

Report

Second Meeting of the Commission on Human Security

Takanawa Prince Hotel, Tokyo
16-17 December 2001

Following a first meeting in Greentree Estate, New York, the Commission on Human Security met for a second time in Tokyo at the invitation of the Government of Japan from 15-17 December 2001.

Prior to the two-day Commission meeting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan organized a one-day symposium entitled *Human Security and Terrorism: Diversifying Threats under Globalisation* on 15 December 2001. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister addressed the symposium and emphasized the importance of the Commission's work.

Following the Commission's meeting, a press conference was organized in which the Commissioners participated. The meeting concluded with an informal dialogue session with Japanese opinion leaders.

Lakhdar Brahimi apologized for not being able to attend the Commission's meeting due to his pressing responsibilities in Afghanistan. The Commission expressed its support and encouragement to Lakhdar Brahimi and offered its assistance toward achieving human security for the Afghan people. In addition to the Commission's secretariat, representatives from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan Center for International Exchange and the Rockefeller Foundation observed the discussions.

This report summarizes the discussions and identifies key action points. In preparation for the discussions, the secretariat prepared various discussion documents.

Introduction and Update on the Commission's Work

The Co-chairs opened the meeting with brief comments that built upon the substantive discussions during the Symposium the previous day. Amartya Sen stressed the need for seeing the challenges of global equity and human security in a somewhat different way from the standard practice. First, while the debates on global distribution often centre on the question as to whether "the poor are getting poorer while the rich get richer", that need not be the central issue at all. When the poor do get poorer, that issue will obviously have to be addressed and rectified, but the more general problem is that of "fairness" of the distribution of benefits. Even when the poor gain a little (rather than losing), the distribution of opportunities and benefits could be very iniquitous. Whenever there are possibilities of joint gains, there are a great many alternative situations in which all parties gain, so that showing that the poor too are gaining something would not

amount to much. The real issue is whether the enormous benefits potentially generated by globalisation are being equitably shared, and how we should choose among the alternative scenarios in which all parties gain. To use an analogy, in showing the injustice to women of existing family arrangements, it does not have to be shown that women would be better off if they lived outside families, but only that the benefits and chores in family living are unfairly distributed between men and women in the established family arrangements. The issue of global equity relates to this type of distributional question, and to the institutions needed for a better sharing of the gigantic opportunities generated by economic globalisation.

Second, while the problem of distributional equity is direction neutral, human security is concerned specifically with “downside” risks. For example, growth with equity, even when very successful (as in, say, South Korea for decades preceding the Asian economic crisis) does not in itself provide any guarantee of security in case of a downturn (as Korea experienced after 1997). It is important to see the relation between democratic practice, the functioning of markets, effectiveness of public policies, and the operation of other institutions, in safeguarding human security, in addition to promoting efficiency and equity (between and within nations).

The need for a departure in understanding the nature of the problems is as strong today in this field as it was on the environment at the time when the Brundtland Commission Report was presented. That Report managed to transform the terms of the debate, dealing particularly with the compatibility of growth and the environment. The Human Security Commission faces a similar challenge at this time. The urgent tasks include conceptual clarification as well as promotion of public discussion, in addition to identifying concrete projects for action related to institutional change for promoting equity and for the safeguarding of basic human security. A better understanding of conflicts and values has to be integrated with investigation of the demands of health, education, poverty removal and the reduction of gender inequality and insecurity.

The nature of the problems to be addressed today are very different from those faced in the 1940s when the Bretton Woods institutions were set up. There is a need for institutional reform as well as more effective formulation of policies.

Sadako Ogata said that the concept of human security is an entry point to analyze the central security issue confronting the world today, namely the security of the people. The latter should be understood in the broad sense, focusing not only on individuals but also communities. That what distinguishes human security from other *state-centered* approaches is: First, its emphasis on the *interconnectedness* of poverty and conflict, freedom from fear and freedom from want. Inequality and poverty contribute toward conflict, whereas the latter, in turn, lead to further inequality and poverty; Second, the focus on people and communities rather than the State. Ogata suggested that the Commission frames human security in reference to the globalization and equity debate. The globalization process has affected the security of people in many places and in different ways, and has hampered the capacity of states to provide it. At the same time, existing international institutions are not equipped to respond to the needs, as their

mandates are state-centered. Based upon her experience, people/communities can play an important role toward enhancing their own security in the broader sense.

Ogata proceeded by summarizing the work of the Commission since its first meeting. The Co-chairs had met on three occasions since and this had contributed toward a common understanding about the tasks ahead. One of the obstacles encountered was the lengthy process in obtaining the release of funding for the development project from the Human Security Trust Fund and which resulted in a delay in implementation. She thought that if the Commission could come-up with clear criteria, funding through the Trust Fund could be made available to UN agencies for projects. She emphasized that the Commission should seek to promote the translation of its policy recommendations into operational guidelines to be implemented by others as in the case of Afghanistan, for example.

