



# A Breakthrough for People and Planet

Effective and Inclusive Global Governance  
for Today and the Future

## About the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism

The High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB) was established by the United Nations Secretary-General and builds on *Our Common Agenda*, a report released by Secretary-General António Guterres in September 2021 that calls for stronger governance of key issues of global concern. The HLAB is co-chaired by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia, and Stefan Löfven, former Prime Minister of Sweden, and supported by the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research (UNU-CPR).

### For more information:

<https://highleveladvisoryboard.org>

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## Co-chairs' Preface

**On the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, Member States pledged to strengthen global governance to deliver for present and coming generations. They requested the UN Secretary-General to offer a pathway for the multilateral system to address this challenge. *Our Common Agenda* is the answer to that request and issues a stark warning to us all: On our current trajectory, we face a collective breakdown. We are failing to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. We are hurtling from one emergency to the next, unable to address global shocks from new technologies, pandemics, rapidly changing economies, and accelerating poverty and inequalities. We are putting the existence of future generations at risk.**

The UN Secretary-General tasked the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism to identify concrete, actionable recommendations that point towards a radical shift in our approach to global governance. In this report, we offer six transformative shifts that we believe will be instrumental in delivering a breakthrough for people and planet.

We are optimistic that these changes can be achieved. We can transition from our dependency on fossil fuels and achieve balance with the planet, while providing energy for the 800 million people who lack access to electricity. We can spark a just, green transition and unlock opportunities for shared prosperity and sustainable development. We can reconstitute our global financial system to provide fairer representation and sustainable resources for all. We can build greater transparency and trust around our collective security, understanding and preparing for emerging and future risks. And we can harness opportunities in technological advances and digitalization while also managing the associated risks.

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*“Over the course of the past year, we have met with hundreds of people representing Member States, private and public organizations, civil society groups, and activists on the front lines. We have been inspired by their work, their ideas, and their dedication to reimagining a breakthrough for our world.”*

Our point of departure is not one of disruption. The overall thrust of our report is to rebuild trust in the multilateral system with the United Nations at its core. We want to add value to existing structures and systems. But we are firm in our twin propositions that effective multilateralism must draw its strength and legitimacy from greater inclusion and offer representative majorities meaningful opportunities to shape global decision-making. Today's multilateralism should extend beyond States to include and obligate a broader range of global and local actors who will be crucial in delivering the breakthrough we need.

We also propose that our global governance system be redesigned around equitable access to global public goods, allowing all people, everywhere to benefit from our collective resources, knowledge, and security. And we advocate for mission-focused governance that holds us to account for our commitments.

In particular, we want to emphasize the need to invest in Sustainable Development Goal 5: achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Ensuring women's equal rights and representation is not only morally right, but also the smart thing to do. We want to place gender equality and equity at the heart of the global multilateral architecture. The transformative shifts that we are proposing will not happen unless the capacities and resources of all people are fully mobilized.



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown. "Ensuring women's equal rights and representation is not only morally right, but also the smart thing to do."

Over the course of the past year, we have met with hundreds of people representing Member States, private and public organizations, civil society groups, and activists on the front lines. We have been inspired by their work, their ideas, and their dedication to reimagining a breakthrough for our world. Many of our recommendations have been developed within these networks and reflect years of effort. We were especially inspired by the ideas put forward by youth and have worked to make their views an integral part of our report. We hope that our report offers an entry point for new thinking and an example of the kind of inclusive, networked approaches we hope will become the norm of multilateralism going forward.

We firmly believe that international cooperation is the only way forward. This report defends investments in issues of global concern, in a healthy planet, in sustainable development for people, in just digital and energy transitions, and in peace — not war. Multilateralism can work, but it must work better and faster.

Our report is fully aligned with all other international efforts that support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we hope to contribute to the momentum behind the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2023.

The Summit of the Future in 2024 offers yet another opportunity for UN Member States to transform our current global breakdown into a breakthrough for people and planet. We urge political leaders to build on the ideas in this report to forge a bold vision for the future. Ultimately, we cannot meet our collective challenges by acting alone. Greater cooperation is the only path to our mutually assured survival.

*Ellen Johnson Sirleaf*

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

*Stefan Löfven*

Stefan Löfven

# Executive Summary

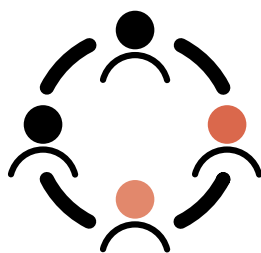


Photo: © Charlize D/peopleimages.com – stock.adobe.com.

**World leaders came together in 2020 at the 75th anniversary of the United Nations to advance a vision of strengthened international cooperation in the service of planet and people and pledged to pursue this goal with new ambition and moral courage. This report draws inspiration from the UN75 declaration and seeks to re-imagine global governance for current and future generations.**

The proposals of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism offer a pathway to revitalize and position the multilateral system at and beyond the Summit of the Future. They suggest that global governance must evolve into a less hierarchical, more networked system wherein decision-making is distributed, and where the efforts of a large number of different actors are harnessed towards a collective mission.

The Summit of the Future will be a rare opportunity to reaffirm and recommit to effective multilateralism as the only way to guarantee our collective survival. As a starting point, this report outlines **ten constituent principles of effective multilateralism**: people-centered, representative, transparent, equitable, networked, resourced, mission-focused, flexible, accountable, and future-oriented. These principles are integrated into **six transformative shifts** that can help tackle the challenges facing us today and those on the horizon.



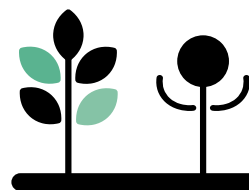

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### **Shift One: Rebuild trust in multilateralism through inclusion and accountability.**

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To be effective, global governance must become more inclusive, networked, and accountable. This report offers specific steps to:

- › Ensure that “we the peoples” are better represented in the multilateral system by placing gender equality at the heart of the multilateral architecture, creating more meaningful space for the participation of civil society, and by supporting a UN Youth Office with greater accountability structures for youth inclusion;
- › Design institutions, policies, and practices that represent and account for future generations;
- › Provide formal status to cities, subnational governments, and private sector actors in key multilateral processes; and
- › Shift towards qualified decision-making on crucial issues of global concern and agree to a code of conduct on inclusive multilateral processes.




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### **Shift Two: Deliver for people and planet by regaining balance with nature and providing clean energy for all.**

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The triple planetary crisis is accelerating and intensifying. We now face irreversible tipping points that put our collective future at risk. Based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, our report offers a comprehensive set of steps to put us on track to regain balance with the planet. This report proposes:

- › A call to conclude a pact for people and planet with an ambitious set of measurable targets to address the triple planetary crisis and a means of holding all actors accountable;
- › A decarbonization package to radically increase our investment in clean energy, shift incentives away from carbon-based fuels, and accelerate the transition to a post-fossil fuel era;
- › A set of reforms to the global trade and intellectual property architecture that would allow for free flow of the technology necessary for a just, green transition and provide immediate capacities and incentives to developing countries; and
- › An elevation of the environment within the multilateral system to generate the resources, accountability, and networked responses needed for a global shift to a circular economy.



### Shift Three: Ensure sustainable finance that delivers for all.

Our ability to deliver for people and planet, remain resilient in the face of successive global shocks, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires significant shifts in our global financial architecture. This starts with the recognition that no government, sector, or institution acting alone can underwrite the global investments needed. Drawing on the momentum of ongoing reform efforts, this report proposes:

- ▶ A repurposing of the multilateral development bank system to catalyse a new generation of public and private investments in global public goods;
- ▶ A strengthening of the global financial safety net to offer greater and more equitable access to international funding during times of crisis, including through regular issuances of special drawing rights;
- ▶ Major governance changes at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to improve representation and legitimacy;
- ▶ Strengthening of the global debt architecture, including through a platform for debt treatment, improvements to debt transparency, and better safeguards on credit rating agencies; and
- ▶ Strengthened regulatory frameworks for financial flows, and global taxation reforms.



### Shift Four: Support a just digital transition that unlocks the value of data and protects against digital harms.

The global digital transformation can bring about important advancements for our collective well-being, but also poses some of the most important risks to our aspirations of safe, inclusive growth and an end to inequalities globally. This report recommends steps to support a just digital transition, including through:

- ▶ The creation of a Global Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization;
- ▶ An expansion of the definition of threats to peace and security to include digital harms, and strengthening of the capacity of judiciaries to respond;
- ▶ Convergence on principles for data governance through a Global Data Compact; and
- ▶ The establishment of a data impact hub to respond more swiftly to global crises.

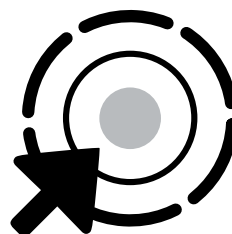




### Shift Five: Empower equitable, effective collective security arrangements.

If the multilateral system is to position itself to effectively deliver on peace as a global public good, it must be based upon a definition of collective security that reflects the political, economic, social, environmental, and technological threats facing us today. This report proposes:

- › Reforms to the UN Security Council to bring it in line with the principles of legitimacy, equity, and modernization, and a significant expansion of the UN’s peacebuilding mandates to address the broader range of conflict drivers globally;
- › A collective security framework between the UN and major regional bodies, establishing a more strategic and realistic basis for large scale investments in peace at the regional level;
- › A multistakeholder transparency platform to build trust via a common assessment of security risks; and
- › A renewed commitment to the global norm against the use of nuclear weapons and a commitment to “no first use” by all nuclear States. The report calls for setting a date for total denuclearization, which must translate into a concrete vision of a world without nuclear weapons, and identifies concrete steps towards strengthening and accelerating denuclearization.



### Shift Six: Strengthen governance for current and emerging transnational risks.

Today’s multilateral system is lagging behind emerging and fast-moving trends, unable to anticipate and respond to risks before they escalate beyond our control. To build a more nimble and responsive system, this report proposes:

- › Steps to broaden our understanding of and response to the growing security risks posed by climate change;
- › A global pandemic threats council accompanied by an independent monitoring capacity;
- › Global agreement on bio-risk management standards and a common scientific advisory process for biological weapons;
- › A timeline for the development of a global architecture for AI design, development, and use based on common standards and approaches;
- › An accelerated formalization of regulations on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, as well as a ban on non-human control of nuclear weapons platform launches; and
- › A global strategy on transnational organized crime across the multilateral system.

# Six Transformative Shifts for a More Secure and Sustainable Future

**When the United Nations was established in 1945, its core purpose was to prevent military aggression by creating a collective security response based on the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. That concept of collective security is as important today as ever, but the context has evolved significantly over the past 77 years.**

Today, the threats to global stability are understood as far broader and more diverse than military aggression between nation States. In addition to the risks of the continued build-up of weapons and direct military confrontation, a range of non-military factors influence human security and our collective well-being, including deepening social, economic, and political inequalities; uneven and inadequate progress on our SDGs; global shocks caused by the impacts of climate change and environmental damage; global health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic; poor governance and backsliding on human rights; foreign interference in the internal affairs of States; large-scale demographic shifts and population movements; transnational organized crime and massive illicit financial flows; and transformative shocks presented by new technologies.<sup>1</sup>

Many of these threats have a specific and disproportionate impact on women and girls, creating greater challenges to their security while providing them with fewer resources with which to cope. If the core goal of the United Nations in 1945 was to prevent the massive human suffering resulting from world wars, the goal of the United Nations today must be to prevent the human suffering and global instability caused by the aforementioned multiple, interrelated threats to our collective security.

