United Nations at 70: international law and the achievement of UN aims

A day conference at the FCO hosted by Chatham House in partnership with the UN Office of Legal Affairs
16 October 2015

Agenda

On 24 October 2015, the United Nations will turn 70. Based on the opening words of the UN Charter, the conference will discuss, in respect of specific aspects of the UN aims, the extent to which the current international legal framework is able to assist in meeting these aims: is it fit for purpose?

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 reaffirm 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 freedom

9.45 – 10.00: Introduction and welcome

Elizabeth Wilmshurst, Chatham House
Miguel de Serpa Soares, UN Legal Counsel
Iain Macleod, Legal Adviser, FCO

10.00-11.30: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war

Has the attempt to subject the use of force by states to the rule of law failed? Can the legal framework foreseen by the Charter be developed to address current conflicts and humanitarian aims?

Chair:
Elizabeth Wilmshurst

Panellists:
Cathy Adams, Legal Director, FCO
Professor Dapo Akande, University of Oxford
Professor Guglielmo Verdirame, King’s College

11.30 – 11.45: Coffee
11.45 – 1.15: to reaffirm fundamental human rights

To what extent have international human rights laws and institutions succeeded in achieving the UN vision of a world in which human rights are realised? What is their contribution to preventing atrocities and addressing humanitarian challenges presented by current armed conflicts?

Chair: Sonya Sceats, Chatham House

Panellists:
Tawanda Mutasah, Senior Director for International Law and Policy, Amnesty International
Bertrand Ramcharan, former acting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Professor Sun Shiyan, China Academy of Social Sciences

1.15 – 2.15: Lunch

2.15 – 3.30: to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained

The ICJ has far more cases before it than in the first decades of the UN. But how can its jurisdiction be further used? What has been its contribution in preventing conflicts through peaceful settlement of disputes? What about the other courts and institutions set up under treaties under the UN system?

Chair: Sir Franklin Berman, Essex Court Chambers

Panellists:
Judge Theodore Meron, President of ICTY and MICT
James Sloan, University of Glasgow

3.30 – 4.45: to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom

Are economic and social rights the poor relation of the human rights system, at least so far as the West is concerned? How can this fourth aim of the UN be further achieved? To what extent can the law support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals?

Chair: Professor Sir Nigel Rodley, University of Essex

Panellists:
Professor Christine Chinkin, London School of Economics and Political Science
Professor Ben Saul, University of Sydney
Dr Margot Salomon, London School of Economics and Political Science

4.45 – 5.00 Conclusion

Elizabeth Wilmshurst and Miguel de Serpa Soares/Stephen Matthias