The Commission's secretariat was subsequently introduced.¹ Following the introductory comments by the Co-chairs and Commissioners, the programme of work and the meetings' agenda were finalized.

The discussion on the proposed conceptual framework was preceded by a review of the two major events that had taken place at the initiative of various Commissioners prior to the Tokyo meeting:

- A symposium on Human Rights and Human Security, San Jose, Costa Rica on 1 December 2001: The meeting was co-organized by the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, the University for Peace and the Commission's secretariat. The discussions focused on the need to adopt a rights-based approach toward human security and used the situation in Colombia as a case study. According to Sonia Picado, the host of the meeting, a rights-based approach could provide a useful framework for the promotion of human security. The substance of the meeting was captured in a statement that the participants adopted and which will be disseminated in the region.

- A workshop on the Measurement of Human Security, Harvard on 30 November 2001: The purpose of the meeting, organized by Lincoln Chen, was to establish contact between the Commission and researchers in the field of human security. Participants presented alternative "measures" of human security and discussed a proposal of an annual human security report focusing on global violence. Human security was thought to be as much a process as a product, namely the humanization of security issues. The Commission's work was introduced and greeted with interest.

¹ Francois Fouinat, Executive Director; Vivienne Taylor, Coordinator: Development Project and Deputy Director; Johan Cels, Coordinator: Conflict Project; Sabina Alkire, Research Writer for the Report; and Kazuo Tase, Liaison Officer.

An Evolving Human Security Conceptual Framework

As part of its objectives to develop the concept of human security as an operational tool for policy formulation and implementation, the Commission considered a background paper on the *Conceptual Framework of Human Security* prepared by Sabina Alkire. The paper reviewed definitions and processes of human security, as well as its relationship with human rights, human development, and national security. It also proposed the following working definition: “*the objective of human security is to protect the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive threats in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment.*”

Following discussions, the Commission adopted it as a working definition guiding its work pending further refinements. Particular emphasis was put on the need to incorporate the close relationship between human security and human rights. In many respects, human security was thought to relate to efforts geared at “rescuing” people or, in other words, protecting them against “downside risks.” In this sense, human security was seen as complementing human development: the latter seeks to create and enhance opportunities and capabilities, whereas the former aims at securing social protection against risks and vulnerabilities. Moreover, attaining human security could be seen as “the ultimate public good.”

The Commission also identified a legitimacy crisis (democratic deficiencies) in national and international politics as well as institutions. Democracy was thought to be an essential, although not always a sufficient, element for achieving human security. Globalisation has affected the role and functioning of States and international institutions. It was thought that the linkage between the people and the State should be re-established through focusing on human security issues. As the State has the ultimate responsibility to protect human security, governance issues need to be addressed as well as the capacity of States to deliver. This requires, on the one hand, a new political vision regarding the ethical responsibility of States toward people. On the other hand, the value of protecting human security must also be highlighted if this perspective is to take root among policy makers.

Human security was viewed as a condition that results from an effective political, economic, social, cultural, and natural environment, contrary to the view of human security that focuses on national and military concerns. Therefore, the Commission is to promote a “paradigm shift” from state-centred to people/community-centred security by breaking with existing patterns of analysis and transmuting the security agenda by redefining both the problem and the processes that address it. What has changed include the nature of threats, the failure of national security processes, and the impact of the globalisation process upon the security of people.

Culture also plays a role in human security threats, for memory is at the root of ethnic hatreds; identity and exclusion are at the heart of many conflicts; and the affiliations can be woven into conflicts. While the Commission will not consider cultural dialogue as part of its programme, awareness of cultural issues and sensitivities will permeate its work.

In light of the discussions, it was thought that any human security strategy should include a bottom-up and a top-down approach. The former relates to the perception of people of their human security and needs, whereas the latter relates to the mechanisms and institutions to protect human security. In order to assess people's perceptions and needs, it was proposed that the Commission undertakes selected public hearings on human security. This will also give added legitimacy to the Commission's work. With respect to the functioning of mechanisms and institutions on human security, it was agreed that a paper be prepared for the next meeting which identifies and maps institutions contributing to human security; examines how globalization has affected institutional responses; map the resource flows (financial and otherwise) through these institutions; and evaluate the effectiveness of these institutions in realizing human security.

The Conflict and the Development Projects

Johan Cels introduced the working assumptions and focus areas for the Conflict Project. The Conflict Project will focus on a) the security of civilians (refugees and internally displaced persons) during conflict, b) the coexistence of communities following conflict, and c) the 'gap' between emergency relief and development. Four additional areas of interest are a) causes of conflict, focusing on discrimination and citizenship; b) gender-based violence; c) the criminalization of violence; and d) funding for human security. The Conflict Project will synthesize existing research as well as undertake new research. A series of workshops will be organized in cooperation with UNHCR and other partners, the results of which will feed into the Report. To the extent possible, the project will seek to promote operational initiatives aimed at enhancing the security of people in selected areas.

