

What Role Should the United Nations Play in the Ever-Changing Today's Global World

ABSTRACT

We are living in an era very different to the one that our parents or grandparents have lived. The world is changing tremendously and will continue its transformation leaving to our imagination what it would look like after 20 or 30 years. The technological progress gives the people one of today's powerful instruments and that is the power to be connected. The internet access opens a new world of opportunities, like being able to communicate, to be informed, to make business, to learn and study and positively influence the less developed countries in economic and social aspect.

The unlimited access of information always carries the need to understand how to use it appropriately in order to be safe in the virtual space. It also arise the need for introduction of framework, like internet governance that could help preserving our privacy rights and the rights of our children. The organisation that could mitigate risks associated to children, to privacy, to intellectual property rights, to national security, is the United Nations. As a very influent organisation, the United Nations is capable of presenting new legal instrument for regulating the interrelations between consumers and providers of internet service.

People are the heart of everything and even though the digitalization is absorbing into our life, making it easier, we forgot to stay together and somehow we disconnect to each other. People need more than ever to be heard, to be understood, to feel important and to be involved in creating their future and the future of their children. United Nations should learn the lessons from the past and focus more on people and less on bureaucracy in order to avoid future failures. The public trust in big organisations or unions should be restored implying the need for more flexible approach to information and communication. The role of the United Nations in the ever changing world should be

not necessary linked to the technological progress; it could be link to something that needs to be revised in this connection or something that has been lost.

Ever-changing today's global world implies the need for a change and it has to start inside by reforms, legal and administrative. The United Nations should functions in a way that is transparent without showing signs for serving national interests for some of its powerful Member countries. Probably there is a time for rewriting the UN Charter, a time for presenting instruments for promoting the implementation of its initiatives, a time for transformation of its structures.

In 2015 the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted making it one of the most ambitious documents, covering broad range of social and economic development issues. Because of its non-binding principles the implementation of the targets started to suffer and opens serious treats for its final completion. The need for effective reform of the UN development system is growing in line with the need for more flexible, predictable and integrated multi-partner financing. Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires a more systematic, coordinated and comprehensive approach to capacity development.

The transition from planned to market economy has influenced a lot the labour market thus the family environment and the traditions. Work migration increases, leaving many villages and small towns uninhabited and families separated. As one of the biggest employers the United Nations by its recruitment system should continue promoting flexible and remote jobs and encouraging governments of introducing them as a factor of restoring the family as a unit. The opportunity for working at home will provide balance between working career and family life, could support uninhabited places and the economic independence of people. More opportunities for people with little experience should be given as far as the United Nations wants to be accessible to everyone.

Finally, one of the most important beneficiaries of the United Nations activities is the younger generation. Younger people are those who are the consumers of the United Nations work and by acting as an ambassador it should reach as many as possible of those who will afterwards have to continue United Nations work and to fight problems of their time.

The world is changing with faster pace than we ever image 5 or 10 years ago. We experience one of the biggest financial and economic crises in 2008; we saw the faces of terror through the terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels, Moscow, Boston, the United Kingdom and the chemical attack in Syria. We face natural disasters, like the earthquake in Japan and witness one of the massive migrant flows in Europe since the World War II. To the world was introduced the first humanoid robot “Sophia”, who is also a Saudi citizen and according to her, she is here to help humanity and create the future. A new digital currency – bitcoin was created making it the first decentralized payment system. The world has changed and inevitably it will continue its transformation. The technological revolution is spreading in many economic sectors and according to Microsoft by 2025 and beyond some of the current professions will be replaced by new ones. Space tour guides will show the location of satellites and pieces of junk in orbit; human body designers will combine design skills with bio-engineering know-how to create customised human parts; personal content creator will help people to increase the storage capacity of their overstretched minds or ethical technology advocate will negotiate the relationship with the robots and their makers, by setting the moral and ethical rules under which the machines operate and exist. The introduction of new technologies always carries the need to understand how to use it appropriately and the questions suddenly arise: “Are we prepared for the future?”, “Who will protect our rights?” and “Is there time for reforms?”.

