

# **The Tsunami Tragedy: An Educational Forum**

**Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service  
Georgetown University**

**Tuesday, January 25, 2005**

Photo courtesy of DigitalGlobe

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***Welcome & Introductions***

Robert Gallucci – Dean, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service

Professor David Steinberg, Director, Asian Studies Program, Georgetown University

Professor Asoka Bandarage, Asian Studies Program, Georgetown University (M.C.)

***Panelists***

Professor Tim Beach, STIA Program, Georgetown University

Dr. Roberta Cohen, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and Co-Director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement

Mr. Zachary Abuza, United States Institute for Peace

Ambassador Alphonse F. La Porta, U.S.-Indonesia Society, Washington D.C.

Mr. Ron Somers, President of the US-India Business Council

Dr. David Smith, Acting Director, United Nations Information Center, Washington D.C.

***Conclusion (not included)***

Dr. Chuck Weiss, STIA Program, Georgetown University

**START OF TRANSCRIPT**

***Dean Robert Gallucci***

I am very pleased that we have a program this evening on the Tsunami Tragedy in Asia, sponsored by the Asian Studies Program; the Program on Science, Technology, and International Affairs; and by the Lecture Fund. It has occurred to me, as it probably has to you, that there are events that occur that mark our lives in various kinds of ways. And the event that comes to most people's minds, in this country, is 9/11. And people will ask, where were you when that happened? I think this is this kind of event. Now, it's interesting, in magnitude, 3,000 people died, roughly, as a result of the attacks of 9/11. I don't know what the numbers will be when the counting is done, but it is pushing up in the direction, of direct deaths, of over 180,000 towards 200,000 people as a result of this catastrophe. However measured, it is a catastrophe of such magnitude that I think it is worth pausing not only for the humanitarian reasons involved, but for other reasons, to ask about the implications of this: war, politics in the region, environment, broader issues of health and security. So I'm very, very pleased that we have such distinguished people here to help us think about this. I'm very glad that you have come to give your thoughts and to engage them. It is an event of overwhelming importance, I think. Let me introduce now Professor David Steinberg, who will then introduce others. Welcome.

## ***Professor David Steinberg***

Thank you, Dean Gallucci. The School of Foreign Service has always been supportive of all things we try to do in Asian Studies. We want to, as quickly as possible, do something about this terrible disaster. We know that students have organized many fundraising campaigns and other events. This forum, essentially an educational event, will try to explain aspects of the problems caused by the tsunami. My job today is simply to introduce the person who is really behind all of this: Asoka Bandarage, who is a new professor of Asian Studies here at this university. She has basically organized this forum and put it all together. We are thankful to her for all her work. I am going to now turn this all over to her to introduce everyone and moderate the discussion.

## ***Professor Asoka Bandarage***

Thank you very much, Professor Steinberg. Before I make a few introductory remarks, I want to thank Georgetown University for this opportunity to hold this forum. This all came together very quickly. Even last Friday, we didn't know if this was going to take place because we were competing with the presidential inauguration, in trying to reach speakers and so on. I am not able to thank all the individuals who helped put this together, but certainly I need to mention Professor Steinberg and Professor Chuck Weiss in the Science, Technology, and International Affairs Program. Three other key individuals are Jennifer Maher, who is the Asian Studies Program Coordinator; Ruchi Gugliani, who is a student at SFS; and Andrea Sarubbi from the Communications Office at Georgetown. Thank you very much to each of you for making this possible. And a very big thank you, to begin with, to the panelists, who have been incredibly supportive and who have come on short notice, leaving aside their many other responsibilities. And thanks to you, the audience, for attending this Forum on the tsunami tragedy in Asia despite your very busy schedules.

Just in the way of a few introductory remarks, I come from Sri Lanka, which is one of the countries hardest struck by the tsunami. Although it has been a month since the tidal waves struck, there are thousands of people who are still unaccounted for and dead bodies and debris are still being disposed of. Millions have become homeless. In Sri Lanka alone, one million. That is more than one twentieth the population of the island. And I think it is needless to say that this tragedy has struck a cord in everyone because all of us watched the images of our fellow human beings struggling to survive and many losing their lives in front of our very eyes. And, as was mentioned before, the toll was close to 200,000 and I think it is important for us to remember that at least one third of those who died were children.

The outpouring of compassion and generosity from around the world has been unprecedented. The United States government just doubled its relief aid just yesterday. Everyone from elementary school children to nation-states and corporations have contributed to the relief effort. And indeed the world has come together. We have heard less about the local relief efforts, however, from countries like Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, and India, and the tremendous acts of courage, compassion, and generosity that have come to the fore within the devastated countries because the global media understandably has focused on bilateral and multilateral efforts. Often the local individual acts have tran-

scended ethnic, religious, and social class boundaries. And just to give you one example, Tamil writers in Sri Lanka have noted that Buddhist monks and Sinhalese from far away villages went in trucks loaded with rice, sugar, and cooked food to some of the Tamil coastal areas in the most devastated areas in Sri Lanka. Because bridges were damaged and villages were inaccessible by truck, some of these village donors carried the relief supplies on their heads and shoulders for up to five miles to reach the tsunami survivors. The spontaneous outburst of generosity indeed defied communal boundaries, and it prompted one Tamil schoolteacher in the eastern coast to say, and I will quote her, "At the bottom of their heart, all Sri Lankans want to live in peace with one another. This is what the tidal wave taught us. What we saw is a people eager to help each other, forgetting all differences. Whatever community we belong to, there is something called Sri Lankan hospitality. The politicians should remember that when they get back to negotiations."

***...I believe that this is the greatest lesson that the tsunami tragedy has taught us, that ethnic and religious differences do not inherently create hatred, that they are primordial enemies. It is political mobilization along ethno-religious lines that create these antagonisms and polarization.***

I think we can easily generalize this to the world at large, because we have seen global generosity and compassion at play here. So I believe that this is the greatest lesson that the tsunami tragedy has taught us, that ethnic and religious differences do not inherently create hatred, that they are primordial enemies. It is political mobilization along ethno-religious lines that create these antagonisms and polarization. So I think this is something to be studied at this point. Which is not to be naïve and say that conflicts and differences don't exist. I think we are all familiar with that. But I think that it is nevertheless important to honor the unity of groups across ethnic and religious boundaries. It is true that different groups are beginning to exploit the tsunami tragedy for their own purposes. There are examples of people recruiting often children into child trafficking rackets, for instance. There are extremist religious groups, both local and international, using the poverty and despair of victims for purposes of

religious proselytization. And that poses a threat to cultural survival and cultural pluralism. For example, there are many reports that Christian evangelical groups from the United States are trying to convert tsunami victims, especially children in certain areas. And there are also some reports that the victims are refusing food from some groups. And if these practices are allowed to continue, they are likely to contribute to increasing religious conflicts.

Referring to the divisiveness that is emerging, I should also mention that there are reports from UNICEF and Human Rights Watch that the Tamil Tiger rebel group has been forcibly constricting some children who are tsunami survivors into their cadres. Now these are just some of the humanitarian and political issues that are emerging, and our experts will be addressing these in greater detail. Let me turn to some of the economic lessons of the tragedy. I think we need to recognize that most of the victims were poor. Many were squatters who had built ramshackle houses on the beaches because they had nowhere else to live. And the enormity, the magnitude, of the tragedy was partly, at least partly, due to the widespread poverty in the region. And I think in this regard it is important for us to recognize that South Asia and also Southeast Asia are among the poorest in the

world. Of the global population that lives in poverty that is less than one dollar a day, 39.2% are in South Asia and 23.7% are in East Asia and the Pacific. I think it's also important to recognize that children and women have been particularly hard hit by this tragedy: the children who have been orphaned, the women who have been widowed, and so on. So I think if we're talking about reconstruction, it is important to talk about poverty alleviation as part of rehabilitation and the reconstruction efforts. And our panelists will be addressing these issues as well.

