Summary

Thematic Debate of the General Assembly
"Responding to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century: Human security and the post-2015 development agenda"

New York
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Opening Remarks

JOHN ASHE, President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, opened the thematic debate on "Responding to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century: Human security and the post-2015 development agenda". Focusing on the billions of people, in all corners of the world, who are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty, marginalisation and insecurity, President Ashe called on Member States to look beyond State-centric notions of security. He underscored how the human security approach and its principles recognize the intrinsic linkages between the three fundamental pillars of the United Nations – development, peace and security and human rights – and give expression to the commitments agreed to by the General Assembly "to ensure greater inclusive social and economic development, environmental sustainability, and peace and security". He noted that by focusing on the multiple dimensions of poverty, and based on its use of disaggregated data, the human security approach can help Member States and UN entities to better understand the complex situation of individuals and communities living below national poverty lines. He noted that rather than using aggregate macro indicators, by breaking down data in terms of region, class, age and gender, policymakers and practitioners can gain a more nuanced understanding of how regions and social groups manifest or experience different types of threats and vulnerabilities. In closing, President Ashe invited participants to reflect on the merits of the human security approach as a useful methodology for the analysis and development of policies and programmes in the formulation of the post-2015 sustainable development goals.

JAN ELIASSON, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, thanked President Ashe for convening the thematic debate on human security. Mr. Eliasson noted that in view of the growing violence and extremism in many regions of the world, coupled with the persistent threats of climate change, poverty and inequality, it is clear that the principles enshrined in human security – freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity – can be instrumental in addressing challenges as diverse as climate change, rural poverty, rapid urbanization and post-conflict reconstruction. Reflecting on the third report of the Secretary-General on human security, which compiled examples and lessons learned on the application of human security at the national, regional and international levels, Mr. Eliasson stated that the application of human security can have a positive impact on removing obstacles to sustainable development and tackling poverty. To this end, Mr. Eliasson urged the Assembly to consider how the underlying principles of human security can be applied to the post-2015 development agenda.

Interactive Panel Discussion

The panel discussion was opened by YUKIO TAKASU, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Human Security and moderator of the discussion. Mr. Takasu noted that the aim

of the debate was to examine the good practices and recommendations contained in the third report of the Secretary-General on human security which was prepared based on an inclusive process by which inputs were received from Member States, regional organizations, the United Nations system, NGOs and academic institutions. These examples, Mr. Takasu noted, show that the human security approach can have a positive impact on sustainable development and the resilience of vulnerable people and communities. Recalling the Secretary-General's recommendation to mainstream human security in the activities of the United Nations system, Mr. Takasu noted that the debate organised by the President of General Assembly is particularly timely and provides an important opportunity to collectively consider the inclusion of human security as an overarching framework in national development plans and a guiding principle to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

DES GASPER, Professor at the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, presented an overview of the key principles of the human security approach and highlighted its added value. He noted that while initially a sceptic on the merits of yet another approach promoted by the United Nations, he has become entirely convinced of the added value of the human security approach. By examining what has emerged through the types of investigation guided by the human security approach, Professor Gasper noted that the application of human security provides a framework to link, integrate and focus other approaches while adding new insights in what is experienced as insecurity. As a result, human security highlights the dynamic nature of vulnerabilities and the many forces which touch people's lives; it connects to the work on human rights and human development; and it promotes a case-specific and comprehensive framework to analyse the intersection of forces and dimensions that threaten people's lives and their aspirations to be free from want, fear and indignity. By providing a zoom lens to look at the particular context in which people live and by combining this with a wide-angle lens that stretches beyond disciplinary and national frontiers, examples from national and regional human development reports, highlight the flexibility and rigor by which the application of human security can assist in understanding the interconnection of the challenges which affect people's lives. Such an analysis can result in a more comprehensive, targeted and prioritized human-centred planning and development framework.

