

**WVF PEACE AND SECURITY SUMMIT
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**OPENING SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE WVF
AT THE WVF PEACE AND SECURITY SUMMIT 2013**

Our mission at this Summit is to establish how veterans can contribute to peace and security in society. To accomplish this mission, we have first of all to fully understand the words “peace” and “security”.

Peace is generally defined as a state of harmony resulting from freedom from war and freedom from civil disorder. In other words peace exists within a secured environment or within the environment of security.

Security is defined as a degree of resistance to, or protection from harm. Therefore, it is correct to say that in order to have peace we must first of all have security in place or, we can put it in a more concise way by saying “no security, no peace”. Security therefore forms the basis for peace.

Let us now examine the concept of security. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in the past the concept of security had been interpreted narrowly as security from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy, or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. It had been focused more to nation states than to people.

The legitimate concerns of the ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives were forgotten. For many of them, security symbolized protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards.

With the end of the Cold War era, we can now see that many conflicts are within nations rather than between nations. Based on these findings, the UNDP had recently changed the concept of security in two basic ways: Firstly, from an exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people’s security; secondly, from security through armaments to security through sustainable human development.

According to UNDP, human security is the all embracing element to ensure peace because it provides all the ingredients for national, regional and global security. The list of threats to human security is long, but most can be considered under seven main categories. They are Economic Security; Food Security; Health Security; Environmental Security; Personal Security; Community Security and Political Security.

Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with life and dignity. According to UNDP, the basic concept of human security is focused on four essential characteristics.

Firstly, Human security is a universal concern. It is relevant to people everywhere, in rich and in poor countries. There are many threats that are common to all people – such as unemployment, drugs, crime, pollution and human rights violations. Their intensity may differ from one part of the world to another, but all these threats to human security are real and growing.

Secondly, components of human security are interdependent. When the security of people is endangered anywhere in the world, all nations are likely to get involved. Famine, disease, pollution, drug trafficking, terrorism, ethnic disputes and social disintegration are no longer isolated events within national borders. Their consequences travel the globe.

Thirdly, Human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention. It is less costly to meet these threats upstream than downstream.

Fourthly, Human security is people-centered. It is concerned with how people live and breathe in society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities – and whether they live in conflict or in peace.

Ever since the inception of the WVF, we have been telling the whole world that as those who have been involved and experienced the horrors of wars, we as veterans are the best people to speak about peace. We did this religiously in line with our credo, pleading with the international community to resolve their differences by peaceful means. It appears to me that very few have been listening to us. This is evident by the increasing number of conflicts as the years passed by.

According to a recent UNDP report, conflicts in the post–Cold War era have claimed more than 5 million casualties, 95% of them were civilians. The report further stated that the majority of security threats currently come not from other countries but from insurgencies, terrorism and other civil conflicts. These facts have reinforced their views that peace can only be achieved by establishing human security within the state.

Based on the changing policies of the UNDP, I think it is logical for us as strong supporters of the United Nations to review our role in the promotion of peace and security so that it is in line with those policies.

Our role could perhaps be in making sure that governments carry out relevant activities pertaining to the development of human security which, according to UNDP is crucial in ensuring peace at national, regional and global level.

I am confident that we can play this role and we can do so very well because as veterans we had been trained in the creation and the maintenance of security and all of us have acquired excellent experience as agents of security in our respective countries. Furthermore, a large number of us have served in peace missions in many parts of the world.

That being the case, the question before us now is: How do we play such a role? I leave it entirely to you as participants of this summit to come up with the relevant answers.