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PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX: - Ms. Nancy Lindborg, President and CEO, United States Institute of Peace;
- Mr. Peter Maurer, President, International Committee of the Red Cross;
- Dr. Lassina Zerbo, President, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
- Moderator: Mr. Jonathan Tepperman, Editor-in-Chief, Foreign Policy
SUBJECT/SUJET: Plenary 4 at the Halifax International Security Forum entitled "Institution Evolution: International Law and Global Order."

Moderator: Well, we all struggle to get those gruesome images out of your mind. We'll get started. Hi, everyone. I'm Jonathan Tepperman. I'm the Editor of Foreign Policy Magazine and a Halifax board member and I cannot make that video. We've been given a rather daunting assignment for this panel, "International Law and Global Order", right. But as I see it, this theme is really just another way of talking about what we've been talking about this weekend already. And the subject that preoccupies so many of us these days which is the general decline of the post-World War II rules-based global order.

In this conversation, we're going to try and focus on a few specific aspects of that problem to use the metaphor used in the video if the international rules-based system is the roads, the inner-state highways. Our job on this panel, I think, is to talk about the infrastructure that supports those highways, the rules, the norms, the institutions, the traffic cops.

Now, that infrastructure is, of course, what has allowed the overall system to produce so much peace and prosperity over the last 70 years and that infrastructure is currently decaying while simultaneously being attacked by all sorts of vandals and saboteurs. So what is the state of play? And what can we do about it?

For answers, let me quickly introduce our panellists and then we'll get right into it. On my far right is Nancy Lindborg, President and CEO of the US Institute of Peace; next is Peter Maurer. He's the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross. And finally on my immediate right, Lassina Zerbo is Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

So Peter, I want to start with you, if I may. There's been a lot of talk in recent years about a global crisis in human rights specifically. Now, part of this concern is easy to understand because we currently have a US president who cares less about the issue than any other in recent memory. The West is divided and preoccupied with its own problems. At the same time, populists and authoritarians are rising around the world.

But as bad as things may look, what I want to ask you is were they ever actually that much better?

After all, throughout their history, it seems that human rights norms have more often been honoured in the breach than in the observance. And one period where the West really seemed to get its act together and be prepared to act on this problem, mainly in the 1990s, now looks more than a brief aberration in the arc of history than like a trend. So are things truly so much worse today than they were in the past?

Peter Maurer: Well, a good question and what we are struggling each and every day to assess. What we certainly see is that there are outrageous violations of many of the theatres of conflict that we are looking at being having received the task of the international community to look at the Geneva Convention in situations of war and conflict, but also violations of human rights. And we see this huge discrepancy between a normative system which has evolved rapidly over the last 70 years and the lack of respect of those norms on a day-to-day basis.

On the other hand, if I look just at the Geneva Convention which is the most largely ratified international treaty in the post-war world, all states have ratified it. If I look at our work, this is more of a glass half-full and half-empty. We see in our engagement with more than 130 armies worldwide that there are serious efforts to train, to respect international humanitarian law, to respect these norms and principles in combat operations.

We are engaging all over with arms bearers and situations of conflict and we see that they are credible efforts to respect. And so, I think we have to nuance our talk of a degrading order. The system is here. The discrepancies are unquestionably there as well. The efforts to respect are here and we have taken a deliberate effort over the last couple of years not only to look at violations and degradations, but also to see where does the law functions, where is it respected and how can we build on the respect in order to enlarge respect.

So I think I wouldn't buy into the degradation order – into the degradation respect either. But we see broadly is this paradox enough progress where on the one side we see progress of respect, also translating into better lives for people and better social and economic situations. And on the other hand, we have places of fragility and disrespect which are at the origin of most of the problems with which the international order is coping today.

It always strikes me to see that the 20 largest operations in which International Committee of the Red Cross is active today is responsible and at the origin of 80% of all the regular displacements in the world. So there are these hyper fragile places which are places of exclusion, of injustice, of disrespect of the norm, of big discrepancy with which we are struggling. But there are a lot of other places where good people try to respect rules and human rights or international humanitarian laws.

Moderator: Nancy, I want to ask you if you share Peter's optimism and add one more element to the question. A number of critics like David Reese (ph), for example, argued that part of the reason human rights are in the parlay (sic) state that they are today, if in fact they are, is not just the fault of the vandals, the leaders in the states who

are abusing those rights or failing to support them, but of the human rights movement itself which according to some pushed too far too fast during that great moment in the 1990s when anything seemed possible and established principles like the responsibility to protect without assuring adequate buy-in or enforcement mechanisms. So now we're all paying the price for that. What do you make of that?