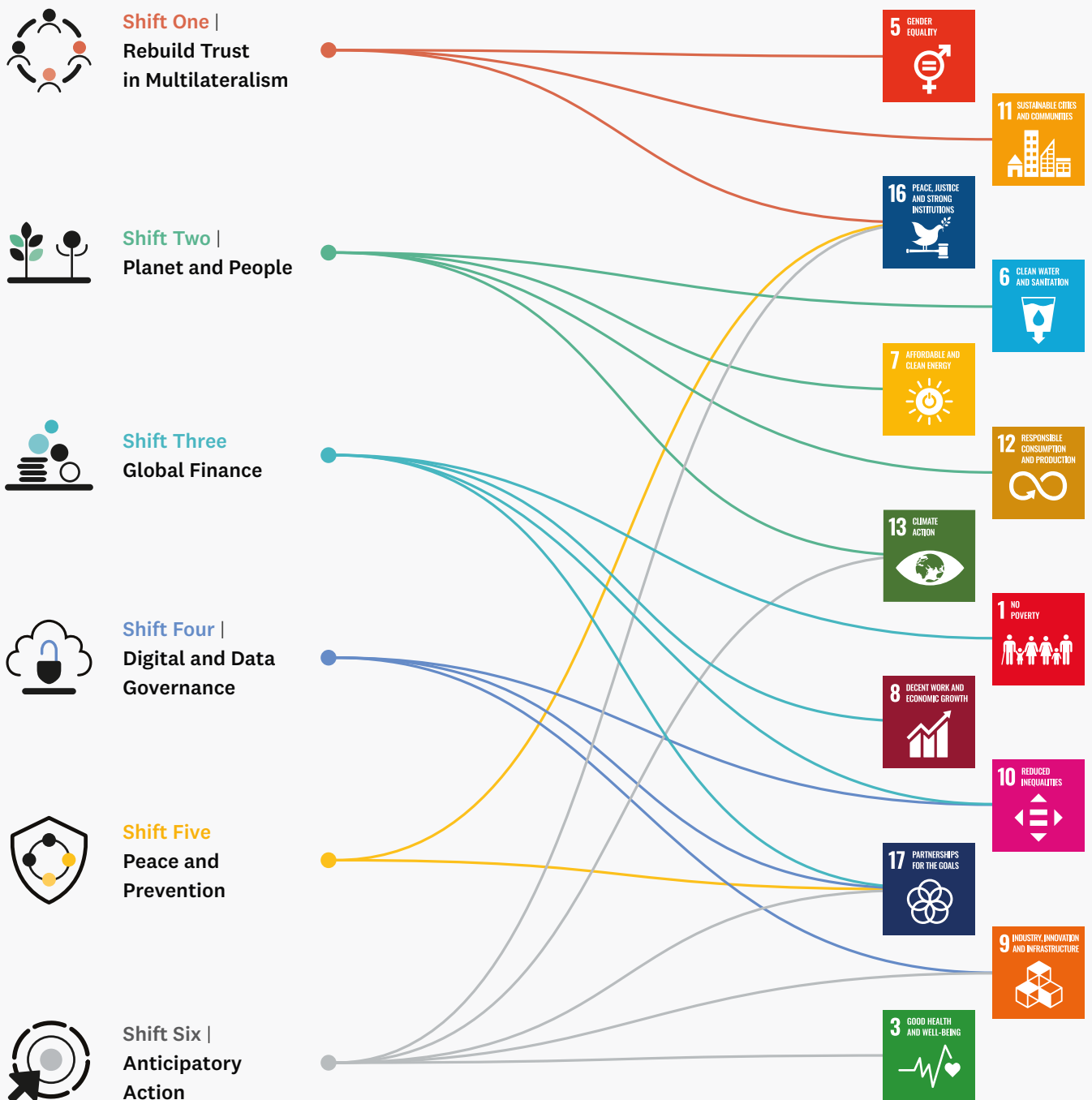
Achieving this goal requires a paradigm shift. If the birth of the nuclear age showed us the existential risks of mutually assured destruction, today's concept of collective security is its opposite: **mutually assured survival is the only pathway to sustainable safety.** We must stop thinking in narrow, nationalistic frames and accept that our collective survival depends on equitable investments in peace and sustainable development as global public goods.<sup>2</sup> This is a **vision of positive peace**, where investments gradually shift away from military spending and towards those activities that will build more resilient, flourishing societies.<sup>3</sup> It means reaching a balance between people and planet, and new approaches to our global economy that can sustain us all together. And it means harnessing the potential of the digital world while warding off the existential risks posed by rapidly accelerating technological evolution.

It may seem paradoxical to call for such a vision at a time of intense geopolitical competition and dramatic rises in military spending. But this Board believes the growing risks of fracture and polarization demand a new mindset. This is a clear-eyed recognition that today's geopolitics pose an unacceptable risk to us all. It is a demand that we cooperate because humanity cannot afford not to.

The Summit of the Future is a rare opportunity to collectively reaffirm and recommit to inclusive, effective multilateralism as the only means to deliver this vision. Now is the time to deliver on six interrelated shifts across the multilateral system, thereby positioning global governance to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

# The Six Transformative Shifts

The six transformative shifts are closely aligned with the SDGs and support *Our Common Agenda*, the United Nations Secretary-General's vision on the future of global cooperation.



# Shift One | Rebuild Trust in Multilateralism

Improve Legitimacy and Effectiveness through Inclusion and Accountability



*“Effective multilateralism is only possible if ... women and men are equally and meaningfully represented.”*



**The Board’s extensive consultations surfaced a clear call for a multilateral system that is people- and planet-centred, delivering tangible results for all while driving a circular, sustainable global economy.**

To be people-centred, it also must be radically and systematically inclusive, offering meaningful opportunities for participation in global decision-making by all States, civil society, private sector actors, local and regional governments, and other groups that have been traditionally excluded from global governance. We must accept that individual aspirations are no longer principally mediated by national governments, though States continue to play a central role. Each one of us is simultaneously a stakeholder in multiple overlapping communities. Our vision of networked and inclusive multilateralism makes room for representatives of these communities in global governance.

Inclusive, effective multilateralism is more than merely adding seats around a table. It requires a fundamental transformation towards more distributed, networked decision-making for our collective well-being. It recognizes that in many areas, the future of global governance will not be based on worldwide unity or top-down control, but rather on connectivity across distinct domains, communities, and spheres of influence. Drawing inspiration from extensive consultations, this Board has identified key interlinked principles that should guide this transformation and contribute to rebuilding trust in the multilateral system. The recommendations throughout this report proceed from these principles.

### ● Recommendation 1. **Represent “we the peoples” in the multilateral system.**

Over the course of our consultations, no issue received greater advocacy than the need to make the multilateral system more inclusive of groups that have been traditionally left out or marginalized. The full range of proposals offered to the Board can be found on our website. Several impactful actions that could be adopted in the lead up to the Summit of the Future are highlighted here.

**Strengthen the multilateral architecture for gender equality and equity.** Gender equality and equity changes the lives of all women, men, boys, and girls, increasing their capabilities and choices, and supporting sustainable solutions to the current global and interrelated crises. Efforts to strengthen gender equality are transformative because they promote inclusiveness more broadly. It is now widely accepted that reducing gender disparities goes hand-in-hand with higher economic growth, greater economic stability and resilience, and lower income inequality. And there is overwhelming evidence that equal representation and inclusion is fundamental to effective multilateralism.<sup>5</sup>

Over the past 30 years, the multilateral system has developed a set of structures to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.<sup>6</sup> Yet progress towards gender equality continues to be far too slow. It is worrying that much of the multilateral system’s efforts on gender equality remain siloed in gender-specific processes, subject to frequent renegotiation, and without the resources to hold us all accountable for our commitments.<sup>7</sup>

## Principles of Effective Multilateralism

Effective multilateralism is:

1

**PEOPLE-CENTRED:** delivering tangible results for people, responding to their needs and reflecting their priorities; measuring impact from the viewpoint of people; empowering women and girls, and youth; and systematically recognizing different voices in society.

2

**REPRESENTATIVE:** deriving legitimacy from meaningful representation and a clear role in decision-making for all stakeholders; and allowing representative majorities to make and implement decisions in the face of minority opposition where necessary to deliver on issues of global concern.<sup>4</sup>

3

**TRANSPARENT:** building open, common assessments of global risks; and ensuring universal access to public data and knowledge to deliver global public goods.

4

**EQUITABLE:** recognizing common but differentiated responsibilities to address issues of global concern; prioritizing delivery for vulnerable and historically excluded communities; and upholding the fundamental principles of gender equality and respect for human rights.

5

**NETWORKED:** bringing constellations of States and non-State actors together to achieve goals; encouraging exploration and innovation in response to issues of global concern; drawing on existing resources, structures, and knowledge to aggregate effort; encouraging constructive competition; and streamlining global and regional engagement.

6

**RESOURCED:** generating sufficient public and private financial flows to maintain, protect, and deliver global public goods, including key planetary resources; making available new and necessary technologies; and driving convergence on global rules and norms for people and planet.

7

**MISSION-FOCUSED:** building a common understanding of the tasks needed to achieve success; setting clear, measurable targets with meaningful benchmarks for assessing progress; and providing resources to implement and measure change.

8

**FLEXIBLE:** allowing sub-groupings of States to explore, innovate, and implement new approaches to global problems for broader deliberation and adoption.

9

**ACCOUNTABLE:** adopting common, enforceable rules that cannot be broken with impunity by any actor and which are reinforced by empowered, legitimate bodies and processes; and recognizing the crucial role that incentives, rules, and norms play together in influencing behaviour.

10

**FUTURE-ORIENTED:** responding to emerging risks and new global shocks quickly by harnessing networks of actors to generate resources and action in a timely fashion; and putting in place structures and processes that can evolve over time to meet the needs of future generations.

At the current rate, it will take 132 years to reach gender parity in the workforce.<sup>8</sup> Global megatrends like climate change, livelihood shifts, demographic changes, and the pandemic have a distinct and often worse impact on women and girls.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, violence against women has its roots in inequality, which still affects one in three women globally, with far higher rates in fragile, conflict-affected areas.<sup>10</sup>

Effective multilateralism is only possible if SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) is fully implemented and women and men are equally and meaningfully represented across the leadership and core work of all institutions and processes of global governance. The recommendations in this report reflect the pressing and continuous pursuit of full gender equality.

Several specific actions can be taken to address existing shortcomings. This Board proposes that the Summit of the Future include clear steps to place gender equality and equity at the heart of the multilateral architecture, including through:

- ▶ A recommitment to the Beijing Platform of Action which states that governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector must safeguard women's rights and ensure that gender is taken into account in all national, regional, and international policies and programmes. This should be accompanied by systematic follow-up and a more ambitious set of implementation markers.
- ▶ A declaration that effective multilateralism is only possible if women and men are equally and meaningfully represented across the leadership and core work of all institutions of global governance. Quotas and temporary special measures are a proven approach to reaching gender parity across the multilateral system. The declaration should be complemented by a commitment to generate, collect, and analyse data that track gender-specific goals and targets across all multilateral investments.
- ▶ A conditioning of UN support to peace processes on the full, equal, and meaningful inclusion of women by all parties in all stages of a peace process.<sup>11</sup>

- ▶ A commitment by all Member States to a whole-of-society approach on gender equality at the national level, including through the introduction and systematic use of gender-responsive budgeting systems for all macroeconomic plans and public governance.<sup>12</sup>

