

**Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS)  
Tokyo Liaison Office**

**Presents**

# **Asian Perspectives on the Role of the United Nations in Addressing Intensifying Global Challenges**

**ACUNS Annual Meeting  
Friday, June 24, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. Geneva, Switzerland**

**Report compiled by: Maciej Witek**

**Ms. HU Weni**

**Vice President and Director-General of the United Nations Association of China, China**



Ms. Hu greeted and welcomed all participants. She stated that nowadays changes in the world are unfolding in ways like never before which is posing challenges that must be taken seriously by the international community. Firstly, multilateralism has been severely undermined. In recent years it has encountered an unprecedented adverse current. Some countries with the pretext of multilateralism engage in a small circle and group politics inside division and confrontation, and vigorously practice hegemony and power politics. These acts harm global peace and security. Geopolitical tensions are on the rise and

even burst into a crisis like what we saw in Ukraine.

Secondly, the COVID 19 pandemic has been raging for more than two years, taking more than 6 million lives, and bringing political, economic, and social damage. So far it has not been effectively controlled around the world. Factors such as uneven vaccine distribution and continuous virus mutations, have greatly hindered the pace of global pandemic prevention and control and cast a shadow on the economic recovery.

Thirdly, COVID 19 has slowed down the improvement in global poverty reduction over the past years. International efforts to implement the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development have been greatly undermined. The global extreme poverty rate rose for the first time in more than 20 years, 119 million to 124 million people in the world have been returning to extreme poverty. If the current trend remains unchanged, the global poverty rate is expected to be 7% in 2030, which will not meet the goal of poverty eradication in 2030. The economic recession and slowing down caused by COVID 19 did not alleviate the climate crisis, the biodiversity loss and ecological environment continue to deteriorate. COVID 19 has also exacerbated the existing inequality among and within some countries. The north-south development divide continues to deepen.

Fourthly, global climate change has continued to intensify. The intergovernmental panel on climate change recently released an assessment report titled “Climate change 2022 – impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability”. The report shows that if human beings do not strictly limit carbon emissions, nature-harming phenomena will increase significantly in the next few decades, and the spread of disease will further accelerate. There are traditional and non-traditional security threats emerging one after another and peace and development are facing severe challenges. The fundamental reason is that multilateralism with the UN as the core has not been effectively practiced. The role of the UN cannot be undermined. All member states of the UN should resolutely uphold the authority and standing of the UN, ensuring the UN plays a leading role in advancing peace, development, and human rights.

Multilateralism is a master key to addressing all global challenges. On one hand, we need to firmly uphold the purposes and principles of the UN charter, advance democracy in international relations, promote equity for all countries in rights, opportunities, and rules. Adhere to the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits in global governance. Increase the representation and voice of developing countries. On the other hand, we must oppose the practice of small circles and group politics, working together to ensure that international affairs are handled by all, international rules are formulated by all, and development achievements are shared by all. Fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic should be a collective action of the international community. All countries need to actively strengthen international solidarity, ensure adequate distribution of vaccines, contribute multiple lines of defense against COVID-19, and speed up efforts to build a global community of health for all. With the principle of putting the people's life first, China has a dynamic and strong line of defense against the virus, consolidating the gains made in the COVID-19 response. Not only the people's lives have been protected, but the overall stable performance in economic and social development has also been maintained. Development issues should remain a priority for the UN. The international community should further promote the building of an open world economy, and create conditions for the implementation of the 2030 agenda as scheduled. Last year, China raised the Global Development Initiative and called for the international community to pool efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 agenda – for the united, equal, balanced, and inclusive global development partnership, and promote cooperation in a wide range of areas such as poverty alleviation, food security, COVID-19 response and vaccines, development financing, climate change and green development, industrialization, digital economy and connectivity, and work together to build a global community for development. The UN and other international financial institutions should make double efforts to mobilize more resources for developing countries to enhance their ability to cope with external shocks. Developed countries should honor their commitments to help developing countries achieve sustainable development. Fighting climate change is an urgent cause for each country. It is vital to enhance mutual trust among member states, uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and promote the implementation of the outcomes of the COP26 to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Developed economies should take a lead in bearing the emission reduction responsibilities and deliver commitment of financial and technological support.

