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INTERNATIONAL
ORDER &
CONFLICT
REPORT

BEYOND UN75

**A Roadmap for Inclusive, Networked
& Effective Global Governance**

 Global Governance
Innovation Network

Global Governance,
Justice & Security
Program

About this report

Beyond UN75 considers the new kinds of tools, networks, and institutions, combined with enlightened global leadership, required to take forward the twelve commitments at the heart of the UN75 Declaration, adopted, on September 21, 2021, by the world body's 193 Member States. Drawing on insights from past and contemporary scholars and world leaders, the report explores the concepts of a new social contract, a new global deal, and networked and inclusive multilateralism introduced recently by Secretary-General António Guterres to help the United Nations better grapple with 21st century transnational challenges. It further offers a roadmap for revitalizing global governance between now and 2023 by harnessing the ideas and capabilities of states, civil society, the business community, and international organizations in the run-up to a proposed World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance.

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Foreword

We are honored to introduce this new Stimson Center report *Beyond UN75: A Roadmap for Inclusive, Networked & Effective Global Governance*, timed to coincide with the seventy-sixth anniversary of Charter Day (June 26). Against a backdrop of great power competition, the troubling rise of exclusionary nationalism, global environmental threats, and the ongoing onslaught of COVID-19, the report considers how three powerful ideas championed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres—a new social contract, new global deal, and networked and inclusive multilateralism—can advance the ambitious and far-reaching commitments embodied in last year’s UN75 Declaration.

The report also charts a path toward an ambitious 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance to advance the ideas for change emerging from the Secretary-General’s “Global Conversation” of last year and from his much-anticipated report, *Our Common Agenda*, to be released in September 2021. Tapping the talents of governments and non-governmental groups worldwide, the summit would aim to overhaul the global governance system to better address twenty-first century challenges and opportunities and to usher in a new collaborative compact of global institutions, polities, and peoples. We look to global coalitions of states like the Alliance for Multilateralism and civil society networks like the Coalition for the UN We Need and the Together First campaign to help provide the leadership, creative ideas, and diplomatic skills needed to fulfill the promise of this much-needed endeavor.

Our own organizations, the Group of Women Leaders: Voices for Change and Inclusion and the Club de Madrid, remain steadfast in our support for a robust and meaningful UN75 Declaration follow-through agenda. This includes—as the Club de Madrid recommended in its own proposals to the UN Secretary-General—convening, as a matter of urgency, a Second World Summit for Social Development, to reinvigorate the social components of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in response to the backsliding triggered by COVID-19. Focusing on people’s needs is, more than ever, essential to ensuring the United Nations’ continued relevance.

Indeed, reflecting on our own earlier leadership roles at the United Nations and within our respective national governments, we believe solemnly that the world’s only truly universal organization has never been more relevant to all peoples and countries—while, simultaneously, requiring renewed imagination, vigorous adaptation to changing global circumstances, and emboldened advocates from within and outside governments.

We wish to express our appreciation to the authors of *Beyond UN75* and look forward to discussing, at the virtual 2021 Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (June 24-26), how its insights, policy recommendations, and proposed strategy for reform—alongside related ideas and initiatives of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers—can help to realize fully the “The future we want, the United Nations we need.”

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Related Publications

- *Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance, The Report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance* (2015)
- *Just Security in an Undergoverned World* (2018)
- *An Innovation Agenda for UN75: The Albright-Gambari Commission Report and the Road to 2020* (2019)
- *Reimagining Governance in a Multipolar World* (2019, co-published with the Doha Forum)
- *UN 2.0: Ten Innovation for Global Governance 75 Years beyond San Francisco* (2020)
- *Coping with New and Old Crises: Global and Regional Cooperation in an Age of Epidemic Uncertainty* (2020, co-published with the Doha Forum)

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List of Abbreviations

AHWG	Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
A4P	Action for Peacekeeping
AU	African Union
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEPI	Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations
COP	Conference of the Parties
COP26	26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties
COVAX	COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access
COVID-19	2019 Novel Coronavirus
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DSSI	Debt Service Suspension Initiative
DPBC	Democratic Peacebuilding Council
DPPA	(UN) Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
ECOSOC	(UN) Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
EWI	The EastWest Institute
GAVI	The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGE	Governmental Group of Experts
GHGs	greenhouse gas emissions
GoF '23	Group of Friends for the 2023 World Summit
G20	Group of 20 Nations
G7	Group of Seven Nations
G77	Group of 77 Nations
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HRC	(UN) Human Rights Council
IACC	International Anti-Corruption Court
IC	Integration Committee
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICT	Information and Telecommunications
IFFs	illicit financial flows

IGG	Inclusive Global Governance (2023 World Summit on)
IGN	Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform
IJTI	International Judicial Training Institute
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDCs	nationally determined contributions
OCHA	(UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OEWG	Open-Ended Working Group
P5	Permanent Five (members of the UN Security Council)
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDR	Special Drawing Rights
SLCP	short-lived climate pollutant
SSTIC	South to South and Triangular Industrial Cooperation
SWIFT	Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States
UN60	United Nations' 60th anniversary
UN75	United Nations' 75th anniversary
UN80	United Nations' 80th anniversary
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNPN	United Nations Parliamentary Network
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

Executive Summary

“As we emerge from the pandemic, the UN is more relevant than ever. This was clear in the responses to our global listening exercise conducted for the 75th anniversary, but it was also clear in the ways people looked to States—the very States that make up the United Nations—and to international organizations to solve the biggest problem we have collectively faced since our founding. We must act as a catalyst and platform for more inclusive, networked and effective forms of multilateralism.” — UN Secretary-General António Guterres (23 March 2021)¹

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern.” UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ UN75 Global Conversation with civil society and Member State negotiations for a UN75 Declaration, both major initiatives that were just underway, had to accommodate the pandemic’s restrictive “new normal.” The sudden and severe health crisis and its knock-on effects also heightened already-trending exclusionary undercurrents in many states and the related impacts of populist, anti-multilateralist politicians. Together, they amplified public anxiety in pursuit of nationalist, short-sighted agendas, posing an unprecedented test for the rules and institutions of global cooperation.

Just over a year later, however, encouraging signs abound of a shift from defending and preserving multilateralism to strengthening and renewing it. From likely more ambitious climate targets for the Paris Agreement’s COP26 this November in Glasgow to the slow yet steady transfer of resources, know-how, and possibly intellectual property to enable developing countries to better combat the coronavirus, prospects have grown for improved collective action through multilateral institutions to deal with hard global problems. Beginning with a dramatic policy U-turn in the United States, countries large and small are further signaling their support for the Secretary-General’s vision of an “inclusive, networked, and effective” United Nations.

Meanwhile, requirements for global cooperation have, arguably, never been greater. Besides the COVID-19 and climate change crises,

extremist violence in fragile states, the specter of cross-border economic shocks, and increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks loom large. Low-income countries have far less fiscal space than wealthier ones for pandemic recovery and relief; many entered 2020 with high levels of debt that have only grown. As powerful nations hustle for influence and opposing camps emerge that downplay basic principles of multilateral cooperation, countervailing efforts to enhance justice, security, and prosperity for all need a firm, human rights-centered vision; creative proposals to fulfill that vision; and a forward-looking strategy for implementing them and guiding global relations in the 21st century.

The UN75 Declaration of September 2020 was an important first step in that direction by re-making the case for the United Nations to cope with contemporary threats and challenges in a politically turbulent era, while recognizing that the world body needs to partner increasingly with non-governmental civic and private sector actors to maintain relevance. It further mandated the Secretary-General to produce a follow-up report, *Our Common Agenda*, due in September 2021. That report can offer world leaders a program of ambitious renewal and innovation. To persuade Member States to embrace such a program, the Secretary-General should present a roadmap with three essential, intertwined elements: conceptual advances, specific recommendations for taking forward the UN75 Declaration’s twelve commitments, and a highly participatory strategy for reform.

Conceptually, Secretary-General Guterres’ repeated calls, in 2020 and 2021, for a **new social contract**, a **new global deal**, and **networked**

and inclusive multilateralism have the potential of framing the shape and trajectory of the United Nations in its next quarter-century, like the powerful ideational roles over the past few decades played by the concepts of sustainable development and human security. Extending beyond the classic people-state relationship, the new social contract provides an overarching vision for progressively realizing the economic, political, social, civil, and cultural rights of all peoples. The new global deal would operationalize this vision by encouraging global, regional, national, and community-level plans for green recovery from the pandemic and attendant policies and programs—both recalibrating and accelerating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To take these concepts forward, Secretary-General Guterres appealed for a new kind of networked and inclusive multilateralism, drawing on the ideas and capacities of academic and scientific institutions, regions and cities, civil society, and the business community. This could also generate a rethinking of global governance institutions, policies, laws, operations, and norms. To spur new thinking on renewal and innovation, this report undertakes a gap analysis and offers these and other ideas that speak to each of the UN75 Declaration's twelve commitments:

1. We will leave no one behind. Create a **G20+** to accelerate the Decade of Action for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through enhanced coordination by G20 members with the UN system, Bretton Woods institutions, and related bodies, supported by a new, small, and full-time secretariat. The global economic governance system should be further strengthened to limit the potential for socioeconomic dislocations, such as those produced by the current global pandemic, while guiding a durable, green, and broad-based recovery.

2. We will protect our planet. Define one or more **global climate adaptation goals** and gauge their achievement in terms of measurable improvements for local human security; finance support for adaptation from revenues formerly directed to fossil fuel subsidies.

3. We will promote peace and prevent conflicts. Create a strong **UN Democratic Peacebuilding Council** to replace the current Peacebuilding Commission (as well as the Trusteeship Council) with a body having enhanced powers, responsibilities, and a mandate to lead on conflict prevention and peacebuilding policy development, coordination, and resource mobilization—for situations not addressed directly by the Security Council. It would employ a new **Sustaining Peace and Conflict Prevention Audit** tool.

4. We will abide by international law and ensure justice. Seek **universal acceptance of international justice institutions**, in particular the **International Court of Justice** and the **International Criminal Court**, while increasing their enforcement powers, preserving their independence, and enhancing their resilience against political pressures.

5. We will place women and girls at the center. Call for the **withdrawal of most UN Member State reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**. Stronger legal bearing on preventing and combating violence against women would compel Member States to enact national policies to provide better legal protection for women and girls.

6. We will build trust. Establish an **International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC)** to build trust in governments, reduce inequality, improve governance efficacy, and decrease security risks. Similar to the International Criminal Court, the IACC would enable international prosecution of corruption cases only where national jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to prosecute.

7. We will improve digital cooperation. Strengthen cybersecurity through **international cybercrime centers, international cybercrime expert rosters**, and a global campaign to promote end-user **cyber hygiene**.

8. We will upgrade the United Nations. Address the UN's democracy and legitimacy deficits by establishing a **United Nations Parliamentary Network**, initially as an advisory body to the UN General Assembly. Composed of individual

members of national and regional parliaments—as well as representatives of existing parliamentary networks, institutions, and possibly local authorities—the UN Parliamentary Network would act as a platform for direct participation, input, and accountability claims by the peoples of the world on governance matters pertaining to the UN.

9. We will ensure sustainable financing. Set-up a new **funding compact** to finance a sustainable, values-based, and effective UN system. It would aim to reduce the tying of both Member State and non-Member State financial contributions to a specific program, project or entity, increase financial transparency across the UN system, and meet the highest standards of due diligence.

10. We will boost partnerships. Establish a **Civil Society Champion within the UN senior echelon** to enhance civic space and participation at the United Nations, by representing civil society across senior UN Secretariat leadership meetings, monitoring the UN system for civil society inclusion in policy-making opportunities, and promoting diversity and equity, including from the Global South, in UN-civil society operational partnerships.

11. We will listen to and work with youth. A **UN Youth Advisory Council** is needed to elevate the voices of youth in international decision-making and to ensure youth inclusion in programming across the UN system. It would offer advice and oversight in advancing the 2018 UN Youth Strategy and serve as an advocacy body for young people’s rights around the world.

12. We will be prepared. Establish a **Global Health Threats Council**, adopt a **Pandemic Framework Convention**, and strengthen the **independence, authority, and financing of the World Health Organization**, as recommended recently by the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, for preventing and better managing future global disease outbreaks.

The roadmap for implementing such a strategy for reform should include a comprehensive, intergovernmental, and multi-stakeholder preparatory effort that culminates in a **2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance**

(**IGG Summit**)—for truly innovating the United Nations system to keep pace with present peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights challenges and opportunities. Mobilizing diverse actors worldwide, the summit would seek to upgrade and equip the global governance system to better address major issues confronting the international community, and to usher in a new compact with citizens to enhance and rebuild confidence in their common institutions. To maximize the summit’s impact, priority steps would include:

- *Convening four two-week Preparatory Committees (PrepComs) on different continents organized around the four thematic pillars of: i) peace, security, and humanitarian action; ii) sustainable development and COVID-19 recovery; iii) human rights, inclusive governance, and the rule of law; and (iv) climate governance; a fifth cross-cutting pillar could consider overarching topics to promote integrated, system-wide reforms in connection with these four pillars;*
- *Holding global-regional Peoples’ Forums and E-Dialogues to increase global public awareness and feed civil society perspectives into the PrepComs and summit;*
- *Organizing an Eminent Advisors Council and a related series of Track 1.5 UN Ambassador-Expert Roundtables to examine how the global governance system can be better organized and equipped to address major current and over-the-horizon threats; and*
- *Ensuring that the IGG Summit’s Outcome Document emphasizes select, concrete, time-bound, and measurable reform commitments to aid near and longer-term results.*

A more inclusive and effective system of global governance for better coping with 21st century challenges while seizing new opportunities is within our reach; time, however, is running short. Going forward, the international community must draw strength from the representative legitimacy—but also ideas, networks, and capabilities—of diverse state and non-state actors. Meaningful change is possible, though making headway on this global road ahead will require patience, imagination, and most of all courage.

I. Introduction

“We demand greater urgency, action and broader intergenerational governance structures within the UN to swiftly resolve our world’s greatest challenges...Let’s make this more than just a commemoration, more than words with empty meanings...it will only happen if leaders commit to solidarity and support for multilateralism.” — Charles Hamilton, *Climate Change and Public Health Advocate* (youth activist from the Bahamas delivering a statement at the High-level Meeting to Commemorate the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations on September 21, 2020)²

Marking seventy-five years since its founding, the United Nations’ recent anniversary reminded us that norms, institutions, practices, and policies need constant nurturing and revalidation. The one-year period of intense reflection that it stimulated led, in turn, to a follow-on process which, if skillfully leveraged, can help to create more inclusive, effective, and responsive approaches to meeting major global challenges. This report builds on insights from two parallel efforts, in 2020, to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the world body: the UN75 Declaration and the UN75 Global Conversation, summarized below. Looking to the future, beyond UN75, this section further outlines several positive political and socioeconomic trends observable since the start of 2021. They provide fertile ground not only for the realization of the UN75 Declaration’s commitments, but for embarking on a course for more inclusive global governance befitting the present age.

The Road to UN75

The international community entered 2020 with hope for a new decade (specifically, the Decade of Action for delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals) of human decency, prosperity, and ambitious action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement, and other global agendas. With 2020 marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the UN, “We the Peoples” and the community of nations grasped this opportunity to renew commitments to long-standing principles of multilateral cooperation, and to reimagine and renovate the global governance architecture.

This positive outlook for 2020 was soon disrupted, however, by a pandemic with devastating human, social, and economic consequences worldwide, which spread fear, despair, and polarization. It set back global efforts to resolve long-standing feuds, convene (and raise ambitions at) a planned five-year review of the Paris Climate Agreement (COP26), and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030—reversing progress on poverty reduction, health-care, and education, especially among vulnerable populations. However, 2020 has also been a period of solidarity, adaptation, and innovation. It became apparent that only through enhanced and more inclusive global cooperation could the immediate health crisis—but also long-standing and other emerging global challenges—be addressed effectively.

Against this backdrop, the UN celebrated its anniversary in a less festive but more reflective spirit under the banner “The future we want, the UN we need.” While both learning from the organization’s failures and building upon its accomplishments, UN Member States initiated, in June 2019—through General Assembly resolution 73/299—preparations for a political declaration to be adopted by the annual high-level segment of the UN General Assembly, in September 2020, in New York.

Co-facilitating the negotiations for the declaration, the Permanent Representative of Qatar, Ambassador Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, and the Permanent Representative of Sweden, Ambassador Anna-Karin Eneström, consulted extensively with Member States, civil society, scholars, policy researchers, and youth representatives to achieve a “concise, substantive,

forward-looking, and unifying” declaration.³ The consultations (between February and June 2020) reflected on the UN’s performance, the relevance of multilateralism and its foundational principles, and explored new ideas for enhanced global cooperation.⁴ In sum, they represented an important step in remaking the case for the United Nations to cope with contemporary threats and challenges in a politically turbulent era, while recognizing that the world body needs to partner increasingly with non-governmental civic and private sector actors to maintain relevance.

At a time when the world was facing what many characterized a “crisis of multilateralism,” and a “return of geopolitics, protectionism, unilateral sanctions, treaty withdrawals, and even military and economic coercion,” building consensus on a forward-looking and ambitious declaration was an arduous undertaking.⁵ This state of affairs was compounded by additional negotiating constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced Member States to adapt to unprecedented working methods, including new virtual negotiation procedures. Among the most contentious diplomatic battles surrounding the text of the declaration were those fought over Security Council reform, references to the Paris Climate Agreement, and human rights and inclusive governance (including women’s rights, civil society engagement, and the promotion of democratic governance and the rule of law).⁶ Divisiveness over these issues was intensified by U.S.-China competition, by new stresses owing to the pandemic, and by the Security Council’s inability to pass (until July 2020) a resolution endorsing Secretary-General Guterres’ March 23, 2020 call for a global cease-fire. Tensions also emerged between civil society’s aspirations and Member States’ expectations. Some delegations, including the co-facilitators, emphasized the value of civil society in mobilizing support for revitalizing the UN, while others pushed back on their call for ambitious reform agendas, arguing that the “timing is not right” and that their expectations for the declaration were “too idealistic.”⁷

Despite these headwinds, the co-facilitators, supported by the Alliance for Multilateralism’s

Figure 1.1:
UN75 Declaration commitments



Source: United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations* (2020).

Box 1.1: The Secretary-General’s Global Conversation: Major findings of the UN75 survey and dialogues

- 97 percent of respondents believe that international cooperation is important for addressing global challenges.
- The respondents’ number one priority in the short-term is better access to basic services, such as healthcare, education, and water and sanitation.
- The number two short-term priority following the pandemic, for respondents in both high- and low-income countries, is addressing poverty and poor living standards.
- 73 percent of the Latin America and Caribbean respondents saw climate and environmental issues as main threats over the long-term.
- Risks related to health scored second on the list of long-term global challenges.
- “More respect for human rights” ranked number three globally as a long-term priority.
- Participants acknowledged the United Nations’ role in leading international cooperation, but they also called for its revitalization, including: a reformed UN Security Council, a revised Charter that addresses global challenges such as climate change, an inclusive and participatory UN system, and management and leadership reforms.

Sources: UN75 Office, *Shaping Our Future Together* (2021); and UN75 Office, *Shaping Our Future Together. Key Findings Of UN75 Survey and Dialogues* (2021).

member countries and by the efforts of transnational civil society networks, managed to secure consensus on the need to renew and strengthen the UN system, stressing the importance of multilateralism for rebuilding “better and greener” after the pandemic. On September 21, 2020, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (UN75 Declaration), which outlines a vision and twelve distinct commitments (see figure 1.1) to enhancing global cooperation on solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges, threats, and opportunities.

The landmark UN75 Declaration further calls for “the Secretary-General to report back before the end of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly with recommendations to advance our common agenda and to respond to current and future challenges,” which creates an opportunity to follow-through on the vision set out in the declaration.⁸ Three months later, on December 15, 2020, the UN General Assembly President, Volkan Bozkır, facilitated an informal plenary to “mobilize resources, strengthen efforts, and show unprecedented political will and leadership” to fulfill the commitments made in the declaration.⁹

Delegations such as the European Union encouraged the Secretary-General to be “bold and frank in [the] recommendations” that he was to present in his forthcoming (September 2021) *Our Common Agenda* report (see section V for more details on the *Our Common Agenda* report and related consultations).¹⁰

The Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* consultations built upon a global listening exercise conducted by the Secretary-General’s UN75 Office in 2020. Consisting of a global survey of 1.5 million people from all 193 United Nations Member States and multiple sub-surveys, over 3,500 global dialogues, and giving particular attention to empowering youth voices, the Global Conversation let people worldwide share their priorities and fears for the future, as well as ideas to address global challenges and make the UN fit for purpose. On January 8, 2021, the UN75 Office released its final report on the year-long conversation, the UN’s most ambitious effort to date to collect input directly from the global public through surveys and dialogues. Its analysis centers around priorities for recovering better from the pandemic; threats and challenges in the run-up to 2045; long-term priorities for the future; and views on international cooperation

and the UN itself. Most importantly, the report offers a raw and realistic picture of people's perceptions on the most pressing short and long-term global challenges, which, as shown in the results presented in box 1.1, need to be addressed by enhanced global cooperation.

A Time for Cautious Optimism

The UN75 Declaration can serve both as the capstone to commemorate the world body's first three quarters of a century and, maybe even more importantly, the commencement of its next chapter. Before considering the multiple, serious threats that multilateral cooperation currently faces, and which we address in section II, it is worth pausing to contemplate this moment in history. While COVID-19 rages on, there are, nonetheless, several political and socioeconomic reasons why 2021 is less gloomy than the years just past; ideas and events that provide a fertile ground for taking forward the UN75 Declaration's commitments and for infusing as much ambition and long-sightedness as possible into the process and content of *Our Common Agenda*.

Between 2016 and 2020, multilateral cooperation and global governance reached their nadir for this century so far. With the election of Donald Trump as the forty-fifth president of the world's most powerful country, alongside the rise of populist leaders in other parts of the world, the erstwhile "indispensable nation,"¹¹ which had played an instrumental role in the creation of the United Nations in 1945,¹² seemed to fully turn its back to international cooperation. The new "America First" approach would soon lead to the United States notifying its intention to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Iran Nuclear Deal, and the UN Human Rights Council, un-signing the UN Arms Trade Treaty, ending its participation in the UN Global Compact on Migration, and putting the WTO's dispute settlement system out of operation, among other actions.¹³

This hostile turn in U.S. foreign policy played out against a larger backdrop of state fragility, rising deaths from violent conflict, shrinking spaces for civil society, and declining levels of democracy and rule of law in many parts of the world. During this time, scholars announced the "The End of American World Order"¹⁴ and the failure of liberal internationalism.¹⁵ Other observers raised questions about whether the "West Had Lost it?"¹⁶ with the Munich Security Conference even choosing "Westlessness" as the theme of its 2020 report¹⁷ (though, to be sure, the lack of American or Western leadership does not equal the end of rules-based multilateralism in the twenty-first century).

During this time, however, it was also observed how various coalitions of actors, both from the West and beyond, stood up to defend rules-based multilateralism. The most high-level example of this is arguably the Alliance for Multilateralism, launched by France and Germany in April 2019 as an "informal alliance of countries that are convinced that multilateralism founded on respect for international law is the only reliable guarantee for international stability and peace, and that the challenges we are facing can only be solved through cooperation."¹⁸ The Alliance has subsequently been joined by more than fifty countries, including Canada, Mexico, Chile, South Africa, and Indonesia. In September 2020, the Alliance vowed to "contribute to 'building back better' the world and multilateral institutions following the COVID-19 crisis"¹⁹ (see box 1.2).

On February 1, 2020, the United Kingdom formally left the European Union. "Brexit," an unprecedented development in the bloc's history, can in itself be considered a blow to multilateral cooperation, with the EU representing a model of close, supranational cooperation with the potential to inspire other regions and perhaps even global governance.²⁰ Nevertheless, and despite a campaign to leave the EU that was marked by xenophobic sentiments and skepticism towards international courts and institutions, thus far, the British government has not turned its back on multilateral cooperation more generally. In its 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign

Box 1.2: Alliance for Multilateralism

The Alliance for Multilateralism's belief that multilateral cooperation is fundamental to solving the common challenges facing the world gained salience as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the world. Rather than cooperating to slow the spread of the virus, many nations instead turned inward, closing borders and hoarding medical supplies. The threats posed to humanity by the virus were, and continue to be, multifaceted. In their April 16, 2020 Declaration, the Alliance for Multilateralism identified key challenges to address, while reiterating its unanimous support of international organizations and pledging to strive towards a "better recovery" for all. It is with this same vigor and swift action that the Alliance for Multilateralism must accelerate the drive towards renewed international cooperation as the

world begins to recover from the pandemic.

The alliance has already established a solid footing to reinvigorate global discourse across fourteen initiatives dedicated to seven pressing action areas: human rights, international law and accountability, disarmament and arms control, cyberspace, global public goods, climate, and strengthening institutions. Among these initiatives, the alliance has rallied international support around global issues such as the need for a stronger international criminal justice system through its Alliance Against Impunity, as well as a call for nations to fight disinformation by the International Partnership for Information and Democracy. A similar vision for enhanced global cooperation has been manifested by the United Nations through

the UN75 Declaration and the *Our Common Agenda* consultations, and by global civil society networks such as Together First and the Coalition for the UN We Need—all providing prospects for expanded global partnerships as they petition for a strengthened multilateral system.

This seems, then, a propitious time for change, and yet there remains the need for leadership to transform visions into action. The Alliance for Multilateralism could fill this gap at this moment of global introspection—utilizing its worldwide political network to establish crucial intergovernmental processes that can turn ideas, discourse, and rhetoric into reality.

Sources: Alliance for Multilateralism, Ministerial Meeting, *Joint Declaration* (2020); Alliance for Multilateralism, *Action Areas* (2021); and Ponzio, Richard et al., *UN 2.0: Ten Innovations for Global Governance 75 Years beyond San Francisco* (2020), 54.

Policy, the UK government emphasized that instead it remains "deeply committed to multilateralism" and noted the need to strengthen international institutions "that are vital to the future functioning of the international order."²¹

Moreover, a feared mass exodus led by African countries from another important multilateral body, the International Criminal Court (ICC), did not materialize. Though the Philippines and Burundi did eventually terminate their membership, South Africa and the Gambia reversed their decisions to withdraw. The Gambia, in fact, subsequently started proceedings at the International Court of Justice against Myanmar regarding alleged genocide of the Rohingya minority, under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The dysfunctions of these past years, seemingly culminating in the onset of the pandemic, have prompted states and other actors from around

the world to come out more openly and actively for multilateralism, to get organized, and to amplify their voices on the international stage. In 2021, encouraging signs abound of a shift from defending and preserving multilateralism to strengthening and renewing it, with a view to realizing the UN75 Declaration's commitments.

With the election of Joe Biden as the forty-sixth President of the United States in November 2020, the "America First" policy was replaced by an announcement that "America is Back" and with it "Multilateralism is Back. Diplomacy is Back."²² In terms of specific actions, the new U.S. administration has already rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement, canceled the country's withdrawal from the WHO, announced the return of the United States to the UN Human Rights Council, and lifted sanctions against the ICC.²³

However, in today's multipolar world, a change in leadership in the United States alone, though

momentous, does not suffice for turning the corner on reinvigorating multilateral cooperation. In the same vein as the Alliance for Multilateralism, the European Union also restated its commitment to rules-based multilateralism in a communication in February 2021,²⁴ as did the G7 in its leaders' communiqué of the same month where they pledged to "work together and with others to make 2021 a turning point for multilateralism and to shape a recovery that promotes the health and prosperity of our people and planet."²⁵ Realizing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) prognosis that 2021 could see the global economy's fastest expansion in at least four decades, with a projected growth of around 6 percent, would certainly help in that endeavor.²⁶

A truly global and multi-stakeholder initiative to combat the COVID-19 pandemic—the COVAX facility—launched in April 2020 aims to provide equitable access to vaccines around the world, with an emphasis on low- and middle-income countries. One year later, more than 160 countries are participating. By early May 2021, close to sixty million vaccine doses had been distributed to 122 participating countries.²⁷

Admittedly, this is just a fraction of what is needed, which has prompted calls from the Group of Least Developed Countries and the G77 developing countries to take the COVAX facility further. The President of Malawi made an urgent call for "increased vaccine access and adequate and predictable funding for the COVAX Facility, to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines can reach the widest possible population" and "pledged support for India and South Africa's call for the World Trade Organization to temporarily suspend the application of trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights in order to increase vaccine access."²⁸ In a remarkable reversal of its longstanding stance on the issue, the U.S. government announced its support for a waiver on vaccine patents to increase their global availability,²⁹ with the EU urging developed countries to boost vaccine exports to developing countries.³⁰ In addition, in May 2021, the Italian G20 Presidency and the European Commission convened the Global Health Summit, which culminated in the Rome Declaration. The declaration commits the

G20 and other signatory countries, among other things, to "[e]nable equitable, affordable, timely, global access to high-quality, safe and effective prevention, detection and response tools ... and to strong, inclusive, and resilient health systems; and support robust vaccine delivery systems, vaccine confidence and health literacy."³¹

Despite these signs of progress, caution remains warranted for several reasons. First, it remains to be seen which further actions follow the bold statements from the U.S., the EU, the G7, and the Alliance for Multilateralism to contribute to lasting global governance reform. The EU, while vocally championing the rule of law on the global stage, has for several years been struggling with a "rule of law backsliding" crisis at home,³² which threatens its credibility. Thus far, the U.S. government (which has also faced recent internal threats to the rule of law) has not taken steps to reactivate the World Trade Organization's (WTO) dispute settlement system by ending its blockade of appointments to the WTO's Appellate Body. Early on, the U.S. and UK declined to export COVID-19 vaccines, leading to charges of "vaccine nationalism." India and other countries with large surges of infection also held onto vaccine inventories for domestic use. The U.S. has since supported waiving vaccine patents and will donate 500 million doses to boost lagging distribution through COVAX, while G7 countries have proposed large-scale support to the facility.³³ Despite some reassuring signs, the challenges that face the world beyond the pandemic, including climate change and biodiversity loss, remain vast, as elaborated in this report.

