

YOGA IN DAILY LIFE & THE UN SYSTEM

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Összefoglalás

A civil szervezetek az ENSZ-rendszer létrejötte óta fontos szerepet játszanak a – béke, illetve a globális társadalmi és gazdasági egyensúly és növekedés biztosítása érdekében elkötelezett – legátfogóbb nemzetközi szervezet életében. Az alábbi írásban négy olyan konferenciát emeltem ki (az 1992-es Rio de Janeiróban rendezettet, a 2000-es millenniumit, a 2002-es johannesburgit, illetve a 2012-es Rio+20-nak elnevezettet), melyek mérföldkőnek számítanak a civil szervezetek ENSZ-rendszerbe történő integrálása szempontjából. Áttekintettem az ENSZ-rendszer mélyszegénység elleni küzdelmének folyamatát, mely először 2000 és 2015 között az ún. Millenniumi Fenntartható Célok, majd 2015 és 2030 között az ún. Fenntartható Fejlesztési Célok által megfogalmazott keretrendszerben öltött testet. Végül részleteztem, hogy a civil szervezetek és általuk bárki, az egyéni segítségnyújtás szándékával, milyen módon tudott/tud a folyamat előrehaladásához hozzájárulni, kiemelve a Jóga a mindennapi életben – Rendszer által 2002 óta foganatosított és finanszírozott segélyprogramokat.

Kulcsszavak

ENSZ-rendszer, civil szervezetek, fenntarthatóság, jóga-rendszer

Summary

Since the conception of the UN system civil societies have played a vital role in supporting the most comprehensive international organisation in its activities pertaining to the peacekeeping as well as in the creation of global social and economic welfare. In the writing below I have touched upon four conferences, the first Rio Summit organized in 1992, the 2000 Millennium and the 2002 Summit as well as the Rio+20; that were all relevant milestones in binding civil societies to the UN. I have covered the UN system's fight against extreme poverty under the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030). Finally I have elaborated on how civil societies may contribute to the advancement of the aforementioned Goals with special emphasis on the charitable activities established and financed by Yoga in Daily Life since 2002.

Keywords

UN system, NGOs, sustainability, YIDL

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Introduction

The title of this year Kautz Conference, “Sports – Economy – Tourism” provided me with the long awaited opportunity to interlink three major areas of professional life. Since 1997 I have been employed by Széchenyi István University. I have been leading courses on the global economy for more than twenty years. My thinking on the world economy has been largely shaped by academician Mihály Simai, my mentor and PhD thesis supervisor, honorary doctor of Széchenyi István University and president of the United Nations Association of Hungary (UNA-H). Around the millennium, when Professor Simai was a visiting professor at the Department of Global Economics at Széchenyi István University as an assistant professor I was privileged to co-instruct the course World Economics led by this giant of the contemporary Hungarian economic thinking. It was at that time when I started teaching Global Economics by first defining its major actors: the countries, the transnational corporations as well as the international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. I still stick to the latter order in my teaching methodology and elaborate on the role of the above mentioned actors in the interlinking process of the global of commodity, service, financial, capital and labour markets.

In 2008 Professor Simai invited me to join the Presidium of the United Nations Association of Hungary (UNA-H) that is a national movement for the support of the United Nations (UN). It is the Hungarian member organization of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA). “Inspired by the first words of the Charter of the UN “We the Peoples...”, one year after the establishment of the UN, the WFUNA came to existence in 1946. Nowadays its membership consists of more than 100 national UN Associations. Initiated by the leaders of WFUNA, the UNA-H was established in 1947. Since then it has been functioning practically without interruption. Its statutes have been reviewed and reformed in 1989 and according to the new Hungarian Act on the Right of Associations it has been incorporated as an “Association Serving Public Interests”. The sole purpose of the UNA-H is to promote the realization of the goals and ideals laid down in the UN Charter. Among others disseminates information about the activities of the entire UN-system. It is the only non-governmental organization in Hungary which encourages and supports the international cooperation in the framework of the UN-system in the areas of peace and security, economic and social development, human rights, international law and humanitarian action. The UNA-H offers you insights into what the UN is and how it works, as well as a channel through which you can join with people to become engaged in the critical global issues affecting us all.” (menszt.hu 2017).

