Executive Summary – Webinar "Human Security and Parliaments" 27 June 2023

Event page: https://www.ipu.org/event/human-security-and-parliaments

Session 1: Tuesday 27 June – 07:00-08:30 CEST

Mr. Garry Jacobs, President and CEO of the World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS), Executive Chairman, Human Security for All

Mr. Garry Jacobs opened the session by emphasizing the importance of a human-centric approach to security. He outlined the history of human security as a concept, introduced by the UN in 1994, and its shift in focus from national security to encompassing a full range of human needs. Mr. Jacobs explained how human security aims to support the SDGs by considering both the global and individual perspectives.

Mr. Jacobs further highlighted the interrelated nature of the many dimensions of security, such as food, health, economy, environment, community security, political security, personal security and more including technology security. The importance of viewing these elements as an interconnected web impacting individuals was stressed, offering a holistic and contextually aware approach. He further mentioned the importance of considering the subjective dimension of security. He argued that it is not just about quantifiable data, but also about people's trust in institutions and their confidence in the future. He called for strategies that both address the objective dimensions and build a sense of security and freedom. He tied human security and environmental security together, stressing the inseparability of planetary health and human security needs. He provided examples of successful strategies initiated at local or national levels that embody these principles, such as the role of a bank in development model of a South Indian village that was extended to 100,000 villages throughout India in ten years and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh which became a highly successful global model for microfinance.

Finally, Mr. Jacobs expressed the webinar's aim to gather insights from participants on what the concept of human security means to them and how it can be applied in their work, with a goal to develop a set of tools to aid members of IPU worldwide. The session proceeded with introductory talks from panellists, followed by a discussion.

Mr. Mine Yoichi, Executive Director of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development

In his presentation, Mr. Mine Yoichi discussed the concept of human security from the perspective of the Ogata Sadako Research Institute of the Japan International Cooperation Agency. He presented the concept of human security as focusing on human dignity rather than weapons. He underscored the urgency to perceive threats to human security as common threats to human survival.

Mr. Mine mentioned the publication of the Institute's report, 'Human Security Today'. The first issue revisited the concept of human security, and the second issue will delve into the compounded crisis triggered by the Ukraine war. He highlighted how traditionally, security discourses focused on military confrontations between states, whereas the concept of human security puts the individual at the centre.

Mr. Mine talked about the recent UNDP report on human security which introduced the concept of solidarity among various stakeholders. He discussed the threats to human security, emphasizing their

sudden and unpredictable nature, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and other unexpected disasters.

Mr. Mine stated that the capacity of the government and non-government actors should be strengthened, as both state and human security are interconnected. He underscored the role of parliamentarians in connecting the voices of people with national governance.

He concluded by underlining the need to guarantee access to basic entitlements for the most vulnerable populations by law. He spoke of the importance of mutual learning and expressed the continued commitment of the Ogata Institute to be a catalyst for such learning efforts.

Ms. Amanda Ellis, Former UN ambassador, Senior Director of the Global Partnerships and Networks, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory at Arizona State University.

Ms. Amanda Ellis began her talk by emphasizing the importance of understanding the diverse human security experiences across the world. She pointed out how international institutions tend to favour national security over human security, and called for a focus on both top-down and bottom-up approaches, as well as their interlinkages.

Drawing from her experience with the UN Security Council, Ms. Ellis discussed the challenges the international architecture faces, especially when basic human rights, like medical assistance, are weaponized by nation states. She called for a paradigm shift and questioned if human security could become a unifying concept for global security. Highlighting the plight of island states on the front lines of the climate emergency, Ms. Ellis reiterated the need for a shift towards human security. She brought up the emerging threats such as the climate crisis, zoonotic diseases, disinformation, the threats and benefits of generative AI, and the resurgence of nuclear war threats. Ms. Ellis stressed the need for a bottom-up approach to enhancing the global development agenda and highlighted the critical role of parliaments and their constituents in creating multi-stakeholder collaborations. She mentioned the collaboration with the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) around the "my parliament, my planet" campaign and gave examples focusing on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in decision-making processes.

Ms. Ellis highlighted the lack of full gender equality worldwide, pointing out that only 14 out of 193 UN member countries have introduced laws for full gender equality. She discussed the online process in collaboration with IPU, allowing individuals to have their voices heard at the UN, advocating for change and enabling civil society voices to be heard. Discussing the climate crisis, Ms. Ellis pointed to the IPU's recent campaign, "My Parliament, My Planet, Our Shared Global Future," and its potential to interlink human security with global security. This campaign aims to amplify the voices of individual parliamentarians and their constituents, provide accessible education modules, and create an opportunity for deeper engagement with a broad coalition of stakeholders.