Facing up to such challenges requires looking ahead to the factors that will continue to threaten multilateral cooperation (section II), a reflection on new paradigms of thinking (section III), a hard look at the prospects of, and urgently needed innovations for advancing, the UN75 Declaration's commitments (section IV), and a strategy for global system-wide revitalization—including a call for a 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance (section V)—building on UN75-generated political momentum.

II. Global Backdrop: Threats to Multilateral Cooperation

“There is a need for greater multilateral cooperation to resolve trade conflicts, to address climate change and risks from cybersecurity, and to improve the effectiveness of international taxation.” — Gita Gopinath, Chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund³⁴

“If multilateral institutions cannot bring about peace and the rule of law because of the vested interests of their members, then both national democracy and global governance will continue to be rocked by crises.” — Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (article on Global Risks Report 2016)³⁵

As the United Nations celebrated its 75th anniversary last year, multilateral cooperation and the global rules-based order were under substantial pressure from great power competition, the rise of exclusionary nationalism and populism, global environmental threats, and socioeconomic setbacks exacerbated by COVID-19. These issues, outlined below, cast shadows over multilateralism, which is most effective when the ideas, capabilities, and networks of international organizations, governments, businesses, and civil society groups can combine for global problem-solving. In early 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres characterized such threats, plus the dark side of cyberspace, as the “four horsemen” that continue to imperil world order.³⁶ The pandemic’s immediate health threat and longer-term socioeconomic knock-on effects have also joined this list of pressing global concerns. Yet some states have chosen to turn inward in this time of crisis, or worse, against one another. As the Secretary-General pointed out early in his tenure, “despite greater connectivity, societies are becoming more fragmented. More and more people live within their own bubbles, unable to appreciate their links with the whole human family.”³⁷ Against this seeming paradox and global backdrop, the need to act upon the UN75 Declaration’s twelve ambitious commitments only intensifies.

Great Power Competition

As powerful nations hustle for influence and opposing camps emerge that can erode fundamental principles of multilateral cooperation,

all peoples’ prospects for security and prosperity are undermined. Even at the height of the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States found ways to cooperate for the safety and stability of humanity. Although imperfect and politically fraught, the norms and agreements, including legally binding treaties, established in those decades helped humankind avoid both the use of nuclear weapons and a Third World War.

The world today is not without some promising signs of global cooperation. By February 2021, eighty-eight UN Member States had ratified or become signatories to a new treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons;³⁸ the START III (New START) nuclear arms control treaty between the U.S. and Russia was extended, in February 2021, for five more years;³⁹ and after two years of deliberations, in March 2021, all 193 UN Member States adopted the UN cybersecurity Open-ended Working Group’s Final Substantive Report, marking the first time in UN history that a process open to all countries led to unanimous agreement on international cybersecurity.⁴⁰ While recognizing these encouraging developments, in at least three major areas (economic competition, military competition, and cybersecurity) progress has been crippled or, at the very least, weakened by tensions and competition among the great powers.⁴¹

Fear of a Bifurcated Economic World

In his opening address to the 75th Session of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Guterres,

wary of growing U.S.-China tensions, warned that “we must do everything to avoid a new Cold War.”⁴² This concern of the world dividing once again into two “camps” begins in the economic sector, as the world’s two largest economies (with the EU in third place, post-Brexit) seek to influence which technological standards, financial systems, and regulations the rest of the world adopts.

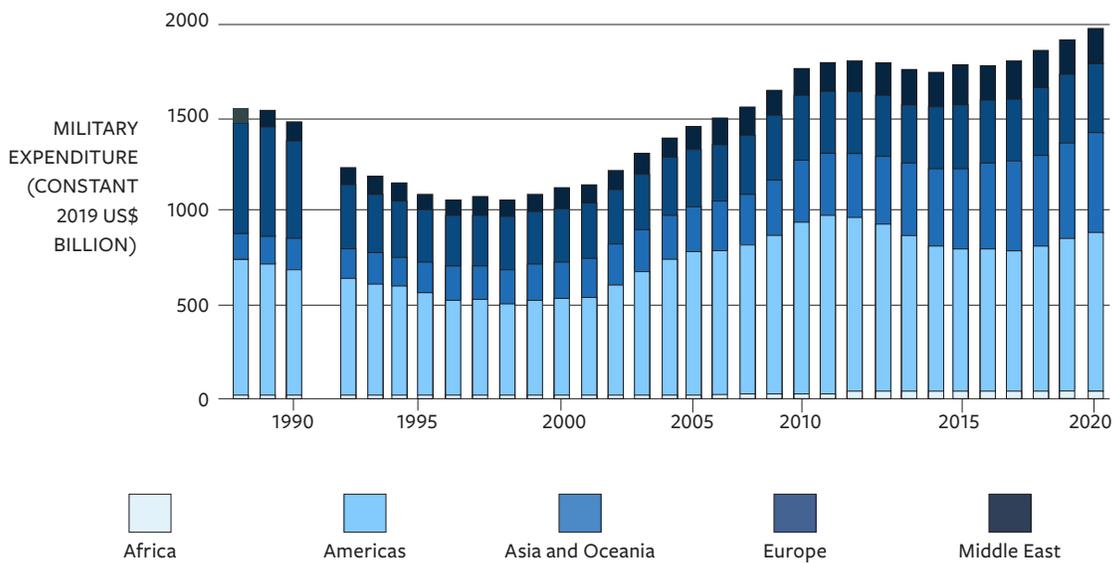
Techno-nationalism (encouraging protectionist stances on global technological innovation and transfers) has forced smaller countries to decide between Chinese and American technologies,⁴³ spawned U.S. export controls aimed at starving China of crucial semiconductor components sourced through global supply chains,⁴⁴ and intensified protectionist economic policies, such as “America First” and “Made in China 2025.”⁴⁵ In the financial sector, China has begun to experiment with its own blockchain currency,⁴⁶ a financial transactions clearance system (CIPS) that could circumvent the more widely used SWIFT system (and thereby U.S. sanctions),⁴⁷ and bilateral currency swap deals. The latter enabled China and Russia to conduct over 50 percent of their bilateral trade, in the first quarter of 2020, without utilizing the U.S. dollar for settlements.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the signing of a

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership among China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN Member States, in November 2020, and the China-European Union Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, are additional potential sources of U.S.-Chinese tension and heightened economic competition.⁴⁹ Their commercial and financial rivalry may escalate and potentially coalesce around two camps with worldwide reach, undermining core multilateral principles for global cooperation.

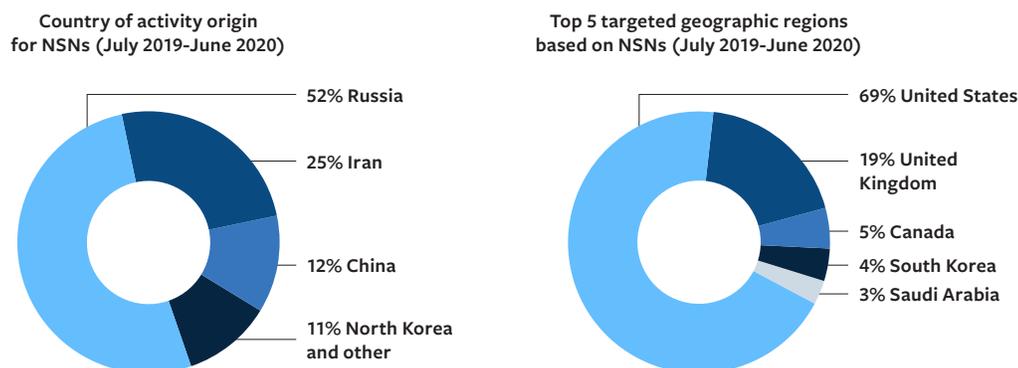
The Looming Threats of a Renewed Arms Race and Military Confrontation

Although the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is laudable, it lacks support from any of the acknowledged nuclear powers (United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea). Russian leader Vladimir Putin, for example, recently equated a country’s nuclear military capabilities with great power military status.⁵⁰ While American and Russian stockpiles are declining, the rate of disarmament has slowed significantly, and other nuclear powers, such as China, India, North Korea,

Figure 2.1: World military expenditure, by region, 1988-2019



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2020* (2021), 1.

Figure 2.2: Top originators and targets of state-sponsored cyberattacksⁱ

i. Nation-State Notice (NSN) as defined by Microsoft: “When a customer (organization or individual account holder) is targeted or compromised by nation state activities that Microsoft tracks, we deliver a nation state notification (NSN) to the customer. Over the past two years, Microsoft has delivered over 13,000 NSNs.” Microsoft. “FY20 Microsoft Digital Defense Report.” September 2020. 42. Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=101738>.

Source: Microsoft, *FY20 Microsoft Digital Defense Report* (2020), 42.

and Pakistan,⁵¹ and even the U.K., are increasing their nuclear reserves. Furthermore, the United States’ massive ten-year U.S. \$500 billion nuclear modernization effort suggests that nuclear weapons will continue to be a significant component of U.S. defense policy into the future.⁵² Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, cyber operations, and autonomous systems⁵³ can further exacerbate nuclear risks, as they can raise the possibility of miscalculation or judgement error in times of tension.⁵⁴

Beyond nuclear competition, global expenditure on arms continues to increase year-over-year (figure 2.1), and great powers continue to vie for primacy in the global conventional weapons trade, with the United States, Russia, France, and China (all UN Security Council permanent members) accounting, in 2016-2020, for 73 percent of all global arms sales.⁵⁵ Furthermore, persistent tensions between great powers (or between a great power and a military alliance) can directly threaten regional or global peace. Examples include military maneuvers by Russian forces opposite eastern Ukraine and in the Black Sea,⁵⁶ China’s contested “Nine Dash Line” claims and its activities to enforce them in the South China Sea, the U.S. Navy’s freedom of navigation exercises to protest those claims,⁵⁷ and the global use of private military companies

to conduct proxy wars with plausible deniability and little accountability.⁵⁸

Cyberspace: A Global Battlefield with No Rules of Engagement

While the massive human, ethical, economic, and political costs of nuclear war deter such weapons’ use, legal and political gray areas permeate the military use of other emerging technologies, and the potential consequences of their employment, particularly in cyberspace, have so far deterred few. Large powers conduct, and are victim to, the majority of state-sponsored cyber-attacks (figure 2.2), lending credence to theories of future great power conflicts waged virtually but with very tangible consequences. States employ cyber-attacks for multiple reasons: for espionage,⁵⁹ security,⁶⁰ election interference,⁶¹ prestige,⁶² and business competitiveness.⁶³ Moreover, great powers have begun to steal personal information from rival governments’ citizens. A former director at the U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center estimates that up to 80 percent of Americans have had their biodata, in some cases including DNA profiles, stolen in attacks sponsored by the Chinese government.⁶⁴ Furthermore, claims of power grid attacks conducted between the United States and Russia

raise concerns around infrastructure disruption,⁶⁵ while the 2010 Stuxnet attack against Iran’s nuclear program indicates that critical nuclear infrastructure can even be destroyed physically through digital means.⁶⁶ Present state-sponsored cyber-attacks may serve as a mere harbinger of the continued escalation of unregulated cyberwarfare between great powers in an increasingly digital world.

Exclusionary Nationalism and the Rise of Populism

Multilateralism itself is, in many ways, the best safeguard against the worst outcomes of great power competition. However, for multilateral cooperation to work, rules, norms, and institutions must be respected across borders. Paradoxically, as the COVID-19 pandemic wreaks havoc around the world, the very institutions best equipped to plan a durable and broad-based recovery are under assault by growing forces of isolationism, protectionism, nationalism, and populism.⁶⁷ These political orientations are reflected in the international community’s disjointed, ad hoc, and under-resourced response to COVID-19 (further examined below).⁶⁸

The panic and fear caused by a highly contagious virus that does not respect borders has prompted many countries to turn inward, close their borders, and compete for basic health and related resources. Traditional champions of multilateral institutions blocked medical exports,⁶⁹ leading to global medical supply chain disruptions.⁷⁰ Throughout the crisis, inward-looking nationalism flourished as countries closed their borders and misinformation pervaded news and social media outlets. Xenophobic messaging against China fueled a global rise of racism and violence against Asians.⁷¹ Vaccine nationalism also emerged as wealthy nations purchased most of the vaccine doses available by late 2020 and early 2021, precluding a more equitable and balanced recovery for developing nations.⁷²

Exclusionary sentiments based on notions of “the other” are also still all-too-often observed within national borders. Exclusionary nationalism can challenge ideals of national identity,

thereby weakening those associated with universal civic participation and belonging, particularly in countries experiencing major demographic changes.⁷³ For instance, lingering institutional racism, anti-migrant policies and legislation, and the persecution of cultural and religious minorities by national governments persist worldwide, deepening societal divisions that give rise to populism and even extremist behavior.⁷⁴

Right-wing populism has been prominent over the past few decades, serving as a catalyst for exclusionary nationalism.⁷⁵ The number of populist leaders in power around the world increased five-fold between 1990 and 2020, and right-wing populism, typically a feature of developing democracies, is now taking root through elections in well-established democratic states too.⁷⁶ Populists create bottom-up fissures in society that can extend from local to international levels, as observed in the rise of Donald Trump (United States), Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines), Viktor Orbán (Hungary), Narendra Modi (India), and Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil). Such populist leaders have greatly challenged institutions created to facilitate global and regional cohesion, as exemplified by Donald Trump’s assaults on the UN and WHO,⁷⁷ Hungary’s and Poland’s continued defiance of EU values,⁷⁸ and Brexit.⁷⁹ Unsurprisingly, this tide is also reflected in reporting from watchdog organizations such as Freedom House, which recorded, through 2020, fifteen years of consecutive democratic decline globally.⁸⁰ While these trends do not necessarily imply strict causality with rising right-wing populism, they did coincide over the past two decades.⁸¹ Equally alarming is how populist governments have repeatedly undercut international organizations, the core multilateral principles and tools that underpin and animate them, and their ability to curtail and address the underlying causes of soaring great power tensions on a level not witnessed since the Cold War. Central to the populist leaders’ playbook is tapping into (and, in effect, intentionally aggravating) people’s basic job-related and social development anxieties, which escalated dramatically from early 2020 with the onset of the coronavirus.

Socioeconomic Setbacks

The pandemic has caused severe socioeconomic setbacks worldwide, and the barriers to rebuilding a post-COVID-19 world are substantial. Failing to remove them will jeopardize the multilateral cooperation essential to addressing not just economic recovery but many other global issues.

The pandemic disrupted global supply chains and financial markets and forced advanced economies, emerging markets, and developing economies alike into recession. The damage is widely felt from the largest global economic shock in decades.⁸² In 2020, the global economy is estimated to have contracted by 3.3 percent overall (see table 2.1),⁸³ but it has begun to bounce back quickly and aggressively, with global economic growth for 2021 projected at 6 percent.⁸⁴ As the largest economy in the world at market exchange rates, the United States is expected to expand by 6.4 percent in 2021, due in part to President Biden's U.S. \$1.9 trillion relief package (and proposed follow-on infrastructure recovery plan), as well as the accelerated vaccine roll-out aiding many Americans' return to work.⁸⁵ Similarly, China's growth projection (the world's largest Gross Domestic Product based on purchasing power parity) is 8.4 percent in 2021, and 5.6 percent in 2022.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, according to the UN, developing countries experienced a 2.5 percent contraction in 2020, and they are projected to grow, in 2021, by 5.7 percent. Within the developing world, least developed countries lost 1.3 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020, but they are estimated to expand by 4.9 percent in 2021.⁸⁷

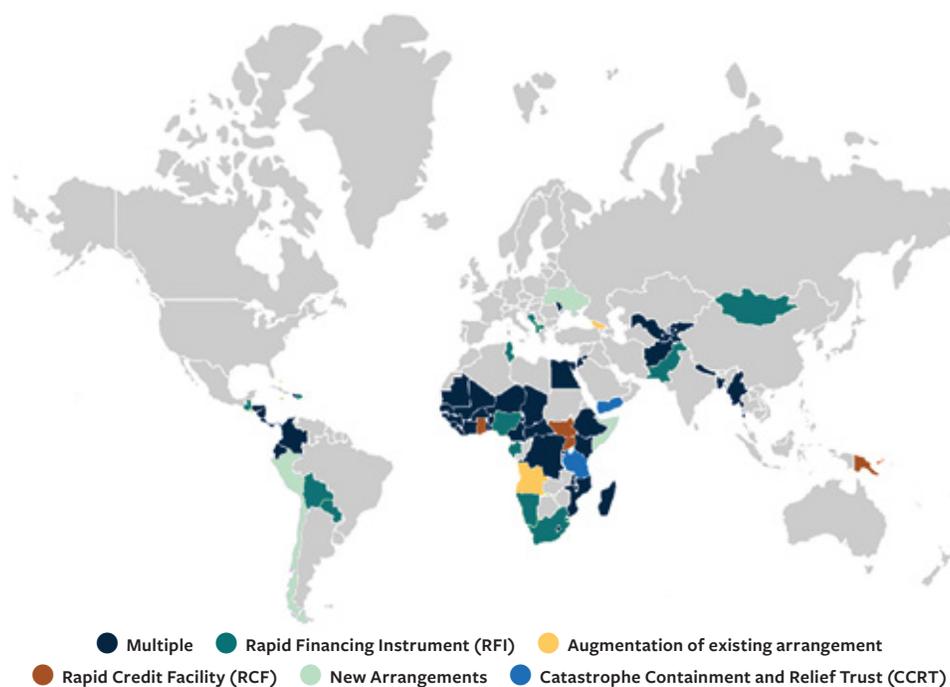
Although economically advanced countries are bouncing back relatively quickly from COVID-19, low-income countries have far less capacity to offer recovery and relief packages; many entered the pandemic with high debt that has risen even higher during the crisis.⁸⁸ If poorly managed, recovery could exacerbate global economic inequality, which was already a source of tension pre-COVID. While economies in emerging and developing Asia are projected to achieve 8.6 percent growth, on average, in 2021, countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa are projected to grow by not more than 3.7 percent.⁸⁹ Countries with economies anchored in tourism and oil exports faced and continue to encounter difficulties bouncing back due to the slow re-establishment of cross-border travel and the contraction in world oil demand by 8.7 million barrels per day in 2020, which is not expected to fully recover in 2021, rebounding only to 5.5 million barrels per day.⁹⁰

Table 2.1: World economic outlook projections (real GDP, annual percent change), April 2021

	Estimate	Projections	
	2020	2021	2022
World output	-3.3	6.0	4.4
Advanced economies*	-4.7	5.1	3.6
Emerging and Developing Asia (China, India, ASEAN-5)	-1.0	8.6	6.0
Emerging and Developing Europe	-2.0	4.4	3.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	-7.0	4.6	3.1
Middle East and Central Asia	-2.9	3.7	3.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	-1.9	3.4	4.0
Low-income Developing Countries	0.0	4.3	5.2

*United States, the Euro Area, Japan, United Kingdom, and Canada

Source: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook* (April 2021), 8.

Figure 2.3: Countries receiving assistance and debt service relief

Source: International Monetary Fund, *COVID-19 Financial Assistance and Debt Service Relief*, (2021).

The socioeconomic consequences of this economic downturn have been felt most by the world's poorest and most marginalized. It is estimated that the pandemic has pushed 114.4 million people into extreme poverty.⁹¹ In addition, over 155 million people experienced acute food insecurity in 2020—an increase of 20 million people compared to 2019.⁹² In Sub-Saharan Africa, per capita incomes for many (though not all) countries are not expected to return to the pre-pandemic level before 2025.⁹³ International support through grants, concessional loans, and debt relief will be essential to prevent a continuous rise in poverty and other socioeconomic challenges brought by the pandemic, especially since the battle against the virus has not been won yet.⁹⁴ The surge of COVID-19 cases in India, including the spread of a new variant, has made it the second country to record 20 million infections, after the United States. As of May 2021, the WHO estimated that India accounted for 46 percent of the world's new coronavirus cases and 1 in 4 deaths.⁹⁵

The biggest priority for low-income countries is to increase vaccine availability and production

and to expedite the roll-out of vaccines, while also protecting marginalized groups. Out of the one billion vaccine doses administered globally by April 2021, residents of advanced economies received more than 81 percent, while those in low-income countries just 0.3 percent.⁹⁶ On average, almost 1 in 4 people in high-income countries have been vaccinated, whereas only 1 in 500 in low-income countries.⁹⁷ Additionally, in an effort to allow generic and other manufacturers to make more vaccines, South Africa and India renewed their bid, in March 2021, to waive rules of the World Trade Organization's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) agreement and boost production of COVID-19 vaccines for poor nations. As noted in the previous section, the proposal was originally opposed by Western countries, such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, EU, and the United States.⁹⁸ However, the United States' announcement, in May 2021, to support the temporary waiver of intellectual property provisions is a positive development that instills new and stronger support in the ongoing World Trade Organization negotiations on COVID-19 patent

waivers.⁹⁹ A study by the International Chamber of Commerce Research Foundation found that without sufficient vaccine access in developing countries, the world economy might lose U.S. \$9.2 trillion, in 2021, due to lack of herd immunity and the ability of the coronavirus to mutate.¹⁰⁰ Although the U.S. committed U.S. \$2 billion to the COVAX facility, with another U.S. \$2 billion promised when other countries fulfill their pledges, the world is far from seeing the end of the coronavirus pandemic and the commensurate resources required to bring it about.¹⁰¹

Financial assistance and debt relief are further imperatives to create conditions under which countries can continue to sell goods and services across borders and access international financial markets.¹⁰² Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are being hit particularly hard. In 2020, seventy-six low-income countries carried at least U.S. \$573 billion in debt (with an estimated U.S. \$41 billion due to service those debts in 2020).¹⁰³ Debt distress has further slowed investment in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁰⁴ Although disbursements by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been a small fraction—according to the IMF’s own estimates—of the financing needs of developing countries, the IMF’s Executive Directors are discussing a new Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation of \$650 billion to boost reserves and help global recovery from COVID-19.¹⁰⁵ In the short-term, debt distress will cause supply-demand and income shocks, while in the long-term, high debt levels will slow down new investments, as depressed demand will lead to lower growth in all sectors.¹⁰⁶

In order to ease the economic constraints afflicting the poorest countries due to COVID-19 crisis, the World Bank and IMF urged the G20 to set-up the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which aims to help countries “concentrate their resources on fighting the pandemic and safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of millions of the most vulnerable people.”¹⁰⁷ Since its inception in May 2020, the DSSI has delivered around U.S. \$5 billion in relief to more than forty eligible countries (see figure 2.3).¹⁰⁸ Although the G20 initially extended the DSSI period from December 2020 to December 2021,¹⁰⁹ the UN

Secretary-General has encouraged its extension until at least June 2022 and pressed the need to include middle-income countries too, specifically Small Island Developing States and other vulnerable nations.¹¹⁰ Additionally, he urged the international community to build upon the G20 Common Framework, in order to offer legal and technical advice on options for debt and debt service relief for countries in need.¹¹¹ By addressing the immediate financial burden facing many low-income countries, resources will be freed up for broad-based recovery plans with a special focus on achieving the SDGs, including a concern for a more stable climate and other environmental objectives.¹¹²

Environmental Risks

Current global environmental trends highlight the gap between policy commitments and action taken. Deforestation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, and pollution are devastating the planet’s environmental well-being, causing acute damage to humans and other species. Most consequential, climate change—examined at length in section IV—is occurring much faster than anticipated due to pervasive unsustainable consumption and production patterns.¹¹³ Multilateral and national commitments to environmental law, conservation, and preservation need to address these ever-growing environmental risks.

In the last decade, global total forest area has decreased substantially, with losses particularly severe in tropical primary forests such as the Amazon, the Congo, and Southeast Asia, amounting to 10.4 million acres.¹¹⁴ Forests contain more than 80 percent of all terrestrial species of animals and plants, and their growing displacement from continual deforestation is increasing human contact and zoonotic (animal to human) transmission of infectious diseases.¹¹⁵ Failure to address high deforestation rates also contributes to species extinction and creates further trickle-down effects in areas such as soil degradation. Such degradation and loss of nutrients in land may, in turn, contribute to crop failure, reducing the quality and quantity of food available to the earth’s still rapidly growing human population.¹¹⁶

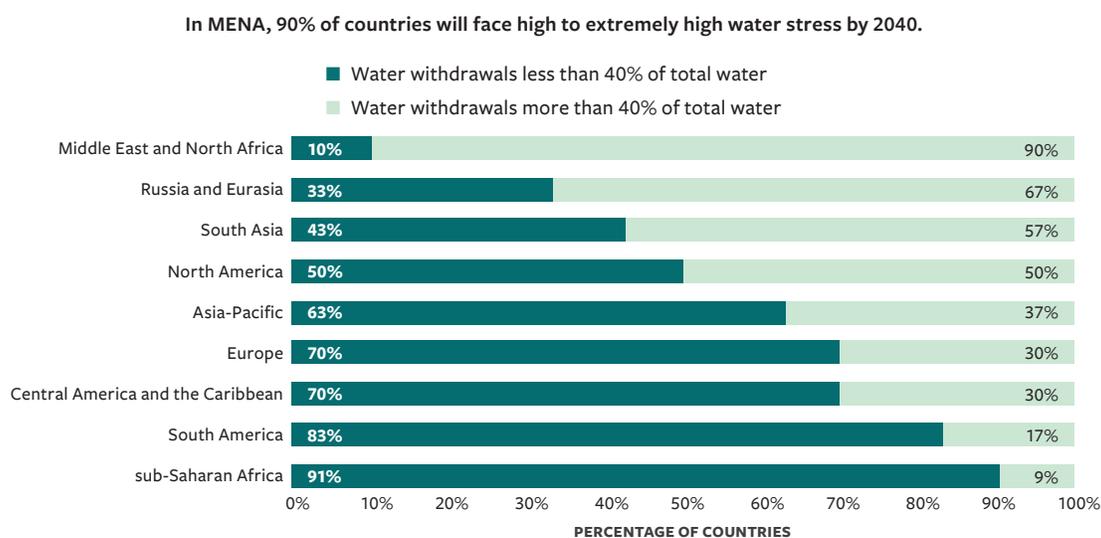
Ninety-five percent of world food supply depends on sustainable soil function, but landscapes with soil capable of sustaining agro-ecosystems are diminishing around the world, due to desertification, degradation, and urban expansion.¹¹⁷ Confronting deforestation and broader land degradation are both critical to ensuring that targets are met under Sustainable Development Goal 15 (*Life on land*), including efforts to combat desertification and restore degraded land and soil by 2030.¹¹⁸

The related environmental issue of biodiversity loss places at risk broad-based and sustainable development. In recent years, with conservation efforts thwarted by illicit poaching and wildlife trafficking, 8 percent of animal breeds became extinct, with another alarming 22 percent at risk of extinction.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the average abundance of species native to particular ecosystems in most major terrestrial biomes has fallen by 20 percent and may accelerate as native biodiversity is impacted by invasive alien species.¹²⁰ If current biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation trends continue with downward trends in other SDG target areas, the commitments set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and

Paris Agreement will fail to be met.¹²¹ In short, if biodiversity loss is not slowed down dramatically, a permanent and irreplaceable reduction of the range of diversity in species and their benefits may follow.¹²²

Water consumption and water stress add additional strains on the environment. Water use has increased six-fold over the past century and continues to rise by about 1 percent per year. By 2030, an estimated 700 million people worldwide could be displaced due to water scarcity; by 2040, impacts will be particularly severe in North Africa and the Middle East (see figure 2.4).¹²³ Downstream countries of the Mekong River Basin, meanwhile, have experienced unprecedented droughts impacting millions of people, as China’s dams have confined nearly all upstream precipitation to its portions of the upper basin.¹²⁴ Strains on water systems management will increase over the coming thirty years, potentially leading to water shortages for many millions of people.¹²⁵ Water pollution is further undermining the availability and quality of water in many regions, putting the health of marine ecosystems and species at risk. An estimated ten million metric tons of plastic

Figure 2.4: Percentage of countries with high or extreme water stress by region, 2040 projections



Note: “Water stress compares available water to the amount of water withdrawn for agriculture, domestic and industrial needs. The indicator used in the Ecological Threat Register compares supply to demand and ranks countries on their ability to balance these two. A higher water stress score indicates that the available sources of water are not sufficient to meet the water demand in that country.”

Source: Institute for Economics & Peace, *Ecological Threat Register 2020* (2020), 42.

waste enter the seas each year, and these micro- and nano-scale plastic particles (including those found within manufactured chemicals) may take hundreds of years to degrade while continuously entering the food chain.¹²⁶

Likewise, air pollutants are impacting global food security and availability. Ozone precursor emissions (particularly nitrogen oxides) penetrate plant structures and impair their development, causing global crop losses in soy, wheat, and maize—all staple foods for the majority of the world’s population.¹²⁷ The impact of air pollution on people’s health is further heightened by human exposure to particulate matter (soot, dust, and smoke). Particulates increase the possibility of respiratory infections, as they make their way into people’s lungs and bloodstreams, worsening asthma and bronchitis, and even causing heart attacks.¹²⁸

To address these and other environmental challenges, a newly recommended instrument, the Global Pact for the Environment, was proposed in 2017 by environmental law experts from more than forty countries, together with the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s World Commission on Environmental Law.¹²⁹ If formally adopted by governments, the Global Pact would create a legally binding UN international environmental treaty that synthesizes the principles outlined in the Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the World Charter for Nature, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law, and other documents, solidifying the environmental rule of law around the world.¹³⁰ Its adoption would also facilitate international environmental legal coordination on a global scale, harmonizing an estimated three hundred environmental agreements under one coherent set of legally binding obligations for the protection and preservation of the environment.¹³¹

Yet, in May 2019, at the last session of the Open-Ended Working Group “Towards a Global Pact for the Environment,” UN Member States (facing challenges to secure support for a new treaty in the present political environment) opted instead for a simple Political Declaration, proposed for adoption during the landmark 50th anniversary,

in 2022, of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (known as the Stockholm Conference). This was a step back from the original ambition to adopt the Pact as an international, legally binding treaty enshrining the general principles of environmental law.¹³² The “Stockholm +50 Declaration,” now anticipated in June of 2022, is expected to deepen environmental connections with the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) has also set February 2022 as the date for the United Nations to consider a High-Level Political Declaration on the Environment (also to commemorate “UNEP+50”), where consultations will allow more sectors of society worldwide to elaborate and contribute to the declaration.¹³³ Commitments to and enforcement of environmental laws are fundamental to tackle growing environmental threats, and reinvigorated multilateral, national, and subnational actors (both state and non-state) are needed to bridge the gap between environmental laws, policies, and actions to promote and uphold sustainable development and environmental protection.