Security in Asia is in our common interest. It is necessary to keep pace with the times and establish a security concept in the 21 century. China has called for common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security in Asia and promoted extensive consultation and joint contribution to common security. It meets the historical trend of building a community with a shared future for Asian countries and responds to the urgent needs of all parties, jointly addressing the security challenges. This year China put forward a global security

initiative during the Boao Forum for Asia, which is a new approach to solving the global security dilemma. The main points of the global security initiative are six commitments. It calls all countries to stay committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security. Stay committed to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. Stay committed to abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN charter. Stay committed to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously. Stay committed to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation. Stay committed to maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains. We should be clear, that we are a community in which all countries share a common stake. We, in the international community, should reject zero-sum thinking and work together to build a new type of international relations based on mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation.

Asian countries should stay vigilant and reject actions undermining peace and development together. People in Asia deeply cherish the value of peace and understand that development does not come easily. Over the past decades, Asia has enjoyed overall stability and sustained rapid growth, and other countries have benefited. It demonstrates Asian resilience, wisdom, and strengths, and makes Asia an anchor of peace and stability. As important countries and major economies in the world, China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea should focus on a fundamental and long-term interest in the region and international area.

Today's world needs multilateral cooperation, coordination, and compromise more than ever before. UN lays a foundation for collective actions in sustaining peace and development of the whole world. Let's hope for a future of mutual respect and equality, and let's work together.

### **Ambassador Takahiro SHINYO**

#### **Japan Association for United Nations Studies (JAUNS) and Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan**



Mr. Shinyo noted that the war in Ukraine is a crisis of the UN security council, and the NPT system, over the malfunctioning of the UN, centered around the security council, and disarmament of the nuclear weapons. Regarding the dysfunction of the Security Council, Russia has made an overt invasion of the neighboring country, and the exercise of Russian veto power caused the security council to fail. As a result, the need for security council reform is once again recognized

by countries around the world. All UN member states are required to take concrete measures to address the fundamental issue of veto restrictions.

Regarding the crisis of the NPT regime, a serious violation of international law over nuclear weapons continues, such as the threat to use it by Russia, and attacks on the nuclear power plants in Ukraine. Regarding the NPT treaty, the fact that the nuclear-weapon states have not fulfilled their obligation to negotiate disarmament in good faith based on article 6. This has shaken the NPT system itself in a form of non-compliance with the international treaty. On January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, a joint statement of the five nuclear-weapon states was issued, stating that the nuclear war should not be fought, but it shows how this will be treated after the Ukrainian war and must be seen whether a commitment of the nuclear weapon states to negotiate nuclear disarmament will be made. It will not be a substantial outcome of the August NPT Review Conference unless progress is made in this regard. Furthermore, if the final document would not be agreed upon, a yellow light would be lit to the continuation of the NPT system.

How to respond to the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)? Japan should have attended the conference of the parties as an observer, and openly explain Japan's realistic nuclear disarmament proposal, to find a way to lead a pragmatic nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament negotiations. Therefore, it is Japan's role to explain comprehensive approaches from the perspective of realism. Japan should continue to persuade nuclear weapon states and treaty parties to drive a disarmament process elsewhere, rather than TPNW. That is the responsibility of Japan, the country that was a victim of the nuclear bomb. It is an essence of Japan's role as a so-called bridge builder.

What about a specific direction of nuclear disarmament? Looking at the outcomes of the two nuclear disarmament conferences this year, TPNW and NTP, Japan should demonstrate leadership by proposing to hold the 4<sup>th</sup> UN special session devoted to disarmament as soon as possible. Today, after experiencing an invasion of Ukraine, which was the biggest war since World War II, the 4<sup>th</sup> special session of the General Assembly is urgently needed. The world should not fall into the dualism of NPT or TPNW but should create a global platform for the promotion of a new nuclear disarmament process beyond NPT and TPNW. Based on the result of the G7 Hiroshima summit to be held in Japan next year, it is necessary to start the special session as soon as possible. The Security Council should take special responsibility for arms control and disarmament as well as international peace and security. According to the Article 47, paragraph 1, of the UN Charter, the Security Council is supposed to make concrete plans on issues related to the regulation of armaments and possible disarmament. However, the Security Council does not play this role. In 2018, Secretary-General Guterres released a report entitled "Agenda for Disarmament". He also stated in his report titled "Our Common Agenda" published in September 2021, that he would create a new agenda for peace, however, it should be created as soon as possible, including various proposals for disarmament.