In conclusion, Ms. Ellis expressed excitement about the potential of human security and environmental security as interlinked concepts and the opportunity for deeper interaction and collaboration through the IPU. She looked forward to further discussions on the subject.

Mr. Anders Wijkman, former co-president of the Club of Rome, former member of the European Parliament, former Policy Director, UNDP.

In the webinar, Mr. Anders Wijkman delved into his extensive experiences in international diplomacy and policy, touching upon his stint as the Policy Director of UNDP, his collaboration with the IPU and the GLOBE Network, and his long-standing involvement with the Club of Rome. Discussing the multifaceted challenges of human security including economic, social, ecological, and technological, he highlighted the urgent global crises, such as the war in Ukraine and ecological crises exacerbated by economic growth and resource depletion.

Mr. Wijkman referred to an important report published by the Club of Rome, titled "Survival Guide for Humanity", which uses state-of-the-art modelling to explore policies likely to achieve prosperity for all within planetary limits. He outlined two possible paths, 'Too Little, Too Late' and 'The Giant Leap', the latter being a call for transformative policy changes.

The report proposed five major transformations: addressing poverty and inequality, empowering women, transforming food systems, and changing energy systems, with material consumption as a cross-cutting issue. Mr. Wijkman stressed the need to overhaul our current systems, particularly highlighting the importance of controlling material consumption as a driving force behind the triple ecological crisis.

He also emphasized the need for a systemic approach that measures the right things, and discussed the potential of complementing GDP growth with quality indicators for wellbeing, referencing New Zealand as a positive example. He underscored that to tackle long-term issues like climate change and biodiversity loss, it was necessary to build societal trust by tackling poverty, inequality, and other social ills. He critiqued the current financial, trade, and IPR systems for primarily benefiting rich countries and called for significant changes to address poverty on a full scale.

The speaker suggested several reforms, such as taxing transnational corporations and rich individuals, and introducing a universal basic dividend - a fee on the use of global commons distributed equally among citizens worldwide. He cited Alaska's practice of charging for raw material extraction as an existing successful model. Regarding the empowerment of women, he underscored the importance of education for girls and expansion of reproductive health services. On food systems, he proposed reducing food waste, promoting planet-friendly diets, and transitioning from industrial agriculture to regenerative agriculture.

Lastly, in relation to energy systems, he emphasized the need to phase out fossil fuels by providing alternatives, noting the lack of investment in renewable energy in low-income countries. In conclusion, Mr. Wijkman asserted that the report provides a comprehensive roadmap for tackling the challenges at hand and that it holds valuable insights for parliamentarians across the globe. He expressed interest in aiding the development of national agendas in the Asian and Pacific regions.

Hon. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad of Bangladesh

In her talk during the webinar on human security and Parliaments organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Hon. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury articulated her thoughts on the evolving concept of human security. She noted that over a quarter of a century, human security has expanded beyond protection from war and conflict, to include non-military components that threaten peace and human dignity.

Ms. Chaudhury argued that the current understanding of human security encompasses economic, environmental, political, and community security, among others. These aspects, she said, are interlinked, and collectively allow individuals to fully realize their potential. She highlighted that enabling human security requires breaking the cycle of poverty and allowing people to live decent lives. She warned that poverty, inequality, and deprivation foster conflict, terrorism, insecurity, and organized crimes.

Parliaments, she stated, must strive to eradicate economic injustices, disparities, and socio-economic inequalities. She also highlighted their responsibility to promote gender equality and hold the government accountable for ensuring basic human needs like healthcare, education, shelter, and food security. Ms. Chaudhury insisted that poverty reduction strategies need to be adopted and implemented, along with the fair distribution of benefits and resources. She mentioned the challenges in implementing a welfare-oriented, multi-dimensional model of human security, including the need for extensive data support and difficulties in setting priorities among various components.

Reflecting the universal commitment to promoting human security, she mentioned the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030, and emphasized the importance of Parliaments ensuring adequate budget allocation and funding to achieve economic and environmental security. Focusing on

environmental security, Ms. Chaudhury listed the numerous threats posed by environmental degradation, from excessive heat to scarcity of food and extreme weather conditions. She mentioned how Bangladesh has incorporated human security issues into its five-year plan and national adaptation plan.

