

**Background Paper for the
General Assembly Thematic Debate on Human Security
United Nations Headquarters,
New York, 22 May 2008**

In its 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, Heads of States and Governments, referred to the concept of human security. Paragraph 143 of the document recognized that "all individuals, in particular, vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential." To this end, Member States have committed themselves "to discussing and defining the notion of human security in the General Assembly".

The aim of the General Assembly thematic debate on human security is to reflect on its multidimensional scope and to further explore ways to follow up on the reference to human security in the World Summit Outcome Document.

In practice, the notion of human security has already been reflected and being developed in a number of concrete projects carried out by Member States and United Nations offices, agencies, funds and programmes as well as by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security.

In March of 1999 the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security was launched in New York. Managed by the subsequently-established Human Security Unit situated in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security has so far invested in over 175 projects worldwide. The projects are being selected based on whether they provide concrete and sustainable benefits to people and communities whose survival, livelihood, and dignity are threatened. Other criteria include the need to combine protection and empowerment measures; promote partnerships with civil society and other local entities; and address the range of issues pertaining to the multi-sectoral demands of human security. For further reference consult:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/HumanitarianIssues/HumanSecurity/tabid/2421/Default.aspx>.

As a follow-up to the 2005 Summit, an open-ended forum composed of Member States from all regions called Friends of Human Security was set up in New York in October 2006. The forum seeks to promote an understanding of human security, to mainstream human security in UN activities, and to pursue collaborative efforts among Member States.

Friends of Human Security as well as UN offices, agencies, funds and programmes identified a spectrum of human security related initiatives from their fields of action. In February 2008 the Friends of Human Security submitted a compendium of human security related initiatives and activities by members of the Friends of Human Security and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to the President of the General Assembly. The letter was issued as document A/62/695.

Outside of the United Nations different initiatives reflect the need to tackle threats to security through people-centred and comprehensive solutions.

An intergovernmental group for human security, the Human Security Network, was established in May 1999. It brought together a group of like-minded countries from all the regions of the world. The group has as its aim highlighting the added value of human security in the UN and other multilateral frameworks. By focusing on human security challenges in the numerous situations that threaten human lives, livelihoods and dignity, such as those pertaining to climate change, abject poverty, health pandemics, the protection of children, armed conflicts, and landmines, among others, the Network continues to raise the human security agenda as a focus for international efforts in addressing concrete issues of common interest for the well-being of all peoples. For further reference consult Network's internet site: <http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org>.

In May of 2003, the Commission on Human Security, established through the initiative of the Government of Japan, submitted its report "Human Security Now" to the UN Secretary General. In the report the Commission concentrated on a number of distinct but interrelated issues concerning conflict and poverty. The report can be found at: <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html>.