Nancy Lindborg: Thank you, Jonathan, and it's great to be here at the Halifax Forum. I do share Peter's optimism. I don't share David Reese critique although he makes an important point that some of these conventions and certainly R2P (sic) was passed without the teeth required to enable it to work. Although, remember that in 2011 the UN Security Council did pass a resolution using the R2P mechanism that enabled the campaign in Libya. It was only after NATO enlarged that initial air campaign into regime change that Russia and China signalled, you know, we will never allow R2P to be passed again.

So I think it's a more complex and more nuanced argument than David makes. There has been enormous positive moment, as you know noted in your intro, since 1945 and all the ways in which we've been able to reduce violence globally. Also, the many, many conventions and real institutions that have allowed us to make gains on human development. And as Peter said, where we have this concentration of civil wars, violence extremism, sources of out migration, refugees is in this ever-smaller group of fragile states which are also by the way the most vulnerable to the predations of Russia and China that we've talked about so much this weekend.

And, by the way, in some of the most repressive countries, you have citizens who have taken these rights conventions very seriously. And they are calling for their rights to be respected. So I think there is an interesting question of number one, are we in a moment of decay or is it disruption? And as we know from the tech industry, destruction always gives us an opportunity to refresh, you know, to invent in the areas that need reinvention.

And so, how do we grab this as a moment of opportunity? Because we know there are barnacles on the system that don't work as well as we want them to. So how do we take this moment of disruption to reinvent? And number two, how do we appropriately support the citizen movement for those who have taken very seriously the basic fundamentals and the rights that we've all put into place over the last 70 years and support their efforts. They're leading it without getting in their way or being too heavy-handed to continue to support the success and the people movements that we've seen sweeping the globe over the last several years.

Moderator: Well, I want to come back to those last elements when we start to talk about solutions, but Lassina, I want to bring you into the conversation as well. And ask what does the gradual breakdown of the system look like from your perspective working on nuclear weapons as you do? Are we entering an era where the only thing that will ultimately protect us from nuclear annihilation is the logic of mutual-assured destruction? Or do you feel like despite the recent changes, the global treaty system is still robust enough that it will persevere and can be reinvigorated again?

Lassina Zerbo: Thank you. Thank you all for inviting me to the Halifax Forum. The global norm is completely fragmented. If you take nuclear non-proliferation (sic) and

disarmament which is my field, can we say that norms are respected? I mean we heard in one of the videos the importance of the non-proliferation treaty. We heard North Korea on the importance of the complete nuclearization of the Korean (sic) Peninsula. But the big problem in non-proliferation and disarmament is that we don't connect the dots. On the one hand, we want the denuclear North Korea. In another hand, we don't call North Korea to adhere to the basic principle which is for instance in my particular case stopping nuclear testing but observing the comprehensive test-ban treaty or adhering to the comprehensive test-ban treaty.

And why don't we do that? Because many actors in the discussion have not ratified the comprehensive test-ban treaty and it's difficult for them to convince North Korea because it would say – I mean you have to clean your door step before you attempt to clear mine. But if you take the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, how today can we consider that it is possible without injecting a dose of the norm that manage the non-proliferation in that peninsula? I.e, making sure that North Korea that they've destroyed their nuclear test site it's very friable (sic).

Have we done this? We just look at a video where they blew the test site of probably the tunnel or the entrance of the tunnel and then we have to believe in it. But who can verify that the country you're testing on the same side in the next 5 or 10 years? Nobody has taken this up. And then how do we call them to join the international norm by – we talk about imposing sanctions. I mean the North Koreans are saying the sanctions were working they wouldn't be at a stage where we have doubts that they have nuclear weapons or not.

And my big problem in talking about this norm it's when I travel the developing world. When I'm in Africa briefing university students or Latin America, what they tell me is the world of the double standards that we heard yesterday. How come can you talk about – I mean can you sit today with North Korea that is testing and for instance Iran has never tested and then we're putting so much pressure on Iran.

Those are the questions that I get from students in the developing world. It's a difficult question to answer. And then, when you come to Africa, they will say South Africa has dismantled its nuclear weapon completely. Where do we stand? Should Africa made sure that South Africa keep this so that South Africans have a voice? And possibly be having a voice on the Security Council?