And, as analysts and policymakers, it is important for us to move beyond blaming Mother Nature or attributing the tragedy to the wrath of God. I think it is necessary for us to take a sober and rational look at the balances in the global social order. Many are questioning why early warning systems were not available in this part of the world, which is a poorer part of the world, and I don't think we need to deny that global inequality has been a factor, but I think we also have to look at regional and national dimensions of the issue as well. Without greater accountability, transparency, at the regional and local levels, even the best of technologies would not be implemented when they are needed, whether it's early warning systems or other types of technologies that can help avert or minimize disasters in the future. And to overcome the corruption and inefficiency that lie behind some of these problems, I think it is important to recognize that changes in values are necessary and when we talk about values. It seems like a formidable task, the challenge of moving away from excessive individualism, sectarianism, and greed towards greater compassion, generosity, and unity; it seems like wishful thinking but nevertheless the tsunami tragedy I think has at least momentarily, revealed to us a vision of a better world, that is, a more caring and a more equal world.

Finally, before I introduce the speakers, let me quote from a leaflet that was written, again, by some Tamil-speaking people from Sri Lanka, from the Digamadulla area in the eastern coast, (to express) their thanks to their Sinhalese brethren who came to support them in their need: "The Tamil-speaking people in distress in the Digamadulla area went to the Sinhalese people looking for help and assistance. How we were welcomed with love and affection! And from that moment until now, the hospitality and the assistance we received will never be forgotten, and the brotherly bond created as a result has been so strengthened that it must be mentioned that no force will be able to break the bond in the future."

Now let me turn to our panelists. We have an expert panel who will be elaborating on these issues that I have mentioned as well as many other issues involved in the political, economic, and environmental lessons of the tragedy. We have with us six outstanding professionals with impeccable qualifications and years of dedicated service in the areas of environmental protection, human rights, peace and security, and bilateral and multilateral aid. I will introduce each one before they speak, and I ask them in your presence to keep their remarks to no more than fifteen minutes each because we do want to have time for questions and answers at the end.

So let me begin by introducing our first speaker. And that's Professor Tim Beach, who is Director of the Georgetown University Center for the Environment. He is Associate Pro-

fessor of Geography and Geoscience in the Program in Science, Technology, and International Affairs in the School of Foreign Service. He teaches courses on climatology, geomorphology, hydrology, environmental restoration, and international environment management, and he has also done extensive research on these topics both in the United States, Central America, and the Middle East. So welcome to Dr. Tim Beach. Thank you.

## **Professor Tim Beach**

*(PowerPoint slides attached in a separate file.)*

*(Slide 1.)*

I will give you a quick ten-minute background on geological and environmental hazards and hazards warning systems. One thing I want to show you with the first slide is simply that we live in a very hazardous world. It is becoming more hazardous, not because there are more natural hazards, but because more people are moving closer to areas where hazards are more frequent and more severe, such as coasts, floodplains, and mountainous areas. As they do, we lose more and more lives. The Boxing Day tsunami was a terrible hazard, a terrible loss of life—perhaps the final toll will be 200,000 or more—but we've had in the past hazards that killed many more people, and I'll give you some examples of that along the way here.

The map I'm showing you just gives you an idea of the geography of hazards around the world. It basically shows meteorological hazards and geophysical hazards. They are all geophysical hazards, but we often divide them into geological ones like volcanoes, earthquakes, landslides, and tsunamis, and meteorological ones like floods, lightning, and hurricanes. One thing to point out is that Southeast Asia has just about all of those hazards except, obviously, extreme cold.

*(Slide 2.)*

This slide shows an estimate of the total death toll by various hazards over the last seventy years, and you can see that one particular flood in China killed approximately four million people, though the estimate is not very precise. Also, one cyclone, which induced severe flooding in Bangladesh, killed 300,000 people at least. Going down the list, you can see earthquake after earthquake killing hundreds of thousands of people. Some earthquakes may have killed more like half a million to 600,000, but it is very hard to estimate total loss because mortality comes from many streams: the seismic event, landslides, gas line ruptures, and structural collapse; not to mention the hazards that linger like heightened disease from water pollution because of infrastructure and human support failures.

Therefore, we need to be mindful of the fact that hazards come from many different sources. This Boxing Day Tsunami provides a moment of clarity where we can see geological time and human time intersecting. This event gives us the imperative to focus our energy and money on something we do need: early warning systems for places in the world where most of the people live and are vulnerable, especially coastal and floodplain areas.

(Slides 3, 4.)

Year	Location	Estimated Cost
1995	Japan, Kobe Earthquake	\$95 Billion
1992	United States, Hurricane Andrew	\$30 Billion
2004	Japan, Niigata Earthquake	\$25.9 Billion
1988	Soviet Union, Armenian Earthquake	\$20.5 Billion
1980	Italy, Irpinia Earthquake	\$20 Billion
1998	China, Yangtze Flood	\$20 Billion
1991	Soviet Union, Flood	\$19 Billion
1997	Indonesia, Wild Fires	\$17 Billion
1995	United States, Northridge Earthquake	\$16 Billion
1994	North Korea, Flood	\$15 Billion
2004	Southern Asia, Earthquake and Waves	\$13.6 Billion
1993	United States, Midwest Flooding	\$12 Billion

As background and context, I just wanted to show you that this was a 9.0 earthquake. That's a one-in-twenty-year event. In other words, in the entire world we have a 9.0 or larger earthquake every twenty years on average. But this means that tomorrow we may have another one or that we may have far into the future. You can see further from my list that some of them have been much larger than 9.0, for example 9.5, and can produce tsunamis that are just as large or larger. This was a very large tsunami and one of the greatest killers in the history of the world, but we know there were larger events. In fact, in Lituy Bay, Alaska, in 1958, an 8.0 earthquake triggered a landslide that in turn triggered a

tsunami that was at least 100 feet high and waves surged to an elevation of 1720 feet above sea level. There's not a lot you can do to escape such a tsunami, but fortunately such events are infrequent and usually very localized, but they do serve to warn us of potential magnitudes.

Another important point is that all hazards, except for meteorite impacts, have predictable geographies. Geological hazards are associated with plate boundaries, though intraplate earthquakes can also occur such as the devastating New Madrid earthquakes near what is today St. Louis, Missouri, in 1811-1812 and the Gujarat earthquake of 2001. Geoscience research now has mapped these plate boundaries and intraplate earthquake zones all over the globe. We know there are earthquake and tsunami hazards all over the Americas: the West Coast, the Mississippi Valley, even the East Coast, and on the US Caribbean coast. One such threat for the East Coast of the United States and Western Europe is a potentially massive landslide in the Canary Islands that would produce an extremely destructive tsunami. Of course active plate boundaries, active volcanoes, and active seismic activity occurs in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and South America, and Southeast Asia is plagued by all of these as well as floods, landslides, and cyclones.

(Slide 5.)

This slide shows the particular zone of the Banda Aceh region on Sumatra and some initial information on death tolls, which of course have gone up daily since the event. Just off the coast of Banda Aceh, Sumatra is the earthquake's epicenter. Outside of catastrophic landslides, often the largest tsunamis come from earthquakes in shallow water and shallow earthquake zones, and both were unfortunately true in this event. This map shows

one of the early estimates and it shows how widespread this was throughout the Indian Ocean. Nonetheless, we should be mindful that tsunamis are actually more common in the Pacific in places like Japan, Hawaii, Chile, and the whole Pacific rim, which have suffered repeated earthquake inducing tsunamis.

*(Slides 6, 7.)*

This is a map of the Pacific Ring of Fire, that zone with so many tsunamis and earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that have killed millions of people. Narrowing in on the Sunda Trench on this map, where the India and Burma plates plunge together. One of the problems with the Boxing Day earthquake was that it occurred only over *part* of that trench, and there's significant concern that the event did *not* release all the potential pressure. Hence, there may indeed be another future earthquake and tsunami, according to Dr. Kerry Sieh, a Caltech University expert who has warned of this possibility.

