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Human Rights and Technology: The main requisites to implement the 2030 Agenda

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- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is grounded on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties.

- Technological progress is perceived as a necessary tool to ensure prosperity and to ensure the fulfillment of people's needs.

- The interactions between human rights and technology must be studied and considered in the development of national plans that aims to achieve the SDGs.

- The Book "Human Rights and Technology. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", to be published in February 2017, promotes academic research on these topics and presents models on how SDGs can be achieved.

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Economic, political, and cultural aspects of every day's life affect the form in which we perceive the world, hence, society is under continuous change. At the national level this means that states need to adapt and effectively respond to the challenges faced by its people; but this also requires organization and active participation of citizens in public matters. At the international level, these social changes require more cooperation among states, civil society, and the private sector, to improve living conditions and guarantee peace and international security.

The United Nations (UN), aware of these changes, has developed different strategies to address them at the international level. Throughout the last 70 years, the organization has created campaigns to eradicate poverty and hunger, promote wellbeing for all, achieve gender equality, combat climate change, and so on.

The first comprehensive plan, "The Millennium Project", was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000. It comprised 8 Development Goals (MDGs) and 18 targets that were designed to face the challenges posed by globalization and that were supposed to be achieved by 2015.[1] Even though by that date these targets were partially achieved, it was necessary to continue working on these issues, and that is how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came to be.

The new plan presents an ambitious Agenda that includes 17 goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. It was designed to "to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment."[2] In order to implement it, states indicated that they are determined to protect the planet, promote peace, create partnerships, and ensure prosperity. It is surprising that no specific mention to human rights is made in the preamble of this resolution, while technological progress is perceived as a requisite to enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives.

The Declaration goes further in this idea and present technology as a key aspect for the implementation of the Agenda. In fact, goal 17, strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize de Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, includes 3 specific targets on the use of technology. Moreover, the Declaration launched a "Technology Facilitation Mechanism"

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1   United Nations General Assembly. (2000). Resolution 55/2. United Nations
      Millennium Declaration, A/RES/55/2 (18 September 2000).
2   United Nations General Assembly. (2015). Resolution 70/1 Transforming our world:
      the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1 (21 October 2015).
      Preamble.

composed of a UN inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation to promote coordination, coherence, and cooperation between the civil society, the private sector and the scientific community, and states.[3] However, no expert on human rights is included in this mechanism, and no mention to the relationship between technology and human rights is made in goal 17.

Yet, states indicated that they "envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity",[4] and they specified that the Agenda is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, and applicable international law.

For experts on this topic the linkages between human rights and technologies seem pretty obvious, but for experts in other fields it is not that evident. Interdisciplinary studies are not very common. Scholars tend to specialize in one area, and for that reason, to find research in which different fields of expertise are combined is very difficult. Considering that all goals are interconnected, and that their achievement depends on the implementation of comprehensive national plans, I coordinated the publication of a book, that will be launched by the UPEACE Press in February 2017, and in which the linkages between technologies and human rights were explored from different perspectives.[5]

**UPEACE Book: "Human Rights and Technology.
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"**

Since every SDG aims to protect one or more human rights and states will rely on the use of technological innovations and global interconnectedness to implement the 2030 Agenda, the book pretends to answer one question: how the uses of current technologies, and the development of new ones, can contribute to guarantee and protect human rights within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

The articles included in the book answer this question from different perspectives. Also taking into account that the agenda recognizes the different national realities, capacities and levels of development, the majority of the articles present examples related to specific regions and countries. In general, the studies in this book promote the understanding of

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3   Idem, para. 70.

4   Idem, para. 8.

5   The call for papers was published in May 2016 and it is now closed.

the forms in which states are organizing, or can develop national plans, to achieve sustainable development in its 3 dimensions (economic, social, and environmental).

The book begins with the article *Technology and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Right to Development Approach*, which argues that without technology and without considering the right to development SDGs cannot be achieved. Following SDG 17, this article indicates that there are mainly 3 ways in which technology can contribute to the achievement of all goals and to foster right to development: through international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation; through the transfer, dissemination and diffusion of technologies; and by operationalizing capacity-building mechanisms. This framework is further developed in the rest of the book,

The following sections are related to the economic and social aspects of sustainable development. The economic aspect is essential for the achievement of the SDGs, and the first group of articles explores the relationship between economic development and technology. There are many forms in which this can be done, and 2 articles review this issue from different perspectives.

Firstly, the article *Emergent challenges in International Investment Law: Investing in ICT* discusses the consequences that foreign investment have, and will have, in developing the information and communication technologies (ICTs) sector, and in promoting the use of these technologies to achieve SDGs. The second article, *Networks for sustainability: The role of social media in converging offline gaps*, promotes the use of social media to create economic development. It explores the idea of using Internet-based platforms to prompt our collective, identities to drive behaviours and values towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

The second section of the book relates to the social aspect of development, and it considers the use of ICTs to achieve different SDGs. Today's world is driven by information, and without it, accomplish the goals set by the 2030 Agenda is impossible. Five articles present different approaches to achieve them.

