EDITORIAL

Toward holistic governance in an interdependent world

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In an informative piece, 'What do we mean by governance?' (1), Anna Bruce-Lockhart, editor at the World Economic Forum, cuts through a lot of the 'buzzwords' that are used to describe governance. She refers to governance in its 'purest form', that is 'the structures and decision-making processes that allow a state, organization or group of people to conduct affairs' and applies the term to organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations (UN) that 'have an authority that is recognized in the world'. In a business context, the label generally refers to how companies regulate themselves and contribute to the regulation of global frameworks. Referencing the Australian Audit Office, she shares the view that good governance is about openness, transparency, integrity, effective collaboration, and performance orientation.

She emphasises that it is a central concept that applies to most areas and levels of human activity, and includes human rights, freedom of speech, economic transactions on a worldwide basis, full access to the internet, and to financial markets. Unfortunately, however, given the risks facing us categorised as Global Warming, Global Divides, Global Security, Global Instability, and Global Health (2), few might question her conclusion: 'Global regimes are experiencing an erosion of authority in the face of intensifying threats'.

More might agree that as things stand "textbook" political governance is generally not working on the global, regional and national stage anymore. On many counts, it is a failing concept.As Edward Lucas, former editor of *The Economist*, points out, 'the Brexit vote and Donald Trump's election in the US both stem from a widespread feeling that the system no longer works properly. In the advanced industrialised world, two thirds of the population, or 580 million people saw their incomes before taxpayer-financed top-ups stagnate or fall between 2004 and 2014. Between 1993 and 2005 that figure was only 10 million (3).

Professor Ian Goldin at Oxford Martin School in his book *"Divided Nations: Why global governance is failing, andwhat we can do about it"* (4), highlights that one of the main reasons why we are failing 'to manage global issues'-migration, climate change, cybersecurity etc. alongside their prevention- is that global institutions, such as the UN as well as most other ones, have not kept pace with 'their growing complexity and danger' and as a result are no longer fit for purpose.

The author puts forth that we need 'a fundamental rethink of the way we approach global governance'. In his view governance is failing in global institutions because their power or authority is 'circumscribed by its members.' In other words, as we have seen time and time again in the UN Security Council member allegiance is generally not to the UNto which they all belong but to their respective nation-states. To make these institutions work for the benefit of the world or region would mean ceding powers to them, which as history has shown is highly unlikely. The difficult question, then, is howself-interests and cooperation for the common good can be reconciled?

One option for Professor Goldin is to view sovereignty in a different light –'to imagine a world where sovereignty is not just about preventing but also about enabling. If we redefine sovereignty, to look beyond coercion and exclusion but also consider cooperation and inclusion, it no longer makes sense as something one can monopolize'.

A hallmark of the seventeen UN -2030 Sustainable Development Goals (5) with which most are now familiar,is their interconnectedness and interdependency-as examples, climate, health, food production, peace, education, prosperity, security - and that progressing the goals and targets could be optimised by "building co-operative organisations out of self-interested components".

This fundamental principle underpinning the UN-2030 Agenda and the SDGs could apply equally well to other issues of global governance (trade, migration, conflicts), that is, ensuring that interactions and negotiations take a more holistic approach tackling

complementary global issues so that what one nation may lose on one issue (e.g., migration), it can gain on another, rather than dealing with only one hurdle at a time often leading to an unsatisfactory outcome or at best a stalemate (6). Streamlining the committee structures of many organisations (e.g., UN, EU) could be a useful first step to dealing with multi-faceted issues or problems, arriving at more realistic outcomes while also saving time especially if a horizontal management structure is put in place, providing 'a balanced equilibrium between bottom-up initiative and top-down support' (7).

While research into distinctive areas of knowledge continues to be vital in gaining a better understanding of the world we inhabit, it has also been the cause of fragmentation, competition and tensions (6). The differentiation of school subjects and medical specialisations (over 100 in US) are examples of how society has tried to cope with the ever-increasing range, complexity and depth of knowledge integral to the planet and our relationship to it. One estimate is that knowledge is now doubling every twelve months and may soon do so every month.

Reductionism and silo approaches to tackling global issues as applied in the 19th and 20th centuries persist (e.g., Ebola crisis) but no longer work when we know, as example, that the drought in California is linked to deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest and that unregulated migration to Europe is related to political hegemony, ideological extremism, climate change, food insecurity, education, unemployment and regional conflicts.The separation of ecology, democracy, social justice, prosperity and peace and the impact these have on the health and well-being of people and the planet can no longer be justified and neither can effective governance that underpin these factors.

Rather than focusing strictly on human dimensions governance is tasked with taking a broader perspective considering the interplay between humans, animals, plants and the environment. The concept is known as One Health (8,9) and has been taken on board by many organisations globally – the World Medical Association, the World Veterinary Association, the InterAction Council, made up of former heads of state and ministers, the OECD, and the CDC, among many others (9).

The pressing need to adopt the concept and collaborative approach is exemplified by the devastation in Syria: not only did it lead to the destruction of a society – over 500,000 lives - half children - needlessly lost along with countless farm animals and poisoned land but it also impacted severely on the constituents that make life possible in the first place -undermining biodiversity and the ecological systems in general.

While agreeing with the attributes about 'good governance, identified earlier (1), perhaps consideration might also be given to another,that is, recognising that 'governance' has a higher purpose - the sustainability of people and planet. Achieving this aim would require adoption of a new worldview to ensure that our needs as human beings are compatible with the needs of our ecosystem - upon which all life and our activities depend (10). Embracing the mantra 'One Health in All Policies' (6) could be a timely and ground-breaking first step toward realising the 'governance' we need.

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