*(Slide 9.)*

This is a view of a typical trench, geologically in cross-section. Here is the Sunda Trench around Indonesia, and the Indian Plate is going down under the Sunda Plate, usually at a slow pace of a few centimeters per year, but these few centimeters build up year after year. And after some period of time, this builds up to become several meters of movement in one event. Thus, thousands of kilometers of one plate grind suddenly against thousands of kilometers of plate, which causes several kinds of seismic waves in the Earth's crust and the ocean above it.

*(Slides 10, 11.)*

This image is courtesy of NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration), and it shows this event as it propagated across the Indian Ocean. Another diagram from the Associated Press shows where the earthquake can occur along the fault and in the motion propagating the wave, which may be less than a foot in the open ocean, so a mariner would never notice it, which propagates then into nine meters. As we have seen in many media images, the power of the sea in a nine meter wave represents a huge physical impact, especially on low-lying coastal areas.

*(Slide 12.)*

One of the things I want to show about this particular trench is just how active it is, how many earthquakes occur along it. The red dots are just the earthquakes in this zone, as you can see, and there are hundreds of them of 6.0, which would be a very large earthquake if it occurred around Washington, D.C. or even in California, is an earthquake that causes significant damage and can kill many people when that occurs. And of course 6.0 is three orders of magnitude smaller than the Boxing Day tsunami.

*(Slides 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.)*

One of the things that we have in place is the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, in Hawaii, and it is based on the following technology. This is the basic technology, and I'll walk you through this. The first of these is a bottom pressure recorder placed on the bottom of the ocean. And this can record small changes in pressure, and these small changes in pressures are very highly correlated with waves associated with tsunamis. This information is then acoustically relayed up to buoys, floating and tethered at the top of the ocean. This information is relayed to the GOES Satellite System. The GOES Satellite System is the atmospheric or the meteorological prediction system the US has in place, from which we see images on the nightly weather report.

Two of the problems with Early Warning Systems are costs and frequent maintenance. An early warning system for the Indian Ocean would cost about \$30 million, but GOES satellites do cost a lot more than that. The GOES satellites are in geostationary orbit, staying in place, mostly looking at North America and Central America. So we have western vision and eastern vision of North America. To extend the early warning system requires linking with and setting up more global satellites, which will be expensive but far less than the cost of the 26 December tsunami.

***Two of the problems with Early Warning Systems are costs and frequent maintenance. An early warning system for the Indian Ocean would cost about \$30 million.***

*(Slide 18.)*

Here is a slide of a GOES satellite image, which you can download from the US GOES webpage anytime. This diagram shows the Pacific Warning System, from Tremor to Evacuation. The system starts off over here with the quake registered. Within the first ten minutes of the earthquake of magnitude seven or higher, the Center issues a warning of possible tsunami. Scientists study sea level data from buoys and gauges to determine if there is a tsunami. If there is one: the notices are issued, the sheriff's department goes out and passes the information on to emergency directors, and this is passed down the line. Now this can obviously occur in the United States or other highly developed nations. It is harder task in many developing countries because of less infrastructure and chain of command systems, although there have been some developments for cyclone warning in Bangladesh, where people are sent out with a fleet of bicycles and whistles to warn of incoming cyclones and higher water. The success from this shows that low-level appropriate technology may be effective as a start. Some other ideas about appropriate technology would be cell phones and downloaded information that could be rapidly sent out.

Now of course one of the biggest problems with any kind of warning system is the "crying wolf syndrome." And there have been a number of examples where people have cried wolf with good data. We thought we had good data to show a tsunami was coming, and it didn't come. And you may only need a few such events to cause people to ignore the system. There have been examples of this in the United States with hurricanes. For

example, some people have not taken warnings realistically and even had hurricane parties, which has led to deaths.

Lastly, the most important thing we can do for a warning system is to continue geographic and geoscience education, because people who know about tsunamis and know about different kinds of hazards know how to respond to them. The classic example is the ten-year-old girl from England – perhaps you have read this on the *Times of London* website – who had just had a geography lesson. And she remembered her teacher had said that if the waves go way out, it's a likely precursor for a tsunami and people should get out of the way. And so she noticed the waves going way out, told her parents, her parents warned a beach full of people at Phuket, which supposedly saved about a hundred people. Another example of this was a local man who had been watching *National Geographic* specials and had seen one on tsunamis. And he had exactly the same information: he saw the ocean recede far out to sea, and he went down and warned people. According to the *National Geographic*, they said that 3,500 people were saved because of this action. So the basic idea of having geographic and geoscience education about how and where these hazards occur, what to expect, how to respond to events, and how we can predict events, will save lives in the future. Hence, basic geographic education has saved lives in the past and will continue to do so. In conclusion, I reiterate that we need to start by spending more on geographic education and then more on worldwide Early Warning Systems.

### **Professor Asoka Bandarage**

Thank you very much. That was very informative, I'm sure you'll all agree. Our next speaker is Roberta Cohen. She is a specialist in human rights, humanitarian, and refugee issues, in particular the subject of internally displaced persons. Roberta Cohen is a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and Co-Director of the Brookings-Bern Project on International Internal Displacement, and she also serves as principal advisor to the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. Ms. Cohen has written extensively on internally displaced people. She has also served as a consultant to UNHCR and the World Bank. It is not possible to give you all the details, but I would like to mention that among the many boards and advisory committees on which she serves is the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. She'll be focusing on internally displaced people and security issues emanating from the tsunami tragedy.

### **Dr. Roberta Cohen**

I'd like to thank Georgetown University, Professor Steinberg, and Professor Bandarage for bringing us all together to reflect on the impact of this devastating natural disaster. My work is in the humanitarian area, so I am going to address five issues of concern in the humanitarian response that could have longer-term implications.

First is funding issues. There has been an extraordinary outpouring of international aid in response to the tsunami. Indeed, the international community is generally far more willing

to come to the aid of people left destitute by natural disasters than those forced from their homes by civil wars, communal strife and human rights violations. But even in the case of natural disasters, where governments make generous pledges, they don't always fulfill them. Of the nearly one billion dollars appealed for by the UN, pledges from governments now total over \$800 million – maybe it's even up to one billion – but how much of that will actually materialize, as international attention and resources shift to other emergencies? Recall that pledges for the 2003 earthquake in Bam, Iran, did not all materialize and there are survivors still living in tents. In Afghanistan, a Marshall Plan was promised, but reconstruction aid has not kept pace with that promise.

The UN, for the first time, is developing a tracking system that will show pledges, and also receipts, to try to hold pledging governments accountable. But the extent to which UN officials will really be able to expose and shame is doubtful. What *isn't* doubtful is that in the aftermath of many emergencies, substantial numbers remain displaced for protracted periods, forgotten by their own governments and the international community. Staying power is a rare commodity when it comes to rehabilitation and longer-term reconstruction and development.

A second issue I would highlight is the exercise of national sovereignty in disasters. Primary responsibility for protecting and assisting affected populations lies with national governments. But increasingly national responsibility is seen to include cooperating with the international community; in other words, letting in the international community when the government is unable to help all those in need within its own borders. It is therefore important to look at how national and international responsibility intersects and whether it is working to the best advantage of those affected by the tsunami. The effective exercise of national responsibility will after all determine whether survivors of the tsunami will be able to get on with their lives, or whether large numbers will remain homeless without basic services and without jobs, which could prove destabilizing for countries and regions.

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This must be borne in mind when governments in the region announce that they can cope on their own, or that they will not accept international aid in all its forms, or that foreign military involved in disaster relief will have to leave by a certain date. To be sure, the national capacity and level of development of countries such as India and Thailand may make unnecessary extensive international aid but questions do arise. For example, after initially denying foreign aid groups entry to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Indian government took four days to bring in food and then reportedly left the first shipment on a broken jetty difficult for survivors to reach. India's record, moreover, in dealing with persons displaced inside its own country by conflict and development projects has been mixed. Indeed, Indian journalists and civil society members have called upon the government to allow local NGOs and international organizations access to the northeast of the country, where an estimated 200,000 persons displaced by tribal and ethnic conflict have

been largely neglected and to whom foreign access has been barred. How the Indian government over the long term will deal with those displaced by the tsunami merits careful examination. In the case of Thailand, which has rejected international emergency aid, the government has reportedly not been helping the thousands of Burmese migrants living in Thai coastal areas who were made homeless by the tsunami. In Indonesia, some have questioned whether the Indonesian military will be able to effectively take over from foreign militaries engaged in disaster relief by the March 26 deadline announced by the Indonesian government for their departure. Moreover, some relief groups have claimed that they could have sped up the delivery of aid to Aceh if the military and air traffic controllers had accepted help in managing relief flights.

