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() APEC is a multilateral body primarily focused on economic and trade issues. It is therefore no surprise that the Leaders Declaration "Strengthening our community, building a sustainable future" of September 9, 2007 discussed issues such as regional economic structural reform, free trade agreements and climate change. However, the declaration's section "Enhancing Human Security" also affirms forum members' interest in security issues, but within clear parameters and with a focus on the nexus between human security and economic development.

Consistent with much of the literature on human security, the APEC conference affirmed that "human security is essential to economic growth and prosperity". The resultant statements listed a number of risks and challenges to human security - terrorism, pandemics, illicit drugs, contaminated products and natural disasters.

To this end, APEC committed to a number of steps including pandemic preparedness, a more robust approach to food safety, preparedness for natural disasters, an ongoing commitment to countering terrorism and the dangers posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

These are important steps in their own right. Natural disasters can have a devastating impact on people, communities and economies while outbreaks of diseases can impose substantial burdens not only on their victims, but on the health systems of developing states. Similarly, terrorism has blighted a number of APEC states, including Australia, the USA, Indonesia and the Philippines.

This APEC human security agenda therefore appears to be seeking to address real issues that have serious consequences for the people of APEC countries. However, this agenda has a definite narrow approach, and does not address a comprehensive human security agenda, best encapsulated under the rubric of **Responsibility to Protect**. The **Responsibility to Protect** provides a basis for the international community to take measures to protect people from extreme or sustained violence and persecution, including from their own governments. These measures can be preventative, through diplomatic means, or they can seek to resolve existing violence through mediation or intervention.

APEC has clearly steered away from this wider definition of human security, and its commensurate potential obligations that clearly could lead to intervening in another member state's internal business. It has, reflecting the two pillars of human security, focused on "freedom from want" as opposed to "freedom from fear".

Many APEC states have a very strong resistance to any measures that might allow interference in sovereign state affairs. Members would probably not have signed up to any statement that left open the door for APEC forum involvement in the management of what are seen as internal matters.

() Multilateral fora such as APEC keep diplomatic channels open and further friendly relations among states. Further, it can be argued that freedom from fear is mitigated by a freedom from want - that developed states with robust economies are unlikely to become collapsed, fragile or predatory.

WATCHPOINT: In terms of a human security approach, is this the best we can expect out of APEC and is it enough?

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