

H.E. Dr. Naledi Pandor and Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Oasis Plan: An Opportunity To Think of the World in a Different Way

The following are the edited remarks of H.E. Dr. Naledi Pandor, the former Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, and Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute, during the Feb. 14 meeting of the International Peace Coalition (IPC). The remarks proceed in chronological order as they occurred, but without the intervening speakers and questions. Subheads have been added. The video is available [here](#).



Schiller Institute

H.E. Dr. Naledi Pandor



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Helga Zepp-LaRouche

H.E. Dr. Naledi Pandor: Thank you very much for inviting me to join your deliberations. I believe that they are very important. I think the Oasis Plan presents a set of very useful proposals that could be looked at by groupings that are in contention as the basis for further discussion. From our own experience as South Africa, having agreed 30 years ago that we would enter into negotiations with those who had oppressed us for many, many decades, we know that once you get around the table, it is the former oppressed who must determine what future they would like to see. And so it is very important that we never make assumptions on behalf of those who are experiencing harm. We need to find ways of getting their views on the table in order to ensure that whatever outcome is arrived at is one that has the legitimacy of the support of the formerly oppressed.

So while I fundamentally agree that a core part of what needs to be addressed as we go into the future is the matter of the reconstruction of the territory in which the people of Palestine reside, I believe the imperative is to engage the Palestinian people, their leadership, their civil society, and to ask them, “How do you see the future?” And of course, the “enemy”—as

we used to call our oppressor—that they need to speak to is the people and particularly the government of Israel as well as the allies who have supported Israel so vigorously in its oppression of the Palestinian people. So, we have to look at a means through the International Peace Coalition, a means of drawing these groupings together and actually having them give us a sense of what kind of future they imagine.

I wish to indicate that if that future includes continued denial of human rights, continued denial of freedom, disrespect for sovereignty—that is no basis for a political settlement. So, there are certain key agreements that need to be an accepted base. I welcome the notion of a two-state solution; it has been the position which we have all supported, the majority of us, in the General Assembly in the United Nations. But the two-state solution as we imagined it when the resolution was first adopted—the territory has fundamentally altered from what existed at that time. The increased number of settlements by Israelis has made it improbable that you could have a sovereign territory of Palestine. That can only be achieved if there is agreement that there would be resettlement on other land of those persons who have occupied Palestinian territory.

You have seen in the past year and a half of con-

flict against Gaza that the temperatures are so high, the levels of hostility even between ordinary civilians are of such an extreme character, that it is going to be very, very difficult to get a discussion—a rational, very carefully constructed discussion—underway. The settler community has even gone so far as to attack humanitarian aid trucks; to kill Palestinian civilians. So, it's gone well beyond the armed forces of Israel. In addition, Hamas and other groupings within Palestine must accept that a settlement has to be found between the two, and that you're not going to destroy one or the other.

So, I think the international peace processes could begin to establish coalitions through a number of key conversations. The first would be to test the probability of an engagement between Israelis and Palestinians. We need to understand: Are the Palestinians ready to sit around a table that would include representatives of Israel? Similarly, are Israelis ready in similar fashion to sit around that table? What would be the key issues that would be brought to that table? And who might be the honest interlocutors who would be trusted to facilitate a very complex process of this kind? I believe a great deal of work needs to be done.

Who Are the Adults in the Room?

I also think we're in a very dangerous time, because we are speaking through headlines, rather than through rationality. So, we need leadership. We need to find a way, through the Schiller Institute, of identifying who are the adults in the room. Who can actually live without being on a headline every day? Who is ready to engage in a serious fashion to actually settle matters of the world? It's not going to do the globe good to have America and China at each other's throat on the trade agreements. This harms our smaller economies and doesn't do the world good at all. So, we need adults; we need leaders. I haven't as yet been able to identify who are the leaders. So, I believe that the Schiller Institute, along with other organizations of similar strength, could begin to assume that leadership role primarily for purposes of convening, of initiating conversations, and developing an agenda.

