

I. STUDII, CERCETĂRI, ARTICOLE

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PEACE AND TRUST (2021)

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Abstract:

Articolul își propune să evidențieze semnificația politică, diplomatică și juridică a proclamării anului 2021 ca An internațional al păcii și încrederii. Este analizat conținutul rezoluției Adunării Generale a ONU pe această temă și se reliefează rolul Consiliului de Securitate în promovarea păcii ca valoare supremă a umanității. Sunt amintite contribuțiile unor organizații internaționale, precum ASEAN, la cauza păcii și întăririi încrederii între națiuni. În întregul articol este menționat impactul negativ al Covid-19 asupra cooperării internaționale.

Cuvinte cheie: an internațional, pace, încredere, Națiunile Unite, rezoluție, cooperare, solidaritate, ASEAN, diplomatie

Résumé:

L'article vise à souligner l'importance politique, diplomatique et juridique de la proclamation de 2021 Année internationale de la paix et de la confiance. Le contenu de la résolution de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies sur cette question est analysé et le rôle du Conseil de sécurité dans la promotion de la paix en tant que valeur suprême de l'humanité est mis en évidence. Les contributions des organisations internationales telles que l'ASEAN à la cause de la paix et au renforcement de la confiance entre les nations sont mentionnées. L'article entier mentionne l'impact négatif de Covid-19 sur la coopération internationale.

Mots-clés: année internationale, paix, confiance, Nations Unies, résolution, coopération, solidarité, ASEAN, diplomatie

There is a strongly established diplomatic practice to proclaim international years observed under auspices of the United Nations (UN). The world organization designates specific years as appropriate occasions to mark particular events or topics in order to promote, through awareness and action, some significant objectives. Usually, one or several Member States propose these observances and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) takes a relevant decision by adopting to that effect a resolution.

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Under the symbol A/RES/73/338, on 12 September 2019 the UNGA adopted the resolution entitled International Year of Peace and Trust, 2021¹.

The long list of initial co-sponsors of this resolution in the order given in the UN official documents is the following : Azerbaijan, Belarus, Canada, Central African Republic, Cuba, Ecuador, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Viet Nam.

In an Addendum, the following countries joined the initial list of sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Chad, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Georgia, Greece, Guyana, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Samoa, Serbia, Somalia, Sudan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates and Zimbabwe.

The content of the resolution

The resolution has just two pages covering a preambular part and an operative part of six paragraphs.

The preamble starts by the UNGA “Reaffirming the Charter of the United Nations and its purposes and principles, and especially the commitment to settle disputes through peaceful means and the determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”.

In the rest of the preamble the following ideas and considerations are reflected: the important role of the UN in developing friendly relations among nations; the approach of multilateralism and diplomacy could reinforce the advancement of the three pillars of the United Nations, namely sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights, which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, while observing respective mandates and the Charter.

Special reference is made to the importance of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace which serves as the universal mandate for the international community, particularly the UN system, for the

¹ The full text of the resolution is available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/338>. From the relevant books in the field see *The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict*, Publisher: Read How You Want, 2015, 360 pages. See also Seligman Adam B., *Problem of Trust*, Princeton University Press, 2000, 240 pages. This book analyzes trust as a fundamental issue of social relationships and asks whether trust – which critics identify as essential in creating a cohesive society – can continue to serve this role as it is losing its unifying power. From the academic studies see Melissa R. Trussell, *The Cyclical Relationship of Peace and Trust*, Published online: 19 March 2021, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10242694.2021.1896961>

promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence that benefits humanity, in particular future generations.

The UNGA also recognizes the urgent need to promote and strengthen preventive diplomacy, *inter alia*, through multilateralism and political dialogue, and the important role of the UN in this regard.

A significant preambular paragraph contains the acknowledgment that peace and trust entail accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way.

In another separate paragraph, the UNGA recognizes the role of international, regional and subregional organizations, in accordance with their mandates, in the promotion and preservation of peace. This idea is further developed by the recognition of the fact that peace not only is the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. In the same context, the UNGA stresses the importance of preventive diplomacy in supporting the UN efforts to promote the peaceful settlement of conflicts, in order to preserve peace.

Adequate reference is made to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and to the UNGA's resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The UNGA does not forget to encourage the continued and increasing efforts and activities on the part of civil society organizations throughout the world in advancing a culture of peace, as envisaged in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace already mentioned earlier.

As expected, in the first operative part of the resolution the UNGA "Declares 2021 the International Year of Peace and Trust (IYPT)".

How is this year characterized?

The UNGA underlines that the IYPT constitutes a means of mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace and trust among nations based on, *inter alia*, political dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation, in order to build sustainable peace, solidarity and harmony.

