



Multiplicity: Threats, Partnerships, and Stories of Success*

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Abstract

The article discusses the crucial concept of human security in the context of global challenges and multilateral efforts. It highlights the interconnectedness of sustainable development, security, and human rights, emphasizing the imperative for collaborative international actions. The evolution of human security from its origins in the 1994 UNDP Development Report to its current relevance, including the incorporation of technological security, is explored. The importance and impact of human security frameworks in addressing present threats and fostering public support for the Sustainable Development Goals are underlined, emphasizing the pivotal role of human security in shaping a more secure and sustainable future.

At each [Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates, a formal statement](#) has been produced and that often emphasizes consistent themes:

1. Sustainable and inclusive development, security and human rights are interdependent.
2. There is no option for failure to strengthen cooperative multilateralism to address global challenges such as oceanic health, nuclear weapons, climate protection, inequity, poverty, denuding forests, peace, and pandemics.
3. And, to quote from the most recent Summit in South Korea, “There can be no national security without shared Human Security.”

My personal realization of the importance of human security goes back to the foundation of its articulation in the [UNDP Development Report of 1994](#) led by Mahbub ul-Haq and Inge Kaul which focused on seven dimensions of security: i) economic; ii) food; iii) health; iv) environmental v) personal; vi) community; and vii) political. Today we must include technological security, which would include the new digital environment that was non-existent just a few decades ago.

Dr. ul-Haq described the “why” eloquently:

In the final analysis, human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a

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dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons—it is a concern with human life and dignity.

In 2022, in a thorough report, [UNDP highlighted present threats to human security that require invigorated multilateralism.](#)

“The Summit of the Future in September 2024 can benefit enormously by emphasizing the essential framework of human security.”

We can find further roots of the tool of Human Security in the world summits of the 1990s. Because I joined with literally tens of thousands of informed and concerned members of civil society and participated in several of them I felt confident in 2000 to write in a law review article—[Nuclear Weapons, Ethics, Morals and Law](#)—that these summits articulated “the integrated human security agenda.”

Note the present relevance of the themes of these Summits:

- New York, 1990, Children;
- Rio, de Janeiro, Environment (Earth Summit);
- Vienna, 1993, Human Rights;
- Cairo, 1994, Population and Development;
- Copenhagen, 1994, Social Development (Poverty);
- Berlin, 1995, Climate;
- Beijing, 1995, Woman;
- Istanbul, 1996, Habitat II (Cities).

From these events the Millennium Development Goals emerged, which of course have evolved into the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda for the Future.

This process has benefited enormously from civil society engagement and that is why the UN Trust Fund for Human Security so wisely partnered with the World Academy of Art and Science (founded by luminaries such as Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Robert Oppenheimer and Joseph Rotblat) to promote the [Human Security 4 All Campaign](#).

I serve as Fellow and Trustee of the Academy and worked on this project directly. One aspect of its impact was the Academy’s partnering with the world’s most influential tech event of 2023 and 2024, the CES conference of the Consumer Technology Association held in Las Vegas with over 115,000 participants from 174 countries with 60% of the Fortune 500 companies represented. Its central theme, robustly advanced with flare and substance, was Human Security for All.

I share these examples because we are all well aware of the UN's work but its impact and outreach are often not sufficiently appreciated. With the help of the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, such dynamic outreach and advocacy will continue to expand.

“Human security is a conceptual framework that integrates daily life considerations of all people with global governance concerns. It is a unifying lens that draws its purpose from what is needed to ensure the survival, livelihood and dignity of people at every level.”

The world has seen pivotal developments in human security discussions, including the issuance of Secretary-General António Guterres' report on human security (A/78/665) and an informal meeting of the General Assembly plenary to discuss the report in April 2024. Of particular and pressing relevance, he said then:

Human security has proven its value as a framework to focus on supporting people to live in dignity, free from want and fear.

It can help accelerate progress towards Agenda 2030, prevent the emergence of future crisis, and deliver the hope people need.

I urge all countries to use the important tool of human security to address today's multilayered crisis—and to integrate its insights into our efforts to prepare for future challenges.

Expressly integrating human security into the potentially transformative upcoming summits and events can help advance the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), advance our Common Agenda, and meet the ambitions of the Summit of the Future.

We face profound challenges on multiple fronts. And we face them at a time when trust in institutions of governance requires improvement.

Fulfilling the Agenda for the Future needs wider public support. Human security is a framework that normal citizens can understand and appreciate.

The Summit of the Future in September 2024 can benefit enormously by emphasizing the essential framework of human security. By focusing on the realities of life seen through the eyes of people, human security puts a face on the words of policy.

People from Wall Street to Main Street as well as the far too many on “no street” live under the threat arising from several challenges unique to this moment of history—for example, protection of biodiversity, oceanic health, nuclear catastrophe, and climate change.

These causes of insecurity cannot be adequately addressed at only national levels and responding appropriately requires common purposes and coordinated efforts. The UN is essential for this process. Here we can say “we” and mean everyone.

Human security is a conceptual framework that integrates daily life considerations of all people with global governance concerns. It is a unifying lens that draws its purpose from what is needed to ensure the survival, livelihood and dignity of people at every level.

Human security helps bring clarity of focus on meeting the needs of “We the peoples of the United Nations”. That focus will amplify our work to overcome the differences and divisions that confront us.

Our world needs this focus on human security to help governments and the multilateral system tackle the enormous challenges ahead of us from adapting to climate change, governing the digital economy, to ending and recovering from existing violent conflicts.

Never before has there been such a convergence of a morally compelling need to serve to protect our fragile planet and its precious inhabitants and fulfill already agreed practical policy commitments. Human security is a tool to ensure our success.

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