

Commentary

BUFFIN PARTNERS INC.

ECONOMIC INVESTMENT AND ACTUARIAL RESEARCH

United Nations 66th Anniversary

The United Nations was founded in 1945. The anniversary of the day on which the United Nations Charter came into force is observed each year on October 24. This year the United Nations reaches its 66th anniversary. On each anniversary the UN and its agencies celebrate the occasion as an opportunity to reflect upon the historical record of the organization's achievements and to acknowledge and evaluate the global social, economic, peace, and security challenges ahead. The UN Charter sets out the framework and principles for the functions and organization of the United Nations to promote peace and security, development, democracy, economic prosperity, health, and human rights around the world. The preamble to the UN Charter includes the specific objective "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" and it sets forth a commitment "to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples." Chapter IX of the UN Charter covers the topic of International Economic and Social Cooperation and refers to "the creation of conditions of stability and well-being necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples." It continues with a statement that the United Nations shall promote: "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems, and international cultural and educational cooperation; and universal respect for, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction."

The UN General Assembly subsequently added a second important document to supplement the UN Charter when

it adopted The Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. The preamble to this Declaration states that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." Articles 22 and 23 of the Declaration include references to social protection and social security: "Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection" and "Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality." Article 25 is more specific in providing that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

The UN Charter and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights are essentially statements of principles that establish a framework for universal cooperation and goodwill. A more recent practical plan of action, with a focus on specific stated objectives, was established in September 2000 when world leaders met at United Nations Headquarters in New York at the Millennium Summit. They adopted a plan of action, 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, collectively referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There are eight MDGs: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development.

Taken together, The UN Charter, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and The Millennium Development Goals provide the framework and inspiration for achieving great good around the world. They serve to emphasize the unity and brotherhood of all humanity, identify the common good of all nations and all peoples, and provide guidance on how a family of some one hundred and ninety three nations should live together in peace and harmony on a small planet so as to sustain a human population that is projected to reach ten billion within this century. Achieving these lofty aims and applying these universal principles is, however, not simple to accomplish; global cooperation and mutual respect and understanding are pre-requisites to overcoming difficulties and avoiding conflicts. The United Nations and its agencies represent the hopes and aspirations of all peoples and deserve recognition and support for their efforts to make the world a better place for today and for future generations to live in peace and harmony with improving social and economic conditions.

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