



VUK JEREMIC

Former President of the UN General Assembly; former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia

Richard Cooper, Professor of International Economics at Harvard University

We will move to Mr Jeremić.

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Three critical events will take place next year: financing for development conference (July, Addis); SDG launch (Sept, NYC); and COP21 (Dec, Paris) – note: foundation for good outcome of the latter is now being laid at COP20 in Lima. The other two are GA processes and are being guided by PGA Kutesa (prospects are good – OWG produced a solid draft).

In about a year, we will know whether the cumulative outcomes will result in success. (Integral to this achievement is transforming “brown economy” of today into the “green economy” of tomorrow.)

Recent U.S.+China announcements, following similar EU announcements, are cause for optimism. But we race against time: 2 degree threshold likely to be breached, deep-decarbonization requires massive effort involving governments, private sector, NGOs—everyone working together for comprehensive change: how we power our lives, build cities, retrofit factories...

We're still not at that point. Personal experience: when I was Serbian MFA, I had little involvement in the COP process—most colleagues in similar situation. Most diplomats too (also heads of state, etc). When I was PGA (Parliamentarians for Global Action), I spoke often about how climate change must become core national interest of every country—how sustainable development must become embedded in the worldview of senior decision makers and so assume rightful place in conduct of international relations in 21st century. Some progress (e.g. Sept 2014 UN Summit) but still a ways to go...

Global problems require global awareness for global solutions — leaving no nation behind and ensuring no nation opts out. Worldwide coordination exceedingly complex at the best of times...

But these are hardly the best of times — we have a suboptimal geopolitical environment, so achieving consensus between major actors will prove more difficult.

Personal experience: when PGA, multilateral work on SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) was often overshadowed by Syria. Political disputes spilled over into disputes about development trajectories.

Tumultuous geopolitical circumstances can affect the atmospherics on other issues. (Another example: Ukraine cast a shadow over G20 in Brisbane, which was supposed to be about sustainable economic growth and job creation.)

It is an illusion to believe that negotiations on post-2015 agenda and climate change can take place in isolation from general international trends. In order to have successful outcomes in Addis, New York and Paris, there needs to be a certain degree of confidence and goodwill between major actors.

It is far from being the case today. The present reality is best seen in three theatres: West-Russia; Middle East; East Asia.



West-Russia: misperceptions, misunderstandings and complexities between major actors on global stage (U.S., EU, Russia), with serious strategic spillover effects on other two theatres.

Middle East: Syria (carnage ongoing) + Turkey (hesitation to engage for the sake of others), Libya (disaster) + Egypt (pulling back from the brink of disaster), Palestine (Gaza, peace talks in deep freeze), ISIS (Sykes-Picot), Iran nuclear talks, Shia-Sunni. Shifting alliances.

East Asia: changing dynamics of U.S.-China-Russia triangular relationship (competitive cooperation) is a determinant factor. The two pipeline deals (Power of Siberia eastern route, Altai western route) will have long-term consequences. Japan (revisionism). ASEAN (economic success; security neophyte). Arms buildup (everyone's doing it). Korean peninsula (constant tension/unpredictability).

Tumultuous geopolitics is also noticeable in UN context. Except for playing a peripheral role in a few of these developments, UN has been largely absent from the frontlines of solving any of them — this is due to choices made by member states but also because UN leadership is unfortunately ineffective.

In multipolar world where you have growing security and development and climate challenges, UN is needed more than ever.

Movement from MDGs (imposed) to SDGs (negotiated) — shift also reflected in Addis financing for development and COP processes. 2015 could be UN's great chance to reassert leadership on the international stage—test of relevance and effectiveness.

Richard Cooper, Professor of International Economics at Harvard University

Can I ask a clarifying question? Who exactly is charged with the other negotiations you mentioned, sustainable development and financing development? We have a well-defined procedure with the COPs for climate negotiation. What is the counterpart in these two other areas?

Vuk Jeremic, Former President of the UN General Assembly; former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia

It is the General Assembly of the UN, so basically these other two, the Financing for Development compact and the new goals which are to replace the MDGs, need to be adopted in the UN General Assembly, by the member states of the UN, so basically governments with their representatives at the UN.

Richard Cooper, Professor of International Economics at Harvard University

That is also true of the COPs; these are member states of the UN, and you said that communication is very poor. I am just wondering about who are the counterparts of the people at COP who will actually negotiate the financing and the sustainability.

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Usually how it works is that the ambassadors in the COP are representatives of the Ministries of Environment, and ambassadors in the UN are ambassadors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.



Richard Cooper, Professor of International Economics at Harvard University

They have a demonstrated incompetence, in my experience, in negotiating anything concerning finance.

Vuk Jeremic, Former President of the UN General Assembly; former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia

I come from a country that is definitely not the best organised in the world, from Serbia. We are probably not the worst organised country either. We have absolutely no communication between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment.