The Delta Prize for Global Understanding

The University of Georgia

Awarded in 2009 to

Mohamed ElBaradei
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Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei
Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei delivers his acceptance speech for the Delta Prize on March 18, 2009 in Athens. (Photo/Paul Efland)

Inset: The Delta Prize Sculpture. The Delta Prize sculpture was designed by Barbara Mann and Gary Noffke. The sculpture consists of a sterling silver medallion, approximately 2 1/4 inches in diameter and 1/8 inch thick, held in place by a titanium pin on a bronze triangular base. The medallion portrays the earth with the abstracted continents in low relief. In raised lettering surrounding the earth are, on one side, the words “THE DELTA PRIZE FOR GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING,” and, on the other side, the words “THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA.” The medallion rotates in place on the stand. The name of the recipient of the Delta Prize is inscribed on the bronze base. (Photo/Paul Efland)
The Delta Prize for Global Understanding

The Delta Prize for Global Understanding, endowed by the Delta Air Lines Foundation and administered by The University of Georgia, is awarded on an annual basis to individuals who by their own initiative have provided opportunities for greater understanding among cultures and nations. The Delta Prize honors a variety of contributions to peace and cooperation, such as grassroots projects that diminish hostilities in a particular region of the world, international programs that facilitate communication or commerce among different peoples, and the leadership of individuals in the solution of global problems.
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I am delighted that the University of Georgia has a longstanding partnership with Delta Air Lines in awarding the annual Delta Prize for Global Understanding. I am especially happy tonight that we can give the tenth Delta Prize to Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei.

As Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Dr. ElBaradei has campaigned tirelessly against the military use of nuclear power—and against war in general. The University of Georgia shares Dr. ElBaradei's commitment to peace through understanding, for which Dr. ElBaradei is being honored tonight.

Dr. ElBaradei has said that the twenty-first century requires “a new mindset and a change of heart, to be able to see the person across the ocean as our neighbor.” That is what we instill in our students here at the University of Georgia, in the expectation that their understanding of other cultures will enable them to contribute in the future to a more peaceful global society.

The University has striven for a decade to provide students with opportunities to become acquainted with people all over the world—through our study-abroad programs, our language programs, and our area study programs. We have more than ninety study-abroad and student-exchange programs for our undergraduate students. We teach not only the languages of Europe but also many of the world's other languages: Arabic, Hebrew, Swahili, Hindi, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, to name just a few. And we have robust area programs and institutes, such as the African Studies Institute, the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Institute, and the Center for Asian Studies.

Our goal through all these programs is to enable our students “to see the person across the ocean as our neighbor.”

The Delta Prize is unique among international prizes in that students participate in the selection process. Our finest students compose a Delta Prize Student Selection Committee, charged with developing a short list of nominees for the Delta Prize Board. I am pleased that they are here tonight. I suspect that they will remember for the rest of their lives that tonight they met a man who has dedicated his life to help bring peace to the world.

Michael F. Adams
President of The University of Georgia
Member of the Delta Prize Board
The University of Georgia and Delta Air Lines present the 2009 Delta Prize to Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency, for his advocacy of a world-wide moratorium on nuclear weapons and his promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear power. The Prize also honors him for his lifetime commitment to global cooperation as a means to achieve international peace and security.

Dr. ElBaradei’s career in diplomacy expresses his deeply held belief in the ability of the world’s diverse societies to interact cooperatively. Dr. ElBaradei entered the Egyptian Diplomatic Service in 1964 and served in the Permanent Missions of Egypt to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, where he had responsibility for political, legal, and arms control issues. During the next several decades, he worked with the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council, the Conference on Disarmament, the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, the Commission on Human Rights, the Organization of African Unity, and the League of Arab States.

In 1997, Dr. ElBaradei was appointed Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and was reappointed for a third term in 2005. In this position, he has promoted the peaceful use of nuclear technology—in the areas of human health, food and agriculture, industry, energy, and environmental management—while seeking to control nuclear weapons proliferation.

Dr. ElBaradei considers the IAEA’s function of weapons inspection to be “an early warning system” for the world. He has managed weapons inspections of Iraq, North Korea, Iran, and other countries and has reported the results to the UN Security Council. In 2003, when his team of inspectors found no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, he argued against the US invasion of Iraq.

Dr. ElBaradei’s belief in the futility of war and the necessity of intercultural understanding has motivated his work for four decades. In accepting the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the IAEA and himself, he said “History has taught us that war rarely resolves our differences. Force does not heal old wounds; it opens new ones.”
For his efforts to advance diplomacy and international understanding and for his leadership in the peaceful use of nuclear technology, we are delighted to give the 2009 Delta Prize for Global Understanding to Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei.