In conclusion, Hon. Chaudhury stressed the centrality of political will in promoting human security for a sustainable and equitable world. She affirmed that it's crucial to incorporate human security considerations into all efforts to foster positive changes.

Discussion section

The discussion revolved around the multifaceted aspects of human security and its global implications.

Criticisms were raised about the existing global governance structures and how they sometimes hinder justice due to power imbalances. It was suggested that commonly used indicators like GDP might not accurately reflect well-being and security, and thus, a shift towards more comprehensive measures, like those seen in New Zealand's well-being budget, was proposed. Human security was praised as a people-centric, bottom-up approach that could shape policies to tackle global challenges like poverty and inequality. Referencing historical instances of humanitarian interventions was used to further underline this point. The discussion then highlighted the importance of a bottom-up approach to human security, acknowledging the detrimental impacts of current regulations and structures, especially on the poorer populations. It was proposed that these structures need modification or removal to ensure human security.

Simultaneously, the significance of blending top-down structures with bottom-up approaches for effective change was emphasized, citing examples of successful programs that adopted this strategy. It was also suggested that ambitious global goals, like the Sustainable Development Goals, necessitate participation from all levels of society, not just governmental actions. The speakers accentuated the vital importance of addressing food insecurity and poverty as foundational elements of human security, asserting that these issues should not be overshadowed by the focus on climate change. A comprehensive approach was suggested, integrating mitigation, adaptation, and development efforts.

The point was made that before expecting all nations to contribute equally to climate change solutions, it's crucial to address basic human needs like poverty and food insecurity. The idea of human security as a context-specific approach was proposed, with an emphasis on the necessity of both bottom-up citizen engagement and top-down governmental support. The need for prioritizing poverty and inequality was reiterated, highlighting the potential of technology leapfrogging to help prevent low-income countries from following conventional, environmentally harmful development paths. Concerns were also raised about the unregulated development and potential risks of disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence.

Finally, the crucial role of parliamentary networks and collaboration in addressing human security was stressed, especially in relation to climate change and its impact in Asia, including displaced persons from small island nations. It was suggested that attention to human security should be expanded across all regions, fostering exchange and cooperation among different parliaments.

Session 2: Tuesday 27 June - 17:00-18:30 CEST

Ms. Brigitte Brenner, Representative of IPU to the UN and other International Organisations in Vienna

In her role as the moderator for the webinar's afternoon session, Ms. Brigitte Brenner opened by reflecting positively on the morning session, which she described as insightful and productive, with a broad range of experience and knowledge brought to the table. She expressed hope that the afternoon session would be just as rich and fruitful.

Ms. Brenner recalled her early career as a young diplomat participating in major UN conferences, and the enthusiasm she felt when the concept of human security was developed. She emphasized that human security ushered in a shift towards a people-cantered approach, underlining the importance of a comprehensive view that includes both the state and ordinary citizens. She highlighted the role of parliamentarians and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in empowering people's voices and using parliamentary diplomacy to foster more peaceful societies. Ms. Brenner stated that the IPU has been tasked with developing tools for MPs to engage in dialogue for peace.

She recalled that the purpose of the webinar was not only to exchange ideas and discuss issues, but also to learn from participants' rich experiences. She pointed out that human security is not an abstract concept, but something that most of the participants work with in their daily political life.

Ms. Mehrnaz Mostafavi, Chief of the Human Security Unit at the UN Trust Fund for Human Security

In the webinar, Ms. Mostafavi underscored the significance of human security as an integral framework for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building stable, resilient societies. She highlighted the multitude of threats plaguing societies, from violence and conflict to the devastating effects of climate change, which all pose serious risks to human security. Ms. Mostafavi argued for the need to move beyond immediate crisis responses and instead focus on addressing the root causes of these risks.

Ms. Mostafavi elaborated on the concept of human security as a comprehensive, context-specific, prevention-oriented approach. She emphasized that this approach necessitates a holistic framework, one that integrates all stakeholders from governments and parliamentarians to civil society, to confront widespread and cross-cutting challenges. She stressed the importance of joint analysis, planning, and implementation among different sectors and entities to promote risk-informed and sustainable development.

Ms. Mostafavi further provided examples of successful implementation of the human security framework through programs supported by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security in countries like Turkmenistan, The Gambia, Senegal, and Cambodia. These cases demonstrated the efficacy of context-specific responses, multi-pronged policy approaches, and the incorporation of short, medium, and long-term strategies for sustainable peace and development.

