



IAN GOLDIN

Professor of Globalisation and Development, University of Oxford

**Laudatio by Alina Bârgăoanu, Dean of the College of Communication and Public Relations,
National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, for awarding the title of
Doctor Honoris Causa to Professor Ian Goldin, Oxford Martin School, Oxford University
November 28th, 2017**

Distinguished Rector,

Dear professor Ian Goldin,

Distinguished guests,

Dear members of the academic community,

Dear colleagues,

Dear students,

Motto: "This is by far the best time in human history to be alive"

It is a great privilege for me to deliver this *Laudatio* in honour of Ian Goldin, Oxford University Professor and Director of the Oxford Martin Programme on Technological and Economic Change, Oxford University.

1. General background

Professor Goldin is a leading figure in field of economic policy and development, both as a practitioner and as an academic. Regarding his practical experience, let me mention that he was Vice

President of the World Bank and the Director of Development Policy, Head of Programmes at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), principal economist at the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Chief Executive of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), advisor to President Mandela, and more recently, Senior Independent Director of the United Kingdom Government's aid agency CDC.

This rich development-related practice is widely reflected in his books. As Ian Goldin himself mentions in the Preface to *The Pursuit of Development. Economic Growth, Social Change and Ideas*, "I have worked in and with developing countries for my entire career and it has been a privilege to be asked by Oxford University Press to distil my experience into this short volume".

His list of publications includes over 20 authored and co-authored books. Among the most recent ones, let me mention: *The Age of Discovery. Navigating the Risks and Rewards of our New Renaissance*, *The Pursuit of Development. Economic Growth, Social Change and Ideas*, *The Butterfly Defect. How Globalization Creates Systemic Risks and What to Do about It*, *Divided Nations. Why Global Governance Is Failing and What We Can Do*, and *Exceptional People. How Migration Shaped Our World*.

Ian Goldin also published over 50 journal articles, including: "Global Governance and Systemic Risk in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Financial Crisis", "Migration Is Essential for Growth", "The Second Renaissance", "Risk and Complexity".

He was the founding Director of the Oxford Martin School from September 2006 to September 2016. During this period, he established 45 research programmes, bringing together more than 500 academics from across Oxford, from over 100 disciplines. Professor Goldin was also the initiator of the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations. As a Vice-President, he steered the Commission's work towards addressing the long-term perspective gap. The report, *Now for the Long Term*, was published in 2013 and proposed 5 guiding principles: creative coalitions; innovative, open and reinvigorated institutions; revalue the future; invest in younger generations; and establish a common platform of understanding.

Ian Goldin's outstanding work was praised in 1998 at the World Economic Forum, where he was nominated Global Leader of Tomorrow for achievements in development. One year after, he received the Gold Award for management from the National Productivity Institute. In 2000, French President Jacques Chirac bestowed him *l'Ordre national du Mérite* as validation for services to development.

He served as advisor to over 50 governments and 100 important global businesses. He was active in the non-profit sector, ranging from charities to chairing the CORE-econ.org initiative to reform global economics.

2. Ian Goldin's vision on development

Ian Goldin's extensive work on globalisation and development has enriched the academic and professional communities all over the world. In his own words, he does not merely have an interest in development, but a genuine "passion" for it. He underlines that development cannot be confined to economic growth as measured by the GDP, but is about social progress and human development, too, about the transformation of societies. In the end, development is about people, about the expansion of each individual's capabilities and choices. Development is above all a learning exercise. I am quoting again: "Development is about learning. Learning what works and what does not, where and why. This requires a dissection of not only successes but also failures." Development requires the rational and emotional engagement of decision-makers, civil servants, businesses, scholars, NGOs and the public at large. Development, sustainable development, cannot be achieved without an engaged elite (a passionate elite, I may say) and without the consent of population on strategic issues.