A third issue to consider is whether relief aid will be provided in such a way as to help people to make the transition from emergency aid to rehabilitation and development. In many post-disaster situations, there's a large gap between emergency aid and the programs to help people get back on their feet and become self-sustaining. Whether humanitarian and development agencies will work closely and effectively together, and whether the World Bank will become involved speedily and early on, remains to be seen. USAID and a number of NGOs are setting up food-for-work programs to enable people to immediately begin working and avoid the long-term dependency and protracted displacement endemic in the aftermath of too many emergency situations. The UN is also moving from emergency relief to rebuilding communities – a positive sign.

A fourth concern critical to future peace and stability is whether the relief effort in countries with longstanding civil conflicts, like Sri Lanka and Indonesia, will become opportunities for governments and insurgent groups to work together and contribute to peace processes, or whether more conflict will result. A Sri Lankan colleague of mine wrote me that he considers the relief and reconstruction efforts an opportunity to promote an inclusive process that would involve the Tamil relief groups associated with the LTTE, civil society, the business sector, and minority groups, in particular the Muslims in Tamil areas. He hoped that the international community and his government would use the relief effort to encourage political reconciliation.

To date, the reports have been mixed. The Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers have been coordinating some of the relief efforts together, by most accounts successfully, which is a very important development. But competition and jockeying for influence has also been reported. And in the case of reconstruction funds, tensions are expected to arise over control over these funds. The Tamil Tigers have accused the government of using the disaster as a pretext for sending government troops into Tamil-controlled areas, while the government has charged the Tamil Tigers with using the tsunami to recruit new members and reinforce its political and military strength.

In Aceh, Indonesia, where no formal ceasefire is in place, a "gentlemen's agreement" not to disrupt aid efforts has been reported between the military and the GAM (the Free Aceh movement); foreign aid workers have gained access to areas previously closed off, and talks may resume in the near future between the GAM and the military. At the same time, forty thousands Indonesian troops are in Aceh, with more reported coming, a state of emergency is in place, and the military is in control of incoming aid, of displaced persons

camps, of the travel of aid workers throughout Aceh. While the military has been helping the population, its interest in having foreign troops leave by the end of March has made some question whether the military is planning to resume counterinsurgency operations or is using the disaster to reinforce its control over all of Aceh.

A final question is whether human rights and protection issues are being effectively addressed. The focus of the relief effort to date has been on bringing clean water, food, health care, and shelter to survivors, identifying and burying the dead, making plans for longer-term rehabilitation and reconstruction, and creating an early warning system to reduce future loss of life. But what I would call human rights and protection concerns have received less attention, even though addressing them would promote greater peace and stability. Among the more pressing problems reported have been:

- restrictions on access to affected populations;
- discrimination in the provision of aid to certain ethnic and political groups;
- pressures on IDPs to move to resettlement camps in ways that give rise to abuse;
- potentially threatening military presence in and around camps, a problem in Aceh;
- recruitment of children into rebel forces to replace those lost to the tsunami as in Sri Lanka;
- trafficking of children;
- loss of documentation by survivors leading to problems with compensation, property ownership, inheritance, and other issues;
- exploitation and abuse of young women, especially in camps;
- exclusion of women from camp management and from participation in the planning of relocation and reconstruction programs;
- danger from landmines and unexploded ordnance uncovered or shifted around by the tsunami.

Clearly, strategies need to be developed for addressing the human rights and protection dimension of the tsunami. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the first international standards for IDPs, could well serve as a framework for addressing these concerns. Strategies could include:

- setting up human rights monitoring systems;
- deploying protection staff in camps;
- making sure that camps are demilitarized;
- strengthening the role of national human rights institutions (the Sri Lankan human rights commission has already undertaken an active role);
- training of military and police in dealing with displaced populations;
- integrating human rights and protection concerns into long-term humanitarian and development programs; and
- including the displaced and civil society, especially women, in the design and management of relocation and reconstruction.

Aid programs that pay attention to such concerns have a better chance of becoming sustainable and contributing to the long-term stability of these countries.

## **Professor Asoka Bandarage**

Thank you very much for that very useful elaboration of practical and political challenges ahead. I should mention that Mr. Brenning is unable to be with us today, but I am very glad that Zachary Abuza has joined us in his place. Mr. Abuza is a Senior Fellow at the United States Institute for Peace, Associate Professor of Political Science at Simmons College in Boston. He's a leading specialist in Southeast Asian security issues and also on militant Islam. He has published widely on these issues, and he is currently working on a project on internal dynamics and the implications for terrorism and security in Southeast Asia. And he'll be looking at these same issues in the post-tsunami period in South and South-east Asia.

## **Mr. Zachary Abuza**

***Both the governments and the rebels are cognizant of the political importance of controlling humanitarian assistance to such traumatized populations. Will aid facilitate peace and reconciliation, or will it simply lead to the mobilization of ethno-nationalist movements?***

As to paraphrase the Bard, some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have it thrust upon them. I got the call to be here at about lunchtime today, so I'm stepping in for someone far more qualified to speak about the subject. So, as I always told my girlfriends or women I was dating, if you have very low expectations, I will not disappoint you.

It's hard to think that a tragedy that claimed the lives of more than two hundred thousand people could have *any* silver linings, yet the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts present a unique chance for two of the governments – Sri Lanka and Indonesia – to do some serious fence-mending, if not help resume formal peace negotiations in two of the regions' most intractable conflicts, those with the Free Acehese Movement (BAM) or with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil (ILAM), short for the Tamil Tigers. In both of these cases, there is an opportunity for the govern-

ment to take some of the wind out of the insurgents' sails, to demonstrate to the local populations that the rebels are unable to provide ample amount of support and relief services, and for the militaries to prove that they can do something more than raid villages and systematically violate the human rights of the population.

But I am a professional cynic, and I caution against any such optimism. At the same time, we have to look and see that if the governments do mishandle the relief and reconstruction, they will reinforce the rebels' assertions that the central governments have little concern for the well being of the population, that they are embezzling funds, or that they are simply using relief efforts as a guise to start counterinsurgency operations. In both these cases, there is palpable mistrust amongst the local population towards the central government and their armed forces, and these are well deserved. Already there has been conflict over the distribution of aid. Both the governments and the rebels are cognizant of

the political importance of controlling humanitarian assistance to such traumatized populations. Will aid facilitate peace and reconciliation, or will it simply lead to the mobilization of ethno-nationalist movements? I tend to favor the latter course, unfortunately. And, finally, I will talk a little bit about the impact that the tsunami will have on terrorism in Southeast Asia, and it actually does.

So let's start with Aceh. In Aceh, the death toll has been 165,000 to 200,000 people, according to the latest press reports. There, GAM has been fighting for an independent homeland since 1976. There have been a number of past agreements with the central government that have granted them more autonomy, including the implementation of sharia law, and greater revenue-sharing from the region's vast natural gas and oil deposits. But neither of these have been enough to get the two sides to reach a durable political solution. Indeed, in March of 2003, the government of former President Megawati Sukarnoputri escalated the conflict and, at the time of the tsunami, the province was still under martial law. Since the tsunami, both sides have agreed to a ceasefire, as my colleague just mentioned, to help the distribution of aid to more than 800,000 internally displaced people. The civil war had already complicated relief efforts in many ways. The fact is, the government was slow to respond to the crisis because, for the last eighteen months, the Indonesian government had more or less banned all NGOs and humanitarian agencies from operating in the region. Journalists, too, were precluded for fear that they would report on the egregious human rights violations of the TNI, the Indonesian government.