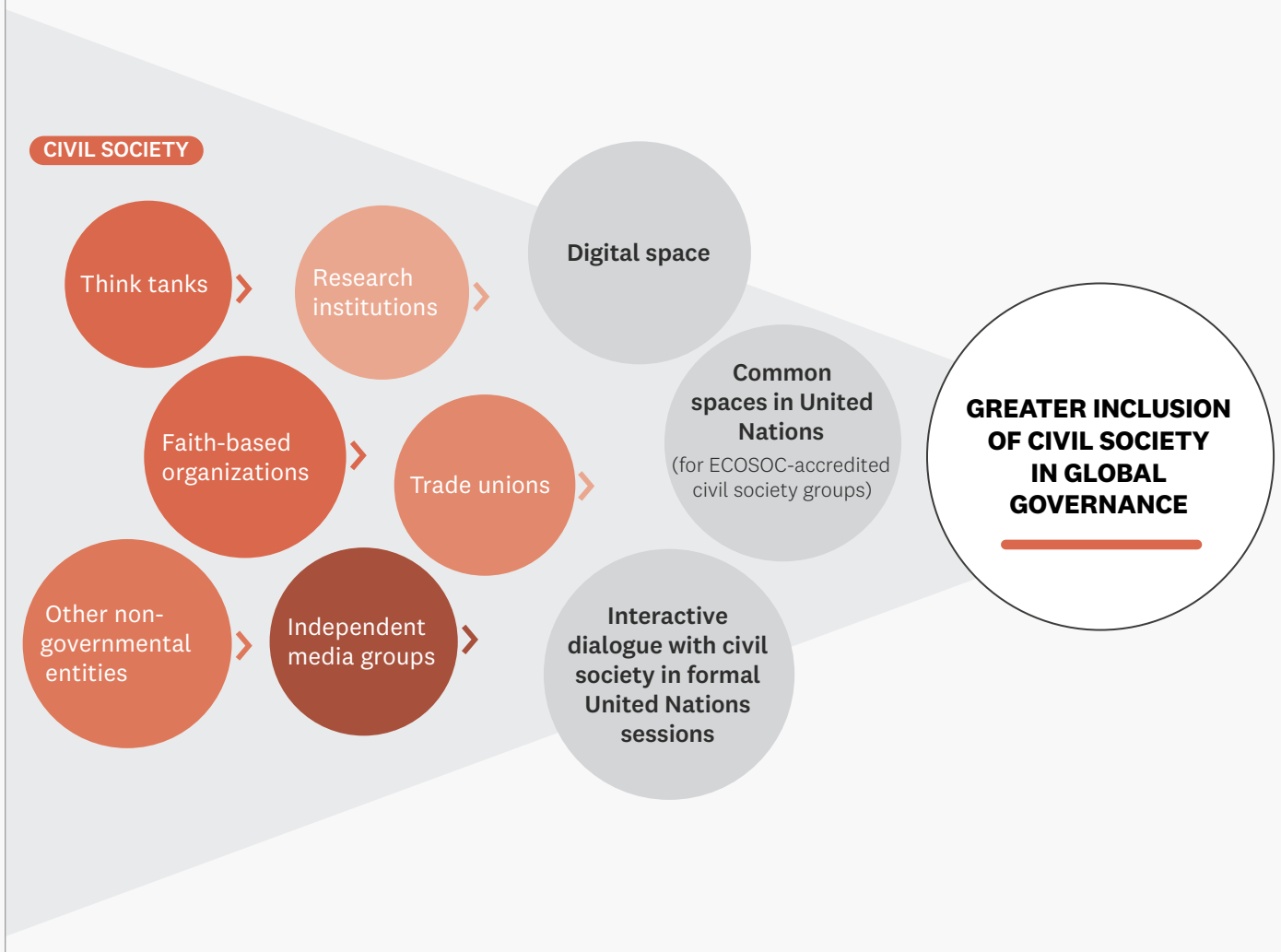
Taken together, these changes would hold the international community more accountable for its gender commitments. Also, it would help ensure that gender equality and equity are incorporated in national and multilateral processes worldwide.

**Give more voice to civil society.** Our consultations surfaced a consistent call for greater inclusion of civil society in the core work of global governance. "Civil society" is broadly defined here to mean non-governmental organizations operating in the civic space, such as trade unions, faith-based organizations, Indigenous networks, research institutions, think tanks, independent media groups, and other types of non-governmental entities.<sup>13</sup> There are a number of concrete steps that could improve inclusion of civil society, such as: (a) using digital space to involve more groups in United Nations processes; (b) formally including Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)-accredited civil society groups in common spaces in the United Nations; and (c) building interactive dialogue with civil society into formal United Nations sessions.<sup>14</sup>

These and other actions to more meaningfully include civil society in the multilateral system should be systematically linked into a network of formally recognized civil society focal points across the major institutions of the United Nations system, reflecting a system-wide strategy for civil society inclusion.<sup>15</sup>

Faith-based and charitable organizations play a significant role in providing public services, extending critical safety nets, peacemaking, and environmental efforts in many countries. Such organizations should continue to be engaged as multi-faith stakeholders in discussions and implementation, within and across countries, and as part of multilateral efforts.

## Improving the Inclusion of Civil Society in Global Decision-making



### **Give refugees and forcibly displaced persons a say in decisions that affect their futures.**

Refugees should be included in peace processes and peacebuilding initiatives, including post-conflict reconstruction. Multilateral support to peacebuilding should encourage meaningful participation and representation of these groups. Their participation in peacebuilding and in post-conflict reconstruction improves the prospect of sustainable return.

### **Accountability towards youth in global decision-making.**

The legitimacy and effectiveness of the multilateral system depends on more meaningfully including youth — not only in the spaces of global governance, but also in its decision-making processes. This Board strongly supports the ongoing creation of the United Nations Youth Office, which will play an important role in driving youth coordination and advocacy for youth inclusion in multilateralism.

### **Accountability for youth inclusion and youth-focused engagement across the multilateral system remains a key gap.**

The Youth Office should offer creative incentives to encourage youth involvement, especially from under-represented regions — such as through youth-focused fellowship programmes, grants, paid internships, innovation prizes, and positions on high-level processes, which could become a mandatory part of every multilateral process. The Youth Envoy and Office could be complemented by an intergovernmental committee on youth, offering a global platform for young voices in the General Assembly to co-create the United Nations agenda on youth with Member States. **The Summit of the Future is an opportunity to commit to transparent, public accounting on our commitments to youth**, beyond accounting of the Youth2030 reports, regular reporting on progress on the World Programme of



Action for Youth, and strong resources to the Youth Office to ensure its work can be scaled up sufficiently. This could begin with Member States appointing at least one young person in their delegations for the Summit of the Future, both in the preparatory phases and the Summit itself.

#### **A strategy to implement children’s rights.**

Children are the only group with a specific human rights treaty that lacks a dedicated United Nations-wide strategy to ensure coherence, implement obligations, and protect rights across the multilateral system. This shortcoming undermines the Secretary-General’s call for a renewed social contract that is “anchored in a comprehensive approach to human rights” and constitutes a significant hole in global governance. A United Nations-wide approach to children’s rights is crucial to reinforce the organization’s capacity to support Member States’ actions at the national level, and to orient global governance towards the future. As a step towards development of such a strategy, clear guidance on mainstreaming children’s rights across the multilateral system should be prioritized. **The Summit of the Future should consider how children’s rights to food, health, and education can be protected globally.**<sup>16</sup>

**A future-fit multilateral system.** The most excluded group in the multilateral system is the set of generations yet to be born, despite our commitment to “succeeding generations” in the United Nations Charter. *Our Common Agenda* calls for a radical transformation of global governance, representing the needs and interests of future generations across all its work. This requires three related steps: (1) a normative recognition of the rights of future generations, which should be a centrepiece of the outcome declaration at the Summit of the Future; (2) the design of future-fit organizations and processes that meaningfully include long-term analysis, goal-setting, and impact assessments;<sup>17</sup> and (3) a system of accountability that will hold all actors responsible for their commitments to future generations. In this context, this Board strongly supports the Secretary-General’s intention to appoint an Envoy for Future Generations, and proposes that the position be provided with a broad mandate to hold the multilateral system to account for commitments to future generations, and resourced to lead future-oriented analyses and build capacities.

## ● Recommendation 2. **A role for cities and subnational regions in multilateralism.**

Cities and other local and regional governments (LRGs) are the frontline of much of today’s global governance, responsible for addressing the impacts of climate change, socioeconomic inequalities, health risks, violence, migration flows, and demographic changes. They are at the core of the social contract and will continue to grow in importance as the world urbanizes.<sup>18</sup> Cities also have demonstrated a remarkable ability to create effective global networks,<sup>19</sup> yet they remain largely sidelined in the formal mechanisms of global governance.<sup>20</sup> There is, however, a growing appetite among United Nations entities and regional commissions to involve LRGs in stakeholder consultation processes. This Board supports the ongoing efforts to develop an Advisory Group to the Secretary-General on Local and Regional Governments and proposes two interrelated steps that would meaningfully bring subnational governments into global governance without diluting the central role played by States.

#### **A special status for cities and regions.**

The Summit of the Future can identify relevant institutions and processes where LRGs are offered a formal and permanent status, independent of civil society and non-governmental organizations, notably in the areas of the environment, global health, migration, refugee response, addressing transnational organized crime, and sustainable development. Consideration should be given to involving LRGs directly in relevant multilateral treaty processes, allowing them to become signatories with responsibilities in much the same way the current plastics treaty is looking to involve and obligate the private sector.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Invigorate the localization agenda of 2030.**

While local and regional governments are at the forefront of implementing Agenda 2030, often they lack necessary resources. Localization — used here to mean the process of including and resourcing local authorities — should be explicitly part of national commitments on Agenda 2030.



Photo: Angus Wall. Cities are often on the frontline of today's challenges, including climate change and socioeconomic inequalities.

The Summit of the Future could recognize this central role played by local and regional governments and make specific commitments around partnering and supporting them going forward.<sup>22</sup>

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● **Recommendation 3.**  
**Include and obligate the private sector.**

Our global governance system has a glaring hole: the private sector. Companies of all sizes drive advancements in new technologies; energy, industrial, and agricultural companies are responsible for a huge portion of our global carbon emissions and pollution; banks and finance companies handle our global financial flows; and private companies deliver most of our goods. But our multilateral treaties largely ignore these actors, wrongly assuming that State action is sufficient to regulate this global

network of private actors. Even when the private sector is engaged, this engagement is often based on their size or clout, not necessarily the positive role they might play in addressing issues of global concern. The result is a system where a relatively small number of large private sector actors can influence processes without being held to account. This must change.

A first step is to **identify multilateral processes where the private sector should be directly involved**. Good examples of this include the tripartite governance structure of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (involving States, employers, and employee organizations) and the current negotiations on a plastics treaty, where major polluting industries have a seat at the table and where all workers in the life cycle of production are taken into account.<sup>23</sup> While this form of inclusion should be approached carefully, participation of the private sector is an unavoidable and necessary aspect of more effective multilateralism and would enable greater accountability in areas of global concern.<sup>24</sup>

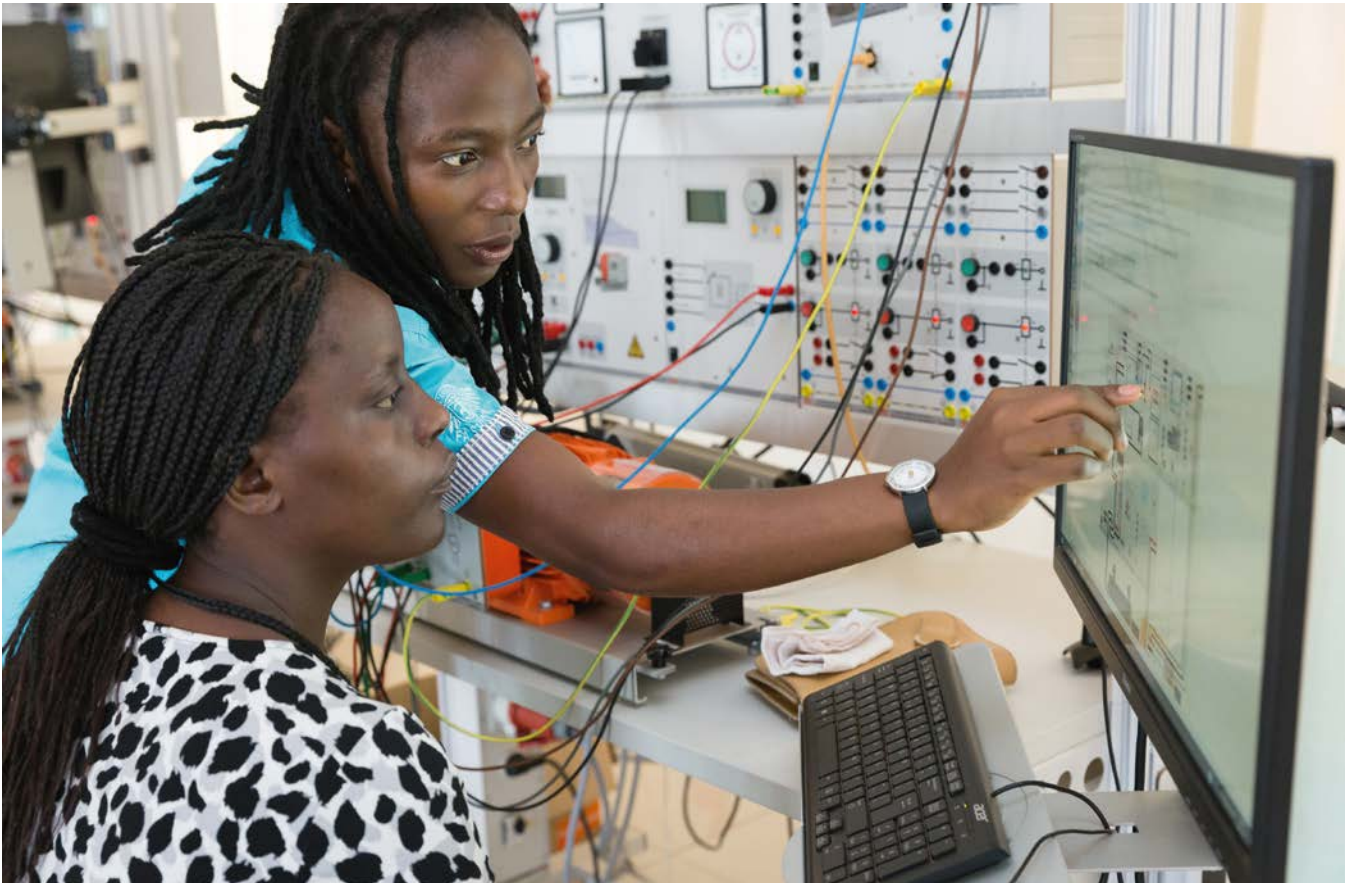


Photo: Kelley Lynch / World Bank. "Our global governance system has a glaring hole: the private sector."