* *

Emerging political, economic, and environmental threats have challenged the multilateral system and put into question the effectiveness of international institutions. Political insecurity, power politics, high levels of debt distress, trade tensions, unemployment, and continuous environmental degradation have contributed to a rise in exclusionary governance practices that undermine much-needed global cooperation for tackling these challenges in the first place. Now more than ever, a revitalized and re-imagined multilateralism is needed to engage individuals, civil society, the private sector, and governments to create and promote innovative solutions that address the growing threats and trends outlined above. The UN Secretary-General’s vision for a new social contract, new global deal, and networked and inclusive multilateralism—three powerful concepts to which we now turn—wield the potential, when operationalized, to strengthen global cooperation on some of the most pressing issues identified in the UN75 Declaration.

III. Conceptual Advances for the Future We Want & UN We Need

“It is vital for the world to come together and develop a new social contract, including with future generations, and a new global deal. It has been said that we may have reached a new ‘San Francisco’ moment that must be seized before it is too late.”

— António Guterres, *United Nations Secretary-General (his vision statement of the United Nations from 2022 to 2026)*¹³⁴

Recent events have brought to the fore certain conceptual advances in the discourse on global governance and its reform, which may reverberate for years, even decades to come. They may echo into the future just as the coining of the term “sustainable development” by the Brundtland Commission in its 1987 Report, *Our Common Future*, reverberated for decades through policymaking and expert discourse, culminating in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—a common global roadmap for all 193 UN Member States. Other fundamental ideas with a lasting impression include “human security,” introduced in the 1993 and 1994 *Human Development Reports*, and the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), drawn from the 2001 Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty.

While it is difficult to predict which concepts will most inform and embody a new generation of thinking about global governance principles, legal instruments, policies, and institutions, a number of innovative ideas permeate current high-level discussions at the United Nations, especially in the speeches of UN Secretary-General António Guterres since the beginning of 2020. In particular, the notions of a “new social contract,” a “new global deal,” and “networked and inclusive multilateralism” stand out and have the potential of framing the discussion of the shape and trajectory of the UN in its next quarter-century.

While these three concepts are not mentioned explicitly in the UN75 Declaration, they are implicit in the framing of the declaration’s twelve commitments (see section IV). For instance,

the need for a “new social contract” dovetails with the commitment “We will leave no one behind” and its emphasis on “people in vulnerable situations,” as well as the commitment “We will build trust,” which criticizes “[g]rowing inequality within and among countries,” contributing to “acts of xenophobia, racism, intolerance, hate speech and disinformation.” The main elements of a new global deal are reflected in commitments such as “We will protect our planet,” which stresses “a historic opportunity to build back better and greener,” and “We will upgrade the United Nations,” which includes a commitment to “a more agile, effective and accountable organization that can deliver better in the field and adapt to global challenges.”

Lastly, the spirit of networked and inclusive multilateralism is well captured by the commitment “We will boost partnerships,” which includes the observation that “[t]oday’s challenges require cooperation not only across borders but also across the whole of society,” requiring a UN that is “more inclusive and engage[d] with all relevant stakeholders, including regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, academia and parliamentarians to ensure an effective response to our common challenges.” The commitment “We will place women and girls at the centre” further reminds us that “[c]onflicts will not be resolved, and sustainable development will not occur, without the equal and active participation of women at all levels.” It therefore calls for “accelerate[d] action to achieve gender equality, women’s participation and the empowerment of women and girls in all domains.”

In short, there are indications of an emerging moral consensus, in direct response to the dystopian trends addressed in section II, to which the Secretary-General and a growing number of UN Member States subscribe. The gist of this tentative consensus could be summarized as aspiring to realize, over the long term, the vision of a “new social contract,” advanced in the nearer term through a “new global deal.” Both concepts would consist of a program of practical policy interventions as well as institutional, legal, operational, and normative changes, which can only be achieved through “networked and inclusive multilateralism” that engages the potential and amplifies the voices of all relevant actors. These powerful notions are further unpacked below with the help of past scholars and world leaders, as well as enriched with the perspectives of present-day thinkers, policymakers, and practitioners.

New Social Contract

In the midst of a global pandemic that has disrupted societies and the global economy, exposing the inadequacies of policies meant to ensure the dignity and wellbeing of the world’s population, and amplifying societal divisions, the Secretary-General has called for “a new social contract between people, governments, the private sector, civil society and more, to tackle the roots of inequality with fair taxation on income and wealth, universal benefits, and opportunities for all.”¹³⁵ This is a universal political project, a vision whereby the global community can reshape the relationship between the governing authority and those who they serve, which today extends far beyond the classic people-state relationship, and can lay down a new normative foundation for the progressive realization of civil, political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental rights.¹³⁶ The call for a new social contract was also voiced by several public intellectuals, scholars, and businesses at the 2021 World Economic Forum.¹³⁷ After considering this concept’s past evolution and intellectual antecedents, this overview summarizes current debates and thinking on a new social contract. Over the past few centuries, the “social contract” concept has been reinvented to capture

the realities of new political, social, and economic theories that aimed to provide more prosperity, security, and justice for more people in more places. The term has its roots in Greek philosophy and is defined as an agreement that governs the relationship and exchanges between individuals and institutions for social benefits (see box 3.1).¹³⁸ The most dominant present form of social contract arose from the ashes of the Great Depression and World War II, facilitating new economic opportunities brought forth by the third industrial revolution, globalization, and the related long peace brought about by the adoption of the United Nations Charter and its core principles.¹³⁹ But as mainstream economic policies became dominant in subsequent decades, it was apparent that aggregate economic growth by itself—centered around Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and average per capita income growth—does not necessarily lead to good living standards and well-being for all. The deeper consequences of globalization have been reflected in increasing levels of social and economic inequity, job insecurity, work and wage polarization, declining living standards, and environmental damage.¹⁴⁰ In 2019, 2,153 billionaires worldwide had more wealth than 60 percent of the planet’s population combined (4.6 billion people).¹⁴¹ While inequality is affecting all societies at different levels, income and wealth inequality are most prominent in African countries, with South Africa and Lesotho being the most unequal.¹⁴²

The fourth industrial revolution, ushered in by new digital technologies, has further transformed institutions and profoundly impacted labor markets worldwide. This has lifted productivity and contributed to higher levels of aggregate economic growth, but the distribution of benefits has been unequal. Part of the issue is owed to a flawed measure of human well-being and economic success: the Gross Domestic Product, which measures market activity and the size of an economy, but does not reflect a nation’s welfare.¹⁴³ GDP measures ignore the negative effects of conventional economic growth on society, such as income inequality, poverty, equality of opportunity, and ecological costs amongst others.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, while the

Box 3.1: A historical overview of the social contract

The *social contract* has a long history in political thought, dating back to sophists (ancient Greek teachers) and Epicures' contract theory, which attempted "to reconcile the individual's pursuit of pleasure and tranquility with the public need for justice and peace." The concept gained more prominence in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe (the Age of Enlightenment), when social contract theorists tried to explain why individuals need to give up some of their natural freedom to enjoy the benefits of political order. Based on different interpretations of a human's state of nature, the social contracts put forward by philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke argued that in order to ensure a stable and comfortable life, the individual would have to voluntarily transfer some of their rights to an absolute authority (the sovereign or monarch) or to a representative government, respectively. Recognizing that "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains," philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau aimed to reconcile freedom and authority in his famous social contract theory by suggesting that the sovereign represents all citizens acting collectively (through the "General Will") to establish rules and set up systems of governance.

During the twentieth century, the social contract was the basis of John Rawls' theory of justice. Rawls argued that all citizens of a society have basic rights, and cooperation should benefit everyone, regardless of their racial, ethnic, or other differences. Charlez Beitz and Thomas Pogge criticized Rawls' theory as being too isolated and argued for its global extension. They were followed by Mathias Risse's theory on global justice, where global justice is defined as distributive justice and founded in common humanity, adherence to the "global order," and the collective ownership of the earth system. In recent years, the idea of justice was further conceptualized as just security—a framework which argues for the pursuit of both justice and security (with human security at the center) as two complementary yet aggregate global public goods that must be guaranteed together to maintain global order. Contemporary feminists, such as Carole Pateman and Susan Moller Okin, have questioned the social contract's moral grounds and criticized its individualistic focus, pointing at how it contributed to the patriarchal structure of the modern state.

Since the Ancient Greeks, the social contract has been re-shaped to fit societal, political, and economic shifts, thus becoming more complex and multi-dimensional. Over the past two decades, civil society, the business community, and international organizations have recognized an urgent need to upgrade the past century's dominant social contract to one that can respond to this century's challenges. They suggest that the human, social, and economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic should bring the international community together to innovate a new social contract.

Sources: Thrasher, *Reconciling Justice and Pleasure in Epicurean Contractarianism*, 1; Friend, "Social Contract Theory"; Rousseau, *The Social Contract*; Durch et al., *Just Security in an Undergoverned World*, 17; Okin, *Feminism, the Individual, and Contract Theory*, 658.

world has benefited from technological advancements, nearly half of the world's population is not connected to the internet, and over 100 million workers in eight of the world's largest economies risk being displaced by automation and may need to find new jobs by 2030.¹⁴⁵ In addition, it is estimated that the pandemic triggered the most acute crisis for the world of work since the Great Depression in the 1930s, with those already disadvantaged bearing the brunt.¹⁴⁶

Surveying the current discourse of policymakers, civil society, and academia, there is growing discontent with the present state of the social contract, with critics (including the United Nations, World Bank, and the International

Trade Union Confederation) noting that it is outdated and incapable of meeting the needs and challenges of the twenty-first century.¹⁴⁷ At the eighteenth Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture, the UN Secretary-General emphasized that a new social contract is "an opportunity to build back a more equal and sustainable world" from COVID-19.¹⁴⁸ A new, modernized social contract could, indeed, help advance a more just post-COVID-19 recovery and economic policies that consider the realization of human rights as an end in itself—rather than as one more channel to achieve high economic growth levels under outdated metrics. Similarly, it could address the deeper systemic inequities that are plaguing societies, fueled also by racism, discrimination, and gender inequality.

Several elements of social protection have also gained particular prominence in current debates, as underscored by the Secretary-General, who suggested “a new generation of ... safety nets including Universal Health Coverage and the possibility of a Universal Basic Income extended to everyone.”¹⁴⁹ The unprecedented wealth levels seen globally show that we have all the resources we need to invest in global public goods; what we need is to channel these resources appropriately. From reading the contemporary literature on the social contract, three major insights stand out:

First, progressive civil society, scholars, and international organizations argue that a global political commitment to securing social protection floors (or basic social security guarantees) needs reinforcing, as they are essential for ensuring people’s health and dignity.¹⁵⁰ More than half of the world’s population lacks coverage from even one social protection benefit.¹⁵¹ Among the most affected are the two billion people employed in the informal sector, which is estimated at more than 60 percent of workers worldwide.¹⁵² Social protections entail basic income security, such as pensions, child benefits, income support, employment services for those living in poverty and for the unemployed, and universal access to health and other social services.¹⁵³ They have proved to contribute to human development and be a macroeconomic stabilizer during economic shocks.¹⁵⁴

Second, many also contend that access to education should be ensured for all, and that educational systems need to be reinvented to meet the economic, technological, and societal shifts now underway.¹⁵⁵ Schools should equip students with skills and competencies that set them up for succeeding in fast-changing labor markets and contribute to climate-friendly economies. Universal access to quality education is a fundamental right; it should be at the core of any new social contract, giving particular attention to the world’s nearly 60 million children out of primary school.¹⁵⁶ At the same time, businesses must also play a key role in providing quality employment opportunities that also offer diversity, equity, and inclusion in their hiring processes, advocate for social safety nets, and generate low-carbon footprints.¹⁵⁷

The momentum to create a “New Social Contract” is about, first and foremost, an understanding of partners at the local level.
— participant speaking at the Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration Expert Series, March 18, 2021

Source: Coalition for the UN We Need, Stimson Center et al. Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration’s Promise Expert Series. Experts Roundtable 2 (March 18, 2020).

Third and finally, multiple growing voices from civic groups, academia, and global institutions proclaim that an equitable, resilient, and sustainable social contract should rebuild people’s trust in governance institutions. Trust is a prerequisite that offers legitimacy to those governing, and it permits the existence of a contract in the first place. However, around the world, we see a crisis of leadership and an erosion of trust in political leaders. The UN75 Declaration underscores this insight, observing that “[i]nequality leads to mistrust between countries and to people’s mistrust in institutions of governance” (see further section IV). This trend was further heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵⁸ Institutions exist “for and on behalf of people,” and legitimacy stems not only from periodic elections, but from regular inclusion in decision-making processes, where historically marginalized and vulnerable groups can contribute.¹⁵⁹ Trust also builds social cohesion, which helps prevent socio-political polarization and sustain peace.¹⁶⁰

A new social contract that prioritizes these three areas central to human development and dignity could help to avoid or at least dampen moral distortions and inequities that can fracture the social contract, whether nationally or across borders. Similarly, economist and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz suggests that at the core of his people-centered economic prescriptions rests a new approach to the social contract, “a new balance between the market, the state and civil society, based on what I call *progressive capitalism*. It channels the power of the market and creative entrepreneurship to enhance the well-being of society more generally.”¹⁶¹

While presenting the findings and recommendations of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response’ report, in May 2021,

former New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, and former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf—both co-chairs of the panel—also noted that “The panel is recommending a fundamental transformation designed to ensure commitment at the highest level to a new system...on which citizens can rely to keep them safe and healthy.”¹⁶² Contemporary thinking on a new social contract not only highlights its inadequacies, but, fortuitously, also suggests areas ripe for policy intervention and change. Achieving these building blocks toward a long-term transformative vision will require a vigorous and sustained commitment by governments, alongside constructive pressure and technical, financial, and other resources from international organizations and a diverse range of private sector and civil society actors.

New Global Deal

With the “new social contract” being the vision and long-term goal for weaving a new normative fiber binding states and peoples together, to overcome the main hurdles to its adoption and to facilitate the delivery of global public goods in the medium-term, the world also needs a “new global deal.” As noted by Secretary-General Guterres in his Nelson Mandela lecture of July 2020, the world needs such a “redistribution of power, wealth and opportunities” because current “global political and economic system[s] are not delivering on critical global public goods: public health, climate action, sustainable development, peace.” “[H]uge gaps in governance structures and ethical frameworks,” he noted, were further laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶³ On January 10, 2021, the UN Secretary-General again called for a new global deal, through which “[p]ower, resources and opportunities must be managed better and shared more equitably.”¹⁶⁴

The above list of global public goods can be seen as “aggregate” goods “that no single state or group of states can provide throughout the world.”¹⁶⁵ The more states contribute to providing these goods, the stronger they become, with some states providing larger shares than others. At a sub-regional level, however, “certain states may be ‘weak links’ whose low levels of

governance threaten not only their own people’s enjoyment” of such public goods as security and justice “but that of neighboring states as well.”¹⁶⁶ These goods, and their absence, also interact; for example, conflict undermines security and justice, climate change undermines development, and both undermine public health.

The “new global deal” in some respects harks back to its historical antecedent, the New Deal, spearheaded between 1933 and 1939 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States in response to the Great Depression. That effort is widely remembered as a vast government program of public works, reforms, and regulations. It pursued goals similar to the new global deal, as it also aimed, over time, to forge a new social contract through greater social security, improved infrastructure, and the provision of public goods, such as health and education. It focused on the “3 R’s” of relief for the unemployed and poor, recovery of the economy back to normal levels, and reform of the financial system to prevent a repeat depression. While the UN certainly does not have the spending power of the U.S. federal government, historians have pointed out that an underappreciated part of the New Deal was its encouragement of private investment,¹⁶⁷ making even the original New Deal a kind of public-private partnership and multi-stakeholder effort.

As noted, the sort of new global deal favored by Secretary-General Guterres involves a redistribution of power, wealth, and opportunities. This call for a redistribution of power—or rather a call for empowerment—reacts to undeniable shifts both among states and from states to non-state actors over the seventy-five years since the UN was founded. The Secretary-General stresses that “[d]eveloping countries must have a proportionate role and more relevance in global institutions.”¹⁶⁸ This echoes long-standing discussions about representativeness in the current system of global governance, considering, for example, the distribution of “special drawing rights” at the IMF, which gives the United States a blocking minority share, or the setup of the Security Council with its five permanent, veto-wielding powers and ten non-permanent members. Beyond a more up-to-date representation of states at the

UN or elsewhere, a new global deal also requires the active engagement of, and participation from, non-state actors in an inclusive and networked way, as the next subsection further elaborates.

Regarding the redistribution of resources and wealth, increasing inequalities between and within countries have already been highlighted (see section IV also). In the words of UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, “[g]rowth alone, without far more robust redistribution of wealth, would fail to effectively tackle poverty.”¹⁶⁹ He argues that it would take far too long to eliminate poverty with an approach that “does not take into account the environmental degradation associated [with] economic growth, or the impacts of climate change on poverty itself.”¹⁷⁰ As one of the more radical proposals to counter growing economic inequality, for instance, Thomas Piketty has proposed a global wealth tax,¹⁷¹ while others such as Bill Gates have put forward the less sweeping idea of a progressive global consumption tax.¹⁷²

Resource redistribution and redirection also need to be seen in light of calls for a “green recovery” from the COVID-19 pandemic and of the need to recalibrate the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. As noted by the UN Secretary-General at the One Planet Summit in January 2021, with “smart policies and the right investments, we can chart a path that brings health to all, revives economies and builds resilience and rescues biodiversity.”¹⁷³ Similarly, the G7 communiqué of May 2021 included a “commitment to working with developing partner countries, especially in Africa, to achieve a green, inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19, aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, including urgent equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.”¹⁷⁴

Various “green deals,” which are being launched in different parts of the world, can be seen as work programs in the service of these goals. For instance, the “European Green Deal” is an ambitious plan of the EU to have no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 and to decouple economic growth from resource use. This is to be achieved through an investment plan (“InvestEU”) of at least €1 trillion (U.S.

\$1.2 trillion) in sustainable infrastructure and technologies, flanked by a financial support and technical assistance scheme (“Just Transition Mechanism”) to help the most affected at the level of at least €100 billion (U.S. \$120 billion) over the period 2021-27.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Colombia’s “Green Growth Roadmap,”¹⁷⁶ South Korea’s “Green New Deal,”¹⁷⁷ Saudi Arabia’s dual “Green Initiative” and “Middle East Green Initiatives,”¹⁷⁸ the African Development Bank’s “Energy New Deal,”¹⁷⁹ the UAE’s “Green Economy for Sustainable Development,”¹⁸⁰ and the Asian Development Bank’s commitment to making 75 percent of its operations related to climate change mitigation and adaptation by 2030¹⁸¹ all outline ambitious efforts to curtail climate risk which would disproportionately affect their own populations. The “Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel,” moreover, is an African Union-led project to combat desertification, “sequester 250 million tons of carbon and create 10 million green jobs.”¹⁸² At the One Planet Summit, the initiative received a pledge of more than U.S. \$14.2 billion in additional funding over the next 10 years.¹⁸³

One important aspect for the redistribution of opportunities is how the lack of human security hampers social mobility. In addition to the abovementioned initiatives, an initiative that contributes directly to the redistribution of opportunities in countries most in need—the “New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States” launched, on November 30, 2011, at the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness hosted in Busan, South Korea—represents a landmark effort to re-envision the relationship between conflict-affected states, development partners, and civil society.¹⁸⁴ A key aspect of this particular “New Deal” was to place conflict-affected governments at the center of determining root causes of conflict and developing solutions, and this approach is still considered a best practice today. However, the fact remains that these nations often lack the resources to address these issues themselves. Therefore, it is vital that aid efforts, particularly Official Development Assistance (ODA), be protected and maintained during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The latest available data

show that a record U.S. \$76 billion in net bilateral ODA went to fragile contexts in 2018, and in extremely fragile contexts, ODA amounted to 11.5 times the level of foreign direct investment (FDI) and 2.5 times the amount of remittances.¹⁸⁵ Continued regular consultations between donors and host governments and other local stakeholders in fragile regions will help to ensure more sustainable solutions, which offer a greater chance for equity and overall progress in conflict-affected areas of the world.

Networked and Inclusive Multilateralism

The new social contract and the new global deal can be advanced only through an ambitious global approach to governance that connects, engages, and empowers a larger, more diverse, and representative set of actors, including but also beyond the state, for global problem-solving. Networked and inclusive multilateralism, going beyond classic intergovernmentalism—but in line with and furthering the core goals of the UN Charter—provides a platform and framework to carry out a new global deal (operational plan) in the service of establishing a new social contract (vision).

Since his speech at the General Assembly's Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Meeting, on September 21, 2020, the Secretary General has emphasized on various occasions the need for networked multilateralism, in which “the United Nations family, international financial institutions, regional organizations, trading blocs and others work together more closely and more effectively.”¹⁸⁶ While observing the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, on April 24, 2021, he called again for more “inclusive multilateralism that draws on civil society, business, local and regional authorities and others, and shares power more broadly and fairly.”¹⁸⁷ This concept builds on the global partnership for development framework conceived in 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit as Millennium Development Goal 8 (*Develop a global partnership for development*) and then again, in 2015, as Sustainable Development Goal 17 (*Revitalize the*

global partnership for sustainable development). The ten UN General Assembly resolutions “Towards global partnerships” adopted from 2002 to 2019 have also emphasized that “efforts to meet the challenges of globalization could benefit from enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners.”¹⁸⁸

Networked and inclusive multilateralism is not an alien concept among policymakers, scholars, and public intellectuals. Researchers Anne-Marie Slaughter and Gordon LaForge see networked and inclusive multilateralism as a multidimensional concept that emphasizes human interconnectedness and suggests a paradigm shift from the state-centric international world order to one where myriad actors, beyond nation-states (especially beyond traditional major powers), can collaboratively share and implement solutions to complex problems.¹⁸⁹ In recent years, this concept has been interrogated and promoted in various forms by the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance, Independent Commission on Multilateralism, The Elders, Club de Madrid, the Coalition for the UN We Need, and Together First, among many others.¹⁹⁰ They all emphasized the need for alliances between state and non-state actors—or “smart coalitions”—to respond as a “people-centred and -driven multilateralism” to transnational challenges calling for a stronger sense of global community, and greater global solidarity and responsibility.¹⁹¹

This interrelational worldview operates with starting assumptions about human interconnectedness that can serve to strengthen multilateralism. Largely because of the universal impact of COVID-19, these approaches are increasingly aligned with the reasoning of a growing number of people. Theories and philosophies embracing this approach date back centuries. Whether it is the practices of numerous indigenous traditions, the spiritual underpinnings of faith traditions, or the modern practice of cultural expressions, there is likely much to be gained from a deeper understanding of these approaches. Historically, the idea of human interconnectedness, where nothing can be seen in isolation, dovetails with the African philosophy Ubuntu, which through the expression

The UN Secretary-General's call for networked and inclusive multilateralism is, in many ways, a reaction to a multipolar or post-polar era where power is increasingly diffused.

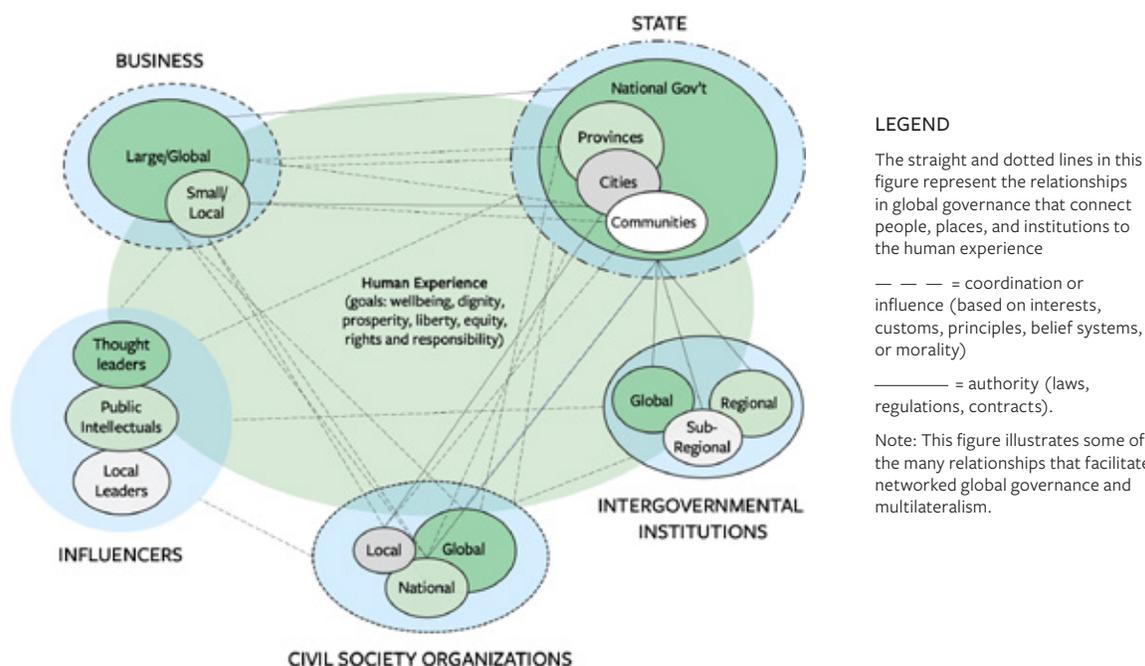
“umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” translates as “I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am.”¹⁹² Coined in the 1990s, following the political instability triggered by the Zimbabwe’s liberation war and by South Africa’s apartheid, Ubuntu shares the belief that all humans are connected, and one’s growth is dependent on the progression of others.¹⁹³ In connection with Amartya Sen’s capability theory (a moral framework by which capabilities represent the freedoms that people have to achieve their potential),¹⁹⁴ philosopher Drucilla Cornell has argued that Ubuntu represents the “freedom to be together in a way that enhances everyone’s capability to transform themselves in their society.”¹⁹⁵ In the same spirit as Ubuntu, notions of human interconnectedness, solidarity, and mutual responsibility are an integral part of many of the world’s various religious teachings.¹⁹⁶ These principles should sit at the heart of a new networked and inclusive multilateralism.

This philosophical wisdom can inform the evolving concept of governance, which, since the post-Cold War period, has become increasingly

transnationalized, leading to the proliferation of multi-actor and multilevel governance networks.¹⁹⁷ The UN Secretary-General’s call for networked and inclusive multilateralism is, in many ways, a reaction to a multipolar or post-polar era where power is increasingly diffused and no one nation-state, international institution, or other actor dominates, and where governance of global affairs has become more complex and multi-faceted (see figure 3.1).¹⁹⁸ Addressing transnational challenges—whether, climate change, growing inequalities, violent conflict, cyber-attacks, pandemics, or cross-border economic shocks—requires multi-stakeholder and inclusive solutions. However, this process of inclusive co-creation depends on the emergence of a new kind of multilateral diplomacy where policy discussions begin to move increasingly from a competitive zero-sum or lowest common denominator framework toward more collaborative solutions-oriented negotiations.¹⁹⁹

In the past, international power was held by a relatively small number of mainly western states, but over the past two decades, the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and other emerging economies have become increasingly influential in global politics.²⁰⁰ The BRIC countries include over 40 percent of the world’s population and exert, at different levels of governance, considerable political and economic influence.²⁰¹ At the national level, the emerging “disaggregation of the state” into subnational jurisdictions, and separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers, have facilitated the development of trans-governmental networks that operate across borders and support the work of international organizations.²⁰² Examples of government networks include the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network, Pharmaceutical Inspection Cooperation Scheme, and International Organization of Securities Commissions—all facilitating networking between participating countries’ authorities.²⁰³ Regional organizations have also contributed political support, financial resources, and technical expertise to global problem-solving. Where regional organizations are weak, cross-border networks of civil society organizations, academia, experts, practitioners,

Figure 3.1: Networked and inclusive multilateralism



Source: Paula Torrez, Cristina Petcu, and William Durch.

and policymakers are sometimes able to share expertise and support cooperation initiatives, even in the absence of support from national governments (such as in the case of North-to-South and South-to-South Cooperation).²⁰⁴

We need to collectively craft a new culture and machinery of multilateralism that is inclusive, that is networked, that responds to the needs of people and planet, and that is accountable and delivers for all. — *María Fernanda Espinosa, President of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly*

Source: Espinosa María Fernanda, *Fulfilling the Promise of the UN75 Declaration* (2021).

States continue to be the bedrock of global governance but, over the past few decades, power and influence have increasingly been acquired by non-state actors, such as civil society and the business community. In 2020, the combined market value of the top five tech

companies (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft) was over U.S. \$7 trillion, more than the GDP of Japan.²⁰⁵ Leveraging the private sector’s potential for supporting the implementation of internationally-agreed global agendas is not new to the UN. The UN Global Compact has grown from thirty-three business participants at its inception in 2000 to over 12,000 in 2021.²⁰⁶ These businesses, but also many other public-private partnerships, if properly designed and held to adequate transparency standards, have the potential to enhance governance in many spheres and advance the UN’s goals (particularly, the Sustainable Development Goals). Additionally, civil society organizations have increasingly been a driving force for progressive global systemic change—including by shaping such global frameworks as the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Together, international organizations, governments, ethical businesses, and civil society are forming multi-stakeholder (or public-private)

partnerships for mobilizing knowledge, expertise, and resources to bridge global, multilateral policy and local action, as well as to deliver global public goods.

