

UN @ 75: Why Should We Celebrate?
My Letter to the Residents of the Planet Earth [ROPE]
10-10-2020

Dear Fellow Residents of the Planet Earth:

On October 24, 1945, representatives of 50 nations met in San Francisco and created a new multinational organization called the **United Nations Organization**. On that momentous day the UN charter was ratified by China, France, Soviet Union, UK, U.S. and a majority of signatories. Subsequently, in 1971 the UN General Assembly by Resolution 2782 declared October 24, “the United Nations Day” devoted to making known to the residents of our planet the aims and achievements of the UN and to gaining their support for its work.

Once again, on October 24, 2020 people of the world will celebrate the United Nations Day. **Should we, as residents of the planet earth, be celebrating the UN Day?** My purpose in writing this to you is to provide you with some very basic information about the work of the UN as it functions today so that you can be the judge.

Today, the UN represents probably 99.9 percent of our earth's human population comprising 193 nation states and, as you will see, its endeavors embrace practically every conceivable facet of human and planetary existence.

At the outset, let me assert that the UN, even with its all-embracing agenda, is by no means or measure a “world government”. Over its short 75-year life, the UN has grown into a **system** of mutually supporting and cooperating agencies established to promote and maintain peace among nations and to sustain, protect and enhance the well-being of the residents of our planet, as expressed and quoted here almost entirely from the near poetic **preamble to the UN Charter**:

“We the peoples of the United Nations determined

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and

to affirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedoms,

and for these ends

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and

to united our strengths to maintain international peace and security, and

to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

to employ international machinery for the promotion of economic and social advancement of all peoples,

have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims”

Now, allow me to note briefly the **structure and system** of the United Nations. Its major departments are comprised of: the General Assembly; the Security Council; the Economic and Social Council[ECOSOC]; the International Court of Justice; the Trusteeship Council; the Secretariat; and the Budget. To do justice to each of these UN departments will demand a full book size space to narrate which I shall forego to not bore you.

The UN system includes Funds, Programs and Research and Training Institutes, a total of about 20 entities. Examples include: International Trade Centre; Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS; United Nations Development Program; UN Environment Program; UN Population Fund; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees; The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UNICEF; UN Institute for Training and Research; UN Office on Drugs and Crime; UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and the World Food Program[more about WFP later].

As for the **UN Specialized Agencies** and Related Entities they include the following: Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Labor Organization; International Monetary Fund; UNESCO; International Telecommunications Union; World Health Organization; World Meteorological Organization; World Bank Group; International Atomic Energy Agency; World Trade Organization. Again, it would be impossible for me to describe even very briefly the work and accomplishments of these UN specialized agencies. For all practical purposes these agencies function as partially or totally autonomous entities. They function under their own Boards and operate primarily with voluntary contributions from member states.

The UN Peacekeeping Program

At least a few words about the UN Peacekeeping Program is required. Although there is no direct reference to it in the UN Charter, armed conflicts among UN Members moved the UN administration and members to respond during the early years of UN. In 1948, the UN established its first Peacekeeping unit: United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East. Since then, the UN has established 72 such operations around the world, 14 of which are continuing today in various parts of the world. This is

probably the largest program under the UN auspices with a multi-billion dollar budget.

The UN and Climate Change

In 1988, concern for the deteriorating environmental quality and protection of our planet, two UN agencies – United Nations Environmental Program and World Meteorological Organization established the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change[IPCC]** to assess the science related to Climate Change, including its impacts and future risks and provide options for adaptation and mitigation. For its path-breaking work, the IPCC shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with the U.S. Vice-President Al Gore. Based on the ongoing work and warnings of IPCC, in 1992 the nations of the world came together in Rio de Janeiro to sign *The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[UNFCCC]*. Other climate change conventions followed ending with the **2015 Paris Agreement** which resulted in nations agreeing to further strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change. Our country, the U.S., a one time champion and leader behind the UN effort, has now sadly withdrawn from the Paris accord. Our country is regrettably divided on this issue although a majority according to polls support more government action in keeping with the Paris accord.

The World Food Program

On October 9, 2020, the **UN World Food Program** was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to combat a surge in global hunger amid the coronavirus pandemic, which has swept around the world with devastating impact. In awarding the Prize, Berit Reiss-Andersen, the Chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee said, among others, “in the face of the pandemic, the World Food Program has demonstrated an impressive ability to intensify its efforts ... the Combination of violent conflict and the pandemic has led to a dramatic rise in the number of people living on the brink of starvation”. According to the New York Times [10/9/20], “As the global fallout from the pandemic began this spring, the World Food Program estimated that the number of people experiencing life-threatening levels of food insecurity could more than double this year to 265 million. The World Food Program -- the largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security internationally – last year provided assistance to nearly 100 million people in 88 countries.” The N. Y. Times article adds “The World Food Program, established in 1961 after a proposal by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, has been a major behind-the-scenes player helping people affected by some of the world's most devastating humanitarian disasters, including famine in Ethiopia in 1980s, wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the 2004 Asian tsunami and the 2010 Haiti earthquake.”

By stopping at this point I do not wish to imply that I have said all I wish to say about the UN. There is much to be noted with respect to UN's major involvement with the

huge issues of **refugees and displaced persons and with regards to human Rights.** **The UN High Commissioner for Refugees[UNHCR]** is mandated to aid and protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, stateless people, and others classified as “persons of concern”, and assist in their repatriation to a third country. Over 65 years of its life the UNHCR has assisted an estimated over 65 million people. As of June 2020 the UNHCR has over 20 million refugees alone under its mandate.

[I will take up the issue of Human Rights in another letter in future.]

Closing Thoughts

Dear residents of the Planet Earth: I am using the term “residents” advisedly not to confuse it with “citizens” which has different implications. I had not expected this letter to be so long but when you note the scope, scale and dimensions of the work of the UN system you can understand my quandary.

Let me say this outright: UN is not perfect as no human managed institution can be perfect. I don't even know what the term “perfect” means here. I can be as critical of the UN as the next person. But one does not need to denigrate the UN. There is room for reform and the process of reform is ongoing So the question is: how do we make the UN a more effective tool for human and planetary betterment. Humans have proved to be capable of accomplishing unimaginable feats. Look at the physical world and you will see more than enough to keep you in utter amazement. Why can't we devote our energies and ingenuity to discover methods and approaches to peaceful settlement of interpersonal and international disputes. How do we move the better angels of human nature to do what needs to be done to make this a better, more peaceful world for all the residents of our planet and other. In the final analysis, it is up to us, you and me, residents of planet earth, to educate, convince and inspire our representatives to this great noble conceptual body known as the United Nations to become **The United Nations.**

Russy D. Sumariwalla
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