She also discussed human security programs in the Pacific Islands and the East Caribbean, which highlighted the consideration of different levels of governance to address various risk factors and vulnerabilities. Ms. Mostafavi concluded by appreciating the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for organizing the webinar and reiterated her commitment to continued collaboration.

Mr. Thomas Reuter, Professor for Indonesian Studies (Anthropology), The University of Melbourne, member of the board of the World Academy of Arts and Science

Prof. Thomas Reuter provided an in-depth analysis of food security as a systemic feature influencing overall human security. Drawing from his experience in science and policymaking, he stressed that various components of food security including demand, supply, ecological, and distribution risks were interconnected. Mr. Reuter highlighted that increasing population growth and per capita consumption, particularly in developing countries, pose substantial demand risks. He also emphasized the supply risks presented by unsustainable agricultural practices which, while initially increasing food production, have led to environmental damage and have not prevented a renewed increase in global hunger since 2015.

He further discussed the significant environmental threats to food security, including water security risks and the adverse effects of global warming on agricultural yields. Particularly, he underscored the risks posed to China, India, and continental Southeast Asia, where 3 billion people are reliant on water flows from glaziers in the Himalayas that are rapidly shrinking.

The speaker then addressed distribution risks, noting how market volatility and manipulation, alongside the formation of cartels by major companies, contribute to the rising costs of food. He pointed out that these factors disproportionately affect poorer countries but also, increasingly, the working and middle classes in wealthier nations.

Finally, Prof. Reuter debated potential solutions to these issues. On one side, some argue for further industrialization and technological advancement in farming, while others propose a return to smaller-scale, community-based farming. He pointed out that smaller farmers currently feed two-thirds of the world's population on less than a quarter of the arable land and tend to produce healthier food. He concluded by advocating for a comprehensive reorientation to support small farmers and community-based systems, coupled with innovative, sustainable technologies.

Ms. Mamphela Ramphele, President of Club of Rome, author, South African activist

In the webinar, Ms. Mamphela Rumphele discussed the urgent need for a shift from current political and economic models that prioritize competition, short-term gains, and power dynamics, to more harmonious, sustainable and equitable systems that promote the common good and long-term survival of the planet and its inhabitants. She invoked a quote from Albert Einstein that emphasized the need to recognize and accept the maintenance of decent living conditions for all people as a universal obligation.

Ms. Rumphele highlighted the example of indigenous communities in Indonesia and Africa who, through their approach to life and nature, demonstrate a higher level of civilization than is commonly recognized. She criticized the market economies that are largely driven by short-term considerations, disregarding the nurturing of eco-systems and obligations to one another.

She further discussed the issues plaguing political decision-making processes, arguing that they are mainly driven by competitive and short-term mindsets. She called for a mindset change that emphasizes equitable access, sharing of resources, and contribution towards the common good. She also drew attention to the pressure faced by parliamentarians, who, instead of being accountable to their constituents, are beholden to their political parties and their pursuit of power.

Ms. Rumphele stressed the need for a change in culture and education to shift away from promoting competition to fostering collaboration and long-term thinking. She called for the reimagining of the global human security system and the UN, criticizing the current representation and power dynamics in the Security Council. Concluding her intervention, Ms. Rumphele encouraged humanity to embrace its interconnectedness and interdependence and to uphold its obligations to others across time and space. She proposed a future civilization that promotes global equity for a healthy planet.

Mr. Garry Jacobs, President and CEO of the World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS), Executive Chairman, Human Security for All

In the webinar, Mr. Garry Jacobs drew upon his experiences from South India, and the lessons from the Green Revolution, to stress the importance of viewing human security in an integrated, holistic manner. Highlighting the inadvertent population explosion due to improved medical care in the 1960s, he noted how a failure to anticipate this consequence led to a severe food shortage.

Mr. Jacobs emphasized the pitfalls of compartmentalized thinking in dealing with complex issues. The 'Green Revolution' in India, he recalled, was a highly integrated approach to a food shortage crisis, considering multiple aspects of food production, pricing, marketing, and research. It successfully doubled food grain production in 10 years, a feat that had previously taken 10,000 years.

However, he acknowledged that the approach overlooked environmental considerations, leading to long-term repercussions. He underscored how issues like food security, environmental security, water security are interconnected, and thus need to be approached in a comprehensive manner.

