

Westminster UNA
1st Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture

Hans Corell

“Where there is a society, there is also a legal order.” In his lecture, *Developing the Rule of Law among nations: a challenge to the United Nations* delivered on 7 July 2003, UN Legal Counsel Hans Corell argued that the rule of law has been forever linked to humankind.

Linking the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius, father of international law, to the UN whose members have sovereign equality but must fulfil its Charter’s obligations, he noted that the UN has generated an impressive 500+ multilateral treaties.

Mr Corell welcomed the International Criminal Court (ICC), a major achievement but he was saddened that one State¹ has sought to evade links with it. Turning to international terrorism, he listed initiatives taken by the GA and the Security Council as indicative of members’ intent to create a safer world. However, the proposed Convention against human cloning posed challenges relating to the sanctity of life when applied to therapeutic practices.

Generally, the UN assists States participate in the international treaty framework It has placed on the internet 50,000+ bilateral treaties²

But what difference has this made, he asked, citing human suffering, terrorism, transnational crime and AIDS? Why, some even deny the existence of international law, maintaining the right to act as they please! He reminded those who believe that international law is the realm of idealists, of the S-G’s recent observation that “Idealism will not be scoffed at as naïve, but respected and taken seriously.”

Regarding the frustrations of members states concerning Iraq, he noted that the Security Council had been the focus of world interest throughout and its members, even if not approving of what had happened, recognized their obligation to act.

Notes:

1, USA

2, see UN Charter, Article 102