Delivering *the future we want* will not come from “polarized member states or politicized UN secretariats.”²⁰⁷ It will rather result from collaborations between international civil servants, Member States, and progressive networks of non-state actors—including scholars, academics, media, businesses, philanthropies, and other stakeholders. In this spirit, the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations must update their rules of engagement with non-state actors, to facilitate networked and inclusive multilateralism. There is no dearth of institutional innovation ideas that can help build inclusive multilateralism. For instance, the Call for Inclusive Global Governance, released in April 2021 by over 150 civil society organizations worldwide, provides three recommendations for promoting greater inclusion and participation of civil society at the UN: first, the creation of a formal instrument—a World Citizens’ Initiative—to enable individual citizens to influence the UN’s work; second, a UN Parliamentary Assembly to allow for the inclusion of elected representatives in agenda-setting and decision-making at the UN; and third, the appointment of a UN Civil Society Envoy to support greater civil society engagement at the UN.²⁰⁸ What is needed now is enlightened leadership, combined with a well-designed strategy for reform (see section V), to channel these ideas in support of a more interlinked and participatory global governance system.

The future UN will entail more networked and inclusive multilateralism, where different actors and constituencies play a greater role in delivering global public goods. Civil society partnerships are essential in the realization of these goals following the *Our Common Agenda* report. — participant speaking at the *Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration Expert Series*, March 18, 2021

Source: Coalition for the UN We Need, Stimson Center et al. *Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration Expert Series. Experts Roundtable 2* (March 18, 2020).

Modern global cooperation, which contributes to effective transnational problem-solving, will only be achieved by involving both state and non-state actors, including women, youth, and marginalized communities. Networked and inclusive multilateralism is a framework for harnessing skillfully the ideas, partnerships, and capabilities of national governmental actors, international organizations, the business community, and civil society for tackling global challenges and creating new opportunities for all peoples and nations.

* *

As outlined above, a moral consensus is slowly emerging worldwide in support of the UN Secretary-General’s vision for recasting the fundamental relationship between governing authorities and those who they serve, reaching from the global to the local level and including, beyond states, other relevant stakeholders from civil society and the business community. The long-term ambition is nothing less than a “new social contract” that overcomes current global inequalities, injustices, and insecurity.

To accelerate the realization of this vision as the world comes to grips with the COVID-19 pandemic, demands for an operational “new global deal” are growing louder, emphasizing a more dynamic United Nations system, with the ability to facilitate in the near-term a green and inclusive recovery, and to ensure the delivery of essential global public goods. At the same time, the UN and its Member States alone cannot bring such a multi-faceted and costly global program to fruition. Instead, what is needed is a new form and approach to multilateralism that shuns exclusion and manages to leverage the potential contributions of all relevant stakeholders, while amplifying their voices. Though its full realization faces many hurdles, the foundations for such an endeavor are manifested in the ambition and foresight of the UN75 Declaration’s commitments, and it is incumbent on all of us to work for their achievement.

IV: UN75 Declaration Stocktaking and Proposed Innovations

“The UN75 Declaration represents the start of a worldwide conversation and process, rather than an endpoint, for global governance innovation and renewal.”

— UN75 Declaration Co-Facilitators, H.E. Ambassador Alya Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of The State of Qatar to the United Nations, and H.E. Ambassador Anna Karin Eneström, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations (correspondence with the authors, June 17, 2020)

The UN75 Declaration defined twelve distinct, high-level political commitments in critical areas of global governance. For each of those commitments, the overviews in this section look at major implementation milestones and recent achievements (“Examining the Landscape”); at shortcomings in current international responses, including major spoilers (“Assessing Challenges and Gaps”); and at potential new or renewed international operational tools, norms, legal, policy, or institutional changes that could help advance each commitment (“Beyond UN75: Rising to the Challenge”).

The overviews also draw upon the current literature, the outcomes of a series of global and

regional policy dialogues begun by the Stimson Center and its collaborators in 2018, and the results of the UN75 forums conducted in 2020 with civil society, scholars, policymakers, and the business community.²⁰⁹ Each overview also informed the discussions and benefited from feedback during the six-part “Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration’s Promise” Expert Series organized between February and May 2021 (see figure 4.1) to take stock of progress toward realizing the Declaration’s commitments; to introduce alternative institutional, policy, legal, and normative measures for improving implementation; and to consider steps for achieving such reforms.²¹⁰

Figure 4.1: “Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration’s Promise” expert series calendar



We will leave no one behind



UN75 Declaration commitment #1:

The next 10 years, which have been designated as the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, will be the most critical of our generation. It is even more important as we build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. We need a strong United Nations development system and effective collaboration between the United Nations and the international financial institutions. We support the Secretary-General's efforts and measures in this regard. We are determined to implement the 2030 Agenda in full and on time. There is no alternative. The peoples have to be at the centre of all our efforts. Particular attention must be given to people in vulnerable situations. Humanitarian access to those in need of assistance must be granted without obstacle or delay and in line with the humanitarian principles. We are guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human right treaties and instruments and will ensure the human rights and fundamental freedoms of everyone.²¹¹

Examining the Landscape

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's promise to "leave no one behind" places a spotlight on refugees, disabled persons, marginalized women and youth, and other vulnerable groups. It reflects a commitment from UN Member States to "eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole."²¹² Although the world is not on track, overall, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (as elaborated below), significant progress was recorded for several goals prior to the onset of COVID-19, including in the fight against extreme poverty and access to clean water. In the two decades preceding the pandemic, around 54 million people moved out of extreme poverty annually.²¹³ Moreover, the number of people accessing safely managed drinking water globally increased from 61 percent in 2000 to 71 percent in 2017.²¹⁴ Despite these advances, much work remains during the Decade of Action (2021-2030),

especially due to the immense challenges the pandemic has created.

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

With only a short decade remaining, and notwithstanding a few noteworthy exceptions, the world is off course to live up to the 2030 Agenda's vision. The challenges facing the SDGs' implementation have been manifold, including a lack of reliable public and private sector financing, limited measurement of progress and accountability, and inconsistencies in communication and outreach.²¹⁵ Such obstacles have impeded the fight against poverty, aid for persons with disabilities, access to technology, and provision of humanitarian assistance to those in greatest need.

From early 2020, the worldwide humanitarian and economic crisis triggered by COVID-19 further set back efforts to meet the SDGs, while increasing inequality within and between countries. The World Bank estimates that 119 to 124 million people were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020, which could rise to 163 million in 2021.²¹⁶ At the current pace, the global extreme poverty rate could reach 6.7 to 7 percent of world population by 2030, some three to four percentage points beyond pre-COVID forecasts.²¹⁷

Those most marginalized and living in poverty—around 80 percent of the world's poorest, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development—reside in fragile states and face conflict, environmental degradation, and slow economic growth.²¹⁸ Over 79.5 million people remained displaced by war, persecution, and conflict as 2019 ended, the highest level recorded since these statistics have been collected, and during the same year, more than 20,000 civilians were killed or injured in ten conflict-affected countries.²¹⁹

Women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, having endured a global spike in gender-based violence, as well as a loss of essential healthcare.²²⁰ Often facing discrimination and other injustices only amplified by lockdown restrictions, millions more women and children are anticipated in the coming months to be pushed into extreme poverty.²²¹ In addition, it is estimated that, in 2021, almost

one in two children under the age of five will face severe malnutrition.²²² Children suffering from malnutrition or stunting have a greater chance at dying from common infections. Even prior to the pandemic, 6.9 percent of children under five suffered from wasting (a condition caused by limited nutrition intake and infection), exceeding the SDGs' 5 percent target for 2025 and the 3 percent target for 2030.²²³

Furthermore, the coronavirus has made access to healthcare and other essential services more difficult for persons with disabilities. Affected adversely by low-quality and often difficult to access healthcare, the disabled are receiving less support than during pre-pandemic times.²²⁴ They are extremely vulnerable as 46 percent are aged sixty and over, facing greater risk of severe health consequences if infected by COVID-19 given their underlying health conditions. Without proper up-to-date information, persons with disabilities are more likely to bear the brunt of the pandemic's effects.²²⁵

Achieving the SDGs' target for inclusive education was already proving difficult prior to the pandemic, with over 200 million children projected to be out of school in 2030. COVID-19-related school closures kept almost 90 percent of students (approximately 1.57 billion) away from school premises for most of the past year.²²⁶ Remote learning has become increasingly important, but around 500 million children and youth currently do not have or cannot afford that option.²²⁷ Although remote learning is mitigating the impact of school closures, the lack of access to technology, such as the internet and computers, for many demonstrates once again the immense digital divide both within and between countries and regions. In 2019, for example, almost 87 percent of households in Europe had internet access, compared to only 18 percent in Africa.²²⁸ Lack of access to digital technology in the face of its current, growing importance to business and education alike is yet a further illustration of the pandemic's differential impact on the poorest and most marginalized communities.

The coronavirus pandemic has also increased the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance by almost 40 percent since December 2019, and it is estimated that 235 million people

COVID-19-related school closures kept almost 90% of students (approximately 1.57 billion) away from school premises for most of the past year.

worldwide will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2021.²²⁹ Humanitarian aid budget shortfalls are worsening as the pandemic continues to affect more lives and, to a large extent, further setback SDG achievements. Around 4.6 million cases of COVID-19 were identified in crisis zones or refugee hosting countries, where the virus has killed over 100,000 people.²³⁰ These groups, including refugees and internally displaced persons, are more vulnerable to the virus as they often inhabit crowded environments without proper access to basic services and healthcare. They also suffer due to travel restrictions and border closures, as well as other difficulties in accessing humanitarian supply chains.²³¹ In some countries, such as Afghanistan, it is estimated that, in the coming months, about half of the country's population will need humanitarian assistance simply to survive as a consequence of the pandemic.²³² Moreover, some 55 countries and territories accounting for approximately 135 million acutely food-insecure people pre-pandemic, all require urgent humanitarian aid to cope with the additional socioeconomic pressures brought by the pandemic.²³³

Beyond UN75: Rising to the challenge

Realistic yet imaginative global governance reforms are needed in the fight against poverty, in aiding persons with disabilities, improving

access to technology, providing humanitarian assistance to those in greatest need, and to advance other priorities central to the massive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The following recommendations outline two possible innovations to meet those needs, consistent with the spirit of UN75 and the Secretary-General's Global Conversation.

Enhance the United Nations' High-Level Political Forum to better track progress and facilitate implementation of the SDGs for the benefit of all societal groups in all countries.

To better help all countries meet their SDG commitments over the coming decade, the UN's High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) needs to enhance its structure and review process, including by addressing the "lack of visible preparation, substantial debate and relevant follow-up."²³⁴ The upgraded forum could better assess progress of the Sustainable Development Goals, encourage greater participation from UN agencies, and facilitate the contributions of relevant partner institutions beyond the United Nations, including from global civil society.²³⁵ The HLPF currently lacks proper "preparatory processes," which can preclude Member States from discussing and arriving at policy decisions that benefit, first and foremost, the most vulnerable persons.²³⁶ In this regard, the HLPF could afford greater attention to the 2030 Agenda's earliest foundational principles, including "Leave No One Behind," translating these principles into greater action in support of people suffering from extreme poverty or requiring urgently needed humanitarian aid.²³⁷ The forum should further recognize the role of regional cooperation and coordination to better address transnational challenges and facilitate sustained development efforts at the regional and grassroots levels.²³⁸ Due to the lasting effects of COVID-19, the co-facilitators for the ECOSOC and HLPF review negotiations are conducting a thorough and result-oriented review of the HLPF to ensure its functionality in implementing the 2030 Agenda.²³⁹ Over the coming two-to-three years, in particular, the High-Level Political Forum must do its part in defining and advancing a durable, green, and broad-based COVID-19 recovery roadmap, centered on the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

Create a G20+ to accelerate the Decade of Action for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through enhanced coordination by G20 members with the UN system, Bretton Woods institutions, and related bodies.

Beyond improving the High-Level Political Forum, ECOSOC, and other internal workings of the UN, leaving no one behind and advancing the 2030 Agenda entails enhancing collaboration between the UN development system, the international financial institutions, and informal groupings of powerful countries, such as the G20.²⁴⁰ For the proposed "G20+," the main policy focus of the G20 would remain on critical issues for the world economy (including reducing volatility in the hyperconnected global economy), but it should also establish stronger links with formal intergovernmental organizations for implementation and follow-through, especially to ensure holistic and effective post-COVID-19 green recovery that, simultaneously, lessens acute inequality within and between nations. Operationally, this could involve assembling the G20 at the Heads of State level every two years at UN Headquarters, timed to coincide with the gathering of all world leaders at the start of the UN General Assembly. A modest (possibly virtual) secretariat should be created for the G20 to give it such presence and promote greater policy continuity and better-integrated economic, social, and environmental approaches to international problems by G20 governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, and the business community.

* *

The forthcoming report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, offers a unique opportunity to advance fresh ideas, including those outlined above, to improve the global governance architecture for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda's "midpoint review," at the July 2023 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum, provides another chance to overhaul the HLPF and its relations with the UN development system, international financial institutions, G20, and other international bodies, with an eye to ensuring that no one is left behind as the world fully rebounds from the pandemic.

We will protect our planet



UN75 Declaration commitment #2:

*Without more determined action we will continue to impoverish our planet with less biodiversity and fewer natural resources. We will see more environmental threats and climate-related challenges, including natural disasters, drought, desertification, food shortages, water scarcity, wildfires, sea level rise and depletion of the oceans. The time to act is now. Many countries, not least small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries are already among the most affected. We need to adapt to the circumstances and take transformative measures. We have a historic opportunity to build back better and greener. We need to immediately curb greenhouse gas emissions and achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns in line with applicable State commitments to the Paris Agreement and in line with the 2030 Agenda. This cannot wait.*²⁴¹

Examining the Landscape

In order to protect the planet and safeguard all forms of life that depend on a habitable ecosystem, the international community must urgently address the climate crisis. Specifically, governments and corporations must significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and in a systematic fashion, create environmentally sustainable economic practices. The global push towards combating climate change began in the 1980s and accelerated, in 1992, with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, signed by 196 states and the European Union. The Framework Convention established the annual Conference of Parties (COP) to assess and advance progress in meeting its goals.²⁴² The Kyoto Protocol, originally signed by all UN Member States in 1997, entered into force in 2005 with ratification by a subset of signatories, informing several COP negotiations.²⁴³ Responding, in part, to the Protocol's lack of global coverage, the Paris Climate Agreement, introduced in 2015, represents a major step forward in terms of GHG reduction, including nationally determined contributions (NDCs) adopted by all countries, and a shared commitment to hold global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.²⁴⁴ At

the same time, all UN Member States endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals—including detailed targets to facilitate climate action (SDG 13), conserve life below water (SDG 14), and preserve life on land (SDG 15).²⁴⁵ For safeguarding biodiversity, three past agreements are the Convention on Biodiversity (1992), the Cartagena Protocol (2000), and the Nagoya Protocol (2010).²⁴⁶ Additionally, the dramatic social measures taken as a result of the COVID-19 crisis are credited for the remarkable estimated 6 percent GHG emission decrease of 2020, yet this is still less than the 7.6 percent annual reduction required to keep global temperature rise under the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target.²⁴⁷

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

Fully implementing the Paris Climate Agreement faces multiple complex challenges. UN Member State NDCs are insufficient in both ambition and follow-through to achieve the 1.5°C goal.²⁴⁸ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has predicted that, even with full NDCs implementation, global temperature will increase by 3-4°C by 2100.²⁴⁹ To reach the 1.5°C target, the international community must emit 45 percent less carbon dioxide than 2010 levels by 2030—and then achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.²⁵⁰ Failing that, humanity can expect more extreme weather, accelerated sea level rise, ocean acidification, and mass species extinction.²⁵¹

Potent global methane emissions and concentration have also increased over the last ten years with methane in the atmosphere reaching record levels in 2020.²⁵² After carbon dioxide, methane is global warming's second biggest contributor, accounting for 20 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.²⁵³ The largest methane emission sources are agricultural waste and fossil fuel (oil and gas) production, distribution, and consumption.²⁵⁴ Methane is considered a “short-lived climate pollutant” (SLCP), which means it has a shorter atmospheric lifespan, but it is extremely harmful while airborne.²⁵⁵ Other SLCPs include black carbon from diesel engine exhaust, emissions from gas stoves and fossil fueled power plants, tropospheric ozone, and hydrofluorocarbon refrigerants—pollutants

that together account for 45 percent of total global warming.²⁵⁶

Another major environmental challenge is protecting biodiversity. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services 2019 report, human activity has impacted 75 percent of terrestrial environments (and 66 percent of ocean environments), threatening about 25 percent of animal and plant species (around one million in total) with extinction.²⁵⁷ Biodiversity loss is heavily connected to the climate change fight, as species' and ecosystem health is linked to keeping the global temperature below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.²⁵⁸

In addition to fighting climate action and halting biodiversity loss, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development deals with other pivotal environmental concerns, including desertification (SDG 15, target 3), deforestation (SDG 15, target 2), and air pollution (SDG 11, target 6). It is estimated that the world averages a score of just above 80 out of 100 for achieving Goal 13, but looking at several specific SDG 13 targets and their associated indicators, several numbers jump out as worrisome (see figure 4.2).²⁵⁹ For example, the 2020

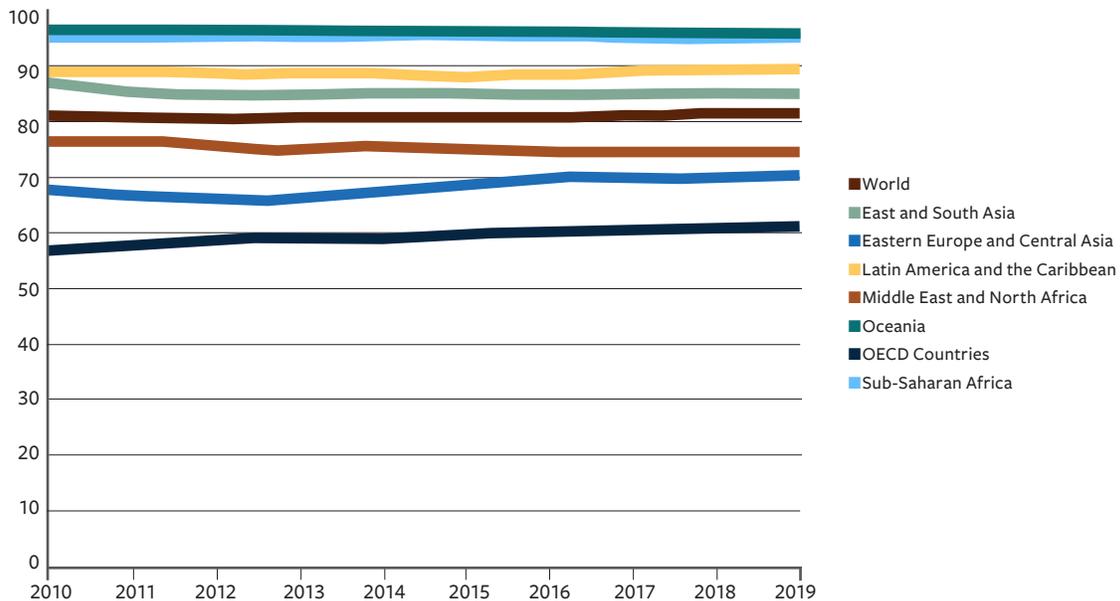
Indian Voluntary National Review stated that India is ranked in the top ten states for climate change performance, however the country's air pollution levels remain among the world's unhealthiest.²⁶⁰ While some UN Member States have made progress towards SDG 13 targets and indicators, those emitting the most GHGs have not, including several powerful G20 countries.²⁶¹ According to the SDG Index, the states with the highest overall score in terms of achieving the SDGs as a whole have significant work to do to achieve Goal 13.²⁶²

Beyond UN75: Rising to the Challenge

Given what is at stake as precious time passes, the issues presented require ambitious, near-term action. Among the changes needed, two global governance innovation recommendations are:

*Define one or more global climate adaptation goals and gauge their achievement in terms of measurable improvements in local human security; finance support for adaptation from revenues formerly directed to fossil fuel subsidies.*²⁶³

Figure 4.2: Sustainable Development Goal 13 progress by region



Source: Sachs Jeffrey et al., *The Sustainable Development Report 2020. The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19 (2020)*, 32.

While the Paris Agreement allows Member States to create their own climate change mitigation goals, the only global goal is to keep the temperature 1.5°C below pre-industrial levels. Since climate change is occurring now and accelerating, it is imperative that the international community places maximum energy and resources into adapting to intensifying climate conditions. For example, a climate adaptation goal could entail strengthening natural disaster early warning systems.²⁶⁴ Measurable progress toward meeting this goal could include “more people surviving severe weather events, increased access to water and food in drought-affected regions, or improved response times to disasters.”²⁶⁵ Another goal could seek improved dryland agricultural crop production, as agricultural waste is a leading emitter of SLCPs, and a third could center on biodiversity, such as protecting mangrove forests or strengthening water resource management.²⁶⁶ To acquire the requisite funding for these initiatives, fossil fuel subsidies should be steadily phased out and the savings rerouted towards such newly agreed adaptation goals by both the public and private sectors.

Invest in Short-Lived Climate Pollutant reduction technologies as a major step for higher-emitting Member States to achieve SDG 13.

A worldwide SLCP emission reduction plan would be an immediate step to reduce major damage wrought by climate change. In its 2018 report, the IPCC called for a 35 percent reduction in black carbon and methane emissions by 2050 relative to 2010 levels, which, if fully implemented, could move the global community closer to achieving the Paris Agreement and SDG 13 targets by a reduction of about 0.6°C.²⁶⁷ Reducing methane emissions has the added benefit of improving air and water quality, as well as improving conditions for biodiversity to regenerate and flourish, as per targets detailed in SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).²⁶⁸ Lastly, decreasing SLCP emissions will help ease the pace of arctic warming, potentially staving off an additional global temperature rise of half a degree Celsius by 2050.²⁶⁹

Since climate change is occurring now and accelerating, it is imperative that the international community places maximum energy and resources into adapting to intensifying climate conditions.

* *

Upcoming UN forums to combat climate change are an opportune time to negotiate at least one new climate adaptation goal and act on short-term pollutant reduction. In November 2021, the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change—a crucial stocktaking of the Paris Climate Agreement—is planned in Glasgow, United Kingdom. The recent UN Biodiversity Conference, in May 2021, negotiations toward a UN Environment Assembly High-Level Political Declaration on the Environment commemorating “UNEP +50” (February 2022), and the “Stockholm +50 Declaration” provide three other multilateral platforms for enhancing overall climate governance.

We will promote peace and prevent conflicts



UN75 Declaration commitment #3: *The ongoing armed conflicts and threats against international peace and security must be urgently resolved through peaceful means. We reiterate the importance of abiding by the Charter, principles of international law and relevant resolutions of the Security Council. International arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements and their architectures need to be upheld. The United Nations must better address all forms and domains of threats. Terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism are serious threats to international peace and security. The diplomatic toolbox of the Charter needs to be used to its full potential, including preventive diplomacy and mediation. We call upon the Secretary-General to enhance this toolbox to prevent the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of hostilities on land, at sea, in space and in cyberspace. We fully support and promote the Secretary-General's initiative for a global ceasefire. International humanitarian law must be fully respected. To build, keep and sustain peace is now one of the main responsibilities of the United Nations.*²⁷⁰

Examining the landscape

The Cold War's end offered a unique opportunity for the United Nations to re-evaluate its conflict management toolbox. Traditional

UN peacekeeping shifted to multidimensional missions aimed at laying the foundation for sustainable peace, as introduced in the 1992 *Agenda for Peace*.²⁷¹ The UN's ineffectiveness in preventing the Rwandan genocide, in 1994, and the Srebrenica massacre, in 1995, precipitated the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect principle, in 2005, to address mass atrocities. In response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the UN enacted a robust legal framework to deter and counter terrorism, followed by institutional strengthening, in 2017, with the establishment of a UN Office of Counter-Terrorism headed by an Under-Secretary-General. Over the past decade, the UN's conceptual shift to "sustaining peace" was a policy breakthrough aimed at prioritizing conflict prevention and its recurrence in the aftermath of deadly conflict. Peacekeeping has also undergone a series of developments (see box 4.1). In 2018, the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative was endorsed, in the form of a declaration, by 154 Member States pledging support for making operations more efficient and impactful.²⁷² Multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations also marked an important milestone in January 2021: the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which outlaws the creation, ownership, and development of nuclear weapons, a step forward despite its as yet constrained membership.

Box 4.1: Significant events in UN peacekeeping reform in the past decade

- **2015** – Report of the Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations.
- **2017** – UN Secretary-General initiates peace and security Secretariat reforms.
- **2018** – High-Level Meeting and Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace; Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) declaration.
- **2020** – The UN75 Declaration calls on the Secretary-General to enhance the UN's "[diplomatic] toolbox to prevent the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of hostilities on land, at sea, in space and in cyberspace."
- **2021** – Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) introduced further to the 2018 A4P declaration.

Source: United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations* (2020), para. 9.

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

Although recent decades have brought significant improvements to UN conflict management efforts, indicators suggest recent backsliding in peace and security worldwide. In 2019, global peacefulness declined for the ninth time in twelve years, and the economic cost of conflict for the ten most fragile countries ranged from 23.5 to 59.1 percent of their national gross domestic product.²⁷³ Moreover, in the same year, it is estimated that 45.7 million people suffered from displacement within their country, and over 76,000 died due to conflict and violence.²⁷⁴ This frail and deadly situation is further heightened by non-traditional security threats, such as climate-induced migration, human trafficking, and pandemic disease. By 2050, up to 143 million climate migrants are projected to emerge from three regions alone (sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America), putting more pressure on economic, political, and security systems, especially in countries unprepared to absorb high migration flows.²⁷⁵

Once established, peace is also difficult to maintain. Nearly half of all conflicts show signs of recurrence, and once reignited, take place between the same belligerents 35 percent of the time.²⁷⁶ Meaningful progress is slow, as 82 percent of fragile and conflict-affected countries are off-track to meet their Sustainable Development Goals.²⁷⁷ SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions is proving itself arduous to measure as approximately eighteen of twenty-four indicators are classified as “tier II,” meaning that data on indicator progression are not regularly produced by countries.²⁷⁸ Moreover, the World Bank Statistical Capacity Index shows that fragile and conflict-affected countries have lower statistical capacity—at an index of 51.3—compared to, for example, the BRIC countries, which have an average index of 80, highlighting a fundamental issue in terms of capacity to collect and analyze data.²⁷⁹

Efforts towards conflict mitigation and prevention have been further undermined by geopolitical rifts and UN Security Council vetoes, slowing the UN’s ability to prevent and respond to conflict and atrocities. The underlying challenge remains the prevalence of two powerful

established ideological worldviews within the UN: one which works towards the expansion of global governance and democracy-building in developing nations, and another which values sovereignty and non-interference above all, while asserting that violence, atrocities, and human rights abuses should be handled by sovereign nations (rather than international intervention). The division between democracy and authoritarianism is reflected in international trends as well. Last year ranked the lowest in the Global Democracy Index since data collection began in 2006.²⁸⁰ The prevailing embrace of authoritarianism and push against democratic ideals subvert the UN’s mandate by hindering its ability to address humanitarian abuses, avert atrocities, and build inclusive governance necessary to prevent, remedy, and recover from violent conflict.

Meanwhile, major powers continue to inhibit denuclearization and disarmament efforts. For example, while the recent ratification and entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons represents progress by the non-nuclear powers, the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty²⁸¹ has still not entered into force due to lack of support among nuclear powers. Legacy nuclear treaties between the United States and Russia, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, have lapsed without renewal,²⁸² while the United States’ withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (commonly known as the Iran Nuclear Deal) undermined efforts to prevent the rise of a new nuclear power in the Middle East. The specter of nuclear (as well as chemical and biological) weapons proliferation will remain a chief concern for the United Nations as it works to avoid potential cataclysmic events with profound human consequences.

Beyond UN75: Rising to the challenge

In response to these challenges and threats to promoting peace and preventing violent conflicts, and the opportunity presented by the UN75 Declaration’s call for enhancing the Secretary-General’s conflict management toolbox, two recommendations are:

An empowered Democratic Peacebuilding Council ... would allow the Security Council to focus on security issues related to ongoing or imminent conflict.

*Upgrade the UN Peacebuilding Commission into a Democratic Peacebuilding Council.*²⁸³

Violent conflict continues to drive the need for humanitarian action and have devastating human and economic consequences, while non-traditional security risks, including climate change and related migration, further undermine peace and human rights. The changing security landscape requires nimble action, which the Security Council has repeatedly failed to provide. The transformation of the Peacebuilding Commission—presently a subsidiary advisory body to the Security Council and General Assembly—into an empowered Democratic Peacebuilding Council (DPBC), replacing the all-but defunct Trusteeship Council, would allow the Security Council to focus on security issues related to ongoing or imminent conflict, while the DPBC could manage broader security-related issues in fragile states, such as preventing conflict recurrence, human rights abuse, and climate change-induced political instability. Working to help nations recover from conflict by building strong, inclusive, and accountable institutions for sustaining peace (SDG 16), the upgraded Peacebuilding Commission would engage a far greater number of Member States in decision-making and follow-through

than the Security Council. Moreover, a DPBC “Sustaining Peace and Conflict Prevention Audit Tool”—similar to the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review Instrument—would employ early warning conflict indicators for greater early action to prevent conflict outbreak and escalation.²⁸⁴

*Enhance UN Capacity to Support the Responsibility to Prevent.*²⁸⁵

Too often the UN has played a reactive role in managing conflict. With strengthened preventive capacities, the UN could address more effectively the underlying causes of conflict before they trigger immense human suffering. Conflict prevention has been a high priority for several UN Secretaries-General, but their efforts remain modest and insufficient to address the complex, asymmetric nature of contemporary conflicts.²⁸⁶ At the root of many deadly conflicts are underlying political, social, and institutional factors—both national and transitional—that must be clearly understood in all stages of conflict management, especially at the earliest (prevention) stage. Building on the 2014 *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*,²⁸⁷ the UN should consolidate and better act upon its conflict analysis and crisis warning capabilities. Specifically, a new conflict prevention center could be created within the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs to systematize information and analysis, formulate coordinated plans of action, and consult with local authorities, governments, regional organizations, and civil society to undertake expanded conflict and risk analysis. Improved early warning analysis would better inform, first and foremost, decision-making and follow-through actions by the UN Security Council and upgraded Democratic Peacebuilding Council.

