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Key Findings Regarding a Comprehensive Human Security: Envisioning and Building a Better Future

When it comes to the Epoque defining awareness of the urgency and imperative to address the overarching global issue of human security, the human family needs an unprecedented mobilization for a comprehensive approach and plans of multidimensional actions to secure our survival, wellbeing, comprehensive health, freedom, and peace.

Even a cursory popular search on human security reveals the following:

“Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are essential to life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations.” Human security integrates three freedoms: freedom from fear, freedom from want and the freedom from indignity.”

Closer to our context one could add the following: “As noted in General Assembly resolution 66/290, “human security is **an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.**” It calls for “people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people.” (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security).

Nearly every area of human experience is connected to the undergirding issue of human security. The list of areas related to human security is broad but specific: 1) Food security, 2) Water security, 3) Economic security, 4) Health security, 5) Gender security, 6) Environmental security, 7) Ecological security, 8) Digital and cybersecurity.

These are concrete domains of human existence and experience. It is not about merely farfetched speculations on possible collisions of asteroids.

We are talking about issues, events, beliefs, and practices that affect people's lives in negative, harmful, and damaging ways. From threats to personal security, to collective predicaments, to regional and national rifts in human solidarity, to needed global security, human security is in fact a lens through which to look at various aspects of human experience.

An example related to the issue of human security range from the dumping of toxic waste in so-called poor regions of the world, to wars of annexations, conquests, subjugations, human trafficking, and genocides.

Our era has been called “the age of insecurity.” This is because of the multiple recent crises that have challenged the wellbeing of literally billions of people.

I am quoting from a recent contribution to our topic, the following analysis.

“The pandemic was, of course, only one of the many things that heightened our anxieties in this age of insecurity. Over the last two decades the world has been subject to many traumatic events—international terrorism, civil wars with all their destruction and exodus of refugees, the financial crisis of 2007-2009, the debt and currency crises (particularly in Europe and Latin America), stringent and wrenching austerity policies, deep slumps in many economies, large-scale job losses, technological disruptions, creeping authoritarianism and ethnonationalism excesses, the increasing incidence of natural disasters (probably attributable to ongoing climate change), agro-ecological distress, mass dislocations and a series of epidemics (COVID 19 being the latest). All of this has dangerously exposed the fragility and insecurity of the lives and livelihoods of billions of ordinary people. This has been particularly acute in developing countries, where numerous people live a hand-to-mouth existence even in the best of times, with very little in the form of social insurance or feasible alternative ways to live.”^[1]

It may be perceived as a coincidence but not for us organizers of a symposium every year over the past 9 years. In fact, every thematic of the 8 symposia since we partner with UN agencies has connections with human security. Human dignity should be the foundation and justification for human security.

Peace, violence, migration, an economy of life, racism, slavery, and coloniality, gender equality. All the topics addressed in this partnership of faith-based organizations and UN agencies representing the global community have to do with human security.

More broadly the pillars of the UN are inseparable from human security. Specifically, it is not by chance that the first pillar of the United Nations is peace and security, the second is justice and development, and the third is human rights in terms of freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from violence. All these are predicated under the overarching umbrella of human security.

Specific to security, in 1994, the UNDP provided a meaningful list of protections and metrics needed for human security to be achieved for all.

Seven types of protection were listed:

1. Economic safety nets,
2. Food security,
3. Access to health care,
4. Environmental protection,
5. Personal security,
6. Community security, and
7. Political security

Today faith-based organizations represented in this 9th symposium highlight needed dimensions of human security that are necessary to build a better world. In fact, from an aspirational perspective. **Every day there are billions of people, praying for human security.**

Muslims pray for the protection from the accursed one. Christians pray in what is known as the Lord's prayer in which they say. "Deliver us from evil." One of the designations and attributes of God among Jews and Christians is "Elohim Amen" the God of Amen. The God of security, that is, One you can depend on. Buddhists pray the famous **Golden Chain Prayer**: "We will be kind and gentle to every living thing and protect all who are weaker than ourselves. We will think pure and beautiful thoughts, say pure and beautiful words, and do pure and beautiful deeds. May

every link in Amida's chain of love be bright and strong and may we all attain perfect peace.” In Hinduism adherents speak about mantras of protection.

Security then is not just security from threats of possible asteroid collisions with planet earth. It is also beyond metaphysical elucubrations. Faith-based actors bring more than prayers. Concrete measurable actions are taken by faith groups, humanitarian organizations, and focus groups on specific aspects of human security.

Security is a daily need for every human being. No wonder all greetings echo the need for human security. Salam, shalom, good morning, bonjour, are most certainly connected to the human desire for human security.

What can we do concretely to improve human security? Various Comprehensive Plans of Action are needed. To this end the following questions are incontrovertible:

At an individual level, what can be done?

At an interpersonal level, how to facilitate safety and peace, in relation to others?

At an organizational level, what and how can our respective organizations plan to help develop a global culture of human security?

