

## ACUNS Annual Meeting 2023: Global Policy Dialogue Summary Report

Thursday, June 22, 2023

Co-Sponsors: ACUNS, Stimson Center, Leiden University, Plataforma CIPÓ, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, and the Global Institute for Strategic Research



As an integral part of the Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the UN System on “**Making, Keeping, and Sustaining Peace**”, from 21-22 June 2023 at the U.S. Institute of Peace, three Global Policy Dialogue (GPD) sessions and a Closing Plenary Session were convened on the theme of “**Reconstructing the Global Peace & Security Architecture**” with the following objectives:

- To convene leading policy researchers, practitioners, and advocates to debate and recommend specific global institutional, policy, legal, normative, and operational innovations that could inform the agenda—and help to raise the ambition—of the September 2023 Ministerial Forum and September 2024 Summit of the Future.
- To make targeted recommendations for operationalizing the UN Secretary-General’s (July 2023) New Agenda for Peace and for ensuring that the Summit of the Future’s Pact for the Future (Peace & Security Chapter) reinforces this new peace agenda with high-level political support, financing, and corresponding structural changes in major UN bodies (e.g., UNSC, UNGA, PBC).
- To contribute to efforts to take forward the UN75 Declaration’s commitment #9 (“We will promote peace and prevent conflicts.”) and the *Our Common Agenda* report’s peace and security strengthening ideas, including by supporting follow-through to the civil society driven—including by members of the ACUNS community—Global Governance Innovation Network and Coalition for the UN We Need-led Global Futures Forum (March 2023 and May 2024)

# **New Agenda for Peace: Global Policy Dialogue on Reconstructing the Global Peace & Security Architecture**

**Co-Chairs:** Elizabeth Hume, Alliance for Peacebuilding and Maria Joao Rodrigues, Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

**Lead-Off Speakers:** H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations; Franz Baumann, ACUNS Vice-President and former UN Under Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Environment and Peace Operations; Roger Coate, Georgia College & State University and former ACUNS Chairperson; Musa Ibrahim, Policy Specialist, Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding, UNDP Crisis Bureau; and Alice Oluoko-Odingo, University of Nairobi and ACUNS Vice-President (Spokesperson).

## **Overview:**

At the outset of the discussion, the Co-Chairs outlined three key questions for the GPD to consider: i. What are the enumerated risks the New Agenda for Peace should consider?; ii. In addressing these risks, how should we balance prevention versus response?; and iii. Which actors should be engaged most closely to implement the New Agenda for Peace? Discussants characterized some of the major risks in the current peace and security landscape, which the New Agenda for Peace (NA4P) should help to mitigate. This led to a discussion on considering prevention and response symbiotically in the peace and security architecture, especially as it relates to recommendations for a NA4P and the roles of key stakeholders.

## **Challenges:**

Participants noted the increasing number of risks, record breaking and increasingly violent conflicts, and resource and other constraints facing the global peacebuilding project. This necessitates an enhanced peacebuilding architecture to address growing challenges, including:

- Nuclear weapons and their resurgence as a serious risk to international peace and security.
- Pandemics and the difficulties associated with building resilient economies and societies.
- Climate change compounds conflict and the constraints this imposes on access to resources and development opportunities.
- Digital technology and its risks and opportunities (especially with regards to artificial intelligence) for conflict, development, and governance.
- Trust deficits between citizens and international governance institutions, and the need to build greater social cohesion in both the Global North and South.
- Decreasing funding for peacebuilding and conflict prevention; the need for new financing channels from both the private sector and philanthropic institutions.
- Development sectors remain siloed, and there are growing calls for the development community to better interface with and reinforce peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

## **Recommendations:**

Participants engaged deeply on the merits of shifting the peacebuilding architecture toward prevention on the Prevention-Response spectrum, bearing in mind the limited public resources available. With the goal of harmonizing the international community's prevention and response capacities, an upgraded Peacebuilding Commission into a **Peacebuilding Council**, charged with

a dual Prevention and Response role and an overall streamlined mandate, would best accomplish the aims outlined below.

### *Prevention*

- An improved **early warning and action capability** would center around equipping the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Department of Peace Operations (DPO) with the resources to monitor and detect potential unrest. This would allow preemptive allocation of resources, through for example the upgraded **Peacebuilding Council** and **UN Security Council**, to mitigate conflict before it arises and thus interrupt the potential for protracted violence.
- An **empowered UNGA Presidency** could leverage more resources and expertise from Member States and command greater political legitimacy for preventative measures.
- Modernizing governance mechanisms in preparation for oncoming technological threats to peace would ensure that international organizations are best equipped for resilience. A concerted UN-led effort to establish a multilateral, **binding treaty on the development and use of autonomous weapons** would cushion the effects of rapidly developing technologies of warfare.
- Include **positive peace indicators in SDG 16**; among other goals, this would help both to measure social cohesion and ensure peacebuilding and conflict prevention integration into major development sectors.