As Chair of the Advisory Board on Human Security (ABHS), SONIA PICADO updated the General Assembly on the work of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) which applies the tools and methodologies of the human security approach through the projects it supports across the globe. Ms. Picado shared valuable lessons learned from projects in Lesotho, the Balkans and El Salvador, as well as the findings from an independent rapid assessment conducted in 2013. She highlighted that the human security approach has generated real positive change in the lives of vulnerable people resulting in (i) a higher sense of dignity by partner communities who were active in the design and implementation of the projects, (ii) a larger sense of national and local ownership, and (iii) a greater determination to expand the gains made under the project to other groups and geographical locations. In closing, Ms. Picado stressed the commitment of the ABHS to the continued advancement of human security and invited Member States to strengthen the UNTFHS and broaden its financial support base in order to effectively respond to today's multi-faceted challenges.

THIERRY ALIA, Minister-Counsellor of the Republic of Benin, shared his country's experience in implementing the human security approach at the national level. Mr. Alia noted that human security is an approach to development based on individuals and their security.

Moreover, human security recognizes that the lasting stability of States is only feasible as long as human security is guaranteed. Therefore, promoting measures focused on human beings and adapted to each individual context must be the objective of human security, with the principal axes being (a) the reduction of risks of conflicts, (b) the elimination of obstacles to development, and (c) the advancement of human rights for all. Accordingly, human security is becoming of ever greater importance in the programmes and policies of the Government of Benin. As a result, based on the assessment of the needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of more than 18,000 households, the Government of Benin applied the human security approach to develop its latest National Human Development Report. This report greatly expanded the understanding of insecurities and helped the Government to prioritize its policies in a more targeted manner, responding to the real needs of its people. Subsequently, the United Nations Development Assistant Framework for 2014-2018 also aims to achieve human security in the country. Based on this positive national experience, Mr. Alia recommended to incorporate the framework and the principles of human security in the post-2015 development agenda, to strengthen the UNTFHS and to mainstream human security in the activities of the United Nations and its implementation by the UN system.

JUAN PULHIN, Professor and Dean at the College of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of the Philippines Los Baños, shared the key findings from the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group II. Professor Pulhin noted that climate change poses serious threats to human security as it undermines livelihoods, compromises culture and identity, increases migration that people would have rather avoided, and challenges the ability of States to provide the conditions necessary for human security. Climate change can also increase risks of violent conflicts by amplifying the drivers of conflict such as poverty and displacement which fuel rivalries over scarce resources. Professor Pulhin concluded that the human security approach can add value in strengthening adaptation and community resilience by enabling dialogues across diverse policy communities; fostering a more holistic and integrated approach to vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning; and addressing differentiated vulnerability in a more responsive manner.

The final panellists, OULIE KEITA, Regional Representative of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, highlighted how Mali is currently facing a crisis that affects every dimension of Malian life. Ms. Keita noted that under the current circumstances, the military approach alone has not been able to solve the problems in Mali and without a holistic human security approach, the root causes of the problems will not be addressed and a sustainable solution cannot be provided. As a result, based on an in-depth analysis of the rising instability in Mali in 2011, civil society have increasingly highlighted the need for an integrative approach that goes beyond the compartmentalized humanitarian, economic and security agendas. Accordingly, she noted that the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding implements a human security project in Mali which focuses on a regional perspective for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Mali, as well as the empowerment of women and other Malians towards achieving sustainable peace and development. She added that human security approach provides a holistic solution to address various interrelated insecurities across multiple sectors, helping communities to build positive coping mechanisms to deal with many different types of challenges to their daily lives.

Inputs from Member States

Stating the European Union's (EU) commitment to continue to promote human security, the EU took the floor on behalf of its Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom). Welcoming the report of the UN Secretary-General as a useful overview of experiences and lessons learned on the application of human security, EU noted its full recognition of the value of a comprehensive, context-specific, people-centred and prevention-oriented approach to address the inter-related threats to the security, livelihood and dignity of people and vulnerable communities. As such, human security has "the potential to be used as a holistic approach to development in the new framework". The EU also expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by the UNTFHS and noted that the EU and its Member States will continue to stress the importance of issues such as peaceful societies, good and inclusive governance, rule of law, human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, equality and non-discrimination, and inclusive and sustainable growth in the post-2015 development agenda; elements which are also central to the human security concept.

