

Action Steps for Common Security

Address by Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.

Holy See Mission to the UN Panel:

“Seeking Urgently Needed Effective Solutions”

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Still basking in the aura of Pope Francis’s visit to the United Nations, we are challenged in this panel to identify effective solutions to the problems he pointed to that hold back humanity from achieving the human security agenda. It is indeed a wide agenda and I cannot do justice to it all. Although I have had the honour of being an adviser to the Holy See delegation to the UN for many years, I am here expressing my own views.

The essence of Pope Francis’s social teaching is the intrinsic value of every person. The United Nations’s programs are also centered on the inherent human dignity of every person. Both the Pope and the UN seek an agenda of peace centered on the human rights of all. This is a common security agenda and, if we achieve it, human civilization will have been elevated as never before.

Although Pope Francis is widely regarded as a sort of “singular sensation” (after all, not many popes get on the cover of *People* magazine), his teaching about the need to honour every person’s human dignity in peace, freedom and respect is not new. Nor is he a lone churchman.

Pope Francis stands on a strong base of Catholic social teaching dating back to the 1891 publication of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which dealt with the mutual duties between labour and capital. Pope John XXIII, in his 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, addressed to all humanity, set out a panoramic vision of peace, embracing economic and social development, the abolition of nuclear weapons, the reform of the UN, and vigorous adaptation of the principles of truth, justice, and sincere cooperation. The Church's calls for peace with sustainable development were carried forward into the Second Vatican Council, which declared: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, those too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."

The very words -- "Human beings are at the centre of concerns" -- stated in the first principle of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992 and repeated often thereafter in U.N. documents reveal how the political structures are gradually being imbued with a recognition of the dignity of the human being. Pope Francis has now projected his vision for humanity onto the world stage and in so doing has contributed significantly to raising the new global conscience.

Both the Pope and the UN stand for common security, which can be expressed thusly: All people, not only states, have a right to a secure existence, and all states have an obligation to protect those rights. Thus, the primary goals of global security policy should be to prevent conflict and war and to maintain the integrity of the planet's life-support systems by eliminating the economic, social, environmental, political and military conditions that generate threats to the security of people and the planet, and

by anticipating and managing crises before they escalate into armed conflict.
(*Commission on Global Governance*)

Pope Francis has aligned himself with the UN Charter and appealed for it to be used “as an obligatory reference point of justice.” When the leaders of the world assembled at the U.N. in 2005 to commemorate the organization’s 60th anniversary, they issued a declaration showing how the Charter has inspired a new global conscience. They pledged to work together for a collective security system based on development, peace, security, and human rights. Of course, actually doing all this would require another step forward in political leadership. But the fact that the leaders were able even to agree that sustainable development and human rights are integral parts of the quest for security is a remarkable testimony to human advancement. How to integrate these ideals into the messy business of state sovereignty remains a challenge.

Applying these thoughts directly to our discussion today, I offer five steps – certainly not an exhaustive list -- the international community should take to organize itself in an inter-locking way to build the conditions for peace.

1. A Permanent UN Peacekeeping Force. Establishing a permanent UN peacekeeping force for quick deployment in emergency situations is hardly a new idea, since it was first proposed in the UN formational meetings and again by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 *Agenda for Peace*. The efficacy of UN peacekeeping has been proven through the years, and was highlighted last week when a summit of 50 countries involved in peacekeeping operations pledged to strengthen existing capabilities. But they did not go far enough in planning for the future.

Peacekeeping has become a critical element of a broader international peace and security architecture. The resources spent by the international community on UN peacekeeping are but a small fraction of global defence spending. Unfortunately, peacekeeping is done on an ad hoc basis. It often takes months, if not years, to assemble a force to respond to new aggression somewhere. A permanent, highly-trained rapid reaction force on stand-by basis is required for immediate deployment upon authorization by the Security Council. A UN emergency peace service (an international “911”) ought to be established to protect civilians and prevent regional conflicts from spreading into wars.

2. Institutionalize Responsibility to Protect. The responsibility of the international community to protect civilians from atrocities is starting to be better understood. Though still early, the Responsibility to Protect doctrine has a checkered track record. It worked reasonably well in Mali, the results are uncertain in the Great Lakes region of Africa, and it was mis-used in Libya. It should have been used in Syria and it is scandalous that the major political leaders could not come to an agreement. The international community must develop norms that can find widespread agreement in stopping human slaughters, and governments must put more resources into the prevention of such evils. The criteria for the use of the Responsibility to Protect need to be sharpened. While the principle of protecting people is firmly and globally established, the practice needs urgent implementation.

3. Nuclear Weapons Convention. It defies logic that the world has global treaties banning chemical and biological weapons but none banning nuclear weapons. With the nuclear powers modernizing their nuclear arsenals despite giving lip service to nuclear disarmament, we face permanency in nuclear weapons unless a Nuclear Weapons Convention or a framework of

legal instruments outlaw the possession as well as use of these instruments of evil.

Pope Francis made his view crystal clear when he spoke to the General Assembly: “There is urgent need to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, in full application of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons.” The Pope had previously backed the new humanitarian movement to rid the world of nuclear weapons when he sent a message to an international conference in Vienna stripping away any lingering moral acceptance of the military doctrine of nuclear deterrence: “Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence.” He called for a world-wide dialogue, including both the nuclear and non-nuclear states and the burgeoning organizations that make up civil society, “to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all to the benefit of our common home.”

Three-quarters of the countries of the world have voted at the UN to commence comprehensive negotiations, but the major powers remain opposed. All countries that profess to understand the “catastrophic humanitarian consequences” of nuclear weapons need to engage immediately in establishing the legal, political and military requisites for a nuclear weapons free world.

4. UN Security Council Reform. Efforts to reform the Security Council have been made in the past but floundered. The fault lies not just with the five permanent members, which are not keen on sharing power, but with regional powers competing for permanent spaces on an enlarged Council. The arrival on the international scene of the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India,

China, South Africa -- with their over-arching new power should be recognized by the selection of Brazil, India and South Africa immediately. Germany and Japan should complete the enlarged Security Council to make it more reflective of modern demography.

Important as these improvements would be, there is an even more urgent reform required — changing the major powers' attitudes toward prioritizing the UN when building the conditions for peace. The powerful states often treat the UN as if it were something to be tolerated rather than championed. They frequently marginalize the UN in the peacemaking process instead of putting it front and centre. They deprive it of funding, criticize its bureaucracy, and undermine their own commitments made when they signed the Charter.

All told, the entire body of work of the UN, including peacekeeping and the sweeping economic and social development programs of forty specialized agencies and programs, costs \$30 billion per year. This works out to about four dollars per person on the planet. It is only 1.76 per cent of the \$1.7 trillion that nations spend annually on arms.

5. Women in Peacebuilding. Peace processes generally have a gender bias in primarily involving male leaders of contending armed forces and groups and mostly male mediators or facilitators. When crucial decisions about post-conflict governance are made, women usually lack a seat at the table despite the different impacts of war on men and women. In short, we need a more human-centered peace leadership built on the principles of Resolution 1325. Women's participation in peacekeeping missions would be a significant step forward.

Also, I look to a highly qualified woman to be the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. There can be no guarantee that more women

in positions of authority will automatically produce a more peaceful world, but given the record of men in producing a culture of war over the past few centuries, the possibility, if not the promise, of a more feminine-inspired world order is dazzling.

I would like to close with a quote from Pope Francis that is particularly apt in a political and diplomatic setting. In his recent, widely-acclaimed encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, which reached out to all humanity, he called for political planning with a breadth of vision: “What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold onto power only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?” I commend these words to the world’s leaders.

