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TOWARDS AN AGENDA FOR HUMAN SECURITY

Human security offers a new angle of vision and a broad template for evaluating policies. It also yields a concrete set of foreign policy initiatives. Focusing systematically on the safety of people highlights the need for more targeted attention to key issues that are not yet adequately addressed by the international community. Current examples of such gaps include the unchecked proliferation of small arms and the inadequate protection of children in circumstances of armed conflict.

Human security is enhanced by reducing people's vulnerability and by preventing the conditions which make them vulnerable in the first place. Assisting people in highly insecure situations, particularly in the midst of violent conflict, is a central objective of the human security agenda. Refugees have long been the focus of international attention. The same focus on vulnerability highlights the immediate needs of the internally displaced, and demobilized combatants. At the same time, a human security agenda must go beyond humanitarian action, by addressing the sources of people's insecurity. Building human security, therefore, requires both short term humanitarian action and longer term strategies for building peace and promoting sustainable development.

Two fundamental strategies for enhancing human security are strengthening legal norms and building the capacity to enforce them. New standards are needed in areas such as restricting the illegal trafficking in small arms, banning the use and recruitment of children as soldiers, prohibiting exploitative child labour, providing greater protection for the internally displaced, and ensuring the applicability of legal standards to non-state actors and to violence below the threshold of armed conflict.