

Remarks by Professor Toshiya Hoshino at the TICAD Ministerial Meeting Thematic Event "Moving toward the Year 2030 of Hope through overcoming the Polycrisis and achieving SDGs!", Tokyo and Online, August 23, 2024.

The co-creation of Japan and Africa through the new concept of human security in the Anthropocene
Good afternoon.

My name is Toshiya Hoshino, Co-Director of ESG Integration Research and Education Center at Osaka University.

I am honored to join the discussion today and I would like to give my thoughts on Japan-Africa co-creation from the perspective of implementing the policy concept of human security.

Human security, as you know, is an epoch-making initiative to put people in the center of peace and prosperity discourse. Human security is an idea, not to replace but to supplement the more traditional concept of national security, which is a state-centric idea with political implications, that is primarily concerned about safeguarding national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Human security, however, is not a political concept but a policy concept. A people-centered idea, placing people's lives at the center of every policy we take. And when we say "people's lives," it is not just about people's life and death question, which is obviously a very important one, but enhancing their well-being and dignity. This is the reason that human security has been on the agenda of TICAD for many rounds so far.

Today, I will discuss the notion of human security mainly from two standpoints.

One is to reaffirm the relevance and importance of original conception of human security as developed since the middle of 1990s, protecting and empowering people in highly vulnerable situations around the world.

People are still suffering from extreme poverty and hunger, having to live without dignity. In order for "no one to be left behind," as the 2030 Agenda explores, we need to redouble our international cooperation to protect and empower individuals and communities in difficult situations.

The second standpoint is related to a more recent development in policy discourse surrounding human security, putting this concept in what we call "Anthropocene" context, which means the era of human impact on earth's geology, landscape, ecosystem and climate.

This is directly related to the production of 2022 Special Report on human security, entitled "New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene."

The report was the outcome of the discussion by High-Level Advisory Panel, co-chaired by Mr. Keizo Takemi, member of the House of Councillors of the Parliament of Japan, now the Minister of Health of Japan, together with Ms. Laura Chinchilla, former President of Costa Rica.

UNDP played a key role to put together a report, and I was deeply involved in updating the concept of human security, almost thirty years after the original concept was introduced.

As we entered the third decade of this twenty-first century, our world began to witness multiple crises, which this session called “Polycrisis.”

These include challenges that affect not just the individuals and communities in vulnerable situations in the Global South and conflict or disaster-ridden countries, but also entire populations, living in this planet earth. We have faced with the challenges from the rapid acceleration of economic activities, natural resource usage, greenhouse gas emissions and the loss of biodiversity to the potential negative repercussions of advanced technologies such as AI. Those issues were NOT that salient ten or twenty years ago but NOW affect the lives of all the people around the world, and they are frequently originated from human activities, directly or indirectly.

The COVID pandemic was another reminder that all of us are inter-connected in today’s world, that no one is safe until and unless everyone becomes safe.

At the early phase of the pandemic, we witnessed an ugly competition of obtaining vaccines. But, if you recall, Japan was one of the first countries to consider vaccines as a “global public goods” and joined the efforts to distribute vaccines through COVAX facility to the people unless otherwise the vaccines are available, however insufficient.

Moreover, enhancing “universal health coverage” to ensure affordable access to health system to all is going to be more important than ever.

These are the testimony that human security in contemporary Anthropocene context is important for the survival, livelihood and dignity of entire populations, living in this planet earth.

In this context, when I was involved in developing the UNDP Special Report, I considered that we need to make conscious mind-set changes in the following two areas.

One is that we need to realize that we are at the historic crossroads that define the future of humanity and the planet. Thus, now is the time to take concrete actions and get results. No time to delay it.

But where to start? We do not have to worry about. Because both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 have already set the goals we need to achieve. Implementing these goals is the first step also from the Anthropocene perspective.

Two is the realization that we are a part of our environment, the nature and the planet. Our health and the planetary health are one and indivisible. This planetary mindset, or what I call “People-Nature-Planet-Nexus” idea should be found underneath all the decisions we make. So that, it is important to promote “global governance” systems of international collaboration that will protect and manage this “People-Nature-Planet-Nexus” through a new collective security perspective, beyond the narrow traditional collective security idea of maintaining international peace and security. We need to add a new element in collective security notion for the sustainability of humanity and the planet, preventing all actions that are harmful to people and environment.

The new report of human security introduced two concepts to realize human security in this broader Anthropocene context: One is “agency”, and the other “solidarity.”

As I said earlier, the term Anthropocene implies many of the issues we encounter today are derived from intentional or often unconscious human behaviors.

It is for this reason, human security today is not just for the people to be protected and empowered but for the people who are taking conscious and responsible roles, by becoming an agent for positive change, to solve or mitigate the issues of peace and sustainability.

In this context, the role of all of us, individuals, business and Civil Society are going to be more important than ever.

The second concept we added was “solidarity.”

The renewed imperative of international collaboration, multilateral diplomacy and people-to-people co-creation is extremely important particularly in time of conflict, rivalry and divisions.

Again, we can start our collaboration from us, like-minded civil society organizations, and Africa should be the place where we start everything now.

TICAD is indeed a platform for solidarity for new vision of human security that the people of Japan and Africa co-create the better future, through multiple channels, both public and private combined.

I hope this input is useful for operationalizing the people-centered concept of human security both in traditional and renewed contexts to ensure better human lives in this planet for us and for the generations next to us.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.