

"Global Action on Peace, Sustainability, and Prosperity"

Session: "We Want Peace: How Can We Promote and Build Peace in Our World?"

Initiatives to Promote Global Peace and Human Security

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Navigating the Global Transition in Turbulent Times

Humanity is in the midst of a revolutionary social transition. The pace, reach, and magnitude of change is greater than at any previous time in history. The people and cultures of the world are coming into closer contact and relationship than ever before – physically, economically, politically, socially and culturally. The problems confronting every society today are expressions of the rising friction and tension between the reactionary response of a receding past to a fast approaching, uncertain future. They are products of the resistance of outdated ideas, beliefs, institutions and centers of power to the fundamental shift in ideas, identity, values and social organization essential for a successful passage to a sustainable global society.

Prevailing ideas, social institutions, values and cultural attitudes are unable to keep pace with the unprecedented rates of technological advancement and global human interaction. The competitive self-striving of special interest groups has not yet conceded the self-evident need for interdependence and global cooperation of all. The bipolar system that dominated international relations has come to an end and a new multipolar world order that gives more equal and equitable voice to its members is striving to emerge in which all nations will have a say, and rule of law will dominate over the threat and use of violence.

At a time of unprecedented advances in science, technology, economic power, education and human rights, humanity is experiencing unprecedented levels of uncertainty and insecurity regarding our individual and collective future. Adjustment to evolutionary changes of this magnitude have previously occurred piecemeal, in one place at a time, over centuries. The slow, unconscious social change has often been accompanied by zigzag back and forth movements and long periods of warfare and destruction. But the magnitude of the challenges and threats we face today compels us to seek the knowledge, will, strategies, and leadership required for a more conscious, rapid and peaceful transformation of all the world's people simultaneously. Such an endeavor is unprecedented in human history.

Up until now collective attempts to address the pressures generated by war, economic inequality and environmental destruction have focused primarily on changes in strategy and policy and have relied primarily on the power of economics and technology to solve our problems. The results obtained by this approach are insufficient. Deeper, more fundamental changes are needed at all levels and in all sectors of global society. The objective materialistic views of modern science that have directed social progress during the past century must be replaced by transdisciplinary and integral perspectives, incorporating the subjective dimension of knowledge based on universal human values.

Global society lives in fractured, turbulent times. It has achieved unprecedented levels of life expectancy, technological advancement, economic well-being, and education. Yet, the prevailing perception and attitude is one of increasing anxiety and insecurity. There is a growing awareness that we are on the pathway to a multidimensional polycrisis and lack the ideas, leadership, institutions and authority to successfully address its root causes.

Humanity has achieved unprecedented levels of life expectancy, technological advancement, economic well-being, and education. The manifestations of the swelling crisis are myriad: COVID-19 pandemic, rising levels of inequality, polarization of society and threats to democracy, wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, reversion to competitive nationalism and the nuclear arms race that characterized the Cold War period, the emergence and potential misuse of generative AI, accelerative environmental degradation, and the existential risk of climate change.

New Paradigm in Security

Business as usual is no longer feasible. A radical change in thinking and values is required. This change should be predicated on a shift in the values we seek, the principles on which our political, economic, and social systems are based, and the institutions and strategies through which we seek to promote security and well-being.

The rising sense of insecurity is not merely the result of the crises referred to above. It is also the cause. When people feel insecure, they look for excuses and scapegoats, and cast blame on external factors. They resort to failed ideas and attitudes discredited in the past and now embraced in the quest for a remedy. Today humanity is confronting multiple sources of rising insecurity. Persistent poverty, growing food shortages, economic inequality, and job insecurity; rising levels of political insecurity, social polarization, weakening of democracies, and a loss of trust in political institutions; rapid technological changes causing economic and social disruptions; environmental degradation and climate change are all gathering steam at the same time. All of these sources of insecurity are aggravated by underlying drivers for rising levels of war and conflict.

Human Security as the Foundation for Peace and Sustainable Development

Peace is the essential foundation for security and human security is the essential foundation for lasting peace. Such a radical change usually occurs only with the passage of many generations. An atmosphere of peace and stability are preconditions for advancing human security and sustainable development, and for addressing fundamental root causes of the challenges confronting humanity. One of the most essential changes needed today is a shift from the concept of competitive national security based on military preparedness to ensuring human security for all individuals on earth based on sustainable development for all life on the planet. Without peace there can be no real security for people. Without human security there can be no firm foundation for a secure peace. A global system based on an integrated conception of security is needed that unites the common security of nation states with the human security of people and communities worldwide.

