There is little point in defining new norms and rights, however, if societies have no capacity to enforce existing norms or to protect already recognized rights. For this reason, improving democratic governance within states is a central strategy for advancing human security. So is strengthening the capacity of international organizations, in particular the United Nations, to deliver on their agreed mandates. Yet the range of protection tasks assigned to UN mandated operations is increasing, at the same time as the UN's capacity to organize and fund such operations is dwindling.

Building institutional capacity without strengthening respect for norms would undermine a human-centred standard of security. Strengthening norms without building the capacity to protect them only invites disillusionment with the possibility of constraining power by the rule of law. Both are essential strategies if we are to move towards a more humane world.