In all his books, he has written extensively about inequality as being the first world problem, which created a strong backlash against globalization. He points out that the root causes of this "reaction to globalization" are the inequalities experienced by those perceiving themselves as being "left-behind", people "locked out of globalization" (Goldin's terms) and by the association – fair or not – between globalization and new risks, such as cascading financial crises, climate change, cyber-attacks, terrorism, tax avoidance.

In his book *Age of Discovery. Navigating the Risks and Rewards of our New Renaissance* and related articles and public appearances, Ian Goldin draws a parallel between our days and the age of Renaissance. He aptly points out that "this is a New Renaissance. This is by far the best time in human history to be alive, it is by far the best time to be in business." I enjoy this well-informed optimism: **This is by far the best time in human history to be alive.** At the same time, Ian Goldin is far from being naïve, and he warns us: "In the first Renaissance, extremists won; reason and evidence did not prevail. In our

second Renaissance, knowledge and inquiry must find a way to conquer prejudice and ignorance. Scientists know that they can never progress through isolationism or ignorance. Nor can our societies”.

3. Public intellectual

Professor Goldin underlines many weaknesses, many ills of today’s societies: lack of strategic vision, complacency, lack of awareness regarding systemic risks, management gap etc. Let me add one more ill: the disengagement/ detachment of the academia, of intellectuals from the policy field, from the field of government. In Great Britain, in the US, in Romania and elsewhere. Professor Goldin proves to be a fine exception to this overwhelming trend. He is actively involved in the public sphere, taking strong stands in today’s major debates. Let me mention a few hot subjects on which Goldin’s points of view provide insight and **guidance**: Brexit, President Trump, anti-vaccination irrationality, artificial intelligence etc.

For example, in the case of Brexit, he underlines: “Brexit promoters peddled fake news and continue to get sustenance through a combination of denial and false promises. Unfortunately the mounting evidence is not likely to lead to an end to this **destructive course of action**”. **Destructive course of action.**

He is equally concerned about the expansion of populism in US, Britain and EU. He names the current US President “a second Savonarola”; he considers the famous Renaissance friar “the true genius of populist politics”. Let me quote: “Trump thinks he’s in power. But so long as he follows the populist’s playbook, he’s at the mercy of his base. History suggests that they will burn him, soon.”

4. Social media savvy

Please allow me to add one more thing about Ian Goldin as a practitioner, intellectual, and engaged public figure. This has a special importance for me, personally. One is tempted to believe that being an academic, especially an Oxford academic, is enough for reputation and that this position allows one to live in a bubble. Professor Goldin proves otherwise. I noticed to my greatest satisfaction that Professor Goldin has an outstanding presence in the media, in the social media, too: press articles, personal website, Youtube presentations and interviews, twitter account. His handling of his online



reputation is an inspiration for me and for my younger colleagues, especially since this media and communication awareness does not happen at the expense of substance.

Being media, social media savvy, professor Goldin proves to have understood that policy communication skills are as important as those related to policy design; that communication and policy dialogue are part of the policy implementation cycle. And a mandatory skill of a 21st century intellectual.

5. Romania and development

Some final thoughts about Romania and the topic of development. As we well know, Romania is currently experiencing a record economic growth in the EU, as measured by the GDP. At the same time, Romania is a “by the book” example regarding the difficulties of converting economic growth into social progress and human development. I hope that Ian Goldin’s books and public contributions in this field will be factored in by the Romanian government, whatever that government may be at a specific point in time. I can only hope that Ian Goldin’s ideas, amplified by the fact that he generously accepted to come to Romania – will be incorporated into Romania’s thinking about its development.

Let me quote Professor Goldin again: “development is about learning”. In order to happen, development should be converted into a state of mind, into a general public mood. These are ideas to be thankful for. The waste of ideas is as dangerous, perhaps even more dangerous than the waste of physical resources. It is my deepest wish and desire that Professor Goldin’s ideas will not be wasted in Romania, that they will be integrated into development thinking and action.

Professor Alina Bârgăoanu

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