of having such close ties between the UN and an institute at a major university?*

The United Nations and the Earth Institute benefit tremendously from their interaction. The Earth Institute has provided the UN Millennium Project with a group of dedicated world-class scientists whose research is geared towards helping the poor. At the same time, the UN Millennium Project has allowed Earth Institute scientists, faculty and students to interact with global policy experts, diplomats and politicians throughout the world, who are working to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A strong scientific understanding of issues such as nutrition, food production, population growth, and disease is vital to achieving the MDGs. The Earth Institute's cross-disciplinary approach enables its researchers to propose practical solutions to some of the major challenges of global sustainable development. The hope is that the



*Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Earth Institute*

Earth Institute, by working in partnership with the United Nations, can connect scientific research with policy implementation to achieve real results.

*Could you describe very briefly your proposal to meet the first of the MDGs, that of halving global poverty and hunger by 2015?*

That's a very big question, to which we devoted several volumes of analysis in our report to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Let me just focus on one specific issue: increasing food production to help combat extreme hunger in Africa. The Green Revolution that has taken place in Asia and the developing world since the 1960s has led to roughly a tripling of agricultural productivity, and has helped to end extreme hunger for hundreds of millions of people. Yet sub-Saharan Africa hasn't yet had a Green Revolution, even though the underlying science exists to increase significantly Africa's food production. A 21st-century African Green Revolution would generate dramatic increases in Africa's food yields and dramatic reductions in pervasive hunger.

My colleagues Pedro Sanchez and Cheryl Palm are in the forefront of thinking on how to produce this 21st-century African Green Revolution. Their strategy calls for stepped up utilization of chemical and organic fertilizers (including agro-forestry techniques to replenish soil nitrogen), improved seed varieties, and more effective water management techniques. Earth Institute scientists are currently implementing these techniques in the Millennium Villages research project, and early results have been impressive. In the coming year, we will expand our village-based research program, as well as our work

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### ON THE SEPTEMBER ROSTER

*Clockwise from upper left:*

*Pervez Musharraf, president of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Sept. 16;*

*Mikheil Saakashvili, president of the Republic of Georgia, Sept. 14;*

*Tarja Halonen, president of the Republic of Finland, Sept. 12;*

*Paul Kagame, president of Rwanda, Sept. 15*