### *Response*

- A **centrally coordinated cadre of trained international civil servants**, on standby to respond to outbreaks of conflict and closely tied to monitoring and prevention efforts, could coordinate political and humanitarian responses to a wide range of crises.
- Need fit for purpose programs and interventions based on what has been learned in addressing new risks (tech, climate), and ensuring **resilient programming**, including understanding mental health and behavioral science.

Given the widespread and arguably growing trust deficit between citizens and their institutions, as well as the range of other risks and challenges facing international peacebuilding efforts, panelists acknowledged the importance of any future efforts engaging socially connected grassroots actors from the outset. Participants highlighted the importance of two types of actors as crucial to ensuring the New Agenda for Peace’s future success:

**Civil Society and Social Movements**—the role of civil society should be expanded to consult and include powerful social movements which have been shown to raise awareness and leverage popular support for crucial causes, such as the impact of the Extinction Rebellion campaign as one recent example.

**Regional Organizations**—in addressing the “rust deficit” issue, participants agreed that regional multilateral organizations are a key mechanism through which both preventative and responsive peacebuilding must be conducted. Regional organizations can possess both *the scale*—often lacking in Member States and substate organizations—and *the legitimacy*—lacking in global organizations in the current climate—to meaningfully address the issues facing peacebuilders today.

# **Peacebuilding Architecture Innovation: Global Policy Dialogue on Reconstructing the Global Peace & Security Architecture**

**Co-Chairs:** Erin McCandless, University of Witwatersrand and Cedric De Coning, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (Spokesperson).

**Lead-off speakers:** H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the UN and PGA (74th Session); Lilianne Nkunzimana, Global Youth Coalition on Peace and Security; Sultan Barakat, Global Institute for Strategic Research and Hamad Bin Khalifa University; Georgios Kostakos, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability; and Henk-Jan Brinkman, International Development Law Organization and former Peacebuilding Support Office.

## **Overview:**

Discussants and participants considered the merits of revitalizing a global social contract that would empower national level peacebuilding structures. It was emphasized that reform fatigue towards revisiting principles of peacebuilding must be met with faith in the process of constant reformation that provides concrete results. The co-chairs highlighted the potential of renewed attention towards the Peacebuilding Commission, which can create pathways for discussion on a wide thematic range of issues such as intersectionality, climate change, and localization of goals.

## **Challenges:**

Five key challenges defined the scope of this dialogue.

- **State-centrism:** Participants commented on the rigidity of approaching international peace with a state-centric perspective. Dialogue often becomes the victim of every initiative to advance peace because of diplomatic blockades. Furthermore, participants commented on the absence of Non-State actors from dialogues and the lack of access to resources it generates for them (and thus the siloed nature of discussion and action).
- **Struggle for buy-in and action on the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda:** Trust in the youth community to construct peaceful societies is peripheralized from conversations within mainstream platforms. Despite the YPS agenda having proven to be effective, it is not reflected in the availability of funding mechanisms for youth networks. Young people's scarcity, notably of youth from the Global South, was also underscored during the GPD.
- **Lack of accountability:** Participants noted the growing lack of accountability in platforms such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the opaqueness of its structures. This was matched with comments on an increase in "under the table" dealings between Member States. Participants also highlighted the problems of a monopoly on the existing financing architecture around peacebuilding, citing the asymmetric influence it serves on the UN system in directing peacebuilding efforts.
- **Access to funding:** Participants noted how funding is inaccessible, inflexible, and devoid of a comprehensive strategy on development and investment. Comments surrounded myopia and that a lack of funds leads to a focus on the symptomatic issues of conflict, which fail to address the root causes.
- **Lack of coherent planning:** It was also noted how international frameworks for peacebuilding are stuck in specific systems, which fail to realize economic solutions for durable peacebuilding and create inconsistencies for a comprehensive response.

## Recommendations:

Participants focused on incremental yet still important shifts in the architecture centered around strengthening opportunities for meaningful and strategic communication across the system to increase coordination, transparency, and accountability.