In conclusion, actions to prevent international conflict in the Asia-pacific region are necessary. There is a political framework called ASEAN Regional Forum, to exchange views on Asian security. Most Asian countries, the US, Russia, and China participate in this. Today, tensions continue around Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea, etc. as well as military and imperialistic expansion in East Asia. It seems that it would be necessary to agree on a political document such as the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), as an Asian version possibly based on this ASEAN Regional Forum. As Japan has always insisted on respect for human rights, strengthening economic and technical cooperation, the introduction of confidence-building measures as well as rule of law. It would include the first principle of the Helsinki Final Act, that changes in the status quo by force are not permissible. We should urgently agree on an Asian version of the Helsinki Final Act for conflict prevention so that we will not repeat a second Ukrainian war in Asia.

**Ms. Shin-wha LEE**

**Director of Peace and Democracy Institute at Korea University and President of the Korea Academic Council on the United Nations System, Korea**



Ms. Lee stated that it was humiliating to the UN when Russia fired multiple missiles at various places including the capital of Ukraine, during the visit of the UN Secretary-General. It is not yesterday's or today's problem that the UN was created for world peace and security after the war, based on cooperation. UN has been perceived for a long time as kind of a puppet or a victim of great powers and power politics. The UN often becomes a contested area for the national interest of those 193 countries, and those countries have their priority

according to their interest. Also, the Security Council decisions are made by powers depending on their strategic interest. But if the politics of power continues like this, the world order will become very unstable.

Because of the Sino-Russian solidarity, the Security Council reform is also important in the case of the Korean Peninsula. We are the mandatory provisions made in response to North Korea's reckless provocation. Security Council reform discussion which has been in a slump for a while is being reentered with the Ukraine crisis, but still, we do not have much hope for that, because the Security Council reform reflects the duality of international politics and should be pursued in a direction that enhances the Security Council's transparency, effectiveness, democracy, accountability, representation, and all allows reform to proceed based on a broad consensus among member countries. South Korea's official position is to continue to participate constructively in the Security Council reform debate, as a member of the United for Consensus, (UFC) Group. In other words, Korea opposes the expansion of the permanent members and supports the expansion of the Security Council with the non-permanent members.

Japan since 2004 is expressing its will to advance to a permanent member state and promotes a need for reorganization of the Security Council in the wake of the recent Ukraine crisis. President Biden while visiting Japan at the end of May, also expressed his support for this. This is unwelcome news for Korea which has been seeking to expand the opportunity to act as a member of the Security Council through the expansion of non-permanent members. What kind of progress would be made if the renewed discussion on the reform of the Security Council, does not establish a framework of debate among member states with conflicting interests over the existing structure problem of how to increase the number of permanent or non-permanent members? Moreover, there is a great probability of split opinions on Korean and Japanese cooperation. Therefore at least at a scholar meeting like this, an effort should be carefully and substantially made to develop agendas and strategic plans together to promote the scope of common understanding between two countries.

It is very difficult to determine the role and the future direction of the UN, but it would be good to keep at least two things in mind. First, why is it true that the block of western democratic countries has been deconsolidated due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine? It may be hollow and potentially risky for the US to establish an international order based solemnly on so-called exclusive diplomacy, that further strengthen ties among like-minded countries on the global agenda, however excluding non-democratic countries. How can we persuade and integrate those countries is very important. Before the world war broke again, Japan, Nazi Germany, and Italy withdrew from the League of Nations in the 1940s. States that are drawn into a corner will be compelled to be more dangerous and reckless, possibly leading to a situation leading to mutual destruction. Therefore, strategic consideration about what kind of multilateral mechanism to establish in the coexistence of the UN with the non-liberal countries including Russia and China. To this end, the reform of the Security Council must be promoted based on a broad consensus among the member states. In the case of the new Korean government, to become a global pivotal country, not only national capability in terms of hard power such as military, economy, and technology, but also soft power such as national image, persuasion, and attractiveness are very important. Therefore the new government's diplomatic strategy should be a comprehensive security alliance with the US, and solidarity with liberal democracy but at the very same time how to coexist with countries with different ideas.