To that end, the UNGA "Calls upon the international community to continue to promote peace and trust among nations as a value that promotes sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights, and invites all Member States, organizations of the UN system, other relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, individuals and other relevant stakeholders, to facilitate the observance of the IYPT, in an appropriate manner and to disseminate the advantages of peace and trust, including through educational and public awareness-raising activities".

The last two operative paragraphs are of procedural nature. The UNGA requests the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of

all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and individuals, and stresses that the cost of all activities that may arise from the implementation of the resolution should be met from voluntary contributions.

The resolution was adopted by consensus.

How to interpret the fundamental notions of peace and trust present in the resolution?

The UNGA has had many occasions to pronounce itself on peace as a supreme value of humanity. The UNGA reaffirmed the right of individuals, States and all mankind to life in peace, declaring itself aware that, since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed and recognized that peace among nations is mankind's paramount value, held in the highest esteem by all principal political, social and religious movements.

Trust, as noun, is defined as firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something and relations have to be built on trust. More interesting explanations of the notion of trust have been suggested by political leaders and scholars. These explanations converge on some crucial points. According to them, the most precious thing in the diplomatic world is trust. It can take years to earn and only a matter of seconds to lose, so it is important to keep trust at the forefront of all diplomatic initiatives. Albert Einstein used to say "Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters."² This is fully applicable in diplomacy, be it bilateral or multilateral.

Readers interested to know why the UNGA declared 2021 as International Year of Peace and Trust (IYPT) will discover that mainstream media ignored this diplomatic decision of the world organization. The probable reason for such attitude is the sad fact that 2021 is the second year of the pandemic Covid-19 during which the world community of nations has been confronted with an invisible enemy, which is seriously affecting peace and trust.

Moreover, the current world is characterized by formidable vulnerabilities, perplexities and discontinuities affecting global, regional and inter-regional cooperation in all fields. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic many elements

² For a collection of quotations about trust see <https://www.inc.com/lolly-daskal/trust-me-these-30-quotes-about-trust-could-make-a-huge-difference.html>. Interesting quotations about peace are available at <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/a27115824/peace-quotes/> See also <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/face-time-building-trust-international-affairs>

of instability and unpredictability have an increased negative impact on international arena and on its actors.³

Noble objectives

However, even if this is an undeniable reality, the noble objectives of a great number of countries who proposed the proclamation of the IYPT cannot be underestimated.

Indeed, when the UNGA adopted by consensus on 12 September 2019 the relevant resolution on the IYPT, 193 members of the world organization were convinced that such a Year constitutes a means of mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace and trust among nations based on, *inter alia*, political dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation, in order to build sustainable peace, solidarity and harmony.

There is convincing evidence that the approach of multilateralism and diplomacy could reinforce the advancement of the three pillars of the United Nations, namely sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights, which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, while observing respective mandates and the UN Charter.

In more practical terms, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence benefits all humanity and in particular future generations.

In operational terms, the UNGA had all reasons to call upon the international community to continue to advance peace and trust among nations as a value that promotes sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights.

Therefore, according to the UNGA all member states, organizations of the UN system, other relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, individuals and other relevant stakeholders are expected in 2021 to facilitate the observance of the IYPT, in an appropriate manner, and to disseminate the advantages of peace and trust, including through educational and public awareness-raising activities, which are essential for the successful celebration of the Year.

Unfortunately, because of the pandemic Covid-19 the organization of such activities is still on the waiting list worldwide. Moreover, on the whole planet we witness an acute form of trust deficit syndrome, a crisis of trust

³ See the article Ioan Voicu, *A test of diplomatic maturity during a multi-vectorial crisis* available in e-version at https://2c2e45e5-12d6-4ee7-81f3-41c6c611007c.filesusr.com/ugd/1c5576_d7ecb58d5a894a6f9c47ff231bb0ef89.pdf

See also <https://www.unicef.org/romania/press-releases/covid-19-pandemic-countries-urged-take-stronger-action-stop-spread-harmful>. An interesting assessment of trust is contained in the article by David Manners, *Who Trusts The Government? Who Trusts Business?* available at <https://www.electronicweekly.com/blogs/mannerisms/delusions/who-trusts-the-government-2021-01/>

in national institutions, while trust in global governance is also fragile and global peace – a supreme value – is still a noble dream.

Towards a culture of peace

When the draft resolution summarized above was submitted, it was emphasized that peace and trust represent acceptance and respect and embody mutual understanding and the recognition of diversity in all its myriad forms. Diversity enriches and strengthens the foundations of life itself, and the recognition of diversity ensures peaceful coexistence to a greater degree even than tolerance. It was reminded that history had repeatedly shown that decisions to shun peace and embrace extremes in any form can trigger conflict and discontent and ultimately lead to war and untold suffering. On the other hand, sponsors of the resolution believe that peace and trust, on the contrary, can mitigate or prevent such consequences. That is why it is crucial to view peace and trust as fundamental to international relations around the world, in some parts of which the task of establishing peace continues to be very difficult to accomplish.

