

## PRESENTATION

# Human Security – Application and its Added Value at the United Nations

Mehrnaz Mostafavi

Chief

Human Security Unit, United Nations

It is my sincere pleasure to be with you today and to share this panel with my esteemed colleagues, Professor Tamai, Mr. Kondo and Mr. Hebecker. I am enormously grateful to Soka University for inviting me to this very timely conference on Global Governance for Human Security. Events like this provide a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on progress made and to consider how to strengthen our common resolve to improve the lives of those most vulnerable. It is also befitting that this conference is held in Tokyo as the Government of Japan has and continue to be instrumental in the advancement of human security.

Colleagues,

I believe it is not an overestimation to say that we meet at a time of considerable crisis. Whether it is the scourge of conflict, the outbreak of pandemics, the devastation of natural disasters, or the indignity

of abject poverty, today's world is an intolerably insecure place for many. And, while progress has been made, recent trends test the efficacy of our international system and examine our efforts to prevent human suffering.

Today, the rising number of people affected by conflict, notably in Syria, Yemen, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, among others, has contributed to the largest number of displaced individuals in search of greater peace and brighter future for themselves and their families since World War II.

Meanwhile, as witnessed in West Africa, the Ebola virus and other pandemics not only threaten people's lives, but place considerable stress on the fragile social, political and economic systems of those countries least capable of responding.

In addition, across the globe, the devastating impact of climate change and natural disasters threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. And while majority of climate-related deaths and economic losses occur in poor regions, the March 11 Japan Earthquake reminds us of the indiscriminate threat of natural disasters to those most vulnerable in all parts of the world.

Lastly, persistent poverty and inequality continue to limit the choices and opportunities of marginalized individuals and undermine their efforts to participate and contribute to their societies.

In one way or another, each of these scenarios result in grave human insecurities - specifically, the breakdown in the survival, livelihood and dignity of individuals and their communities. Moreover, these challenges, if not addressed in a comprehensive and inclusive manner, can lead to more intractable crisis that often spillover into broader national, regional and international insecurities.

Indeed, it is safe to say that to adequately and sustainably address

today's multidimensional and complex challenges requires a renewed consensus on the added value of the human security approach and its systematic application in international, regional, national and local governance mechanisms.

Such an approach recognizes that today's constellation of threats, if not confronted by a framework that emphasizes the interconnected aspirations of people to be free from fear, want and indignity, can lead to further insecurities and provide the space in which, in some instances, criminal networks and terrorist organizations can make inroads and rally marginalized and disgruntled communities into their ranks.

But more importantly, the application of human security provides an invaluable methodology for developing people-centred and comprehensive responses based on multi-stakeholder partnerships to reduce the likelihoods of conflict; overcome the obstacles to inclusive and sustainable development; and promote a life of dignity for all. And while much work remains, a focus on human security can undoubtedly enrich and strengthen our actions towards greater progress and stability within and across our borders.

As a result, recent global policy reviews, and subsequent agendas, have all underlined the added value of such an approach.

From the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the United Nations Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Reviews, the World Humanitarian Summit, and the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, all these reviews and global policy developments have acknowledged the indispensable truth that silo-driven approaches, most commonly adopted by the international community, are not keeping pace with the challenges of a more complex and interconnected world.

Subsequently, they have called for people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented approaches that protect and empower people, and that can more effectively prevent and address today's complex challenges.

Colleagues,

As you are all aware, in September of last year, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted. This transformative agenda was the result of a two-year consultative process in which an unprecedented number of civil society actors and academic institutions participated and played a critical role in our collective efforts to eradicate poverty in all its forms by 2030.

But 15 years to achieve a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and violence, with no one left behind, will not be an easy endeavor.

Reaching this goal will require the concerted efforts of all of us. It will require new and innovative solutions that match the scale and ambition of the SDGs. As I'm sure you can imagine – along with its many opportunities, implementing this broad yet integrated agenda also presents a number of challenges which the human security approach can help address.

Specifically, to meet the goals of Agenda 2030, a context-specific analysis at the local level – a hallmark of the human security approach – is needed in order to further extend the benefits of economic growth across and within countries. Whereas national measurements may not adequately address disparities at the community level, the identification of bottlenecks at the local level can foster an inclusive economic growth with significant gains across societies.

The application of human security, moreover, addresses not only

developmental challenges but also challenges stemming from other factors that impede economic growth and poverty reduction.

