



Strengthening Multilateral Cooperation: The United Nations at 70

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Presentation PANEL 2: EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT and SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Speaking notes

Questions to address:

1. How can we strengthen the UN
2. How can EqD and SP be more mutually reinforcing
3. How should Canada provide leadership/initiatives

I will talk first about what equitable development and sustainable peace means to me, then I will touch on the big agenda items facing the UN this year. Every five, ten or fifteen years, there are major attempts to improve how we address global problems through the UN. Anyone who says the UN is in need of reform has no idea of what is going on. Yes, key reforms are still needed, but I know of no organization which has gone through what will be going on over the next three months. As was pointed out yesterday, this is a major year for the UN. The United Nations at 70 has come a long way and is still committed to maintaining the ideals outlined in the Charter affirmation of We the Peoples.

PART ONE: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT

What do we mean by equitable development?

(DICTIONARY: fair, just, even-handed, impartial, unbiased, unprejudiced, egalitarian)

It has become fashionable to question the need for aid in the classic sense as the inter-governmental transfer of resources to developing countries, particularly the poorest. With more emphasis on the

private sector as “the engine of growth”, public perceptions of aid and whether there is the need for strong development cooperation programmes are confused if you read the papers and some of the recent statements from prominent figures, including our own government.

However, it is important to remember that close to half a billion people live in countries for which Official Development Assistance remains the largest single source of international development finance. Foreign Direct Investment and remittances are seen as competitors, even touted as replacements, but much FDI flows back out in repatriated profits and remittances go largely to a small list of countries, four of the top ten being in Europe.

There is now a greater focus on issues of equality, both in developed and developing countries. Even in Canada the salary gap is hundreds of times what it was in the fifties and sixties, and books such as Chrystia Freeland’s book *The Plutocrats: The Rise of the Super-Rich and the fall of Everyone Else*, have highlighted the hollowing out of the working class and the manufacturing sector, while the financial sector makes more and more money on less and less production. The greed of the plutocratic class and the right wing governments which support it means that it has become harder and harder to increase or even maintain levels of aid to the developing world.

We are now more aware that investment in equality is not only a good idea for people, it is good for societies at home and abroad. My favourite book, *The Spirit Level*, (Wilkinson and Pickett) proves pretty conclusively that more equal societies score higher on almost every social and economic indicator except greed. Flattening out income levels and ensuring safety nets along with social and economic investments to bring everyone into the game, actually does all the things the hard right wing want to achieve with cuts to social investments and cuts to workers rights. Equal societies are more productive, have smaller governments, are more inclusive for women and minorities, have lower crime, with fewer homicides and drug problems, so a lower prison population, less mental illness, fewer teenage births, higher life expectancy, lower maternal mortality, less obesity and better levels of health generally, more social mobility and surprise - higher levels of trust between governments and the population. And somehow, given higher productivity and lower expenses for health care and massive prisons, taxes can be lower. The only losers are those who make money in an unregulated environment by, for example, increasing drug costs by 2000% for their own profit.

To my mind, the equity **within** societies is a sufficient justification for and on the same level as the argument for equity **among** nations. Investment in the poorest, at the global level, must be an extension of our philosophy of equity among our neighbours. Anthony Atkinson, in his recent

publication *INEQUALITY* (thanks Roy) gives a detailed analysis of how to achieve equality within western societies, and then makes the case for ODA to increase to a minimum of 1% of GNI on both ethical and political grounds. Equitable societies must behave equitably in their global relations, to achieve “a global minimum of basic human rights, including health care and primary education”. In his view this redistribution of resources is also motivated by the link between equitable development and a safer world. (Which will bring me to the issue of sustainable peace.)

I should add that while both resources and pro-poor policies are key, we still have a long way to go to meet our rhetoric on better partnerships. The international discussion is all on the importance of working with developing country partners and organizations to ensure that such policies and investments are in support of local priorities and are aimed not only at traditional development investment sectors of agriculture, education and health, but are also focussed on supporting governance and human rights. However, many donor countries, including our own, are better at the rhetoric than the practice. This will have serious implications for the success of the major agendas now facing the United Nations. Fragile states (and also failed states, which are not the same thing) present particular problems.