In acknowledging that an approach founded on trust can help to achieve peaceful coexistence, the sponsors of the resolution considered that peace and trust in all of their forms can help to facilitate the future development of friendly relations among states and contribute to advancing a culture of peace.

It has also been recognized that while there are many obstacles to establishing a culture of peace and trust, they can all be overcome and in our changing world the task of building and maintaining good relations among states and strengthening a spirit of partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation is especially urgent.⁴

All these ideas expressed on 12 September 2019 by the delegations that have sponsored the resolution under consideration are as valid in 2021 as they were at the time the resolution was adopted.

But what is the value of recommendations formulated in an UNGA resolution?

For the lucidity of the analysis we will quote professor Michel Virally of Geneva University who wrote: “There is no doubt that for the future of the international organization, the recommendations to member states are the most significant, even if they are the fewest. Their value may appear mediocre to those who measure everything by reference to the sovereign power of the state over its own subjects. No doubt it is, but before long, and apart from a few geographically limited experiences, this same state sovereignty will oppose the recognition, for the benefit of international institutions, of decision-making

⁴ For the verbatim record of the meeting during which the relevant resolution on the IYPT was adopted see document: <https://undocs.org/en/A/73/PV.106>

powers comparable to those of national parliaments and governments. We must therefore not despise the only instruments currently available.”⁵

Consequently, moderate optimism can be expressed about the political will of countries to fully implement the resolution on the IYPT, in spite of the noble intentions of its co-sponsors. However, a more dynamic encouragement from the UN Secretary-General could generate more interest at the national and regional levels to organize significant and appropriate manifestations able to contribute to the cause of peace and trust at the global level.

Further developments

The most significant event related to the IYPT, but not specifically dedicated to it, is resolution 2565 (2021) unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council on 26 February 2021.⁶

This diplomatic document starts by reminding, *inter alia*, of an UNGA resolution 74/270, entitled *Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19)* adopted on 2 April 2020.⁷ In this resolution the UNGA “Expresses optimism that the unprecedented crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic can be mitigated and successfully reversed through leadership and sustained global cooperation and solidarity”.

Developing further this idea, the UN Security Council reaffirmed that “combating and sustainably recovering from the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic requires greater national, regional, and international cooperation and solidarity, and a coordinated, inclusive, comprehensive and global international response with the United Nations (UN) playing a key role”.

The Security Council demanded that “all parties to armed conflicts engage immediately in a durable, extensive, and sustained humanitarian pause to facilitate, *inter alia*, the equitable, safe and unhindered delivery and distribution of Covid-19 vaccinations in areas of armed conflict.”

From this comprehensive resolution, (too large to be presented in detail in these pages), we reproduce a most topical operational paragraph by which the Security Council “*Emphasises* the urgent need for solidarity, equity, and efficacy and invites donation of vaccine doses from developed economies and all those in a position to do so to low and middle-income countries and other countries in need, particularly through the COVAX Facility including on the basis of the

⁵ See Michel Virally, *La valeur juridique des recommandations des organisations internationales* at <https://books.openedition.org/iheid/4377?format=toc>

⁶ The relevant resolution of the UN Security Council is available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3903131?ln=en>

⁷ The resolution 74/270 adopted by the UN General Assembly is available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/270>

WHO allocation framework in addition to country-specific frameworks, for fair access and equitable allocation of Covid-19 health products”.

This paragraph develops in operational terms an idea strongly expressed in the preamble of the resolution. According to the preamble, the Security Council emphasizes “the unity, common origin and solidarity of mankind, and the need for intensified international collaboration in the face of the common threat of pandemics, in particular by enabling equitable global access to quality, safe, efficacious and affordable diagnostics, therapeutics, medicines and vaccines, and essential health technologies, and their components, as well as equipment for the COVID-19 response.”⁸

At the regional level, a good example is offered by the ASEAN. In the Chairman’s Statement on the ASEAN Leaders of 24 April 2021 it is clearly stated: “We reaffirmed ASEAN’s commitment to upholding multilateral cooperation, anchored in international law, towards achieving peace, security, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond”⁹.

What next?

