

**Academic Council on the United Nations System Tokyo Liaison Office**

**Kyoto Peacebuilding Center**

and

**Global Peacebuilding Association of Japan**

present

**Dr. Augusto Lopez Claros**

Executive Director and Chair of the Global Governance Forum

On

***Global Governance: Emerging Role of global institutions and Japan  
in the 21st Century***

Tuesday, 16 May 2023

15:00~17:00

**Report compiled by Maciej Witek**

**Opening remarks**

**Under-Secretary-General and Rector of the United Nations University, Dr. Tschilidzi Marwala** (sent in writing)



At the insistence of a dear friend of mine, Professor Suki Hasegawa, it is my pleasure to join you in opening this symposium to address the future role of global institutions and Japan in strengthening global governance.

Despite the pessimistic views held by many policymakers, scholars, and opinion-makers about the capability of the United Nations. I believe there are many ways in which the UN can and should assist humanity in mitigating the adverse effects of man-made and natural disasters like the Ukraine War and climate change, as well as artificial intelligence, which can and should be mitigated. Attempting to mitigate the adverse effects of the War in Ukraine, UN humanitarian assistance has already been provided to people in Ukraine and other countries that have been affected by this conflict. The UN General Assembly is holding discussions and expressing the member nations' views regarding the Ukrainian War through its resolutions. As part of his peace efforts, the UN Secretary-General is trying to mediate an agreement between Kyiv and Moscow.

In terms of climate change, Dr. Augusto Lopez-Claros provides a detailed explanation of how humanity has ended up with the current perverse incentive structure and suggests the efficacy of pursuing a mixture of fiscal tools and regulatory policies, including carbon taxes that IMF considers 'the most powerful and efficient.' I agree with him that what is needed is strong political will and leadership, as the UN has held so numerous meetings talking about the need to extend developing countries with financial and technical assistance in transitioning to renewable energy sources.

As someone with an interest and expertise in artificial intelligence, you will also discuss in depth how the UN help utilizes artificial intelligence, for example, in the following ways:

1. Establishing guidelines on the ethical creation and application of AI.
2. Language processing: The UN works in many languages so that AI can help with translations and sentiment analysis.
3. Develop a research agenda highlighting both the benefits and risks of artificial intelligence.
4. Enhancing the development of AI technologies that can address global challenges like climate change and poverty.

In addition, the UN should help:

1. Raise awareness of these issues among the public.
2. Encourage businesses and individuals to take action, and
3. Build partnerships with other organizations working on these issues.

In conclusion, the UN plays a significant role in the development of the world. Our collective efforts can make a difference, so joining forces is crucial. As I have other prior commitments, I can stay for a discussion. But I look forward to hearing the outcome of your discussion today.

Thank you, and all the best.

## **Part I Keynote Speech**

### **Dr. Augusto Lopez-Claros**



#### **Executive Director and Chair of the Global Governance Forum**

Dr. Lopez-Claros dedicated the first part of his speech to Sustainable Development Goals, specifically related to climate change. He noted that certain goals were established for emissions reduction, but that particular framework is not working. Emissions are on the rise, the agreements that were embodied in 2015 were voluntary, there were no penalties for non-compliance, and the fact is that the scientific community is essentially telling us that we are facing a very serious situation in the coming years. This is one area in which whatever mechanisms we have for international cooperation at the moment are simply not working. We will be facing increasing climate catastrophes in the coming years and decades, and this is greatly concerning

because the temperature rises that we currently have, was not seen for at least a couple of million years - we are entering uncharted territory.

On the security side, dr. Lopez-Claros referred to a very serious situation we are facing in Ukraine, with Russia's unprovoked aggression against the country. Peace and security were the primary responsibility of the United Nations, but this is not working either. There are rising tensions between the superpowers, namely US and China, who, in coming years, might wish to take Taiwan by force. We know very well if that were to happen, and we were to have a war in this part of the world, that is going to have security and economic consequences 10 or 20 times larger than what we have seen in the case of the war in Ukraine.

In terms of poverty and equality, the situation is also very worrying. Sustainable Development Goal number 1, the basis of the entire framework, anticipated elimination of extreme poverty by 2030. That goal is not obtainable, partially because of the COVID pandemic, and after that the war in Ukraine. The latest data from the World Bank suggests that by 2030 we will still have somewhere between 500 and 600 million people living below the extreme poverty line. Also, the widening gap between the wealthy and the poor is no longer just an economic problem, it is a serious social problem. Income inequality is destabilizing societies, undermining the basis of democracy, and leading to all kinds of other problems, which are a clear danger to the stability of our societies.