Gary K. Bertsch  
Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Delta Prize Program

Betty Jean Craige  
Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Delta Prize Program

Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei with Gary Bertsch and Betty Jean Craige (co-directors of the Delta Prize) and Lloyd Winstead (managing director of the Delta Prize) at the Delta Prize award ceremony on March 18, 2009.
Delta established the Delta Prize for Global Understanding with the University of Georgia back in 1998 with the mission of recognizing leaders who, by their own initiative, promote cooperation and understanding between nations and cultures. The $890,000 grant was, and remains today, the largest single donation ever made by the Delta Foundation.

Delta Air Lines is now the largest airline in the world. We operate the most comprehensive route network on the planet with service to six continents. As the airline has grown, we have acquired a special understanding of the cultural richness that exists in other parts of the globe. As a result, the Delta Prize for Global Understanding has taken on a special meaning for our organization and our more than 70,000 employees around the world.

As the world’s largest airline, we understand that in order to be successful in all cultures and with all people, we must play a role in facilitating cultural understanding. One way we do this is through the awarding of the Delta Prize to deserving individuals.

Dr. ElBaradei is truly deserving of the Delta Prize for Global Understanding. His work in the realm of nonproliferation and security is without peer. ElBaradei has called for a five-year worldwide moratorium on plans for new uranium enrichment and fission facilities and has pressed the existing nuclear powers to renounce their weapons for good. He has also made a priority of promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear power—for example, making radiation therapy available in less-developed countries for the treatment of diseases such as cancer and malaria.

Dr. ElBaradei’s career showcases a commitment to international law and foreign service. He is a worthy recipient of the Delta Prize.

Edward Bastian
President of Delta Air Lines
(Acceptance Speech)

President Michael Adams, President Ed Bastian, Professor Gary Bertsch, Professor Betty Jean Craige, I am absolutely honoured and humbled to accept the Delta Prize Award for Global Understanding. As I listened to the music today, I thought there is really nothing more for me to say. What did they say? “Let there be peace and let me be the first one to start it.” “You will never walk alone.” “Make our garden grow.” That is really the message of where we should be. We should work for peace. We should work together, and we should work for prosperity and economic development.

Global understanding is not really a luxury, it is an absolute imperative. It is a necessity. It is a way to survive in this interconnected world. Global understanding, to me, means that we need to understand that our diversity is our strength. We need to understand that our core values are exactly the same whether we are Hindus, Muslims, Christian or Jews. We need to understand that we cannot afford not to work together, because we are either going to succeed together or we are going to fail separately.

This is, to me, what global understanding means. Aida, my wife, and I have spent equal parts of our lives in Cairo, in New York and in Vienna. We have come to realize that, no matter how different people are in terms of nationality, language or ethnicity, at the end of the day we are exactly the same: one human family. We have the same hopes, we have the same aspirations and we have the same sense of decency that we all would like to share. But reaching human understanding requires that all of us work for it. Each of us has to play his or her part.

In my area of work, we face two main challenges—insecurity and insecurity. Inequity is something that plagues our globe. We have 900 million people—900 million people—who go to bed hungry every night. We have 1.4 billion people who live on a dollar and a quarter a day. One third of humanity lives on less than two dollars a day. One percent of us own forty percent of the world's assets. Fifty percent of us own just one percent of the world's assets. It would be foolish to think that we will have peace amid this kind of inequity, this total disparity between “us” and “them.” As Betty Jean Craige said: We can't afford to say “us” and “them.” We have to say “we.” We have heard talk about no child being left behind. I would say no human being should be left behind. That is the way for us to survive.

Insecurity is the other main challenge which we face. Wars are raging around the globe. There are festering conflicts that have been with us for decades. We see the steady erosion of international
norms and international law. The reliance on nuclear weapons harks back to the Middle Ages or earlier, to the days of “Who has the biggest club?” These are the challenges we are facing. Gordon Brown, the British Prime Minister, yesterday gave a speech on the nuclear order and the necessity of establishing a multinational nuclear fuel cycle. He mentioned four global challenges: global poverty, global security, global climate change and of course the global financial crisis. In all this, he stated—and I fully subscribe to this—that we must have an environment of cooperation and not confrontation, an environment of collaboration and not isolation. That is the only way to go.