What do we mean by sustainable peace

(Dictionary - ability to endure, maintain, be upheld)

The UN Charter refers to “saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and there are those who credit it for averting World War III, given the role Secretary General U Thant played behind the scenes during the Cuban crisis (Doug Roche, *The United Nations in the 21st Century*).

But sustainable peace remains an elusive goal in many parts of the world, despite the fact that we are learning more and more about the conflict development link. The 2003 World Bank Report on *Breaking the Conflict Trap* was one of the earliest to state that “*if a country is in economic decline, is dependent on primary commodities, and has a low per capita income and **that income is unequally distributed**, it is at high risk of civil war*”. These conditions create a pool of disaffected young men, who can be easily recruited (this is less true for young women who don’t succumb - they are more likely too busy on keeping the family and community going). The state is usually weak, non democratic and not competent to establish any reasonable governance. Even where disputes evolve along ethnic or religious lines they are more likely to turn violent where incomes are low and declining or where political agendas are at stake.

A number of donors, most notably the UK and the Nordics, have developed specific policies and programmes aimed at investing in post conflict or in at-risk societies. However, there is not sufficient attention being paid to these issues with the result that many situations around the world are left to simmer and can eventually explode. The Sahel is a notable example, where decades of underfunding, low levels of aid, environmental degradation, poor governance and lack of international support have resulted in the upsurge of ethnic conflict and now religious terrorism, from the CAR, through Burkina Faso, Northern Nigeria, Niger, Mali. Here, as in Syria, the Western response is the military one. We now have peacekeeping missions in CAR and Mali, even though we saw this coming years ago. The Securitization of Aid is a critical development which is superseding negotiated solutions and is preventing us from investing in root causes. Up front investment in supporting fragile situations costs money. Unfortunately, the world has still not realized that NOT doing this will cost us more. It is a question of PAY NOW OR PAY MORE LATER.

For me the conclusion has always been that development investment in making societies more sustainable economically and socially, more inclusive of women and civil society, and better governed with respect for human rights, with an emphasis on reconciliation and building a common vision of society, are the keys to preventing conflict. Approaches along these lines should be invoked at all stages, whether prevention, mediation, peacekeeping, or post conflict recovery and longer term sustainable development.

However, we have learnt that optimistic projections of the “liberal peace” need to be tempered with a long term approach to fostering change and supporting people coming out of conflict. The knowledge that traditional democracies were less likely to go to war, and unlikely to use violence to solve their internal conflicts gave rise to the speedy process of peace agreements, followed by elections and the withdrawal of the international community. This too often resulted in relapse into conflict, as the peace and the fragile democracy was far from sustainable.

This was part of the reasoning behind the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, which in ten years of operation has unfortunately been unable or unwilling to raise the resources to support post conflict investments in the countries on its agenda.

We are now faced with a global situation where violent conflicts are on the rise and are in fact becoming even more complex. After almost two post cold war decades which saw gradual reductions in conflicts world wide, this is indeed tragic. The objective of sustainable peace on a global level seems unattainable, but we must not be too pessimistic. Sustainable peace has been achieved (and holding) in

a number of areas, notable West Africa, where Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote D'Ivoire have come out of complex wars, and where Guinea Conakry did NOT go to war. Timor Leste is in good shape, as is Rwanda, although Burundi is fragile due to the President's insistence on an illegal third term. And the Balkans are quiet, leaving aside the refugee crisis, although serious problems of accountability, particularly for women victims of sexual violence still remain.

PART TWO: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE UN

If you look at the international agenda for the next three months, you would certainly say we live in interesting times. Let me refer to Charles Dickens:

(I apologize if you heard me do that on Wednesday)

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair"

I could say we are in **the spring of hope**, as we are faced with the opportunity to make progress on several ambitious agendas. All of them are inter-linked and if we are able to achieve a large part of these agendas, we would have reason to celebrate and say we are in **the best of times**

Some of us are a little more pessimistic and are fearing a **winter of despair**. Given the current climate, and after what can only be described as the failure of the Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa this summer, there is a very real risk that we will instead be in **the worst of times**.

