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## Lecture: Challenges to the Protection of Human Rights Today

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**LECTURE**

**CHALLENGES TO THE PROTECTION OF  
HUMAN RIGHTS TODAY\***

A SPEECH BY UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

MICHELLE BACHELET\*\*

Professor Grossman,  
Dear students,

Thank you for inviting me to be with you today. I will try to be brief, as I have been asked to speak, but I also want to hear your thoughts on how we can protect human rights today.

At the outset, I would like to salute the Faculty of Law and its members and students for its long-standing commitment to international human rights law. Your innovative scholarship, research, and litigation have provided valuable contributions to international law, including U.N. human rights mechanisms. Several distinguished members of this Faculty are either current or former members of U.N. treaty bodies or special

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\* This speech was given on April 11, 2019 by Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, at the Academy for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, American University Washington College of Law. The speech was featured as the keynote for an event entitled "Challenges to the Protection of Human Rights in the 21st Century and the Role of the United Nations," which was co-hosted by the WCL International Law Student Association and the American University International Law Review.

\*\* Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria was nominated to be the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2018 after serving two terms as the President of Chile from 2006 to 2010 and from 2014 to 2018. Between her terms as President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet was appointed to be the first executive director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

procedure mandate holders. I salute the work you have done to elevate human rights standards on issues as varied as torture, sexual violence, and accountability for systematic violations.

We live in a paradox. Digital tools, the global economy, and even demographics are bringing people closer together;<sup>1</sup> however, policy makers, the international community, and multilateral institutions are increasingly more fragmented.<sup>2</sup> Leaders seem to be less committed to working together for the common good.<sup>3</sup> They are turning away from shared principles and solutions to shared problems, which is leading to increasing suffering and chaos.<sup>4</sup>

Justice brings peace. It does not eliminate disagreement, but when people have confidence in an impartial and independent structure of law and norms, they know they will be able to resolve their disputes peacefully. This is true within countries, as all the lawyers in the room are well aware, and it is true of disputes between countries as well, as long as the international rule of law retains the trust of all actors.<sup>5</sup>

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1. See generally World Bank Group [WBG], *Globalization, Growth, and Poverty: Building an Inclusive World Economy*, at ix, Rep. No. 23591 (2002) (suggesting that integration of global economies is a complex process producing the simultaneous dichotomies of large-scale poverty reduction and economic marginalization of disparate portions of the world population); see also SPENCER ZIFCAK, *GLOBALISATION AND THE RULE OF LAW* 32–33 (Routledge ed., 2005) (emphasizing the role of technological advancements driven by economic and social problems in increasing globalization).

2. See Press Release, Secretary-General, *Amid Unsolved Conflicts, Growing Inequality, Multilateralism Needed More Than Ever to Achieve Peace*, Secretary-General Says in Message for International Observance, U.N. Press Release SG/SM/19552-OBV/1876 (Apr. 23, 2019) (arguing that multilateralism is essential to building a “safer, more just world for future generations” and must be reinvigorated).

3. Cf. Michael D. Shear, *Trump Will Withdraw U.S. from Paris Climate Agreement*, N.Y. TIMES (June 1, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/climate/trump-paris-climate-agreement.html?partner=Bloomberg> (citing example where leaders appear to be making policy decisions not in concert with previously negotiated and agreed upon international accords).

4. Cf. Press Release, Secretary-General, *supra* note 2 (“[M]ultilateral efforts are under pressure from unresolved conflicts, runaway climate change, widening inequalities, and other threats.”).

5. See generally U.N. Secretary-General, *Strengthening and Coordinating United Nations Rule of Law Activities*, ¶¶ 1–2, 12, U.N. Doc. A/71/169 (July 20, 2016) [hereinafter *Rule of Law Activities*] (highlighting that the effective “pursuit of peace and security, human rights[,] and sustainable development is largely dependent on the strength and consistency of law institutions”).

Shared solutions work. Whether we are talking about shared laws,<sup>6</sup> or an agreement on joint action to target a common problem based on shared principles,<sup>7</sup> policies grounded in dialogue, built on inclusion, and guided by human rights goals make for more effective and better outcomes.

They have worked in the past to encourage peace and development,<sup>8</sup> and they can work in the future – in your future: a future you will share with billions of other people across the world.

I have seen this myself: when I returned to my country, Chile, after years of exile from oppression; when I worked as a pediatrician in Santiago with children whose parents had been tortured, killed, or disappeared; when I became Minister of Health; when I was named Minister of Defence; and as a Head of State and Head of Government.<sup>9</sup> Time and again in all these circumstances, I saw that human rights-based policies deliver better outcomes for people across the social and economic spectrum, and not only that – beyond the borders of the State. They encourage reconciliation. They prevent grievances, conflicts, inequalities, suffering, and discrimination of all kinds.

Policies that build social justice and social protection also promote stronger economies.<sup>10</sup> They drive better frameworks for education,

6. Cf. U.N. Secretary-General, *The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies*, ¶ 6, U.N. Doc. S/2004/616 (Aug. 23, 2004) (conceptualizing the principles that comprise the concept of “rule of law”); cf. *Rule of Law Activities*, *supra* note 5, ¶¶ 3–8, 10, 14, 22–24 (summarizing multinational frameworks where nations have come together to be bound by common agreements and protocols).

7. See G.A. Res. 70/1, pmbl. (Oct. 21, 2015) (providing an example that nations have come together to “embark on a collective journey” of resilient and sustainable development).

8. See *generally Peace and Security*, UNITED NATIONS, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/peace-and-security/> (last visited Oct. 6, 2019) (delineating main strategies that the United Nations uses to prevent disputes from “escalating into conflict”); see also G.A. Res. 70/1, *supra* note 7, ¶¶ 1–6 (resolving in 2015 to work towards “global Sustainable Development” through specified objectives).

9. See MARY HELEN SPOONER, *THE GENERAL’S SLOW RETREAT: CHILE AFTER PINOCHET* 27–28 (U. Cal. Press ed., 2011) (giving a third-person account of the speaker’s biography).

10. See U.N. DEP’T OF ECON. & SOC. AFF., DIV. FOR SOC. POL’Y & DEV., *SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AN OPEN WORLD: THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS*, at 2–4, U.N. Doc. ST/ESA/305, U.N. Sales No. E. 06.IV.2 (2006) (suggesting that economic justice has developed as a basic freedom of market economies and assisted in opening the world

health-care, and other basic services, and they feed into political systems, which actively embrace a range of noisy contributing voices.<sup>11</sup>

Human-rights based policies build confidence and social harmony. They deepen trust. They build hope.