Finally, it is necessary to reflect on the changing in reality. The US is currently considering lifting sanctions on Venezuela in response to Russia, and sanctions by the West. This reflects how reducing the international communities' dependence on Russian resources as well as isolating Russia from the countries around the world, has become a great priority. The US and other western countries are seriously considering importing energy from the Middle East, South America, and Africa, even though they understand that the authoritarian governments are in power in those countries. Resolving the dilemma between resource security first, or valid diplomacy first is a big problem, so the US can propose and justify so-called hybrid multilateralism by selectively inducing authoritarian resource-rich countries into multilateral platforms. Therefore this is another reason why the South Korean government like other like-minded countries, needs to carefully and cautiously consider its option and vision while it pursues the national interest on the strategic chessboard where the tension between value-based solidarity and real politics are complex and paradoxical, and here what UN should do is also very important.

**Mr. Heung-Soon PARK**  
**Sun-Moon University, Korea**



Mr. Park first referred to Ms. Hu's words about a proposal for a global security initiative. In the Korean academic community, there have been a lot of positions on this kind of East Asian Framework on peace and development, but the question is how to implement it? Who would be a key player in organizing this Asian version of CSCE? In the context of different positions on immanent and long-term national interest among the three nations, what would be the effective and practical way to realize this global idea? Secondly, what is the Chinese position on

Security Council reform? So much was discussed about it in the wake of the Ukraine crisis. Most of the P5 including China is maintaining the status quo on the current Security Council. However, there is so much international criticism and pressure on restructuring the Security Council. How about the restriction of the exercise of the veto power? Is China willing to take that risk? Then Mr. Park referred to an idea proposed by ambassador Shinyo: an Asian version of the Helsinki final act. Some increasing voices are proposing the development of nuclear weapons by South Korea, to counter the North Korean open aggression with the nuclear weapons. The suggestion is that we should cooperate with Japan, and joint development of nuclear weapons to maintain security in East Asia. There is an increasing number of Korean scholars who are saying that they do not have many alternatives and cannot rely on the US forever. Is it too much for Asia, for Japan, for Korea to pursue a kind of dual approach? With the new administration of the Republic of Korea, next few years the policy on Northeast Asia, and even the UN may be different from the previous administration. There are a lot of expectations and some concerns about this more conservative approach of the new Korean government. What is, from the Japanese point of view, the future role of Korea?

**Ms. Ai Kihara-Hunt**  
**University of Tokyo, Japan**



Ms. Kihara-Hunt addressed two main points. Firstly, it is very important to put people in the perspective. Global governance is extremely multilayered, the talk was very much concentrated on inter-state relations, but in many of these areas, it is impossible to discuss it, without talking about people in the center. Secondly, when we are talking about Asian perspectives, it depends on what you mean by 'Asia'. She addressed a question to Vice President Hu Wenli:

how does the development, and leading role of developed states work for decreasing inequalities within the state? Another question was addressed for Ambassador Shinyo: talking about realism, would ASEAN be the organization that Asia should and can use, taking into consideration many big powers have other networks they may prefer to use. The final suggestion was that the world is facing challenges regarding global governance, so maybe we should reiterate and check with each other what the fundamental principles are that the world shares? For example, an obligation to implement laws and rules in a good faith is a principle that states would not oppose, but maybe it is getting a little bit forgotten.

**Mr. LI Kaisheng**  
**Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS), China**



Mr. Kaisheng noted that the Security Council reform is a very important question. There are so many global challenges that we should be very cautious about. The question addressed to ambassador Shinyo was what is his plan to reform the UN Security Council? Regarding the Korean nuclear issue, some people are talking about seven nuclear tests of North Korea, this is a very important challenge for the new South Korean government.

This is a very long time issue. We need to find out a fundamental plan for this issue, and there are three points. Firstly, we should recognize the origin of this problem which is an interdependence on security. Secondly, there should be different solutions to this issue, because sanctions failed. We should have a regional security regime, this is a fundamental solution to this problem, but how to do that? There should be a normalization of diplomatic and collective security, not so many military alliances in this region. Maybe there should be a realistic and comprehensive approach, to encouraging North Korea. The UN should play a realistic and cautious role.