I'm just throwing those questions to say that things seem to be fragmented and nobody believes in its neighbour. That's a deficit of trust as mentioned by Antonio Gutierrez (ph) in the video and that's something that we have to deal with citizens.

Moderator: Nancy, let me come back to you and I'm going to jump to another aspect now of the international system which has already come up a few times, the Security Council. And it's on this theme of disruption and double standards. Clearly, part of the reason that key bodies like the Security Council are working today is because key players on that body are either malign and competent like China and Russia or malign and incompetent like the Trump administration or benign but incompetent like France or Germany.

But there's another reason that the body isn't working very well and that's because according to many it no longer reflects the reality of power around the world today. The US Security Council very much is a post-World War II club and we're not living in a post-World War II world anymore. And yet, how do you think about on this theme of disruption? How do you contemplate changing the institution, the key institution like the Security Council when many of the countries are demanding a larger role don't share the same values as the founding members?

Nancy Lindborg: There have been many trees killed as people write papers about how to reform the Security Council. And maybe this moment of disruption will enable one of those solutions to fully go through. But in the meantime, what we're seeing are a lot of alternative ways for people with shared values to come together in alliances and mechanisms for moving forward the kind of values that evidence has shown us lead to greater stability, greater prosperity in the community of small deed democracies. And you know, I would cite, you know, the Paris Peace Accord.

In the previous panel, we heard about the importance of not just thinking about sovereign states as key actors but also business. I would bring civil society into the conversation. That there are a lot of other actors and groupings that become absolutely critical for moving forward the norms and for moving forward the ways in which people can come together for positive collective actions.

And so whether it's regional institutions, you know, that we're seeing, the AU and ECOAS (sic) and either some of these regional institutions claim an ever greater and more positive role and advancing the shared norms. I think the arena has shifted and the ways that we can look to and invest in those various collections of arenas where the values and the shared interests are coming together become the way that we look for, carrying forward those key values that have served us so well over the past 70 years.

And that's not to say that you abandon those core institutions or alliances, but rather that's sometimes we need to shore them up with other more effective mechanisms.

Moderator: Peter, let's stay on this theme because I want to hear about your perspective leading such an old and powerful non-governmental organization. We are at a moment where as Nancy was alluding to a lot of the action to renew the system, rethink the system is not coming from the traditional great powers. Clearly, there is a role for NGOs, but it's tricky given that we're dealing with the system of international law in general in which traditionally the only players, exclusive players, were nation states.

So what can an NGO do very specifically to address these general problems that we're talking about?

Peter Maurer: Well, let me maybe choose different entry points. First, I wanted to come back to this issue of values and trust. I think we have to deconstruct a little bit on where the problem is. What we encounter in many places is that it is useful eventually not to highlight the divergences on values or the lack of consensus on what the norms and values are, but to focus also on challenges of implementation, to focus on obstacles to overcome, to focus on trying to bring people together to have a say in interpretation in a specific case of norms instead of just boldly stating that there is no common basis.

I think if we take a systemic view on where we have challenges to respect norms and principles into places in which we operate, I think it is important exactly, as you mentioned Jonathan, to have a broader view and to see who are influencers of behaviours and how can we somehow get the hooks and the screwdrivers where there are influencers of behaviour.

If we take today's battlefield where international humanitarian law is respected or violators, who is behind those who carry guns? Who violate international humanitarian law and how can we leverage influences of those behind? I give you an example. I mean in Iraq, for instance, we have worked with religious leaders in order to get their voice for the respect of certain norms and principles. And religious leaders can be powerful influencers with people on the ground to ensure respect.

In other places, we see that mobilizing communities and supporting local communities and local community leaders can be powerful entry points in order to ensure respect of norms in the battlefields. And third, instances we see that with the assemblage of actors that we find in the battlefield states have influence over other states. And they can open doors to have, for instance International Red Cross having access to detainees, having access to civilian populations, having access to battlefields and having access to training rooms of armed forces.

So these are access roads to engage in a discussion on the application and the complete meaning of the norms rather than trying to establish whether we have exactly the same views on values. And so, I think we have to deconstruct the value discussion and not presuppose that in a fragmented world we all think about exactly the same way on certain norms. But we have to create and recreate a situational agreement that this an acceptable or doesn't that have to happen in certain circumstances.

And here I think the civil society engagement, the influencers' approach, the idea of looking at the system and see where we can build pressure points is of critical importance to ensure respect for norms within society, but also in very difficult contexts.

