

Global Governance: A Macrostrategy for Human Survival

There is a cluster of existential risks confronting everyone now alive on the planet. Each of them involves a cataclysmic scenario for which we are not prepared. The reality is that no country in the world has the capacity to protect us from a planetary scale disaster. Multilateralism has failed. The retreat to unilateralism is ratcheting up the risks. Realistically the only hope for us all and future generations is a UN Parliamentary Assembly and global governance that set planetary integration into motion. The alternative is annihilation.

<https://en.unpacampaign.org/11740/denny-taylor/>

Human societies are off kilter and there is a sense that we are not prepared for the existential challenges that confront us. Uncontained world crises are growing with the growth of the private sector. Ecological disruption is matched by societal and economic disruption. The exponential growth of elite private interests with financial resources to buy the UN are ravaging the ecosystems of the planet and leaving more and more people behind. But at the UN Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) are fighting back.

Two hundred civil society organizations and 40 international networks have called on the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General to end the recently signed UN's Strategic Partnership Agreement with the World Economic Forum (WEF). The call, made in an open letter, condemned the agreement for "delegitimiz[ing] the United Nations and weaken[ing] the role of states in global decision-making."

The [UN-WEF Partnership](#), which these MGoS are contesting, was signed at United Nations headquarters by UN Secretary-General António Guterres and World Economic Forum Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab, who stated:

Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals is essential for the future of humanity. The World Economic Forum is committed to supporting this effort, and working with the United Nations to build a more prosperous and equitable future.

Civil society MGoS disagree. The Multistakeholder Action Group overarching message is that the corporate capture of global governance by the WEF-UN partnership agreement is a dangerous threat to the UN System and an existential threat to people worldwide.

Civil society organizations are raising the alarm that the UN system is already under a significant threat from the US Government and all those who question a democratic multilateral world. They make the case that this ongoing corporatization will reduce public support for the UN system in the South *and* the North, leaving the system, as a whole, even more vulnerable.

This contestation of the global violation of human rights, calls out the WEF, the IMF, *and* the UN for disguising their economic aggression in the rhetoric of the amelioration of oppression, prejudice and suffering, and concludes with some insights gained from local and regional civil society initiatives in +140 UN member states that are largely ignored by the rich and powerful, but provide a macrostrategy for human survival.

These contentions are grounded in three years of ethnographic research at UN events, including the 2018 and 2019 High Level Political Forums, participation in global email conversations of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) and conversations with high-level representatives of UN Member States.

"There are a large number of governments that don't care one way or other about human rights," a senior UN Official states at the July 2019 UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development.

"If the UN pushes back against human rights violations it is accused of undermining governments," he states. "Many countries do not want 'human rights' mentioned in any discussions or included in any UN documents. If we mention human rights in our strategic plans we get push back."

“What’s happened to Human Rights up Front?” a man in the audience asks.

Human Rights up Front (HRuF) is the Secretary-General’s initiative to strengthen prevention of serious problems with human rights consequences that cut across the UN’s three pillars of: 1) peace and security; 2) development; and 3) human rights.

“Human Rights up Front is in difficulties,” the UN Official states. “It is systematically being broken apart.” The official looks tired and dispirited as he notes that human rights receives only three and a half percent of the UN budget, which is troubling given that it is one of the three pillars.

“We’re off track,” the UN Official states, and the discussion shifts to the views of members of the Security Council who question the relationships between human rights and sustainable development. He states that human rights are not filtering through at the UN. “If we push back on human rights we get accused of undermining governments.” He laments, “Some countries will not use the words ‘civil society’.”

The consistent message at other sessions of the UN HLPF is that “there is a huge sense of urgency” and that “the huge SDG architecture has not delivered.” There is talk of the violation of “moral and ethical boundaries” and that “civil society can no longer function in silence.”