Based on its core vision to achieve freedom from fear, want and indignity, a focus on human security helps clarify how diverse issues ranging from deprivation in all its forms (food, health, education, employment, etc.) to violence and environmental degradation interact and require comprehensive and context-specific solutions.

That is, by emphasizing the triangular relationship between peace and security, development and human rights, a focus on human security can ensure that poverty reduction strategies are attentive to the root causes and the remedial solutions needed in order to stem the persistence of insecurities and stop their impact on the achievement of inclusive and sustainable development and the promotion of peaceful societies.

Today we can confidently say that the application of human security will complement and significantly enrich the mechanisms that will be needed in order to attain the SDGs.

In addition to supporting the SDGs, the application of human security also contributes to ongoing efforts in a number of important areas which I would like to share with you, notably, a more inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding architecture; a stronger transition from humanitarian relief to longer-term development; and, more effective mechanisms to prevent, prepare for, manage and recover from natural disasters, particularly at the local level.

Friends,

After two decades of steady decline, conflicts are once again on the rise. As noted in the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture in 2015, the success for sustaining peace “relies on uniting the ‘peace

and security’, ‘human rights’ and ‘development’ pillars of the United Nations.”

In this regard, the human security approach is an invaluable tool for building multi-stakeholder partnerships for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Despite daunting challenges, post-conflict situations do provide significant opportunities to address the root causes of conflicts, to heal fragmentation, and to strengthen state-society relations.

The success of peacebuilding strategies, however rest on the ability to deliver the dividends of peace to all people and communities in a manner that is transparent, participatory and fair.

To this end, the application of human security underlines the inclusion of protection efforts – such as providing public safety, essential basic services and the rule of law with empowerment measures that promote partnerships with local stakeholders.

Local partners can play a significant role in reinforcing ownership in the future of their country; in nurturing reconciliation; and in restoring trust in the institutions that return stability to post-conflict situations. Together, this dual approach can help minimize the space in which societies may relapse into conflicts.

At the same time, by promoting a comprehensive and context-specific approach, the application of human security can ensure that support from across the international community is based on the actual realities on the ground. This results in a response framework in which the needs, vulnerabilities and capacity gaps of conflict-affected countries are continually assessed, and actions that address these gaps are supported by a peacebuilding architecture that strengthens local and national capacities.

Colleagues,

The transition from humanitarian relief to long-term development is another complex and rarely linear experience. Far too often, environmental crises or violent conflicts devastate the same vulnerable communities time and time again.

Without addressing the underlying causes of these crises, I'm afraid our best efforts to build back better will remain unfulfilled.

As a multi-stakeholder, comprehensive and integrated approach, the application of human security can contribute significantly to our ongoing efforts in this area. Human security underscores the need for joint analysis, planning and implementation among humanitarian and development actors, and provides the rationale and evidence by which to transcend this divide.

At its core, human security is rooted in the notion that threats to people's survival, livelihood and dignity are seldom singular in nature. Rather, a mix of factors come together to generate situations that are often complex and multidimensional. Therefore, human security advocates for comprehensive solutions that encompass all key stakeholders including those responsible for emergency relief, rehabilitation and longer-term development.

Moreover, human security is premised on the recognition that long-term sustainable results are more likely to be generated by activities that go beyond responding to an immediate crisis. By looking at the root causes of a particular threat, the human security approach identifies the structural and behavioural changes needed in order to mitigate negative impacts and help prevent the re-occurrence of current and future crises.

Lastly, climate change and its interactions with other insecurities remains one of the most pressing issues of our time.

Climatic fluctuations, environmental degradation and extreme weather patterns disrupt harvests, deplete fisheries, erode livelihoods and increase the spread of infectious diseases. Vulnerable groups are particularly at risk, not only from the immediate impacts of natural disasters, but also from knock-on risk factors such as, displacement and migration.

Since 2008, an average of 26 million people have been displaced each year as a result of natural disasters.

Climate change is also a “threat multiplier”... particularly in situations where the loss of land, together with persistent poverty, displacement and other insecurities, trigger competition over increasingly scarce natural resources that often intensify into societal tensions.

Well-suited to the multifaceted challenges of natural disasters, the human security approach highlights the interconnectedness and the cross-sectoral consequences of climate change and its impact on different facets of people’s lives. Such an analysis helps to identify the differentiated impact as well as the compounding magnitude of climate-related threats on people and their communities.