It can be done. I have seen it done. I have seen a country bitterly divided and diminished grow more inclusive, more developed, and more just.<sup>12</sup> In your lifetimes, and in the lifetimes of your parents, this has happened again and again in various parts of the world as policies grounded in human rights shape greater justice, equality, and dignity.<sup>13</sup>

And it can be done again. Today I will be speaking on some of the very strong challenges that we increasingly face in today's world. But as I do so, I'm also going to ask you to hold on to this thought; NO MATTER HOW COMPLEX AND HOW PAINFUL THESE CHALLENGES MAY SEEM, THEY CAN BE ADDRESSED.

So that's enough about solutions for the moment. Let's talk a little bit about the problems that we face.

I want to begin with climate change, which is a comprehensive and

market to countries capable of seizing the opportunities).

11. *See generally id.* 16–19 (connecting the relationship between inequalities in access to social opportunities to greater social and political participation); *cf.* 25 Encyc. Britannica *Political Systems* 984 (1991) (surveying different types of political systems including their function and development).

12. *See generally* Martin Nilsson, *The Left and Democratic Consolidation – Deepening Democracy in Latin America?*, in THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROJECT: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES 87–88 (Ashok Swain et al. eds., 2009) (noting the democratization that took place in Latin America from military dictatorships to electoral democracies in the 1980s and 1990s carried out social reforms leading to economic prosperity).

13. *See generally* Human Rights Council Res. 18/7, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/RES/18/7, pmb. (Oct. 13, 2011) (providing an example where the U.N. took measures to promote truth and justice by appointing a Special Rapporteur to design implementing strategies to address “gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law”; *see also* OHCHR, United Nations Human Rights Management Plan 2018-2021, 28–29 (2018) [hereinafter Human Rights Management Plan], [https://www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRReport2018\\_2021/OHCHRManagementPlan2018-2021.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRReport2018_2021/OHCHRManagementPlan2018-2021.pdf) (documenting a roadmap by which the OHCHR intends to “promote equality and counter discrimination through laws and institutions,” and “encourage rights-based and inclusive public narratives”); G.A. Res. A/811, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Dec. 16, 1948) (highlighting an instance where “the peoples of the United Nations . . . reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person[,] and in the equal rights of men and women and . . . determined to promote social progress and better standards of life”).

devastating threat to human rights and indeed, human life.<sup>14</sup> I was only wearing one pin [on my jacket] this morning, but I was just at a meeting with the so-called V20: the 20 countries most vulnerable to climate change in the world.<sup>15</sup> The Chair of the V20, who is from the Marshall Islands, convened a group of finance ministers and asked them to commit to actions and dialogue to tackle climate change.<sup>16</sup> This pin, a traditional shell pin from the Marshall Islands,<sup>17</sup> reminds us that if we do not act, the Marshall Islands will disappear underwater.<sup>18</sup> To me, climate change is a very important issue.

Climate change is driving displacement by destroying people's ability to earn a decent livelihood in the places they were born.<sup>19</sup> From increased

14. See Glob. Comm'n on Adaptation [GCA], *Adapt Now: A Global Call for Leadership on Climate Resilience*, at 3 (2019), [https://cdn.gca.org/assets/2019-09/GlobalCommission\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://cdn.gca.org/assets/2019-09/GlobalCommission_Report_FINAL.pdf) (accepting that climate change is inevitable and that people must adapt to climate change because it will have devastating impacts on people, the environment, and the economy).

15. See also *About, V20*, <https://www.v-20.org/about/> (last visited Sept. 15, 2019) (outlining twenty vulnerable countries joining V20 to create an initiative to mobilize efforts that will “strengthen economic and financial responses to climate change [ . . . ] includ[ing] to: Promote the mobilization of public and private climate finance; Share and exchange best practices on economic and financial aspects of climate action; Develop new and improved approaches to climate finance; and, Engage in joint advocacy and other collective actions”).

16. See Joseph Robertson, *Adaptation Affects the Value of Everything: Report from the 2019 V20 Ministerial Dialogue on Adaptation*, GLOB. CTR. ON ADAPTATION (Apr. 23, 2019), <https://gca.org/news/adaptation-affects-the-value-of-everything> (broadly summarizing the outcomes and report of the V20 Ministerial Dialogue on Adaptation resulting in aims to “establish ongoing means of support for financial and institutional resilience, to ‘climate -proof economic growth’ and sustainable shared prosperity”).

17. See V20 Group of Finance Ministers (@V20Group), TWITTER (Apr. 11, 2019, 10:39 AM), <https://twitter.com/V20Group/status/1116395343460147200> (showing a picture of the pin and highlighting Bachelet's call for “urgent climate action in support of V20 economies”); see generally JUDY MILFORD, *HANDICRAFTS OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS* 1, 36 (Wilson Printing ed., 2006) (providing a pictorial overview of the nature and types of handicrafts and jewelry of the Marshall Islands).

18. See, e.g., Coral Davenport, *The Marshall Islands Are Disappearing*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec 1, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html> (giving an individual personal account of the impact of growing tides on a family and village in the island nation).

19. See also Sarah Opitz Stapleton et al., Overseas Dev. Inst. & U.N. Dev. Programme, *Climate Change, Migration and Displacement: The Need for a Risk-Informed and Coherent Approach*, at 9 (2017), <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11871.pdf> (presenting an “overview of the current evidence base on the

poverty and food insecurity to the scarcity of water and accelerated environmental damage, climate change is a clear and present threat to human dignity and to the gains that have been made in building up inclusive and sustainable development.<sup>20</sup> Climate change also heightens tensions and inequalities within societies, driving conflict – including violent conflict.<sup>21</sup>

The younger ones might not know this, but when I was younger, I saw the *Mad Max* movies, which were about a war for energy resources.<sup>22</sup> Well, I do not know if that's going to happen in the future, but water will clearly be a driver of conflict in many places in the world.<sup>23</sup> We have seen how in some Central American countries, drought means a massive flow of migrants looking for new opportunities and a better life.<sup>24</sup> My office

complex relationships between climate change and human mobility” and providing information regarding displacement events that are climate-related).

20. See also Emma Schwartz, *Quick Facts: How Climate Change Affects People Living in Poverty*, MERCY CORPS (Aug. 13, 2019), <https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/climate-change-affects-poverty> (describing current and future impacts of climate change on access to water, arable land, and the resulting impact on populations); see generally Christopher Flavelle, *Climate Change Threatens the World's Food Supply, United Nations Warns*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 8, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/08/climate/climate-change-food-supply.html> (broadly summarizing the results of a report commissioned by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change); Interdepartmental Working Group on Climate Change, Food and Agric. Org. of the United Nations [FAO], *Climate Change and Food Security: A Framework Document*, at 9, 11 (2008), <http://www.fao.org/3/k2595e/k2595e00.pdf> (documenting the nexus between climate change and food security); Juneau Gary & Neal S. Rubin, *Does Climate Change Compromise Fundamental Human Rights?*, 34 PSYCHOL. INT'L, Oct. 2003, at 8–10 (adding to the discourse on fundamental human rights negatively impacted by climate change).