In the IAEA, we deal with both inequities and insecurities. A good part of our work is like that of a caring mother. We try to deal with those who are left behind. Many of you probably do not know that a lot of our work is in the developing countries, helping people to get radiotherapy machines to treat cancer, to manage their groundwater so that they have enough clean water, to produce better yields of different varieties of food, to use nuclear techniques for measuring pollution to make sure that seas and oceans are clean. This is a good part of the bread and butter of our work. It is not much reported because we are often referred to only when there is a crisis. We are talked about as a watchdog. Yes, we bark sometimes, but at many other times we are a very docile dog, trying to help people in need.

Insecurity is a major challenge. We live in a world which still relies on nuclear weapons. This is simply not sustainable. I cannot continue with a straight face to go around the world telling countries that nuclear weapons are not good for you, while there are nine weapon states saying “the world is a dangerous place and we have to rely on nuclear weapons and to continue to modernize them.” That is not a sustainable system. Many people do not like to hear what I say. But I have to continue to say it because I have a responsibility on my shoulders. I need at least to make people aware that this system of security we have is not a sustainable system.

The good news is that finally the fog has been lifted. President Obama, upon his election, made a firm commitment to work for a world free from nuclear weapons. The so-called quartet—Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, Bill Perry and Sam Nunn, my good friend Sam Nunn—have come forward to say we have to go for a world free from nuclear weapons. That is not idealism; this is simply a practical way to save ourselves. Why? Because the technology is out of the tube and if we continue the way we are, more and more countries will have nuclear weapons. The odds that nuclear
weapons will be used, accidentally or intentionally, become much, much higher. More worrisome is the prospect of an extremist group acquiring nuclear weapons, because they would simply use them. The so-called concept of deterrence does not figure in their ideology. For the international community, this is a wake-up call that we need a change of mindset.

We need to look for a new system of security that does not depend on nuclear weapons. That is not going to be easy, but it’s the way we have to go. There is absolutely no excuse, twenty years after the end of the Cold War, for still having 27,000 warheads. We still have nuclear weapons on Cold War status alert. Every country has the right to acquire the nuclear technology that enables it to develop a nuclear weapon in a matter of weeks. That margin of security is absolutely unacceptable. It is unacceptable that, with all the advances we have made in areas such as information technology or biotechnology, we still, in the area of international security, live by the values of the Middle Ages. That is something we need to address and address aggressively.

As I said, I saw a clear glimmer of hope when I saw Barack Obama committing himself to nuclear disarmament, when I saw Henry Kissinger and company—and yesterday Gordon Brown—committing themselves to nuclear disarmament. Finally, we see light at the end of the tunnel and the possibility that we will have a system of security based on cooperation and not confrontation. Based on empowering international institutions, based on learning how to resolve our differences through peaceful means.

I always refer to the European Union, the twenty-seven countries that are now working together as one. They play tricks on each other all the time, but they will never think to use force against each other because they have much that binds them and the mechanisms, the institutions, to resolve their differences in a peaceful manner. My dream, I often say, is to see the world transformed into a bigger European Union, into a world where we emphasize what we share together and understand that all that we think separates us is simply superficial. Ethnicity, nationality and language add to our cultural diversity, but they are not really what we are about. What we are about is that we are one human family of six billion people. We need to continue to see how we can work together for the sake of our children and our grandchildren.

Travel is a great way of improving global understanding. I am grateful to Delta for realizing that, if we want global understanding, we need to encourage people to travel. I see that very clearly.
with my son and my daughter, who were born in Geneva, went to primary school in New York, high school in Vienna and college in London. For them, color, nationality and ethnicity are totally irrelevant. Their best friends, who were Japanese, Ethiopians and Afghans, were just human beings. This gives me a sense of hope. That’s the kind of world I would like to see. I’d like to leave our children a world where they think of themselves as part of one human family with the same core values. That is the only way we can survive.

I’d like to end by citing the Bible. When the first blood was shed, God asked Cain “Where is your brother?” and Cain answered defiantly “I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?” Until we come to realize that every one of us is his brother’s and sister’s keeper, we will not have peace and security.

Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei

Recipient of the 2009 Delta Prize for Global Understanding
The Delta Prize Board

Dr. Michael F. Adams
Mr. Richard Anderson
Dr. Gary K. Bertsch
Dr. Betty Jean Craige
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Ambassador Kai Eide
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Jung Woong Kim
John Marshall
Saptarsi Mukhopadhyay
Joshua Sandler
Andrew G. Watts

*Major Scholarships Coordinator, Honors Program
Recipients of the Delta Prize for Global Understanding

1999
President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter and The Carter Center

2000
Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu

2001
President Mikhail S. Gorbachev

2002
Mrs. Sadako Ogata

2004
President Václav Havel

2005
Ambassador Gertrude Ibengwe Mongella

2006
Mr. Ted Turner

2007
President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

2008
President Martti Ahtisaari

2009
Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei
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