There are seven more months until the end of 2021 and specific activities dedicated to the IYPT can still be organized worldwide. The list of sponsors of the resolution proclaiming the IYPT is a long and representative one, including, as mentioned earlier, among others countries, Canada, Norway, Ireland, India, Indonesia, China, Russian Federation, Brazil, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam. The sponsors of the resolution can offer a good example of inspiring activities for the promotion of peace, trust and solidarity, considering that the unprecedented extent of the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this context, full recognition of geo-political realities is an imperative condition for promoting authentic confidence among nations. Moreover, appropriate conclusions should be formulated in the light of valuable findings of scholars in the field of international relations. In this regard, we quote Richard A. Falk, professor emeritus of Princeton University (USA), who wrote: “I believe that a world government, whatever theorizing proceeded it, would never become a political project or if it did, would almost certainly veer toward global tyranny that reproduced military and material hierarchies. Given existing levels of inequality and distrust, there was no prospect in my mind for accepting a world government that would improve the human condition, except possibly in the midst of a mood of despair that might arise

⁸ See note 6 supra.

⁹ The full text of the document is available at <https://asean.org/chairmans-statement-asean-leaders-meeting-24-april-2021-five-point-consensus/>

after a global apocalypse – and even then, I would not be hopeful.”¹⁰ Indeed, as emphasized by the UNGA itself on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the world organization: “**We will build trust.** Growing inequality within and among countries is jeopardizing our efforts to ensure the future we want. Inequality leads to mistrust between countries and to people’s mistrust in institutions of governance”.¹¹

In the process of celebration of the IYPT, member states could make an effort to further define trust as a value binding them in their mutual relations, having in mind that trust is a central part in the large sphere of all human relationships, including education, partnerships, business operations, politics and diplomatic practices. The concept of confidence-building measures which is already familiar in multilateral diplomacy practiced under the UN auspices might provide some useful guidance in defining trust.¹²

Anyhow, the critical assessment of the IYPT’s results will be on the UNGA’s agenda in 2022 and the UN Secretary-General will have to submit a report about the implementation of the resolution by which the IYPT was proclaimed.

Meanwhile, the UN Secretary-General advocates in favour of the cause of peace on a frequent basis. The most recent example is dated 25 May 2021. It is the statement contained in the UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ message for the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, observed on 29 May. In this statement the Secretary-General asserts: “This year’s observance focuses on the central question of youth, peace and security. In every country where our peacekeepers work, peace can only be achieved with the active participation of young people. The world needs to do far more to address their needs, amplify their voices and ensure their presence at decision-making tables. One of our greatest strengths is our own young peacekeepers, in particular young women peacekeepers who contribute every day to debunking deeply entrenched gender stereotypes and inspire young women and girls to seek non-traditional paths and opportunities. United Nations peacekeeping helps nurture peace in some of the world’s most dangerous places. Today and every day, we salute the dedication and bravery of our peacekeepers in helping societies turn away from war and towards a safer, more stable future.”¹³

The question about how topical is the implementation of the IYPT is answered by dramatic or even tragic facts. From 1989 to 2019, more than 2.5 million people were killed due to war and conflict, according to the Uppsala

¹⁰ See Richard A. Falk, *Public Intellectual: The Life of a Citizen Pilgrim*, launched in February 2021 by Clarity Press, Inc. p. 28.

¹¹ For the full text of the resolution, see <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/1>

¹² See the full text of the resolution at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3895285?ln=en>

¹³ For the full text of the statement see <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20743.doc.htm>

Conflict Data Program. The program has a history of almost 40 years and it is the world's primary data provider on organized violence. The International Crisis Group reports that more than 70 conflicts are ongoing in 2021 and that a record 68 million people are displaced due to conflict and persecution.¹⁴ To all these data we must add the tragic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁵

For the launching of the IYPT the UNGA's current President has already made thoughtful statements on the matter. In a very recent one, the President of the 75th Session of the UNGA, Volkan Bozkir, thanked the Government of Turkmenistan for initiating the IYPT and underlined that, in view of the global situation, the need in peace and trust is high as never before and urged the international community to continue cooperating through political dialog and solidarity on the way to peace, security and sustainable development.¹⁶

The resolution initiated by Turkmenistan and co-sponsored by many other countries listed above declaring the year 2021 as the IYPT belongs to a diplomatic strategy of international cooperation searching realistic solutions to global problems. An UNGA resolution is an expression of a will and an aspiration. It is the responsibility of all UN members to implement it.

It is universally recognized that peace and trust are closely inter-related and cannot be separated. International life demonstrates that both peace and trust are capricious and cannot be taken for granted. It is a permanent task for bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to make robust efforts to give visible tangibility to these humanistic values.

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¹⁴ See the current data at <https://www.timeanddate.com/year/2021/peace-trust.html>

¹⁵ For the most recent data concerning Covid-19 pandemic see <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/>

¹⁶ See also <http://www.newscentralasia.net/2019/09/17/2021-international-year-of-peace-and-trust/> On general aspects of trust from the perspective of the World Health Organization see *Does the WHO trust China on COVID?* available at <https://www.dw.com/en/does-the-who-trust-china-on-covid/a-56760832>.

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