



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

## Virtual Symposium: A New Generation of Human Security

Dates: 8-11 June 2021

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### Concept Note

#### Background

The world is facing an inflection point in the development landscape. Apart from causing more than 2.5 million direct deaths over the past year, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a sharp reversal in human development after decades of progress. Insecurities have touched nearly every person in the world.

In this environment, Human Security appears as a top priority of national and international policy making. The concept was pioneered by the *Human Development Report* in 1994, enriched by the Ogata-Sen Commission in 2001-2003 (and the *Human Security Now Report* in 2003), and mainstreamed by the GA resolution 66/290 in 2012, stating that “human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of people”.

In retrospective, the visionary idea of human security came in a period of relative stability and progress. Today, the world needs a new generation of Human Security to navigate unprecedented transformations. This is a world that faces new interconnected challenges from natural and social systems. With ‘business as usual’, human pressures on the planet will likely exacerbate global warming, natural disasters, and the loss of biodiversity, which can lead to a new set of risks so far unknown to humanity. Societies under pressure may tolerate inequalities, fuelling political polarization as well as multiple forms of violent conflict.

Not all of this is new, and neither is it all caused by Covid-19. Although the global economy was still expanding and international conflicts were at a historic low before the onset of the pandemic, hunger was on the rise and so were the human and economic costs of natural disasters. People were on the streets protesting inequality, climate change, and discrimination. The underlying drivers behind these trends are structural, and they are likely to intensify as the pandemic takes its course.

Amidst this context of increased structural challenges that constitute existential risks for humanity, it is indispensable to rapidly endow people around the world with new tools to advance human development and human security.

The Human Development Report Office is organizing a *Symposium on the New Generation of Human Security* to inform the preparation of a Special Report that will push the analytical frontier on human security with a forward-looking lens, and suggest policy options for a bold systemic response to the risks that societies are facing around the globe.



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The specific issues to be covered during the Symposium include those that have come to light or intensified after the publication of the *Human Security Now* Report in 2003, and especially those that are expected to persist beyond the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For example,

- Structural changes to human security threats: threats that have emerged on the one hand from the Anthropocene challenges and on the other hand from the digital age
- Threats to human security: violent conflicts and crime, specifically a new form of violent conflicts with an increased number of civilian casualties, as well as organized crime and related citizen insecurity.
- Human insecurity as a threat to human development, including topics such as economic security, health, domestic violence, dignity, multidimensional inequalities, discrimination, and polarization.
- The way forward: new aspirations and new responses during challenging times, focussed on revisiting the concept of human security and identifying potential policy responses to people's aspirations in the 21st century.

Discussions will cover conceptual and normative issues, including the role of dignity and human rights, and measurements. There will be a strong focus on policy-making, given that the overall purpose of the Symposium is to gather ideas about how to create a setting of human security in which people all over the world can develop their full potential without leaving anyone behind.