* *

The Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* report offers a promising opportunity to further recommend improvements to UN peacekeeping, peacemaking, and prevention capabilities. Similarly, these proposals could be considered, in 2022, in the Secretary-General’s interim report on the review of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture.²⁸⁸

We will abide by international law and ensure justice



UN75 Declaration commitment

#4: *The purposes and principles of the Charter and international law remain timeless, universal and an indispensable foundation for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. We will abide by the international agreements we have entered into and the commitments we have made. We will continue to promote respect for democracy and human rights and to enhance democratic governance and the rule of law by strengthening transparent and accountable governance and independent judicial institutions.*²⁸⁹

Examining the landscape

The United Nations Charter has been the cornerstone of the contemporary international legal order for the past seventy-five years. Respect for the international rule of law ties together Member States and is crucial for an effective multilateral order. As the commitment in the Declaration for the Commemoration of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations on this issue shows, such respect for law also reflects a commitment to promote respect for democracy and human rights, notably through a growing canon of international human rights treaties. While selective compliance with international law is not a new phenomenon, the strong “anti-multilateralist” sentiments of the past years threaten to erode the rules-based global order and the instruments that help uphold the rule of law, human rights, and democratic governance worldwide.²⁹⁰

Despite the existence of institutions that promote the rule of law at regional and international levels, such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC), the World Trade Organization’s dispute settlement mechanism, the European Court of Human Rights, and the ECOWAS Court of Justice, the road to advancing this UN75 Declaration commitment is rocky. Withdrawals from treaties and organizations (and threats to do so), blocking of dispute settlement mechanisms, and pervasive basic human rights violations and other breaches of international law all undermine the international rule of law.

Nonetheless, other recent developments reflect progress. Since starting operations in 2002, the ICC has issued thirty-five arrest warrants and heard thirty cases.²⁹¹ Another milestone is the adoption, in 2015, of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies).²⁹² Amongst the targets to achieve within SDG 16, rule of law and access to justice (16.3), two indicators to assess progress are: proportion of victims of violence in the previous twelve months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms, and unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population. Lastly, in 2019, the French and German Foreign Ministers formed the Alliance for Multilateralism (see box 1.2 in section I), a loose global coalition to uphold rules-based multilateralism in the face of adversity, to counter the nationalist and exclusionary tendencies that had been growing amongst major powers over past years.²⁹³

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

One of the most significant challenges to achieving this commitment is the global rise of anti-multilateralist sentiments and policies. In the U.S., the Trump administration had adopted a “withdrawal doctrine”²⁹⁴ and took steps to leave several multilateral agreements and bodies, including the Paris Agreement, the Iran Nuclear Deal, the UN Human Rights Council, and UNESCO. The administration removed its signature from the Arms Trade Treaty and stated its intention to withdraw from the World Health Organization in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁹⁵ Additionally, the former U.S. administration’s persistent refusal to appoint new members to the WTO Appellate Body rendered the compulsory international trade dispute settlement dysfunctional.²⁹⁶ The successor Biden administration has undone most of these acts or has committed to do so—though with some exceptions, reflecting a more long-term American ambivalence towards international law and institutions. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala’s recent appointment as the WTO’s first female and first African director-general also gives hope that the organization will emerge from its crisis.²⁹⁷

In 2017 and 2019, respectively, Burundi and the Philippines withdrew from the ICC due to their perception of the Court's Western bias. Additionally, certain regions remain under-represented at the ICC because only a few states from these regions are party to the Rome Statute. For example, in Asia, among the countries that have thus far not joined the ICC are China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, and Vietnam.²⁹⁸ In regard to the ICJ, only about seventy Member States have accepted its compulsory jurisdiction in more general terms through the so-called "optional clause" (contained in Article 36, paragraph 2 of the ICJ Statute), preventing the Court from exercising its authority in many cases.²⁹⁹ Multiple international law violations have also contributed to rule of law decline at the international level, including arms transfers to belligerent states despite the Arms Trade Treaty prohibiting arms sales to be used to commit human rights violations.³⁰⁰ Human rights watchdogs have repeatedly called out the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, to no avail.³⁰¹ Lastly, multiple national immigration policies today disregard the 1951 Refugee Convention principles.³⁰²

Ensuring justice in the world is equally a matter of domestic governance as it is of global governance. However, more countries' rule of law declined over the past year than improved.³⁰³ COVID-19 also had a moderately negative impact on Goal 16, due to "disruption of legislative processes and public debates," as well as "the suspension of freedom-of-information laws and transparency policy."³⁰⁴ Measures taken to combat the pandemic often reinforced state authority, including expanded police forces, and in some cases corruption and fraud regarding distribution of essential supplies.³⁰⁵ Additionally, gaps or failures in pandemic responses have allowed armed non-state actors to benefit from the crisis, undermining government legitimacy and rule of law at the national level.³⁰⁶ An erosion of constraints on government powers, threats to fundamental rights, and corruption weaken the rule of law, which is already in jeopardy in times of emergency, such as a global pandemic (see figure 4.3).³⁰⁷ In Africa, it is concerning that out of more than twenty national

elections that were planned in 2020, only five proceeded as scheduled.³⁰⁸ Overall, COVID-19 has affected justice systems and those seeking justice, impacting vulnerable and marginalized groups the most. Finally, the proven, positive correlation between effective rule of law and public health emphasizes the necessity of reinforcing the former in the pandemic response.³⁰⁹

Beyond UN75: Rising to the challenge

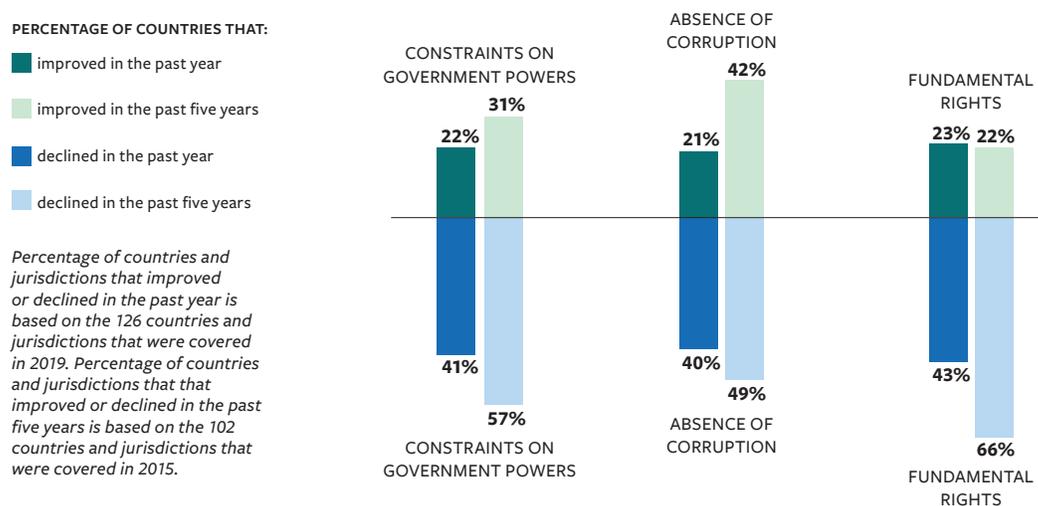
Crucial reforms are needed to strengthen the rule of law both nationally and internationally. The following recommendations can help achieve this commitment and address the above-mentioned challenges.

*Increase universal acceptance of international justice institutions, in particular the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Moreover, increase their enforcement powers, preserve their independence, and enhance their resilience against political pressures.*³¹⁰

International courts are integral to a well-functioning rules-based international order. Boosting their reach and resilience will reinforce the legitimacy of international law. In a political climate with strong anti-multilateralist currents, it is crucial to understand and address states' hesitation and reluctance to accept international court jurisdiction (where these are not obvious and insurmountable) and implement effective solutions to address grievances. An in-depth ICJ study investigating, for instance, the reasons why certain countries have not used or discontinued their acceptance of the ICJ's "optional clause," followed by a global campaign to address their concerns, should aim to improve the court's standing as an authoritative instrument of peaceful dispute settlement. Additionally, understanding why certain regions, such as Asia, are under-represented at the ICC would help strengthen court legitimacy when membership issues are addressed. The global campaign might be met with resistance by some (in particular, powerful) states who do not adhere to the courts. However, many small and medium-sized states may end up being persuaded, to various degrees, to utilize international courts after their concerns have been considered.

Figure 4.3: Percentage improvement or decline in rule of law index factors

Fundamental rights, constraints on government powers, and absence of corruption show greatest decline
WJP Rule of Law Index 2020



Source: World Justice Project, *The Twin Crises of Public Health and the Rule of Law* (2020).

*The ICC, the Human Rights Council (HRC), and the UN Security Council should strengthen their working ties to reinforce their respective authority and capabilities.*³¹¹

The ICC, the Human Rights Council, and the UN Security Council should strengthen their working ties, as the absence of such reform undermines the ICC’s and HRC’s authority, capabilities, and overall relevance. Several measures can be taken to achieve these ends, such as adopting a protocol to guide UN Security Council deliberations regarding the potential referral of a situation to the ICC, allowing sanctions to support ICC measures to reinforce Security Council support, and encouraging recurring dialogue between the UN Security Council, Human Rights Council, and the ICC to respond to large-scale human rights abuses. It is important to reinforce cooperation between these authoritative bodies to, in turn, improve overall compliance with international law by Member States. A reinforcement of the rule of law at the national level should be expected, as States would be further incentivized to uphold human rights. Finally, establishing a modern and well-resourced International Judicial Training Institute (IJTI), dedicated to the education of judges that sit in international courts, would

enhance current international court capacities.³¹² Specifically, it would consolidate knowledge and ethics at both national and international levels, and contribute to strengthening impartiality and legitimacy. It would further create an additional platform for human rights discussions between the above-mentioned UN bodies. Certain states might oppose the creation of an IJTI, due to the already perceived Western bias of the international courts. In fact, overcoming such biases, and critically revisiting the origins and normative foundations of the international legal order, should be part and parcel of the mandate of such an Institute, contributing to a new, truly global ethic of rules-based governance.

* *

These recommendations should be featured in the UN Secretary-General’s upcoming *Our Common Agenda* report. Additionally, the forthcoming (July 2021) High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will provide a platform for discussions related to strengthening multilateralism and the international rule of law. Specifically, the forum will discuss progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 16, a crucial goal for advancing the UN75 Declaration commitment on abiding by international law and ensuring justice.

We will place women and girls at the centre



UN75 Declaration Commitment

#5: *Conflicts will not be resolved, and sustainable development will not occur, without the equal and active participation of women at all levels. Human rights can never be fully upheld unless they are also enjoyed by all women and girls. Persistent gender inequalities and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence, have deprived us of a more just and better world. We will accelerate action to achieve gender equality, women's participation and the empowerment of women and girls in all domains.*³¹³

Examining the landscape

Women's equal and meaningful participation across society is not only a fundamental human right but also brings positive change to communities. For example, higher women's employment rates and equal participation in education are shown to boost economic growth.³¹⁴ During the pandemic, countries led by women have shown significantly better responses to COVID-19.³¹⁵ In addition, women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding and peace negotiations increases the quality and durability of peace, with more sustainable peace agreements.³¹⁶ Many gender-related breakthroughs at the international

level have also generated more ambitious commitments toward creating a more equal world for all women and girls (see box 4.2). The past decade, for instance, has seen an increase in support for gender equality legislation, with up to 274 legal and regulatory reforms enacted by 131 different countries.³¹⁷ In 2017, Secretary-General António Guterres also initiated the UN-wide Strategy on Gender Parity aimed at achieving system-wide gender parity by 2028. By 2019, the organization had already succeeded in reaching gender parity at the senior echelon.³¹⁸ And at the grassroots, movements like #MeToo, #NiUnaMenos, and Women's Marches worldwide have also shown the power of collective action on women's rights, shining a light on issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, equal pay, and sexual harassment.

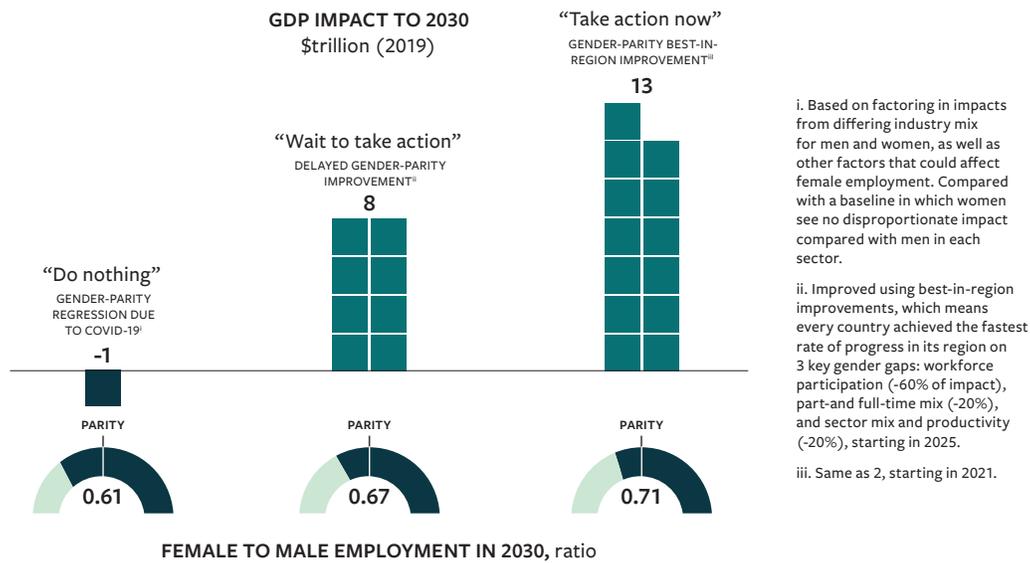
Assessing Challenges and Gaps

Despite evidence that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls—in all their diversity—benefits everyone, the world is still behind in achieving this goal, and at current rates of reform, the international community is unlikely to close the gender gap within the next hundred years.³¹⁹ The UN Secretary-General has underscored gender inequality, calling it the “greatest single challenge to human rights around the world.”³²⁰

Box 4.2: Major international achievements for women's rights throughout the years

- **1946** – Establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).
- **1979** – Adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- **1995** – Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- **2000** – Adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS).
- **2010** – Creation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
- **2015** – Adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes Sustainable Development Goal 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **2020** – Adoption of the Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Figure 4.4: Advancing gender parity could increase GDP by \$13 trillion in 2030



Worldwide, gender disparities in the labor market were evident before the pandemic, with 30 percent fewer women in the labor force than men.³²¹ Out of those in the labor force, women are paid, on average, 16 percent less than men.³²² Pandemic job loss has since disproportionately affected women, in part due to the closing of childcare facilities and schools, which has forced mothers to stay home to take care of their children, often without paid leave or unemployment benefits.³²³ Advancing women’s economic empowerment and gender equality can have a positive effect on economic growth and create a multiplier effect, whereby women’s financial prosperity also benefits society at large (by some estimates as much as U.S. \$13 trillion through 2030, see figure 4.4).³²⁴

Women’s meaningful participation in leadership roles and decision-making also continues to lag. Just four out of 198 countries, or 2 percent, have achieved gender parity in their national legislature (Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia, and the United Arab Emirates).³²⁵ Globally, women hold only one in four parliamentary seats or workplace leadership positions,³²⁶ and the pandemic has put businesses at greater risk of losing women in senior-level positions.³²⁷

Persistently high rates of violence against women are another urgent concern. Globally, one in three women has experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.³²⁸ A “shadow pandemic”³²⁹ of violence against women has paralleled the coronavirus pandemic, especially in countries with stay-at-home measures in place.³³⁰ This prompted the UN Secretary General to appeal for a “domestic violence ceasefire” in the early weeks of the lockdown.³³¹ However, the number of UN agencies engaging in this area has declined since 2014 (from twenty-four prioritizing violence against women and girls to seventeen at present).³³²

Girls’ access to quality education in safe environments also remains a key gender equality challenge. In 2020, an estimated thirty-two million primary school age girls were out-of-school compared to twenty-seven million boys; and 31 percent of young women globally were not in employment, education, or training, compared to 14 percent of young men.³³³ More concerning, an estimated 20 million girls will not return to school following the pandemic,³³⁴ which can lead to a higher risk of child marriage, unwanted pregnancies, sexual exploitation, and forced labor.³³⁵ Indeed, quality

education for girls can prevent a lifetime of economic disadvantage and the risk of falling into poverty.

Beyond UN75: Rising to the challenge

In working to place women and girls at the center of global governance, two recommendations designed to better equip the UN system and international community at large are:

*Strengthen financial flows for greater gender equality and women’s empowerment through a feminist funding ecosystem approach.*³³⁶

Financial investment in women’s rights organizations is inadequate. With global military expenditures officially estimated at almost U.S. \$2 trillion in 2020,³³⁷ and a further estimated U.S. \$427 billion lost each year to international corporate tax abuse and private tax evasion,³³⁸ it is political will, rather than public and private financial resources, that is lacking. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development³³⁹ serves as a good start to gender mainstreaming and incorporating gender-responsive budgeting in development finance, but the international community must go further. An estimated 99 percent of international aid does not reach women’s rights organizations directly.³⁴⁰ A higher percentage (at least, initially, by a factor of two or three) of international development funding should be earmarked for these organizations.³⁴¹ Furthermore, a new “feminist funding ecosystem” approach could reimagine the present power imbalance, currently in favor of public and private donors, by shifting toward a more collaborative decision-making model that accounts far more for the priority needs and ideas identified and driven from within the women’s movement worldwide.³⁴²

Call for the withdrawal of most Member State reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Evidence suggests that women who live in countries with domestic violence laws are less likely (by 7 percent) to experience violence compared to countries without such laws; every year that a country had such legislation in place was associated with a 2 percent annual reduction in the prevalence of domestic violence.³⁴³ This suggests

that international legal frameworks hold weight in changing norms and behavior away from gender-based violence. While CEDAW is legally binding, over one hundred UN Member States’ reservations allow ratifying countries to avoid changing national laws to comply with the convention if incompatible with religious, legal, cultural, or societal practices. This number is significantly higher than for other frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (which considers reservations incompatible when two-thirds of the States Parties to the Convention object to them).³⁴⁴ Governments should either agree to abolish certain existing reservations to CEDAW or, in limited circumstances, provide more compelling arguments for maintaining specific reservations—particularly with respect to Article 2 on abolishing discriminatory laws and customs, and Article 16 on gender equality in family life.³⁴⁵ Stronger legal bearing on preventing and combating violence against women and on domestic violence would compel Member States to enact national policies to provide better legal protection for women and girls, as well as change detrimental social norms and behavior. For this admittedly uphill battle to succeed, local activists and grassroots organizations will need to join hands with international non-governmental organizations and the media to pressure governments to rescind current CEDAW reservations. Recent developments in Singapore and Tunisia, among other countries, indicate that change in favor of gender equality and women’s rights is possible.

* *

The Secretary-General’s forthcoming *Our Common Agenda* report offers a unique opportunity to shine a light on issues of gender discrimination across the United Nations’ agenda and to consider proposals, such as those presented above, on what the world body can do better to help empower women and girls. Moreover, at the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2022, leaders worldwide will once again assess their countries’ progress and share good practices in placing women and girls—in all their diversity—at the center of national development strategies.

We will build trust



UN75 Declaration commitment #6:

Growing inequality within and among countries is jeopardizing our efforts to ensure the future we want. Inequality leads to mistrust between countries and to people's mistrust in institutions of governance. It also contributes to acts of xenophobia, racism, intolerance, hate speech and disinformation. We condemn all such acts. We will address the root causes of inequalities, including violence, human rights abuses, corruption, marginalization, discrimination in all its forms, poverty and exclusion, as well as lack of education and employment. It is our responsibility.³⁴⁶

Examining the landscape

Trust and transparency are foundational values for effective and inclusive global governance, as well as for peaceful and economically beneficial relations between and within countries. Recent multilateral initiatives to improve transparency, such as the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, the Automatic Exchange of Information standard, the Addis Tax Initiative, and the Platform for Collaboration on Tax, are tools that enhance the application of these values.³⁴⁷ Nevertheless, in January 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted “deep and global mistrust” as one of the main threats to global progress and prosperity.³⁴⁸ Partly in response, the High-Level Panel on Access to Information underscored, in September 2020, the positive impact of guaranteed access to information on health, education, and justice, and of building more trust and bridging inequalities.³⁴⁹ In addition, the report of the High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda, launched in February 2021, included several recommendations to stem illicit financial practices in the global economy.³⁵⁰

Significant parts of the world's population do retain trust in international institutions, despite waning confidence in national institutions. For instance, most (97 percent) of the 1.5 million participants in the Secretary-General's

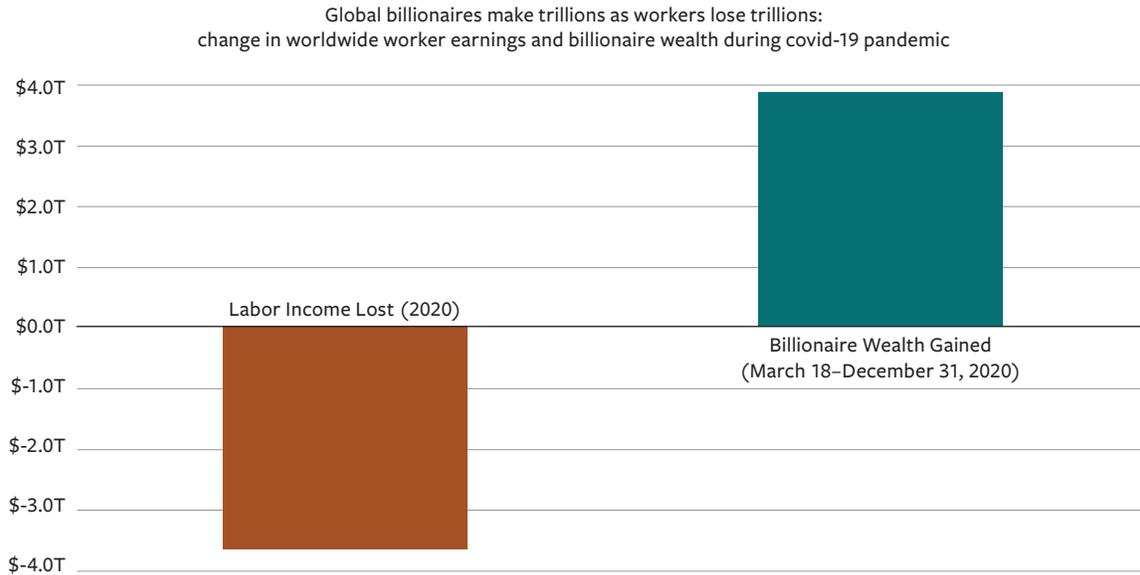
UN75 global survey considered international cooperation to be “essential” (52 percent), “very important” (34 percent), or “fairly important” (11 percent) for addressing global challenges,³⁵¹ and 74 percent of respondents agreed that “the UN is an essential organization for helping to tackle the biggest issues the world faces today.”³⁵²

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

The UN75 Declaration stresses that growing inequality between and within countries fuels xenophobia, racism, intolerance, hate speech, and disinformation, while access to public services, such as universal healthcare, can be a great equalizer, and is crucial for more equal societies.³⁵³ Despite a shrinking global economy caused by the pandemic, thirteen billionaires saw their wealth increase by 500 percent, and 270 individuals became billionaires in 2020.³⁵⁴ Income inequality within countries has risen in recent years, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated economic disparities (see figure 4.5).³⁵⁵ The 2020 Sustainable Development Report underscores the pandemic's negative impact on Sustainable Development Goal 10, on reducing inequality in countries with low safety nets, largely due to the disproportionate health and economic impacts of the coronavirus on vulnerable groups, including refugees working in the informal economy.³⁵⁶

As the international community faces a global public health crisis, the correlation between inequality and poor health intensifies. Medical research has shown that those who live in countries experiencing high inequality register lower life expectancy and other health complications, including more cancer-related deaths and heart failure. Country disparities regarding COVID-19 death rates and employment loss point to societal failures that public institutions, first and foremost, need to address.³⁵⁷ Moreover, ethnic minorities and women have suffered disproportionately more from the pandemic, in terms of poor health and loss of employment opportunities.³⁵⁸

Inequality and political trust are also inextricably linked, as citizens surveyed in more equal countries tend to trust their governments more.³⁵⁹ The Edelman Trust Barometer reports,

Figure 4.5: Increasing wealth inequality during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: [Inequality.org](https://inequality.org), *Get the Facts on Inequality and Covid-19* (2021).

from a twenty-eight-country survey, that trust in government institutions eroded in diverse parts of the world in 2020, with the two greatest economies, the U.S. and China, suffering the greatest decreases.³⁶⁰ Misinformation and disinformation accompanied the coronavirus outbreak, including directly from heads of state who expressed misleading narratives counter to their own scientific advisors (purportedly to advance narrow political goals). Conversely, trust in leadership proved to contribute to an efficient pandemic response, as witnessed in New Zealand and Australia.³⁶¹ Furthermore, a UNESCO survey assessing the Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 16.10 (on the number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory, and/or policy guarantees for public access to information) concluded that despite 127 Member States having Access to Information laws, they are not fully implemented.³⁶² The international community, governments, and social media companies alike must address the rise of social media as a tool for purveying misinformation.³⁶³

Corruption in the public sector—often fueled by the private sector—is a major source of mistrust

and contributes to an increasing lack of confidence in government leaders. Public officials prioritizing private gain, at the expense of the collective good, not only divert government revenue from crucial public expenditure projects, but their actions can also lead to the distortion of narratives for ideological or personal ends, fueling further mistrust.³⁶⁴ Tax evasion and illicit financial flows are forms of corruption that also increase inequality within and between countries by preventing the financing of essential public services in rich and poor nations alike. It is estimated that illicit outflows of funds can total more than U.S. \$1 trillion annually.³⁶⁵ Developing regions lose ten times more to corruption than they receive in foreign aid, and trillions of dollars (nearly 5 percent of the global gross domestic product) is paid annually in bribes.³⁶⁶ Corruption spreads through society and has been linked to various issues, including criminal behavior and failure to address crucial societal concerns.³⁶⁷

Beyond UN75: Rising to the challenge

The following policy recommendations offer concrete steps for building trust, in accordance with this UN75 Declaration commitment:

*UN Member States should establish an International Anti-Corruption Court as a means to build trust in governments, reduce inequality, improve governance efficacy, and decrease security risks.*³⁶⁸

Despite the prevalence of widely adopted international legal frameworks against corruption, this dishonest and illegal behavior remains a major challenge to tackling inequality and mistrust in governments around the world.³⁶⁹ An international enforcement mechanism is needed to better implement existing shared international legal norms and to address the global, pervasive nature of corruption. An International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC) would enable international prosecution of corruption cases only where national jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to prosecute, as is the approach of the International Criminal Court, which is focused on the prosecution of the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. In countries that struggle with pervasive corruption, leaders are often personally involved in graft, exercise state control over the judiciary, police, and media, rig elections which might unseat them, and prosecute individuals who investigate corruption. It is, therefore, imperative that an international investigative and prosecutorial body, which is not dependent only upon good-faith compliance, be established. The proposed IACC would serve as a court of last resort, following the principle of complementarity.³⁷⁰

*Governments should counter the growing “disinfodemic,” with a view to conformity with international human rights (notably freedom of expression, including access to information and privacy rights) and basic monitoring and evaluation standards.*³⁷¹

Disinformation undermines trust, which is a further impediment to reducing inequality between and within countries and to providing public goods both nationally and globally. Initiatives to counter the current “disinfodemic” worldwide, with the support of the United Nations and other international organizations, include: (i) strengthening government information sharing systems to ensure transparency and accountability; (ii) fact-checking and storing in publicly available data-bases official government information; and (iii)

An International Anti-Corruption Court would enable international prosecution of corruption cases only where national jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to prosecute.

the development and implementation of policies and proposals for access to legislation and other official government information. In addition, international institutions should increase technical assistance to governments seeking to further develop regulatory frameworks and policies, in line with international freedom of expression and privacy standards. Targeted public and donor partner investments in such initiatives are critical, especially when powerful social media tools facilitate the spread of misleading information.

* *

These recommendations are offered for consideration in the Secretary-General’s forthcoming *Our Common Agenda* report. Additionally, the July 2021 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development provides a timely platform to address inequality, corruption, and trust in public institutions, given the upcoming forum’s special consideration of Sustainable Development Goals 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

We will improve digital cooperation



UN75 Declaration #7: *Digital technologies have profoundly transformed society. They offer unprecedented opportunities and new challenges. When improperly or maliciously used, they can fuel divisions within and between countries, increase insecurity, undermine human rights and exacerbate inequality. Shaping a shared vision on digital cooperation and a digital future that show the full potential for beneficial technology usage, and addressing digital trust and security, must continue to be a priority as our world is now more than ever relying on digital tools for connectivity and socioeconomic prosperity. Digital technologies have the potential to accelerate the realization of the 2030 Agenda. We must ensure safe and affordable digital access for all. The United Nations can provide a platform for all stakeholders to participate in such deliberations.*³⁷²

Examining the Landscape

In the past decade, international groups have formed to strengthen digital cooperation, including the multi-stakeholder Global Forum on Cyber Expertise, created in 2015,³⁷³ and the independent Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace, which released, in 2019, a report recommending cyberspace norms and principles for governments and non-state actors.³⁷⁴

The United Nations also recorded progress in this area. Since 2004, when the UN established the first Governmental Group of Experts (GGE) on Advancing Responsible State Behavior in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security, the UN has had GGEs working on these issues, with the 2015 GGE report being adopted by the General Assembly. In 2018, the UN invited other stakeholders into the discussion of threats, norms, and capacity building with the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, mandated to further develop the rules, norms, and principles listed in UN General Assembly resolution 73/27. The OEWG issued its final report in 2021.³⁷⁵

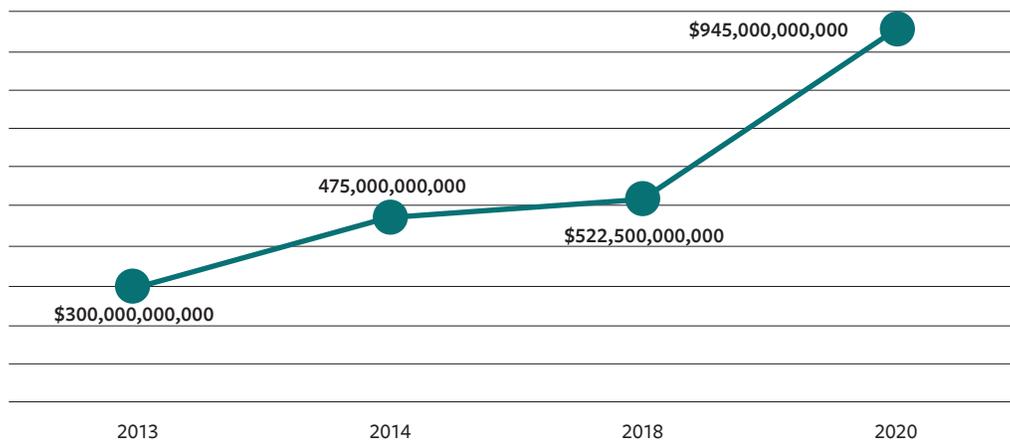
Moreover, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres created the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, which brought together governments, civil society, the private sector, and technical experts to discuss digital cooperation.³⁷⁶ The Panel's final report in 2019 (complemented by a 2020 implementation roadmap of the UN Secretary-General) presented eleven recommendations covering issues ranging from global digital cooperation to economic inclusivity and human rights.³⁷⁷ Most recently, the Alliance for Affordable Internet, a multi-stakeholder coalition of governments, civil society organizations, and businesses, released, in March 2020, its Rural Broadband Policy Framework.³⁷⁸ As detailed in some of the aforementioned initiatives and other international and regional efforts, several challenges and gaps merit particular attention when seeking to improve digital cooperation.