21. See generally Caitlin E. Werrell & Francesco Femia, *Climate Change Raises Conflict Concerns*, 2 UNESCO COURIER, Apr.–June 2018, at 20–21 (broadly summarizing the results of studies and models implicating “with increasing accuracy, the way in which changes in climatic conditions can, if left unmitigated, scale up to higher-order security situations, including a higher likelihood of conflict”).

22. See generally Sidney Fussell, *The Dark Backstory of 'Mad Max' Shows How the World Ends*, BUS. INSIDER (Mar. 2, 2016), <https://businessinsider.com/mad-max-what-happened-to-world-2016-2> (highlighting the director and screenwriter's vision for the movie, specifically its concerns for the consequences of not proactively providing infrastructure for alternative energy and its continued relevance today).

23. PETER GLEICK & CHARLES ICELAND, WORLD RESOURCES INST., WATER, CONFLICT, AND SECURITY 5, 8 (2008) (“While water-related security events may begin as localized crises, some have spillover effects that can threaten national, regional, and global stability.”).

24. See generally Econ. Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC],

will continue to deal with the more traditional human rights issues,<sup>25</sup> but I also want to work on the frontier issues such as climate change and its impact on the most vulnerable.

This brings me to another challenge: war. The devastation of today's conflicts, and their huge economic and humanitarian cost, create broad and enduring harm to the next generations.<sup>26</sup> There is no victory or winner in a conflict that destroys lives, land, infrastructure, economies, and hope.

We are seeing fewer wars between States,<sup>27</sup> but more and more enduring, intra-State conflicts with the involvement of foreign countries.<sup>28</sup>

*Atlas of Migration in Northern Central America*, at 5, 22, 25 (2018), [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44288/1/S1801071\\_en.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44288/1/S1801071_en.pdf) (providing statistics and analysis of factors impacting the migration of peoples in the Americas).

25. OHCHR, Human Rights Report 2018, at 4–5 (2018), <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHRreport2018.pdf> (providing a review of recent, on-going, and future initiatives by the OHCHR in advocating for and advancing human rights, as well as promoting access to economic and social justice); U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Global Update at the 42nd Session of the Human Rights Council (Sept. 9, 2019), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=24956> (stating that OCHR will continue to “tackle traditional human rights issues, but also an array of new ones, such as new digital landscape, and privacy . . . [and] climate change”).

26. Cf. Neta C. Crawford, *United States Budgetary Costs of Post-9/11 Wars Through FY2018*, WATSON INST. INT'L & PUB. AFF., BROWN UNIVERSITY, 1–2, 4–5, 32 (Nov. 2017) (“As of late September 2017, the United States wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria and the additional spending on Homeland Security, and the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs since the 9/11 attacks totalled more than \$4.3 trillion in current dollars through FY2017.”); cf. Neta C. Crawford, *Human Cost of the Post-9/11 Wars: Lethality and the Need for Transparency*, WATSON INST. INT'L & PUB. AFF., BROWN UNIVERSITY, 1, 2, 5 (Nov. 2018) (providing statistical estimates of the total numbers of people killed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan since the 9/11 attack in the United States).

27. See generally Monty G. Marshall & Gabrielle Elzinga-Marshall, Ctr. Systemic Peace, *Global Report 2017: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility*, at 26 (Aug. 27, 2017), <http://www.systemicpeace.org/vlibrary/GlobalReport2017.pdf> (“[T]he global trend in interstate warfare has remained at a relatively low level since the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the United Nations Organization (UN), particularly in comparison with the high levels of interstate war during the first half of the twentieth century.”).

28. Cf. *id.* (“Empirical research indicates that periods of genocidal violence, when

We need greater efforts to rationalize and control the proliferation of arms and the conduct and risk of conflict. In February, the U.N. Secretary General told the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, "I will be blunt. Key components of the international arms control architecture are collapsing . . . new weapons technologies are intensifying risks in ways we do not yet understand and cannot even imagine."<sup>29</sup>

However, countries are eroding existing agreements.<sup>30</sup> It has been seventy years since the Geneva Conventions<sup>31</sup> laid out the minimal basic decencies to be respected by all parties in conflict to preserve the lives and dignity of civilians, *hors de combat* soldiers, and prisoners of war.<sup>32</sup> But the actors of today's conflicts increasingly fail to respect even these minimal commitments.<sup>33</sup>

Sieges are employed to deliberately starve civilians while other obstacles to humanitarian assistance deprive them of basic services and

they do take place, are always 'embedded' within protracted armed conflicts in an apparent attempt to impose a 'final solution.'").

29. Press Release, U.N. Secretary-General, Arms Control Efforts under Increasing Jeopardy Amid Drive for New Weapons, Secretary-General Warns Conference on Disarmament, U.N. Press Release SG/SM/19474-DCF/462 (Feb. 25, 2019).

30. Cf. *Changing World, Unchanged Protection? 70 Years of the Geneva Conventions*, ICRC (Mar. 13, 2019), <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/changing-world-unchanged-protection-70-years-geneva-conventions> ("We need scientists to help put innovations at the service of humanity and avert new means and methods of warfare eroding the protection enshrined in the Geneva Conventions.").

31. First Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field art.12, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3314, 75 U.N.T.S. 31; Second Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea art. 12, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3217, 75 U.N.T.S. 85; Third Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War art. 13, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3316, 75 U.N.T.S. 135; Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War art. 4, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3516, 75 U.N.T.S. 287; First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, June 8, 1977, 1125 U.N.T.S. 3; Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, June 8, 1977, 1125 U.N.T.S. 609.

32. *The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols*, ICRC (Jan. 1, 2014), <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/geneva-conventions-1949-additional-protocols> (giving a broad overview of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their basic purposes and provisions).

33. Cf. Nick Cumming-Bruce, *War Crimes Committed by Both Sides in Yemen*, U.N. Panel Says, N.Y. TIMES (Sept 3, 2019), <https://nyti.ms/2LntOnT> (writing that all parties to the war in Yemen are committing war crimes).

care.<sup>34</sup> Medical locations are bombed, repeatedly, in what seem deliberate patterns.<sup>35</sup> Attacks on women, including the use of rape as a weapon of war, seem to be employed in some cases as policy to try to break down family and community bonds and demoralize the adversary.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, in places where there used to be war, gender-based violence remains a huge threat, such as for many women in some countries of Africa.<sup>37</sup> Children are tortured and killed in front of their parents to create widespread fear; they are abducted and used as soldiers or as sexual slaves; and they are deprived of education.<sup>38</sup>

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34. See generally Lara Seligman, *Syria's Assad is Deliberately Starving Thousands of Refugees*, FOREIGN POL'Y (July 25, 2019), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/07/25/syrias-assad-is-deliberately-starving-thousands-of-refugees-syria-bashar-assad-rukban-idlib-islamic-state-isis/#> (highlighting the dire situation facing many civilians in Syria as Assad refuses U.N.-led humanitarian aid).