Human security embraces the same objectives as the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals unanimously adopted by 193 nations in 2015 under Agenda 2030. The only difference is that the SDGs approach the issues from the perspective of nation states and international organizations, in the language of scientists and diplomats. Progress on implementation of the SDGs has fallen far short of commitments and expectations because they have never been fully understood and embraced by the masses of humanity. Human security personalizes these

objectives by addressing them from the perspective of their relevance to every individual on earth. It is a message that resonates with the needs and aspirations of people everywhere.

The SDGs define 17 important goals for the collective survival and progress of humanity. These goals add up to something far greater than the sum of their parts. Taken together and viewed as aspects of a greater whole, they constitute the central pillars of the intrinsic concept we call human security. For the fulfilment of human life, it is not enough that we make progress on some of these goals. To be fully secure, it is essential that we achieve them all. It does not matter whether a person lacks food, water, employment, clean air, freedom and equality, peace and dignity, safety, or good health. All are essential for the security and well-being of all of us. Some people may lack only food, or freedom or access to health care. But regardless of which one is missing, they cannot feel fully secure.

The human security approach was first advocated by the United Nations in 1994 and has since been applied in hundreds of programs around the world. It defined the concept in terms of seven dimensions of security – food, health, economic, political, environmental, community and individual. Recently technology has been incorporated as the eighth dimension. All these dimensions are interrelated and interdependent. Human security embodies the sense of the integrality of all these dimensions. Without freedom from fear and want we cannot feel secure and live in dignity.

HS4A

Two years ago, the pressing need to address security in a manner intelligible to all humanity prompted the World Academy of Art & Science to collaborate with the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security to launch a global campaign Human Security for All (HS4A)¹. HS4A calls for adoption of the human security approach at the global level as a comprehensive, integrated strategy to meet global challenges by addressing both the objective and subjective factors required for their resolution. It broadens the concept of security by placing the security of everyone at the center. It calls for a global campaign to generate awareness and elicit active support and participation from all major sectors and sections of global society in an unprecedented effort to release and mobilize the untapped energies and capacities of humanity in pursuit of human security for all.

Experience over the past two years confirms that the message of human security for all resonates and is embraced by a wide range of stakeholders including business and technology leaders, parliamentarians, inter-faith groups, environmentalists, scientific academies, research institutes, universities, civil society organizations, the media, youth and the general public.

Imperative Peace Offensive

Today's youth want peace more than anything else. Rising levels of conflict undermine all their hopes and aspirations. Peace is imperative. As part of HS4A, WAAS has proposed a global initiative designed to mobilize the weight and influence of the NGO community to engage all stakeholders in global society in a systematic initiative to reduce all forms of war, conflict and threats to human security, major and minor, by a global peace offensive based on reciprocal, incremental, unilateral initiatives to de-escalate conflicts.²

¹ Human Security For All Campaign website - <https://humansecurity.world/>

² Donato Kiniger-Passigli, "Time for a Peace Offensive", *Cadmus* 5, no. 3 part 2 (2024), 6-14.
<https://cadmusjournal.org/article/volume-5-issue-3-p2/time-peace-offensive>

The concept of a "Peace Offensive," is grounded in the philosophy of mutual concessions and strategic initiatives and offers a viable path forward in resolving protracted crises. It is founded on the premise that there is scope for positive progress between parties to conflict when they recognize the legitimacy of reciprocal initiatives for compromise. It calls for unilateral, symbolic gestures to encourage reciprocal actions in response. It aims to transform adversarial dynamics into collaborative relationships, even amidst the most entrenched conflicts. It seeks to demonstrate how unilateral concessions can serve as catalysts for meaningful dialogue and peacebuilding.

The current geopolitical landscape underscores the urgency of adopting a peace offensive. The humanitarian crises in regions like Gaza, Syria, and Yemen highlight the destructive consequences of sustained warfare and the necessity for immediate and substantial peace efforts. The protracted war in Ukraine presents multidimensional challenges that demand innovative solutions beyond military engagements, including potential diplomatic gestures such as multiparty security guarantees, demilitarization and humanitarian cooperation.

A peace offensive advocates for phased, publicized initiatives that reduce distrust and promote cooperative engagement. Implementing unilateral concessions in the initial stages and other practical steps can build confidence and establish a foundation for sustained peace negotiations. The time has come for a coordinated, global peace offensive that transcends traditional conflict management and embraces comprehensive, inclusive efforts to transform crises into opportunities for enduring peace. Such an offensive, underpinned by strategic unilateral actions and a commitment to building trust, can break the cycle of violence and pave the way for a more stable and cooperative international order.