In many of the side events at the HLPF, the acute sense of urgency at sessions organized by Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) is palpable. Speakers and participants share an unsettling energy to “*push forward*,” to “call for action,” and a common purpose to insist that UN Member States be “more accountable,” “more inclusive” and to “leave no one behind.” In contrast, at the session with the UN Official on human rights, he reports that the overriding message from UN Member States is to “*push back*”.

The UN Official speaks at length about the *push back* against the UN human rights agenda by UN Member States and, sounding tired, he tells the audience that many UN Member States deny the connection between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and human rights. He gives as an example Egypt’s glowing Voluntary National Review (VNR) of their advancement of the SDGs, while violating the human rights of the Egyptian people. He makes the case that many countries have taken a similar stance, lauding the advancement of SDGs in their own country, while ignoring their unacceptable behavior and degradation of their own people.

At the MGoS *Civil Society Forum* that took place on September 24, 2019 at the UNGA, the panel focused on identifying structural barriers to establishing durable partnerships that recognize the interconnections between human societies that governments cannot break. There was concern expressed that the private sector is not accountable, and that there is more private money than public money, which constitutes an emergency for human survival.

While the speakers at the *Civil Society Forum* focused on identifying structural barriers, at the *International Congress on Discrimination on Work and Descent* the speakers demonstrated how to break them down.

Every speaker came from an oppressed group and identified themselves with the 260 million people worldwide who are discriminated against. There were participants at the Congress from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America, and every speaker highlighted the need for inclusion, equity and non-discrimination in human rights if the SDGs are to be achieved by 2030.

“We are resilient unbreakable people,” the first speaker stated. “We have come here not begging. We have come here to demand equality and justice. We say, ‘No to contemporary forms of slavery. We reject violence and discrimination.’ The SDGs have once again left us behind. Two hundred and sixty million people. And who is stopping us? Governments and the UN.”

Speakers focused on the protection of existence and the right of marginalized groups to define themselves. They decried how marginalization becomes internationalized, and that discrimination starts in hearts as well as in minds. But the overarching message, so powerful and so significant, was that

those who perpetuate discrimination against marginalized groups should take into consideration that those who have been left behind are now able to come together to unite and to fight for their rights.

“We have come here to declare our freedom,” a speaker shouts. “The freedom of the people. Not the freedom of the nation. The freedom of the people!”

The World Economic Forum and the International Monetary Forum (IMF) are under verbal fire by MGoS who decry the huge economic impact on governance of UN Member States and the UN forming a conduit for the WEF and IMF to co-op the 2030 SDGs. The MGoS pierce the thin benevolent shell of these world controlling economic organizations that deny the inclusion of human rights in mission or focus, but embrace the SDGs, which in fact have a human rights mandate.

“The end of the world is competing with the end of money,” a speaker states.

“The global governance that is needed to address the SDGs does not exist. Does not exist!” a speaker states.

“It’s not just about achieving policies that are needed. It’s a complete rethinking of the interrelationships between policies and governance.”

“It starts at the local level. Strengthening local communities and the capacity of local communities”

“Why are we allowing the WEF and IMF to co-opt the SDGs?”

“Twenty first century capitalism is reshaping inequalities. The WEF and IMF are driving inequalities.”

“No UN member state is on track to achieve the SDGs.”

“How do we operationalize for a common cause – the survival of humanity?”

The UN has transformative choices to make. MGoS are aching for UN Member States to place the experiences of the most vulnerable in human societies at the center of a re-visioning of governance—it is the only way we will sustain life on this planet.

The climate has changed, the temperature is rising, and none of us can go back. The UN’s *Strategic Partnership Agreement* with the World Economic Forum will accelerate the existential risks confronting humanity. We are hurtling forward and we must insist on the establishment of a practical political project that disrupts the status quo, a universal political project that is intolerant of corruption, accepts the challenge of social, economic and political reconstruction, and recognizes it is the most vulnerable people in human societies who hold the key to human survival.

It is past time for global governance.