35. See generally Stephanie Nebehay, *Syria Attacks Hospitals, Denies Healthcare as 'Weapon of War'*: U.N., REUTERS (Sept. 13, 2013), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-health-idUSBRE98C0NG20130913> (reporting accounts of patterns of attacks against hospitals in Syria by fighters loyal to the Assad regime).

36. See, e.g., U.N. Secretary-General, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, ¶¶ 5, 13, 17, U.N. Doc. S/2019/280 (Mar. 29, 2019) (highlighting the verified countries involved in conflict-related sexual violence and the general tactics and purposes of the groups); Claudia Card, *Rape as a Weapon of War*, 11 HYPATIA 5, 10–11 (1996) (“Of many forms of martial terrorism, rape in a patriarchal culture has a special potential to drive a wedge between family members and to carry the expression of the perpetrator’s dominance into future generations.”).

37. See Mahlet A. Woldetsadik, *Long-Term Effects of Wartime Sexual Violence on Women and Families: The Case of Northern Uganda*, 54, 57, 77–78 (July 2018) (Ph.D. dissertation, Pardee Rand Graduate School) (on file with the RAND Corporation) (using a case study of Ugandan women to demonstrate the consequential effects of conflict-related violence); see also, Rep. of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, *Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences*, ¶¶ 45–49, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/41/42 (June 20, 2019) (providing historical context of the U.N. mandate to address violence against women).

38. Sarah Maguire, *Children, Slavery, and Soldiering*, in CHILD SLAVES IN THE MODERN WORLD 238, 240 (Gwyn Campbell et. al. eds., 2011); see Tonya L. Cook et. al, *War Trauma and Torture Experiences Reported During Public Health Screening of Newly Resettled Karen Refugees: A Qualitative Study*, BMC INT’L HEALTH & HUM. RTS., 2015, at 8 (providing testimony of children’s experiences being tortured during conflict with their families); António Guterres, *The Rohingya are Victims of Ethnic Cleansing. The World has Failed Them.*, WASH. POST (July 10, 2018), [https://beta.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-rohingya-are-victims-of-ethnic-cleansing-the-world-has-failed-them/2018/07/10/08cab8a0-8447-11e8-9e80-403a221946a7\\_story.html](https://beta.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-rohingya-are-victims-of-ethnic-cleansing-the-world-has-failed-them/2018/07/10/08cab8a0-8447-11e8-9e80-403a221946a7_story.html) (recounting stories of torture and widespread killings from Rohingya refugees); United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], *Education Under Fire: How Conflict in the Middle East is Depriving Children of Their Schooling*, at 2–6 (Sept. 3, 2015),

Although measures to identify these violations and hold those accountable *are* being taken<sup>39</sup> – including by my Office<sup>40</sup> – these measures are not unanimously supported by the world's states.<sup>41</sup> Governments need to do a much better job supporting accountability for violations of international humanitarian law.

Conflicts impoverish nations and drive displacement.<sup>42</sup> According to U.N.H.C.R., 44,400 (forty-four thousand four hundred) people are forced to flee their homes every day because of conflict or persecution.<sup>43</sup> Most are internally displaced;<sup>44</sup> others will try, desperately, to find safety across international borders.<sup>45</sup> Other displaced people are fleeing deprivation; they have simply lost hope that they will benefit from the basic requirements of human dignity in their homeland.<sup>46</sup>

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<https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/education-under-fire> (noting that, due to the conflicts in the Middle East, over 200 schools were targets of attacks, depriving millions of children from attending classes).

39. See, e.g., Int'l Crim. Ct. Off. of the Prosecutor [OTP], *Strategic Plan: 2016-2018*, ¶¶ 48–52 (July 6, 2015), [https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/EN-OTP\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2016-2018.pdf](https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/EN-OTP_Strategic_Plan_2016-2018.pdf) (outlining the Office of the Prosecutor's mandate as a strategic goal to implement policies in relation to sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against children).

40. See Rep. of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, *Right to Education*, ¶¶ 1, 4, 21, 31, U.N. Doc. A/74/243 (July 29, 2019) (establishing the U.N. framework for the right to education); see also, U.N. Secretary-General, *Rights of the Child*, ¶¶ 94–109, U.N. Doc. A/61/299 (Aug. 29, 2006) (outlining the U.N. recommendations for protecting children worldwide from violence).

41. S.C. Res. 2467 (Apr. 23, 2019); cf. Michelle Nichols, *Bowing to U.S. demands, U.N. Waters Down Resolution on Sexual Violence in Conflict*, REUTERS (Apr. 23, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-war-rape-usa/bowing-to-us-demands-un-waters-down-resolution-on-sexual-violence-in-conflict-idUSKCN1RZ27T> (explaining how the U.S. veto threat to the Security Council Resolution on sexual violence in conflict caused other council members to retract support to certain portions of the resolution).

42. See, e.g., UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018*, at 35, 38 (June 20, 2019) [hereinafter *Forced Displacement in 2018*], <https://www.unhcr.org/5d08d7ee7.pdf> (finding that 41.3 million people were displaced due to a convergence of the factors arising from escalating violence that contributed to poverty).

43. UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, at 2 (June 25, 2018), <https://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf> (“44,000 new displacements every day”).

44. *Forced Displacement in 2018*, *supra* note 42, at 2 (stating that of the 70.8 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide that 41.3 million are internally displaced).

45. *Id.* at 2 (estimating 25.9 million refugees and 3.5 million asylum-seekers).

46. Norwegian Refugee Council [NRC], *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019*,

These migrants are women, men, and children exactly like you and me.<sup>47</sup> Who knows; if we were in their situations, we would perhaps make the same decisions and embark on similar journeys. They are our equals, but increasingly, instead of measures to assist and protect them, they are greeted by barriers, pushed back into danger, humiliated, threatened, detained, and exposed to unnecessary risk.<sup>48</sup>

A great deal more could be said about these three challenges, all of them connected – climate change fuelling migration and conflict<sup>49</sup> – but there are a number of other very significant challenges to human rights that are also increasing in scope and intensity today: food insecurity.<sup>50</sup>

at 6–7 (May 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/more-people-displaced-inside-their-own-countries-ever-enarfr> (charting new displacements in 2018 by conflict, violence, and disaster); Norwegian Refugee Council [NRC], *Understanding the Root Causes of Displacement: Towards a Comprehensive Approach to Prevention and Solutions*, at 2–3 (Dec. 8, 2015), <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/understanding-the-root-causes-of-displacement-towards-a-comprehensive-approach-to> (distinguishing non-conflict causes of displacement).