The Indonesian government has raised the issue of security for international volunteers and for the reason of restricting them. They talk about the fear that NGO relief workers will be abducted or killed by the Acehese rebels. I don't think that's likely to happen. The Acehese rebels seem as determined to have the international community in, if nothing else to discredit the Indonesian military and to forestall any renewed counterattack. There have been attacks by the TNI on the rebels. By the military's own account, they've killed over 120 rebels. The rebels have countered and said that only twenty of the rebels were killed; most of the people were innocent civilians. Certainly, this has led to concerns that the impetus for the Indonesian government's call for the withdrawal of foreign forces on March 26 is simply there so that they can resume their offensive. Indeed, GAM and the Acehese population have appealed to the international community to stay on, both to forestall the offensive as well as to deliver aid of which they do not believe the Indonesian government is capable. The TNI asserts that two-thirds of their troops in the province are there conducting relief efforts. Ah, but here's the catch: they increased the number of troops from 20,000 by an additional 15,000, which basically means the same number of troops are involved in counterinsurgent operations. Peace talks are due to start in Finland this week, but I really caution against any optimism here. For one thing, they're still negotiating between Jakarta and the exiled elite. That has gotten nowhere. Second, the rank-and-file Indonesian military, and especially the acting head of the TNI, has made a number of statements that are just not in gear towards reconciliation and in fact lead to very clear concerns that counterinsurgency operations are going to resume soon.

However, I want to try to find some good in this. And for one thing, GAM has no real territory controls. It does not have an effective government. And this is very important.

Second, they also don't have a lot of popular appeal themselves. Although they claim to represent the aspirations of the population, they're pretty brutal and thuggish in their own right. And this has not necessarily endeared them to the population. I think most people will realize that they too have little to offer. Finally, we should remember that President Yudhoyono, who took office in September 2004, has committed himself to working out a political solution. As a former general himself, he understands how little this military solution can go. Unfortunately, there has to be a willingness to engage civil society in Indonesia and to find an alternative to current talks.

In Sri Lanka, I'm much less optimistic, even less optimistic than Aceh. The conflict there has been far more ferocious and couched in very stark zero-sum terms. Almost 70,000 people have been killed in the twenty-year conflict. But the real problem is that the Tamil Tigers exercise very ruthless, bordering on police state, control over their territories. And unlike the Acehnese, they really do control territory. They do have not just a shadow government but a real government. The Norwegian-brokered ceasefire was signed in February 2002. And following that, the Tamil Tigers renounced their goal of creating an independent homeland. But the talks broke down over issues of power-sharing and autonomy in March 2003, when the Tamil Tigers walked out of the peace process. And last December, days before the tsunami, they had actually threatened to restart the civil war.

The issue in Sri Lanka, unlike Aceh, is over who delivers aid. The Acehnese rebels themselves have no capability to distribute aid. But in Sri Lanka, the real debate is over who controls the aid because that is what is going to win the hearts and minds of the people. They do have a government structure in place, including a quasi-independent body called the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization, so they're saying international aid should flow right to them. In some cases, they have set up some joint teams and pledged to work together, and there have been success stories. But that cooperation has dissipated in some cases, and both sides have ratcheted up their propaganda attacks. The government accuses the Tamil Tigers of stealing aid and diverting it to their fighters while at the same time recruiting child soldiers, a practice in which the Tamil Tigers have engaged in the past. In fact, they signed an agreement with Amnesty International a number of years ago to stop the practice of recruitment of child soldiers. Amnesty calculated that the average age of the Tamil Tiger fighter was down to around fifteen. The Tigers have accused the government of fundamentally withholding aid and sending in more troops to rebel-controlled/claimed regions. This is especially true in the eastern part of the country, where Tiger control was significantly weakened in the summer of 2003. At the time, the regional commander, Colonel Karuna, defected from the rebel leadership. He took with him a thousand guerrilla fighters. And it really took several months before the Tamil Tiger leadership to purge Colonel Karuna. But they've never been able to get their level of support back to the level it was before this mini-coup, or insurrection. And they're very concerned that the government is working very closely to drive a greater wedge between them and the local community. The Tamil Tigers have been infuriated that the Sri Lankan government has blocked UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan from visiting Tamil-controlled regions. From the government's perspective, they were not going to hand the Tamil Tigers this propaganda victory, having Velupillai Prabhakaran, the rebel leader, stand next to Kofi Annan and solicit aid from the international community. They were not going to have the UN Secretary-General protected by Tamil troops or give de facto recognition of

Tiger control of this territory. Now, while the government has tried to prevent the Tamils from receiving international aid directly, it should be noted that the international community is still trying to do just that. And the World Food Program is still trying to provide aid to some 90,000 in the rebel-controlled north.

Now if there is any cause for optimism in this peace process, it is two-fold. The first is the Norwegians are using this opportunity to rekindle talks, and they've dispatched their top negotiator back to Sri Lanka. And, second, the Tamil Tigers' naval force was destroyed. Now, I know you're probably thinking, "The Tamil Tigers' naval force – how could this insurgent group have a navy?" Well, they had small attack craft that they use very effectively. When the government troops took over Jaffna, the rebels' stronghold, it was landlocked, so they had to supply this area by boat. And, secondly, the Tamil Tigers have always relied on arms smuggling from Southeast Asia, and this has all come in, obviously, by sea. So this does weaken the Tamil Tigers in another way.

Let me conclude by talking about the impact of the tsunami on terrorism in Southeast Asia. In Aceh, you've had the sudden arrival of a number of groups, including the Indonesian Mujahideen Council, the Islamic Defenders' Front, the Lashker Mujahideen, and one charity, the Medical Emergency Relief Charity. There are a handful of other groups, too. The arrival of these groups is alarming for a number of reasons. With the exception of the Islamic Defenders' Front, the other three have very clear, direct ties to Gama'a al-Islamiyya, the regional affiliate of Al-Qaeda that has been responsible for three bombings in Indonesia that have left more than 225 people dead and hundreds more wounded, with about a billion dollars of Indonesian GDP down the toilet. All of these organizations were involved in sectarian conflict in Indonesia, in the Molukus and in central Sulawesi, from 1999 through 2001, which left more than 9,000 people dead. Now this is not inconsequential, as JI, if you look at their strategies to rebuild themselves, has focused on sectarian conflict to regroup and broaden their base of support. Why are they there? Simply to build up good will. They understand the power of using humanitarian aid to broaden their base of support. They are there to proselytize and to keep taps on the United States and the other foreigners. They are fundamentally against us for what we stand for, and I am very concerned about their presence there.

I would be happy to answer any questions about this later. Thank you very much for your time.

### ***Professor Asoka Bandarage***

Thank you very much. That was very interesting. Our next speaker is Ambassador Alphonse La Porta. He is President of the United States Indonesia Society here in Washington DC. Mr. La Porta has held many important positions. He has served for more than 38 years in the US Foreign Service. He was the US Ambassador to Mongolia from December 1997 to November 2000. He is also well-experienced in Asian affairs, having served twice in Indonesia as well as in Malaysia, Turkey, and New Zealand. He was principal officer of the US Consulate in Madan between 1978 and 1981. And he was Political

Officer and Chief of the Consular section of the US Embassy in Jakarta from '67 to '70. In Washington, Mr. La Porta served in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, as Director of the Office of Cambodian Genocide Investigation. Incidentally, he is also a graduate of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. Welcome to you, and we look forward to your remarks on bilateral relief, particularly on Indonesia. Thank you.

### ***Ambassador Alphonse F. La Porta***

Thank you very much, and thank you for mentioning my status as an alumnus. It's a pleasure to be here. It seems we never leave Georgetown, in many ways. By way of prologue, I'd like to mention that the United States – Indonesia Society, or USINDO, is a small NGO. We are an independent organization. We do not take money from governments. We were founded ten years ago. Our purpose is to raise awareness of Indonesia in Washington, largely, but also elsewhere in the United States and to provide a forum for discussion of bilateral issues.