- Encourage **systems-level thinking** in reform discussions. Think of international frameworks as systems of food, energy and actors (private sector, citizen movements, and civil society). Breakthrough academic silos to take account of multisystemic realities and design appropriate responses.
- Encourage an understanding of peacebuilding as a dynamic process for change undertaken, first and foremost, by people and society and **promote a country-engaged paradigm**. Move away from state and international organizations and more toward society led-movements.
- **Changing narratives around the YPS agenda**. Diagnose barriers and identify best practices to dedicate action toward attitudes that provide results. It was also proposed to increase the capacity of youth-led movements to engage in the civil-space by **micro-financing YPS initiatives**.
- Strengthening of channels of dialogue between Member States to reduce “under the table” deals and build a **repository of good practices for negotiations**.
- Participants also suggested looking into integrated responses to conflicts that take account of human rights violations and address security arrangements. In this regard, a new “**Peacebuilding Review**” was proposed that would strengthen accountability among Member States.
- **Strengthen the Peacebuilding Commission (PC)** through: strong engagement with **regional organizations**; **New Peacebuilding Network** in which Member States create a clearer national counterpart for the UN Peace and Security Architecture, such as a Ministry of Peace; **universal reporting** on steps taken to prevent violence and sustain peace, such as that started by Norway and Canada in a recent PBC Meeting; greater engagement with citizens through **open town-hall-style meetings** to foster trust; **engage youth** to promote the positive opportunities of sustained peace; and create a ‘**lessons learned**’ repository in which Member States and other actors can foster accountability and transparency in the peacebuilding policy-making process.



## UN Security Council Reform: Global Policy Dialogue on Reconstructing the Peace & Security Architecture

**Co-Chairs:** Hardin Lang, Refugees International and Karim Makdisi, American University of Beirut.

**Lead-off speakers:** H.E. Neville Gertze, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the UN and Co-Facilitator of the Summit of the Future; H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the UN and PGA (74th Session); Rebecca Shoot, Citizens for Global Solutions; Vesselin Popovski, Jindal Law School; and Anjali Dayal, US Institute of Peace and Fordham University (Spokesperson).

### Overview:

Participants began by noting that today's environment brings both potential and limits to UN Security Council reform measures. A return of Great Power Competition makes any reform of key UNSC mechanisms more difficult, especially regarding the veto, while simultaneously increasing the determination of small states to ensure that the UNSC can serve to effectively resolve disputes at a time when geopolitics is more fragmented and dangerous. Discussions particularly highlighted the benefits of democratizing the UNSC membership process to boost the body's political legitimacy and step-up pressure on the P5 to entertain more significant reforms, including in curbing the misuse of the P5's veto power.

### Challenges

Participants did not shy away from the significant challenges to UNSC reform, noting the political intractability and opposition from P5 members in today's geopolitical climate.

- Many participants mentioned that among the major challenges to UNSC reform was the state of international relations today. **Great Power Competition** makes it more difficult to convince P5 members to agree on reforms. At the same time, it also makes the need for UNSC reform even more desirable, particularly from the perspective of smaller states.
- **A lack of a concrete common agenda** among the smaller states calling for UNSC reform also makes meaningful reform more difficult. Uniting smaller states and, for example, G77 countries behind a common reform platform would render opposition from P5 members more difficult. Members of the group noted that African nations have taken steps to negotiate a common position for UNSC reform, and other underrepresented regions could follow suit.
- There is a **perception within the UN that the UNSC possesses a special privileged status** vis-a-vis the rest of the UN system, particularly the UNGA. A UNSC forced to contribute more meaningfully to peace and security initiatives, for example through financial and operational support, would be incentivized to take its role more seriously.
- **Lack of regional representation** within P5 members is a serious issue for the formation of diplomatic coalitions for positive change.
- **Charter limitations:** the UN Charter does not permit any amendments without the full consent of the current P5. Despite a vastly different geopolitical environment today, P5 members hold the same status as they did at the time of the UN's founding in 1945. This

limitation speaks to the long-term need for a new political consensus on an equally represented UNSC that limits the use of the P5's veto power.

## Recommendations

Participants kept in mind the high political barriers to UNSC reform and focused on incremental diplomatic measures to make meaningful progress on reform in the short-term, while also seeking to generate political momentum toward broader reforms in the future.

- Inequality—in representation and membership—is the Security Council's most fundamental flaw. **Regional groups should be considered for some form of membership** in the UNSC, and permanent seats could be abolished or reduced.
- **Limits should be placed on the veto's use in mass atrocity situations**, or vetoes should require more than one P5 vote and potentially non-permanent votes too.
- The UN General Assembly should be reformed to empower its parallel role to the Security Council on matters of international peace and security. **The UNGA could take a stronger role** by either inserting binding language in its resolutions or by overturning UNSC vetoes, and building directly on recent successes, such as Lichtenstein's initiative to increase transparency in the use of vetoes by P5 members of the Security Council.
- **UNSC working methods should be further reformed and made more transparent**, as this is a high concern to many smaller states who value multilateralism for their security.
- The number of non-permanent seats should be expanded, and **states should be eligible for immediate re-election** to the UNSC to foster deeper engagement and accountability among the most capable UN Member States, while also increasing the term-lengths of elected members.
- **Political difficulties to amend the Charter** represent barriers to UNSC reform. Mobilizing popular will and diplomatic pressure, which proved effective during the Cold War in expanding the number of non-permanent seats, can induce positive change today.