Advocacy for non-proliferation or even elimination of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, I would even say, weapons of individual destruction, should be high on our advocacy agenda.

Closer to each one of us, and within our reach,

At a relational level,

Creating a safe space in every work environment is indeed contributing to human security.

Human security includes giving people a space to feel and know they are safe. No coercion, no bullying, no intimidation, no compulsion, or instrumentalization of people.

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief is an imperative of human security. This means no violation whatsoever of people's physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual integrity. No bending of people's conscience.

Human Security also has dimensions related to health, healing, and wholeness. Without these components of human security, life is frustrated by its essence of flourishing human potential.

Allow me to postulate that the permanent pillar of life from birth to old age is human security which incontrovertibly is acted out through the dignity of covering infants for comfort, affirmation and encouragement, and a sense of worth through all the stages of life. Again, the imperative of peace comes to the fore when speaking about human security. No wonder our partners from the UN insists on the fact that the framework the world must factor in all our endeavors is the imperative of human security. One can add: Human security for all.

There is an elephant in the country and in the whole of the Americas. One cannot be serious about security without addressing the chronic lack of security for indigenous peoples. Of course, from the Amazon but also from Vancouver and in between.

In the context of the Americas, a perennial task is before us: What to do with the reality of the indigenous peoples? Just talking about human security and ignoring, bypassing, what is in plain sight in every land taken from indigenous peoples is part of a chronic perennial denialism. Multiplications of the webinar that could give the illusion that we are changing the world are not sufficient. Which world are we changing? Though impossible to turn back the clock of history, can we today envision a human security that does not exclude anyone?

This brings another dimension of human security. The seeming impossibility of justice should not exclude the imperative of reconciliation for those who have become privileged as per the inheritance from colonists with those who have been deprived of their stories, identities, lands and resources.

Human security becomes a farce if it sidelines these troubling issues. Healing for those living today can be worked on. The future depends on it.

A holistic understanding of human security is therefore ever needed if the human family is serious about peace, a comprehensive peace, peacebuilding, peacemaking, peace sustaining, peace wishing, or peace-giving as when we say “Salam aleikum, shalom alekhem, or salamat,”

Our world faces a sociopolitical dimension of insecurity. This is obviously related to the last on the list UNDP provided in 1994: political security.

Human security is threatened by the rise and multiplication of anti-democratic regimes, authoritarian and repressive. Global Statistics. “In 2021, the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, produced the largest global data set on democracy, covering about two hundred countries, measuring democracy in disaggregated, multidimensional ways, involving over thirty-five hundred scholars and experts.

The institute report is from reading:

- Autocracies now rule a majority of people—in eighty-seven countries that are home to 68 percent of the global population.
- Liberal democracies diminished over the past decade, from forty-one countries to thirty-two, and now have a population share of only 14 percent.
- About one-third of the world’s people—that is 2.6 billion people—live in nations undergoing “autocratization”; only 4 percent live under regimes that are becoming more democratic.
- Autocratization has affected major countries like Brazil, India, Poland, Turkey, and the United States.
- Latin America is back to a level of democracy last recorded in the early 1990s, while Eastern Europe and Central Asia are at post-Soviet Union lows.
- India with its population of nearly 1.4 billion, used to be the world’s largest democracy; it is now described as an electoral autocracy due to the severe shrinking of space for the media, civil society, and political opposition under the current government.

- Attacks on freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly and protest and assaults the media and academic and other civil society institutions are intensifying across the world; the quality of elections is deteriorating.”[2]

The task before us is indeed daunting. It will take the mobilization of all actors of civil society, international institutions, national institutions, faith-based groups, religious and non-religious humanitarian organizations, and all people of goodwill rallying to show solidarity to protect and empower all people to live safely and in dignity.

Nothing but a comprehensive non-discriminatory approach to human security will do. Beyond this symposium, there is a need to establish not only an organizing committee for future symposia but a task force with a specific mandate to provide us with a blueprint on how to develop a culture of human security that integrates all dimensions highlighted during this symposium. Such a tool can provide a heuristic basis to concretely address peoples’ security and planetary sustainability.

I suggest that the planning group discuss how to put in place such a task force, a consultative group to draft a document, and a road map on how to give a chance to human security. This is necessary for a building of a better world where peace and security, justice and development, and human rights in terms of freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity. Peace, in its multifaceted dimensions, is an imperative.

It is fitting to remember a Hebrew prayer for human security.

“The Lord bless you and keep you and keep you

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

He Lord lift up his countenance and give you peace.

So, they shall invoke My name on the children of Israel and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:24-27).

[1] Pranab Bardhan. *A World of Insecurity: Democratic Disenchantment in Rich and Poor Countries* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press, 2022), p. 6.

[2] Pranab Bardhan. *A World of Insecurity: Democratic Disenchantment in Rich and Poor Countries* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London England/ Harvard University Press, 2022), 1-2.