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

An initial major challenge concerns the lack of accountability and the limited collaborative efforts on cybersecurity regulations, policies, and enforcement. In 2020, 130 major cyber-attacks occurred, sixty-eight of which were perpetrated by or against government officials or institutions.³⁷⁹ For example, in September 2020, an alleged Russian hacker phishing scheme targeted NATO and NATO-allied states, creating backdoor entry into NATO systems.³⁸⁰ The perpetrators will likely never be convicted because of the current scarcity of international tools and frameworks for investigating and prosecuting state actors engaged in cyberattacks.

These attacks affect not only national security but also the world economy. Since 2018, cybercrime has cost the world more than an estimated U.S. \$1 trillion (see figure 4.6).³⁸¹ Cybercrime increasingly includes economic espionage, intellectual property theft, and ransomware.³⁸² While these attacks are concentrated in developed states, where digital connectivity is widely available, the costly cybercrime threat grows worldwide.

While many countries have enacted various cybercrime laws, attribution can be a difficult, time-intensive effort, and competing priorities

Figure 4.6: Estimated average cost of cybercrime

Source: Smith, Zhanna Makelos and Euginia Lostri, *The Hidden Cost of Cybercrime* (2020).

can lead to significant enforcement gaps.³⁸³ Moreover, while there are tentative international rules governing state and non-state actors' behavior in cyberspace, non-state actors have no incentive to follow them, whereas states can be met with repercussions.³⁸⁴ There has been no international legal codification of norms and principles and no major international legal innovation since the 2001 Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, to which fewer than seventy countries adhere.³⁸⁵ Yet the borderless and sophisticated nature of cyberthreats requires greater international cooperation to enhance cybersecurity to combat these threats.³⁸⁶ Some recent UN General Assembly resolutions on cyberspace demonstrate the different approaches of the U.S. and Russia. The Russian approach was more inclusive of a broader group of stakeholders, and promoted the concept of "cyber-sovereignty," while the U.S. called for adherence to previous GGE recommendations and for creating a new experts group.³⁸⁷ Despite disagreements, all 193 Member States of the OEWG agreed unanimously on their Final Report in March 2021, which included cyberspace norms for state behavior.³⁸⁸

Another related challenge is digital misinformation. Terrorists, violent extremists, but also political leaders and other influencers are utilizing the internet and social media platforms to spread hate, incite violence, and orchestrate terror attacks.³⁸⁹ Both state and non-state actors have also used disinformation campaigns to manipulate

elections and undermine political participation and trust in government institutions.³⁹⁰ While some major social media companies have begun flagging misleading information and falsehoods from nefarious actors taking advantage of the pandemic, greater efforts are needed to effectively stymie misinformation before it proliferates further.³⁹¹ Most likely, a factor which has slowed the response taken by these platforms is the profitability of spreading misinformation. According to the Global Disinformation Index, ads on misinformation websites made U.S. \$235 million in 2019.³⁹² Almost U.S. \$87 million of that amount came from Google ads.³⁹³ The responsibility for policing misinformation needs further discussion and legal clarification.

The digital divide has also been a major challenge driving inequality both within and between countries. As of 2019, 4 billion people (about 51 percent of the global population) had internet access,³⁹⁴ representing 86 percent of people in developed states, 54 percent of small-island developing states, 44 percent in developing states, and 27 percent in land-locked developing states.³⁹⁵ Developing states' limited internet access has driven many recent aspects of inequality, especially during the pandemic,³⁹⁶ including in terms of productivity while working from home, education quality, social programs, and financial services.³⁹⁷ Around 463 million school-aged children worldwide have been unable to access proper education during

The market forces driving many new digital technologies have challenging social implications.

the pandemic,³⁹⁸ and, according to UNICEF, only 6 percent of low-income country children and young people (25 years old or younger) can access the internet at home, in stark contrast to the 87 percent with access based in high-income countries.³⁹⁹ By closing the digital divide, millions of disconnected people can obtain greater (virtual) access to education, healthcare, knowledge of sexual and reproductive rights, economic opportunities, and civic empowerment, all while securing the digital and data literacy skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly technology dependent world.⁴⁰⁰

Finally, while digital technology and the innovation it produces have tremendous potential, the market forces driving many of the new technologies in this space have challenging social implications. From psycho-social wellbeing—especially of children—to the commodification of the users themselves, we must be cautious with the unquestioned adoption of new technologies around the world.

Beyond UN75: Rising to the Challenge

The following policy recommendations offer concrete steps for improved global digital cooperation:

*Pursue initiatives to accelerate access to broadband connectivity, especially in rural areas, in the post-COVID world.*⁴⁰¹

The majority of people who currently lack internet access live in rural areas, developing states, or both.⁴⁰² With the internet becoming more widely used during the pandemic for work and education, more people need to access it. An important new initiative led by the International

Telecommunication Union, along with digital infrastructure companies and service providers, aims to accelerate access to broadband connectivity for everyone in the post-COVID world by bringing together relevant public and private sector stakeholders.⁴⁰³ It also intends to support a repository of good practices and case studies that can be used by policymakers, regulators, and other stakeholders to deploy resources for and remove barriers to expanding internet access worldwide.

*Strengthen cybersecurity through regional cybercrime centers, international cybercrime expert rosters, and a global campaign to promote end-user cyber hygiene.*⁴⁰⁴

While two major international police organizations (Interpol and Europol) have cybercrime divisions, globally coordinated efforts to fight cybercrime are still lacking. Many UN Member States are further ill-equipped to implement cybercrime laws, national cybersecurity strategies, or computer emergency response teams.⁴⁰⁵ The proposed new global anti-cybercrime network would consist of regional centers that share technology and expertise, including through international cybercrime expert rosters, with less capable states. Both governments and the technology industry should further launch an international campaign to promote end-user “cyber hygiene,” defined as educating people on internet best safety practices.⁴⁰⁶ Promotion of such hygiene will ensure that individual user data are less likely to become compromised in a cyber-attack.

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The UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for implementing the recommendations of his High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation remains essential to advancing the UN75 Declaration. At the same time, the World Economic Forum offers an international platform for informal, multi-stakeholder deliberations on technology governance, cybersecurity, and the digital economy. Intergovernmental fora, including (but not limited to) the UN Cybercrime Ad Hoc Committee, and multi-stakeholder mechanisms, such as the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise, can further serve as useful venues to advance international cybercrime cooperation, including the above-mentioned recommendations.

We will upgrade the United Nations



UN75 Declaration commitment #8:

The world of today is very different from what it was when the United Nations was created 75 years ago. There are more countries, more people, more challenges but also more solutions. Our working methods need to keep pace and adapt. We support the ongoing reforms by the Secretary-General. They are creating a more agile, effective and accountable organization that can deliver better in the field and adapt to global challenges. We reiterate our call for reforms of three of the principal organs of the United Nations. We commit to instill new life in the discussions on the reform of the Security Council and continue the work to revitalize the General Assembly and strengthen the Economic and Social Council. The review of the peacebuilding architecture has our full support.⁴⁰⁷

Examining the landscape

In order to more effectively address today's global problems, the revitalization of the United Nations' principal organs is essential. Both the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform (IGN) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (AHWG) have improved the fundamental working methods of the two bodies, including by holding Security Council and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) elections six months before elected members would assume their responsibilities. Similarly, the President, Vice Presidents, and Chairs of the Main Committees of the General Assembly are now elected at least three months in advance of the new session.⁴⁰⁸ These measures allow for enhanced coordination and improved institutional memory of these three organs. In recent years, an annual review of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development has occurred under the auspices of ECOSOC through the High-level Political Forum. Additionally, UN Secretary-General António Guterres' three pillars of reform have, since 2017, strengthened management authorities of UN Country Teams and improved coherence in delivering

the 2030 Agenda across the UN development system. The Secretary-General also shifted the management paradigm by rebuilding and refocusing two departments—the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and Department of Operational Support—to support managers in decentralizing decision-making authority, and restructured the peace and security pillar by investing the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) with new conflict prevention capabilities and peacebuilding authority, while aiming to improve coherence between DPPA and the Department of Peace Operations.⁴⁰⁹

Past major UN anniversaries have engendered important reforms. The 2005 UN World Summit Outcome (UN60), for instance, adopted the Responsibility to Protect principle and set into motion negotiations toward creating the Peacebuilding Commission and transitioning the UN Commission on Human Rights into a more empowered Human Rights Council. The Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review mechanism, in turn, has allowed governments to self-evaluate, improve their human rights records, and increase their dialogue with non-state actors.⁴¹⁰ The 2005 World Summit Outcome further established ECOSOC's Development Cooperation Forum, which has continued to provide coherent policy guidance for the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, among others.

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

While UN reform fatigue is pervasive at headquarters in New York, long-standing structural problems, political deadlock, and legitimacy and accountability issues with the UN's main organs remain unresolved. In a January 2021 IGN meeting, President of the General Assembly Volkan Bozkır emphasized that it was “crucial that any reforms to the [Security] Council reflect the realities of the 21st Century.”⁴¹¹ Issues at the heart of Security Council reform include improved regional representation, veto power abuse and accountability, and greater participation of non-state and subnational bodies in its deliberations. Currently, the five permanent members, known as the “P5” (China, France,

The UN Charter begins with the words “We the peoples,” yet UN General Assembly decision-making remains exclusively intergovernmental in nature.

Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), represent only 26 percent of the world’s population and just 3 percent of UN membership.⁴¹² The P5 also hold over 95 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons.⁴¹³ Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East are without permanent representation despite the majority of issues debated in the Council being related to these regions.⁴¹⁴ Moreover, P5 countries have issued 293 vetoes since the UN’s founding.⁴¹⁵ Russia, for instance, has vetoed resolutions to address the Syria conflict fourteen times,⁴¹⁶ and the United States has frequently issued vetoes over the Palestine-Israel conflict. Although the UNSC has strengthened its relationship with civil society through ad-hoc “Arria-formula” meetings,⁴¹⁷ more formalized channels for dialogue with non-state actors remain central to modernizing the Council.

The UN Charter begins with the words “We the peoples,” yet UN General Assembly (UNGA) decision-making remains exclusively intergovernmental in nature. Member States are represented primarily by their national executive branch, giving democratically-elected legislators limited opportunities to contribute to UN policy-making.⁴¹⁸ Furthermore, though civil society participation has increased across

the UN system, engagement has been somewhat selective.⁴¹⁹ The same cluster of issues discussed at length at the first AHWG meetings (on the role and authority of the UNGA, the role of the UNGA in the selection of the Secretary-General, and working methods), then adopted in the group’s first draft resolution in September 2006, are still discussed today. A positive development was adding, in the 2009 draft resolution, a fourth cluster on Strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly.⁴²⁰ To keep the UNGA resolutions’ implementation deficit from growing further, many Member States prefer to focus on the implementation of existing resolutions rather than adopting new ones.⁴²¹ In order to move past repetitive discourses, the AHWG must streamline its agenda and closely monitor progress toward implementation. Even more importantly, it must diversify who is invited to participate in its discussions.

ECOSOC has seen more than a dozen reform proposals since its inception, some of which resulted in the adoption of resolutions (32/197 in 1977 and 50/227 in 1996) aimed at expanding membership and improving the effectiveness of ECOSOC procedures.⁴²² Yet, this organ’s last significant improvement occurred in 2007 with the creation of the Development Cooperation Forum. Any hope of rising to the 2030 Agenda challenge must involve a revitalization of ECOSOC, especially in the aftermath of COVID-19. Overlapping jurisdictions, lack of coordination, and decentralized financing are factors in ECOSOC’s limited progress.⁴²³ While UNGA resolution 68/1 on strengthening ECOSOC emphasizes avoiding duplication and increasing the harmonization and coordination of its committees’ agendas, significant progress remains to be seen since its latest review in 2018.⁴²⁴ Thinking through ECOSOC’s complementarity and overall division-of-labor vis-à-vis the G20, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund also requires further spade work. The ongoing reviews of ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)⁴²⁵ taking place in 2021 provide opportunities to improve the interaction between the two,

enhance HLPF's Voluntary National Review process, and undertake a bold restructuring of ECOSOC.⁴²⁶ Such measures should be informed by the 2021 High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum discussions which focused on “advancing international development cooperation that reduces risk, enables recovery and builds resilience in the COVID-19 period and beyond.”⁴²⁷

Beyond UN75: Rising to the challenge

In order to restore legitimacy and strengthen some of the UN's vital organs, structural updates are essential. Two recommendations to address current UN system shortfalls are:

*Make the UN Security Council more effective by expanding its membership, updating its working methods, and giving greater voice to non-state actors in its deliberations.*⁴²⁸

Further expansion of Council membership is necessary to reflect better present-day political realities and UN membership, which have both changed significantly since the Council's last reform in 1965. Ideas such as the “8 + 8 + 8” model would better serve the interests of all countries and regions.⁴²⁹ This model would expand the Council to twenty-four members, with eight permanent members (Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia, the U.S., the African Union, and a joint European seat⁴³⁰); eight members having eight-year renewable terms; and eight members having two-year, non-renewable terms. Regarding working methods, giving the P5 the option to cast a dissenting vote without rising to the level of nonconurrence—where the veto is invoked—would allow more resolutions to be passed, to the benefit of global peacebuilding efforts. Finally, building on Arria-formula meetings, reforms must include a more formal, structured consultative mechanism for dialogues between the Council and civil society, the private sector, and subnational bodies to promote greater transparency and welcome expertise from field professionals.⁴³¹ The pandemic has slowed IGN progress, with already tough negotiations proving to be even more challenging when having to be conducted remotely.⁴³² Upcoming IGN meetings should address key issues of working methods, the veto,

an enlarged and more representative Council, and the meaningful participation of non-state actors and subnational bodies.

*Address the United Nations' democracy and legitimacy deficits by establishing a United Nations Parliamentary Network (UNPN) as an advisory body to the UN General Assembly.*⁴³³

Building a global democratic participation infrastructure is essential to the UN's future success. First proposed in the 2015 Albright-Gambari Commission report, the UNPN would address democracy and legitimacy deficits by expanding public knowledge and direct participation in the UN's work, promoting transparency, oversight, and accountability. Its participants would be individual members of national and regional parliaments, including from existing parliamentary networks, institutions, and possibly local authorities.⁴³⁴ Currently, the AHWG includes provisions for UNGA cooperation with national and regional members of parliament, and in particular the Inter-Parliamentary Union,⁴³⁵ though resolutions focus primarily on improving working methods. The UNPN could be established as a subsidiary body of the UNGA, without amendment of the UN Charter, through Charter Article 22. As such, the UNPN could be a precursor to a more ambitious UN Parliamentary Assembly.⁴³⁶ In September 2020, the proposed UNPN was deliberated during the UN75 Global Governance Forum,⁴³⁷ where it received strong support from several forum participants.

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Co-facilitators of the AHWG (El Salvador and Slovakia), IGN (Poland and Qatar), and ECOSOC and High-Level Political Forum (Austria and Senegal) must continue to demonstrate strong leadership at upcoming negotiations toward making the UN system more inclusive and representative. In addition, the proposed 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance could serve as a starting point for world leaders to conduct a review of the three bodies and their associated, long-standing parallel track reform negotiations, as well as to consider the above recommendations to fulfill the promises of the UN Charter and the UN75 Declaration.

We will ensure sustainable financing



UN Declaration Commitment #9:

*Realizing our aspirations will require sustainable and predictable funding of the Organization. We will pay our assessed contributions in full and on time. Measures to better ensure this should be explored. We will further enhance transparency, accountability and efficient use of resources. The full and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development is key for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Joint public-private financing plays a central role in our efforts to make the United Nations deliver better on its purposes.*⁴³⁸

Examining the landscape

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires comprehensive (public and private) and robust financing, estimated at between U.S. \$5 trillion and \$7 trillion a year.⁴³⁹ The 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development provides the policy framework to mobilize public and private funding to implement the 2030 Agenda by integrating national and donor frameworks to aid countries in overcoming obstacles to financing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance also was set up to generate long-term private investment for the SDGs.⁴⁴⁰ Private financial institutions have further publicly emphasized their commitment to the SDGs (in particular climate mitigation), although their actual actions and financial contributions are difficult to measure.⁴⁴¹ The United Nations Development Program's SDG Impact Team is employing SDG Bonds to shift more public investment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, by facilitating help from sovereign wealth funds to national governments in fulfilling their SDGs commitments.⁴⁴² Overall, success in financing the SDGs has been mixed (see below), but the UN Peacebuilding Fund mobilized, for the period 2017-2019, a record-setting U.S. \$531 million.⁴⁴³ The Fund supports integrated UN responses to fill peacebuilding gaps, making it

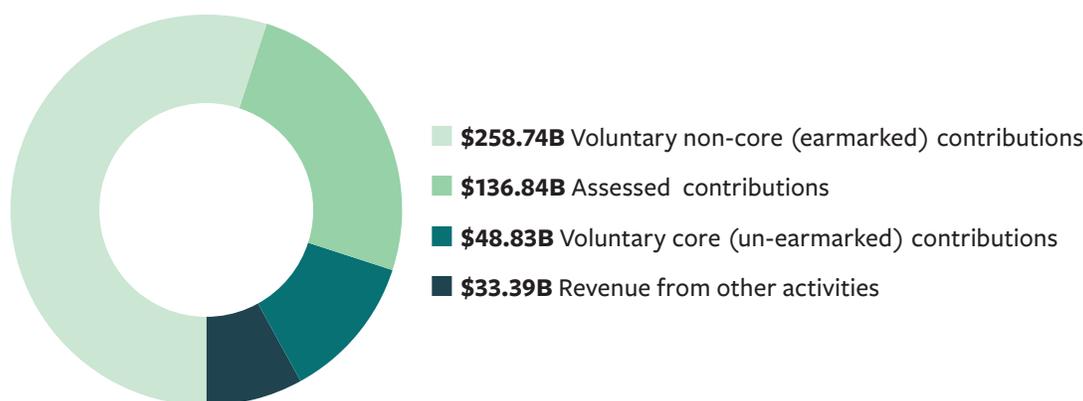
possible, for example, for youth organizations to aid their conflict-affected communities in building just and durable peace.⁴⁴⁴

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

Six years after the launch of the SDGs, limited progress has been made in leveraging public and private funding for the 2030 Agenda, contributing to stagnation and even reversals on several goals.⁴⁴⁵ The annual financing gap to achieve the SDGs (from the projected U.S. \$5-\$7 trillion required annually) is estimated at U.S. \$2.5 trillion, with some U.S. \$1.7 trillion attributed to growing needs and declining resources associated with COVID-19.⁴⁴⁶ Although sustainable financing for the 2030 Agenda also depends on the private sector, the present business model is not conducive to support the business community's contributions, due to the short-term nature of financial markets and lack of tools for in-depth sustainability assessments.⁴⁴⁷

Even some of the most urgent global challenges, such as climate change (the focus of SDG 13), lack sufficient mitigation investments. The international climate finance architecture is complex, and adaptation finance (namely, for helping developing countries to adapt to climate change and build climate resilience) requires more attention.⁴⁴⁸ International adaptation finance almost doubled to U.S. \$35 billion in 2018, yet this accounts for only 5 percent of total climate finance and represents only a fraction of the annual adaptation costs in developing countries.⁴⁴⁹

COVID-19's economic and financial tolls will also be evident for years to come. Gross World Product contracted by 3.3 percent in 2020.⁴⁵⁰ Except for the health sector, financing for the SDGs has largely scaled down during the pandemic.⁴⁵¹ Debt distress was a challenge prior to the pandemic, but the debt build-up over the past year may have further undercut SDGs financing over the medium to long term. The current high (and growing) debt levels in many economies may become unsustainable once interest rates pick up again.⁴⁵² Debt payments on external public debt, for the period 2021-2025, are currently estimated at U.S. \$598 billion for seventy-two vulnerable countries.⁴⁵³ Although the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative

Figure 4.7: United Nations revenue by financing instrument in 2019

Source: UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, *Revenue by Financing Instrument* (2019).

frees up immediate liquidity, this high level of indebtedness in many poor countries is unsustainable for the future. For many developing countries, restructuring their stock of debt has become a practical imperative.⁴⁵⁴

Illicit financial flows (IFFs) also threaten sustainable financing for the SDGs, climate action, peacebuilding, and other UN priorities by starving funds for basic public services. For instance, Africa is estimated to lose around U.S. \$89 billion to illicit capital flight each year, almost equivalent to the combined flows coming into the continent through official development assistance and foreign direct investments.⁴⁵⁵ Avoiding national taxes, IFFs divert funds from priority national development projects needed to build resilience and reduce political stability in some of the most vulnerable countries.

Meanwhile, severe financial shortfalls undermine the UN's work. With chronic cash flow issues due to delayed or withheld Member State assessments, the UN Secretariat faces regular austerity measures.⁴⁵⁶ In October 2020, while introducing the 2021 proposed UN program budget, the Secretary-General warned yet again that "the liquidity crisis has not abated and severely hampers the Organization's ability to fulfil its obligations to the people we serve."⁴⁵⁷ By December 2020, 144 of 193 UN Member States paid their regular budget assessments in full, a number aligning with previous years.⁴⁵⁸ However, despite strict cash conservation measures implemented early in 2020, including the suspension of hiring

through the regular budget, and a spending slowdown caused by the pandemic, the UN's regular budget cash deficit still reached U.S. \$334 million in November 2020.⁴⁵⁹

Equally notable, U.S. contributions for UN peacekeeping, 2019-21, fell on average 2.9 percentage points below the UN's annual assessed rate, resulting in accumulated U.S. arrears of over U.S. \$1 billion (deeply straining the 2020-21 annual UN peacekeeping budget of U.S. \$6.58 billion).⁴⁶⁰ Moreover, the UN's proposed peacebuilding investment of U.S. \$1.5 billion, between 2020 and 2024, in forty countries is deterred by COVID-19 related challenges.⁴⁶¹

Another challenge is posed by the makeup of the UN revenue system. Over the past decade assessed contributions to the UN system have declined, while non-core or earmarked funding increased.⁴⁶² Earmarked contributions to the UN represent the largest financing instrument in the UN system (approximately 54 percent of all UN revenue in 2019, see figure 4.7), but their extensive usage can lead to distortions of program priorities and inhibit the organization in its efforts to deliver on its mandate.⁴⁶³ Over reliance on this type of funding mechanism can run "the risk of turning UN agencies, funds and programs into contractors for bilateral or public-private projects, eroding the multilateral character of the system and undermining democratic governance."⁴⁶⁴ Moreover, donor earmarking contributes to fragmentation and incoherence across the UN system, while weakening accountability.⁴⁶⁵

Beyond UN75: Rising to the Challenge

Two major policy initiatives needed to fill critical UN system financing gaps and support global public goods are:

Establish a new funding compact to finance a sustainable, values-based, and effective UN system.

Over the years, the changing funding patterns of the UN system brought new challenges concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of multilateral action. Earmarking, fragmentation, and bureaucratization have been characterized as “symptoms of failed multilateralism that become visible in the UN bureaucracy.”⁴⁶⁶ Ensuring sustainable UN system financing is, first and foremost, a political problem that requires commensurate solutions (e.g., by increasing trust among states, including between donor and recipient countries), but it is also a management challenge that can be addressed through bureaucratic fixes. Building on the 2019 “funding compact” to financially support the UN development system’s alignment with the 2030 Agenda, a new funding compact is needed for the UN system as a whole that fosters greater sustainability, effectiveness, and a values-based orientation.⁴⁶⁷ It would aim to reduce the tying of both Member State and non-Member State financial contributions to a specific program, project or entity, increase financial transparency across the UN system, and meet the highest standards of due diligence. The new funding compact would help to reduce imbalances where a few large donors dominate the funding landscape and influence decision-making, priorities, and agenda setting—all of which skew implementation across the system.⁴⁶⁸

Extend debt relief for immediate pandemic response and maintaining progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

Debt relief takes three main forms: debt suspension, debt cancellation, and debt swaps. In 2019, half of low-income countries were either “in debt distress” or “at high risk of debt distress” (compared to only 23 percent in 2013).⁴⁶⁹ In response to the pandemic, the G20’s Debt-Service Suspension Initiative allows for temporary debt-service suspensions to bilateral

creditors.⁴⁷⁰ The initiative has helped forty-six of seventy-three eligible countries, in 2020, defer U.S. \$5.7 billion in debt service payments—freeing up funds for governments to fight the pandemic and shore up their economies. The initiative has recently been extended until the end of 2021.⁴⁷¹ With a potential debt crisis still looming, development finance providers must do more to ensure a smooth transition out of the present situation toward a durable and broad-based long-term recovery. Debt suspension, restructuring, and relief from donor organizations should be used as levers to promote greener and more resilient growth in developing countries, especially low-income countries. Debt swaps, in particular, allow indebted countries to divert payment streams toward important development and environmental needs, freeing up resources for health, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development.⁴⁷² New instruments, including debt for climate swaps, should be deployed to repurpose debt in support of the environment and social protection.⁴⁷³ The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, recommends that the Green Climate Fund buys some of the external debt of participating countries, and in exchange, the countries would make payments into a resilience fund to finance green development investments (in lieu of debt-service payments).⁴⁷⁴

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The UN Secretary-General, Canada, and Jamaica convened, in May 2020, the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond. The COVID-19 crisis further accelerates the need to hold the proposed fourth international conference on financing for sustainable development, as stipulated in the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In addition, the repayment of all arrears—with respect to legally assessed due—to the United Nations’ general and peace operations budgets should be prioritized. Finally, consideration should be given to a High-Level Meeting on Financing for Global Governance to discuss innovative public and private financing of reform priorities identified at the proposed 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance (see section V).

We will boost partnerships



UN75 Declaration Commitment #10:

Today's challenges require cooperation not only across borders but also across the whole of society. We have to make

*the United Nations more inclusive and engage with all relevant stakeholders, including regional and sub-regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, academia, and parliamentarians to ensure an effective response to our common challenges.*⁴⁷⁵

Examining the Landscape

As transnational challenges have blurred traditional frontiers of public-private and foreign-domestic policy concerns, the governments' role to address them has been increasingly complemented by direct cooperation with civil society, the private sector, and global and regional organizations. A "global partnership for development" was initially conceived at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 as a way to mobilize resources and promote policy coherence for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.⁴⁷⁶ In 2015, this was further elaborated and updated in Sustainable Development Goal 17 aimed at "strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development."⁴⁷⁷ The scale and complexity of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires cross-sector collaboration, including in building capacities and sharing information and resources.

In recent decades, international partnerships with civil society groups have gained momentum, coinciding with steps to enhance civil society's role in UN decision making. Currently, more than 4,000 non-governmental organizations enjoy UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) consultative status, compared to a mere 700 in 1992.⁴⁷⁸ Active civil society engagement at annual climate talks helped to shape global agendas such as the Paris Climate Agreement⁴⁷⁹ and the adoption and ratification of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.⁴⁸⁰ Multi-stakeholder or public-private partnerships are another mechanism by which

the international community leverages the expertise and efficiency of the private sector to spur economic development and innovation. Between 2000 and 2015, multi-stakeholder agreements increased fourfold,⁴⁸¹ ranging from global health and infrastructure to local crime and piracy prevention. One currently popular public-private partnership aimed at delivering public goods is Gavi, the vaccine alliance (whose core members include the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Gates Foundation), which aims to provide equal access to vaccines for children living in the world's poorest countries.⁴⁸²

Assessing Gaps and Challenges

Despite their contributions to building more just, inclusive, and accountable forms of global governance, civil society organizations (CSOs) continue to face barriers to accessing policy-making and exerting influence across the UN system.⁴⁸³ In 2019, CIVICUS observed that sixteen of nineteen UN Member States on ECOSOC's Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (which grants civil society consultative status) imposed "serious civic space restrictions" within their borders.⁴⁸⁴ As a result, CSOs with dissenting views from several of the countries of concern are often refused consultative status or deferred indefinitely. Not only is access to multilateral bodies difficult, but significant space is usually occupied by resourceful and large CSOs from the Global North in a disproportionate manner compared to their Global South counterparts.

