



PROMOTING PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On December 10th, Asia Culture House and the United Nations in Afghanistan held a webinar with human rights activists to consult on progress in achieving the sustainable development goal 16. Panelists discussed the future and what it contains, what we need to do now to create peaceful, inclusive, and just societies, effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, and what role the United Nations can play.

The webinar coincided with International Human Rights Day. It was part of a series of global consultations that the United Nations has launched for its 75th anniversary. These consultations will continue until the end of 2020.

We thank the following distinguished panelists for their participation in the webinar and their unique insights:

1. Sana Talwasa, Senior Analyst—European affairs and Lecturer at the Herat University Law School,
2. Fatema Ahmadi, Peace Process Program Officer, USIP,
3. Yama Asrar, WASH Coordinator, Norwegian Church Aid,
4. Qasem Qasem, Lecturer, Gharjistan University, and international asylum law researcher,
5. Basir Seerat, Director, Asian Kultur Huset,
6. Ashraf Bakhteyari, Lecturer, Gawharshad University and Director, Afghanistan Forensic Science Organization,
7. Mohammad Zia Shefaie, Lecturer, Kateb University.

The link to the video can be found [here](#). The following is a summary of this discussion:

PRIORITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO RECOVER FROM THE EPIDEMIC

We need to know how countries can share the lessons they've learned from this pandemic in three areas; the services they've provided, their political actions/inactions, and financial policies in response to the pandemic.

We also need to strengthen the healthcare system and multilateralism to deal with the loss from this pandemic.

The UN and other countries could learn from Sweden's example in steadily changing laws and informing the public to better respond to the pandemic. We must be aware of efforts to sideline the fight on the Covid-19 pandemic.



The majority of the projects that are created go wasted because of a lack of information. The UN should raise awareness and advocate.

We also need to focus on the economy, small-medium enterprises, and the poor. We need to create an investment climate in Afghanistan. While we do have wealth and savings, we don't have incentives and an empowering investment environment. The lack of a legal ground for partnerships/stakeholders in Afghanistan is another problem that needs to be addressed.

SDGs are inter-related. We must find out the causal effect and how these goals impact each other. It is vital for the international community and the academia to understand the causal relationship among the SDGs to prioritize programs.

SITUATION IN 2045

If Afghanistan can eliminate political uncertainty and war and use the rise of Chinese and Indian economic growth as an opportunity, the living situation in Afghanistan will improve. Even though the peace negotiations have not succeeded, we anticipate that Afghanistan won't be unstable. To make sure this happens, Pakistan needs to support Afghanistan honestly. Otherwise, they will also be insecure.

We will have a better world:

- if we improve the UN structure and its monitoring of countries,
- if we think of ourselves as part of the process, governments and communities work closely together, consume responsibly, behave responsibly,
- if SDGs are adopted as visions by CSOs and institutions,
- if environmental degradation is prevented.

VISION OF 2045, WHEN THE UN WILL TURN 100

Participants wanted economic equity, a functioning and well-equipped health system, a developed, just, and fair society with a healthier environment, where children have access to education, safe drinking water, and other facilities.

CHALLENGES

Panelists believed that war, terrorism, racism, poverty, epidemics, environmental degradation, and weak international cooperation challenge societies and the United Nations.



ROLE FOR GLOBAL COOPERATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS IN MANAGING THESE CHALLENGES

Covid-19 helped us know that we have shared vulnerabilities. This proves that without cooperation, we cannot overcome the challenges we face nationally and globally. Global issues of war, terrorism, and epidemics can only be resolved by global strategies that the United Nations can spearhead. We call upon the United Nations to facilitate international cooperation.

The UN must help the states better understand their weaknesses. Coordination in SDG implementation is weak among the government and CSOs. Implementing partners do not have access to rural areas at all. Not only community members but also government bodies are unaware of the SDGs. We must also boost public awareness of the programs.

The solution is focusing on SDG 17, shared efforts. Societies should assume ownership, as the UN alone can't be effective. We must ask ourselves how much we understand the goals, the interplay among the goals, and whether we encourage discourse about the goals. CSOs, institutions, communities, and governments should collectively work. We need to create an inter-sectoral dialogue. We can look up to the sustainable development solutions network created by professor Jeffrey Sachs as an example.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UN GENERAL SECRETARY:

The following were recommendations to the United Nations Secretary-General:

- The UN declaration should be updated to facilitate cooperation and enhance trust. Countries can better cooperate with the UN if the relationship is well-defined, and governments have space and roles. The declaration should deal with new notions such as the globalization of the economic, political, and environmental issues. Further, human rights documents should be amended, and new required human rights documents should be developed to serve as a foundation for global relationships and facilitate cooperation.
- Challenge their system and working mechanisms.
- Since we are dealing with new issues every day, the United Nations must adopt new strategies. The UN should call on experts to discuss new phenomenon/challenges we face and adopt strategies to resolve them. The entity still has time and global support and should create international trust, and adopt programs/strategies.
- The UN structure has problems; the US enjoys more power in the security council. We must think of ways to make the entity fairer. Third world countries shouldn't be seen merely as countries that deal with social challenges but should have a meaningful role in the UN.