



Personal Contribution to the Helsinki Process

## **Globalisation and Security**

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The Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy aims at mobilizing political will for transformational change in responding to the major political, social, economic, environmental, spiritual, and financial problems of our time.

The events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent experiences of terrorism, in particular in the form of suicide attacks, have made security the top priority on the political agenda. Governments feel responsible to provide maximum security for their citizens. The policies of the powerful governments tend to place primary importance on effective and decisive military responses to the security threats. However, recent experiences with military action in Iraq, Chechnya, and Palestine as well as previously in Kosovo raise doubt concerning the ability of this approach to restore a sense of security.

The process of globalisation has affected the human security of major parts of the world population deeply. Under the weight of globalisation social and economic structures have begun to disintegrate, civil and ethnic conflicts have increased, and the frameworks of political and public order have been weakened. For large numbers of people, globalisation has produced a climate of vulnerability. In a world of instant communication and growing interdependence, the potential for vulnerability increases continuously.

The natural response in a situation of exposure to vulnerability is to call for security. However, the very nature of global terrorism, not only in the form of suicide attacks, but also in the rapid spread of environmental and health hazards across the globe show that there can be no guarantee of security anymore. The logic of globalisation and the traditional logic of national security are incompatible. The political and legislative measures that have been implemented recently in many countries show that the search for security tends to pervert the very values of freedom, democratic rights and the rule of law on which the social and political order has been built. On the contrary, what is needed is to strengthen and extend the rule of law, both nationally and internationally, as the basic framework for the protection of the weak and vulnerable.

More fundamentally, the condition of globalisation and interdependence has implications for understanding the relationship between security and vulnerability. The recognition of mutual vulnerability can become the basis for cooperative security arrangements that recognize the legitimate security interests of the potential adversary, as was the case during the final stages of the Cold War. Also the concern for human security in the broader sense could draw strength from the acknowledgement of vulnerability. Contrary to common perception, dependency and vulnerability are not necessarily marks of weakness but the decisive indicators for recognizing life in relationships. The open recognition of human vulnerability leads towards favouring cooperative solutions to security threats instead of seeking to defend positions of power and individual interest. Acknowledging mutual vulnerability can engender trust, which is the precondition for security.

The recent experience of the Tsunami tragedy in South East Asia, has not only sharpened the sense of vulnerability but has also demonstrated the willingness and capacity of people everywhere to respond in solidarity and to share in the suffering of the victims. This is a unique source of strength that needs to be applied to the broad range of concerns about human security, from the threat of HIV/AIDS to poverty and environmental degradation.

People's security can only be achieved with the people themselves. The approach of the Helsinki Process -- which seeks to involve governments, cities, international institutions, civil society organizations from North and South, faith communities, business and trade unions -- could serve to open up the security agenda by drawing on and strengthening the ethical insights that arise from the acknowledgment of vulnerability.