STIMSON

A Summit of the Future Roundtable on

A New Agenda for Peace:
Creating Opportunities for Better Collective Security

Monday, October 16, 2023

Embassy of Switzerland in the United States of America
2900 Cathedral Avenue, Northwest, Washington, D.C.

The Stimson Center produced this readout following the roundtable, co-sponsored by the Embassy of Switzerland in the United States and the Stimson Center and held under the Chatham House Rule.

On 16 October 2023, senior State Department representatives, Embassy representatives, and experts from leading think tanks, advocacy organizations, foundations, and universities in Washington, D.C convened under the Chatham House Rule. This high-level roundtable aimed to provide actionable recommendations for strengthening the Secretary-General's initial (July 2023) submission of his **New Agenda for Peace,** in advance of the September 2024 **Summit of the Future.**

Geo-political tensions and the veto power of the Security Council's permanent members—which last year alone hampered collective action on Russia's war against Ukraine, North Korean missile tests, and the Syrian civil war, in addition to humanitarian support for the Israel-Gaza conflict this year—keep the

United Nations from realizing its primary purpose: the maintenance of international peace and security. Not since the end of the Cold War has the specter of nuclear weapons use seemed so real, while intractable conflicts worldwide are taking a toll on the UN's conflict management system. More conflicts (34) are currently active than at any time since the end of the Second World War. Average conflict duration has grown, and "settled" conflicts are relapsing more often.

Against this backdrop, and pursuant to a recommendation by Secretary-General António Guterres in his seminal 2021 report, ***Our Common Agenda***, the UN's 193 Member States committed, last September (in UNGA Resolution 76/307), to convene a Summit of the Future, on 22 and 23 September 2024 in New York. It will have "… an important role to play in reaffirming the Charter of the United Nations, reinvigorating multilateralism, boosting implementation of existing commitments, agreeing on concrete solutions to challenges and restoring trust among Member States." The summit's priority areas, which will be reflected in the outcome document, **"A Pact for the Future,"** are: (i) sustainable development and financing for development; (ii) international peace and security; (iii) science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation; (iv) youth and future generations; and (v) transforming global governance.

The New Agenda for Peace, outlined in a policy brief by Secretary-General António Guterres on 20 July 2023, is integral to the Summit of the Future preparations and outlines the United Nations' commitment to strengthen global peace and security. This initiative seeks to renew the 1992 Agenda for Peace with an understanding that delivering peace demands major 21st century transformations, both from individual nations and from the international community as a whole, fortifying the multilateral system. **Among the key recommendations laid out in the New Agenda for Peace are:**

- Develop national prevention strategies to address the different drivers and enablers of violence and conflict in societies—including monitoring, evaluation, and learning—to strengthen national infrastructures for peace.
- Seek the good offices of the Secretary-General to support action to reverse the deterioration of geopolitical relations and keep diplomatic channels open.
- Employ the good offices of the Secretary-General and his convening powers to protect global supply and energy chains, maintain a free, open, and secure Internet, and prevent economic links from fraying and bifurcating as a result of strategic competition.
- Recognize climate, peace, and security as a political priority and strengthen connections between multilateral bodies to ensure that climate action and peacebuilding reinforce each other.
- Recommit to further peacekeeping reform that builds on the progress achieved through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and reform of the UN peace and security pillar.
- Provide more sustainable and predictable financing, including through assessed contributions to peacebuilding efforts, in particular the Peacebuilding Fund, to support these strategies, as a matter of urgency.
- Realize the critical importance of regional peacebuilding and peacekeeping architectures and coordinate multilateral institutions to strengthen regional efforts.
- Democratize the Security Council's procedures as a way to enhance its ability to reach consensus and make the results of its decisions more durable.
- Establish standards and regulations on key emerging threats, including technology advancements.

At the outset of the discussion, participants recognized a widespread sentiment of mistrust toward governments and international organizations, largely stemming from their perceived inability to address citizen and community needs. Rising food insecurity, escalating displacement, and violence perpetrated by both state and non-state actors have undermined the multilateral system and its ability to maintain international peace and security. Addressing these challenges, attendees stressed the need for urgent

institutional, political, and legal reforms, with some advocating for a fundamental paradigm shift. During the course of the dialogue, three primary streams emerged: (1) revisiting normative and legal underpinnings; (2) enhancing the UN's conflict management toolkit; and (3) strengthening the collective security architecture. Brief summaries of these streams are presented below.

Revisiting Normative and Legal Underpinnings

Overview:
International instruments, such as the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), serve as the foundational pillars for international peace and security. Not only do these instruments codify the principles and values that guide international relations, but they also act as a compass in navigating the complex landscape of UN conflict management, including in the areas of prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding. In a world increasingly affected by violent conflict (compounded by the impact of COVID and climate change and illustrated in the record-breaking findings in recent OECD States of Fragility reports), these frameworks provide the foundation for state and non-state behavior, offering a roadmap for conflict resolution, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of peace. Guaranteeing their compliance and effective implementation is paramount to ensuring global stability.