Dr. Lopez-Claros admitted that he would prefer not to rank the aforementioned problems, but if he had to do so, he would say that climate change is the most urgent at the moment. The last time that we seriously looked at the global order, attempted to rethink it and establish some framework to enhance international cooperation and allow us to create a basis for peace and prosperity, and stability, was in 1945 at the time of the adoption of the UN Charter. We can debate whether the Charter was a great achievement or it was a missed opportunity, some arguments can be presented on both sides. The initial vision of the UN was very ambitious – to create a world legislator and give it the power to make international law that will be binding for all countries. In fact, people who participated in the debate on what exactly the UN should be were inspired by the US Federal Constitution which in 1787 created a new layer of government, and gave to those institutions a huge amount of jurisdiction and other attributes which essentially created a complex peace and stability in the US. Many people argue that was the primary engine that ultimately converted the US into the most powerful, prosperous country in the world. That was the idea, but it did not work out. Stalin was not interested and agreed to sign in to the UN, as long as this organization never imposes its will on his national priorities. And that is how the idea of veto came to be. Roosevelt himself knew that for the US to adopt the UN Charter, he needed 2/3 of the senators to approve it. There was immediately an effort to water down the Charter and create a document acceptable to all of the senators. Dr. Lopez-Claros is of the view that the UN Charter was a wasted opportunity in the sense that it was not an adequate response to the 60 million casualties in World War II. One important aspect of the conference in San Francisco which he highlighted is that 17 countries were very annoyed at the introduction of the veto. In San Francisco US and Soviet Union told the other members "Either you accept the veto in the Security Council or there is no United Nations". That was a very bipolar situation. A group of 17 countries led by New Zealand said that this is not acceptable,

they will not be a part of this process. Eventually, they adopted the Charter, but article 109 was introduced – which essentially says "We can attend a review conference to examine the appropriateness of the Charter". At the moment we have Summit of the Future in 2024. At this summit two fundamental questions have to be answered: What kind of future do we want? How are we going to get there? The report that came out from the High-Level Advisory Board Meeting recommends having the review conference soon, to make sure that we will end up in that future that we all want.

The book that Dr. Lopez-Claros published, "Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" is a series of proposals that are aimed at rethinking our global governance structure, so the UN can be brought into the XXI century. There is a chapter on the reform of the Security Council and a proposal for the creation of the World Parliamentary Assembly. The UN can be funded in a more sustainable way than it is now. Dr. Lopez-Claros explained some of the content of his book and noted that earlier that day during the conversation with several members of the parliament, he was very pleased to see that the notion of World Parliamentary Assembly has a lot of support in Japanese parliament. This idea in its essence is to strengthen the legitimacy of the UN. At the moment the way the General Assembly is organized is that the people who seat at the General Assembly are diplomats representing the party back in power. However, the UN Charter says "We the people". What is missing, and what Albert Einstein already alluded to in his letter to the General Assembly in 1947, is directly electing members of the General Assembly. At the moment that is not possible but a World Parliamentary Assembly could be created as one more agency, without amending the Charter. Initially, like the European Parliamentary Assembly of 1958, it could be made up of parliamentarians of the member countries. In the beginning, it did not make laws, but it came little by little over time to the direct election and today it can pass the legislation that is binding for all European Union Member States. For us, that is a very useful model. The World Parliamentary Assembly would discuss climate change, human rights, issues of inequality, providing intelligence and advice to the other UN bodies, and in time we could give it more jurisdiction and power.

There are ways in which we could reorganize Security Council and make it less dysfunctional. What happened last year is a very good example. When Russia invaded Ukraine, there was immediately an attempt for the Security Council to issue a resolution condemning the invasion. The Russians vetoed that, and within a couple of days it went to the General Assembly with no veto power, and then a strong resolution was issued condemning the invasion and asking Russia to withdraw. The way that the UN works is that if you are a member of the Security Council with veto power, you can violate every principle of the UN charter and remain in good standing. This is a very dysfunctional arrangement. And yet, in 1944 we had the UN Monetary and Financial Conference. When the moment came to ask the question how are we going to govern ourselves? They did not say we will have 5 permanent members with veto power to run the global economy. The important principle they introduced was the idea that every country will have a voice and representation. That is the way the organization worked ever since, and it works relatively well. If we organize the Security Council in a way that preserves the spirit of that structure, namely that every country has a voice and every country is represented, we do not have that very strange system of many years when Japan or India, one of the largest

populations and contributors to the UN budget, do not have a voice. This is a very unusual way of operating an organization that is supposed to be about cooperation and collegiality, working together to solve world problems.