**Mr. Takahiro SHINYO**  
**Japan Association for United Nations Studies (JAUNS) and Kwansai Gakuin University, Japan**

Mr. Shinyo noted that his personal view is that the Security Council must be of course reformed. To put it simply, the Council was not able to deter the aggression of Russia. The permanent members can't stop this, and the nuclear development made by North Korea, because there is always a veto. If it continues this way it will inevitably not possible to prevent a war to breakout. The responsibility of the permanent members in terms of the Russian aggression, and North Korean nuclear developments is how to stop it? If they should be cautious, then what should be done? Mr. Shinyo would like to see how Russia and China act against North Korea. If something serious happens, it is the Council's responsibility.

The Council can work by limiting the veto right, and instead of expanding permanent members, the focus should be on how to control the veto. This is possible without changing the Charter of the UN, and the right place to do this is the General Assembly. We need a resolution in the General Assembly, and then we could think about an enlargement. We should perhaps talk with Korea and other countries to see if something in-between could be possible. We should not follow the G4 idea anymore, and talk with other groups including Consensus Group. This is something that the Japanese government should do. How to make the CSCE type of conference in Asia? We have already necessary conditions in the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum which includes ASEAN countries, Japan, China, Korea, Russia, and the US. Everybody is already in, and this must be the basis. It could be proposed by some of the ASEAN countries to have a kind of CSCE type of conference. We do not have to create any new forum, we have already.

**Ms. HU Wenli**  
**Director General of the United Nations Association of China, China**

Ms. Hu agreed that Asia has enjoyed peace and stability over the past few years because of the focus on development rather than mutual suspicion and panic. For Asia to maintain stability and peace is to eradicate the cold war mentality. Countries should regard each other as partners rather than adversaries and rivals. See each other's development as an opportunity rather than a threat. It is on this basis we could cooperate and work together to fight the challenges.

Regarding the reform of the Security Council, it is a very complicated issue and there is not a simple solution for that. Of course, China supports the reform of the UN Security Council and believes that the reform should enhance the authority and effectiveness of the Council, increase the representation and voice of developing countries, and give more opportunities for small and medium-sized countries to participate in the decision making. There is not a single solution to it, it should be a package solution.

Regarding development, and how to reduce inequalities among nations, people's attention is all caught in the geopolitical tensions but the problem is that the development is getting more and more marginalized on the international agenda. Why did China put forward the Global Development Initiative? The main purpose is to bring development back to the center of the international agenda, to offer an effective platform for all parties to coordinate development policies and deepen practical cooperation as well as an impetus to pool resources, address difficulties holding back development and promote greater coordination and efficiency. The developed countries should provide more financial and technological support for the developing countries, to build the infrastructure, and capacities, and help fight the challenges. From a global point of view, there is still a divide between the north and the south and it is deepening.

**Mr. Yutaka TOKUYAMA, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Kyoto University of the Arts**



Mr. Yutaka Tokuyama informed the participants that the Kyoto University of the Arts has agreed to host the ACUNS Tokyo Liaison Office at the campus of the University. He then indicated his hope that the participants take a moment and think about the importance of culture to build peace.

**Ms. Lise HOWARD  
President of ACUNS**



sovereignty.

Addressing Mr. Tokuyama's comment, she noted that ACUNS at its fundamental basis is a scholarly association, over the years has engaged in the arts and has had artists performing at the annual meetings and she hopes it will continue. ACUNS is not a political forum but seeks to engage scholars, and policy-makers in dialogue, and today is an example of why it is important to continue having these kinds of conversations. Since its first annual meeting in 1987, ACUNS gatherings have not experienced such tensions as today. Prof. Howard noted that everyone on the panel agreed that the UN is important, and the idea of fostering a broad, inclusive, multilateral networks is also important. Despite differences, everyone on the panel expressed a commitment to the principles of justice, equality, rule of law and most of all, respect for state



**Mr. Sukehiro HASEGAWA**

**Director, Kyoto Peacebuilding Center and ACUNS Tokyo Liaison Office**



Professor Hasegawa noted that during the session participants have heard about the need to maintain the universal principle in the conduct of international affairs, but also to be tolerant and understanding of each other. In more than several thousand years of its history in Asia, the Asian philosophers have endeavored to find what constituted “truth” “goodness” and “beauty”. He suggested to join the Asian philosophers in searching the meanings of these ideas in sustaining peace in the region. He expressed his hope that the Asian leaders will exercise their leadership in preventing the difference of views and aspirations becoming the source of armed conflicts in Europe.