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Turner not optimistic about world's future

The Associated Press

Even while his three foundations continue to spend millions of dollars on environmental and health initiatives, Ted Turner told a newspaper group Sunday night he does not have an optimistic outlook for the future of the world.

"If I had to predict, the way things are going, I'd say the chances are about 50-50 that humanity will be extinct or nearly extinct within 50 years," Turner said. "Weapons of mass destruction, disease, I mean this global warming is scaring the living daylights out of me."

Returning to the city that was home to the CNN and Turner Broadcasting companies he founded, Turner was the featured speaker at the Associated Press Managing Editors international coverage seminar. Turner spoke to editors from 10 regional states and admitted he may not be very good at making predictions.

"I said 20 years ago newspapers wouldn't be around in 10 years, and I was wrong," Turner said.

Turner, who now lives in Lamont, Fla., stepped down as vice chairman of AOL Time Warner and sold 50 million shares of the company's stock earlier this year.

"It's really a good thing those no-good weasels ran me off, they pushed me out," Turner said, adding he now has more time for his philanthropic projects.

Turner said his Turner Foundation focuses on environmental issues in America. He said his U.N. Foundation already has contributed about \$600 million to support United Nations programs and will contribute another \$400 million in the next eight years to complete his \$1 billion pledge.

Turner also co-chairs the Nuclear Threat Initiative with former U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn, an effort that allows Turner to address his concerns that the end of the Cold War did not end the nuclear threat.

"The most dangerous thing in the world right now is the fact the Russian and American nuclear missiles, 10 years after the Cold War is over, are still a hair-trigger away with less than 10 minutes response time from two presidents who thankfully are together today," Turner said.

The ever-candid Turner also gave a negative review to the U.S. efforts in Iraq.

"We spent \$87 billion to blow Iraq up and then we spent another \$87 billion to put it back together, and all to get one man and we still haven't got him," Turner said. "Talk about a failure."

Turner's wealth had been estimated at more than \$7 billion before the Time Warner stock dropped sharply following its merger with AOL. Earlier this month, Forbes Magazine estimated Turner's wealth at \$2.3 billion, good for a tie for the No. 78 position on the magazine's list of the 400 richest Americans.

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