Challenges:
Participants noted the need to address systemic issues within existing international frameworks. Among the core challenges identified were:
- *Eroding credibility of international instruments.* The credibility of fundamental international instruments is under attack, including the UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and two International Human Rights Covenants. This erosion of trust and respect threatens fundamental human rights protections, as well as principles like national sovereignty and the rule of law. This has led to a fractured and ineffective multilateral system.
- *Compromised Security Council.* In the past few decades (and intensified since early 2022), permanent members of the Security Council have openly undermined the rule of law and our commitment to human rights. This has destabilized international relations, threatening consensus-building and collective action.
- *Absence of robust accountability mechanisms.* One of the glaring gaps in the current system is the lack of strong and comprehensive accountability mechanisms. While preventive measures are essential, the reality is that states are far more reactive than proactive. The absence of robust mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable has led to a culture of impunity, and consequently, the cycle of conflict continues.

Key Takeaways:
In light of these challenges, participants recognized the urgency of reforming our international normative and legal frameworks. Distilled takeaways from the discussions include:
- *Leverage and empower existing normative and legal frameworks, while considering new frameworks.* The UN Charter is not just a guiding moral compass, but a practical toolkit. It—along with a still growing body of international legal instruments—offers peaceful alternatives to resolving disputes through violent conflict. The UN Charter's fundamental principles and intentions have not changed, but it was suggested that Member States may need to modernize certain provisions to align with evolving and emerging issues.

- *Expand the International Court of Justice's jurisdiction*: One the Charter's six major organs, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), is central to ensuring accountability and the rule of law. Steps to expand the ICJ's jurisdiction worldwide merit serious consideration.
- *Reaffirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* The principles of the UDHR remain as relevant today as they were at the time of its inception 75 years ago. There is a pressing need to not only reaffirm our commitment to these principles, but also to enhance them with specific measures geared towards conflict prevention.
- *Address the root causes of violence and fragility and ensure shared responsibility among major actors in doing so.* Merely responding quickly to violent conflicts with band-aid solutions is often inadequate. Rather it is both a moral and practical imperative to tackle the root causes of complex and damaging conflicts, whether fueled by, for example, socioeconomic grievances and emerging grievances and factors that are accelerating conflict, including disinformation and technology. Sufficiently addressing such challenges can require significant burden-sharing. Nations must, therefore, collaborate effectively through multilateral and other means to shoulder these shared responsibilities.

Enhancing the UN's Conflict Management Toolkit

Overview:
The United Nations has employed a variety of tools and strategies designed to address the multifaceted challenges of maintaining inter- and intra-state peace and security. These measures can be categorized under a "4Ps" framework: (1) preventive diplomacy; (2) peacemaking; (3) peacekeeping; and (4) post-conflict peacebuilding. Central to the efficacy of this toolkit is adequate financing. Secure and sustainable funding not only ensures that interventions are effective and robust, but also provides the necessary resources to prevent conflict, thereby saving both lives *and* money in the process. The New Agenda for Peace provides a basic analysis of the 4Ps, but it misses the opportunity to modernize and adapt them to respond more effectively to the evolving nature of conflict and emerging threats.

Challenges:
Participants highlighted several inherent problems in the current conflict management toolkit, illustrating the need for reform. They pinpointed in particular:
- *Perceived inefficacy of peacekeeping operations.* The effectiveness of peacekeeping operations has been called into question (perhaps, most notably, due to the decline in stability following the departure of peacekeeping missions). Participants discussed whether a decentralized approach to peacekeeping was starting to take shape, with operations outsourced increasingly to new "coalitions of the willing." This may further undermine the UN's credibility and its perception as a trusted and competent ally in peacekeeping initiatives.
- *Representation and role of the New Agenda for Peace.* Questions also arose about who the New Agenda for Peace represents and the level of inclusivity in determining its conflict management and other recommended priorities. Additionally, the absence of structural and operational reforms raised concerns among participants of the efficacy of these recommendations.

- *Legacy and legitimacy of the New Agenda for Peace.* Some participants voiced apprehensions about the legacy that the New Agenda for Peace would leave behind, specifically, in terms of its historical impact and whether it would help to bolster the UN's institutional legitimacy.

