



Remarks

by

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Thematic Debate of the General Assembly

“Responding to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century:

Human security and the post-2015 development agenda”

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Excellencies,
Deputy Secretary-General,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

I am pleased to welcome you to today's Thematic Debate on "Responding to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century: Human security and the post-2015 development agenda".

This Debate is about everything human and the need to ensure security where it pertains to them. It is about individuals – men, women and children – and their right to a life of dignity, free from fear and want. It is about vulnerable communities, living in remote areas under the threat of floods, devastating hurricanes or desertification. It is about the young leaving their villages in search of a better life, settling in slums and struggling daily to make a living. It is about mothers, sisters, wives and partners who stayed behind, striving to put food on the table. It is about children who have no access to medical care or education because the closest school and hospital are too far away.

This Debate – writ large – is about billions of peoples, in all corners of the world, who are caught in a vicious circle of poverty, marginalisation and insecurity. The threats they face, sometimes on a daily basis, have called our Member States to look beyond state-centric notion of security and move towards people-centred security responses.

Excellencies,

As agreed by our General Assembly less than two years ago, Member States have identified an approach that works to ensure greater inclusive social and economic development, environmental sustainability, and peace and security. The human security approach and its principles give expression to these commitments.

Specifically, in resolution 66/290, our General Assembly, recognised that human security can [quote] “assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.” [end quote]

This approach recognizes the intrinsic linkages between the three fundamental pillars of the UN – development, peace and security, and human rights – as well as a wide range of rights, including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. It reminds us that freedom and safety entail the ability to fully enjoy these rights.

By affirming that security includes “freedom from want,” the human security approach calls on us to examine the relationship between income distribution and economic, social and environmental dynamics. As such, it recognises and seeks to address the multiple dimensions of poverty – including underemployment; poor health; lack of access to education; inequality, including gender inequality, and social exclusion – in a more coherent and systemic manner.

Thanks to its use of disaggregated data, the human security approach can also help Member States and UN entities better understand the complex situation of individuals and communities living below national poverty lines. By breaking down data in terms of region, class, age and gender rather than using aggregate macro indicators, policymakers and practitioners can gain a more nuanced understanding of how regions and social groups manifest or experience different types of threats and vulnerabilities. As a result, responses towards poverty reduction can be better targeted and account for the impact of income and wealth inequalities, social exclusion and discrimination, which can perpetuate poverty despite otherwise effective strategies.

Finally, with a focus on early prevention and risk mitigation, strategies rooted in human security can strengthen State-society relations and empower communities as active agents of change. This approach can be particularly useful in the context of human-centred threats with a global character, such as climate change or large-scale pandemics.

Distinguished Guests,

On several occasions, Member States, civil society and other stakeholders have underscored that for the post-2015 development agenda to be truly transformative, it must be people-centred. In this respect, it is important to recognise the merits of the human security approach, which calls for people-centred, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that are nationally owned, locally driven, and more sustainable. It is in this context that the latest report of the Secretary-General on human security recommends to the General Assembly to consider human security as an overarching framework in the post-2015 development agenda.

Indeed, by underscoring the importance of inclusive, targeted and comprehensive solutions to widespread and cross-cutting challenges, human security can provide a useful methodology for the analysis and development of policies and programmes in the formulation of the post-2015 sustainable development goals. I trust that your deliberations today will foster ideas for further consideration in the ongoing discussions on the elaboration of the post-2015 agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to invite you to reflect on how we can continue to broaden our perspectives and understanding about human security, safety and freedom. Let us use this Debate to share what has and has not worked in our own countries and regions and commit to learning from one another. And finally, let us move toward policies and programmes that are truly people-centred, so as to ensure the well-being and security of all humans on this planet.

Thank you.
