

# Human Security Now

*Remarks by Sadako Ogata  
Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network  
Graz, Austria – 8 May 2003*

Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to have this opportunity to introduce the report of the Commission on Human Security today.

I would be amiss if I did not start out by warmly thanking the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, for the support and encouragement provided to the Commission on Human Security.

Human security is a subject of particular relevance to me. As former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, I was confronted on a daily basis with the impact and consequences of insecurities upon people. Looking for ways to protect people displaced by war, violence and human rights abuses was a difficult challenge.

When I was asked to deliver a statement at the 1999 meeting of the Human Security Network in Lysoen, Norway, I stressed that human security means to be free from fear of being killed, persecuted or abused; free from the abject poverty that brings indignity and self-contempt; free to make choices. As threats to national and international security emanate more and more from internal sources rather than external aggression, it is important to shift attention from the security of states to that of people, I argued then. Today, I strongly believe that human security as a concept and policy orientation is even more relevant and urgent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

New thinking and policies about security are urgently required. Despite the fact that security is on the top of the agenda of many countries and organizations, little scrutiny of the concept is taking place.

The concept of security means different things to different people. In fact, there is no broad consensus on the meaning of security. Terrorism and the fight against it; the diffusion of weapons of mass destruction; the Iraqi war; the spread of infectious diseases; the loss of employment and the decline in economic growth, have all had an impact upon security in different ways. As a consequence, people and countries feel more insecure and apprehensive today than at the start of the 21st century.

Nevertheless, the opportunities for working towards removing these threats are better than ever. The rapid movement of people, capital, goods and ideas within and across borders deeply affects the capacity of states to manage security issues in an interdependent world. Globalization, despite its challenges, creates new opportunities for economic expansion and, if properly managed, can

reach people and countries previously excluded. Democratic principles and practices are gaining ground and support. Civil society plays an unprecedented role in setting the security agenda and policies.

It is within this complex and changing context that the independent Commission on Human Security has sought to develop a new security concept and policies that focus on people, rather than on states. Assisted by ten distinguished Commissioners, Amartya Sen and I co-chaired the Commission. On 1 May, the Commission's report was presented to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

For the Commission, human security is concerned with safeguarding and expanding people's vital freedoms. It requires both protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and empowering people to take charge of their own lives. Protection refers to the norms, policies and institutions essential to shield people and implies a "top-down approach," such as the rule of law and democratic governance. Empowerment underscores the role of people as actors and participants and implies a "bottom-up" approach.

Human security does not seek to supplant state security, but rather to complement it. States have the fundamental responsibility of providing security. Yet they often fail to fulfil their obligations – many times they are even the source of the threat to people. As the multitude of violent conflicts and extreme poverty demonstrates, states cannot be secure if people's security is at stake. But neither can people be secure in the absence of strong, democratic and responsible states, as the multitude of collapsed states in the world illustrates. These are the challenges in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine today.

Human security also underscores the close linkages between gross human rights violations and national and international insecurities. The Rwandan genocide represents one of the worst human security failures, and the consequences still reverberate through the Great Lakes region of Africa nearly ten years later. Therefore, realizing human rights lies at the core of protecting and empowering people.

Human security also adds an important dimension to development thinking. As Amartya Sen argues "development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy." By focusing on downside risks, human security emphasizes that people must be protected when facing sudden and profound reversals in economic and social life. In addition to "growth with equity," human security is equally concerned with "down-turns with security." In the absence of safety nets, people face critical and pervasive in-securities in sudden downturns which, in turn, may lead to conflict and violence, as recent examples in Asia and Latin America illustrate.

If security is to be protected, conflict prevented, human rights respected and poverty eradicated, we require urgently a new consensus on security. This is a shared responsibility. Human security provides an impetus for all countries, whether developed or developing, to review existing security, economic, development and social policies. Creating genuine respect for people's safety, livelihood and dignity should be the overall objective of these policies.

Equally important is to overcome the existing compartmentalization of policies and programmes along institutional divisions of work – along security, development and assistance lines. This requires a fundamental rethinking of current institutional arrangements and policies. Integration rather than fragmentation should be the catch phrase.

At a time when the exercise of raw military power seems to leave little scope for soft power, of

promoting democratic principles or respecting freedom and human rights, this call for a new security consensus may appear ill timed. But hard power alone does not win the minds and confidence of people. Not only does our security understanding need to respond to changing threats, but also to the growing role and contributions of civil society groups and community leaders. States no longer hold the monopoly over security issues. People themselves are expected to shoulder increasing responsibilities in determining their own interests, aspirations and security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Now, the challenge is to implement the ideas contained in the report. As a first step, the Commission proposes the setting-up of the Advisory Board on Human Security with two principal objectives: First, to promote and follow-up on the Commission's report. Second, to provide guidance on the criteria to be applied for the UN Trust Fund on Human Security. This Trust Fund was established following the UN Millennium Summit by Japan and is accessible to UN agencies. To date, Japan has contributed nearly \$ 200 million and has agreed to replenish the Fund to help implement the Commission's recommendations. But the donor base of the Trust Fund should be broadened to include other countries. In addition, Japan has also announced the setting-up of a bilateral Grass Roots Human Security Grant focusing on civil society initiatives, with an amount of \$ 120 million.

Over the next few days, I will explore ways to closely link the Commission, its report as well as the follow-up activities with the initiatives of the Human Security Network. The agenda items under consideration, i.e. human rights education and learning as well as the support strategy for children affected by conflict, are of particular interest to the Commission. People in Africa have always been of particular interest to me, and I look forward to working closely with Mali, the next president of the Human Security Network.

Thank you.