

Global Agenda Outlook

Values Redesigned

The following materials are excerpts from the conversations that took place in Dubai that were not included in the final publication, Global Agenda Outlook. They summarize content raised by participants, which offers additional context and insights into the issues discussed. The following materials are not direct quotations from the speakers and should not be quoted as verbatim text.

Jim Wallis

What is the relationship between businesses and the common good? Opinions have been expressed that if we are going to succeed in reducing poverty and sustainable development, we have to engage the business community. The question is how do we connect business to the ancient idea of the common good?

Michael J. Elliot

Information is a fundamental issue. There is still a hope, at least on my part, that all sectors of society would find common ground around certain values and around certain principles, goals, civil society, individuals, governments and business. That sort of optimism takes on the world that has been challenged over the last four years. We saw the financial sector going to a sort of greed-induced melting, which didn't look as if it had much sense of the common good. Governments in the past four years have been decreasingly capable of tackling major problems, whether it's the European governments with the eurozone crisis or the United States with its own fiscal problem. The natural optimists in the world like me had a hard time with it over the last few years.

Jim Wallis

Sometimes we act like the financial meltdown and the great recession are just things that happened to us and we don't know why. Moral choices produced these outcomes. The question is, can we have an economic recovery without also having a moral recovery at the same time?

Michael J. Elliot

It's a terrific question. I think it's one with which a lot of people are struggling. In the Western world, we are seeing levels of inequality beyond belief. The lack of transparency and growing inequality are part of the lack of trust. We have lost the sense of trust in decision-making [and] in those making decisions.

Chan Yuenying

A lot of challenges we face are from the loss of trust and credibility. People need to have a reason to start believing in institutions – education, government and business. It's not just at different levels, but it's also horizontally as well. I see it in Hong Kong, China and the United States.

I don't think we've yet even scratched the surface of the extent to which social media is changing, not just our relationships with existing institutions, but actually creating new institutions.

Jim Wallis

Two words came from each of you, hope and optimism. Desmond Tutu taught me the difference between those two. Optimism is how you are feeling, cup half-full, half-empty; whether I am feeling good about events or not. Hope is not a feeling; hope is a choice we make, decisions we make because of whatever it is we call our faith or moral sensibilities.