

**Launch of AllianceDARC, Geneva, 9 June 2006:
Remarks by Dr Mukesh Kapila**

Thank you for coming this evening - despite the rival attraction of the start of the World Cup. We are particularly grateful to Koen Toonen for opening up his beautiful house in this stunning location, and to him and Kirsty Griifiths for the amazing music and singing which has created such a warm and welcoming atmosphere to inspire our thoughts. Particular thanks also to the principal organisers of this event: Caroline Hunt, Linda Clemensson, and Nichole McGarry, and many others who helped to bring together the well-over 100 friends and well-wishers here today.

At the start, I should also welcome the institutional partners of the Alliance: the Aegis Trust (and its chief executive Dr James Smith who has flown over specially from London), the Africa Humanitarian Action, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, the Humanitarian Dialogue Centre, the International Centre for Migration and Health (represented here by Executive Director Dr Manuel Carballo), and the International Organization for Migration, as well as associates from many UN agencies, NGOs, Red Cross, and the private sector. It is a pleasure to also acknowledge the founding support of the Government of Sweden, Pfizer Inc, the Pears Foundation, and the several farsighted individual members of the Alliance who reached into their own pockets when the Alliance was just a twinkle.

It may be that you are wasting your time this evening. Here are three reasons why I should not support this new venture.

- First, I could say: "I am too busy"
- Second, I could think: "I am already supporting such work or other equally good causes....through my job/taxes/gifts etc"
- Third, I may feel: "What little I can do will make no difference".

Or put another way, "I am too lazy, or too mean, or I just can't be bothered".

So, here are three reasons why I am supporting this venture, and they come from three major phases of my life. Let us call them; "A", "B", and "C".

- "A" was the first death I saw in the initial weeks after graduating as a doctor in the 1980s and working in a hospital near London. She was a Somali mother who died in childbirth from obstructed labour due to female genital mutilation - a near universal condition in women and girls in certain African countries.
- "B" was a teenage Sierra Leonean mother with a ten-month old baby girl - both raped and with amputated arms, that I saw in Freetown in the 1990s

while visiting as Head of DFID's Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department.

- "C" was the Darfurian woman of extraordinary courage who forced her way into my office in Khartoum in 2004 where I was the UN Coordinator - to tell me that she and 120 others like her had been raped by militia - gang-raped in front of their families.

If these are not "reasons" enough, I could tell you others from my own observations in Rwanda, Bosnia, Liberia, DRC, Afghanistan, and in virtually every single war where I have spent most of my professional life over the past decade. Nowadays, rape in conflict has virtually become the norm. And it also happens in major natural disaster crises - such as the Tsunami in Southeast Asia, and the earthquake in Kashmir. Such sexual violence is part of the wider problem of violence against women: at least one in three of the world's female population has been physically or sexually abused at some time. That is the equivalent of around 25 of the 65 or so women in this room.

Like me, you will have your own personal reasons for bothering to turn up and of thinking of supporting the Alliance. I need not detail the aims and objectives of AllianceDARC as you can study them yourself from the leaflet.

So, it will suffice here to convey the three core ideas that underpin the vision of the Alliance, and its very ethos or spirit.

First, the work of the Alliance is about reaching out to the most difficult-to reach, treading where others may fear to do so, taking risks where others would be more wary, trusting where others have become too cynical, and bringing hope and help to the most forgotten.

Second, the Alliance is here to facilitate and support, and not replace or compete, with the many good people and agencies that are struggling to work in this area. There is so much to do in yet more places where currently little is being done.

Third, membership of the Alliance is about making a personal contribution - that goes beyond one's normal life or professional job - where no doubt, many are striving to do good in the world. It is more than that (and neither is about broad or abstract strategies and policies). It is much simpler: it is about the individual difference we can make, and the difference to individuals that we should make.

If you can share in this spirit, a very warm welcome to the Alliance.