47. See Forced Displacement in 2018, *supra* note 42, at 60 (“According to the available data, overall males and females were almost equally represented in the population of concern to UNHCR with 25.4 million men and boys and 25.7 million women and girls.”).

48. See, e.g., UNHCR, *Beyond Detention: A Global Strategy to Support Governments to End the Detention of Asylum-Seekers and Refugees – 2014-2019*, at 7, 19–21 (Feb. 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/53aa929f6.pdf> (noting the diverse community working to create policy and address issues around detention of asylum seekers, particularly child immigrants); Katrine Fangen, *Humiliation Experienced by Somali Refugees in Norway*, J. REFUGEE STUD. 69, 70 (2006) (stating that refugees start at the bottom of new social hierarchies where they are and subsequently excluded, stigmatized, and discriminated against); Bondar Tetiana et al., United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], *Piecing Together the Puzzle: Internal Displacement Affecting Human Rights and Access to Public Services in Ukraine*, at 15–37 (Sept. 13, 2018), [http://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/IDPs-human-rights-observance.html](http://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/en/home/library/democratic_governance/IDPs-human-rights-observance.html) (providing a myriad of statistics on the rights that internally displaced people in the Ukraine are entitled to and the obstacles they face).

49. See Guy J. Abel et al., *Climate, Conflict and Forced Migration*, 54 GLOB. ENVTL. CHANGE 239, 239 (2019) (stating that climate change is a driver for violence that indirectly functions as a significant factor in forced displacement); see also Oli Brown, Int'l Org. for Migration [IOM], *Migration and Climate Change*, at 16–19 (2007), [https://www.iom.cz/files/Migration\\_and\\_Climate\\_Change\\_-\\_IOM\\_Migration\\_Research\\_Series\\_No\\_31.pdf](https://www.iom.cz/files/Migration_and_Climate_Change_-_IOM_Migration_Research_Series_No_31.pdf) (outlining the effects of climate change on migration).

50. See Food & Agriculture Org. of the United Nations [FAO], *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, at 3 (2019),

After many years in which undernourishment and food insecurity has declined,<sup>51</sup> the painful, and almost entirely preventable, number of people counted as “undernourished” rose from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016, mainly due to conflicts, as well as drought and other climate-linked disasters.<sup>52</sup> 815 million is 11% of humanity; in other words, one out of every nine women, men, and children around the world is still going without sufficient food.<sup>53</sup>

Economic inequalities are also growing. More wealth is being produced than ever before in human history; globally, labour productivity grew by over 2% in 2017.<sup>54</sup> But this wealth is not being equitably shared.<sup>55</sup> As the I.L.O. (International Labour Organization) has pointed out, the labour share of global domestic production (G.D.P) has been falling for twenty–five years, and this trend has continued.<sup>56</sup>

I'm sure everyone in this room has heard of Oxfam's analysis that asserted that 82% of all the wealth generated in 2016 went to the richest 1% of the global population, while the poorest half of humanity saw no change in their income, leaving them even further behind.<sup>57</sup>

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<http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf> (citing studies that offer evidence that the number of undernourished people worldwide has slowly increased since 2015).

51. *Id.*

52. *Cf. id.* at 6–7 (citing 785.4 million undernourished people in 2015 and projecting 821.6 million undernourished people by 2018 and attributing long-term impact on food security to drought).

53. *Id.* at 3, 6.

54. See Ana Paula Cusolito & William F. Maloney, World Bank Group [WBG], *Productivity Revised: Shifting Paradigms in Analysis and Policy*, at 3 (2018), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/30588/9781464813344.pdf> (reporting a 2% growth in global labor productivity in 2017).

55. Andrew Gilmour, OHCHR, Keynote Remarks by ASG Andrew Gilmour, OHCHR at the HLPF Plenary Session, *Leaving No One Behind: Are We Succeeding?* (July 13, 2018), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23382&LangID=E> (“[The] economic growth model is producing more wealth than ever before, but this wealth is not being equitably shared.”).

56. See Engelbert Stockhammer, *Why Have Wage Shares Fallen? A panel Analysis of the Determinants of Functional Income Distribution*, 35 *CONDITIONS OF WORK & EMP. SERIES* vi, 1 (2012) (“Wage shares have fallen in virtually all OECD countries.”).

57. *Richest 1 Percent Bagged 82 Percent of Wealth Created Last Year – Poorest Half of Humanity Got Nothing*, OXFAM INT'L (Jan. 22, 2018), <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2018-01-22/richest-1-percent-bagged-82-percent-wealth-created-last-year>.

Last week a major new U.N.-led report – which involved more than sixty international organizations – found that most of the world’s people now live in countries with increasing income inequalities.<sup>58</sup> The 2019 Financing for Sustainable Development Report said low wage growth, rising inequalities, and insufficient actions by the Sustainable Development Goals threaten to undermine the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a breakthrough effort which promises tremendous benefit for all humanity.<sup>59</sup>

In a wide number of countries, laws and policies that restrict and, in many cases, criminalize civic activity are increasingly being adopted.<sup>60</sup> These measures include restrictions on freedom of expression and participation in peaceful demonstrations; restrictions on free and independent media sources; restrictions on the ability to register human rights N.G.Os and to receive foreign funding; and vaguely worded anti-terrorism legislation, which can be misused to target almost any form of criticism.<sup>61</sup>

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58. See Asrian Mirza, *Pay Packet Inequality Growing Worldwide, Says New U.N. Report*, U.N. NEWS (July 4, 2019), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/07/1041862> (noting that the share of income earned by the middle sixty percent of workers dipped between 2004 and 2017); see also *Just 10 Per Cent of Workers Receive Nearly Half of Global Pay*, INT’L LABOUR ORG. [ILO] (July 4, 2019), [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_712234/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_712234/lang--en/index.htm) (“[A]t the national level, pay inequality is actually increasing.”).

59. Rep. of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2019*, at 1 (2019).

60. See Saskia Brechenmacher, *How State Restrictions Are Reshaping Civic Space Around the World*, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT INT’L PEACE (May 22, 2017), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/22/how-state-restrictions-are-reshaping-civic-space-around-world-pub-70049> (noting that governments are using national security and national sovereignty as red herrings for “erecting new barriers to the operations and funding of NGOs, harassing and demonizing civic activists, and criminalizing dissent through expansive anti-terrorism laws”).