PRIVACY ISSUE

Billions of people around the globe have gained access to the internet since the World Wide Web launched in 1991. At the end of 2017 around 48% of world population is using an internet connection with the proportion of young people aged 15-24 significantly higher (71%)¹. For regions like Africa the population able to go online is 22% opening a new world of opportunities, like being able to communicate, to be informed, to make business, to learn and study. This access of information can be defined as Freedom of Information which is an integral part of the fundamental right of freedom of expression, as recognized by Resolution 59 of the UN General Assembly adopted in 1946, as well as by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which states that the fundamental right of freedom of expression encompasses

¹ ITU World Telecommunication /ICT Indicators database

the freedom to “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”.

But with this technological progress and unlimited access of information we have to be aware of the consequences this will impose to our everyday life and to be prepared for the price that we have to pay. Estrangement from each other, loss of communication capabilities and sense of reality, manipulations are some of the side effects of this fast world development. Being one of the most powerful and influent organisation, the United Nations (UN) should stand up for being able to protect our human rights in the virtual space from those trying to sell our personal data for political reasons or for persuading into certain ideology or policy. Now when the company accused in this crime “Cambridge Analytica” is declaring bankruptcy and shutting down its business how this illegally misused information of 87 million users of Facebook is going to be punished. There should be one worldwide organisation, like UN capable of regulating the interrelations between consumers and providers of internet service; an organisation responsible for meeting the rights and the obligations of the both sides, which defends our freedom of expression. This organisation should be able to mitigate risks associated to children, to privacy, to intellectual property rights, to national security.

Search giant, like Google for example can store unlimited amount of personal information, like your location, gender, age, hobbies, career, interests, relationship status, possible weight and income. Google knows everything you’ve ever searched – and deleted. Google can create an advertisement profile based on your information and can store information on every app and extension you use (Dylan Curran). It became much more startling when internet access put in danger the security of our children. According to the Internet Watch Foundation, 57,335 uniform resource locators contained child sexual abuse material in 2016. Of these, 60 % were hosted in Europe and 37 % in North America. About 80% of children under the age of five years use the Internet weekly. Moreover as children get older, their use of the Internet also increases². And this is not the only problem. Children are more likely to be manipulated through internet by copying different patterns of behaviour, which further influence positive or negative their life and the way they form themselves. Combating crimes against children

² <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/technologylive/post/2011/03/study-80-percent-of-children-under-5-use-internet-weekly/1#.WvqXRxuFMkj>

should be shared responsibility between teachers, schools, governments, civil society and the private sector and the organisation able to collaborate and cooperate using its potential of human and financial resources is the UN. UN is the only organisation which over the years had developed administrative and analytical capacity in many economic and social sectors using its structures of agencies and partnerships. All those research-based centres which provide answers to many different problems should be used by incorporating its recommendations and solutions into certain policy actions. UN should encourage leaders and policy makers to take into consideration those policy solutions by promoting discussions for revealing their potential. With regard to this, recommendations presented in the UNICEF report³ should be taken into consideration for more effective policymaking as well as the guidance for children in different age group on child online protection, developed by International Telecommunication Union (ITU)⁴:

Controlling the Internet is a fundamental aspect of the Internet policy, but can be challenging for many countries. Most of them have put some level of censorship to protect their nation interest. However, the degree of online censorship can vary significantly. That is why it is difficult to develop a coherent global privacy rights framework with Internet data increasingly flowing around the world and passing through multiple jurisdictions, each with its own data privacy regulations. At European Union level the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), provides this legal framework of data flows for protecting citizens and businesses.

Prof. Joseph Cannataci who was appointed as the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy, stresses the need for Urgent action to protect privacy in cyberspace to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on 6 March 2018. In his oral speech he noted that an international legal instrument designed to respect and protect the right to privacy in cyberspace is essential. Internet governance is one instrument to strengthen the control over the cyberspace with the relevant legislative framework recognising

³ The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World

⁴ [https://www.itu.int/en/cop/Documents/S-GEN-COP.CHILD-2016-PDF-E\[1\].pdf](https://www.itu.int/en/cop/Documents/S-GEN-COP.CHILD-2016-PDF-E[1].pdf)

national specificities. Internet governance can help supporting economic and social development and can indirectly contribute to the achievement of some of the Sustainable Development Goals, like improving health and wellbeing (SDG 3), expanding educational opportunity (SDG 4), achieving gender equity (SDG 5) and tackling inequality (SDG 10). Taking into account the raising power of internet and the problem with privacy a new Sustainable Development Goal is worth included. This goal could replace some of the targets set in the ITU Global Cybersecurity Agenda (2007-2014) for international cooperation aiming at enhancing confidence and security in the information society.