I believe there are leaders of the South who could play a role. You know that South Africa has been one of the subjects of a recent Executive Order of



UNRWA Facebook page

An UNRWA health center in Deir al-Balah, in the Gaza Strip.

the President of the United States of America. We believe there has been a great deal of misrepresentation of our policy and our policy intentions, and even those people that President Trump has offered refuge in America have said that they have no wish to leave their country of South Africa. So, clearly there is misinformation out there, and this Executive Order was signed without proper research, without consultation with the government of South Africa. It has really put us in a very negative light unnecessarily. Hence, I return to my view that what we need are adults in the room. And perhaps the International Peace Coalition could begin a series of meetings with distinct groupings with the intention of arriving at that larger global consultation where we then could begin to develop an agenda that allows us to address those key problems that are affecting the globe and causing the disarray that we witness at present.

As we speak of the Middle East, we must also record the Sahel in Africa; we should have reference to Sudan that is under great stress, as well as very poor African countries that are bearing a significant burden of refugees and displaced persons without much world attention or commentary on their plight. So, there is a great deal for us to do, and I look forward to the International Peace Coalition identifying these people I call "adults" and persuading them, along with other organizations.

So, the first step is, let us establish a global peace coalition; then working through that, let us be more ambitious until we arrive at a point where one of the

critical issues we wish to address—which I believe has first prize, is the Middle East conflict—really gets focused attention and we attempt, through various resources, to arrive at a solution.

I would want to see the United Nations also involved. I believe in the last few years there's been a genuine and rather malicious attempt to diminish the status of the United Nations as the premier multilateral institution. So, I believe that whatever we do, we shouldn't be seen to be affirming that intention, but should allow the UN, which is our global body, to actually take its place in supporting the resolution of global conundrums.

So, I will pause at that point. Let me conclude by saying, while I agree that this moment offers an opportunity for the South to come into its own, the South is not a coherent, coordinated political formation. Even within BRICS, there are different philosophical orientations, different economic strengths. So, while there are shared perspectives and objectives, it is difficult and perhaps not helpful to imagine the South as a coordinated, coherent political formation. But it is a useful rubric that we could draw on. Thank you very much. I hope I've made some sense. Thank you.

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Helga Zepp-LaRouche: First of all, I want to thank Dr. Pandor for giving the trust to the IPC process, including the Schiller Institute, to put together the kinds of initial groupings to explore this. One of them: Can we get Israelis and Palestinians to accept to sit down at the same table? We just heard Mr. [Dennis] Fritz being very pessimistic about that; and indeed, there are some extreme concerns. We have been approached by many Palestinians who asked: "can you bring us together with some Israelis, because they refuse to talk to us?" So, we are quite aware of the difficulty. However, I think that one should not be deterred by problems of the past. I think that we are in such a tectonic change of everything, that new openings emerge. One of them which needs to be explored is that National Security Advisor Mike Waltz had said Trump's proposal for the Riviera of Gaza is the best proposal on the table. But if somebody has a better proposal, they should come forward. This was repeated even by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who also said if somebody

has a better plan, they should come forward with it.

I think that creates an opening. Given the fact that the Egyptians have taken the lead in proposing their version of the reconstruction of Gaza, I would really urge all participants on this panel to help us to merge the two efforts—the Egyptian proposal with the Oasis Plan.... Let me say first the negative thing. If this goes wrong, not only is a general war in the Middle East possible, but Colonel [ret.] Douglas Macgregor, who is also an extremely knowledgeable and important analyst, thinks that a general war in the Middle East will happen by the beginning of March. He also is very pessimistic. That could lead to a thermonuclear war, because once you have a general war in the Mid-



UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Pandor: "There's been a genuine and rather malicious attempt to diminish the status of the United Nations." Here, a meeting of the UN Security Council.

dle East including Iran, the possible attempt to destroy the nuclear research facilities of Iran has the potential of going completely out of control. So, that is the one danger.