At the regional level, regional organizations are also contributing political support, financial resources, and technical expertise to global problem-solving. But while regional governance is both necessary and complementary to global governance structures, fragmentation between the two persists. Operational cooperation within and between the UN and regional organizations is challenging, and coordination in the field is difficult to execute.⁴⁸⁵ Mandated by UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/279, the UN Secretary-General provided, in 2019, five recommendations to reform the UN development system at the regional

Civil society organizations continue to face barriers to exerting influence across the UN system.

level, including “a unified mechanism for coordination in each region” (also called the “UN regional collaborative platform”).⁴⁸⁶ But while this idea could address basic coordination issues within the UN system at the regional level, stronger partnerships with regional bodies are still needed to ensure more complex policy and operational coherence.⁴⁸⁷ At the political level, the fear of divided responsibility and perceived illegitimacy has placed the UN Security Council at odds with similarly-mandated regional bodies, such as the African Union Peace and Security Council.⁴⁸⁸

South to South and Triangular Industrial Cooperation (SSTIC)—a framework that fosters cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development among countries of the Global South—also provides the benefits of exchanging expertise between actors in developing countries. The India, Brazil, and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation, for instance, implements projects to fight poverty and hunger that can be scaled and replicated in other developing countries.⁴⁸⁹ However, SSTIC continues to be underutilized due to a lack of clear and harmonized national policies, uneven distribution of benefits among participating countries, trade barriers, and geopolitical tensions.⁴⁹⁰

As many countries aspire to achieve a broad-based and green recovery from the pandemic in 2021 and beyond, public-private partnerships will play a key role for expanding digital connectivity and

networked governance.⁴⁹¹ With the pace of digitalization accelerated by COVID-19, private-public partnerships will be critical in boosting internet connectivity. However, such partnerships are imperfect, and have, for example, demonstrated downside risks, from unclear lines of authority owing to their informal structure, to sometimes harmful competition between stakeholders, limited evaluation methods, and “forum shopping.”⁴⁹² On the latter, public or private actors that “shop” forums can quickly reduce their engagement in respective activities or abandon it altogether when a more attractive alternative joint initiative emerges. Profit incentives that private sector partners may look for in a partnership can also lead to low interest in serving vulnerable areas or populations where resources are most needed.⁴⁹³

Development also suffered in 2020 as private sector participation in infrastructure projects dropped by 56 percent, due to investor reluctance and market uncertainty.⁴⁹⁴ Investment trends suggest that, by 2040, the world will face a U.S. \$15 trillion gap between estimated infrastructure needs and available funding.⁴⁹⁵ Public-private partnerships can help address this shortfall, as pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, mutual funds, and other institutional investors hold over U.S. \$100 trillion in assets⁴⁹⁶ that are underrepresented in infrastructure projects, when compared to state-owned entities and public sector investors, particularly in the Global South.⁴⁹⁷

Beyond UN75: Rising to the Challenge

*Establish a Civil Society Champion at the UN to UNmute Civil Society.*⁴⁹⁸

In his 2020 human rights report on the occasion of the world body’s 75th anniversary, UN Secretary-General António Guterres recommended utilizing UN75 as an opportunity to “launch a dialogue on more systematic participation of civil society in UN bodies and agencies ... and to design a system-wide strategy on civic space and adequate guidance to UN leaders in the field.”⁴⁹⁹ Civil society space and participation at the United Nations could be enhanced by appointing a civil society champion within the UN senior echelon. The

champion, appointed by the Secretary-General, could serve as a representative for civil society across meetings with senior UN Secretariat leadership, monitor the UN system for civil society inclusion in policy-making opportunities, and promote diversity and equity (including from the Global South) in UN-civil society operational partnerships. Experts that participated in the UN75 Global Governance Forum, in September 2020, recommended that the role be located in a department outside of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to ensure continuity under changing leadership. Yet it should report directly to the Secretary-General or Deputy Secretary-General to maintain agency, and it should be funded on a voluntary basis to avoid the necessity of a Fifth Committee vote. The civil society champion could serve as a voice for the interests of CSOs which are consistently deferred or denied ECOSOC consultative status. Lastly, the civil society champion would be well-placed to spearhead a new global partnership to tackle a range of UN governance issues, by tapping the ideas, networks, and capabilities of socially responsible businesses, academics, international and community-level non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.⁵⁰⁰

*Create public-private partnerships to expand internationally held stockpiles of medical goods for rapid and equitable distribution worldwide during pandemics.*⁵⁰¹

The Global Preparedness Monitoring Board identified manufacturing capacity, stockpiling, and fragile supply chains to be major barriers to the COVID-19 pandemic response. Manufacturing of vaccines has increasingly been concentrated in a few countries, while most of the world does not have sufficient stockpiles or pre-existing capacity to boost manufacturing during a pandemic. One approach to address this urgent need is the establishment of a robust international stockpile for medical goods (including approved and experimental vaccines) through public-private partnerships that include governments, the World Health Organization, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, Gavi, and private sector actors that supply medical goods, such as pharmaceutical companies.⁵⁰² This would ensure

Civil society space and participation at the United Nations could be enhanced by appointing a civil society champion within the UN senior echelon.

that low- and middle-income countries, but also those in greatest need during a pandemic, have access to medical supplies regardless of their ability to produce them domestically. As part of its special appeal “Uniting Business to respond to COVID-19,” the UN Global Compact could play a key role in facilitating the access of socially responsible businesses in this partnership.⁵⁰³ Post-COVID-19 recovery and preparedness for future pandemics requires a shared strategy between—and cross-cutting approach involving both—the public and private sectors.⁵⁰⁴

* *

The first recommendation above is currently advocated by the Coalition for the UN We Need and Together First at the international policy-making and grassroots levels. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which published a report in 2020 on *Civil society space: engagement with international and regional organizations*, could become an “inside the UN system ally” for this proposal. The second recommendation could be considered in connection with ongoing international policy deliberations on similar global health system strengthening proposals (see, for example, this section’s overview of UN75 Declaration commitment #12, *We will be prepared*).

We will listen to and work with youth



UN75 Declaration Commitment

#11: *We will listen to and work with youth. Youth is the missing piece for peace and development. As we benefited from the foresight of the founders of the United Nations, young people today will have to live with the consequences of our action and inaction. For too long, the voices of youth have been sidelined in discussions about their future. This has to change now through meaningful engagement with youth.*⁵⁰⁵

Examining the landscape

In an effort to listen to their aspirations for the future and their ideas for tackling today's global challenges, the UN Secretary-General placed youth at the center of his UN75 Global Conversation in 2020. In recent decades, youth have led numerous and wide-ranging social, environmental, and political movements, from demanding justice for violent repression (Ending Police Brutality in Nigeria) to climate action (Fridays for Future). With the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth (1995) and UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), marked progress was made to include young people in international decision-making that affects their and humanity's future. This includes the adoption of follow-on Security Council Resolutions (2419 in 2018, on increasing the role of youth in negotiating and implementing peace agreements, and 2535 in 2020, on underscoring the key role of youth in building peace); the development of YPS National Action Plans, national youth policies, and a comprehensive UN Youth Strategy (Youth 2030); the convening of robust global dialogues with youth on issues ranging from violent extremism to economic empowerment; and the *Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*.⁵⁰⁶

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

Among the estimated 1.85 billion youth aged 15 to 24 years worldwide, close to 90 percent live in the developing world, and 30 percent in fragile

countries.⁵⁰⁷ By 2050, 86 percent of the world's extreme poor will live in sub-Saharan Africa, as seen in figure 4.8, and by the same time, Africa's young population, i.e., those aged between 0 and 24 years old, will increase by nearly 50 percent.⁵⁰⁸ The Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, has one of the highest concentrations of young people in the world, with nearly half of the population under 15 years of age.⁵⁰⁹ Conflict severely impacts youth, including by increasing illiteracy rates, deepening poverty levels, and limiting access to education, all of which often leads to high unemployment.⁵¹⁰ The Security Council Resolution 2535 (2020) also recognized for the first time the shrinking civic space young people experience when exercising their rights as human rights defenders and peacebuilders.⁵¹¹ Young people who work on the frontlines are urging the international community to build stronger protection mechanisms, in response to unsafe operating environments.⁵¹²

The UNSC resolutions and other independent studies have shown that young women and men play active roles as agents of peace, and their participation in peace processes and negotiations can have a positive impact on peacebuilding in countries affected by conflict and instability.⁵¹³ But despite the younger generation's "demographic dividend" and clear evidence demonstrating how they benefit peacebuilding, they continue to be sidelined from peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction.⁵¹⁴ Additionally, a gap persists between the promise of empowering youth as peacebuilders and financing for youth-led peacebuilding. Youth-led organizations are not only operating on modest budgets (averaging U.S. \$5,000-\$10,000), but they also regularly face bureaucratic barriers in accessing funding.⁵¹⁵

Governance and political participation platforms also remain underexplored opportunities for providing young people with access to decision-making. In 2019, 70 percent of Africa's population was under 30 years old (with a median age of 19.7 years). However, in 2018, the average age of African heads of state was 64.5 years—symbolic but telling.⁵¹⁶ The limited opportunities for young people to engage formal political systems leaves them not only frustrated, but also mistrustful of political systems and

institutions.⁵¹⁷ In countries with more rigid, conservative power structures and social hierarchies, youth tend to express their dissatisfaction by blaming older generations, thus creating an inter-generational rift.⁵¹⁸

The coronavirus pandemic has set back young people’s integration into the labor market, and inhibited their access to education, while heightening the risk of falling into poverty. Youth have been disproportionately affected by unemployment and, due to the closure of schools, 65 percent of young people worldwide (aged 18-29) reported having learned less since the start of the COVID-19 crisis.⁵¹⁹ Although remote learning has helped some students, only 18 percent of youth living in low-income countries have access to technology for remote learning, versus 65 percent of youth living in high-income countries.⁵²⁰ The consequences of limited education for youth can be detrimental to society. A recent study of 1,200 students in Somalia, for instance, showed that students who had access to secondary education were half as likely to support political violence as those who did not.⁵²¹

Beyond UN75: Rising to the challenge

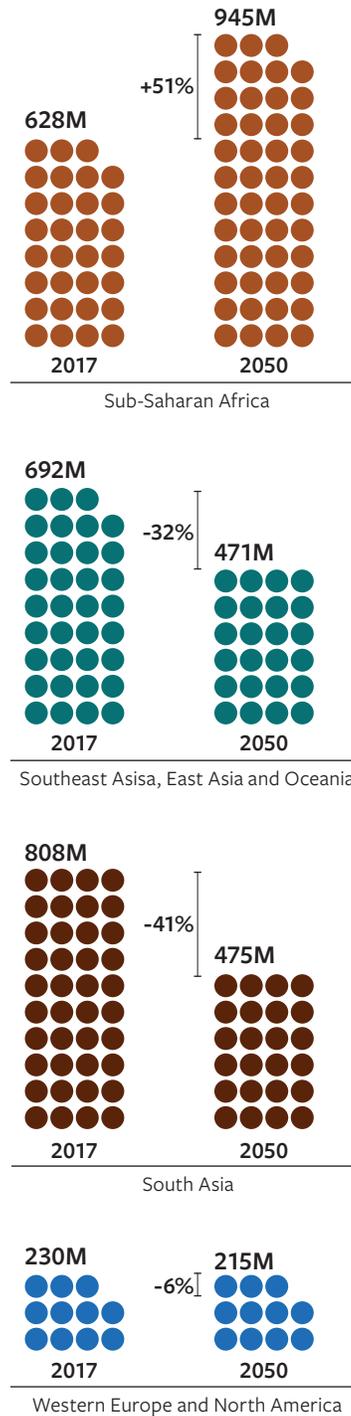
Against this backdrop, the recommendations outlined below seek to address some of the gaps that limit young people from actively contributing to more just and peaceful societies.

*Support the Global Multi-Partner Fund on Youth, Peace, and Security.*⁵²²

Increasing the availability of financial support to local youth peacebuilders in youth-majority countries can enable better and more durable recovery in fragile, conflict-affected countries, reducing the violence of exclusion young people face.⁵²³ Bold, targeted, and sustainable investments through a new Youth Peace, and Security (YPS) fund⁵²⁴ could empower youth to invest in needs-driven peace initiatives and forge partnerships between local young peacebuilders and other major stakeholders.⁵²⁵ In return, these partnerships can facilitate access to conflict-resolution skills and resources needed to expand youth agency for creating and maintaining peace. The YPS Fund

Figure 4.8: Africa’s youth population is booming; the rest of the world’s is shrinking

○ Equals 20 million people aged 0-24 years



Source: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *Goalkeepers*, (2018).

Youth-inclusive global agendas require commensurate investments in young leaders and their follow-through action.

could benefit from a rigorous Social Return on Investment analysis to assess and quantify the impact of youth-led peace and security initiatives. The analysis would help to make the case for stronger integration and participation in the direct financing of youth-led peacebuilding initiatives. UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on YPS is a significant step towards empowering youth to contribute to sustainable peace, as prosperous and peaceful societies require intergenerational approaches to co-creating solutions for current and emerging challenges. However, youth-inclusive global agendas require commensurate investments in young leaders and their follow-through action.⁵²⁶ In this regard, the proposed YPS fund can offer strategic and timely support toward amplifying young people's voice and efforts to promote forgiveness, unity, reconciliation, and social cohesion, thereby contributing to peace processes in countries affected by endemic violence and instability.

*A UN Youth Advisory Council is needed to elevate the voices of youth in international decision-making and to ensure youth inclusion in programming across the UN system.*⁵²⁷

Global governance that is inclusive of young people can serve to empower youth, while strengthening the United Nations. For example, an impressive 55 percent of the 1.5 million respondents to the Secretary-General's UN75

Global Conversation were aged thirty or younger, with 6 percent of respondents aged 15 or younger, and 49 percent of respondents aged between 16 and 30.⁵²⁸ This suggests that: *first*, platforms can be organized for substantive youth engagement in global affairs; and *second*, that young people wish to voice their fears and aspirations for the present and future. Similar to the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth, a youth advisory body should be established at the UN with diverse global representation, as recommended by the Together First campaign.⁵²⁹ Specifically, it would offer advice and oversight to ensure more equitable youth participation in UN decision-making and programming, as well as in advancing the 2018 UN Youth Strategy.⁵³⁰ The UN Youth Advisory Council could further influence the creation of norms and standards on youth involvement within and across the UN system and serve as an advocacy body for young people's rights around the world. The new body could advise the UN General Assembly, in accordance with Article 22 of the Charter. It should ensure efficacy and avoid duplication of efforts by collaborating closely with the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the UN Major Group on Children and Youth, and other relevant UN agencies and youth organizations. The UN Youth Advisory Council would not only harness the creative problem-solving abilities of young leaders, but buttress their position and influence within the world body, thereby giving them greater agency to chart a more inclusive future for the United Nations.

* *

The upcoming High-Level Conference on Youth Inclusive Peace Processes, planned for early 2022 and co-hosted by the Governments of Finland, Qatar, and Colombia, may wish to consider these proposals. The conference is expected to generate much-needed guidance for how governments can better support national strategies for strengthening youth-inclusive peace processes. In addition, these and other youth empowerment proposals should be underscored in the UN Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* report and its anticipated UN Member States-led follow-through process.

We will be prepared



UN75 Declaration commitment

#12: *The COVID-19 pandemic caught us off guard. It has served as a wake-up call for improving our preparedness for not only health-related crises but also other challenges and crises. We need to strengthen international cooperation, coordination and solidarity. It is important to learn and share experiences and information to reduce risks and make our systems more resilient. While improving our global crisis prevention and response systems, there is an urgent need to accelerate development, production, as well as equitable and affordable global access to new vaccines, medicines and medical equipment. We applaud all healthcare and other front-line workers who put their own safety at risk when saving others, and pledge to put people at the centre of our response.*⁵³¹

Examining the landscape

Recent global crises have engendered changes in the multilateral system that have strengthened global governance preparedness in specific policy areas, demonstrating that international cooperation is essential to addressing many transnational challenges. One important development was the G20 upgrade to Heads of State-level Summits in response to the 2008-9 global financial crisis. At the time, the G20 was credited with improving international financial regulatory oversight and facilitating global recovery.⁵³² Further, in 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was adopted to strengthen disaster risk governance worldwide, build greater resilience, and reduce the heavy toll exacted by natural and man-made disasters.⁵³³ And, following the 2013 Ebola outbreak, United Nations agencies and partners established a global Ebola vaccine stockpile to provide timely support to vulnerable populations.⁵³⁴

By November 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UN country teams were able to mobilize and repurpose around U.S. \$5 billion dollars to support immediate regional and country-level responses to the public health crisis.⁵³⁵ Similarly, global

bodies, including the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the vaccine alliance Gavi, the United Nations, and the World Health Organization have together pioneered novel multi-stakeholder mechanisms, such as COVAX, a new global COVID-19 vaccine access facility for participating countries. This global multi-stakeholder partnership has accelerated the development and equitable distribution of COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines—a much needed alternative to unilateral action, blunting fears of growing “vaccine nationalism.” Furthermore, a WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence, supported by the German government, is expected to open in late 2021, to ensure better preparedness and transparency against future global health threats.⁵³⁶

Assessing Challenges and Gaps

COVID-19 has quickly become one of the most serious crises of the still early twenty-first century, exposing inequalities and exacerbating other transnational challenges that continue to test global leadership and solidarity. The United Nations Secretary-General has decried the “lack of global preparedness, cooperation, unity and solidarity” in the global response to the pandemic.⁵³⁷ Similarly, the WHO Director-General described the lack of vaccine equity as a “catastrophic moral failure,” with the poorest countries and vulnerable groups enduring its gravest consequences.⁵³⁸

Despite COVAX, the lack of full universal support for the WHO’s broader health security mandate, including among major countries, has inhibited its ability to respond effectively during the past year’s global health crisis, including in the area of vaccine acquisition. High-income countries that contribute to COVAX secured major bilateral deals with pharmaceutical companies, reducing the availability of vaccines to low- and middle-income countries.⁵³⁹ The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness & Response reported that inequitable access to COVID-19 vaccines favoring wealthy nations meant that low-income countries would be able to vaccinate only 20 percent of their populations in the foreseeable future.⁵⁴⁰

Moreover, the lack of preparedness in global health systems and responses has weakened critical health resources, including distribution networks, in low and middle-income countries. Complex production networks were designed for efficiency and cost—relying on single sources for raw materials or production—not necessarily for transparency or resilience.⁵⁴¹ As of May 14, 2021, just 1 percent of the 1.3 billion COVID-19 vaccines given globally have been administered in Africa, down from 2 percent earlier in the year. Given this slow progress, the World Bank estimates that Africa still needs around U.S. \$12 billion to protect its people from COVID-19.⁵⁴² With additional strain placed on vaccine procurement and distribution, vulnerable populations in developing countries will continue to fall behind as international cooperation initiatives fail to reach them. There is no existing global health system in place that ensures global access to essential medical equipment, such as personal protective equipment, sanitation items, medicines, and vaccines. Regions and countries with weaker healthcare response systems thus

tend to rely on global institutions to support their policy implementation and access to resources. Even among advanced industrialized nations with well-resourced health systems, there are significant disparities in levels of performance vis-à-vis COVID-19 and health security preparedness more generally (see figure 4.9 below).

During the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and Ebola epidemics, accusations of infringements on individual freedoms, including when reporting disease outbreaks, heightened public mistrust in governments and the WHO, further undermining both justice and security in the affected countries.⁵⁴³ There are alarming signs that COVID-19 restrictions are being used as a pretext for infringement on civic freedoms.⁵⁴⁴ Improving communications and coordination among international institutions and reducing public mistrust are critical for building resilience in health security response systems.

Socioeconomic inequalities are also heightened during global health crises, posing acute risks to vulnerable populations in particular.

Figure 4.9: How much do we know about health security and preparedness?

Rank correlation between COVID-19 Safety Countries Index (April 2020) and Global Health Security Index (November 2019)



Note: Excluding Monaco from the figure (outlier). France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States not in top 40 on COVID-19 (exact ranking unavailable, a rank of 41 was assigned by default) but in top 40 ranks on GHS. When removing these six countries, $r=0.28$.

Source: COVID-19 Safety Countries Index, Global Health Security Index & Authors calculations (2020).

For instance, in 2015, more than 926 million people incurred exorbitant health expenses, and 89.7 million people were pushed into poverty due to out-of-pocket medical expenditures.⁵⁴⁵ At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional 135 million people were pushed toward famine and food insecurity, and extreme poverty increased for the first time in twenty years.⁵⁴⁶ G20 leaders did not address the International Monetary Fund's request that G20 nations double its resources, nor did they initially agree to allow poor nations reeling from the pandemic to suspend repayment of their debt obligations (a position later reversed).⁵⁴⁷ In sum, global response systems are slow to support the most needy populations, and as the present crisis illustrates, geopolitical tensions have also impeded the urgent response of multilateral institutions.

Beyond UN75: Rising to the challenge

Ambitious yet realistic global governance reforms are needed to confront the above noted gaps in global health security crisis prevention and response. Below we present two such reforms.

*Establish a Global Health Threats Council, adopt a Pandemic Framework Convention, and strengthen the independence, authority, and financing of the WHO for improved pandemic preparedness and response.*⁵⁴⁸

Fostering sustained high-level political engagement, a Global Health Threats Council would mobilize support among relevant states and non-state actors for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. Providing an international legal instrument for pandemic preparedness and response, a Pandemic Framework Convention could also address international response gaps, clarify the leadership roles of UN Member States and international organizations, and support the implementation of new and existing laws and norms. Furthermore, the World Health Organization's independence, authority, and financing should be enhanced, by giving the WHO Director-General and Regional Directors single, seven-year terms of office

(with no option for re-election) and increasing unarmarked Member States fees to cover two-thirds of the WHO base program's budget, alongside an organized process for replenishing the remainder of the WHO budget.

*Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations should publish agreements and contracts with vaccine developers and manufacturers in a timely manner to improve transparency in vaccine development for future global health crises.*⁵⁴⁹

Transparency of cost of goods and contract terms is necessary to promote just and equitable access to vaccines and essential health development information during pandemics.⁵⁵⁰ Publicizing terms of agreement and conditions of development will allow for better accountability with vaccine developers and international initiatives, like Gavi, that are a crucial part of the global health response. Increased transparency regarding costs would provide objective benchmarks for fair prices and advance equitable access to health products and resources difficult to obtain by most countries.⁵⁵¹ By updating the framework for vaccine development through timely published transparent agreements and contracts, faster and coordinated global health responses can meet time-sensitive goals. Additionally, publishing contracts can contribute to establishing a transparent framework of health response and preparedness, accelerating the development of and access to vaccines. This could further prevent exacerbation of global health risks and crises and better address the needs of vulnerable populations.

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Especially given their close linkages to several of the UN75 Declaration commitments, these proposals merit consideration in the Secretary-General's forthcoming Our Common Agenda report. The successes and shortcomings of global health systems during the COVID-19 crisis should be leveraged to generate political momentum for achieving equitable and affordable global access to vaccines, medicines, and healthcare.

V. A Roadmap for Inclusive, Networked & Effective Global Governance

“At a time of deepening inequalities within and between countries, multilateral actors and partners are working tirelessly to address the multiplicity of threats facing the people we serve... It is clear that in order to succeed, we need to re-commit to multilateralism and diplomacy for peace through a United Nations that is fit for purpose.”

— H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır, President of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly (High-Level Thematic Debate to mark the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace)⁵⁵²

In 2020, the UN Secretary-General’s Global Conversation and the UN75 Declaration challenged us to reimagine and re-energize the global governance system. In 2021, the Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* report, due by the opening of “UNGA Week” in New York, can catalyze an ambitious renewal and strengthening program, but only if a bold case is made not just for necessary, incremental (yet all-to-often tediously slow) change but for a comprehensive rethink. Such a rethink, long overdue, should culminate in a World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance in September 2023, with governments but also a wide array of other stakeholders. Such an event, and the paths leading to it, could build political consensus on urgently needed, substantial global governance reforms that can better meet the challenges—and seize the opportunities—that this century presents in peace and security, sustainable development, and the ongoing struggle for human rights and dignity.

Our Common Agenda: Toward Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration’s Promise

Against the backdrop of the devastating human tragedy of COVID-19, Secretary-General António Guterres viewed the United Nations Declaration on its 75th anniversary as an opportunity to build back a more equal and sustainable world, based on “a New Social Contract and a New Global Deal that create equal opportunities for all and respect the rights and

freedoms of all.”⁵⁵³ With the Declaration and his UN75 Global Conversation serving as points of departure, and in response to the General Assembly’s request that he report back within a year with “recommendations to advance our common agenda and to respond to current and future challenges,”⁵⁵⁴ António Guterres launched a process of profound reflection on the future of multilateralism and global governance, in early 2021, involving four main tracks:

1. *“We the Peoples”* (Civil Society): The “We the Peoples” digital consultation track, led by the Igarapé Institute with support from a network of global partners, encouraged bold and practical recommendations from civil society and expert stakeholders across sectors and regions.⁵⁵⁵ The around 1,000 consultation participants from some 120 countries uploaded and submitted recommendations through an online portal organized around four themes: Our Future, Our World, Our Society, and Our United Nations.⁵⁵⁶ The interactive platform allowed participants to create new collaborations to address specific challenges associated with each theme. Building upon the Secretary-General’s UN75 Global Conversation, this track viewed the pandemic as an opportunity for transformation, securing rights, and advancing prosperity and inclusion in decision-making for all generations.⁵⁵⁷
2. *Young Thinkers*: The Young Thinkers track served as a space for young people, under the age of thirty, to explore the interests of “Next and Future Generations” to

create recommendations for the Secretary-General's report and a stand-alone youth-led report on *Our Future Agenda*. A core group from this track's Next Generation Fellows further engaged diverse youth leaders and organizations worldwide, including through a "Big Brainstorm" dialogue to pitch solutions in response to major global challenges. Five priority issues on the future of the multilateral system emerged from the dialogue: education and skills for empowering youth, jobs and economic opportunities, active citizen participation, sustainable futures, and listening and working with youth.⁵⁵⁸

3. *Thought Leaders*: Through the Thought Leaders track, leading experts of diverse backgrounds contributed innovative ideas, solutions, and substantive inputs to the *Our Common Agenda* report preparations. This promoted greater discussion on how multilateral institutions can tackle global challenges and offered forward-looking proposals on expanding the UN system's impact.
4. *Member States*: This track consisted of formal and informal consultations, in New York and virtually, with UN Member States—including directly with the Secretary-General—on the implementation of the UN75 Declaration.⁵⁵⁹ The consultations started in October 2020 and are expected to end in August 2021. In addition, Member States contributed inputs to the *Our Common Agenda* report and implementation of the UN75 Declaration's twelve commitments through national activities that engage diverse stakeholders.

In addition to these official consultations, other independent initiatives were designed to contribute fresh perspectives. These included the forum on "Middle Eastern and North African Perspectives on Taking Forward the UN75 Declaration"; the forum and expert roundtables on "European Perspectives on Taking Forward the UN75 Declaration"; the Global Town Hall and Regional Consultation Series of the Coalition for the UN We Need; the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the UN System; the Club de Madrid's report

G7 leaders proclaimed that they would "make 2021 a turning point for multilateralism."

Our Common Agenda: UN After 75: Proposals to reinvigorate an inclusive, networked and effective multilateralism, as well as related recommendations shared by The Elders with the UN Secretary-General; and the six-part UN Missions-expert roundtable series, "Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration's Promise" (see annex I).

National governments also have been working to revive multilateral cooperation. Two months after the UN75 Declaration's unanimous adoption, ten regionally diverse heads of state and government, convened by Spain and Sweden, published a joint UN75 Leaders Network statement reiterating their commitment to the Declaration and the ambition it embodies, and calling for reforms of the UN's three principal organs to create a "more agile, effective, and accountable organization" that can "deliver better" results.⁵⁶⁰ Similarly, in February 2021, G7 leaders, including U.S. president Joe Biden, proclaimed that they would work together to "make 2021 a turning point for multilateralism."⁵⁶¹

The European Union has been a longstanding and reliable champion of rules-based multilateralism.⁵⁶² In February 2021, the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, issued a joint communication on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism.⁵⁶³ Additionally, in July 2020, the G7 and China issued a statement to the General Assembly calling on "all members of the international community to strengthen international solidarity, joint efforts, multilateral cooperation and partnership with all developing countries...

To reach the kind of networked and inclusive multilateralism that is needed urgently requires immediate, steady, dedicated efforts ... culminating in a collaborative global forum—an Inclusive Global Governance (IGG) Summit.

to fight and stop [COVID-19].”⁵⁶⁴ Even more forward-leaning in terms of ambition and scope was the September 2020 Eminent Persons Open Letter, signed by fifty former world leaders—including Madeleine Albright, Ban Ki-moon, María Fernanda Espinosa, Ibrahim Gambari, Roza Otunbayeva, Mary Robinson, and Danilo Türk. The letter called for a “dedicated intergovernmental process” as a follow-up to the UN75 Declaration to “strengthen and reform the legal and institutional machinery of the UN system.”⁵⁶⁵

The Road to a 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance

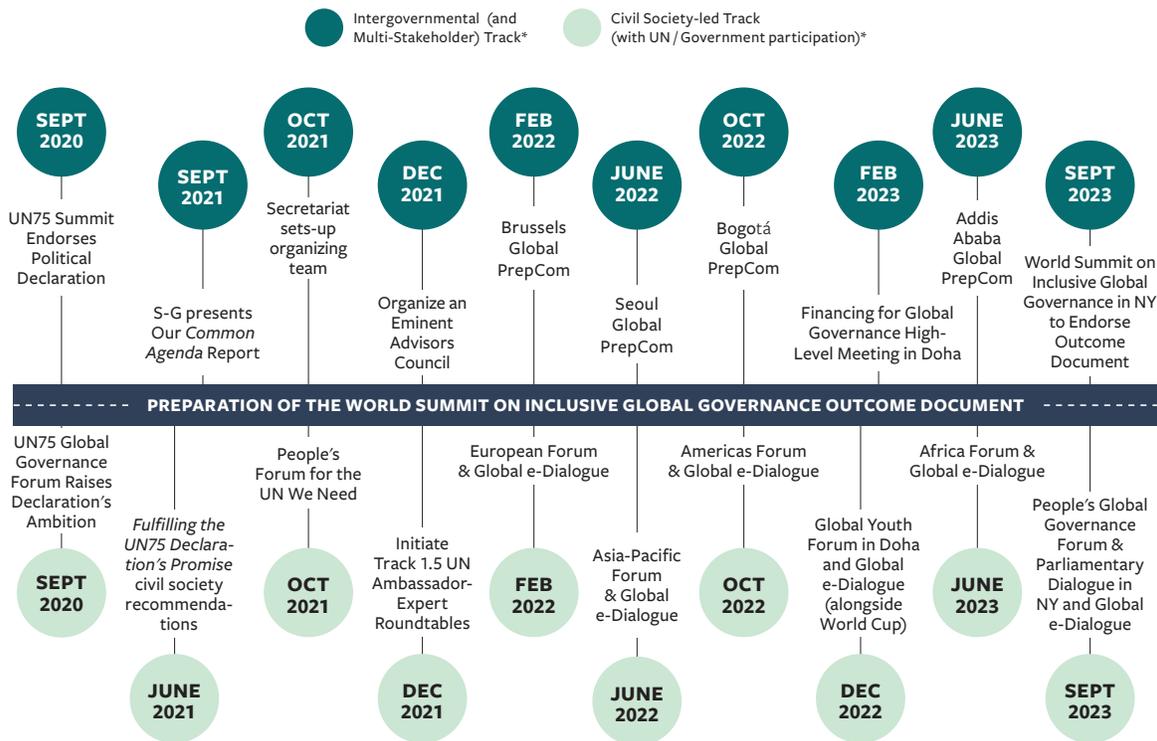
Based on the knowledge generated by the four official consultative tracks and the UN75

Global Conversation, the Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* report will begin to take the UN75 Declaration from vision to action.⁵⁶⁶ However, without a vehicle for the further deliberation and hopeful adoption of many of the best ideas proposed in his and related global governance strengthening reports, these otherwise thought-provoking initiatives are unlikely to come to fruition. An exclusively intergovernmental process, moreover, would likely end up merely tweaking the global governance system—rather than consider more ambitious changes commensurate with today’s challenges, threats, and opportunities.