For building strong internet governance the role of the ITU will be important by its capacity over the years in the field of information and communication technology and by its reports, studies and researches can be a powerful instrument for addressing the main challenges with the right policy actions.

CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE

Even though we are connected to the world and have access to huge amount of information somehow we stay disconnected and uninformed. For example it would be impossible to say that the initiatives that the UN undertakes in different aspects of the economic and social fields are unknown for the people. But that is exactly what happens and the more we develop the more, essential and important things are left underappreciated. The role of the UN in the ever changing world should be not necessarily linked to the technological progress; it could be something that needs to be revised in this connection or something that has been lost. In the ever changing world we, the people have forgotten the power to stay together to be close to each other.

In his speech on 18 September 2017 the current United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres openly express his willingness to “bring decision-making closer to the people” and that UN should be “focused more on people and less on process” and “more on delivery and less on bureaucracy”.

This expression of concern is the first step for voluntary recognition of emerging problem. UN should stay the organization that predict and anticipate unfavourable events, organization that helps changing the world in a positive direction. Solving a

problem especially in a world dynamic transformation requires different approach, flexibility, knowledge and awareness.

This bottom-up proposal of the Secretary-General for governance the decision-making process will give more power to the people and will limit the barriers between politicians and citizens. European Union is another big structure of countries, which also recognize the need for bringing Europe closer to the people. The fading public trust in the Union started to appear since the start of the financial and economic crisis in 2008. This rising discontent among the people flashed within the speech of Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, at the European Parliament in November 2014, where he proclaims: 'Either we succeed in bringing the European citizens closer to Europe — or we will fail'. Bratislava Declaration adopted in September 2016 is another instrument for encouraging the communication among Member States, with the EU institutions, and mostly with the European citizens. The commitments declared will have to restore citizen's trust of the functioning of the EU and its necessity. The power of people voice can break a union, can change policies, can transform priorities and can make history. The Brexit referendum which took place on 23 June 2016 in the United Kingdom, shows how much the ignorance of people needs and the forgotten promises can ruin something that was built decades. This negativism and scepticism is the result of the failure of politicians and policy-makers to ensure the security of their citizens, their interests and the future of their children.

This is an important lesson that the UN should consider in the short term in order to avoid future failures and insecurities. It is significantly more difficult to lead an unified policy, coordinated among 193 Member countries, there is indeed a great difference between UN and the European Union ideology, but the more big and complex a system is, the more difficult is to be understandable and will remain underestimated by the ordinary people. The citizens of the UN Member countries need to better understand how the UN works, how by its work the organisation affects their daily lives; but more importantly, they need to feel that they are fully part of the UN's idea.

One of the evidences of how incomprehensible an organization can be is the Brexit. A significant part of the decision taken by the citizens was influenced by the lack of knowledge from the benefits that a Union can bring. This ignorance is not limited only to the UK but is spreading to other countries. Blame can be found in the inability of

politicians to promote in a simple way the pros and cons of such commitment. UN is a project that influences the lives of millions people that is why the citizens must be place at the centre of each political action. This implies the need for a more global and flexible approach to information and communication, and more effective and focused cooperation among different structures and bodies within the organisation and with other institutions such as World Bank, EU, OECD and ect.

TIME FOR REFORMS

Legal amendments

As a larger organization, the UN faces most of the challenges, which EU faces too. Even if it was created earlier, people do not know about many of its functions, structures and policies. With the preamble of the Charter of the UN which started as “We the peoples of the United Nations” we need to ask ourselves: “Why is that opening line notable?” Because today for us outside the system and not involved by specific way within its activities, the UN seems to serve to narrow national interests for its powerful Member countries.