The other one is if there were an attempt to chase the Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank—this is going on as well—there would be the immediate possibility that six million new refugees would descend on the entire region. It was mentioned already that that could destabilize every single government in the Middle East. Or they could come to Europe, which right now is being torn into pieces over the so-called "migrant" issue because this is complicated. There was again a massacre yesterday in Munich and the whole country is in an uproar. The migrant issue obviously has been one of the key points of Trump building a wall with Mexico. Again, I fundamentally believe that the world hangs together in such a way that we are all

sitting in one boat in a way it never has happened in history before, because of nuclear weapons, because of pandemics, because of the internet; we are really in one boat.

A Solution Must Address All Problems at Once

Therefore, one has to seek solutions which address everything at once. This is why we are calling for a new security and development architecture in which the entire Oasis Plan for the entire Middle East—the region from India to the Mediterranean, from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf—is one development area; where the desert will be turned into agriculture, forestry, and livable land.

And addressing the migrant issue, we have put out a report saying that the only human way to deal with the migrant issue in the United States and Europe is that the European countries and the United States must join hands with the BRICS, to develop the countries where the refugees are coming from. They are not running away risking their lives for fun, but because they cannot live humanly if they stay.

So, the reconstruction of the Middle East as a joint project for Europe, for the United States, hand in hand with the BRICS, is the way to solve all the problems at once; to bring development to Africa, which is in alignment with the plan of the African Union—the Agenda 2063. For Latin America likewise, a plan for a Latin America-wide infrastructure project where the United States and China would work together to lift these countries out of poverty so that refugees no longer would run to the Mexican border, risking their lives. Why not look at all of these things as one package? That would be the win-win approach which I think will succeed.

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Dr. Pandor: I believe we've had excellent contributions. I do think the matter of the military-industrial complex is one that all of us should be paying attention to. There is a proliferation of arms, and much of the conflict on the African continent is often due to arms that are brought into the continent by external groupings that fuel a great deal of hostility among various communities in countries in different regions of Africa. So, I do think we need to alter the way in which we engage with the world.

We do have a plan: we've got the sustainable development goals of the United Nations. These have been

taken off the table for so long. I agree with the former President [of Guyana, Donald Ramotar] that the biggest challenges that confront us are peace, inequality, and addressing poverty in our world. The large majority of people are experiencing great harm; they have no hope. What is even more worrying is, there's a growing hostility toward democratic practice and a democratic ethos. So, I do think all our countries need to move with urgency to assure the public that democracy does mean something positive, and that we do have individuals, institutions that can help to make a difference.

We Can't Miss this Moment

If we miss this moment, I think we can't imagine the chaos that will confront us. So, this is a time in which we need to use all the institutional capacity available to us to ensure that we return to rationality and that we have discussions and processes that address our deep-seated problems of inequality, of lack of livelihood, of insecurity caused by conflict. All of these are matters that we have been discussing for many decades, but we haven't found global cooperation in addressing these challenges. I think we now need to build a truly practical and effective global coalition that will address these development challenges.

I support the former President of Guyana when he says that there's a very important link between peace and development. This is why we haven't seen progress on the African continent; because just as we make a step forward, we then have ten steps back because of civil conflict or conflict between our neighbors. So, we need to really exert our efforts.

I wonder whether it would be plausible—in recognizing that there are advisors that are negative—whether we could create positive advisors who have a voice and who can use the many instruments of communication available throughout the world? One of the areas that concerns me is when a ridiculous idea is put forward, you don't see in the popular press a challenge to that. So, we've even found that in the media, even though I know an idea is ridiculous, I treat it as though it has an opportunity to succeed. But we know it won't work. The people of Palestine will not accept forced removals, just as we in South Africa refused to accept forced removal. So, we need to be more clear about looking to history, looking to the solutions history has given us, and to actually warn those who encourage negative ideas that they need to move toward more

positive objectives.

So, who are the people who can speak to President Trump, who can speak to EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who can speak to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz? We need to get the leaders to agree that they will allow the world a pause so that we address the real issues—climate change, nuclear proliferation, the need for development, an end to poverty, gender equality, and all the negatives that are the real challenge of the world. Thank you very much.