On behalf of the Human Security Network (HSN) (Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mail, Norway, Panama, Switzerland, Thailand, Slovenia and South African as an observer), Slovenia shared the Network's strong support for human security as a useful lens for the current discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. The HSN noted that the concept of human security has allowed the international community to move away from the traditional State-centric notion of security and underscored its added value in addressing complex and often inter-related nature of threats; in placing the human being at the centre of the international community's attention; and by focusing on the root causes of threats and insecurities. To this end, the HSN stressed that the human security approach can be a tool for developing targeted, sustainable and preventative responses that are tailored to local necessities and that strengthen national capacities and ownership. Therefore, the HSN believes that the human security approach can inform and enrich Member States' deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda and the current discussions in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

While commending the report of the UN Secretary-General, Japan stressed that more efforts are required to mainstream human security within the United Nations system and requested the Secretary-General to take concrete steps in this regard. Recognizing that some Member States remain cautious on including human security as an overarching framework in the post-2015 development agenda, Japan referred to the common understanding on human security as agreed to, by consensus, in General Assembly resolution 66/290 and highlighted that the consensus provides a clear understanding of human security and its implementation and can therefore be the basis from which to move forward. In addition, Japan reiterated that it is not their intent to have human security as one of the goals of the post-2015 development agenda. Rather, Japan feels that human security should be an overarching framework to guide the international community's efforts to define and agree on specific and concrete goals.

Chile also voiced its strong support for the recommendation made by the Secretary-General to mainstream human security in the activities of the United Nations. Drawing on examples provided in the report and in view of today's multiple and interrelated challenges, Chile stressed that there is ample evidence of human security's positive contribution to strengthening national planning in different regions. At the same time, Chile noted that the human security approach has contributed to a more effective and integrated United Nations

system. By promoting community focused and context-specific responses that maximize the sustainability, efficiency and the impact of international assistance and cooperation, Chile emphasized the need to increase the implementation of human security. Moreover, based on the evidence gathered to date, Chile firmly supports the inclusion of human security as a cross-cutting approach for the post-2015 development agenda.

Thailand also concurred that the human security approach provides a useful framework to help define the post-2015 development agenda. By putting people at the centre of the discussion, Thailand noted that the sustainable development goals and targets to be formulated under this process will be more inclusive and equitable and will leave no one behind. Furthermore, with an example of a UNTHFS-funded project in the Mae Hong Son region, Thailand highlighted that the application of human security and its protection and empowerment framework, as well as the engagement of local actors, in particular, the local government, can bring significant improvements to vulnerable communities as seen in the project in Thailand as well as elsewhere through projects supported by the UNTFHS.

In addition to bringing clarity on the linkages between the three pillars of work of the United Nations, Costa Rica stressed that the added value of the human security approach is in promoting people-centred responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities. Furthermore, Costa Rica noted that the human security approach highlights the importance of integrating economic, social and cultural rights, as well as access to justice, the right to political participation, and the right to information and freedom of expression. Accordingly, to address the links between the three pillars of the United Nations and to ensure that the international community can offer answers focused on a people-centred approach that promotes equality and the protection of vulnerable groups, Costa Rica considers human security as an important framework for the development agenda beyond 2015.

As part of a people-centered agenda, Brazil noted that the aspirations of human security are incorporated into a variety of mechanisms within the United Nations. Specifically, it was noted that the international community is working towards many of human security's principles through the Rio Plus 20 Roadmap and the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, it was suggested that those elements of human security which fall outside of the three pillars of sustainable development are addressed under the United Nations peace and security agenda. With this in mind, Brazil requested further elaboration on the added value of human security to existing approaches and ideas. Moreover, while Brazil agrees that the report of the Secretary-General demonstrates the value of human security at the micro level, Brazil noted that the approach must also demonstrate its contribution at the national, regional and global levels and must not duplicate or compete with current international agendas. In this regard, Brazil invited further reflection on the extent to which the international community's resources are invested towards enhancing human security. In addition, Brazil highlighted the need to further reflect on where human insecurities have been effectively tackled, where it has failed and human insecurities have increased, and why?