61. See, e.g., *Rep. of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association*, ¶ 20, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/38/34 (June 13, 2018) (restrictions on peaceful assembly); Int’l Ctr. for Not-for-Profit L. [ICNL], *Barred From the Debate: Restrictions on NGO Public Policy*, GLOB. TRENDS IN NGO L. 6 (2019), <http://www.icnl.org/research/trends/trends1-3.pdf> (restrictions on NGOs); *Misuse of Anti-Terror Legislation Threatens Freedom of Expression*, COUNCIL OF EUROPE (Apr. 12, 2018), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/misuse-of-anti-terror-legislation-threatens-freedom-of-expression> (anti-terrorism legislation); *The Tip of the Iceberg*, GLOBAL WITNESS, <https://www.globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/environmental-activists/their-faces->

The killing of at least one human rights defender every day, including journalists and trade unionists, has become a new and shocking fact since 2015.<sup>62</sup> Often, these human rights defenders are environmental activists who resist corporate or development projects.<sup>63</sup> Frequently, they receive little or no protection from the State,<sup>64</sup> and their deaths may never be effectively investigated.<sup>65</sup>

The shutting down of the civil society space has repercussions across a very wide spectrum of government policies and human rights.<sup>66</sup> Participation by the people in decision-making is a vital force to drive accountability and keep every kind of policy grounded in the real needs of society.<sup>67</sup> When governments shut down all critical voices, they are no

defenders-frontline/?accessible=true (last visited Sept. 13, 2019) (restrictions on freedom of expression).

62. See U.N. Secretary-General, *Special Edition: Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Rep. of the Secretary-General*, U.N. Doc. E/2019/68 (May 8, 2019) (reporting an “increase from the previous average of one victim per day observed from 2015 to 2017”); see also Front Line Defenders, *Annual Report on Human Rights Defenders at Risk in 2017*, at 6 (2017), [https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/annual\\_report\\_digital.pdf](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/annual_report_digital.pdf) (highlighting that 312 human rights workers were murdered in 27 countries in 2017).

63. See John H. Knox et al., *Protecting Those Who Work to Defend the Environment is a Human Rights Issue*, THE GUARDIAN (June 5, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/jun/05/world-environment-day-protecting-activists-human-rights-issue> (“[T]hose who work to protect the environment are not only environmentalists – they are human rights defenders”).

64. See Maximus Acuna, *The Risks of Defending Human Rights*, OXFAM BRIEFING NOTE at 4–5 (Oct. 2016) (noting that governments are both neglecting to guarantee rights and actively limiting actions of international human rights mechanisms).

65. See OHCHR, DHC Statement to COP23 Side Event: Enough is Enough: Stopping the Attacks Against Environmental Defenders (Nov. 15, 2017), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22403&LangID=E> (“Very few [killers of environmental human rights defenders] ever are investigated, identified, charged, or prosecuted.”).

66. See generally, Alex Tiersky & Emily Renard, CONG. RESEARCH SERV., R44458, CLOSING SPACE: RESTRICTIONS ON CIVIL SOCIETY AROUND THE WORLD AND U.S. RESPONSES 1–2 (Apr. 8, 2016) (investigating closure of such spaces and their secondary and tertiary effects worldwide).

67. See Jonathan Fox, *Civil Society and Political Accountability: Propositions for Discussion* 5, Presentation at the Helen Kellogg Inst. for Int'l Stud. for Int'l Stud. (Apr. 30, 2000) (noting that the distinction between transparent and accountable bottom-up governance and stifling “top-down rule by local elites”); Off. for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], *Implementing Citizen Participation in Decision Making at Local Level*, at 4 (2013), <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-skopje/231356?download=true> (reiterating that

longer listening to the contributions of all the people – and from housing policies, to education policies, to health, development, defence, every sector of State activity – they are likely to forget that good governance is governance that serves the people.<sup>68</sup> In other words, measures that curtail the rights and voices of civil society also undermine our hope of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Another area where we all have a responsibility to remain alert is women's rights. Advances made in previous decades have stalled in some places and in some cases are going backwards.<sup>69</sup> It is troubling to see the recent roll-backs on many fundamental questions in some countries.<sup>70</sup> They are underpinned by what seems to be a renewed obsession with controlling and limiting women's decisions over their bodies and lives<sup>71</sup> and by views that a woman's role should be essentially restricted to reproduction and the family.<sup>72</sup> Overall, women are still much poorer than

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decision-making is more transparent and “government officials [are] more accountable” when citizens participate).

68. See Ninad Shankar Nag, *Government, Governance and Good Governance*, 64 INDIAN J. PUB. ADMIN. 122, 127 (Mar. 2018) (“Participation [ . . . ] is an indispensable condition of good governance.”); Rajesh Tandon, *Civil Society and Good Governance*, 29 MEDIA ASIA 3, 4–5 (2002) (noting the multidimensional role of civil society in governance: inclusion, empowerment, monitoring, access, and strengthening local institutions); Lyndal Rowlands, *Unanswered Questions: How Civil Society's Contributions to Sustainable Development are Undermined at the HLPF*, IISD (Aug. 2, 2018), <http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/unanswered-questions-how-civil-societys-contributions-to-sustainable-development-are-undermined-at-the-hlpf/> (describing how governments hamstring themselves when they repress civil society).

69. See, e.g., Lisa Liswood, *Women's Rights Have Gone Into Reverse. But Wait, Look Who's Driving*, WORLD ECON. FORUM (Mar. 8, 2017), <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/03/womens-rights-sexual-equality-in-reverse/> (highlighting reduced funding for reproductive health, reduction or elimination of women's choice in family planning, underrepresentation of women in U.S. cabinet-level positions).

70. See Bruno Spada, *Women's Rights Face Global Pushback From Conservatism, Fundamentalism – U.N. Experts Warn*, U.N. NEWS (June 22, 2018), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/06/1012892> (reporting on practices that threaten women's rights due to “rising authoritarianism, economic crises, and rocketing inequality”); European Commission [EC], *2018 Report on Equality between Women and Men in the E.U.*, at 7 (2018) (“[P]rogress is moving forward at a snail's pace and [ . . . ] is even going backwards.”).

71. See, e.g., Diya Uberoi & Maria de Bruyn, *Human Rights Versus Legal Control Over Women's Reproductive Self-Determination*, 15 HEALTH & HUM. RTS. 161, 162–63 (June 2013) (noting efforts in the United States to regulate women's reproductive rights).

72. See United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of

men.<sup>73</sup> They have less property, fewer opportunities, less access to basic services, and a lot less freedom to raise their voices and make their own choices.<sup>74</sup>

Many of us are also very deeply concerned by the global rise in hatred directed at members of racial, ethnic, and religious groups as well as against foreigners and other minorities.<sup>75</sup> In many countries, what used to be extremist ideas have now entered the political mainstream<sup>76</sup> in tandem with a nativist, exclusionary, and intolerant worldview that also attacks efforts to maintain multilateral agreements and measures to ensure greater social justice.<sup>77</sup> This world-view exacerbates global instability by shirking, instead of sharing, global burdens.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps you have noted how connected these challenges seem to be: climate change; unbearable civilian suffering in conflict; involuntary

Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020: Families in a Changing World*, at 28 (2019) [hereinafter *U.N. Women's Rights Progress Report*] (highlighting the contradiction of moralistic and family value-based arguments to deny women the right to make decisions for themselves while these same policies erode the very foundations of these family values).