One example of how one country can influence the implementation of UN policy without consequences and to ignore joint commitment of 195 nations for a problem affecting our planet is the Paris agreement on Climate Change. On 1 June 2017, Mr. Trump withdraws from the Agreement and immediately ceases its implementation. The US is the second biggest polluter behind China and its exit raised questions over whether the goals set by the Paris Agreement could still be met. The withdrawal reduces other countries' emission space and raises their emission costs, and refusal to contribute to climate aid makes it more difficult for developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change (ZHANG Hai-Bina). Since there are no concrete penalties for a country who step out from an agreement, it should had at least morally and ethically commitments to honor it. This act of disrespect of something that was voluntary accepted is a signal that something should be changed in order to avoid situations like this and to provide sustainable implementation of UN initiatives. People's faith in the UN ability to really accomplish its mission is fading. It is true and timely reaffirmation by the Secretary-General that “We need to rekindle faith in multilateralism and confidence in the United Nations as the place where States and civil society can come together to face the most pressing challenges in the world today”. Probably there is a time of legislative amendments, a

time for rewriting UN Charter. Even though UN is an organization which facilitates the coordination among its Member countries, it needs to strengthen its functions by increasing its power of influence. The last amendment of the UN Charter was on 24 September 1973 where the UN Economic and Social Council Membership was increased. How to stick to a policy if you don't have instrument to promote its implementation? If you take the European Union for example there are legal tools that the European Commission can use to encourage a Member State to commit to its obligations, such as the Stability and Growth Pact, the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure and ect. Taking into account that the full potential of those instruments was never been applied, which is a weakness of the Commission work, it represent a way to get the Member States involved.

Administrative transformations

Another very interesting thing is that the maintenance of international peace and security is a responsibility of the Security Council which has 15 Members (5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members). Outside this membership UN Members can participate without a vote. There are still 60 countries that haven't been elected as Members of the Security Council. Why such an important subject as peace and security is decided by only 15 countries? How come the procedure for the election of new Members has never been changed since 1963? Those are important questions that affect every single person and the answers to which we will probably never receive. But going back to the problem of moving away the decision making process from the people, there is a room for manoeuvre which could decrease this distance. An open public consultation will be an example for discussing eventual change in the rules of the election process in the Security Council. Another option is to promote and present in a comprehensible manner why and how the Security Council work.

Increasing the transparency and the effectiveness of the UN flashed in the report of the Secretary-General for the work of the Organization. The report is more like a snapshot of the main activities rather than what the UN is actually achieved through the year and unveils needs for reform momentum. It once again shows how UN is understandable for the people not dealing with public or local administration, governance or involved in decision making process. Outside the structures of the UN, its activities are still unpopular for the people and represent only the next proclaimed promise.

If we looked at the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development some could say that is very ambitious other that is right on track, but we have to remember the history and what happen to same of the strategies that were introduced like the Lisbon strategy or the Europe 2020 strategy, which is still implemented but on his final stage. Those strategies were a failure even though they started with strong commitment and political ownership. With fewer targets the focus on the strategies was moved and the results are not very impressive. Mr. Guterres also confirms at the Economic and Social Council on 27 February 2018 that there are serious threats to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that the UN, especially its development system, must be effectively reformed in order to be able to limit the impact of those threats. The indivisible and interconnected nature of the Sustainable Development Goals has reinforced the need for more flexible, predictable and integrated multi-partner financing. Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires a more systematic, coordinated and comprehensive approach to capacity development. The United Nations development system should be able to provide high quality, evidence-based, integrated policy advice.

For achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals it would require financing of \$5 trillion to \$7 trillion per year with contributions coming from public, private, national and global investment. One of the reasons for delaying the implementation of the Agenda could be due to financial constraints. On 30 November 2016 delegates in the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) of the UN General Assembly expressed disappointment with regards to the UN Secretary-General budget proposal for supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, while also voicing concern over the Secretariat's handling of programme budget assessments for regional commissions. The United Nations development system still relies heavily on a few donors. In 2016, three donors (the United States, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Germany) accounted for 45 % of contributions received from Governments and 35 % of total contributions to the United Nations development system. Such reliance on a limited number of donors makes the UN susceptible to a sudden shift in overall funding, should any of its top donors have a policy change.

Wherever we think of decision making process we have to be aware of the people really involved in this process and that is the senior level management. This is where the ideas came to life and where they are developed. The senior level management has loose its

influence and engagement over the years and has been put behind the policy scene. One of the urgent needs that the UN should take into consideration is to revive their role in order really to allow experts to design policy actions. The UN is actually realizing this gap in the policy making process and has started a review for the situation of the senior level management, which is visible in the Report of the work of the Organisation presented by the Secretary-General.