Since states must start by gathering the data needed to understand the issues that must be considered to implement the most appropriate and effective national plans, this section begins with 2 articles on this issue. The article

Las plataformas digitales de acceso a la información pública como mecanismos de visibilidad y prevención de la violencia hacia las personas LGBTI en las Américas, discusses the importance of the right to access to information and it considers that through the implementation of traditional monitoring mechanisms (i.e. statistics on attacks, statistics on filed cases and condemnatory decisions) states will have the possibility to know the main challenges that LGBTI communities are facing, and which are the best mechanisms to protect them. Nonetheless, formal mechanisms can be complemented by other non-traditional type of data collection tool (i.e. storytelling, videos) to collect information and to better protect members of these communities. This aspect is explored in the article *Emergent LGBTI Rights Documentation Policy and Practice in Africa* in which cases of Sub-Saharan countries are presented to illustrate the benefits of using other mechanisms to promote and respect the rights of the people belonging to these communities.

Yet to create more peaceful and tolerant societies, citizens' participation is indispensable. One of the forms in which their participation can be promoted is through the use of Internet-based platforms to exercise their human right to freedom of expression. In this sense, the article *Libertad de expression, participación ciudadana, y Objetivos de Desarrollo Sustentable en Venezuela*, presents a successful example on the use of digital technologies to promote and increase civil participation. It shows that when citizens are involved in the identification of problems and solutions they positively contribute with the transformation of the society.

However, none of this is possible if women are not included. Hence, it is necessary to consider how the uses of ICTs are impacting women's lives and affecting the achievement of SDG 5. Two articles discuss this topic. The first of them *Technology and Human Rights: Revisiting the Role of ICTs in Bridging Gender Inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa* makes a detailed analysis of how the gender divide impedes women from accessing these technologies, its consequences for the protection of women's rights, and the benefits that it produces when they can access ICTs.

The second article, *Mujeres, Derechos Humanos y Web 2.0 en el Sureste de México*, presents a practical approach to the issue. It evaluates how access to education and ICTs can improve living conditions of young women in the Southeast of Mexico. It presents statistics and it evaluates local and national plans that have been implemented in this region and that can contribute to achieve SDG 5.

Within this context, we can forget that ICTs are mainly developed by private actors; therefore, we also need to consider their role. Decisions taken by technology developers, Internet Services Providers not only affect people's lives but the possibilities to achieve the SDGs. For that reason this topic is also considered in this book. The article *Progress and peril: the role of ICT companies in promoting and curtailing Human Rights* discusses the human rights' risks of increased use of ICTs and offers a framework for private sector and government actors to mitigate them.

Finally, since technology is not only about ICTs, the third section of the book explores some examples on capacity-building and technology transfer. Goal 6 promotes access to water and sanitation for all, and this goal depends on the cooperation between different stakeholders. Inhabitants, representatives of the state, and donors must agree on which are the needs and on the most appropriate technologies to satisfy them. Two articles take this into consideration in water sanitation projects.

The first article *Operationalising the right to water and sanitation and gender equality via appropriate technology in rural Nepal* is focused on the capacity-building among local authorities, rural communities, and donors. It presents two examples on how the implementation of projects aiming to improve access to water and sanitation are also contributing with the achievement of SDG 6 and 5 due to the focus of the project. The second article, *Technological innovations and equitable access to clean drinking water– three case studies from Gujarat, India,* discusses the uses of 3 separate technologies: Hydrogen Sulphide (H2S) water test kits, household reverse osmosis water filters, and community-level reverse osmosis water filters, in India. It explains how lack of information affects people's perception on water quality, and how private companies can take advantage of the situation to improve their business but with several negative consequences.

This book is a compilation of studies from all over the world, it pretends to start the discussion and promote interdisciplinary research; thus there are still many issues that should be evaluated. We need to consider that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will guide the adoption of national plans, decisions, and implementation of policies for the next 14 years. All of us (states, international organizations, scholars, and citizens) will have to face the challenges that its implementation supposes.

What to do next?

The book is one of the first publications covering some of the linkages between human rights and technology, but there are many questions that still need to be answered. Technology does not only imply communication and information, it also involves the development of technologies that can be used to improve environmental conditions, medical treatments, or to guarantee food security or energy for all. In consequence, I want to invite you to continue researching these topics, and if possible try to answer some issues that could not be explored in this book, such as:

1. Which is the role of technology in promoting a culture of peace in the 2030 Agenda? Should we aim to stop the development of weapons of mass destruction and other type of military technology?

2. Which are the impacts of the use of new technologies on projects implemented in indigenous communities?

3. To which extend can technology improve environmental conditions? Are sustainable production and consumption our best options?

4. Can smart cities be sustainable while promoting economic development?

5. How e-government increases political participation and the inclusion of minorities?

6. Can judiciary benefit from the use of new technology?

7. How can technology contribute to the improvement of education?

8. Which are the pros and cons of using technology in the health care system?