Moderator: Lassina do you have this kind of option to effectively over the heads of governments and write to the people themselves when there remains the fact that it's the governments who have to sign the treaties and it's the governments who control the weapons?

Lassina Zerbo: The option that I had recently was to – what we've done is going above government is difficult to foreign organizations because we – in my case, we answer to 184 countries that have signed. And then because of eight remaining, we are in this limbo. But engaging youth has changed the dynamic a little bit through the CTBT because if you take India and Pakistan that have not even signed the treaty, we have more young Indians and Pakistanis involved in the CTBT than any other nationality.

We started two and a half years ago with six or nine people. We have 750 young people from 91 countries today and they're now voicing their concern with regard to the entering into force of the CTBT and over all non-proliferation/disarmament architecture. So they are the only ones who can speak for us because have some constraints with, you know, after basically follow what states are saying.

And the young people talk freely and then they will write article that will be helpful for us to refer to and then to help change the dynamic. And when you talk about young people, you talk about civil society and geos (sic) that are basically helping the treaty right now. But one thing I wanted to mention is the disconnects that is coming between the overall non-proliferation architecture and some of the internal norms like the CTBT, the chemical weapons convention and many other issues.

And Nancy mentioned the regional institutions, how to evolve South African Union and ECOAS (sic). And someone mentioned as well that some of the vulnerable countries are left to the predation of China and Russia. And I wouldn't take this way. I want to say that it's because there's a void that others have left that the others are feeling. And if I take the example of, you know, my own example as somebody who has studied in Europe at the time when there was a movement of young scholars going to Europe or to Russia and today we see more African students coming to Canada or going to China than you see them going to Europe. Why?

Nancy Lindborg: Or the United States.

Lassina Zerbo: Or the United States, sorry. Or the United States, you're right. So, but United States it slowly starts, you know, (inaudible) because of obvious reasons that see, the difficulty to get visa. The difficulty to get to the university and so forth. In fact, in my own case, when you study somewhere you tend to have the sentiment and passion to that region because you follow a little bit of the culture, of the way of doing business. And then you tend to interact with them if you are, I believe, is your position. That's a natural thing that you see.

But the void that we see now as push more so of the African country to move towards China. For what? If you look at the relationship that China has with Africa, they came with one word that I want to use, is you come with the respect. And then when you come with the respect from our culture, you open your eyes. And that's something that the Chinese are probably seeing. But I'm not going to the economic or whatever that, you know, many people are criticizing. That's not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about the cultural way of approaching things that is helping making a difference in Africa that people are seeing. You take Russia. I met two years ago president Putin and then the question was why don't we have students from Africa coming to the Patrice Lumumba University anymore? I mean you've seen in the recent Africa-Russia summit that they will now open their arms to African students to come because they want to change the dynamic, because they realize that they've lost Africa because there was no connection between Russia and Africa.

And Europe is going in that direction. The less and less students and less and less interaction between African students and European. And that will lead to – I mean what the same deficit of trust that we're talking will worldwide go. If you talk to a young scholar today and say where do you want to go and study? The first thing that will come up of his mind is Canada. And that is linked to what the mayor said yesterday that Canada is open arm and Canada is welcoming students.

So they will come and then they will learn freedom and liberty in Canada the way it is done and the way it is accepted. And I think this is a conduit that we have to try and use

in many aspects when I take disarmament and non-proliferation. It's how you deal with this issue. We can't talk about non-proliferation and disarmament if you don't evolve countries, for instance, like South Africa in a way where we take into account and respect the fact that this is one of the first countries to have dismantle its nuclear weapon arsenal.

And those are things that we have to do and then educate people in that region to understand that non-proliferation and disarmament doesn't belong to the usual suspects. It belongs to all of us because peace and security depend on all of us.

Moderator: Great. Let's open things up now to question from the audience. I think the first hand was right there, please. And please try to keep your questions short which is another imprecation that always gets observed in a breach. But we don't have a lot of time. Thanks.

Question: Thank you. Lincoln Bloomfield (ph), Stimson (sic) Centre. Thank you for your excellent comments. It's interesting to hear the glass half-full, but I'm having a hard time letting go of the glass half-empty. And when I look at Syria in particular, the Russians using munitions to bomb hospitals. Bashar al-Assad driving 5.6 million people out of the country who want to go back but can't. Our friends in Turkey now clearing his own and potentially conducting a forced population transfer which to this lawyer, non-lawyer looks a violation of the 1945 Fourth Geneva Convention which hasn't happened yet.