The United Nations should also more **systematically identify private sector actors playing a positive role in addressing issues of global concern**, helping to highlight their work and connect them to multilateral processes. For example, in the context of the Net Zero for non-State Actors process, the United Nations could track companies that offer innovative approaches to reaching net zero, helping to promote positive work globally.<sup>25</sup> This should include a specific focus on smaller businesses, highlighting more local practices that could be scaled up or supported at the global level.

Many existing initiatives worldwide are taking on a significant aspect of the global governance needs identified here. A dedicated page is available on the website of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism where the many ideas and proposals received can be reviewed. Wherever possible, stakeholders should draw on this work and attempt to connect and network ongoing initiatives rather than create parallel tracks. This report is designed to be complementary of the existing tracks of the *Our Common Agenda*, helping to accelerate the SDGs and hold us responsible for the commitments at the heart of our multilateral system.

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#### ● Recommendation 4. More effective decision-making.

A frequent obstacle to more effective multilateralism is the overreliance on decisions by consensus, which has been interpreted in many settings to mean unanimity without objection.<sup>26</sup> While ostensibly a reflection of collective decision-making, in practice this highly inefficient and unfair approach allows a small number of States to block action that is clearly needed to address issues of global concern. It has led to stagnation on denuclearization, hampered more equitable global finance, and enabled a minority to obstruct meaningful action on the environment. This does not mean there is no place for consensus; in some settings, it is an important mechanism to protect against excesses of power and prevent impunity. But where consensus prevents equitable and effective decision-making on issues of global concern, alternatives must be found.

**The Summit of the Future should identify key processes to be shifted to qualified majority, double majority, or non-unanimous definitions of consensus voting systems.**

While making every effort to achieve unanimous decisions in all multilateral forums, our response to issues of global concern cannot be decided by a small number who benefit from the status quo. Shifting towards qualified majorities, or a new definition of consensus that does not require unanimity in the case of deadlock in multilateral processes, could help to address long-standing shortcomings in environmental governance,<sup>27</sup> the Conference on Disarmament's meetings on denuclearization, international financial institutions, and other areas noted throughout this report. Such a shift would constitute a significant improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of global governance.

**The Summit of the Future could also include agreement to develop a code of conduct for negotiating international agreements on issues of global concern** that would consolidate

commitments on data transparency, reliance on independent scientific research, gender parity, and inclusion of a range of traditionally marginalized groups (youth, women, civil society, smaller States, and local and regional authorities).<sup>28</sup> This code of conduct also should help to increase accountability from the outset by establishing standardized implementation and enforcement processes, pairing commitments with the resources and capacities to track implementation. Such a step would help to address long-standing criticism that international negotiations lack teeth and allow for open-ended commitments without accountability.

**The Summit of the Future should take account of the crucial importance of regional actors within the multilateral system.**

While having widely differing capacities, regional organizations have a special set of responsibilities and roles that make them indispensable for addressing issues of global concern. The meaningful political and financial investment in regional bodies proposed in this report would align the United Nations system with the principle of subsidiarity, deliver greater legitimacy across the multilateral system, and address many of the shortcomings in global governance identified in *Our Common Agenda*.

## Principles in Action

### Networked, Flexible, and Future-Oriented Approaches for Effective Decision-Making

We are in a renewed era of exploration and use of outer space, with active programmes to return humans to the Moon and to take the first steps beyond. Space assets have transformed the way we live. We have become increasingly dependent on space science and technology applications at all levels of activity and daily life. Space systems are vital for understanding and solving global problems, and for the implementation of the SDGs and climate action. These uses of outer space are expanding exponentially, driven by the industrial, commercial, and private sectors, who are now increasingly significant actors in a USD 400 billion space economy. As integral as space is to socioeconomic development, outer space remains an arena for geo-political and strategic competition, as technical developments and their dual-use nature create new risks to security, safety, and sustainability of outer space activities.

The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), established in 1959 as a permanent body under the General Assembly, is the instrumental platform for developing, through consensus, the global governance of outer space activities. This consensus model can make it more difficult to introduce new agenda items and debates on controversial-but-critical developments related to outer space. It is widely recognized that the good governance of outer space will increasingly require the inclusion of experts beyond the Committee membership.

COPUOS could consider innovating its procedural framework to facilitate broader and more regular consultations with diverse stakeholder groups. Such engagement models already exist. The Security Council deemed it necessary to create a mechanism to obtain valuable information from

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*“It is widely recognized that the good governance of outer space will increasingly require the inclusion of experts beyond the Committee membership.”*

Security Council outsiders; “Arria Formula”<sup>29</sup> meetings have provided the Security Council with a working method to take advantage of expertise and information outside formal meetings. Arria Formula meetings have not only been used to introduce outside views, but they are also an accepted meeting format when there is no agreement for a formal meeting.

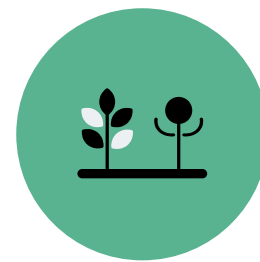
A model for broader operational stakeholder inclusion should also be considered for COPUOS to ensure that it remains at the forefront of developments. Investing in inclusion will also support meaningful and results-driven exchanges on effective governance models and operational requirements among governmental and non-governmental actors. COPUOS could adopt Arria Formula meetings as a means of gathering candid, expert views through more regular exchanges with stakeholders in a confidential setting. This small innovation could help the Committee achieve its goals while also enhancing its working methods.

# Shift Two | Planet and People

Regain Balance with Nature  
and Provide Clean Energy for All



*“All of us will benefit collectively if we treat a healthy planet as a global public good ...”*



**The triple planetary crisis is accelerating and intensifying. Due to human activity, our climate is warming towards levels well above the crucial 1.5-degree threshold; our biodiversity is being destroyed at the fastest rate in human history; and we are polluting our land, air, and water at unsustainable levels. The triple planetary crisis has created an inequitable burden for women in particular, exacerbating existing disparities in a world already beset by inequalities.**

Since the world’s first climate treaty in 1992, more than three decades of inaction have turned our planetary challenge into an existential crisis. Meanwhile, the gap between needs and action widens as fossil fuel production and unsustainable industrial production continue to soar. We now face irreversible tipping points in our global ecosystem, including the melting of the Antarctic ice sheets, tropical coral reef collapse, and the large-scale loss of rainforests.<sup>30</sup> The impacts are clear and horrifying: biodiversity loss is undermining the well-being of billions of people, pollution costs nine million lives per year, and entire countries risk being swallowed by rising sea levels in only a few years.<sup>31</sup> Without a radical change in our relationship with the planet, our collective future is at risk.

Our starting point for an equitable, green transition is the recognition that countries and communities who have benefited most from decades of planetary exploitation have a special responsibility. The Paris Agreement is clear that governance of our environment should be taken forward on the basis of “common but differentiated responsibilities”.<sup>32</sup>

Women and Indigenous peoples are pivotal agents of global environmental change, playing a significant role in securing food supplies, mitigating the effects of climate change, and safeguarding biodiversity. Their essential role should result in specific opportunities to engage in decision-making, policymaking, and access to finance for a just and sustainable transition to a circular economy.

This is not a zero-sum game. All of us will benefit collectively if we treat a healthy planet as a global public good, building a networked and inclusive governance system to protect it, ensuring equitable access to resources, and living within its boundaries sustainably.<sup>33</sup> To flourish as a species, we must regain balance with nature and with one another, treating ecosystems as a primary asset for securing our collective well-being. Indeed, the recent breakthrough in agreeing to the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (Oceans) Treaty is evidence that principles of equity and collective responsibility for the planet can be the basis for our international legal obligations.<sup>34</sup>

A circular economy that delivers for all is our only pathway to achieving the SDGs, global security, and prosperity. This is the basis of the General Assembly resolution recognizing the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, which signals the interconnectedness of the well-being of people and a healthy planet.<sup>35</sup> Our responsibilities to current and future generations can only be met if we act in trusteeship for the planet.

## ● Recommendation 1. Conclude a pact for people and planet.

We call on Member States to conclude **a pact for people and planet, pledging to hold us collectively accountable for implementing ambitious, measurable commitments to address the triple planetary crisis.<sup>36</sup> Such a declaration should be articulated at the upcoming 2023 Climate Ambition Summit and taken forward as an integral part of the Summit of the Future.** The pact should be led by a majority of the world's top State and non-State polluters, demonstrating a commitment to address the global environmental challenges facing us today.<sup>37</sup> It should recognize successful treaty and impact hub models, encouraging more democratic and effective approaches to environmental governance.<sup>38</sup> Reaffirming existing treaty obligations,<sup>39</sup> the pact should incorporate time-bound commitments to accelerate the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and other environmental agreements, with specific commitments to:

- Net-zero carbon emissions;
- A phase out of fossil fuels;
- Provision of energy to the 800 million people without access to electricity, prioritizing investment in clean energy at scale;<sup>40</sup>
- Zero loss of forest cover, zero deforestation, and a global incentive mechanism to protect standing forests;
- Biodiversity targets that respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities;
- Nature regeneration; and
- A pollution-free planet.

Taken together, these commitments would enable a global transformation towards a circular economy, helping to regain balance with the planet and ensure sustainable development for all. A more detailed version of this package with specific options is provided in Annex 1.

Ultimately, however, such commitments will only be meaningful if they are part of **a system of accountability that holds all actors responsible and generates behavioural change at the global level.** The pact should commit to including and holding accountable major industries and the private sector within multilateral agreements.<sup>41</sup> For example, it could lead to protocols to obligate private sector actors within existing treaties;<sup>42</sup> agree on globally enforceable science-based targets for industry;<sup>43</sup> empower a global network of bodies to ensure that the private sector discloses and meets its nature-based targets;<sup>44</sup> and/or generate city-specific targets that offer clear benchmarks for sub-national entities.<sup>45</sup> An important first step would be agreement on a roadmap for implementing the recommendations of the High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities.<sup>46</sup>

The following recommendations offer a pathway to meet these global environmental commitments.