Vivienne Taylor and Lincoln Chen introduced the Development Project. The Project will be located in Harvard, but will work largely in the South. The aim is to do research and consultation into the value-added of the Human Security lens in various sectors: health, education, inequality, gender, and 'new insecurities'. Research papers will be commissioned on these to examine the inter relationships and substantive policy aspects with human security. Workshops will be convened in each sector. The Development Project will also look at the data and concepts of human security, and map the institutions associated with human security (in conjunction with the Conflict Project). The outcome of the project will feed into the Report.

Although the discussion on both projects was compressed, agreement was reached on the working assumptions contained in the outline of the Conflict Project. Attention should be given to discrimination, the cost and financing of the military as well as international migration issues. The feasibility of applying the human security perspective to the Afghanistan situation could be examined as the threads of conflict and development are interwoven. The need to integrate the work being undertaken under both projects was recognized.

An Outreach and Communications Strategy

In addition to the activities being planned under the Conflict and Development Projects, a series of joint outreach activities are foreseen. Based upon the drafts prepared by Lincoln Chen, Carl Tham and the secretariat, it was agreed that a clear and succinct communications strategy aimed at promoting public understanding, engagement and support of human security and its underlying imperatives is critical.

The need to develop and communicate a series of simple and straightforward messages to well-defined groups of target audiences was underlined. The Co-chairs stressed that this is a democratic commission, and individual Commissioners should each plan outreach activities accordingly. At the same time, there was a consensus that a professional communication strategy is essential and should be developed soonest. Such a strategy would:

- a) identify the different groups and levels of ‘audience’;
- b) identify different kinds of participation, input, and communication, ranging from public hearings to focus groups to issue-based workshops to media coverage to comments on early drafts of the report, to presentations at major events such as the G-8/24, Trilateral Commission or the African Union;
- c) distinguish between events *during* the life of the Commission, and *after* the final Commission meeting to promote the report and its recommendations to national and international audiences.
- d) identify what funding exists for these activities, and what more needs to be raised; and
- e) identify which members of the Commission and Secretariat are willing and able to undertake certain activities and focus on specific themes.

During the discussions, a series of concrete activities were proposed, in addition to those presented by the secretariat including public hearings in Africa, presentations at various international forums, as well as a workshop in Central Asia. .

Administrative and Management Issues

The delay in the release of funding for the Development Project was of concern and has resulted in pushing back its implementation. As a consequence, it was thought unlikely that the Commission could complete its work by January 2003. Instead, It is now envisaged that the Commission will complete its report by Spring 2003.

Although sufficient funds have been made available by the Government of Japan through UNHCR to cover the expenses of the secretariat and the Conflict Project till the end of 2002, the secretariat will undertake a review to determine whether additional funds need to be raised, in particular, regarding the functioning of the secretariat beyond 2002, the Commission meeting, outreach activities, and the publication and launch of the report. As the Commissioners agreed on the need to operate in a transparent and accountable manner, appropriate budgetary information will be prepared and made available. The

Rockefeller Foundation also agreed that the remaining funds made available for the initial launch of the Commission could be utilized at its discretion.

As the Swedish Government had initially offered to host the next Commission meeting, it was decided to hold the third meeting (9-10 June 2002) in Stockholm if that is still agreeable to the Government and with the understanding that it will cover the local costs. The funds made available by the Rockefeller Foundation could be used to pay for the Commission's travel expenditures. The Commission also emphasized the need to hold a meeting in the South. Surin Pitsuwan proposed to host a meeting in Thailand (tentatively scheduled for 26-27 January 2003). This offer was warmly accepted. The timing and location of the launching of the Commission's Report will be decided at a later stage.

To strengthen the communication among the Commissioners and the secretariat between meetings, it was agreed that a special electronic discussion bulletin board be set-up in conjunction with the Commission's website.

Conclusion and Way Forward

At the end of the meeting, the Commissioners expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of Japan for hosting the meeting of the Commission as well as having organized the symposium immediately preceding the Commission's meeting. The Co-chairs wrote to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to convey the Commission's gratitude.

The secretariat was requested to prepare various documents for discussion among the Commissioners and in preparation of the Commission's third meeting:

- Review of the conceptual framework in view of the suggestions made;
- Preparation of a detailed report outline as well as critical messages to be conveyed, with particular attention being given to ensure that the ideas are translatable into different languages from English (French, Spanish and Japanese);
- Detailed work plans for the secretariat as well as the implementation of the Conflict and Development Projects. Background documents on various themes are to be prepared, including a paper on the existing institutional architecture as it relates to human security;
- An outreach and communication strategy with direct involvement of Commissioners in specific activities;
- A report on the Commission's financial situation as well as an estimate of additional funds required. .

Secretariat
Commission on Human Security
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