27 June, 2014

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a Summary of the key messages that emerged from the Thematic Debate of the General Assembly "Responding to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century: Human security and the post-2015 development agenda", which I convened on 18 June 2014.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

John W. Ashe

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

<u>**Summary of the Key Messages**</u>

<u>**Thematic Debate of the General Assembly**</u>

<u>**"Responding to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century: Human security and the post-2015 development agenda"**</u>

<u>**United Nations Headquarters, New York**</u>

<u>**18 June 2014**</u>

I.   **Overview**

On 18 June 2014, the President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly hosted the thematic debate "Responding to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century: Human security and the post-2015 development agenda".

The objective of this debate was to enable Member States to respond to the recommendations contained in the latest report of the Secretary-General (A/68/685) and also to provide an opportunity for an exchange of views on how human security could be included in the next development framework. The exchanges during the debate built upon existing good practices at national, regional and international level, which have demonstrated the positive effect of the use of human security as an integrative approach towards peace, development and human rights for all. Finding solutions to address climate change, as well preventing relapse into conflict by addressing disparities and inequalities, were specifically addressed in the debate.

The meeting was opened with statements of the President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly, Ambassador John Ashe, and the UN Deputy Secretary General, Jan Eliasson.

Following the introductory statement, a panel discussion, moderated by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Human Security, Yukio Takasu, allowed for an exchange of views by Member States, academics and practitioners, focusing on the implementation of the human security approach, achieved results and possible way ahead. The following panelists contributed to the debates: Des Gasper, Professor at the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague; Sonia Picado, Chair of the Advisory Board on Human Security; Thierry Alia, Minister Counselor to the Permanent Mission of Benin to the UN; Juan Pulhin, Professor and Dean at the College of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of the Philippines Los Baños; Oulie Keita, Regional Representative of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. 13 speakers took the floor, two of them on behalf of several Member States.

Overall, there was agreement that the human security approach proved to offer useful frameworks and tools to address sustainable development and to tackle poverty. While a few participants voiced concerns, in particular with respect to possible overlaps between development processes, recommendations were made with respect to the ways human security could contribute to the post-2015 development agenda,

II.   Opening Statements

The President of the General Assembly underscored how the human security approach and its principles recognize the intrinsic linkages between the three fundamental pillars of the United Nations – development, peace and security and human rights – and give expression to the commitments agreed to by the General Assembly "to ensure greater inclusive social and economic development, environmental sustainability, and peace and security". He noted that by focusing on the multiple dimensions of poverty, and based on its use of disaggregated data, the human security approach can help Member States and UN entities to better understand the complex situation of individuals and communities living below national poverty lines. The President also invited participants to reflect on ideas for further consideration in the ongoing discussions on the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson noted that in view of the growing violence and extremism in many regions of the world, coupled with the persistent threats of climate change, poverty and inequality, it is clear that the principles enshrined in human security – freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity – can be instrumental in addressing challenges as diverse as climate change, rural poverty, rapid urbanization and post-conflict reconstruction. Reflecting on the third report of the Secretary-General on human security, the Deputy Secretary-General stated that the application of human security can have a positive impact on removing obstacles to sustainable development and tackling poverty. To this end, he invited Member States to consider how the underlying principles of human security can be applied to the post-2015 development agenda.

III.   Highlights of the Panel Discussion
a)   *Implementation of the Human Security Approach*

Participants recalled that the application of human security provides a framework to link, integrate and focus other approaches while adding new insights in what is experienced as insecurity. As a result, human security highlights the dynamic nature of vulnerabilities and the many forces touching people's lives; it connects to the work on human rights and human development; and it promotes a case-specific and comprehensive framework to analyze the intersection of forces and dimensions that threaten people's lives and their aspirations to be free from fear and free from want.

Statements highlighted that human security has allowed the international community to move away from the traditional State-centric notion of security and underscored its added value in addressing complex and often inter-related nature of threats. The added value of the approach is its focus on individuals and communities, as well as on the root causes of threats and insecurities. To this end, the human security approach can be a tool to develop targeted, sustainable and preventative responses that are tailored to local necessities and that strengthen national capacities and ownership. Moreover, participants underlined that the human security approach should be seen as a universal framework to respond effectively to the challenges that lie at the intersection of peace and security, development and human rights.

Participants also stressed the merits of a context-specific approach. Human security ensures necessary flexibility in this respect. As shown by the experience of Benin and of other countries implementing a human security approach, the lasting stability of States is only feasible as long as human security is guaranteed. Similarly, in-depth analysis of the instability in Mali highlighted the need for an integrative approach that goes beyond the compartmentalized humanitarian, economic and security agendas. Therefore, promoting measures focused on human beings and adapted to each individual context must remain the objective of human security, with the principal axes being (a) the reduction of risks of conflicts, (b) the elimination of obstacles to development, and (c) the advancement of human rights for all.

Several participants stressed that the human security approach provides a holistic solution to address various interrelated insecurities across multiple sectors, helping communities to build positive coping mechanisms to deal with many different types of challenges to their daily lives.

Several speakers commended the work of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), which applies the tools and methodologies of the human security approach through the projects it supports across the globe. Calls were made with a view to enhance the financing for the Trust Fund. Other concrete suggestions related to enhancing those institutional structures that are implementing the human security approach.

Several participants underlined that human security approach has generated real positive change in the lives of vulnerable people resulting in (i) a higher sense of dignity by partner communities who were active in the design and implementation of the projects, (ii) a larger sense of national and local ownership, and (iii) a greater determination to expand the gains made under the project to other groups and geographical locations.

Some statements referred to climate change as a challenge posing serious threats to human security, as it undermines livelihoods, compromises culture and identity, increases migration that people would have rather avoided, and challenges the ability of States to provide the conditions necessary for human security. Climate change can also increase risks of violent conflicts by amplifying the drivers of conflict such as poverty and displacement which fuel rivalries over scarce resources. Human security approach can add value in strengthening adaptation and community resilience by enabling dialogues across diverse policy communities; fostering a more holistic and integrated approach to vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning; and addressing differentiated vulnerability in a more responsive manner.

b) *Human Security and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*

A majority of participants highlighted the added value of human security to the post-2015 development framework. Several proposals have been put forward.

Some saw human security as an overarching framework for the articulation of the post-2015 development agenda. Others considered the principles of human security should be incorporated in the framework of the post-2015 development agenda. Human security approach can, at the same time, inform and enrich Member States' deliberations on the next global development agenda.

A few participants recalled the principle of national ownership which should be applied when implementing the human security approach, in line with the common understanding of 2012 (A/Res/66/290). They underscored that human security does not replace State security. Suggestions were made with a view to seek further clarifications of the mentioned common understanding. The idea of incorporating human security principles in the post-2015 development agenda was questioned, as a few underlined that some elements of the approach are not reflected in the realm of either MDGs or "Rio+20" outcome document.

A delegation questioned also the added value of human security, asking if the results achieved with the implementation of the human security approach are not stemming from a better coordination between the UN agencies. Further reflection would be also necessary on what generates human insecurity al global level.

IV.   Closing Remarks

Speaking on behalf of the President of General Assembly, Vice-President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Charles Ntwaagae of Botswana, noted that the contribution of the human security approach, as a comprehensive tool for responding to complex and multiple challenges, was a common theme throughout the discussion. Moreover, the discussion highlighted that the human security approach is particularly valuable in assisting with project design, strategic planning and policymaking across a wide range of thematic and institutional settings, not only in the context of fragile states but in all societies. He expressed his hope that the experiences and ideas exchanged at the debate will inspire further initiatives in all regions and countries, as well as at the United Nations.