## ● Recommendation 2. Equitably distribute clean energy.

If we are to transform our economy to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and Glasgow Pact and deliver energy to the 800 million people lacking electricity, a massive public and private investment that prioritizes a rapid transition to clean energy is required. This is proposed in Shift Three (below), which envisages public and private investment in clean energy and sustainable development. Specific to climate action, **the Summit of the Future should adopt the recommendations of the 2022 Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance**, which offer a clear sense of the scale of investments needed along with practical steps that should be taken by Member States and multilateral banks.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the enormous resources required, delivering a just, green transition requires shifts to improve access to technology, transfer knowledge, and lower the costs of renewables, including through the socially and environmentally



responsible production of key minerals. At the global governance level, a rules-based architecture should be developed to manage technological risks in line with the precautionary principle, prevent supply disruptions, and ensure equitable access to the benefits of clean energy. While the World Trade Organization (WTO) has some enforcement mechanisms in place, the current multilateral frameworks will not guarantee the supplies of clean energy needed for a worldwide energy transition. Building on current governance structures, **a global system for the fuels of the future** should be created, ensuring that countries can decarbonize their industries and economies while also promoting equity and cooperation. Specifically, this will require meaningful steps to lower the barriers around trade and intellectual property (IP) rights that currently enable monopolies and prevent equitable access to clean technology, including:

- ▶ **Reform of the global trade and intellectual property system.** Today's trade and intellectual property system allows for private monopoly of the crucial knowledge and technology that could accelerate an equitable shift to clean energy globally. There should be a global review of major bodies like the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), driven by an understanding that the technology for a green transition is a global public good. Ultimately, our governance of trade and IP should be reformed to regulate technology patents more effectively, increase limitations on patentability criteria to avoid privatization and/or enable distribution to those in need, and create incentives and disincentives to generate greater transparency and knowledge-sharing.
- ▶ **A global distributed renewable energy platform.** Distributed renewable energy (DRE) is an effective and well-established solution for energy access, offering lower costs and greater accessibility in many underserved parts of the world.<sup>48</sup> DRE supports local jobs, increases the resilience of electricity systems, and addresses the recurring costs of government subsidies to existing electricity grids. Creation of a DRE platform would dramatically lower the initial costs of investment and allow for

a massive scale-up and distribution of high-powered renewable energy that would increase interoperability, contribute to a fair-trade ecosystem, address IP issues equitably, create robust supply chains, pool funds, enable a global inventory of technology, and track emissions. This model is well articulated in, for example, the LDC Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative for Sustainable Development (LDC REEEI)<sup>49</sup> and could also take inspiration from the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) recent initiative in sub-Saharan Africa, which is already showing positive results.<sup>50</sup>

- ▶ **A green technology licensing facility** to expedite and reduce the barriers to a green transition. Creation of such a facility as a joint public/private initiative would help to address one of the greatest impediments to a just transition to clean energy in developing countries: licensing and IP restrictions in the technology sector.<sup>51</sup> The facility should prioritize licenses for technologies that have been co-developed and offer an opportunity for countries to agree on bilateral municipal, state, or national licensing arrangements.<sup>52</sup> It could be accompanied by a global green technology fellows programme to incentivize exchange and co-development of green technology.

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### ● Recommendation 3. Price and regulate carbon to accelerate a just, green transition.

The scale of action needed to achieve a just, green transition should not be underestimated. Even by the most conservative estimates, tens of trillions of dollars must be generated to meet the most basic mitigation needs of developing countries and implement our obligations under the Paris Agreement.<sup>53</sup> A critical first step is full implementation of the breakthrough agreement on "loss and damage" funding for vulnerable countries.<sup>54</sup> But this will not be enough. Specific actions must be taken to put a meaningful price on carbon, end the widespread practice of subsidizing fossil fuel production, enhance transparency around carbon generation and capture, and offer incentives to accelerate the shift to clean energy.

Drawing on the principles of effective multilateralism offered in this report, and aligned with the concept of countries doing their “fair share”,<sup>55</sup> **the Summit of the Future could advance agreement on a global decarbonizing package, including:**

- › A global system of carbon pricing to meet the Paris Agreement goals;
- › A global carbon incentive;
- › Shifting of subsidies from non-renewable to clean energy;
- › A global emissions liability management system;
- › Improved carbon-offset programming;
- › A transparent framework to define and ensure standards for the integrity of carbon credits; and
- › A phase-out plan for fossil fuels.

More details and some options for building such a package are outlined in Annex 2.

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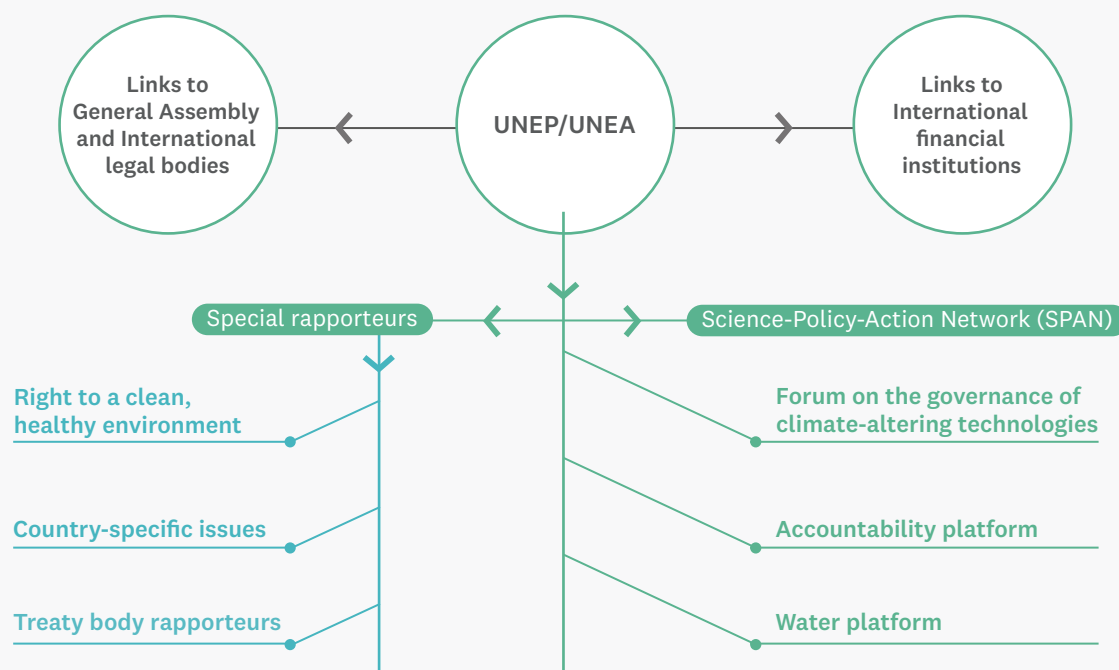
#### ● Recommendation 4. **Elevate the environment within the multilateral system.**

The central importance of the environment to all aspects of our lives and collective well-being must be accompanied by an elevation of the environment within our global governance system. This requires strengthening UNEP and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) with mandates and resources comparable to the United Nations’ development, peace and security, and human rights institutions. Specifically, **UNEP should be empowered to act as a more effective global environment agency**, able to track our interrelated impacts on the environment, consolidate and measure our commitments, condition our global financial investments, and drive a transformative agenda for people and planet across multilateralism.<sup>56</sup>

In line with the above principles of effective multilateralism, and to build a global environmental governance system that can deliver a just, green transition, **UNEP and UNEA could be elevated and strengthened along the following lines:**

- › **A bolstered monitoring/accountability role.** To uphold the newly recognized right to a healthy, clean, sustainable environment, UNEP and UNEA should be provided with a special rapporteur group possessing mandates to investigate and report publicly on environmental violations. These bodies should be mandated to issue more regular public reporting on the gaps between international commitments and current trends, including those related to carbon emissions, pollution, and encroachments on protected sea and land areas.<sup>57</sup>
- › **Integration with the international financial system.** One of the major shortcomings of today’s environmental governance system is its lack of integration. Whereas organizations like WIPO, ILO, and the World Health Organization (WHO) have the mandates and ability to integrate across all relevant sectors, UNEP and UNEA are only loosely linked with a range of unrelated environmental instruments scattered across different legal and administrative bodies. Providing UNEP and UNEA with an advisory role for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) would help to integrate their work with the global financial system. This link could be achieved by agreeing on the set of environmental conditions that international finance would follow when providing resources.<sup>58</sup>
- › **A Science-Policy-Action Network for the planet.** UNEP should be resourced with a Science-Policy-Action Network (SPAN) to consolidate information regarding the triple planetary crisis into a coherent, constantly updated, actionable assessment of risks to the planet.<sup>59</sup> Such a body could act as a policy clearing house<sup>60</sup> to draw from existing bodies and generate recommended actions for governments and non-State actors in real time.<sup>61</sup> The SPAN would issue reports on horizon scanning and strategic foresight; trace environmental impacts, including on climate-driven security risks; use behavioural science to generate global shifts in our policies and practices; and offer clear, actionable

## Global Environmental Governance System



recommendations for policymakers.<sup>62</sup> Its mandate could include country-specific reports based on national commitments, a facility to feed into policy decision-making, and resources to build adaptation and green technological capacities in developing countries. Drawing on models like the Climate Trace initiative, the SPAN could track a broader range of environmentally harmful activities, including pollution of air, water, soil, and the seas; deforestation; desertification; destruction of protected habitats; safe production of critical minerals for renewable technologies; and violations of international environmental commitments.<sup>63</sup>

- **A public accountability platform for our planetary commitments.** Across the major environmental conventions, signatories should be held publicly accountable for their commitments and supported in their efforts to reach the core goals of net-zero carbon emissions, biodiversity protection and restoration, and a pollution-free planet.<sup>64</sup> This could be achieved by establishment of a UNEP-supported platform containing publicly available information, capacity-building for developing countries, information-sharing around best practices, and an annual reporting requirement to the General Assembly for all conventions.

- **A platform for water diplomacy.** Water is at the heart of the people/planet relationship and is a key aspect of many peace efforts around the world. Improving the global governance of water is crucial to addressing the triple planetary crisis and achieving the SDGs. Unfortunately, today's governance regime is outdated, fragmented, and unable to keep pace with the fast-moving trends affecting water worldwide. Building on the Global Commission on the Economics of Water,<sup>65</sup> an inclusive platform for water diplomacy should be established, offering a safe, neutral space to exchange on a wide range of water-related issues, including infrastructure (hydropower), water-sharing, combating water pollution, and safeguarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.<sup>66</sup> Such a platform should avoid reinforcing existing fragmentation of water governance, instead drawing on existing initiatives and resources, and could be included within a strengthened UNEP structure to ensure global coherence.<sup>67</sup>

- **A forum on the governance of climate-altering technologies.** Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have made clear that, absent far more radical changes to our economies, we are headed well beyond the 1.5-degree threshold. This has led some to consider a range of climate-altering technologies, including large-scale ongoing efforts at Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR). More speculative and potentially dangerous technologies like Solar Radiation Modification (SRM) are also being considered by some actors, though there is widespread scientific consensus that the risks of SRM are far too great to proceed without significant further research based on the precautionary principle.<sup>68</sup> A strengthened UNEP could better support dialogue on the governance of climate-altering technologies, drawing on a global network of scientific experts, and with a commitment from Member States to shape policies based on their findings.<sup>69</sup>
- **A global hub for the conservation, preservation, and dissemination of Indigenous knowledge, and its inclusion in policymaking processes.** Establishment of such a hub supported by UNEP would expand from UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme, and the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform under the umbrella of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which helps to amplify Indigenous voices and facilitate their participation in climate negotiation processes.<sup>70</sup>
- **Advancing environmental rights within the multilateral system.** The 2022 General Assembly resolution on the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment was a watershed moment demonstrating broad recognition of the central importance of the planet to the multilateral agenda. In the event of conflict between this right and profit-motivated exploitation of natural resources, the human right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment should prevail. To this end, international investment law should be realigned to avoid undermining the climate and environment goals in the Paris Agreement. The right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment, however, carries no legal weight

unless it is attached to judicial bodies at the international and national levels. Our proposal for an elevation of the environment within the multilateral system could be accompanied by specific steps to consolidate environmental rights within our current and future systems, some of which could include: (i) modernizing the International Court of Justice to better address global environmental issues;<sup>71</sup> (ii) codifying the human right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment in a new international treaty, or in a protocol to an existing treaty body;<sup>72</sup> (iii) inclusion of ecocide in the statute of the International Criminal Court; or (iv) a call for all Member States to codify the right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment in their national laws. Some of these efforts could be led by the newly created Envoy for Future Generations, linking environmental rights to normative and legal obligations to future generations.