## **Closing Plenary Session: Working Group Report-Backs and Ambassadorial Segment**

**Moderators:** **Richard Ponzio**, Stimson Center and **Charlotte Ku**, Texas A&M University.

**Spokespersons:** **Alice Oluoko-Odingo**, University of Nairobi and ACUNS Vice-President, on the New Agenda for Peace; **Cedric De Coning**, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI); and **Anjali Dayal**, Senior Scholar in Residence, USIP, and Associate Professor, Fordham University, on UN Security Council Reform.

**Discussants:** **Maria Joao Rodrigues**, Foundation for European Progressive Studies; **Vesselin Popovski**, O.P. Jindal University; **David Passarelli**, Centre for Policy Research, UN University and High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism Secretariat.

**Distinguished Panelists:** **H.E. Pascale Christine Baeriswyl**, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN and recently President of the UN Security Council (May 2023); **H.E. Neville Melvin Gertze**, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the UN and Co-Facilitator of the Summit of the Future Political Declaration; **H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande**, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the UN and PGA (74th Session); **H.E. Mohamed Al Hassan**, Permanent Representative of Oman to the UN and Co-Facilitator of the Summit of the Future Modalities Resolution (September 2022); and **H.E. Robert Wood**, Ambassador and Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs, U.S. Mission to the UN.

The spokespersons for each session reported back on the discussions from their individual GPD sessions earlier in the day, highlighting major expert insights and recommendations, as well as the conditions for mobilizing a broad-based coalition in support of each group's specific proposals. The discussants and distinguished panelists commented on the importance of many of the recommendations shared, while underlining the geopolitical tensions that may continue to preclude large-scale global peace and security structural reforms. Ensuring strong linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals through the SDG Summit (September 2023) and with an eye to the Summit of the Future in fifteen months' time (September 2024), civil society will play an important role in retaining and sustaining momentum for change across the entire UN agenda of peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights.

The distinguished panel of UN Ambassadors further elaborated upon the importance of deliberating upon and then implementing inclusive and just changes across the UN system to enable it to tackle effectively the increasingly complex challenges of the 21st century. A vibrant dialogue between the ambassadors covered the role of the United Nations in advancing international peace and security, the importance of prioritizing agendas led by the Global South, neutrality in an era of Great Power tensions and aggression by one large state against a neighboring smaller state, and the urgency for action across systems of governance in preventing the initial outbreak and recurrence of violent conflict.



The panel of Ambassadors alluded to a fourfold crisis: in leadership, trust, truth, and accountability at all levels of governance, as the root cause of surmounting challenges to sustainable peace. In response, they recommended building upon political momentum for change and transparency, in the UN Security Council and elsewhere across the UN system, as a means to address geopolitical tensions that neglect complex, ground-level realities. One panelist called for broader accountability by taking stock of past mistakes, and by enforcing inclusivity through regional organizations. The Ambassadors also called for revitalizing the UNSC Resolution 1325 Women, Peace & Security agenda aimed at strengthening the role of women in peacebuilding. Another Ambassador felt that the current UN framework is unfit for the future, citing intractable conflicts, inherent biases in the application of international laws and norms, and asymmetry in cooperation during vaccine distribution at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. They urged a radical reform of the status quo based the premise of universal equality. They also questioned the asymmetry of decision-making in major platforms such as the UN Security Council (where, for instance, Member States make decisions on behalf of others that are not directly consequential to their own country's political processes).

While much of the panel spoke to the merits and complications surrounding UNSC reform and strengthening the capacity of the Peacebuilding Architecture, a ray of hope came through with the New Agenda for Peace. Ambassadors emphasized the need to take it seriously and to unite around common principles heading into the Summit of the Future. This “renewed” Agenda for Peace must be both practical and resilient to changing geopolitical dynamics, with many panelists reiterating the need for it to be grounded in the peace and security realities of the Global South and most vulnerable populations.

**Watch the full closing plenary discussion [here](#).**

*Summary Report produced by the Global Governance, Justice and Security Program at the Henry L. Stimson Center.*

### Registered Participants

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