Key Takeaways:
Given these concerns, participants emphasized the pressing need to revamp the current UN conflict management toolkit. The following are key insights from the discussion:

- *Upgrade and Adapt UN Peacekeeping.* Participants stressed the unparalleled role of the UN in peacekeeping operations. In particular, they emphasized that the UN's holistic approach, international credibility, and experience make it an important actor in this field. Its position in the peacekeeping space cannot be replaced without proper training and oversight. Moreover, the one-size-fits-all approach is proving inadequate, and consequently, missions cannot address all of the issues that beneficiary countries face. A more tailored approach is needed. Recommendations included targeted upgrades to the 4Ps, including by entertaining the need for more hybrid and partnership-oriented peacekeeping operations between the UN and regional & sub-regional organizations. Africa was given special attention, with participants recognizing the need for innovative (out-of-the-box) solutions that better address concerns on the African continent.
- *Engage with youth.* The meaningful engagement of youth needs to be made a priority. Representing both current and future stakeholders of peace, and a proportion of the population disproportionality affected by the lack thereof, youth can bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to UN supported conflict resolution efforts. Beyond fulfilling the Youth, Peace & Security and Women, Peace & Security agendas, women and youth must also help to shape all aspects of the New Agenda for Peace.
- *Collaborate with local civil society.* Several participants further underscored the importance of closely collaborating with local civil society organizations when employing the UN's conflict management toolkit (though at present, only 4% of ODA goes to peacebuilding endeavors). This will better inform UN staff with local and nuanced understandings of a conflict, including the needs of affected communities and an overview of cultural dynamics.

Strengthening the Collective Security Architecture

Overview:
In responding to evolving and emerging challenges, the multilateral collective security architecture is in need of urgent reform. The Security Council, General Assembly, and Peacebuilding Commission stand at the forefront of this revitalization. Updating these institutions will ensure that decision-making is both deemed more legitimate by better reflecting global political realities and more effective by helping war-torn communities more quickly and fully recover. In addition, structural reforms must be designed to prevent the outbreak and recurrence of violence in fragile and conflict-affected countries and regions.

Challenges:
Attendees underscored a number of issues with the existing global architecture for collective security. In particular, they identified as primary challenges:

- *Inefficacy of the Security Council.* Several participants expressed grave concern over the Council's declining effectiveness. Many agreed that the current composition and basic functioning of the Security Council is inadequate to address contemporary global challenges, with one speaker describing the Council as a "black hole," emphasizing that while many issues are presented and deliberated upon, only a few are effectively resolved or even addressed.
- *Imbalance of power.* Other participants acknowledged the inherent power imbalance within the UN's collective security architecture. As a consequence, this has contributed to a repeated misalignment between proposed solutions and actions—for example, in the case of the New Agenda for Peace's call to dismantle the patriarchy. These entrenched disparities can also lead to ineffective or biased solutions that fail to address the root causes of recurring violence.

Key Takeaways:
In light of these and other challenges, attendees underscored several priority areas for improving the current global system of collective security, including the need to:
- *Facilitate system-wide institutional reforms.* Ensuring that our institutions across the UN system, beginning with the Security Council, General Assembly, and Peacebuilding Commission, are more inclusive, credible, and fit for purpose is crucial for preventing, better managing, and recovering from protracted violent conflicts. One recommendation is integrating conflict prevention and peacebuilding fully into other sectors—be it under the header of "humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) nexus" or "conflict sensitivity"—and allotting a designated percentage of budgets to these efforts.
- *Rethink the Security Council.* A reimagining of the current makeup and working methods of the Security Council is in order. By increasing both permanent and non-permanent members, the Council can better reflect the present global political landscape and international concerns, making decisions more credible, effective, and universally acceptable.
- *Empower the General Assembly.* Participants proposed the need to further strengthen the General Assembly to enhance its capabilities for the peaceful resolution of armed conflicts.
- *Guard against duplicative responses.* An overriding sentiment was the importance of streamlining processes across major UN organs and agencies, to ensure more coherent and coordinated responses, limit redundancies, and guarantee that resources are optimally utilized.
- *Bolster the role of the Secretary-General.* A call was made for the UN Secretary-General to play a more robust and proactive role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. A more assertive Secretary-General would maximize the UN Charter, including Chapter VI measures.

Conclusion

In the lead up to the Summit of the Future, this roundtable on the Secretary-General's recently introduced New Agenda for Peace underscored the importance of revisiting normative and legal underpinnings, enhancing the UN's conflict management toolkit, and strengthening the collective security architecture. As global challenges evolve and grow in complexity—particularly given new technologies and environmental factors—international institutions must adapt to keep pace with these fast-moving shifts in global affairs. Addressing the pivotal issues facing our system of global governance is more vital than

ever, if the international community is to uphold and safeguard the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Overall Major Takeaways
- The New Agenda for Peace's call for conflict prevention and reduction is one of the pivotal issues of our time.
- Upgrade international institutions to make them more inclusive, credible, and fit for purpose.
- Reinforce the credibility and legitimacy of fundamental international normative and legal instruments, beginning with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Improve transparency and inclusivity within the UN collective security architecture, beginning with the Security Council, General Assembly, and Peacebuilding Commission.
- Update the UN's conflict management toolkit to keep pace with contemporary challenges and maintain international peace and security. This includes making UN peacekeeping more strategic through better long-term planning and more assertively employing UN peacemaking capabilities.
- Engage women, youth, and civil society leaders in mediation and peacebuilding activities from the start of an international engagement (where the UN sets international standards for addressing conflict drivers, drawing from lessons worldwide) to achieve more durable and just outcomes.

