



Evian Group Communiqué – 17 October 2004

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The Evian Group, a forum committed to an open, equitable and responsible global economic agenda, held its ninth annual plenary meeting in Montreux, Switzerland, from 15 to 17 October. The meeting was attended by approximately one hundred leading policy makers, policy thinkers and business executives from all continents.

The meeting once again stressed that this is an era of unprecedented opportunities, daunting challenges and a number of potential threats. The business, technological, social and in many ways also the political environment is undergoing profound change. The sudden emergence of the “huge new kid on the global economic bloc”, China, is one of the more vivid illustrations of the profound change.

Beyond China, however, more generally the “developing world” is keen to get more involved in global trade, but at the same time irritated to find that the playing field in certain sectors where it has comparative advantage – notably agriculture and labour intensive goods – is anything but level.

The point repeatedly emphasised is that the overall concern must be growth. In this first quarter of the twenty-first century, about one billion (one billion!) young persons will be joining the labour force in the developing world. This can either serve as a key driver for what could (should) be the XXI century global economic miracle, or it could pave the way for disasters comparable to those the world witnessed at the time that huge unemployment was generated following the 1929 Great Depression.

The world economy is very much at a crossroads. In the face of the new realities, there is an imperative need for a proper adjustment of mentalities. The industrialised countries must cease their discriminatory practices against developing country exports – including exports of labour! Developing countries must radically improve their domestic governance in a way that entrepreneurship should be enhanced, and not, as is too often currently the case, impeded.

Developing countries must also reduce barriers, especially in respect to each other. Not only is North-South trade the global growth vehicle of the times, so is – or should be – South-South trade.

What is vitally necessary at this time of profound change is to ensure that the rules-based multilateral framework is robust and respected. To that end, an absolute priority is the timely and successful conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda.

For further information:

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