***...there is coordination on the ground, things are working, and in fact several NGOs describe the coordination with local officials in Aceh as being very good.***

There are many aspects to discussing the disaster areas in northern Sumatra, because it's not only Aceh but also affected areas of North Sumatra Province and the offshore islands of Sumeulue and Nias. But I think you can well appreciate that in the media we've been the recipients of a lot of information: a lot of conflicting information, a lot of backtracking information, a lot of imprecision, and it's very difficult to know exactly where the bouncing ball stops. So, with those qualifications, I'd just like to relate to you a few points that were discussed this morning in a meeting of about twenty-five nongovernmental organizations and several umbrella organizations representing NGO constituents. This meeting was at the Indonesian Embassy; it was

a useful exchange of views, and I think that there are a few things of some importance that came out of it.

First of all is that the United Nations, on the ground, is working. Coordination by the UN and its agencies, including UNICEF, WHO, and World Food Program, is indeed effective. And there are linkages with the NGOs working on the ground. Secondly, there is indeed coordination, and some degree of quality coordination, among nongovernmental organizations with the local authorities and with the military forces, not only the indigenous armed forces of Indonesia but also visiting armed forces of the United States, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, and several other countries and now Japan. So there is coordination on the ground, things are working, and in fact several NGOs describe the coordination with local officials in Aceh as being very good. They are sensitive, they are trying to be helpful, and they are trying to identify issues and get the assistance to the appropriate areas.

In that connection, I think that you have to appreciate that almost the entire telecommunications infrastructure was destroyed. The roads and bridges around the whole littoral of Aceh were destroyed. Communications have been very difficult, and there is a lot of jury-

rigging going on, but things are working. There is an effective supply base in Medan and North Sumatra. There are sub-centers for logistical supply in Sibolga on the west coast in North Sumatra Province; centers for relief supplies have been opened in Meulaboh, Lhok Seumauwe, Banda Aceh, and in Sabang Island off the north coast. Supplies have been staged through Subang airport in Kuala Lumpur and also Changi Airport in Singapore. The problem is the capacity of the airport in Banda Aceh: it is a very small airport, with very little apron space and virtually no storage space. Large quantities of supplies are out in the open, there have been a lot of problems getting trucks in and out, and to transport supplies to outlying areas. But the good news is, things are happening.

A third area discussed this morning was the area of political and multicultural sensitivity. Let's bring it down to what it is: Islam. This is a very important issue because there are not only foreign non-Muslim organizations working in Aceh, including Buddhist organizations and one Hindu organization. But there are also indigenous Indonesian non-Muslim charitable and other organizations. The umbrella organizations from the US and a couple of European organizations that were part of this morning's discussion at the Indonesian Embassy indicated a very high degree of cultural sensitivity and awareness of the complexity of working in an extremely conservative and largely closed society.

I think that there are several layers to this, because there are differing village organizations and village cultures within Aceh. There are certain distinctions between the central interior area versus the east coast versus Banda Aceh versus the west coast – they're all somewhat different. But also there are distinct village-level organizations in Nias Island and in other areas affected by the disaster. On the crunch question of proselytization, there is no question that from the humanitarian relief point of view, there have been some improper activities by religious organizations, not only from the United States but also from Indonesia. This is extremely unfortunate, as Zachary Abuza noted, in terms of the delicacy of trying to grapple with international religious extremism and the Aceh separatist phenomenon.

There are a lot of organizations already working on the longer term implications of recovery. My own organization is cooperating with four other major organizations – the Asia Society, the Asia Foundation, the US ASEAN Business Council, and the US Chamber of Commerce – to sponsor a private sector summit, most likely toward the end of April, in order to keep the momentum of reconstruction going and, as was mentioned earlier, to call in those pledges and direct them toward useful reconstruction activities. Moreover, the World Bank has been placed in charge by the Indonesian government to plot out long-term reconstruction plans, and needs assessments should be in hand within the next six to eight weeks. Also, the World Bank at least has indicated its intention to have a reconstruction conference by the end of March. My own organization, USINDO, is having a conference in Jakarta in the third week of February to talk about the economic impact of reconstruction on the general Indonesian economy. And the Indonesian government has relied on the Consultative Group for Indonesia (CGI), which is the principal donor coordination forum, plus an infrastructure summit that was held early last week, to move things forward.

Lastly, there are a lot of unknowns. We cannot tell at this early point, because a lot more study and a lot more fieldwork is needed to determine where future human settlements

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are going to be. While it's nice to be able to say that displaced persons should remain in their home localities, it may not be feasible, in view of the wipe-out of the infrastructure but also changes in the landscape. There are no ports left where there were ports. There are no rice fields left where there were rice fields. And so the question of human settlement and habitation has to be given very detailed consideration before everyone rushes willy-nilly into the reconstruction effort. It's going to require tremendous talent in terms of human settlements and urban planning. Let me also mention, in that connection, that the population of Aceh is probably three and a half million people, but it's estimated that half of the people in Aceh were directly affected in some way by this disaster. Only those people in the under-populated, internal parts of Aceh were not affected. But even there, bridges and some roads were wiped out and waters backed up into the upland areas in some localities.

So we have a tremendous human problem. We have one in which most people in Aceh were negatively impacted, either through loss of life, loss of loved ones, loss of livelihoods and businesses and so forth. It's estimated by the government, for example, that 97% of Aceh's GDP was wiped out because the areas affected by the disaster were where the rice culture was, where the commerce was, where the entrepreneurs for trade were, where the points for shipping of export commodities were, etc.

Let me just move on to make two very quick points and maybe enlarge upon a couple of the points made by my good friend and colleague Zachary Abuza. There has been a lot of negative focus on military-to-military relations and how the Indonesian military has behaved. I would say that a lot of the criticism is well deserved. Comments in this morning's press by an Indonesian general that foreign forces were behaving in an insolent manner, does not help, let me assure you. On the other hand, I think that this is an opportunity for the Indonesian government to establish civilian leadership of the military and to provide not only corrections but also positive direction in terms of the the military's role in Aceh. I think also you can say with all fairness that some of the undesirable behavior - xenophobia, acting out in various ways, control instincts - have been the result of over a decade of isolation of the Indonesian military. We've heard from allies, not only the US forces, that the Indonesian armed forces simply didn't know how to interoperate with the foreign armed forces on the ground in the Aceh relief effort. They didn't know what to do. Moreover, they've lost a lot of English language capability because of the isolation of the Indonesian military and not having access to US and other international training.

In other words, in the modern world of armed forces in Asia, the Indonesians have not been integrated nearly to the extent they should have been and have had no track record in humanitarian relief, certainly nothing on this scale. They have not been part of a lot of the training, logistical seminars, things done by disaster preparedness people in the region. They've not been part of peacekeeping operations where a lot of these skills are

learned. And so we're seeing now the fruits of over a decade of isolation. I would also add that this is also an outstanding opportunity for the new SBY government which, as Zachary pointed out, had been in power only a few more than seventy days before this disaster struck. What is needed is to bring the Indonesian military out of its isolation and to begin to institute much-needed reforms. It behooves not only the United States but the United Kingdom and a number of other friendly governments to assist military reform so that we can mitigate some of the worst factors that we have observed and also try to direct them into more positive ways, including dealing with the *Aceh Merdeka* insurgency.

### ***Professor Asoka Bandarage***

Thank you very much for that sensitive presentation. You mentioned private sector initiatives. Ron Somers is the President of the US-India Business Council, which was established in 1975. It is comprised of more than 100 of the top US companies investing in India. Mr. Somers also serves as the Council's CEO, and he has been instrumental in establishing strategy, leading policy initiatives, and advocacy efforts, in terms of US-India private investment activities. I'm really delighted that Mr. Somers is here to talk about his organization's efforts towards tsunami relief.

### ***Mr. Ron Somers***

Yes, thank you very much. And allow me first to give a little introduction as to the impact of the tsunami, focusing for a moment on India. India was actually spared the brunt of the tsunami and therefore the impact. Luckily for India, in the coast and in the Bay of Bengal – if you imagine the strand of the Bay of Bengal, where you have the states of Andhra Pradesh, going south into Tamilnadu – Sri Lanka basically blocked most of the wave, and so the rising tides definitely had an impact on India. The result for India, of course, was the loss of life in the number of 15,000 and counting. This occurred mostly in the southern portion of Tamilnadu state, in the area of Nagappattinam, and also in the islands which are in the smack middle of the Bay of Bengal called the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. And those areas took a severe, devastating blow by the tsunami. The impact, of course, was mostly affecting the fishing community. And, if you have ever been to that region of the world, then you will know that the fishing community lives almost on a daily hand-to-mouth basis. Their housing is what I would call not substantial. It is quite what I would call temporary, and you would even describe it as a hutment. All of this has been wiped out, and of course it was the fishing community that would have been up early in the morning. They would have been out fishing, and therefore the adult male population would have been severely affected by the tsunami, leaving orphans, leaving women and children, and affecting as I mentioned, the fishing community primarily.

We have received today an update from people that are on the ground in Tamilnadu, where the tsunami had the largest impact, and what they report is quite interesting: that the main infrastructure of roads and power lines and substations affecting the electricity supply are relatively unaffected. It is just these hutment villages along the coast that have been destroyed and wiped out. That is unfortunate, of course, for the residents that were most

badly affected. But in terms of the electricity supply, within a matter of hours of the tsunami hitting the Indian coast, electricity was being generated and the assessment is that there will be a limited amount of capital expenditure needed by the states of Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh in restoring facilities. And in terms of lost revenues, which would have an impact on the larger economy of the state governments that have been affected by the tsunami, the losses were relatively minor.

I think the striking issue, different than Sri Lanka and different than Indonesia, about which we've just heard, that distinguishes India in this case is the power of their growing economy. I want you to imagine for a moment the magnitude of the Indian economy, which at this point is leaping ahead at *six to seven percent* GDP per annum. In fact, the day after the tsunami, the Bombay Stock Exchange hit its record-ever levels. So despite the amazing impact of this natural event, the tsunami had very little effect on the people in Bombay, the investment community, and the financial institutions that make up the engine of the economy. And, in fact, the stock market, as I mentioned, achieved record levels.

The other thing that I think was remarkable is that, the very day of the tsunami, India turned to itself and, with the massive resources available to it, it was able to dispatch immediately relief to its affected villages along coastal Andhra Pradesh and coastal Tamilnadu. And, indeed, they were able to dispatch and release the Indian navy to support relief efforts in Sri Lanka. Now that's a first ever. And I think what that does is it demonstrates a resilience, number one, of an extraordinary economy that's now emerging as a major power in the world. And it demonstrates, I think, India's desire to be recognized on the world stage as a major player at the head table. And indeed, India deserves that acknowledgement, and we welcome their emergence into this major economic power that they have become.

The other remarkable – striking, I think – observation is the generosity of the corporate sector that took place immediately after the tsunami. We began receiving calls immediately, on the twenty-sixth of December. There were major corporate sponsors who were willing to step to the table and to do so, frankly, on a basic altruistic basis. They were not looking for any quid pro quo; they were not looking for name recognition; they were not looking for profile advancement or for brand identification. They were looking to help a country that they saw as a major partner over the long term, and they recognized that there may be a need in India for immediate support. And they wanted to step to the table, and they didn't know how to do that.

It was interesting to me, sitting in the chair where I was, that at the outset there was really not a lot of information that we could obtain. The Indian Embassy did the right thing by directing immediate relief resources to the Prime Minister's relief fund. That, of course, is a large corpus of money that the Prime Minister keeps available to him for all such natural events or natural disasters where relief is needed to be dispatched anywhere in the nation. It's extremely transparent, meaning it's not subject to corruption. It's large, and it's the kind of corpus that's needed for such events. But for corporate giving into

that kind of a fund, you certainly would receive very little, if any, recognition. And therefore all the companies that gave into that fund were doing so out of pure and altruistic reasoning.

Eventually, as more and more information became apparent to us, it appeared that the relief efforts were succeeding in India, at least. I recognize that Sri Lanka is different, I recognize that Aceh and Indonesia and Sumatra are much different, but in the case of India, water and medicine was slopping around on the beaches a matter of hours after the tsunami had hit. In other words, relief was getting to the affected communities.

The corporate focus now, therefore, is on the rebuilding effort. And I know that our previous speakers have mentioned this. This is going to be the challenge, now that the shantytowns and hutments have been destroyed, the livelihoods have been lost, the fishing community has been ravaged, the fishing nets, the fishing boats are now gone. These are the means through which these communities were able to make their livelihoods. How is the corporate sector, who is now wanting to engage India in a long-term partnership to be doing business there, how can we help rebuild those communities and restore those economics in a way that is meaningful and sustainable? And what we're now grappling with is exactly as the Ambassador has just mentioned: What is the long-term planning that we can participate in? I think it would be wrong to overreact too quickly. Now that the relief has hit the beaches, that the people who could be rescued have been rescued, and that the people that have been able to find medical care are being cared for, how can we now begin to rebuild the economies along these coastal areas of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamilnadu?

What we are doing is that we are funneling money right now to the United Way of India. It's very similar to the United Way of the United States; in fact, it is affiliated with the United Way in the United States. This enables the corporate sector in the United States to obtain a tax deduction for their donation, but, in fact, they can direct the money to NGOs on the ground in India that know how to get the money to the communities that most badly need it, while still being able to take benefit of the larger organization, the United Way with which all of us are familiar. Slowly but surely, you're going to be seeing corporations sponsoring fishing boats, sponsoring the giving of fishing nets, sponsoring the rebuilding of clinics and of schools along the coastal strands of Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh and along the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. And this will be done in a way where the sponsorship could be recognized, where people can, for example, sponsor a boat. In fact, Georgetown University could very easily sponsor a boat for any number of communities. They cost about \$2,000 each. But in this way the corporates want to spend their energies and dedicate their resources to the rebuilding of these communities.

In the long-term again, the conclusion here would be that India was most spared of all. There was some confusion as to why India at first resisted international aid. I met with Ambassador Sen of the Indian Embassy just last Tuesday, and he clarified to me, "The reason at the outset we were resisting aid is because we recognize that there were neighbors in the community that needed the help more badly than we did and we wanted to

have the help go to them first.” And, as you can see, India backed that up by dispatching the Indian navy to Sri Lanka to assist in relief efforts there. And certainly they took care of their own. The second point, again, I think is the resiliency that we’ve seen in the Indian economy, the power of this emerging global engine. And I think that we see bright days coming again and India actually emerging as a truly extraordinary economy. Thank you very much. The United States-India Business Council is here at the US Chamber of Commerce, and we’re happy to meet you on the internet or even meet you in person. It’s an organization that is thirty years old this year, organizing a business interest to promote commercial ties between India and the US. Thank you very much.

### ***Professor Asoka Bandarage***

Thank you very much for that important analysis and presentation. Next we have Mr. David Smith. He is the Acting Director of the United Nations Information Center in Washington, DC. He has had a very illustrious career as a foreign correspondent, author, and professor. He has reported from the world’s major flashpoints: Africa, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. He continues to be a Senior Correspondent for ITN (Independent Television News) of London. He was Bureau Chief for ITN in Moscow between 1988 and 1990. He has been a correspondent for ITN in the Middle East, in Africa, in Spain and Italy. And, furthermore, he has been a visiting professor at a number of different universities, including the University of Maryland and the University of Michigan. So I’m very pleased to have you here.

### ***Dr. David Smith***

Thank you. It should be said that I no longer am a broadcaster. And forgive me, at the end of what has been a fascinating evening, in the words of Henry VIII to all those wives, I won’t keep you long. I think after all those lovely and fascinating presentations that we’ve had, it’s time for me to just make a few points, throw away the prepared remarks, and hopefully cue up some questions.