And the Kurds force and the Shea non-state militias helping all the way to the destruction of Syria. My question is there a role that is missing now for greater accountability? Thank you.

Moderator: Who wants to?

Nancy Lindborg: Lincoln, you know, there are many other cases not just Syria where the glass half-full clearly is in the foreground. And we are missing, I think, the ability of a concerted alliance to act in a way that would make a difference. I mean there are many ways that you can deconstruct what happened or didn't happen that led us to this point in Syria. However, I liked Senator Kaine's formulation of he is to be worried about violent extremism then he became worried about great powers. Now, he's worried about the US and its inability or its unwillingness to provide that kind of leadership.

I think actually all are true at the same time. None of those previous threats have gone away and so it is a more complicated three-dimensional world and yes there is a need for more accountability. We set up a lot of legal structures that enable it. The International Criminal Court and you know the Rwandan (sic) Court mechanisms. I mean we have a lot of mechanisms for accountability, but you also need the enforcement. And for that, you need a solid alliance of nations with shared values supported by populations that share those values.

So I don't think that's all destroyed. I don't want to be pollyannish, but I think we just have a wake-up that we need to take that structure and those values more seriously and to align them with our interests more vigorously and to look at how democracies haven't delivered such that we're seeing this wave of nationalism, but also the wave of

people in unlikely countries around the world where they are demanding a return to those democratic values.

So I think we're in a moment of great complexity and churn and I choose to be optimistic because I do see that there is a counterwave across the globe saying we bought into that vision. We demand that vision and we are going to act in very courageous, putting our lives on the line ways to get that back.

Moderator: We need taking questions from groups now. So first, Alissa Ayres (ph), please and then Paula Dubriensky (ph) in front.

Question: Thank you. Hi, Alissa Ayres from the Council on Foreign Relations. Since we have two panellists with such deep experience in the humanitarian sectors, I wonder if I can ask a question about whether you have any ideas, ways the humanitarian response could be changed to perform better? We see over and over again in a case for example like the Rayenga (sic). The international appeals consistently fall short, not able to deliver all the resources needed. Do you have some thoughts about how the structure that currently exists could be improved?

Moderator: Thank you. Right here in the second row, please.

Question: Thank you. Paula Dubriensky, Harvard University. I want to follow on Nancy, your last comment. One of my professors at Harvard, Samuel Huntington (ph), wrote a book. Admittedly, it was about American politics, about focusing on what he called the IVI gap, Ideals Versus Institutions. Take that forward to the global order and the fact that there's discontent that many of the institutions are not upholding the values. And there's real discontent and cynicism.

Take for example the United Nations Human Rights Council. And how you have some of the worst offenders on it and that's never been changed. So my question to not just you, but to the panellists, what are the kinds of reforms that can and should be taken at this time to really make a difference? And we have a changed international environment. We know what hasn't worked. How can we move forward and get more accountability?

Moderator: Thank you. And a third question right here.

Question: My name is Kinana Ramani (ph). I work with an organization called the White Helmets that has saved over 120,000 Syrians from under the rubble because the international law and global order has not been able to save any Syrians. Not to be redundant with the question that Lincoln asked, but we have in Syria the regime using chemical weapons over 340 times. We have Russia and the regime targeting medical facilities over 500 times. Fifty hospitals have been bombed in the past six months.

A lot of people don't realize that in northwest Syria, one million Syrians have been displaced just in the past six months. And so my question is, we have a Security Council that Russia continues to be doing (sic) any kind of action. We have the United Nations even on the humanitarian response which actively coordinates with and works with the regime in a way that furthers the barbaric and brutal response of al-Assad regime.

And we don't even hear about it anymore that the regime has a seat at the United Nations. It still is recognized and it's very easy to you know jump to the conclusions that I would like the international community to do which is to stop the killing of the al-Assad regime. But what we're seeing is that there's not even any recognition of these continued crimes because of how immune we've become to the continued violations of the international law.

Moderator: So what's your question?

Question: The question is how do we work through international law and global order when there can be no accountability for years and years of systematic war crimes and violations?

Moderator: Ok, thank you. So these questions all really relate to one another. How can we improve change in the system to improve accountability? And what can be done to improve the humanitarian response on the ground? Peter, do you want to start with that last part first?