73. See Esteban Ortiz-Ospina & Max Roser, *Economic Inequality by Gender*, OUR WORLD IN DATA (Mar. 2018), <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-inequality-by-gender#differences-in-pay>. (citing to U.N. International Labor Organization data).

74. *Id.*; see also U.N. *Women's Rights Progress Report*, *supra* note 72, at 122–25 (providing quantitative and anecdotal assertions about the gender gap within the framework of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals).

75. See e.g., *Tackle 'Tsunami of Hatred' Across the World, Urges Guterres, to Counter Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Intolerance*, U.N. NEWS (June 26, 2019) [hereinafter *Tsunami of Hatred*], <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1041361> (referencing a recent speech by the U.N. Secretary-General about combating intolerance and hate).

76. See *Hate Speech 'on Notice' as U.N. Chief Launches New Plan to 'Identify, Prevent and Confront' Growing Scourge*, U.N. NEWS (June 18, 2019) [hereinafter *Hate Speech on Notice*], <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1040731> (“In both liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes, some political leaders are bringing the hate-fueled ideas and language of these groups into the mainstream, normalizing them, coarsening the public discourse and weakening the social fabric [ . . . ].”).

77. See U.N. Secretary-General, Secretary-General's Statement on Intolerance and Hate-Based Violence (Apr. 29, 2019) [hereinafter *Statement on Intolerance*], <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2019-04-29/secretary-generals-statement-intolerance-and-hate-based-violence> (outlining the two initiatives from the Secretary-General's office to combat hate speech and protect religious sanctuaries).

78. See *Hate Speech on Notice*, *supra* note 76 (“Hate speech not only attacks human rights norms and principles, it also undermines social cohesion, erodes shared values[,] and lays the foundation for violence – setting back the cause of peace, stability, sustainable development and the fulfilment of human rights for all.”).

displacement; inequalities and extreme poverty; threats to the civic space; the oppression of women; a global rise in hatred being directed at members of minorities and migrants; and a sweeping world-view that undermines the search for agreement on joint action.<sup>79</sup> All these negative trends, profoundly corrosive to our hope for a decent future, seem to accelerate and accentuate each other.

But the solutions are also connected.

Some countries – not always the richest, in income or resources – are choosing to adopt principled policies that are also more effective.<sup>80</sup> Because they are grounded in the full range of human rights – taking steps to advance civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights together – they create a mutually reinforcing dynamic, in which justice and greater civic freedom build sound development policies<sup>81</sup>, and measures for social protection feed into greater social harmony and trust. I want to tell at least some good stories.<sup>82</sup>

Ethiopia is a recent example where we see encouraging progress.<sup>83</sup> Another, better known but older, is the intervention by the U.N. which helped to end 300 years of apartheid and a bitter long-running conflict in South Africa now replaced with democratic institutions.<sup>84</sup> We also have some good stories in the Maldives, where there is a democratic government that is asking for support so that they can improve the institutions, change the constitution, and be more democratic.<sup>85</sup> They

79. Kaysie Brown, *Global Issues are Connected and that Matters*, U.N. FOUND.: GLOBAL HEALTH (Apr. 23, 2018), <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/global-issues-connected-matters/> (providing quantitative data to show that development challenges should not be addressed through disparate international efforts but through the interconnectedness of the international community).

80. *See id.* (providing the example of the African Capacity Insurance Company Ltd. which is the first African natural disaster insurance pool).

81. G.A. Res. 70/1, *supra* note 7, ¶¶ 10–11, 13.

82. *Id.*

83. *See* Daniel Otieno, *After Making Peace, Ethiopia and Eritrea Now Focus on Development*, AFRICA RENEWAL (Dec. 2018–Mar. 2019), <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2018-march-2019/after-making-peace-ethiopia-and-eritrea-now-focus-development> (referencing the secondary goal of focusing on development with the peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea).

84. G.A. Res 1761, ¶¶ 1–4 (Nov. 6, 1962); S.C. Res. 418, ¶¶ 1–7 (Nov. 4, 1977).

85. *See* Joanna Slater, *Maldives Opposition Declares Victory Over Autocratic Ruler in Presidential Election*, WASH. POST (Sept. 23, 2018)

also want human rights advisers to help them identify human rights grounded policies.<sup>86</sup> My office has experience many such interventions in Guinea, Nepal, Togo, and elsewhere.<sup>87</sup>

This is not about waving a magic wand and having everything suddenly come out perfectly; This is about progress. We can prevent conflicts – and in fact, we do.

We will never see a TV reporter declaim into her microphone that she is, “coming to you live from a country where war has not taken place”. The news doesn’t work that way. But the world often does.

It may not seem so amid the turbulence and atrocities of world events. But in by far the majority of countries, disputes are de-escalated before they reach boiling points,<sup>88</sup> or, after conflict has broken out, they are mediated and brought under control.<sup>89</sup> Enduring reconciliation is

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[https://beta.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/maldives-opposition-declares-victory-over-autocratic-ruler-in-presidential-election/2018/09/23/1cffe2c-bf37-11e8-9f4f-a1b7af255aa5\\_story.html](https://beta.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/maldives-opposition-declares-victory-over-autocratic-ruler-in-presidential-election/2018/09/23/1cffe2c-bf37-11e8-9f4f-a1b7af255aa5_story.html) (referencing the democratic election of Ibrahim Mohamed Solih).

86. See United Nations Dev. Assistance Framework [UNDAF], *Final Evaluation Report of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016-2020 for Republic of Maldives*, at 12–13 (July 11, 2019) [hereinafter *UNDAF Maldives Report*], <http://www.un.org.mv/publications/final-evaluation-report-of-the-united-nations-development-assistance-framework-undaf-2016-2020/> (outlining the goals of the Yageen Manifesto and the collaboration between the United Nations and the Republic of Maldives).

87. See Needah Jehu-Hoyah, *Togolese refugees start going home from Ghana with UNHCR help*, UNHCR (Sept. 27, 2007), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2007/9/46fbd2c32/togolese-refugees-start-home-ghana-unhcr-help.html> (providing data on the return of Tongolese refugees to Ghana with the help of the U.N. refugee agency); see United Nations Dev. Assistance Framework [UNDAF], *United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018-2022 for Nepal*, at 27–28 (Dec. 2017), <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/nepal/docs/legalframework/UNDAF%202018-2022.pdf> (outlining the Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth goals for the Government of Nepal to work toward poverty eradication and policy development with the support of the U.N.).