One of the things I learned at a small liberal arts college in England too many years ago is to read good American literature and good American philosophy. And, believe it or not, my year was the first year it was actually allowed to study American literature at a small liberal arts college in England. Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The years teach much which the days never know.” We’re a matter of days away from a once-in-a-lifetime catastrophe, the likes of which, when I saw Tim’s first presentation, I think only the Bangladesh cyclone of 1970 in my lifetime, in terms of numbers, would outdo. And as a correspondent all over the world, this was truly the nightmare image that you never wanted to broadcast. But the years of talk make the moment of greatest catastrophe, greatest despair, greatest human suffering usually the moment for opportunity, a seed of hope.

I’m not going to hit you with statistics or too much detail of what the UN has been doing, I would argue very successfully, in the past twenty-nine days, because I think we’re twenty-nine days away. I’m going to hit you with a few observations about the seeds of hope, the

seeds of opportunity that I see in the last month. And perhaps really at this point I've got, if I've thrown away my prepared remarks, I've got my more of a journalistic hat on than my UN hat.

You know, the folks in New York, running the humanitarian assistance program OCHA, which obviously has been working around the clock since December 26, are using a wonderful new UN acronym. There are lots of UN acronyms that, frankly, I don't like at all, and some of them I don't even know what they stand for, but the one that currently has currency in New York is OBG: Overwhelmed By Generosity. The first flash appeal for a billion dollars has netted well over \$800 million. I think there's very, very serious optimism that we will get over a billion. In fact, Pricewaterhouse, which has been brought in to monitor and track the funds, is really quietly confident that we are going to go much, much higher. I say that because it hasn't always been the case, as we know. It wasn't even the case last year in Darfur, when we were putting out emergency appeals. I say that as well because the first month has surely unleashed the power of giving in a way that perhaps only a once-in-a-lifetime catastrophe does. And it's come from countries, it's come from governments, and, as our friend from the India Association just pointed out, there is every prospect of corporations actually sponsoring the reconstruction of a fishing village. I would argue, in thirty years of reporting the world, that this is quite extraordinary and somewhat positive. So that is OBG.

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The other one that strikes me, and again this comes from our people in New York who are working on the front line of this one, is that governments, by and large, are doing their job. I'm not going to comment on whether the Indian government did this or did that and the real purposes of why they chose a certain tack. It's not my place to really talk about what Indonesia did and the role of the Indonesian military. I think it is clear, however, though, that there is a level of coordination at the government level which is quite extraordinary. I'm struck by the response in Indonesia. The government response, and this is what the UN is concluding, has been swift and significant. The government in Indonesia remains in charge of coordinating the relief effort. Strategic coordination has been strengthened by the establishment of a joint government of Indonesia-UN liaison unit. There is a UN sub-office established in Banda Aceh, I think something we probably wouldn't have seen on December the twenty-fifth, working at quite the level it is. There is a joint government of Indonesia-UN-US emergency health assessment of the west coast. There's emergency food distribution, reaching approximately 330,000 people. These numbers are not insignificant, and the level of cooperation is not, in my experience, insignificant.

We have heard a lot tonight about cooperation between the military. I have to tell you, a fellow was down from our humanitarian assistance briefing on Capitol Hill the other day –

and he's a very wise fellow, he's a former Marine Corp Colonel and a spirit in his own right – and he painted a picture that now we have the U.S.S. Lincoln off the coast of Banda Aceh, with multiple NGOs and UN teams flying missions into Banda Aceh. Yes, I think we have every reason to worry about what the Indonesian military will do when their deadline expires. I think we have every reason to worry about what may happen in Tamil-controlled areas of Sri Lanka. But I don't think we should lose sight of the fact that there is quite extraordinary cooperation between the military at this point. We are a matter of days away, but I would argue that we're watching quite a few barriers that have been there for years come down.

The next one – and the word is used selectively; it's something of a buzzword at the moment – I think it's quite extraordinary transparency going on here. Transparency is a word, as I'm sure those of you who read about the United Nations will know, has very serious currency at the moment, because of what has happened to us with the issue of the Oil-For-Food Program in Iraq. But we're already seeing, as was pointed out earlier, we're already seeing the effect of having an online examination, not just of how governments will give and whether they meet their pledges, but also where the money goes. You heard me mention Pricewaterhouse. Pricewaterhouse have been brought in by the UN. They are currently in Geneva looking at the books. I would argue that that is a very positive thing. Because hopefully, when the allegations of corruption come in, and surely they will, then equally Pricewaterhouse will be in the position to look at it in a truly independent fashion. The Secretary-General said, when he went to the region earlier in the new year, that this kind of scrutiny was important and critical. I would urge, as an old media hand, that one of the litmus tests of whether the world gives enough is whether the media stay on the story. And so far, there is every indication, if you watch your nightly news and you read your papers, and even in these busy, busy days in Washington in the last couple of weeks, we have not lost sight of the tsunami. Transparency in the broadest possible sense.

There is, finally, my own organization. The United Nations is not often accused of being the sum of its parts, correct? Forgive me, that's British humor, not very funny. No, the UN is not often accused of being the sum of its parts. But I think there is plenty of evidence that, in the past month, the UN has, to quote the local vernacular, got its act together. I'd urge all of you to go to our website, [un.org](http://un.org), and look at what we're doing. I'll just give you a flavor. And some of those acronyms do bother me, so I won't belabor them too much. But I'm very aware that, on this one, we are, if I can find the piece of paper, delivering. We are, in fact, providing the kind of support, as we move from immediate needs. This is this week:

- The World Food Program: Air bridge to ferry 500 tons of tin fish from Bangkok to Banda Aceh.
- The World Food Program: Loading a 3,000-ton ship with 2,200 tons of rice, 24 tons of biscuits, 6.5 tons of noodles.
- The WHO, the World Health Organization, organized a technical working group already, to document the lessons learned.
- UNICEF: A team of pediatricians, psychologists, nurses, conducted rehabilitation for affected children in Sri Lanka.

- UNICEF: Procuring EPI vaccines and cold chain equipment: BCG, Polio, TT, DTP, Measles, and Hepatitis B.
- UNDP, the development agency: Mobilizing resources to protect the reefs and clean up the seabed, yes, because the environment has been brutalized.
- UNEP, the environmental agency: Conducting environmental damage assessments throughout the region.
- UNHCR, the refugees: First phase of a plan to house 100,000 in temporary housing.
- UNHCR – sometimes as a journalist, you know, the statistics never told the story – this is Sri Lanka, UNHCR, the refugees’ agency: Distributing 261,000 tons of non-food relief items to 140,000 beneficiaries.

I’m sure you know where I’m heading. You know, as a journalist too many years ago, my disasters were manmade. They were famine in northern Uganda in the late 1970s, famine in Ethiopia – I was an Africa hand in those days – in the early 1980s, when the numbers would numb you. They were overwhelming. And these numbers are the same.

To me, when I hear the world and my own organization talking about early warning systems and how best we can make use of what the folks in California and Hawaii have got and whether we can find the UN umbrella and some funds, when I hear my organization talking about early warning systems and how we prevent this next time, I think we’re in the right direction. And great news: last week in Kobe, the UN found, I think, the \$12 million in seed money to give us some kind of early warning system. Early warning worked, I would argue. What happened 20 years ago in Africa has never quite been replicated, thank God. So much as I can be concerned, and we should all be, about the way the Indonesian military behaves, or the Sri Lankan government for that matter; much as we should be concerned, yes, about whether children, currently most vulnerable, are turned into modern-day slaves or worse; much as we should be concerned about whether can move now from the immediate needs of people who are starving and homeless to reconstruction and development; I think the years teach much, and the years are teaching us that even in twenty-nine days we’ve come a long way. How far we’ve come and how far we still have to go. But that, I would argue, is a positive direction. Thank you.

### ***Professor Asoka Bandarage***

Well, I’m delighted to be able to conclude the panelists’ speeches. On that note, the positive direction, we can take a few questions and comments. We don’t have a lot of time since we started late. But if we have some questions or comments, please go to one of the mikes on either side of the room.

***[Questions and Answers, followed by conclusion by Dr. Chuck Weiss.]***