# Shift Three | **Global Finance**

Ensure Sustainable Finance  
that Delivers for All



*“No government, sector, or institution acting alone can underwrite the global investments we require.”*



**The Summit of the Future is an opportunity to reconsider the reasons, places, and ways in which we invest. It is one in a series of events and global meetings that can shift the business-as-usual approach to global finance over the coming months.<sup>73</sup>**

Delivering critical global public goods and inclusive economic development requires significantly greater investment in a long-term vision of collective resilience.

The SDGs are an integral part of this vision. However, we must also draw lessons from recent global shocks that have systematically undermined our ability to deliver progress for people and planet. For example, we have underinvested in health systems which, in the aggregate, will cost countries around the world USD 21 trillion.<sup>74</sup> We have also underinvested in our planet, which is rapidly becoming a place of brutal extremes.<sup>75</sup> Environmental changes are likely to plunge millions into food insecurity, exacerbating and multiplying global famines.

One global report after another warns that we are responding too late and with too little to avert crisis, despite clear warning signals.<sup>76</sup> While the World Bank's current resourcing may have positioned it to respond to medium-sized crises, it is not adequate to confront a future of overlapping crises, and existing buffers are dwindling rapidly.<sup>77</sup> United Nations resources are equally stretched, and its financing is nowhere near as reliable and predictable as it once was. The safety, security, and well-being of millions depend on the proper functioning and resourcing of these organizations.

Collectively, we have been unable to direct the available capital toward long-term productive investments at sufficient scale and speed to effectively mitigate risks in a shock-prone world, nor have we closed the gap between developed and developing countries in any meaningful sense.

No government, sector, or institution acting alone can underwrite the global investments we require. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was delivering USD 2.5 trillion less than required each year to achieve the SDG targets. Today, the SDG financing gap stands at between USD 3.9 trillion and USD 7 trillion annually (according to different estimates).<sup>78,79</sup> Forests, an important carbon sink, together with other natural climate solutions, can deliver one-third of the needed emissions reductions, yet have received only 3 per cent of climate finance.<sup>80</sup> And while the digital economy picks up speed, more than 800 million people do not have the electricity they need to power digital devices.<sup>81</sup> A just digital and green transformation, with finance for infrastructure, capacities, and technology, will require many trillions (not billions) in new investments.

This Board joins the Secretary-General in calling for a rapid, sizeable increase in long-term investment for people and planet that reduces inequalities and safeguards our shared life support systems. The costs of inaction are clear: lives and livelihoods cut short, nations battered by recurrent crises, deprived of the opportunity to invest in a future of equal freedom. An effective multilateral response must translate into more investment, not less.

Building on the right to development, and national efforts to implement the SDGs and Agenda 2030, we recognize that development and sustainability will require a major step up in financing from all sources: national and global, public, and private. Good governance and regulatory systems must be enhanced to ensure effective domestic resource mobilization for sustainable development alongside fair access to affordable capital. Credible and coordinated international efforts to tackle corruption as a development obstacle must therefore also be strengthened.

Official development assistance (ODA) will continue to play a key complementary role in reaching the SDGs. Donor countries must meet their long-standing commitments to 0.7 per cent of national income for ODA. In this context, policies that erode the domestic resource base or support the excessive shifting of profits from the domestic resource base will undermine the goals of self-supported development pathways and creation of an attractive domestic investment climate.

Meeting these urgent challenges is in the interest of all States, and the reforms are within reach. Recent months have seen shareholders of the World Bank call on the global body to present a roadmap that would ensure a rapid evolution of the organization, allowing it to better respond to global challenges, including by systematically integrating and scaling funding for global public goods. A local initiative with global aspirations, the Bridgetown Initiative, is reaching critical velocity and is rallying support for collective action on climate financing, debt, and affordable capital for development.<sup>82</sup> The Secretary-General has offered a bold SDG Stimulus Plan. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda remains a highly relevant framework for collective mobilization of resources for the implementation of Agenda 2030. And both the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the IMF have forcefully argued for an improved global system to deal with debt.<sup>83</sup> The steps outlined in this report align with these efforts and ultimately aim to strengthen our investment in the global commons, improving resilience to global shocks, while remaining simultaneously committed to the unfinished business of poverty eradication.<sup>84</sup>

## ● Recommendation 1. **Repurpose the Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) system to catalyse a new generation of public and private investments in global public goods, development, and inclusivity.**

To be effective in the face of twenty-first century challenges, **the World Bank and the other Multilateral Development Banks must update and expand their mandates to include the financing of global public goods and the protection of the global commons, alongside the twin goals of poverty alleviation and shared prosperity.**<sup>85</sup> The World Bank's global mandate and reach make it an ideal platform to address today's cross-border challenges. Its shareholders must provide it with regular capital increases so as to effectively discharge this expanded mission. Failure to invest in global public goods, and the institutions that finance them, will erode donor credibility as well as trust in the multilateral system.<sup>86</sup>

Other MDBs will also play an increasingly important role in a revitalized funding landscape: they combine experience, transparency, size, and reach in an unparalleled investment platform uniquely sensitive to regional needs. Crucially, they can serve as force multipliers, leveraging their capital to provide substantially more development finance in turn.<sup>87</sup> MDBs offer development and infrastructure funding with longer maturities and at better terms than international capital markets.

Implementing this recommendation will require:

- ▶ **Defining** a core set of global public goods and global commons investments;
- ▶ **Commitment** and direction from World Bank and MDB shareholders, and a greater sense of urgency;
- ▶ **Rationalizing** lending operations to maximize efficiencies; and
- ▶ **Reducing** risk to catalyse greater private investments.

**To start, the World Bank’s shareholders must encourage the Bank to work in conjunction with the United Nations to define a core set of global public goods that would benefit from enhanced and predictable global public investment, coordinated with other MDBs.**

The Biennial Summit between the members of the Group of 20 and of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General, and the heads of the international financial institutions (IFIs), as called for in *Our Common Agenda*, might serve as a platform for this exchange, building on the priorities outlined in the reports of the International Task Force on Global Public Goods and the High-Level Panel on the Future of Multilateral Development Banking.<sup>88, 89, 90</sup> The expanded mandate might include, among other global public goods, support for: (i) a just digital transition; (ii) a global clean energy transition; (iii) strengthened capacity for prevention of and preparedness for global health threats; and (iv) access to education for all. The G20 Leaders’ Summit in September 2023 will be an important milestone and should be used to advance key elements of this new vision and mandate.

Public financing is important for all activities that are not inherently profit-making or where potential returns are too low to attract private investors but are an important part of the investments required for meeting the SDGs as well as for addressing climate change challenges — for example, public financing accounted for more than 70 per cent of total climate financing provided to developing countries between 2013 and 2020.<sup>91</sup>

However, transformative change will only be possible if access to private financing is made easier, more affordable, and more predictable for poor and vulnerable countries.

There must be a greater focus on coordinated de-risking activities by MDBs to reduce overall system risk while facilitating new private investments.<sup>92</sup> **Member State shareholders should task the MDBs with developing de-risking and blended finance projects designed to catalyse the volumes of financing necessary for development from private as well as public actors; this could be similarly applied to the use of ODA to mobilize**

**additional private financing through risk mitigation.** These projects must be undertaken with appropriate contract design to protect the public interest, avoid extortionary rates of profit, prevent future debt crises, and minimize the potential fiscal burden over time. They also must be accompanied by conditions to ensure that such financing meets social and environmental goals. By facilitating private investments for global public goods projects, we can safeguard concessional financing for low-income countries.<sup>93</sup> Where public financing is used to de-risk projects, there should be a fair sharing of risks and rewards between the private and public sectors.

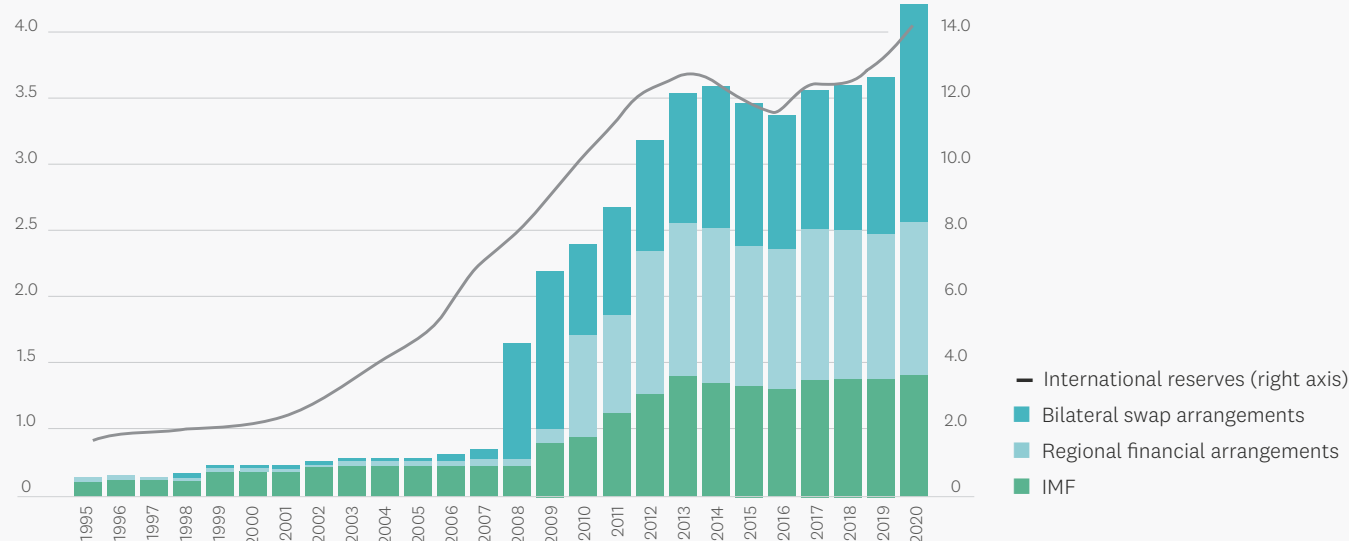
**The use of country platforms should be encouraged for all development partners, including MDBs, development finance institutions, UN entities, philanthropic organizations, and non-governmental organizations (including faith-based and charitable organizations) to overcome fragmentation and maximize development impact.** Country platforms have also been advocated by the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance in November 2022, given the criticality of achieving scale and coherence in development finance to support the climate transition. Additionally, country platforms would help to achieve convergence around appropriately high standards while ensuring country ownership and flexibility to engage with the most suitable partners. Incentives and targets should be built into the operating models of the World Bank and other MDBs to encourage them to initiate, support, and participate in country platforms more consistently.

Ensuring that the available capital in MDBs is used effectively is key to generating the financing required for the major transformations discussed in this report — fair, equitable, green, and digital transformations. **We endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the G20 Independent Review on MDBs’ Capital Adequacy Framework, which outlines five ways that existing MDB capital can be used more effectively, unlocking several hundred billion dollars of new financing for development and the provision of global public goods.**



## Global Financial Safety Net

Both y-axes in USD trillion



Adapted from: Alina Iancu, Seunghwan Kim and Alexei Miksjuk, "Global Financial Safety Net – A Lifeline for an Uncertain World," IMF Blog, 30 November 2021.

### Recommendation 2. Strengthen the Global Financial Safety Net.

Countries very often face crises of a global nature such as pandemics, global financial crises, and war. The Global Financial Safety Net (GFSN) has evolved over time to ensure that when crises hit, financing is available on global, regional, and bilateral levels to support balance of payments for countries in temporary financial distress.<sup>94, 95</sup> However, this safety net has grown increasingly fragmented, with uneven coverage across Member States. Since the global financial crisis, the GFSN has become overly reliant on selective regional financial arrangements and bilateral swap lines offered by a few major central banks to selected jurisdictions. This weakness has left lower-income and middle-income countries with a protection deficit and few good alternatives. While some countries have built up self-insurance through reserve accumulation in the past two decades, this can come at the expense of development and growth needs.