By the time of my joining the UNA-H in 2008 the UN system has been largely engaged by achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that had been established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 (UN 2000). As discussed above the primary reason behind the formation of national UN associations was to contribute to realizations of the goals and ideas phrased in the UN Charter thus since the year 2000 the first and foremost agenda of the UNA-H is to disseminate information on the MDGs and SDGs that are discussed in this paper.

The creation of the MDGs has a prehistory of four decades dating back to 1960 when the Organization admitted 17 new members, the most in any one year. This was the first wave of newly independent countries that would dramatically change the composition of UN membership. “The most urgent developmental concern at that time was reducing world hunger. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) led international action to address the situation of these new UN members from Africa, parts of Asia, and the Pacific and the Caribbean, as well as that of other members in similar situations, by launching on 1 July 1960 the "Freedom from Hunger" Campaign, which drew world attention to the problem of

hunger, seeking support from Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for national campaigns against hunger” (Jackson 2007).

“There were representatives of 1 200 voluntary organisations present at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945. They played a significant role in writing the first seven words of the Charter: "We the peoples of the United Nations ...", and also in the inclusion of Article 71, providing that "The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organisations ..." Fifty years later, building on Article 71, it seems that NGOs are emerging everywhere throughout the UN system. There are more than 90 UN offices handling NGO relations” (Alger 1999).

In 1975 the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN NGLS) was created. “According to its mission areas statement, NGLS “promotes dynamic partnerships between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. By providing information, advice, expertise and support services NGLS is part of the UN’s efforts to strengthen dialogue and win public support for economic and social development.” NGLS is a voluntarily funded, inter-agency programme of the UN system, whose role and work was endorsed by the Administrative Committee on Coordination in 1992 and by the General Assembly in 1993. In the pursuit of its mandate and objectives, NGLS executes a wide-ranging programme of information outreach activities, publications and meetings and helps promote the participation of NGOs in major UN events and processes. NGLS is currently supported by several agencies, programmes, funds and departments of the UN system, a number of donor governments and, on occasion, NGOs also support NGLS activities” (UN NGLS 2017a).

“In 1995, 4 000 NGOs participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro, created a Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and outlined nine major groups which should be partners with governments and international organisations in the search for sustainable development: NGOs, local authorities, farmers, scientists and the technical community, business labour, indigenous peoples, women, children and youth. NGOs have recently addressed ad hoc meetings of the Security Council. A committee of ECOSOC has held discussions, and a committee of NGO representatives has made proposals for the arrangements for NGO relations with the General Assembly” (Alger 1999).

In October 2000, after the Millennium Summit the President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) issued a non-paper on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The communique entails two paragraphs on the role of the civil societies stating that “the Millennium Declaration calls for strong partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication. The UNGA President further called for ensuring effective overall implementation there is a need for enhanced partnership and cooperation between United Nations, governments and the relevant actors of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector as a whole” (UNGA 2000).

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), or as the conference was informally nicknamed, the “Rio+10” held August 26–September 4, 2002 “in Johannesburg, South Africa, aimed at assessing developments since the Rio Earth Summit and reinforcing multilateral commitments to sustainable development. More than 20,000 participants, from governmental (representing 180 countries) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and the scientific community addressed increasing challenges in environmental degradation and sustainable development. A novel approach at the WSSD was the concept of “Type II” agreements that brought public, private, and civil actors in partnership. These agreements resulted in formal partnerships between NGOs, inter-governmental organizations, private companies, and scientific institutions. The Type II agreements aimed at enabling stakeholders to advance concrete contributions towards the official outcomes of the WSSD

covenant. This new form of governance widens the scope of participation to include both private and public sectors, from multiple scales of governance, to align themselves with international environmental and developmental organizations” (Norman–Carr 2009, 409).

It was at the Rio+10 in Johannesburg that the founder and author Vishwaguru Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda and Yoga in Daily Life – the system (YIDL) introduced one of their most prominent charitable programmes the Desert Rainwater Harvesting Initiative (DRWHI). Since the WSSD YIDL has been supporting the UN system in the fulfilment of its Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals.²

The UN MDGs

“At the Millennium Summit of September 2000 149 Heads of State and Government and high-ranking officials from over 40 other countries adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets - with a deadline of 2015 - that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” (UN 2015).

