

**Speech Pronounced by His Excellency the President of the Dominican Republic,
Dr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, during the launching of the book “Investing in
Development” within the framework of Prof. Jeffrey Sachs’ visit
Salón Los Embajadores, National Palace
April 26, 2005**

**Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of Columbia University’s Earth Institute.
Secretaries of State
Ambassadors
Special Guests**

I was able to observe with certain concern that, when the master of ceremonies introduced the members of the Head Table there was discrimination in the distribution of applause. Each one of the members received one round of applause, Professor Sachs received two rounds of applauses and for the president there was no applause.

But this lack of applause was greatly compensated with two books that I have received as a gift from Professor Jeffrey Sachs and, of course, these two books have great value, not only for me, personally, but for all of us.

At one time, a great economist from Great Britain said that politicians are intellectual providers of the economies of the countries and it seems that he was right. But here, in our case, the Dominican Republic, at least, we politicians that belong to the political party in office are the intellectual winners of a living economist called Jeffrey Sachs. And, although I have referred to it before, perhaps this is the time to tell you how Professor Sachs came to us.

It was the year 1990, I was with architect Eduardo Selman in Massachusetts, it was terribly cold, I was running for vice-president and, because we knew we could win the elections, we were looking for alternatives to face the pressing situation of the country. There was a severe economic crisis in the country. We went, Selman and myself, to Harvard University and found Professor Jeffrey Sachs’ cubicle and there we arrived that cold winter night in 1990.

And when we arrived at Professor Jeffrey Sachs’ cubicle we were told “Professor Jeffrey Sachs is in Poland, he is advising the Polish government” and we asked “when is he coming back?” and they told us “we do not know because from there he is going to advise the Russian government”. At that time he was the global advisor of all countries in crisis.

We were not lucky enough to see Professor Sachs at that time but, later, after our term in office was over in the year 2000, we went back and, this time, we had the good fortune of meeting with Jeffrey Sachs and including him in the projects for the future of the Dominican Republic.

Later, I have said to him that in reality perhaps he has been the only economist that has been looked for in two different centuries, in the 20th century and the 21st century because in effect it happened during this period of historical transition.

Therefore, we started to work with Professor Jeffrey Sachs as of the year 2001 in the design of a series of proposals for the country starting with what is called the competitiveness strategy for the Dominican Republic and jointly with a group of his collaborators that had been in the Center for International Development at Harvard University and who later went to Columbia University’s Earth Institute.

We started to review all the topics related to trade policies, those that had to do with the development of small, medium and micro enterprises, development of education, and information technology within a national development plan and of competitiveness. All these ideas, in fact, have proven to be very useful as we tried to have a horizon of which are the main challenges that the Dominican Republic has in its near future, as well as on a medium and long term basis.

And, naturally, knowing the depth of the economic and financial crisis that has affected the Dominican Republic during the last few years, we looked for his counsel and advise to try to have a finished diagnose of the national drama, as well as a series of recommendations on how to face these problems that have recently caused so many difficulties in the Dominican Republic.

Professor Jeffrey Sachs, with the generosity that is typical in him, has said here tonight that he is observing how the Dominican Republic is starting to come out of this deep crisis that has assailed us. What he has not told you is that he is responsible for the ideas that have allowed us to conquer this crisis because it was in consultation with him, that we in effect received his orientations, his advice, and his criteria as to how to come out successfully of this terrible situation that affected our nation during the last few years.

Thus, I believe that we already have the medicine in the Dominican Republic. When there is a crisis, we look for Professor Jeffrey Sachs. This will allow us to get out of the crisis in a shorter period of time and, in some way, make the situation as less difficult and traumatic as possible.

Now Professor Jeffrey Sachs presents to us two books that, as soon as he compensated me for the lack of applause with the books, John Gagain came and took from me immediately, but I will examine them carefully. However, I do want to advance that the titles are very suggestive and attractive. "Investing in Development" is the title of the 2700 pages collection that Professor Jeffrey Sachs has said represent the United Nations system to try to achieve the objective of reducing in half the extreme poverty in the planet and the second one is a book of which he is directly the author of and entitled "The End of Poverty", a title that seems to me more fortunate than "The End of History" by Francis Fukuyama because, besides being more realistic, it is more in tune with our objectives. We do not want to end history, here, what we want is to end poverty and it is much more pertinent and relevant to be able to have a text of this nature on these subjects.

And we share with Professor Jeffrey Sachs the idea that, in effect, extreme poverty and poverty in general can not only be mitigated, it can, in effect, be eradicated but this requires a set of policies, it requires a work methodology, it requires a national unity that links the government with the private sector and with civil society, with the academic world and with all the actors of a society determined to, based on this, identify what accrued historical problems have prevented the country from reaching new sources for generating wealth, a more equal distribution of said national wealth and the creation of opportunities that dignify human beings as such and nobody can make such a dramatic and keen transformation in the life of a nation if they do not have the intellectual capital, if they do not have the ideas, if the criteria and the concepts that are the basis for a modification and a transformation of this kind is lacking.

Therefore, these texts that Professor Jeffrey Sachs presents to us tonight, I would say have the value of the power of the ideas that serve as the basis to achieve in practice, the objective of eradicating poverty in the Dominican Republic and, in the case of United Nations, of all countries that are affected by a similar situation.

I also share your optimism and the sense that if we join efforts in the Dominican Republic, especially the political parties that have great responsibility towards the people, that the conflicts that are secondary such as the struggle for power are subordinated to national interest; that we can reach practical agreements about what has to be done and to have matrixes, effective and lasting

matrixes so that in a democratic system where power is alternated, the party that directs the destiny of the country by choice of the people knows that they do not have to start from zero; that there are determined criteria, theoretical basis that already exist, that have been examined, that have been converted into practical points on which we have agreed, we also agree that they should not be changed because they produce good results and that based on this, we will move forward,

I say that perhaps one of the challenges that we face from the perspective of the political process is that every four years there are elections and that with elections there is a change in the political parties in power and that the problem in Latin America is that the democratic system has hindered the political continuity of the State and that in this sense we cannot.... well; other regimes contemplate continuity in the application of State policy.

What has to be learned is that political parties have their own identities, their own criteria, their own ideology, their own programs, but there are basic things that are unchangeable and that, based on this, democratic parties, competing in the electoral arena within a plural system can effectively apply values, principles, political standards that go beyond their limited government period and it is on the basis of guaranteed continuous public policies that countries are in effect transformed, four years is very little, eight also, 12 as well.

This has to be looked at on a long term basis and democratically; nobody can last for such a long time in power because, even if they are doing a good job, it generates fatigue, it generates the need for change, so I think that the important thing is to assume ownership of these ideas, they do not belong to anybody, but rather to everyone; to share them and make a formal political commitment that no matter who is in power, there is a commitment before the nation to in effect work to dignify the Dominican nation so that there are job opportunities, vocation, so that everybody has access to running water, that there is a healthy environment in the Dominican Republic and I believe this is how we can move forward.

So Professor Sachs, once more we are very honored by your presence, each time you visit us you do no more than nurture and feed us to continue with this tough battle that we have ahead of us in the Dominican Republic to satisfy the great expectations, the great trust that our population has that the political class will reach the level of their great hopes and great utopias.

Thank you and thank all of you!