88. United Nations [U.N.] & World Bank Group [WBG], *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, at 11 (2018) [hereinafter *Pathways for Peace*], <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337> (“Despite the escalation of some ethnic conflicts and prompted by the atrocities that took place in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, a surge in peacekeeping and prevention, among other factors, reduced violent conflict to unprecedented levels by the mid 2000s.”) (internal citation omitted).

89. See *id.* at 36–37.

possible.

This work is not just relevant – it is massively cost-effective.<sup>90</sup> Because when human rights go wrong – when violations and abuses generate explosive crises and conflicts – the cost in bloodshed, wrecked economies, and humanitarian aid can be titanic.<sup>91</sup>

All our field offices spend a significant portion of their time on training for government officials, for members of security and police forces, and for civil society groups.<sup>92</sup> Our monitoring of specific situations leads us to recommend targeted policy changes.<sup>93</sup> We also work in the long term to strengthen the laws and institutions that should protect rights, including courts, parliaments, regional councils, schools, and community groups.<sup>94</sup> And we seek to empower human rights defenders and civil society activists of all kinds – including activists for minority rights – so that they can confront prejudice effectively and with confidence.<sup>95</sup>

Every situation has different characteristics, but the core drive is to translate human rights into practical measures:<sup>96</sup> how to question people without using torture; how to manage peaceful protests without violence; how to ensure that minorities can raise their voices and participate fully in the life of a nation; how to ensure that women – and other discriminated groups – can claim their rights from judicial systems that continue to be operated, in majority, by men.

This practical work may not be what springs to mind when we first speak of human rights. One's first thought is of lofty ideals – but those ideals are upheld by a huge range of very practical actions.

Why am I telling you this? Because this is not just *our* job.

Upholding human rights is your job too. This planet belongs to all of

90. *Id.* at xix.

91. *See id.* at xix–xx.

92. *See* Human Rights Report 2018, *supra* note 25, at 6–11 (outlining training methods for groups and individuals supported by U.N. field offices).

93. *Id.* at 12–52 (highlighting specific country and regional examples where the U.N.).

94. *Id.*

95. *Id.* at 6–11.

96. *See* Human Rights Management Plan, *supra* note 13, at 28–29 (outlining a plan to combat inequality and countering discrimination at the heart of human rights abuses).

us, and this work is simply too important to be left to a handful of U.N. staffers.

To achieve sustainable development, and address climate change effectively, countries need to respect human rights.<sup>97</sup>

To end inequalities and poverty, they need to embrace the voices of civil society and respect the rights and choices of every member of society.<sup>98</sup>

To improve governance, fight terrorism effectively, and shape stable, secure societies, we need justice.<sup>99</sup>

We need a perspective that looks not just at today but at tomorrow. We need you - your generation, which may well be among the most important generations in human history in terms of the survival of humanity in a benign ecosystem.

The fact is that human rights violations – from the horrific to the chronic and almost invisible – are not random, they are not accidents, and they are rarely sudden.<sup>100</sup>

They are almost always the consequence of long-term political, economic, social, and cultural inequalities that create obstacles to the fair sharing of opportunities and resources and limit freedom and participation.<sup>101</sup>

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97. See OHCHR, Fact Sheet No. 37: Frequently Asked Questions on the Right to Development, at 15–16 (2016), [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FSheet37\\_RtD\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FSheet37_RtD_EN.pdf) (stating the importance of globalized acceptance of international human rights standards).

98. See Rep. of the U.N. High Comm'r for Hum. Rts., *Procedures and Practices in Respect of Civil Society Engagement with International Partners and Regional Organizations*, ¶¶ 7–9, U.N. Doc. A/HCR/38/18 (Apr. 18, 2018) (outlining civil society organizations empower and give voice to those that are marginalized by advocating to expose human rights violations).

99. Int'l Bank for Reconstruction and Dev. [IBRD], *World Dev. Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, at 8–9 (2011) [hereinafter *Conflict, Security, and Development*] (stating that a sustained level of citizen security, justice, and jobs are needed in order to break away from cycles of insecurity and reduce risk of recurrence).

100. See *id.* at 6–8 (reporting that “countries with weak institutional capacity were more likely to suffer violent social unrest during food shocks” and that states with “high levels of corruption and human rights abuses increase their risks of violence breaking out in the future”).

101. *Id.* at 6 (noting that “internal causes of conflict arise from political, security, and economic dynamics”).

And we can, all of us, contribute to shaping better policies and better outcomes. We can come together to protect the important gains of the past and advance towards more justice, greater dignity, respect for human equality, and better solutions for the world.

Remember this; a stable country is one where the people trust the government and each other. Without the rule of law, due process, and respect for human rights, there can be no long-term security of any meaningful kind.<sup>102</sup> By the same token, economic growth that generates sharp inequalities generates chronic frustration, and thus potential violence.<sup>103</sup>

States must be willing to protect the human rights of their people, and people must be able to hold the State responsible;<sup>104</sup> this is our legal obligation, a moral necessity, and also the only way to achieve the safety your generation will need to accomplish everything you dream of achieving.

I am not willing to give in to defeatism and watch passively as the structures which maintain peace and security and sound development crumble.

We have the opportunity. This generation of world leaders has the capacity to ensure far greater well-being for their people. Tools such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be transformational;<sup>105</sup> fundamental principles can underpin needed

102. See, e.g., OHCHR, HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTION MAKING, at 98, U.N. Sales No.E.17.XIV.4 (2018), [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/ConstitutionMaking\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/ConstitutionMaking_EN.pdf) (providing Article 21 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya as an example).

103. See *Pathways for Peace*, *supra* note 88, at 109–11 (quoting, “at least since Aristotle, theorists have believed that political discontent and its consequences – protests, instability, violence, revolution – depend on the absolute level of economic well-being, but also on the distribution of wealth” (internal citation omitted)).

104. See *id.* at 161 (emphasizing effective, accountable, transparent, and inclusive institutions with goals to reduce violence against children, promote the rule of law, and provide equal access to justice for all); *Conflict, Security, and Development*, *supra* note 99, at 10 (“A reasonable interpretation of these results is that greater repression and abuse by a government creates both grievances and signals that those government (sic) are not dependable negotiating partners; suggesting that less coercive and more accountable approaches significantly decrease the risk of conflict.”).

105. See World Bank Group [WBG], *Annual Report 2018*, at 44 (2018), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/annual-report> (announcing the President of World Bank’s joint commitment with the U.N. Secretary to help countries implement

reforms.<sup>106</sup>

Thank you for your attention; now is my turn to listen to your voices.

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the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

106. See G.A. Res. 70/1, *supra* note 81.