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seeks to forge a global alliance to strengthen the institutional policies that link individuals and the state—and the state with a global world. Human security thus brings together the human elements of security, of rights, of development.

The Commission on Human Security's definition of human security: to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.

The vital core of life is a set of elementary rights and freedoms people enjoy. What people consider to be “vital”—what they consider to be “of the essence of life” and “crucially important”—varies across individuals and societies. That is why any concept of human security must be dynamic. And that is why we refrain from proposing an itemized list of what makes up human security.

As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan points out, human security joins the main agenda items of peace, security and development. Human security is comprehensive in the sense that it integrates these agendas:

Human security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has

opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment—these are the interrelated building blocks of human, and therefore national, security.¹

Human security also reinforces human dignity. People's horizons extend far beyond survival, to matters of love, culture and faith. Protecting a core of activities and abilities is essential for human security, but that alone is not enough. Human security must also aim at developing the capabilities of individuals and communities to make informed choices and to act on behalf of causes and interests in many spheres of life. That is why human security starts from the recognition that people are the most active participants in determining their well-being. It builds on people's efforts, strengthening what they do for themselves.

Human security and state security

Human security complements “state security” in four respects (box 1.2):²

- Its concern is the individual and the community rather than the state.
- Menaces to people's security include threats and conditions that have not always been classified as threats to state security.
- The range of actors is expanded beyond the state alone.
- Achieving human security includes not just protecting people but also empowering people to fend for themselves.