Peter Maurer: Well, I would like to go back to acknowledge that, of course, the international system needs both components, better accountability for violations as well as consensus building again involvement and understandings with whoever is part of that system to create understandings on the significance of the norms. And obviously we don't have a clear understanding on where the accountability part of the system has to work and where the consensus part has to work, or the involvement part has to work.

And we seem, of course, to have still big divergences of interests and big differences of interests almost on each and every situation with which we are dealing with. And I think one of the big problems that we are encountering is also that we continuously account accountability and involvement and consensus building as opposite and different paths. I think they are heavily complementary and they have to be complementary. They don't necessarily meet the same actors.

I mean from a humanitarian perspective, my sense on the improvement of the system, we have underinvestate (sic) consensus building on what the humanitarian space is, because technically you can do a lot to improve the humanitarian response, but that's not the issue. The issue today in today's conflict is that we don't have safe humanitarian spaces for neutral and impartial humanitarian action to deliver humanitarian action based on needs and not on political or other priorities.

And I think negotiating these spaces, having political support for neutral and impartial humanitarian action is something which is oddly lacking in the international system. We have a lot of controversy between the powers, but we don't have a lot of support for frontline humanitarian action and space. Then, there is a lot of technical stuff which can be improved.

But at the end of the day, I think what my institution represents now for 156 years has remained the same in today's conflict and today's situations. We have to find minimum consensus on who is a weapon's bearer on the ground to ensure respect for the basics of international humanitarian law. And this needs involvement, outreach, diplomacy,

negotiation and I think that's what is most lacking at the present moment and in the present system.

Moderator: Do you want to jump or should we move to the next question?

Lassina Zerbo: No, I can jump in. Just on what needs to be changed. I think this is a question that comes often but what I want to mention is instead of what used to be changed or reformed, can't we respect what we have already in terms of the norm? Where are we with regard to the international norm that exists? And who is respecting them and who is not respecting them? Can we deal with this issue first?

Because the better we know of how to respect or not to respect then we can think about how to reform in future. But first, we have to deal with the norm that exists and then make sure that we follow that. That's all I wanted to add.

Moderator: Thank you.

Nancy Lindborg: So Jonathan ---

Moderator: Yes.

Nancy Lindborg: I just want to jump in on this area of question because I think Syria really has underscored for us in the course of that really terrible tragedy all of the weaknesses of the international system because, in fact, from the beginning there was an effort to work within the international legal structures to address the unfolding first through evolution and then series of atrocities. And the systems were bent, you know, there was cross border humanitarian assistance, a huge effort to get the Security Council's blessing for that.

There was an ongoing process that Ocho (ph) led to try to get agreement that there was humanitarian suffering and atrocities underway. And China, Russia and Iran – mainly Russia and Iran blocked it and denied it continuously. There was an effort to get the chemical weapons taken out using legal conventions. It kind of worked but it didn't address the ongoing bombardments and barrel bombs and you know constant violations.

And so I think that will serve as the beacon of a case study, the wake-up call for all of us to say how do we – and it goes to the heart of David Reese critique of how do you put the kind of teeth into all the things that we've agreed to when the system allows there to be blockage to moving that forward. So this is one of the conundrums that we have.

And it goes to Elisa's (ph) question that there are a lot of ways to reform delivery of humanitarian assistance, huge very useful thinking about how to reform the institutions and the way it gets delivered. But the reality is that it's often the only thing moving on the chessboard. And people reach for humanitarian assistance because we don't have anything else that we can effectively deploy in terms of protection and human rights, addressing human rights violations.

And Syria is another example of that. There has been great humanitarian assistance. Billions of dollars of humanitarian assistance but it hasn't stopped the killing. And so, we can't inflate humanitarian assistance with effective protection.

Moderator: And you know, Syria is also relevant and worrisome because clearly the system doesn't change unless there are severe crises. But one wonders if Syria is not bad enough, what will it take for a deeper reform in the system? We were supposed to see changes after Rwanda and Bosnia and it didn't really happen. Or the ---

Nancy Lindborg: It did. It just hasn't moved all the way.

Moderator: It did but it hasn't worked, right. And we took one step forward and then after Libya we've taken multiple steps back. Ok, so more questions on this side, please. That gentleman and then we'll move over here. But first the gentleman in the third row, please. Just wait for the mic coming down the stairs. And we're really short on time so please be short.