Another aspect of how the world has changed is the way he transformed our lives. The old traditions have been forgotten, the family as a unit lose their meaning and the pure nature of relationships was desecrated. One of the reasons for this is the transition from planned economy to a market economy. The inequality in incomes in the period of market economy has increased, as well as the unemployment and with that the functioning of the labour market. Ahead with the advantages that a market economy can bring, it negatively influences the destiny of many families. Why is that, because the labour market requires more flexible labour force, with different and specific qualifications. The old professions have started to disappear, as a result of the digitalisation; regional mobility has increased leaving smaller villages and towns uninhabited. People were forced to change their current location of living, persuading new highly paid job for supporting their family or just looking for a better perspective for their future. As a big employer UN could be a very good example of how we have to take advantage of the digitalisation. Because the world is changing so fast we have to find ways to use the positive side of this change and to compensate for the loses. For example the UN recruitment system provides opportunities for people all over the world to joint its structures, it also give opportunity working at home which is something that could help for achieving a balance between working career and family life. This way of working could support uninhabited places by reducing the level of migration and to increase the economic independence of people. UN should continue to provide those kinds of contract relations and to further increase the supply of remote jobs. As an influent organisation, UN could enforce governments or other organisations to encourage those underdeveloped methods of working, which could at the end contribute not only to the functioning of the labour market and to influence the hall economy, but could have positive effect on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Something that is good to be mention is the need UN to give more opportunities for people with little experience or to expand its job positions to low or to senior level of

consultants. This will give more chances for those willing to be part of the system, but not being able to fit the heavy requirements and the procedure of the UN recruitment system.

SPREADING KNOWLEDGE

The most powerful instrument is the knowledge and we acquired it by learning each and every single day. Younger people are those who are the consumers of this tool and by acting as a teacher UN should spread its main messages, its missions, its commitments and policies. The volunteering programme offered by UN is a good example for positively effecting people's lives. But this is not enough if we want to use the full potential of the UN's services. Most of the UN's beneficiaries are coming from least developed countries which are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets. Currently those countries accounted 47 and have exclusive access to certain international support measures in particular in the areas of development assistance and trade. But beside those countries what is the percentage of people really familiar with the UN activities? This is in fact the most important task the UN should do, to promote among people especially the youth about its role and because the world is changing so fast it should act as a teacher spreading its knowledge and as an ambassador achieving balance, proclaiming trust. The younger generation is the one who will benefit from this role of the UN, because depending on how effectively UN plays his role and implements its policies now, it will influence tomorrow on our children future.

More communication campaigns will be needed for better implementing this role of UN. The lack of knowledge is the most destroying quality of our society and even though we live in the age of technology, the specialization has moral and pragmatic consequences and as "The Guardian" post: "Individually, we depend more on our technologies than ever before – but we can do more than ever before. Collectively, technology has made us smarter, more capable and more productive. What technology has not done is make us wiser." UN should find the best way to continue implementing its main purposes and to make sure the younger generation is a good successor. Now is the time to hand down a brighter picture of our society, planet and universe so they can be more free to invent methods how to improve this brightness.

CONCLUSIONS

We've come a long way, passing by different cycles of evolution, trying to put together what we have learn over those years to become what we are now. This road has shown to us that the ultimate value is to be united. Our joint efforts are the key to our success and as far as we stay together we could accomplish anything. The ever-changing world desire never stopping needs, needs that are determined by our willingness to be developed and to stay up to date. Natural resources can be non-renewable, but our knowledge and appetite for searching new channels for closing the gap of our never stopping needs can be unlimited. But as long as the world is changing, we have to protect our essence – our humanity.

Today ever changing world will be different to the one in the future and if today we are struggling to protect our personal data, to defend the privacy of our children, to deal with problems like disconnection from each another, in the future those things would be unfamiliar to us. National Geographic unveiled some of the transformation we will witness. The artificial intellect will dominate our life and will be in the basis of all technologies. We would be able to travel in the cyberspace, to have our personal avatar, to being able to restart ourselves. This will envisage a hall new concept of policy making and thinking and the UN should be ready to response to those changes adequately. The world will require then different approach of communications and needs, we will have new package of targets to follow in order to tackle the emerging problems.

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