PROGRAM

4:00 PM Roundtable Participants Arrive

4:30 PM Welcome from Co-Moderators
H.E. Jacques Pitteloud, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States
& Brian Finlay, President and CEO, The Stimson Center

4:40 - 5:00 PM Introductory Remarks
A New Agenda for Peace: Prevention and National Ownership
Elizabeth Hume, Executive Director, Alliance for Peacebuilding
A New Agenda for Peace: New Threats, Financing, and the Collective Security Architecture
Dr. Richard Ponzio, Senior Fellow and Director, Global Governance, Justice & Security Program at the Stimson Center and former Director, Albright-Gambari Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance
The U.S. Perspective on the New Agenda for Peace
H.E. Ambassador Michele Sison, United States Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs

5:00 - 6:00 PM Moderated Dialogue with Roundtable Participants

6:00 - 7:00 PM Reception

REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS

Koichi Ai, *Embassy of Japan*

Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Thani, *Embassy of Qatar*

Robert Berg, *Stimson Center*

Paula Boland, *United Nations Association of the National Capital Area*

Aurélie Bonal, *Embassy of France*

Kizito Byenkya, *Open Society Foundation*

Jason Calder, *Saferworld USA*

Chandrima Das, *National Security Council*

Debbie Driesman, *Frank Islam and Debbie Driesman Foundation*

Farah Eck, *UN Foundation*

Ismail Esau, *Embassy of South Africa*

Brian Finlay, *Stimson Center*

Corinne Graff, *United States Institute of Peace*

Lise Grande, *United States Institute of Peace*

Melanie Greenberg, *Humanity United Foundation*

Jordie Hannum, *Better World Campaign / United Nations Foundation*

Elizabeth Hume, *Alliance for Peacebuilding*

Andrew Hyde, *Stimson Center*

Frank Islam, *Frank Islam and Debbie Driesman Foundation*

Dr. Jason Ladnier, *Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, U.S. Department of State*

H.E. Amb. Stavros Lambrinidis, *Delegation of the European Union*

Natalie Landau, *Stimson Center*

Hardin Lang, *Refugees International*

Yusuke Nakanishi, *Embassy of Japan*

Dr. Abbey Ogunwale, *One Earth Future Foundation*

H.E. Amb. Jacques Pitteloud, *Embassy of Switzerland*

Dr. Richard Ponzio, *Stimson Center*

Preston Pentony, *United Nations* (former)

Saji Prelis, *Search for Common Ground / Global Coalition on Youth, Peace & Security*

Laurel Rapp, *Policy Planning Staff, United States Department of State*

Lisa Sharland, *Stimson Center*

Rebecca A. Shoot, *Citizens for Global Solutions*

H.E. Amb. Michele Sison, *Bureau of International Org. Affairs, U.S. Department of State*

Christoph Sommer, *Embassy of Switzerland*

H.E. Amb. Georg Sparber, *Embassy of Liechtenstein*

Vincent Valdmanis, *United Nations Foundation*

Brenden Varma, *United Nations Information Center Washington, D.C.*

Bernardo Velloso, *Embassy of Brazil*

Hon. Anne A. Witkowsky, *Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Ops., U.S. Department of State*

Peter Yeo, *United Nations Foundation*

Nudhara Yusuf, *Stimson Center*

Annex: List of Resources on the New Agenda for Peace

Rethinking Global Cooperation: Three New Frameworks for Collective Action in an Age of Uncertainty
(September 2022, section 5)

Recommendations for the New Agenda for Peace (January 2023)

Geneva Consultations: Ensuring the challenges of our time are addressed from a prevention perspective
(March 2023)

Nairobi consultation of civil society organizations on the New Agenda for Peace (March 2023)

*Global Governance Innovation Report 2023: Redefining Approaches to Peace, Security &
Humanitarian Action* (June 2023)

Global Policy Dialogue on Reconstructing the Global Peace & Security Architecture: Summary Report
(June 2023)

Will the New Agenda for Peace and Summit of the Future Transform the UN? (June 2023)

The New Agenda for Peace: A Model for the Declaration on Future Generations? (July 2023)

What's New about the UN's New Agenda for Peace? (July 2023)

The UN Emergency Platform is Not a "Power Grab"--It's a Force Multiplier (August 2023)

*Future of International Cooperation Report 2023: Building Shared Futures: Innovating Governance for
Global and Regional Problem-Solving* (September 2023, section 3)