## Part II Discussion



During the discussion, **Ambassador Hans Klemm** admitted that the argument of the dysfunctionality of the UN system is very on point but also noted that there were some successes of the UN system. Now there are hundreds of peacekeeping missions, as well as developmental missions, including Timor-Leste from 2007-2010. That mission and probably many others as successes that bring stabilization, developing institutional structures, and trying to contribute to economic development and the rule of law. After the mission ended, Timor-Leste enjoyed political stability and security among its neighbors, and while it is still a very much lower-income country, it has seen some development.

Dr. Lopez-Claros agreed that, absolutely, the example of Timor-Leste is viable. Some missions were very successful, some were not, and that is the nature of things. His criticism of the UN system as it is now, should not be interpreted as a lack of recognition for the victory or successes in small areas across the world. He and the authors of the book propose to reorganize the General Assembly under the system of weighted voting. Not one country, one vote, that is not a reasonable arrangement that undermined the credibility of the General Assembly. We could say that there was kind of a cynical move on the part of the big powers to essentially concentrate all the power in the Security Council instead of the General Assembly. There is a fairly detailed proposal suggesting reorganizing the General Assembly under the system of weighted voting using three factors: population, relative GDP, and membership factor equal to all the countries. It can give small countries like Timor-Leste the same weight as China or India. Instead of having permanent and rotating members, we have 193 members of the Security Council. The second reform proposed in the book is that instead of calling it Security Council, we call it Executive Council. It becomes an organization in charge of the day-to-day running of the UN system. It is the General Assembly under the weighted voting system that possesses the real political power – which was the original vision for the UN.



Later discussants expressed their concerns about the current state of the UN, drawing attention to the privileges of Permanent 5 and the necessity of giving a voice to all countries. **Professor Vesselin Popovski** noted that somehow we can think of how to repair what has not been done in 1945 exactly with the act of 109. The war in Ukraine created a new dynamism. Mostly in terms of global unity to face an aggressor. How can we live in the future where one of the permanent members, instead of being a guardian of peace, becomes the most blatant aggressor, almost similar to Nazi Germany back in 1939? That dynamism which we see almost daily, is creating a stimulus for a

more radical vision of the UN reform and not pushing for new permanent memberships, but thinking if we even need permanent members and a veto anymore.



**Ambassador Tadanori Inomata** stated that in the current UN, countries are equal on the one hand, then there is the Permanent 5. Those states are not equal. Why do these five countries have prerogatives? This is not efficient. During the time of the League of Nations, all member states had a right of veto. The worsening situation today shows the fundamental defect of the UN charter. We have to abolish the permanent membership in the Security Council.



**Ambassador Yasuyoshi Komizo** noted that global issues are all interconnected, and one solution will not solve all the other problems. Leaders and the people should focus on whether the UN reform will benefit all the people in the world, not only selected ones.

In response to the comments, dr. Lopez-Claros noted that it is very fundamental to understand that it is one thing to write a book about ambitious proposals for the UN reform, rethinking our system of global institutions and international cooperation, and then there is the political reality. He thinks that the comments made by Professor Popovski are highly relevant here. When the proposal was put on the table to this High-Level Advisory Board to consider Charter review in the context of Article 109, nobody expected that they would take it seriously and endorse it in the report. That means something has changed in the mentality. Charter reform that used to be taboo is no longer a taboo, and part of the reason for that is because there is growing frustration with the deteriorating situation in the world on several different fronts and the fact that the UN seems to be completely on the sidelines—all the successes of the past notwithstanding. Global systemic risks, like climate change, threaten humankind. The fact that in 2023 in the context of the war in Ukraine, we broke the nuclear taboo - the weapons are there, but we never talk about using them. But Vladimir Putin broke the taboo and openly discussed using nuclear weapons. For the first time in the UN's history, all of a sudden, we realize that either we do something, or essentially the UN becomes irrelevant as an organization. In that scenario, maybe we should think about creating a new organization. The UN came to replace the League of Nations. In coming years, with multiple crises on different fronts affecting people's security, there might be a point where the situation becomes so critical that we realize this is not a way to run the world. We need to do something. Dr. Lopez-Claros thinks the Summit of the Future is one last chance to address those issues in a cooperative, ambitious way. In his opinion, if the summit becomes yet another UN summit that is good on

paper but with no implications for the real world, then we will have lost a big chance, and he will become very pessimistic.