Governments facing foreign exchange crises need to retain the ability to access funds in foreign currencies; typically, they can do so by drawing on domestic foreign currency reserves. Since the financial crisis of 2008, the number of central bank swap lines between countries has multiplied rapidly, and have become the principal way that governments can access foreign currencies in moments of global shock. While all four layers of the GFSN have expanded over the past few decades, much of the reserves are selectively positioned to aid bilateral partners or members of a regional group. Only the IMF provides universal and transparent access to external financing, yet today it represents only a small part of the overall safety net.

We need a global buffer to protect against the spill-over effects and negative impacts of crises, especially in developing countries and small countries. This can be achieved through a stronger GFSN that (a) pools resources efficiently, (b) lends more quickly and (c) has higher ceilings on financing once specific conditions materialize, to any country with need. This will require a stronger multilateralism at the heart of the GFSN.

It will require rethinking the value of regional self-insurance — through mechanisms such as the European Stability Mechanism in Europe or the Chiang Mai Initiative in Asia — while much of the rest of the world lacks the ability to self-insure. Furthermore, the accumulation of national reserves locks away resources that could be put to better use for domestic investments and development purposes.

**To ensure that all countries have the necessary access to foreign currencies during global crises, the IMF should develop a multilateral swap facility, together with major central banks, to achieve greater global scale and overcome the selectivity and fragmentation posed by today’s bilateral central bank swap arrangements. The criteria for drawing on the swap facility should be pre-agreed with the Executive Board to allow for greater automaticity in the case of extreme shocks. A revamped GFSN must provide support with minimal or no conditionality in cases of global shocks as well as climate shocks.**

In addition, drawing from the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Member States must reform the IMF’s lending toolkit to enable effective and timely crisis responses.**

Existing instruments, including the Short-Term Liquidity Line (SLL) and the Fund’s emergency financing instruments, are subject to approval delays and have limited access levels, with potential stigma faced by countries that request assistance even in a global crisis. There is scope to expand the IMF’s lending toolkit by introducing enhanced pre-qualified facilities that disburse financing upon a set of pre-defined trigger criteria, with enhanced access levels.

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### ● Recommendation 3. **Ensure greater automaticity and fairness in SDR allocations.**

IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) are reserve assets that supplement a country’s international reserves.<sup>96</sup> They can be exchanged for currency, used to repay debt, donated, or lent in

transactions between members of the IMF or through prescribed institutions. They are best thought of as a “reserve sharing mechanism”.<sup>97</sup> In a General SDR allocation, advanced economies with strong external positions receive the bulk of allocated SDRs.<sup>98</sup> This was specifically the case in the 2021 allocation valued at approximately USD 650 billion SDRs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately favoured advanced economies.

While G20 Finance Ministers supported the channelling of SDRs on a voluntary basis to vulnerable countries, the process has proven to be cumbersome and time-consuming. If the aim is to provide support to vulnerable countries, the current SDR administration approach is inefficient, as the channeling process can extend beyond the moment of acute crisis.

A fundamental review of the Fund’s SDR mechanism is required, to enable it to play a fuller role in the GFSN and with greater benefit to the emerging economies and developing countries. This should include regular annual allocations of SDRs, to achieve the original intent for SDRs to constitute a key component of global reserves. **The IMF’s Articles of Agreement should also be reviewed to allow for “selective SDR allocation” — enabling only those countries that face weak external positions to receive SDRs in a general allocation. A further amendment should stipulate specific conditions under which these SDR allocations would be triggered to ensure a swifter global response.**

**In line with the other recommendations and priorities in this report, this Board also supports calls to extend the use of SDRs to strengthen the balance sheet of MDBs, while investing in efforts to determine how this might be done while preserving the SDR’s reserve asset characteristic.** This will ensure that reserves multiply through the capacity of MDBs to leverage for more inclusive development support and impact, taking advantage of the long-term nature of MDB financing at affordable terms for borrowing countries.



Photo: Jacek Waszkiewicz / World Bank Group. “The World Bank’s global mandate and reach make it an ideal platform to address today’s cross-border challenges.”

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#### ● Recommendation 4. **Enact governance changes at the World Bank and IMF that improve representation and credibility.**

Our global financial architecture is rooted in the institutions and international regimes established at the close of the Second World War.<sup>99</sup> These include the Bretton Woods Institutions (the IMF and the World Bank), and other MDBs. These institutions catalysed development gains and fostered financial stability over many decades, but they have not always designed and pursued objectives in a manner that effectively incorporates the views and priorities of emerging majorities.

These institutions and their shareholders have taken some steps to address these shortcomings, such as in 2010 when the IMF enacted reforms of its quota and voting structures to provide greater representation for developing countries, while also protecting the voting power of low-income

countries.<sup>100</sup> The global economic landscape has shifted radically in the decade since; it is time to invest in another round of progressive changes to ensure that decisions taken are congruent with the interests of the majority of shareholders and not only of its principal shareholders.

Change must begin with the leadership of these institutions. **We call on Member States to urgently introduce fair selection procedures for the Managing Director of the IMF and the President of the World Bank.** Dismantling of conventions on the leadership of these institutions — an American at the head of the World Bank, and a European at the head of the IMF — is long overdue. Unless these institutions embrace bolder reforms, they will face a rolling crisis of legitimacy.<sup>101</sup> Selection of leadership of the Bretton Woods Institutions must follow a merit-based system where the best candidates are appointed to these leadership roles, a strategy endorsed more than a decade ago by members of the G20 and advocated in a joint 2001 World Bank/IMF report, the recommendations of which have yet to be implemented.<sup>102, 103, 104</sup>

**Member States should advocate for enhancements including (a) the appointment of a search committee, (b) the holding of public hearings, as is done for the United Nations Secretary-General, and (c) adoption of a double majority voting mechanism to ensure that appointed leaders command the support of both principal shareholders and the majority of shareholders.**

A more representative leadership of the World Bank and IMF would better account for a world in which developing and emerging markets represent more than half of global output.<sup>105</sup> Better representation might also facilitate the reconsideration of IMF and World Bank programming — for example, improving the typical conditionalities associated with loans to take account of contemporary economic realities and their implications for inequality, human development, gender equality, the environment, and vulnerable groups.<sup>106, 107</sup> Inclusion of a dedicated window for refugees and host communities in the World Bank’s Fund for the Poorest is a positive example of inclusion of the most vulnerable that can be built upon.

Today, 24 Board members represent all 190 member countries of the IMF (double the number of countries at the time of the IMF's creation).<sup>108</sup>

**To improve representation, we call for the expansion of the IMF's Executive Board through the creation of additional seats for emerging and developing countries, and especially African States.** Similar changes have occurred in the past, most recently when the European Union Finance Ministers agreed to reduce their seats by two on the IMF Board to allow for greater representation of developing countries. This is a moment to marshal the same spirit of compromise and flexibility for the greater common good.<sup>109</sup>

It is also necessary to reform voting practices. For decades, world leaders have called for greater inclusion and modernization of the World Bank and IMF's governance structures to address the twin issues of poor representation and uneven voting power.<sup>110</sup> Several formulas have been proposed over the years. While the IMF has a well-established consensus-building approach for policy decisions, voting shares still matter significantly. The role of basic votes should be given specific consideration. Compared to when these institutions were established, the basic vote distribution (equal for every country) has been greatly reduced in significance — even accounting for recent increases — shifting the balance of power to large economies. **We call on shareholders to double the share of basic votes<sup>111</sup> to 11 per cent of total votes, and adjust vote shares automatically when quotas are increased.**

**Finally, we recommend extending the practice of double majority voting, which is prevalent in other international bodies, to major decisions taken in the IMF.** The Fund's Articles of Agreement already allow for double majority voting — 85 per cent of voting power and a 60 per cent majority of members — to amend the Articles of Agreement. A double majority requirement would ensure that principal shareholders with sufficient collective voting power to direct the IMF's agenda would be required to secure the agreement of a majority of members for major decisions. The benefits of this change have been widely discussed; specifically, it will provide an incentive to traditionally influential shareholders to negotiate more broadly with developing country constituencies.<sup>112</sup>

## ● Recommendation 5. **Strengthen the global debt architecture.**

High-income countries typically recover more swiftly than others when confronted with a global crisis. Numerous factors reinforce this tendency, including the politics of cross-border credit and debt.

Today's global debt architecture stands in the way of development ambitions, crisis response, and recovery. While improved comprehensive measures to restructure debt are being worked out,<sup>113</sup> various debt metrics suggest that debts are growing more unsustainable. Sharp adverse changes in the global environment have already unleashed a wave of debt defaults across the world, and the ecological and humanitarian crises on the horizon foreshadow further declines in development and international cooperation on a wide range of issues.

**We recommend establishing a global coordination platform for rapid, systematic, and reliable debt treatment.** Raising the necessary financing for SDGs and climate action has never been harder for low- and middle-income countries and economies threatened by debt crises; they will find it nearly impossible to access additional sustainable credit.<sup>114</sup> **We urgently need to reach an agreement on a coordination platform that allows for rapid, systematic, and reliable coordination for debt treatment, as well as greater debt transparency and sustainability.**

We have noted calls for an independent sovereign debt authority.<sup>115</sup> Whether an independent authority or a coordination platform, the solution must bring all major public creditors and private creditors together to coordinate debt workouts and restructurings. The heterogeneity of players makes this difficult, and we should therefore expect progress to be incremental.<sup>116</sup> If we cannot agree on a robust, inclusive debt architecture, we must at least take meaningful and significant steps towards this goal by working with the tools and instruments that have the support of key creditor groups and which can deliver urgent reprieve to indebted countries.

**This Board therefore welcomes the incremental steps taken by the IMF in recent months to convene a global sovereign debt roundtable that includes a range of creditors, including private and bilateral creditors, and borrowing countries.<sup>117</sup>**

In some respects, these initiatives replicate the central goal of the Common Framework for debt treatment beyond the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative. The Common Framework was created to encourage coordination with multiple creditor groups, as the alternative, bilateral approach to debt restructuring is not in the interests of either creditor or borrower countries. However, the Common Framework as implemented thus far has been too slow, limited, and ineffective in dealing with existing or imminent debt crises. Eligibility is limited to low-income countries, despite widespread debt distress in middle-income countries. Of those eligible, only three countries have requested assistance through the Common Framework, and none have yet completed the process more than a year on. Full participation of all creditors has been lacking, and there has not been agreement amongst participating creditors on what debt should be covered or how comparability of treatment should be applied. The Common Framework is therefore currently struggling to maintain its credibility and is in urgent need of revamping.

The Common Framework requires stronger engagement, wider access, and more transparent principles. Some possible elements of the required reform include:

- ▶ **Clear and transparent knowledge of all the data on debt** held by sovereigns in various forms, as well as of all publicly guaranteed privately held debt. In addition to encouraging full disclosure of debt among creditors, the IMF and World Bank should be tasked with collecting full and accurate data of all (public and private) debt held by countries deemed to be in actual or potential debt distress, on an urgent basis.
- ▶ **Increasing rapidity of response.** A creditor's committee drawing on the recently launched "roundtable model" could be formed within four to six weeks of the request by a debtor country, with a transparent timeline of resolution within three months.

- ▶ **A standstill on all debt repayments** during the process would incentivize speed of restructuring on the part of creditors and provide some breathing space to debtors.
- ▶ **Eligibility should be expanded to include middle-income countries** in clear debt distress.
- ▶ **There should be clarity on the comparability of treatment** across all public creditors and private creditors, including IFIs.
- ▶ **Enforcement of outcomes should not rely on only voluntary compliance** by private creditors. Anti-vulture legislation in major creditor countries (particularly in the UK and US, where more than 90 per cent of sovereign debt contracts are made) would ensure that the process cannot be held up by a few hold-out creditors.

**We must also ensure widespread adoption of contractual reforms, such as collective action clauses (CACs) and state contingent debt instruments (SCDIs) in future sovereign debt contracts.** This will help ensure more predictable and fairer debt restructuring outcomes.