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Overcoming the Oppressors

Dr. Pandor: [Responding to a question about how South Africa dealt with overcoming its oppressors while maintaining a balanced and non-judgmental identity toward them] I think it's a very difficult undertaking. However, from inception of the liberation movement in South Africa, there was always the intention of drawing the nation together. Initially when the large liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC), was created, its agreement was to unite African people, because the colonial agenda was to divide us ethnically so that we would never be sufficiently united to pursue full freedom. So, the ANC began as an organization drawing Africans together; but over time, as it confronted the oppressive forces, it realized that actually oppression is about values and principles. It's not simply about identity. In every community, there were individuals who valued human rights, who valued justice and freedom. So, it worked to draw those people together, and assured that the African National Congress would become a non-racial organization admitting all who wished to join the struggle against *apartheid* into the liberation movements. So, the notion of non-racialism had existed for many decades. Confronting the *apartheid* state was to confront the evil of *apartheid*, and not to confront white persons.

So, I think it is the maturity of the political understanding of what needs to be done in order to build a nation. As a country with an unusual colonial history,



UN/ICJ/Frank van Beek, courtesy of the ICJ

H.E. Dr. Naledi Pandor (l.), at the time Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, and H.E. Mr. Vusumuzi Madonsela, South Africa's Ambassador to the Netherlands, at the International Court of Justice in 2024 for South Africa's case against Israel's war crimes in Gaza.

in that within that, imperial forces that governed from overseas, they were resident in our country and had been for centuries in South Africa. So, they were very much African; they were South African. It was a reality we had to live with. The challenge was to persuade that it is actually right that all of us should enjoy rights; that we can be free together; and that the task of combating oppression and ending *apartheid* was freeing not just the oppressed, but the oppressor as well.

So, I think the answer really is that it's the maturity of your political ideal that determines whether you have the ability to really seek solutions that seek to build, or attempt to destroy. South Africa was in that way I think quite unusual, and we are fortunate that we had leaders with the foresight to believe in the possibility of a nation that could be united in its diversity and share in common values and principles.

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Status of South Africa's Case at the ICJ

Dr. Pandor: [Responding to a question about the status of South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice] In terms of an update, I think the government of South Africa provided one recently in the address to the nation by the President of South Africa. I'm out of government. The update is that the South African government has now submitted the memorial,

the papers that fully canvass the belief that genocide has been committed against the Palestinian people. The government has worked with a range of research organizations, civil society organizations, and many others who have provided evidence that forms part of the memorial that has been submitted to the court. Other countries have joined in the case at the International Court of Justice, and we are now awaiting a date for a hearing on the merits of the case. So, we have taken all the steps that are necessary. The medical fraternity has been very helpful in the health domain in that they have provided very useful evidence of the atrocities that we believe are linked to the commission of the crime of genocide. I think all of us should pay close attention to the case once the hearing begins. If there is additional evidence that could be provided, we should be in touch with the countries that have joined South Africa in the case.

It is somewhat of a pity that it is largely countries of the South that are taking up this matter, which emphasizes the importance of recognition of international human rights law and its place in protecting the marginalized and the vulnerable. One wishes that more countries in our world that had been very concerned about the genocide in Rwanda, extremely concerned about what happened in some countries in Latin America, we wish that they too could recognize the value of institutions such as the International Court of Justice in holding leaders to account for their actions which cause harm to groups or individuals.

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Reform of the UN Is Urgently Needed

Dr. Pandor: [Responding to a question of whether she sees the world moving to a place where nation-states play a lesser role, and secondly what role the Oasis Plan can play for Africa] Firstly, I don't think that we should accept the notion that non-state entities would now become the force or driver of global action and global relations. I had said earlier that I believe it's very important that we affirm the role of the United Nations as the premier multilateral institution of the world. While I say that, I also in the same vein support all the calls made by South Africa and many other member states of the UN for reform of the United Nations and other development institutions, particularly international finance development institutions which have dealt rather unfairly with the African continent.

