

Estoril Political Forum 2020 Conversation

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I would like to welcome you all to this conversation on our International Annual Meetings. Today we were all supposed to be in Estoril, at the Hotel Palacio, near the sea, celebrating the 28th edition of the Estoril Political Forum. Due to the present circumstances, this is not possible, as we are all aware. Fortunately, thanks to technology, we are able to have this conversation and to be together, although virtually.

We had invited two renowned guest speakers for today's conversation, Professor Lord Raymond Plant and Dr. Marc Plattner, both very close and long-time friends of the Institute, however, due to health problems Professor Plant is not able to join us today. He is, nevertheless, recovering well and we hope he will join us in October in Estoril.

Today's session will be divided into three parts. We will begin with a first round of interventions on the relevance and tradition of the Estoril Political Forum. We will then present this year's Conference programme, just updated for October.

I will give the floor to Dr. Marc Plattner, then to Prof. João Carlos Espada, our Director, and finally to Prof. José Tomaz Castello Branco, who is a Fellow at the Institute and has participated in our conferences since the very beginning, 1993.

This will be followed by a second round of interventions on the main topic of the conference, namely, "New Authoritarian Challenges to Liberal Democracy".

Lastly, we will open the floor for discussion. But before we begin with the interventions, we have a surprise for you. We are happy to share a series of photos taken in previous years, starting with pictures taken in Arrábida in the late nineties.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Dr. Plattner, who many of you know very well.

Dr. Plattner is founding Coeditor of the *Journal of Democracy* and is now the *Journal's* Coeditor Emeritus, as well as Distinguished Nonresident Fellow at the International Forum for Democratic Studies of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). He is now a member of NED's board of Directors.

He is the author of *Democracy Without Borders? Global Challenges to Liberal Democracy* (2008). His essays on a wide range of international and public policy issues have appeared in numerous books and journals. Over the past three decades, he has coedited with Larry Diamond more than two dozen books on contemporary issues relating to democracy in the *Journal of Democracy* book series.

Dr. Plattner is the Chairman of our Institute's International Advisory Board and is the key international partner of the Estoril Political Forum. He has been an active participant in the conferences since 1998. We are honored to have him with us today.

We will now move on to the presentation of this year's Conference programme. I would like to draw your attention to the importance of the topic at the present time, where threats to liberal democracy are emerging in various forms in different parts of the world.

Once again, the programme is quite varied and intensive, which makes it challenging to present each panel individually. I would, however, like to highlight the tribute to Gertrude Himmelfarb on October 19th. Professor Himmelfarb continues to inspire us intellectually.

In addition, I would like to point out the two memorial dinners and three memorial luncheons organized in association with the Ambassadors of the United Kingdom, France, United States of America, Italy and Germany, respectively.

We will have the Winston Churchill Memorial Dinner (October 19th), the Charles de Gaulle Memorial Luncheon (October 20th), the George Washington Memorial Dinner (October 20th), the Luigi Einaudi Memorial Luncheon (October 21st) and the Konrad Adenauer Memorial Dinner (October 21st).

The Estoril Political Forum is a gathering of friends of liberty that has grown over the years. It was not made by a central decision, or a central command. It has grown. It has evolved gradually through the free interaction and cooperation of free and responsible individuals and institutions that have felt at home and have enjoyed these annual meetings.

Some of our Portuguese colleagues, from other Universities, are sometimes surprised by the success of this unplanned evolution of what has become a great institution of friends of liberty. However, whenever they join us and visit us at the Estoril Political Forum, they, too, are touched by the atmosphere of orderly liberty which we celebrate in these meetings. It is for me a great privilege to be part of such an enriching Forum.

I will now close the session, but before I do, I would like to thank our guest speakers once again for their inspiring contributions: Dr. Marc Plattner, who has joined us from Washington DC; our Director, Prof. João Carlos Espada, the founder and true soul of these International Annual Meetings, whose commitment and enthusiasm adds enormous value to our yearly editions; and Prof. José Tomaz Castello Branco, actively involved in our Meetings since 1993. A special word of thanks, for hosting this session, is also due to Prof. André Azevedo Alves, Head of the Institute's Research Centre. Last but certainly not least I would like to thank the session participants, namely our foreign guest speakers for the October conference, whom we look forward to meeting then.

I will finish by saying "we'll meet again" ... hopefully, in October in Estoril.