To better cope with the next pandemic disease, the growing prospect of runaway climate change, extremist violence in fragile states, cross-border economic shocks, and ever more sophisticated cyber-attacks, the world needs a better way of marshalling its talent and resources—new tools, networks, and institutions. To reach the kind of networked and inclusive multilateralism that is needed urgently requires immediate, steady, dedicated efforts on several fronts, as discussed below, culminating in a collaborative global forum—an Inclusive Global Governance (IGG) Summit—that can debate, amend, and authoritatively endorse their results.

Detailed below, a two-year intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder process—running from September 2021 until September 2023—and culminating in an IGG Summit yields significant advantages compared to single-institution-focused or single-issue-focused reform efforts, including: i) the potential to generate political momentum for multiple, urgent, interconnected, and mutually reinforcing reform initiatives (a “global systemic reform package” approach); ii) strong negotiation outcomes through deal-making and trade-offs across a broad reform agenda that speaks to diverse national interests and values—making the summit acceptable to powerful P5 countries and other potential spoilers—and can also break through long-standing logjams, such as Security Council reform; iii) a defined rallying point for a “big-tent” smart coalition of like-minded governments and non-governmental organizations who wish together to

**Figure 5.1: Roadmap to the 2023 Summit
(recommended)**



* Only select recommended activities listed.

raise the ambition of the summit's outcomes and seek their immediate implementation; and iv) international media attention necessary for mobilizing political support for stronger and more inclusive institutions of global governance.

Just as the UN Member States' 2000 Millennium Declaration and the Secretary-General's *We the Peoples* report (alongside multiple civil society statements and independent studies, including the 2004 High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change) built the case for the far-reaching 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, the UN75 Declaration and *Our Common Agenda* can lay the foundations for the proposed 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance. Together, they can help to realize the calls from people around the world, gathered in the Secretary-General's worldwide UN75 survey, for "A global intergovernmental conference ... to reformulate key aspects and mechanisms of global governance."⁵⁶⁷ Indeed,

building inclusivity into the summit's title highlights the intent to welcome diverse, non-governmental perspectives into the proposed intergovernmental process and its anticipated outcome: a revitalized and better networked United Nations system.

To prepare for the summit and maximize its impact, ten preparatory and follow-through steps (many running in parallel) are both necessary and desirable (see figure 5.1).

1. *Set up a small UN Secretariat organizing team with expertise in the 2023 World Summit's five major thematic areas:* Similar to the skillful and high-profile leadership role performed by Maurice Strong for the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment and 1992 Earth Summit, an Under-Secretary-General should be appointed, by October 2021, and given the resources to lead a small, yet highly experienced and networked organizing team for the 2023 World Summit.

With secondments from across the UN system, Bretton Woods institutions, regional organizations, and a leading global media company, the summit's secretariat should be entrusted with backstopping substantive committee work. Reporting directly to the Secretary-General, the IGG Summit's organizing team should further lead on logistical preparations, research and drafting of the Summit's Outcome Document, and communications.

2. *Ensure an effective global communications and social media plan from day one:* Learning from the interactive, 1.5 million persons global survey and 3,500+ dialogues inspired by the Secretariat's UN@75 Office, and the massive online consultation feeding civil society perspectives into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a robust communications and social media outreach plan should be prioritized early in the summit's preparations, underscoring initial progress and "early wins" to garner momentum for achieving more ambitious milestones as the summit nears. Special attention should also be given to public messaging on the summit's reinforcing linkages with COVID-19 humanitarian response and longer-term green recovery, which is the emerging "new normal" in the global economic order. As the 1945 San Francisco Conference represented the start of the post-World War II global renewal, the 2023 World Summit could signify the beginning of a new phase of global cooperation, with the coronavirus threat contained and a renewed commitment by world leaders to confront other looming challenges together.
3. *Convene four two-week PrepComs on different continents:* The 2023 World Summit's Preparatory Committees (PrepComs) could be organized, in 2022 and early 2023, around the four thematic pillars of: i) peace, security, and humanitarian action; ii) sustainable development and COVID-19 recovery; iii) human rights, inclusive governance, and the rule of law; and iv) climate governance. A fifth will be useful to promote integrated, system-wide reforms

in connection with the ideas of the four other pillars. Drawing inspiration from the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), which launched a comprehensive process to prepare for the 1992 Earth Summit, each PrepCom would convene for approximately two weeks, each on a different continent, so as to ensure that the Summit's Outcome Document reflects inputs from diverse, under-represented perspectives and is grounded in local realities (*see point #4 below*). Each thematic pillar could be led by a manageably sized Committee, co-chaired by developing and developed country UN Permanent Representatives appointed by the President of the General Assembly. The co-chairs of the fifth pillar "Integration Committee (IC)" would serve, simultaneously, as the overall co-coordinators for providing strategic direction to IGG Summit preparations, in consultation with the Secretary-General and his representative.

One of the most important roles of the IC Co-Chairs, Committee Co-Chairs, and the Under-Secretary-General's organizing team would be to keep UN Member States focused on building consensus around a select number of priority institutional, policy, legal, operational, and normative global governance strengthening proposals (e.g., around 8-10 per thematic pillar). To mitigate against an unwieldy IGG Summit Outcome Document and ensure strong linkages with the twelve UN75 Declaration commitments and *Our Common Agenda* report recommendations, the members of each thematic Committee could be encouraged to rank their options according to criteria involving concerns, for example, related to desirability, policy impact, urgency, cost, and implementation feasibility.

4. *Hold simultaneous global-regional People's Forums and E-Dialogues alongside the PrepComs:* Each thematic Committee would engage nonstate actors from global civil society and the private sector by having their

Box 5.1: Innovating track 1.5 & 2 policy dialogues: Lessons from the EastWest Institute

From 1980 through 2020, the EastWest Institute (EWI) pioneered unique methodologies for Track 1.5 & 2 dialogues to enhance conflict resolution and prevention efforts globally. Critical to the impact it achieved in multiple countries and regions was EWI's recognition as an honest broker with the ability to tap a global network of influential stakeholders—including policymakers, international organization representatives, business leaders, and independent experts, as well as local representatives directly affected by a particular conflict—committed to pursuing innovative solutions to some of the thorniest and most complex policy challenges. Some of the EastWest Institute's most noted contributions to and insights from Track 1.5 & 2 exercises stem from its:

High-Level Dialogues: From the mid-1980s until 2020, EWI engaged senior decision-makers, including at the heads of state level, from the U.S., Russia, China, and other Great Powers on seemingly intractable policy differences. Bringing together small groups of leading experts with policymakers for candid, off-the-record conversations, EWI laid the groundwork for the historic 1987 Washington, D.C. Summit between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, improving relations between the West and Soviet Union; enhanced cooperation in Asia on water security and disaster management; facilitated dialogues between political parties of the U.S. and China; fostered international cooperation on cybersecurity; and helped to forge a formal cooperation agreement between Kosovo and Serbia backed by their neighbors, to name a few. Fundamental to the success of these Track 1.5 and 2 dialogues was their emphasis on discrete back-channel diplomacy, with EWI providing an impartial platform for trusted communication among policy leaders. The institute's political independence and values-based approach secured by its diverse, global board of directors and corporate culture, as well as its founder CEO John Edwin Mroz's personal moral leadership, reputation, and communication skills, were further positive attributes.

Military-to-Military Dialogues: Starting in 1984, the EastWest Institute brought together military officials from countries with adversarial relations and limited communications to work on measures to mitigate the risk of armed conflict. From exchanges between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries during the end of the Cold War to more recent U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China discussions, mil-mil Track 1.5 dialogues, alongside select experts from EWI's global network, reduced tensions among these military powers. Integral to their progress was the institute's convening strategy, designed around engaging policy leaders of diverse political backgrounds who were known for their professionalism, commitment to moral principles, and stature and influence within their respective national security communities.

Business-to-Business Dialogues: From the 1990s until 2020, EWI gathered business leaders at the regional level and in functional areas to address bottlenecks to expanded commercial cooperation. These Track 2 exercises facilitated, for instance, joint ventures between business leaders in post-Soviet countries, as well as between India and Pakistan, and Algeria and Morocco. Specifically tailored methodologies for this track entailed cross-border business and cultural events, exploratory field trips for business leaders, advancing local and regional multi-stakeholder cooperation frameworks, analytical products to enhance transparency of public resources allocation, and business and development training for regional and municipal officials and community leaders.

In terms of key tailored lessons for a proposed series of Track 1.5 global policy dialogues in the run-up to the IGG Summit, the sessions should operate in a discrete, off-the-record manner to facilitate frank and open discussions; they should place a premium on skillful moderation and selecting diverse, talented, and networked individuals; and the exercises should be supplemented by rigorously prepared global governance innovation research products that detail creative, yet realistic policy and institutional reform options.

Source: Nvard Chalikian. "Global Changes and Track 1.5/2 Diplomacy: The Case of EWI." *Stimson Center Working Paper* (forthcoming).

co-chairs and other Ambassadors participate in global-regional Peoples' Forums and E-dialogues, held in conjunction near the start of each two-week PrepCom rotated between different regions. Learning from the civil society-led Coalition for the International Criminal Court's engagement, in 1998, in the negotiations toward the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, global civil groups could: i) disseminate a daily newsletter with up-to-date analysis during a PrepCom; ii) assist UN Member State delegations, especially at the regional level (where shared languages and culture are prevalent), through collective lobbying supported by periodic "strategic talking points" memos; and iii) arrange to have their members invited to serve on certain delegations.⁵⁶⁸

5. *Organize an Eminent Advisors Council and a related series of Track 1.5 UN Ambassador-Expert Roundtables:* The IGG Summit's preparations could benefit from an Eminent Advisors Council composed of a diverse and carefully balanced group of public intellectuals and former world leaders, including from The Elders, Club de Madrid, and earlier Albright-Gambari Commission. It could examine how the entire global governance system (not just the United Nations) can be better organized and equipped to address major current and emerging challenges and opportunities facing the international community, giving attention to pioneering joint ventures between global, regional, and sub-regional organizations across the 2023 World Summit's five thematic pillars. Such a distinguished group could also be uniquely tasked with helping to strike a better balance—in the 2023 World Summit's agenda—between, on the one hand, national interests and, on the other, the global public good.

Moreover, learning from other Track 1.5 & 2 multi-stakeholder exercises (see box 5.1), the newly established Global Governance Innovation Network could convene the Eminent Advisors Council, thematic Committee co-chairs, a new ambassadorial-level Group of Friends for the 2023

World Summit (GoF '23) building on the UN75 Leaders Network,⁵⁶⁹ and other leading scholars and policy researchers for a series of Track 1.5, off-the-record global policy dialogues timed to precede each two-week PrepCom. In addition to challenging conventional assumptions and helping to reframe narratives to overcome potential spoilers, each roundtable discussion would emphasize—based on the vetted findings of independently commissioned policy briefs—the need for creative, serious, and actionable global governance reform proposals for which world leaders and international institutions could be held accountable.

6. *Convene a Financing for Global Governance High-Level Meeting prior to the Summit:* Before the final PrepCom, a High-Level Meeting on Financing for Global Governance could be held, in February 2023, in Doha, Qatar—akin to the July 2015 Addis Ababa Financing for Development Conference that preceded the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—and give special attention to public-private/blended financing gaps for a durable, green, and broad-based recovery from the coronavirus. The meeting could also underscore the significance of mobilizing domestic revenue, combating illicit financial flows, and ensuring that all IGG Summit reform commitments are financially supported to incentivize follow-through. Immediately following the fourth and final PrepCom, in July 2023 at UN Headquarters, linkages would also be encouraged with the midpoint (High-Level Political Forum) review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
7. *Hold a Global Parliamentary Dialogue and Global Youth Forum prior to the Summit:* Often neglected in UN Summitry, both national parliamentarians and young leaders have fresh ideas on the future of global governance to bring to the table. Importantly, they both possess agency and, in the case of legislators, an officially mandated role—often including budgetary oversight—to facilitate implementation and follow-through

to the 2023 World Summit. In addition to having both parliamentarians and young civil society leaders serve on UN Member State delegations and featured in global-regional People’s Forums and E-Dialogues, each stakeholder group merits the convening of a pre-summit special Global Parliamentary Dialogue and a Global Youth Forum, respectively.

8. *Ensure that the culminating IGG Summit’s Outcome Document emphasizes select, concrete, time-bound, and measurable reform commitments:* To be convened in September 2023, at the start of UNGA High-Level Week in New York, the World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance would seek to upgrade and equip the global governance system to better address major issues facing the international community, and to usher in a new compact with citizens to enhance and rebuild confidence in their common institutions. In doing so, it would aspire to take forward the UN75 Declaration’s vision and commitments and associated Secretary-General *Our Common Agenda* follow-through recommendations. The IGG Summit should also strive to increase participation in global decision-making, to enhance the legitimacy, effectiveness, and accountability of global institutions, and to strengthen the rules-based global order. To achieve these complex, overarching goals, the 2023 World Summit’s Outcome Document must underscore select, concrete,

time-bound, and measurable innovations in the form of institutional, policy, legal, operational, and normative global governance reforms. One proposed methodology for ensuring selectivity is detailed in point #3 above. Agreeing on associated targets and indicators for each innovation—akin to the approach taken for each of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals—will help to ensure they are specific and actionable, follow an ambitious yet realistic timeframe, and their implementation and impact can be assessed over time by employing official and independent quantitative and qualitative research tools.

9. *Track and coordinate follow-through progress through a UN Secretariat-led annual report and an intergovernmental monitoring and coordination body:* Setbacks of various kinds—political, financial, and operational—are inevitable when mobilizing and implementing global governance reform. Employing tools outlined in the previous point, the UN Secretariat could prepare an annual progress report following the IGG Summit, from which an intergovernmental monitoring and coordination mechanism could further assess implementation gaps and recommend to relevant international bodies early corrective action, thereby seeking to hold world leaders and international institutions accountable (*note: the Peacebuilding Architecture and Human Rights Commission upgrade first introduced as part*

Table 5.1: Select parallel negotiations, 2021-2023

UN Biodiversity Summit (COP15)	October 11-24, 2021, in Kunming
UN Climate Change Conference (COP26)	November 1-12, 2021, in Glasgow
First Meeting of States Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons	January 12-14, 2022, in Vienna
UN Conference on the Human Environment II	June 2022 in Stockholm
HPLF Mid-Point Review of the 2030 Agenda	July 2023 in New York (UN HQ)
First Global Stocktake of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement	2023 (location, date - tbd)

Over 150 organizations ... came together around a “Call for Inclusive Global Governance.”

of the UN60 2005 World Summit Outcome each took several months of additional work culminating in subsequent General Assembly and Security Council operational resolutions).

10. *Marshal a global movement, building on the Coalition for the UN We Need, Together First campaign, and Global Governance Innovation Network, to help governments and the UN system take the IGG Summit agenda forward: Political will is never constant, and as underscored earlier, smart coalitions of civil society organizations, Member States, business leaders, and international civil servants—representing a new kind of approach to global diplomacy—are essential for increasing ambition during the PrepComs on the Road to the 2023 World Summit. Building on their steadfast commitment, experience, and expected growing numbers and political influence between now and 2023, the Coalition for the UN We Need, Together First campaign, and Global Governance Innovation Network—in collaboration with the government-led Alliance for Multilateralism—can lend support to the UN Secretary-General and the intergovernmental monitoring and coordination body on the IGG Summit follow-on agenda. This can take many forms, including public outreach through tech-savvy social media campaigns, closed-door and candid Track 1.5 policy conversations on summit follow-through, research, and continuously raising the ambition of proposed corrective actions designed to fill post-summit implementation gaps.*

Alongside groundwork for the 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance are a number of intergovernmental negotiations over the next two years that intersect with its substantive focus (see table 5.1). Besides identifying linkages with these processes, the IGG Summit preparations should give special attention to ensuring mutually reinforcing connections with the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform, Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly, and the ongoing reviews of the Economic and Social Council and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. For this purpose, the co-chairs of these institution-focused negotiations could meet periodically with the co-chairs of the 2023 World Summit’s five thematic Committees, in addition to participating in the series of Track 1.5 UN Ambassador-Expert Roundtables (see point #5 above).

Complementary to the expected 2023 World Summit and the leadership role of progressive UN Member States associated with the Alliance for Multilateralism, a growing number of civil society organizations worldwide may wish to invest their ideas, energy, and resources in summit preparations. For instance, on April 23, 2021, over 150 organizations—and growing—including Avaaz, CIVICUS, Together 2030, and Forus International (a network of over 20,000 civil society groups) came together around a “Call for Inclusive Global Governance,” endorsing a World Citizens’ Initiative to enable people to bring popular proposals before the UN General Assembly or Security Council, a UN Parliamentary Assembly to give elected representatives an agenda-setting role at the United Nations, and a UN Civil Society Envoy to drive the UN’s outreach to the public and civil society organizations.⁵⁷⁰ Moreover, the UN Global Compact should mobilize its over 12,000 business community affiliates around the world in support of the IGG Summit, including Microsoft’s new United Nations representation office led by John Frank, Vice President of UN Affairs.

Building on the momentum generated, in 2020, by the UN75 Declaration and the

Secretary-General's Global Conversation, it is critical that the *Our Common Agenda* report, in early September 2021, sustains their spirit for change, by calling for a comprehensive, multi-lateral, and multi-stakeholder negotiation for more inclusive, networked, and effective global governance. The annual resolution of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly, also planned for early September, is well-placed to formally initiate this process, as could a General Assembly resolution adopted during UNGA High-Level Week in New York (September 20-24, 2021).

With Secretary-General António Guterres's recent election to a second term, he can afford to be bold in his *Our Common Agenda* report, especially when making the case that a better equipped global governance system can bolster regional, national, and sub-national efforts to cope with transnational calamities, beginning with climate change, terrorism, cyber-attacks, and the ongoing pandemic. Waiting until the next major UN anniversary (UN80 in 2025) risks losing momentum and the possibility of an unfavorable U.S. presidential electoral outcome in 2024. Convening the proposed summit by September 2023 also recognizes the gravity of the issues demanding a more urgent and capable response by the world's governance system.

Beyond UN75: Renewing Global Governance for the Rest of the 21st Century

In striving to achieve a more just and secure world, we can draw inspiration from our forebears, in 1945 San Francisco, and turn to renewing the architecture of global governance for a new century and a new generation. Accompanying the UN Secretary-General's ongoing post-UN75 reflection on the future of multilateralism is a profound choice: to either merely go through the motions of reform or to work steadfastly to innovate the world body and associated institutions, to keep pace with growing global economic, social, political, technological, and environmental challenges and opportunities.

Meaningful change ... will require patience, imagination, and most of all courage.

Despite the newfound hope that the COVID-19 pandemic can be rolled-back, and growing calls by world leaders to reinvest in multilateralism, exclusionary and nationalistic undercurrents driven by populist, anti-multilateralist politicians who amplify public anxieties (over immigration, job loss, or scientific processes they neither understand nor trust) continue to undermine the rules and institutions of global cooperation. They frequently do so by falsely passing blame for countries' troubles, or pursuing ineffective, insular approaches to inherently transnational problems, at times in violation of agreed international laws and norms. These ever-present tensions, tearing at the seams of the multilateral system, cannot be tackled by simple re-commitments by governments to vague principles and general policy goals that are often repeated at the United Nations yet encounter mixed success in terms of follow-through.

A more inclusive and effective system of global governance for better coping with 21st century challenges, while seizing new opportunities, is within our reach—but *time is running short*. Going forward, we must draw strength from the representative legitimacy—but also ideas, networks, and capabilities—of diverse state and non-state actors. We must further draw inspirational lessons and ideas from generations past as we work, together, to build swiftly a more hopeful, peaceful, equitable, and environmentally sustainable future for present and future generations. Meaningful change is possible, though making headway on this global road will require patience, imagination, and most of all courage.

Annexes

Annex 1

Select recommendations from the “Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration’s Promise” UN Missions-expert roundtable series.

For the full compendium of the series’ proposals, visit: www.innovation-network.org.

#1 We will leave no one behind	Similar to the Millennium People’s Forum, in 2000, a major civil society forum should be held every 2-3 years in the General Assembly Hall, for debating UN policy issues and making recommendations to the General Assembly and Secretary-General.
#2 We will protect our planet	Negotiate a legally binding Global Forest Convention to protect forests, involving not only countries with large forest areas but also those importing and financing forest products.
#3 We will promote peace and prevent conflict	A Global Resilience Council should be established as a new, specialized international body to better address non-military threats to building greater resilience, well-being, and human security at the community level.
#4 We will abide by international law and ensure justice	Accelerate the progressive development of the global rule of law in every domain , such as the maritime order, space, and rapidly developing technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence and internet governance).
#5 We will place women and girls at the center	Bring the Generation Equality Forum to cities , similar to how the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women is being adopted as a city-level ordinance or resolution.
#6 We will build trust	A World Citizens’ Initiative at the UN , similar to the European Citizens’ Initiative, would improve trust and accountability of the United Nations by providing citizens with a unique way to make their voices heard at the international level.
#7 We will improve digital cooperation	Provide greater open-source resources —digital information, data, and content—to the public, learning from the International Criminal Court’s legal tool database (accessed, in 2020, over seven million times)
#8 We will upgrade the United Nations	Limit future UN Secretaries-General to a single 7-year term in office, to enable the UN’s head to focus more on meeting performance, rather than political, goals during the term.
#9 We will ensure sustainable financing	Issue a new Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation of U.S. \$650 billion in support of global recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and to supplement the reserve assets of the International Monetary Fund’s 190 member countries.
#10 We will boost partnerships	Establish a new partnerships hub , building on the United Nations Office for Partnerships, to share good practices and identify new and scale-up existing partnerships with the UN system.
#11 We will listen to and work with youth	International institutions should aim to invest worldwide U.S. \$1 per young person (estimated at over U.S. \$2 billion in youth-related investments) and remove excessively bureaucratic requirements for accessing youth grants.
#12 We will be prepared	More reliable and rapid public financing (especially for financing-at-scale) is needed urgently to respond more quickly to health and broader socio-economic emergencies.

Annex 2

List of resources on global governance innovation and UN75 from the Stimson Center and its partners.

Reports and Books:

- *Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance* (June 2015)
- *Just Security in an Undergoverned World* (Oxford University Press, 2018)
- *An Innovation Agenda for UN75: The Albright-Gambari Commission Report and the Road to 2020* (June 2019)
- *Reimagining Governance in a Multipolar World* (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, September 2019)
- *UN 2.0: Ten Innovations for Global Governance – 75 Years beyond San Francisco* (June 2020)
- *Coping with New and Old Crises: Global and Regional Cooperation in an Age of Epidemic Uncertainty* (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, December 2020)
- *Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration's Promise: An Expert Series' Synthesis of Major Insights and Recommendations* (June 2021)

Action Plans from the UN75 Global Policy Dialogues series:

- *Preventive Action, Sustaining Peace & Global Governance* (Doha: Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, December 2018)
- *Global Security, Justice & Economic Institutions* (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, June 2019)
- *Climate Governance: Innovating the Paris Agreement and Beyond* (Seoul: Global Green Growth Institute, October 2019)
- *Global Economic Institutions* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, November 2019)
- *Roadmap for the Future We Want & UN We Need: A Vision 20/20 for UN75 & Beyond* (UN75 Global Governance Forum, September 2020)

UN75 Global Governance Innovation Perspectives policy brief series:

- *Towards Multiple Security Councils* (June 2020)
- *Multilateralism for Chronic Risks* (June 2020)
- *Closing the Governance Gap in Climate, Security, and Peacebuilding* (September 2020)
- *Strengthening the Rules-Based Global Order* (September 2020)

UN75 Regional Dialogues summaries:

- *UN75 Regional Dialogue for Africa: Toward Innovation and Renewal of Global and Regional Governance* (online, March 30–May 10, 2020)
- *UN75 Regional Dialogue for the Americas: Toward Innovation and Renewal of Regional and Global Governance* (online, March 20–April 26, 2020)

Background Briefs from the UN75 Global Policy Dialogues series:

- *Preventive Action, Sustaining Peace & Global Governance*
- *Global Security, Justice & Economic Institutions*
- *Climate Governance: Innovating the Paris Agreement and Beyond*

Endnotes

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BEYOND UN75

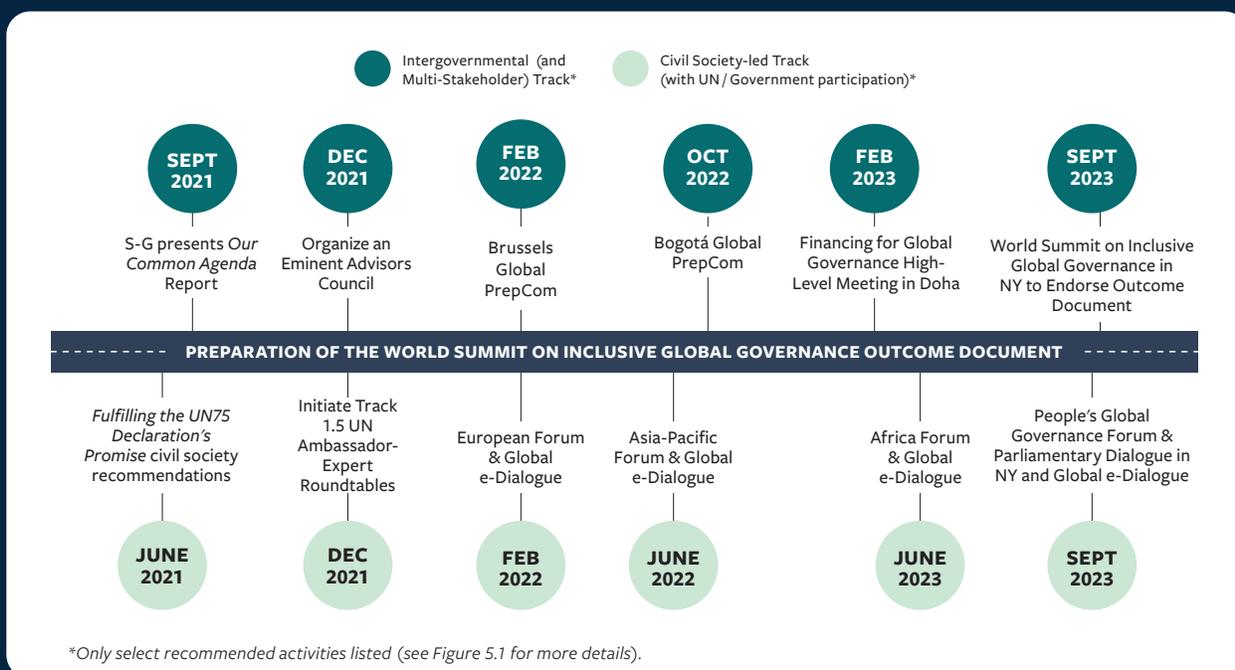
A Roadmap for Inclusive, Networked & Effective Global Governance

“[*Beyond UN75*] charts a path toward an ambitious 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance to advance the ideas for change emerging from the Secretary-General’s ‘Global Conversation’ of last year and from his much-anticipated report, *Our Common Agenda*, to be released in September 2021.”

Foreword to Beyond UN75 (2021), María Fernanda Espinosa and Danilo Türk

“... the most dangerous threat we see is the rise of narrow, exclusionary nationalism, corroding the wider sense of community essential to meeting all these other challenges—threatening the very structure of the international order that has been built since the Second World War.”

Foreword to UN 2.0 (2020), Ban Ki-moon and Gro Harlem Brundtland



To better cope with the next pandemic, the prospect of runaway climate change, extremist violence in fragile states, cross-border economic shocks, and ever more sophisticated cyber-attacks, the world needs a better way of marshalling its talent and resources—new tools, networks, and institutions. Building on the inspirational UN75 Declaration, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has laid out a vision for a “new social contract” and a more operational “new global deal” to build a green, post-COVID-19 recovery into the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This report shows how close coupling of justice and security imperatives can best drive the work needed to take this vision and plan forward toward the kind of networked and inclusive multilateralism that is needed to deal with critical global problems. Such a rethink, sealed by a 2023 World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance, has become imperative. Creatively mobilizing diverse actors worldwide, the summit and the preparations for it would look to equip our common institutions with the tools, structures, and connectivity needed both to rebuild institutional trust and competence, and to face with confidence humanity’s perilous next quarter century.