Question: Thank you. Mustafa Vergood (ph) from Palestine. My question is since Geneva Convention was mentioned so many times, don't you think that one of the major reasons of disrespect to international law today is the fact that it is applied with double standards? I mean you have the leader of the superpower like president Trump recognizing the annexation of occupied territories, Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. And now Mr. Pompeo is coming out saying that violating the 49th article of the Geneva Convention which says that "no occupying power can transfer its population to an occupied land". And still he says that settlements are not in violation of international law.

In my opinion, these things that are happening are simply making so many people so disrespectful of international law. Thank you.

Moderator: Well, I happen to think that you're absolutely right and it's an inherent problem with the system that ultimately relies on self-help and has no enforcement mechanism. So you end up with a million dialogue system where the strong do what they can and everybody else suffers what they must. Michel Murray (ph), I think you were next.

Question: Jean-MarieDeneault (ph) (inaudible) Carnage (sic) Council for Ethics in the International Affairs and previously United Nations. I've got a lot of sympathy for what Peter Maurer said that we may disagree on values but a focused approach to solve the issues where there can be a consensus is the pragmatic way to go forward.

But at the same time, we do need institutions. The values with the norms if they are not backed by solid institutions, eventually they will wither away. And while we have heard from Mr. Bagotee (ph) and others, the global institutions they are under stress today. They are seen sometimes as reckless, Libya, or they are seen as paralyzed Syria. Lots was put in regional institutions, African Union especially. In other parts of the world we see the US very polarized.

In Asia, there is no real – I mean they're on (sic) but there is not regional organization for the whole of Asia. Europe is very much inward looking at the moment, dealing with its own problem. So the regional organizations have their own weaknesses. Nevertheless, they may have a little bit more legitimacy because they're closer to the people and the question I would like to pose is how can you better articulate, especially in the case of the African Union, those regional organizations with the global institutions?

We see in the case of the African Union that the relationship is poisoned by issues of financing. And so we have an institution that might be able to move forward but doesn't have the money to do it and its member states are not prepared to really significantly increase their contribution. So how do we go about that?

Moderator: Thank you. Lobsang (ph). Just stay on the row, please.

Question: Thank you. Lobsang Sangay (ph), President of the Tibetan Administration. Dr. Lassina, you said instead of talking about the reforms of international institutions, why don't we talk about the ones we have and respecting about it. But China is already restructuring international institutions, for example the United Nations. Now, as the second-largest donor to the United Nations, they are putting key personnel and, you know, monopolizing or pressurizing some agencies.

For example, at the Human Rights Council if you try to move a resolution on human rights violations, Hong Kong, Seisian (sic), Tibet or anywhere in China, you will have more countries supporting China saying human rights is good than the countries who say there are human rights violations. Now, China is redefining human rights and they have passed two resolutions where they have said development is better than democracy. Food is more important than freedom.

And more countries have supported those resolutions and they're trying to make it in a statute. If it becomes a statute, then human rights, as we know, it will be very different. It'll be over. So hence, how do we cope with that present system that we have. It's regressing and people because they're donating money and they're restructuring it. That's the challenge.

Moderator: Can you just pass the microphone back to Luis (ph) right behind you, please.

Question: Thanks. Luis Forwee (ph) from Mexico. The premises that the system based on rules and international law is desirable. But what happens when the main promoter of these values or these principles is the main violator. The US has been renouncing the treaties on weapons, two fundamental ones. It is challenging the alliances that have long withheld these institutions. And lately, at least, theoretically, it has been supporting the challenges of the established order. How do we cope with that?

Moderator: Ok. I'm afraid those have to be our wrap-up comments. So I'll go to each of you and you can respond to any of these as you see fit. Just to remind you, we're talking about the problem of double standards; how regional organizations can better be integrated into the entire structure of the international cooperation; how can

we reinvest in an organization like the UN when China is increasingly dominating it and shifting its emphasis to issues more of its liking and encroach more of its liking. And what do you do when the main proponent of international law becomes its biggest challenger? Take away. We have three minutes.

Peter Maurer: Of course there are double standards. The question is, and of course, it is important as Jean-Marie mentions to work through different levels of institutions. It goes back to a point I wanted to make strongly here. The question is what you can do to create consensus, even the differences of interests that we have in today's environment. And you can't overcome unless you stick your heads together and you formulate concrete ideas and concrete steps amongst states.

Just blaming the other for the double standards – my double standard is not your double standards. That's what we are in at the present moment. And that's a no-go. And we will just turn around. And the second point I wanted again to make very powerfully, you don't just take from wherever you look at this international system to see what you can do yourself to respect the norms. And to improve respect for the norms because the vision that there is somebody only violating the norm and somebody only respecting the norm is just a biased vision which will not help us to move forward.