“To measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, a framework of 21 quantifiable targets and 60 indicators was set up by a consensus of experts from the United Nations Secretariat, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank” (UN NGLS 2017b).

The Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Foundation 2017):

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

2. Achieve universal primary education

- Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

4. Reduce child mortality

- Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.

5. Improve maternal health

- Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.

² The author of this article is a board member of the YIDL International Fellowship and the President of YIDL-Győr.

- Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

7. Ensure environmental sustainability

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.
- Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.

8. Develop a global partnership for development

- Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally.
- Address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction.
- Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States.
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
- In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth.
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history and served as the jumping-off point for the new sustainable development agenda. “The MDG Report 2015 found that the 15-year effort to achieve the eight aspirational goals set out in the Millennium Declaration in 2000 was largely successful across the globe, while acknowledging shortfalls that remain. The data and analysis presented in the report show that with targeted interventions, sound strategies, adequate resources and political will, even the poorest can make progress. The final MDG report confirms that goal-setting can lift millions of people out of poverty, empower women and girls, improve health and well-being, and provide vast new opportunities for better lives” (UNDP 2015):

- The number of people now living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015.
- The number of people in the working middle class—living on more than \$4 a day—nearly tripled between 1991 and 2015.
- The proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions dropped by almost half since 1990.
- The number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide fell by almost half, to an estimated 57 million in 2015, down from 100 million in 2000.
- Gender parity in primary school has been achieved in the majority of countries.
- The mortality rate of children under-five was cut by more than half since 1990.

- Since 1990, maternal mortality fell by 45 percent worldwide.
- Over 6.2 million malaria deaths have been averted between 2000 and 2015.
- New HIV infections fell by approximately 40 percent between 2000 and 2013.
- By June 2014, 13.6 million people living with HIV were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) globally, an immense increase from just 800,000 in 2003.
- Between 2000 and 2013, tuberculosis prevention, diagnosis and treatment interventions saved an estimated 37 million lives.
- Worldwide 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation.
- Globally, 147 countries have met the MDG drinking water target, 95 countries have met the MDG sanitation target and 77 countries have met both.
- Official development assistance from developed countries increased 66 percent in real terms from 2000 and 2014, reaching \$135.2 billion.

Twenty years after the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro and ten years after the 2002 WSSD in Johannesburg the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - or Rio+20 - took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012. “It resulted in a focused political outcome document which contains clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development. In Rio, Member States decided to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post 2015 development agenda” (UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform 2017a).

The UN SDGs

“On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit — officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

The SDGs, also known as Global Goals, build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aim to go further to end all forms of poverty. The new Goals are unique in that they call for action by all countries, poor, rich and middle-income to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 Goals. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the Goals, which will require quality, accessible and timely data collection. Regional follow-up and review will be based on national-level analyses and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level” (UN 2017).

Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform 2017b).

Civil societies’ contribution to the fulfilment of the MDGs & SDGs

CSOs, can contribute to MDG-based poverty reduction strategies in at least four ways: (1) providing public advocacy for the Goals, (2) contributing to policy design to meet each target, (3) scaling up service delivery, and (4) monitoring and evaluating efforts to achieve the Goals. Internationally, CSOS can also (5) mobilise and build public awareness around the Goals, (6) share best practices and technical expertise with governments, and (7) deliver services directly.

Table 1: Civil society’s contribution to the MDGs

(1)	driving broad-based mobilisation, strategic alliances with local authorities, national governments and the international community to raise public awareness of governmental commitments to the Goals
(2)	supporting the creation of national MDG-based poverty reduction strategies, identifying priority investments, targeting priority areas and communities, helping design effective implementation strategies, setting national and local budget priorities
(3)	scaling up investment through four main channels: engaging local communities, building human capacity, strengthening local governance, and leading implementation and service delivery
(4)	evaluating performance by participating in national MDG reviews, budget tracking, and auditing
(5)	mobilising global partnership through civil society campaigns in several countries and support across borders and build links between communities in different parts of the world, putting pressure on the developed countries to realize their commitment to the Goal 8
(6)	sharing best practice and technical expertise through intercountry community exchanges, direct technical support, and advice on scaling up to governments
(7)	providing health, education, infrastructure services to achieve the Goals.