The current agenda in the UN includes the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the adoption of the Report on the Future of Peace Operations and the response to the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. In addition, there will be an important review by the Security Council on SCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security later in the term and there is the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in November/December. And as pointed out we have just had the Report on the Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance. So now we have Equitable Development, Sustainable Peace and Just Governance.

The Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs, are now being adopted. They cover 17 broad areas each with myriad recommendations and indicators, from addressing poverty both domestic and international, gender equality, hunger, water, health, education, cities, climate change, etc. Their most differentiating characteristic from the MDGs is that they are not goals for development cooperation from the North to the South, but are universal in nature and require all countries to adopt measures for

their own sustainable development as well as joining in partnership to help poorer countries attain their goals. This is a major difference and one which is very far sighted and ambitious.

Sarah Cliffe of the NYU's Centre for International Cooperation says that the SDGs are the right medicine for an insecure world by "by giving an economic, social and civic stake to young people", that "the goals cover inequality, corruption, peace and access to justice" and adding "Development alone is not the answer to global insecurity, but it is an indispensable part of the puzzle."

The Report on the Future of Peace Operations, i.e. peacekeeping, aims to make peacekeeping more flexible and responsive, more field oriented, more linked to political processes and more cognizant of the need for prevention. There are likely to be internal shuffles as well as an enlargement of HQ capability which is very modest compared to national military capabilities, and it will revive age old requests for rapid response to be made available in member states. While there is a link to the concept of sustainable peace as emphasized in the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, it is a regretted that the two exercises were not more closely coordinated.

The Peacebuilding Review also makes far reaching recommendations and challenges member states to see sustaining peace as the core task set for the UN by its Charter, calling for increased resources, capacities and a review of the organizational hierarchy as the peace building architecture has found itself in a bit of a backwater. Unusually, and welcome, it calls for a percentage of assessed funds to be made available for peace building. This recognizes that the voluntary funding implicit in the PBC's mandate for mobilizing resources has failed to materialize. It will also require fundamental changes in how the main UN organs carry out their business in pursuit of peace.

The Review of SCR 1325 will be preceded by a Global Study on the implementation to date of the resolution, so it remains to be seen what will be proposed for the High Level Review in October. Since the resolution was passed in 2000, there have been six additional resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and the Security Council has stressed that women's perspectives will continue to be under-represented in conflict prevention, resolution, protection and peacebuilding without a significant shift in how the resolution is implemented. Very few peace mediators and negotiators are women and very few peace agreements in the last two decades have even referred to women's roles in sustaining peace.

We are all familiar with the challenges facing the Climate Change negotiations to take place in Paris in November. This meeting will encompass the Parties to the UN Framework Convention as well as the meeting of members of the Kyoto Protocol, sadly Canada not among them. The ambitious goal is to achieve a **legally binding universal agreement** on climate from ALL nations.

PART THREE: WHAT IS MISSING?

Taken together this is an enormously ambitious agenda. Do we believe that the General Assembly and the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme can absorb all these proposed changes? Do we believe that member states will agree to provide the authorities and the resources to effect these changes?

I am conscious that living through the current environment in Canada it is easy to become a pessimist and it is important to remember that there are member states of the UN which are prepared to carry forward some, if not all, of these critical issues. (I think we should re-convene in December to review the resolutions which will be passed before Christmas.)

Obviously the failure of the Financing for Development Conference in July is a bad omen but there will be other opportunities. Where is the political will (or the political won't as someone said)? For Canada it will mean hopefully a new government which will re-think the current stance against the universality of the SDGs and which will be open to supporting peacekeeping and engaging on the environment. On increased funding from Canada, the signs are not good. The Conservatives will not be increasing ODA volumes, the Liberals have yet to commit on ODA and the NDP have reneged on an earlier promise to work towards 0.7%. For the immediate future, Canadians will have to depend on others to carry the burden.