So it is also looking at your own failures, looking at improving the norms, using the influence that you have on actors to ensure respect for norms. This is important in order to fix the system. Thank you. Peter.

Lassina Zerbo: And the need for institutions. I think you mentioned the AU and the difficulty of financing. I don't think it's about countries not wanting to find a financing, make a lesson for the AU. I mean it's linked to many difficulties in Africa right now. Priorities, where do we stand with regard to moving from current structure of the AU to a new structure. I think president Kadam (ph) strives to lead an initiative to find a financing mechanism for that.

But how do you lead the AU to the global issue? It's the way I will picture this is inviting AU to the table of discussion on global issue or having AU on the menu (sic). I think this is how we have to look at the difference. We cannot discuss issue of Africa without bringing AU to the table of discussion. I've seen many articles talking many mentioned Libya. I mean the decision to attack Libya was done without involving the African Union and that's something that is being discussed right now by the youth in Africa.

I mean those are issues that we have to look into seriously. If you want to involve Africa and the issue of Africa, you have to bring them at the table of negotiation. You don't just have to have them on the menu for the discussion. So now, moving on to China.

How do you deal with China's increasing influence in international organizations? I would try and separate the Human Rights Council with international organizations like the one that I'm heading. I've been of the view that to allow international civil servants to speak the truth and tell the truth so that people can follow the norms, we need probably to reform the way heads of organizations are elected. And I think that goes with every kind of election of head of countries as well.

When you elect somebody for four years and then he comes for four years he's worried about getting – winning a second term and then there are some tough decisions that are not easy to take. And I've been wondering if we shouldn't come up with if it's a norm to give two terms to somebody. I mean give them one eight years once and then that's it. You don't have to go so that the guy – the person who come knows that he has eight years to fulfil his full responsibility with regard to the state signatory of the organization and then he can move on.

I think that goes with some countries as well. So that's something that we have to look also so that people don't suffer the influence for power within the organization. So now, I give the example of the type of pressure that comes. I mean if you take – some will tell you we paid 20% of the budget of the organization. We need 20% of staff within the organization. I mean if you take the budget of Burkina Faso it's probably 0.0001 of this organization that I'm heading. I shouldn't be at the head of the organization.

So that's something that we have to look into to make sure that people adhere to global norms and principles that govern international organizations and then the work of international civil servants. And then void that the pressure is not only individual but the pressure should be on what governs the organization so that there could be a balance from other countries to come so that the majority can always speak for the organization rather than the power of the money that we invest in the organization. Thank you.

Nancy Lindborg: So these are enormous topics. Each of the questions and not to be overly glued in the minute I have to respond, but you know I think double standards are really at the heart of a lot of the issues that we're facing right now. A lack of adherence to our values and a divergence between interests and values. And whether it's the failure of democracies to deliver that we've seen after a great flowering of democracies, they didn't hold forth on their promise and now we're seeing this decline in democracies.

Then over and over again, we have seen that double standard and that divergence from what we state to be the goals and the values. So this offers us an opportunity. It offers us a big wake-up call. We are, all of us, spending a lot of time in forums like this where there is a great grappling with these issue re-affirmation of the importance of institutions that are effective, of alliances that keep us focused on like-minded partners and in upholding these norms and institutions.

So at the risk of sounding overly glib, I think that we have the opportunity to grasp this moment of extraordinary disruption, or extraordinary rising levels of certain kinds of violence but against a backdrop of a long peace and the backdrop of the fact that we have had all these developmental games. So we have a lot of evidence that can back up the importance of these frameworks and these values and when you have governments that are responsible to the needs of their people you have greater prosperity and stability that is in everybody's interest.

We all need to double down on figuring out how to breathe life back into those values and institutions. So you can be very glass half-full. It's tempting to be but I actually think it's a moment of energizing and we are seeing this with youth across the globe. They are standing up. They are speaking out. They are putting their lives at risk and we need to figure out how do we get on that train and make a difference for the future.

Moderator: That's a great note on which to end. And I apologize because I feel like the conversation is just getting started and I know many of you wanted to ask questions and I didn't get to you. But while I don't agree that food is more important than freedom like the Chinese do, I know lunch is next. So I'll be unwise to keep going. Please join me in thanking Nancy Lindborg, Peter Maurer and Lassina Zerbo. Thank you.