Source: UN Millennium Project 2005

Yoga in Daily Life & the UN System

Yoga in Daily Life (YIDL) is a humanitarian, philanthropic NGO in consultative status with the UN ECOSOC, overseen by Vishwaguru Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda that has taken up the UN's call and is committed to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and to support the UN's post-2015 development agenda.

Yoga in Daily Life (YIDL) promotes physical, mental and social health through the ancient precepts of yoga, the System offers yoga classes and special programmes in 31 states, more than 200 cities, and reaches out to uncountable rural communities (villages). The incomes of the yoga classes run by the global YIDL community support approximately 10 UN-related charitable activities, a few of them, briefly listed below.

In 2002 to contribute to the Achievement of Universal Primary Education (MDG 2, SDG 4) on the premises of the Om Vishwa Deep Gurukul Swami Maheshwarananda Ashram Education & Research Centre (Om Ashram), Jadan, Rajasthan a primary school was established to enrol the underprivileged children of the rural India. Jadan School now delivers education from pre-school levels to bachelor's degrees for over 1 500 students. The Gyan Putra scheme of Jadan School provides free transportation, textbooks, uniforms and free meals to the most deprived children to help them emerge from extreme poverty. To bridge the digital divide and to contribute to the knowledge society Jadan School is equipped with 21st century information technology.

To promote Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (MDG 3, SDG 5) educational services are offered free of charge to all girl students. The Sri Swami Madhavananda Hospital, a further initiative on the grounds of the Om Ashram, and Jadan School offer a joint community health care educational programme for women. In line with the UN's new, 2030 development Agenda volunteer health mentors are trained at the hospital to protect and empower children, disabled and older persons, the most vulnerable people of society. To Improve Maternal Health (MDG 5) and Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (SDG 3) the Sri Swami Madhavananda Hospital operates with numerous departments, including a 24-hour ambulance service, helping people with serious life-threatening conditions and providing treatment for tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis and other water-born and communicable diseases.

Under the framework of Ensuring Environmental Sustainability (MDG 7, SDG 6, SDG 15) YIDL launched its Desert Rainwater Harvesting Initiative (DRWHI) at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, 2002. The programme that was further introduced at the Rio+20 and the Budapest Water Summit (2013) ensures water for drinking and agricultural purposes to Rajasthan's poor rural communities, in a state that spans ten percent of India's geographical area, but which has only one percent of the country's water resources. The water gained through the DRWHI is additionally taken advantage of by the programme's 24-hour fire and rescue services.

Climate change is directly affected by the carbon released into the atmosphere due to deforestation and forest degradation. The Forestation and Tree Planting programme (SDG 13, SDG 15) of YIDL, which led to the planting of well over 15 million trees, was initiated by Vishwaguru Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda as an integral part of the Voluntary Commitment titled "Awareness & Action: Peace Conferences, Tree plantings, Clean-ups & Vegetarianism" pledged at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in Rio, 2012.

To protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss (SDG 15 Target 5) a Seed Bank Initiative has been recently established. The project primarily focuses on the protection of native "heritage" seeds and medicinal herbs. Again, in line with the 15th sustainability goal a campaign titled "Save the Birds" was launched to draw public awareness on how unsustainable agricultural production patterns (i.e. the

excessive use of pesticides) and equally unsustainable consumption models (e.g. natural habitat destruction for sports activities) endanger the lives of uncountable bird, bee and butterfly species.

Summary

Though the UN Charter starts with the phrase “We the Peoples...” the international organization is often confronted with being an ivory tower that exhibits little outreach to the world it is surrounded by. Since the 1960s the UN strives to cooperate with civil societies and gradually integrate them into the web of its colossal system. In the paper above I have touched upon four of the major Summits of the United Nations system (the UNCED, the Millennium Summit, the WSSD and the Rio+20) that have bound closer the activities of the most comprehensive international governmental organization and that of the NGOs.

I have covered the MDG and SDG framework, the structural background of the UN’s combat against extreme poverty as well as its fight for sustainability, social inclusion and economic growth in all parts of the world.

I have further touched upon the ways CSOs may support the framework above and I have introduced a global yoga system, YIDL that is operated on a charitable basis where all the incomes deriving from yoga instruction and various programmes have been financially and technically supporting a wide gamut of MDG- and SDG-related schemes. My primary aim was to highlight the actual opportunity for any individual to contribute to the lofty ideas of the UN.

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