The Sendai Conference in particular, highlighted many of the core principles of human security. It advocated for a broader and more people-centred, preventative approach. It underscored the importance of comprehensive and multi-sectoral solutions that engage all stakeholders. And it emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation to build local and national resilience and to facilitate the transfer of technology and financial assistance.

For close to two decades, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security has provided resources and guided programmes that aim to reduce the risks of vulnerabilities; seek to build the resilience of fragile



communities; and strive to protect those most vulnerable.

The human security approach recognises that insecurities must be tackled together in terms of UN support. Accordingly, all programmes under the Trust Fund require an integrated response, often including several UN entities, in partnership with Government and non-governmental actors - thereby, combining expertise, accelerating delivery, limiting duplication, and maximising the reach of scarce resources.

With over \$440 million distributed to more than 220 projects and programmes since 1999, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, established by the Government of Japan, has produced a substantial catalogue of lessons learned in how we conceptualize, plan and respond to current and emerging challenges. It has provided the rationale and methodology for why different entities must come together to support a more inclusive and shared prosperity in greater peace and resilience.

Colleagues,

I am pleased to say that in recent years we have made significant progress in expanding the practice of human security across the United Nations and beyond.

Today, more and more university programmes are training the next generation of human security experts. In addition, an increasing number of civil society organizations have integrated the human security approach into their work with Governments and communities.

At the Human Security Unit, we continue to partner with a wide range of UN and non-UN entities. Among these, the UN Trust for Human Security remains an important instrument in expanding the

contribution of human security to the priorities of the international community.

Through seed money provided by the Trust Fund, combined with co-funding commitments from other sources, particularly at the national level, contributions to the Trust Fund have resulted in greater multi-stakeholder partnerships on a wide range of issues that aim to reduce vulnerability, strengthen resilience, prevent conflicts, and foster social harmony.

And while the Trust Fund remains critical in our efforts to promote human security, we continue to undertake additional steps to mainstream the application of human security in the work of the United Nations. This work is guided by the “Framework for Cooperation on the System-wide Application of Human Security”.

The Framework, endorsed by the Interagency Working Group on Human Security, highlights the added value of the human security approach and its contribution to the priority areas of the UN -such as, the fulfillment of the SDGs, the One UN reform agenda, transition from humanitarian to long-term development, and disaster risk reduction. It documents how the application of human security can enable the United Nations system to utilize its resources and comparative advantages in a more integrated, effective and efficient manner.

In addition to our support to the UN system, our partnerships with member States and others on a wide range of issues and activities remains a priority for us.

Among these, in May of this year, we co-organized an event titled “Health, Resilience, and the Added Value of the Human Security Approach to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals” in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization and the

Japan Center for International Exchange, co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Costa Rica, Japan and Thailand.

Later in the month, the Advisory Board on Human Security and the Human Security Unit participated in the Asia-Pacific Regional Human Security Conference, organized by the Government of Thailand, as the Chair of the Human Security Network. The event brought together policy-makers and practitioners to share experiences on how the application of human security contributes to the achievement of the SDGs.

Most recently, the HSU in partnership with the Human Security Network and the Aspen Ministers Forum organized a high-level event on “Human Security for Refugees, Migrants and Host Communities: Tools and Approaches for Collective Action.” Bringing together present and former Foreign Ministers, Permanent Representatives, and senior UN officials, the event reinforced the value of the human security approach to the implementation of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

These collaborations are further complemented by our ongoing engagement with academics and non-governmental organizations, across regions and continents, including today’s timely conference at Soka University.

Looking to the future, we will focus our efforts to ensure that the lessons learned from the past 17 years continue to be translated into institutional, policy and programmatic shifts that enable us to better manage risks, prevent instabilities, save lives, and promote greater peace and prosperity for all.

And, through all of our work, we will continue to place ‘people’ at the heart of our actions so that, at this critical juncture, our international system has the policies and practices to advance human

security.

Therefore, allow me to underscore my sincere hope for the success of this conference and our joint efforts to further strengthen the “Global Governance for Human Security.” Let us, through the human security approach, connect the dots that will enable us to better respond to current and emerging challenges. Let us uphold the United Nations Charter and its focus on “we the peoples”. And let us strive to achieve international cooperation in promoting peace, prosperity and dignity for all.

I thank you for your attention.