Referencing the 17 SDGs, he warned against the tendency to separate and specialize, and argued that human security necessitates viewing all dimensions together. He concluded by emphasizing that these dimensions converge at the individual human level, affirming our collective need for food, health, peace, economic opportunities, human rights, and good governance.

Discussion Section:

The discussion section was particularly rich, multiple members of Parliaments took the floor to reflect on the approach of Human Security and to share their respective experiences. Multiple experts and professionals also shared their thoughts on the complexity of the global context and raised different points on the application of Human Security to decision-making.

A parliamentarian from Argentina underscored the critical role parliaments play in promoting global peace, security, and human rights. She emphasized the need to incorporate a human rights and gender perspective in all policies, enhance transparency in public resource management, and address issues of weapons trafficking to ensure global peace and security.

The representative from Bahrain stressed the importance of food security, the right to life, and human rights, expressing concern that these rights remain unfulfilled in some societies. They called for parliamentarians to reconsider their roles in bettering humanity and emphasized making United Nations decisions compulsory to rejuvenate humanitarian work.

Despite being relatively peaceful and secure, the Gabonese Senator recognized the prevalence of global issues like violent conflict, natural disasters, climate change, pandemics, and economic recession. They advocated for a human-centric, proactive approach to these challenges, asserting this method as a pathway to achieving Sustainable Development Goals. The speaker underscored the financial reality for nations like Gabon that actively combat climate change, and reiterated Gabonese Parliament's commitment to applying seminar insights to their work.

Algeria's parliamentarian acknowledged the rapidly changing world marked by conflicts, natural disasters, poverty, and diseases. As Algeria prepared for its role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2024-2025, they reiterated their commitment to the UN Charter's values and to combating global challenges like terrorism and organized crime.

A parliamentarian from Nicaragua emphasized the nation's focus on its people and the development of a social model providing essential services like free healthcare and education. They celebrated the National Assembly's role in promoting public involvement and affirmed that the nation's production ensured food security for its citizens.

A former Parliamentarian from Burkina Faso raised a question regarding the application of Human Security during crises. Another speaker, an anthropologist from Egypt and trustee of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences, emphasized the need for practical solutions and evidence-based research in human security, suggesting the creation of a UN oversight committee to ensure worldwide adherence to a set of principles towards human security.

Another participant highlighted the necessity for collective introspection, acknowledging our collective contributions to today's global challenges like pandemics and climate change. They called for action, accountability, and transparency in human security matters, and criticized nations contributing to the spread of weapons and diseases. The speaker advocated for a justice-based world order, citing Sudan and Palestine as regions where transparency and accountability were particularly needed.

The panellists were given the floor to conclude the webinar.

Ms. Mehrnaz Mostafavi underscored the interconnected nature of state and human security, advocating for a shift in focus towards the lived realities of people. She highlighted the essential role parliamentarians play in informing policy decisions due to their close contact with constituents. Ms. Mostafavi advocated for

an approach to human security that addresses various insecurities, such as food, health, and environmental security, prioritized by people through consultative and transparent processes. She concluded by highlighting that Human security encourages an approach that considers the specific context to address multiple insecurities, with short, medium, and long-term strategies. However, the Human Security approach recognizes that not all insecurities can be tackled simultaneously. Instead, it advocates for addressing those insecurities that are prioritized by the people, in a consultative and highly transparent manner.

Mr. Anders Wijkman agreed that while politicians should stay in touch with public opinion in a democracy, they should also lead and set examples, as public opinion might not always reflect the reality. Mr. Wijkman proposed systemic change, particularly in terms of human security, which requires a comprehensive government approach. This approach involves integrating knowledge from all governmental sectors and engaging experts to understand the far-reaching impacts of decisions in the parliamentary process.

Ms. Mamphela Rumphele stressed the need to rethink governance and parliamentary operations, suggesting this could only be achieved by enhancing our understanding of humanity and acknowledging our interconnected responsibilities to present and future generations. Given the urgency of the current global crises, Rumphele argued a transformative approach to human security was necessary.

Mr. Garry Jacobs emphasized that human security is about empowerment, and societal development is driven by informed, motivated, and educated individuals given the opportunities to act positively. Mr. Jacobs highlighted the success of the Green Revolution as an example, attributed to farmers provided with the right environment and resources. He also called for an educational system that prepares young people to promote human security globally and acknowledged parliamentarians' role in disseminating information, ideas, and examples to promote mutual learning.