So, I believe states remain vital, but we also must have strong non-state entities that act in concert with government; and particularly, on development priorities, are able to support implementation of development initiatives.

I don't think the state on its own in any country is able to fully execute a development agenda. And it is through working in a very well-crafted plan with non-state organs, civil society, be they state-based organizations, sports bodies, women's organizations, and so on—it is through bringing all of these together that we then get a unity of purpose that I think can better advance development goals.

The Oasis Plan speaks to many issues of importance to the African continent. If you take the 17 priorities of Agenda 2063, the plan that we call "The Africa We Want," you will see that those priorities link in very clear terms to the goals that are set out, the various initiatives on energy, sustainability, water quality, water infrastructure that are set out in the Oasis Plan. So, rather than a proliferation of plans, I think we need to look at how we may establish greater collaboration to ensure that we do execute the focus on key priorities for the majority of the people on our globe. We have a great problem with water infrastructure with equitable access to water resources; we have a large part of the world lacking energy. There are sustainable energy solutions, green solutions. Many countries lack food security. All of these are part of Africa's Agenda 2063, and they are focused upon in the Oasis Plan.

So, I see these as being able to dovetail in quite a comfortable manner. And of course what it would take would be that African leaders must become resolute and very practical in executing the key 17 priorities of Agenda 2063. Thank you very much. I think Dr. Zepp-LaRouche should add.

Zepp-LaRouche: I fully agree with Dr. Pandor that the role of the United Nations must be strengthened, and that its still-existent shortcomings in functioning should not lead to the conclusion that you can abolish it, because it is the only representation of all nations on the planet. I think that the reform has to be very urgent.

I really would like to again put forward this idea of a new global security and development architecture which could be taken up by the UN General Assembly. I think that unless you develop an architecture which takes into account the interests of every single

country on the planet, both in terms of security, poverty elimination, health systems, education, just every aspect of what constitutes the interests of a nation, I think that's the only way we can think about a durable peace.

Since it is not so easy to jump from zero to 100, my proposal has been—and we made a little progress on it, but not enough—to get a combination of think tanks and/or universities to start to discuss what such a new security and development architecture would look like in the tradition of the Peace of Westphalia, and how you would go about it. I had forwarded for that purpose Ten Principles which specifically are not program points, but are principles which have to be included. They are not exclusive; this is just an invitation for other people to contribute. But I think these Ten Principles in my mind are the absolute prerequisites for such an architecture to function.

I would really put it to Dr. Pandor, President Ramotar, Mr. Fritz, and Dr. [Nidal] Jboor and others who are on this panel: maybe we can take as one of the concrete steps Dr. Pandor had mentioned in the beginning, that we come up with a list of actions which the IPC should take up as urgent priorities. My suggestion would be to promote such a think tank/university international conference on the urgent need to move to a New Paradigm in this respect. That's the first question.

The second question is that of the emergency plan we have proposed to address the migrant question for Africa, where 600 million people are still without electricity. We have proposed a very concrete plan for how to develop this electricity by using hydropower, using turbine power, but at the same time start the building of nuclear plants which take longer. Then have in addition to that certain game-changer projects like the Transaqua Project, which would give electricity and hydro-power to 12 countries from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Chad. That has been adopted by the Lake Chad Basin countries in Abuja, Nigeria already [seven] years ago. It is basically ready to go if it could be implemented. Naturally the building of the Grand Inga Hydroelectric Project is another such game-changer project. So, that I think needs to be put on the agenda in earnest. I want to remind people also that Professor Zhang Weiwei of Fudan University in China at a recent Schiller conference said that China has the capability to implement the Oasis Plan based on the fact that they have transformed the desert in northeast China from a



UN Photo/Pernaca Sudhakaran

Months after gaining his freedom after 27 years in prison, then ANC vice president Nelson Mandela addressed an audience at the UN in 1990.

complete desert into a land where now you have agriculture, forestry, tourism. So, China has proven that it can be done.