In taking the floor, Russia reminded the General Assembly that the implementation of the human security approach should not entail the use of force and must adhere to the provisions of the UN Charter with regards to the respect for national sovereignty. Furthermore, Russia reiterated its view that human security should be applied within the context of economic development and that Governments themselves are responsible for determining the threats and challenges that hamper the wellbeing of their citizens and that international assistance

should accordingly be provided upon request. In this context, Russia welcomed further discussion in order to reach a mutually acceptable definition of human security that leaves no room for interpretation.

Further to the intervention delivered by the Delegation of the European Union, <u>Spain</u> in its national capacity stressed that human security must occupy a central role in the post-2015 development agenda. Reflecting on the third report of the Secretary-General on human security, Spain noted that the examples and experiences provided in the report demonstrate the added value of the human security approach as a comprehensive, sustainable, context-specific and people-centred framework. Moreover, drawing on its own experience in development assistance, Spain emphasized the importance of adapting policies and programmes to the local context; addressing the deep causes of insecurity; and promoting inclusive responses that are locally owned and prevention-oriented in focus. Consequently, Spain underlined its firm commitment to the human security approach as a universal framework to respond effectively to the challenges that lie at the intersection of peace and security, development and human rights and will continue to contribute actively in the international community's efforts to advance the approach.

In light of today's multiple and complex threats, ranging from climate change, violence, crime and gender inequality, among others, <u>Honduras</u> highlighted the significant benefit and value of including the core principles of human security within the new global development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on human security, Honduras noted that the international community is now able to realize the proven contribution of human security in integrating the social, economic and environment dimensions of sustainable development at national and local levels.

In view of the relationship between human security and the post-2015 development agenda, <u>China</u> noted that ensuring human survival, development, dignity and security relies on efforts on the basis of national security to attain sustainable economic and social development. In this regard, China stated that the international community may, from the perspective of human security, explore ways to respond to the increasingly complex challenges to global security and development but human security does not belong to the realm of the MDGs and should not be incorporated into the framework of the post-2015 development agenda. Lastly, while General Assembly resolution 66/290 marks a convergence of views around human security, China expressed concern over different interpretations of the common understanding. Moreover, China cautioned against mainstreaming human security within the United Nations before conducting a comprehensive review and assessment of human security activities to date.

For <u>Mexico</u>, examples provided in the Secretary-General's latest report as well as its own experience in utilizing the human security approach have proved the practical utility and the added value of the human security approach in all regions of the world. As a result, Mexico considers human security as an important framework for achieving the objectives of the post-2015 development agenda. Moreover, Mexico asked the panellists to further elaborate on how the human security approach could be incorporated in efforts to address migration in different regions of the world; what opportunities are available to link human security with disaster risk reduction to be discussed in Sendai, Japan in March 2015; and how can human security be integrated into the post-2015development agenda?

Lastly, <u>South Africa</u> drew attention to the growing consensus on the contribution of the human security approach to the work of the United Nations as highlighted in the report of the UN Secretary-General. South Africa recognized the critical role of the UNTFHS in channeling financial resources to field-based projects which apply the human security approach and have resulted in tangible benefits for many people and communities around the world. To this end, South Africa sees human security as an important tool in addressing the remaining gaps to the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda. Moreover, human security can be useful in addressing national and regional priorities and in highlighting the importance of partnerships across a broad range of sectors and groups. South Africa also stressed the important contribution of the human security approach in assisting the global South to realize sustainable development and human rights for all. In closing, South Africa reiterated its readiness to engage in promoting human security as a tool for the articulation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Closing Remarks

CHARLES NTWAAGAE, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Botswana to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the President of General Assembly, thanked the moderator, the panellists and Member States for their insightful presentations on experiences and lessons learned in implementing the human security approach at the international, regional and national levels. He noted that the contribution of the human security approach as a comprehensive tool for responding to complex and multiple challenges including inclusive poverty eradication, food security, women's empowerment, prevention of communicable diseases and maternal mortality, sustainable development, among others, was a common theme throughout the discussion. Moreover, the discussion highlighted that the human security approach is particularly valuable in assisting with project design, strategic planning and policymaking across a wide range of thematic and institutional settings, not only in the context of fragile states but in all societies. He expressed his hope that the experiences and ideas exchanged at the debate will inspire further initiatives in all regions and countries, as well as at the United Nations.