The next scenario is a kind of World War II scenario, where the system collapsed, and we need to think about what we are going to replace it with. That will be the role of young people. In the year 2000, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had a brilliant initiative. In May of 2000, he invited 1500 representatives from civil society to New York to debate what are the world's problems, how we can solve them, and work better together in order to change our mindset. The idea was that this NGO forum would make recommendations to the September Millennium Summit, which was going to be the largest congregation of world leaders. To empower civil society in that way was a great idea. It would be wonderful if that NGO forum were formalized. Let it take place on a regular basis, to empower youth organizations so they can be part of the conversation. People in their 60s might catch some of the early beginnings of climate change, but young people are going to face all of it. The older generation needs to find a way to give a voice to the youth because they are going to face the consequences of past mistakes.

In terms of SDGs, dr. Lopez-Claros was not surprised when the World Bank did a forecast for 2030 for SDG number 1. Due to the COVID pandemic, it got out of reach. For the previous 30 years, we have seen a reduction in extreme poverty year after year without interruption. It was one of the successes, but then COVID and Ukraine crisis came, and now we live in a different environment. But for Dr. Lopez-Claros it is a lesson in whether we fulfill the SDGs by 2030, what is important is the direction of change, are we moving in the right direction? This is where he is a little pessimistic. Speaking about SDG number 5, we are not making enough progress in terms of eliminating discrimination against women. Here dr. Lopez-Claros shared an anecdote. A few years ago he was in Moscow and had a meeting with the economic team of the Russian government about ways in which the country can create a more friendly environment for the private sector. It was in 2016, Russia's economy was already under sanctions after Crimea, the economy slowed down. Dr. Lopez-Claros asked the minister, what about eliminating at least some of the 456 occupations which are forbidden to women in Russia? The minister was shocked that there are that many. For example, in Russia, women cannot drive a metro. How many of those prohibitions have been lifted since then? Zero.

Regarding Article 23, the attitude of the Permanent 5 was always like the UN Charter did not bind them. They signed it, but they exempted themselves from the obligations – this is the essence of the veto. Dr. Lopez-Claros shared some views from the economist's perspective. The value of the veto power is rapidly declining and going to zero. Looking at the case of Ukraine, if the veto power were a powerful instrument, it would have had some impact, but it had zero. There was no resolution from the Security Council condemning the war. But has it prevented the rest of the international community from assisting Ukraine? Has it protected Russia from its “special military operation” and empowered it? Absolutely not. Today they broke the nuclear taboo because they are facing defeat and are desperate. The veto power has very little power other than symbolism. In a world where the veto has zero value, because faced with the veto, other countries, NATO, EU take their own actions, at some point, we have to make it explicit and move to a new system where there is no veto.



At the end of discussion, **Professor Sukehiro Hasegawa** summarized the discussion and shared his own views on the UN reform. He referred to what PM Kishida said in September 2022 at the General Assembly that the time had come to reform the Security Council. Veto should not be abused. We should make the UN Security Council more democratic. We should stop talking about its reform in general, and put down in writing, what we had to do.

Dr. Hasegawa noted that what participants advised during the symposium was the need for change in the mindset and understanding that the veto was a protection of the power, not a solution to the global challenges. The proposal of the Japanese government was as follows: let us not make the reform agenda very complicated. If we made it complicated, we would never get anywhere. In 1963-65 the only change made in the Security Council Charter was an increase in the number of members of the Security Council from 10 to 15. We now had an agreement among all groups, consisting of the G4, Consensus Group, African Group, Caribbean, and R69, which is a group of small nations demanding that their place should also be secured there. There was now some progress made.

In conclusion, Dr. Hasegawa expressed his hope that the General Assembly would consider a text-based solution and propose that the Security Council seats be increased by 10. And half of those seats should be between 8-10 years. We should have another five countries elected for 4-5 years. That would enable all the countries to talk about their own entitlement for the Security Council seats. We can work for another 20 years with this seating arrangement until 2045, which is the 100 anniversary of the establishment of the UN. Then, we can go for debunking the 5 permanent memberships. They should also be elected for terms of 20 years. This arrangement will compel all of them to behave as they would be voted out if they misbehaved. This is the idea that the government of Japan should be advocating.