I think these are two very concrete reference points for additional action.

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Devoting One's Life to the Search for Freedom

Dr. Pandor: I'd like to really conclude by saying Nelson Mandela devoted his life to the search for freedom for the people of South Africa. When he stood up to speak as the first democratically elected President of a free South Africa, he said, "I have fought black domination all my life, and I have fought white domination. I seek a South Africa that is united with a people who enjoy justice and human rights." This is after spending a bitter 27 years in prison. I believe we should have the spirit of Mandela, that freedom is possible; that the Palestinian people will enjoy sovereignty, justice, and freedom. And that the Oasis Plan offers an opportunity for us to think of the world in a different way.

So, let us marshal our resources; let's not freeze at this point. Let us be ambitious; let us be optimistic. Because Mandela has shown that things that we imagine impossible are indeed possible. Thank you very much.

Zepp-LaRouche: I think that a lot of good things were put forward which demand follow-up. One of the things I would like to add to the agenda is something we were working on in the IPC a couple of months ago. Then because of the breaking developments and so forth, it sort of moved into the background. But I want to move it to the forefront again. That is the idea that since the need for adults in the room is so obvious as never before, that the proposal to create a Council of Reason is more urgent now than when the proposal was made. It is the idea to look out for individuals in each country who have proven through their life work—be it in politics, in science, in art—for the common good; who have proven that they are not guided by selfish reasons but are devoted to the common good of humanity. That we start really in earnest to look out for such individuals ... who then could step forward and advise presidents, heads of state, and step forward where governments are not doing so up to this point.

So, I would like again to call on all of you, if you know such people, join with us; tell us who they are. Help us organize them. As Dr. Pandor was telling me in a recent conversation, this is really much the same idea as the Council of Elders which was created by Nelson

Mandela. Maybe we can even invite this Council of Elders to be part of this. I really would like everybody to come forward with such proposals.

I want to thank all of you, and ask you to double, triple, quadruple the number of participants in the IPC for next week, because we need a real army to fight. We need to unite the peace movement which is still a big challenge ahead of us. But I would really also hope that we get a lot of people from Asia, from Latin America, and from Africa to be strong voices in the IPC. I'm convinced that the New Paradigm has to be one which is definitely shaped by the Global Majority. I still think the only way we will get out of this crisis is if we persuade the countries of Europe and the United States or North America to join with the Global Majority, because we have to end geopolitics. Geopolitics in my view is the biggest brain disease I can think of. As long as you think that you need an enemy, that you have to divide people into foes and friends, we will not get out of this trap. We have to teach people to make the jump to think of the One Humanity first before you think about your national interests. If we can make such a jump, then I think we can solve all the problems easily.

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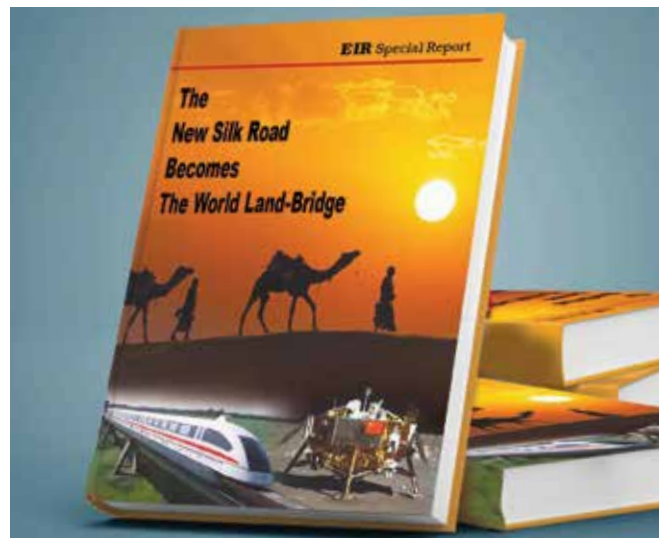
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