These recommendations address existing unsustainable debt stocks. However, as countries look to borrow to invest in development, debt-for-climate, debt-for-nature, and debt-for-SDG swaps become new viable tools. While such swaps cannot replace debt restructuring, they can complement other measures aimed at providing sustainable credit. Importantly, the success of these initiatives will depend on massively increasing the capacity of national authorities to develop suitable swap frameworks and relevant metrics to guide implementation.<sup>118</sup>

**Strengthen safeguards in relation to credit ratings. There is a need to regularly review and strengthen the standards on transparency and accountability in credit rating methodologies to protect the integrity of the rating process.**

This should build on the International Organization of Securities Commission (IOSCO) Code of Conduct Fundamentals for Credit Rating Agencies (CRAs) to ensure fairer and more rigorous credit assessments, including through the introduction of legal liabilities and employee conflict of interest safeguards. We should also conduct a stocktaking

of the progress made since the 2014 peer review on the Financial Stability Board’s “Principles for Reducing Reliance on CRA Ratings”, with a view to have more countries implement a wider array of practical complements to credit ratings.

### ● Recommendation 6. **Enable and facilitate strengthened regulatory frameworks for financial flows.**

Many of the measures required to stabilize financial markets must necessarily be national, and this is also true of measures designed to direct financing towards the desired social, developmental, environmental, and planetary goals. However, changes in regulation are increasingly coming up against legal barriers that are the by-product of a complex web of overlapping and interconnected international agreements, such as trade agreements, comprehensive economic partnerships, and bilateral investment agreements.

We must support efforts to re-orient regulatory structures to serve the interests of people and the planet, rather than only safeguard the interests of capital. **We call for a special working group, possibly under the Financing for Development wing of the United Nations, to assess the implications of different intergovernmental economic agreements for regulation. While pursuing financial stability and ensuring financing for the SDGs and climate alleviation, we must also consider how negative implications from regulation can be minimized and how legal barriers can be lowered.**

Financial regulations aimed at addressing climate-related risks have been mainly focused on the risk to the balance sheets of individual financial institutions. However, this is unlikely to lead to a significant reallocation of capital to support the transition needed for a Paris-aligned net-zero pathway, as the largest risks are expected to manifest beyond the timeframe of most loans and assets on current balance sheets. **Financial regulators should therefore, in coordination with other public authorities, set more stringent targets for loans and other asset portfolios in support of the Paris Agreement goals, going beyond the immediate assessment of balance sheet risks.**

### ● Recommendation 7. **Pursue global taxation reforms.**

There is a need to review the current international tax architecture to keep pace with efforts to tackle illicit financial flows, tax avoidance, and tax evasion. Although various international platforms such as the Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, each comprising more than 140 countries, have been established to strengthen international tax cooperation, we need to broaden participation in these forums and accelerate their work, including on the “two-pillar solution”.

This Board also looks forward to the follow-up from the UN Second Committee resolution “Promotion of inclusive and effective international tax cooperation at the United Nations”,<sup>119</sup> including the Secretary-General’s report on the potential next steps to recommend actions on the options for strengthening the inclusiveness and effectiveness of international tax cooperation.

Ultimately, work on international tax cooperation should seek to achieve:

- Fairer and more equitable tax systems to ensure that all countries can benefit in the global tax system from a level playing field, while recognizing that each jurisdiction has the sovereign right to assess and calibrate its tax measures based on its fiscal needs and capacities;
- Greater accountability in global finance and business operations to tackle tax avoidance and counter money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, while protecting privacy and personal safety; and
- Greater collaboration and coordination between national governments and existing multilateral platforms on tax-related issues, including the sharing of information on beneficial ownership of all assets, while avoiding duplication of work and proliferation of tax forums that will hurt resource-constrained and low-capacity countries most.

# Shift Four | Digital and Data Governance

Support a Just Digital Transition that Unlocks the Value of Data and Protects Against Digital Harms



*“The benefits of the digital age cannot be captured by a few at the expense of the public interest.”*



**Effective multilateralism must support critical, multilateral, and generational reflection on the benefits and risks of the digital age. Collaboration in the digital space has been slow because the complexity and political sensitivity of the topic have inhibited effective multi-stakeholder approaches to digital governance fit for our future.<sup>120</sup>**

On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, Member States reaffirmed the central place of the organization in the multilateral system, emphasizing its unparalleled convening power and unique potential for normative impact.<sup>121</sup> They acknowledged disappointments and setbacks and pledged to respond with greater action, not less.<sup>122</sup> The Summit of the Future in 2024 must be the moment the international community comes together to close the digital governance gap.<sup>123</sup>

The solutions developed over the next few critical years will shape societies for decades to come. They will inform our ability to predict and respond to change, but if poorly designed (or not designed at all) will exacerbate digital poverty, limit innovation, and possibly enable new forms of intersecting discrimination and authoritarianism.<sup>124</sup> Our solutions must be human-centred and rights-respecting; encourage open dialogue, exchange, and learning between cultures, stakeholder groups, and sectors;<sup>125</sup> and, crucially, build on past successes.

This can be achieved through new strategic investments and renewed commitment to multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation that prioritizes convergence over uniformity. We must overcome regulatory fragmentation in the digital landscape — a proliferation of unilateral action resulting in a patchwork of national and regional mechanisms and rules.<sup>126</sup>

This fragmentation will stymie innovation and job creation, locking the benefits of the digital age with diminishing social and economic dividends for individuals, communities, and developing countries. This fragmentation is most likely to adversely impact low-income countries, less well-off individuals, and marginalized communities the world over, as well as worsen structural discrimination against women.<sup>127</sup>

A future of exclusionary digital development must be avoided at all costs. New investments in public service capacities are needed, not only to support digitalization but also to converge standards and core values.<sup>128</sup> The introduction of new digital technologies spearheaded by major corporations in the private sector has often outpaced the establishment of national institutions and regulatory capacity to manage this innovation.<sup>129</sup> The multilateral system trails even further behind. The benefits of the digital age cannot be captured by a few at the expense of the public interest. Improving public capacities to adequately participate in, facilitate, and regulate the digital age will ensure that individuals, businesses, and States can safely and fairly engage and benefit from digital innovation.

We must also build on the momentum in data governance. The wealth and safety of nations over the next century may well depend on our ability to unlock data’s potential in fair, equitable, and safe ways.<sup>130</sup> Data flows are expected to reach triple the current volume by 2026, yet we still lack coherent and joined-up data governance mechanisms.<sup>131</sup> Our current data ecosystem remains a complex, adaptive system made up of a very large number of interconnected agents with poor interoperability across regions and sectors.<sup>132</sup> A system for trusted and secure data flow is urgently needed — one that respects sovereignty and supports value creation everywhere, enabling all countries to share in the mutual benefits of data sharing.



The Summit of the Future is a unique opportunity to make smart investments in digital development that can generate significant returns for communities, economies, ecosystems, and societies, while simultaneously addressing global inequalities and injustices.<sup>133</sup>

Several emerging initiatives point the way forward.<sup>134</sup> We endorse the view of the General Assembly and its Human Rights Council that the same rights exist online and offline, and welcome efforts from within and outside the United Nations system to reinforce and implement the existing rights framework and offer international guidance for human rights in the digital age. We welcome, in particular, the General Assembly resolution on Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Development (77/150), which recognizes the critical importance of expanding the participation of all countries, in particular developing countries, in the digital economy. These are necessary contributions in a global effort to harness the enormous potential of data this century.

Digital governance solutions must be agile, foster trust, and allow for iteration to keep pace with change. They must also sensitively manage the risks to national, enterprise, and human security that increase with the pooling and sharing of data and digital innovation. Toward this end, this Board has proposed several process innovations as well as immediate actions that Member States can take to support the digital future we need.

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## ● Recommendation 1.

### **Support a just digital transition by addressing digital poverty, inequality, and harms.**

#### **A. Create a Global Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization.**

Our vision of digital governance centres on regular, predictable, and structured engagement from civil society, the private sector, academia, and other technical entities, such as standards bodies, complementing the efforts of Member

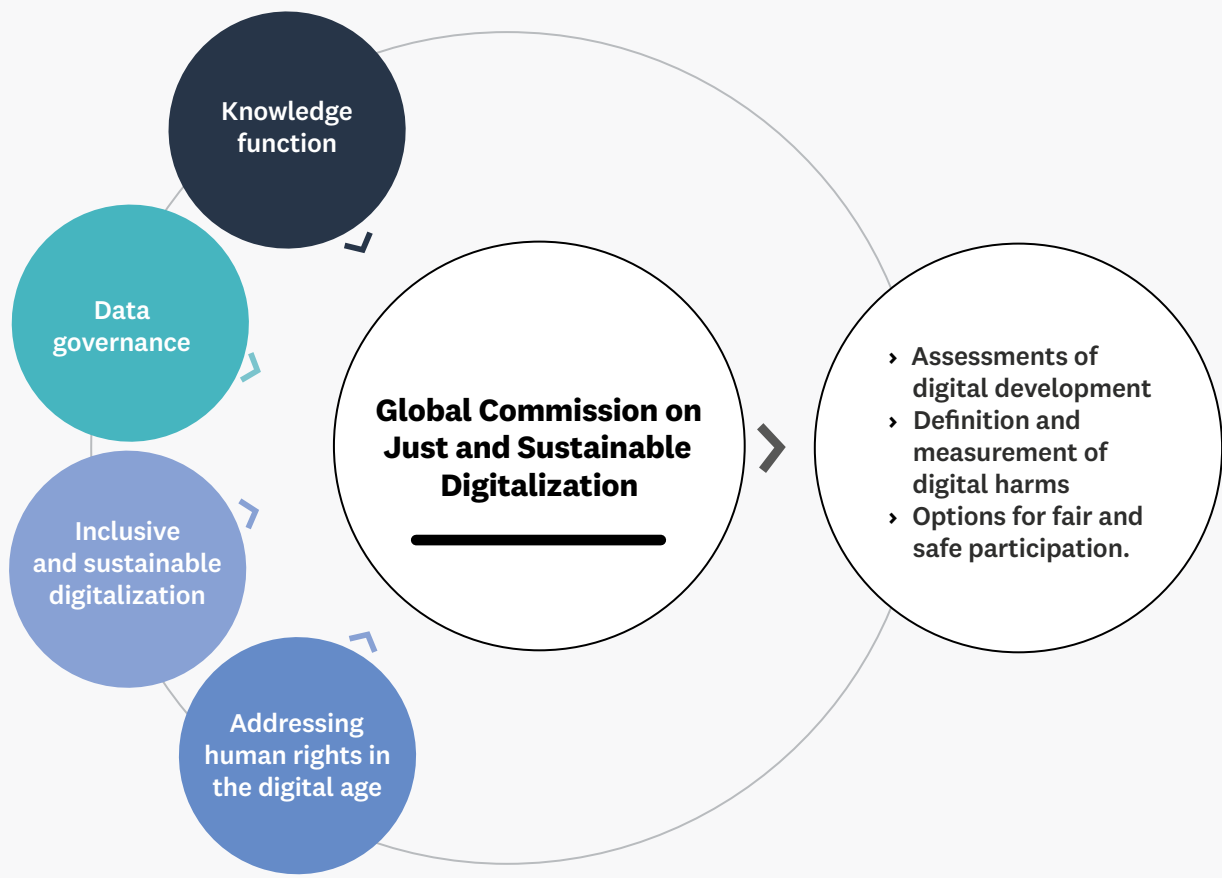
States and the multilateral system. While several examples of multilateral and multi-stakeholder coordination exist,<sup>135</sup> no single forum is responsible for agenda-setting and coordination,<sup>136</sup> nor is there comprehensively organized, shareable information to ensure that digital governance efforts are informed by an objective assessment of the risks and benefits of digitalization so that resources are channelled to address digital poverty, inequality, and harms.<sup>137</sup> We need to consolidate structures and forums to have greater impact in this critical space. Our recommendation to create a Global Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization does not aim to add a new institution to an already cluttered landscape, but rather to focus existing efforts.

Shortly after the establishment of the United Nations, a concerted effort was made to develop standards and formulate relevant international conventions to support the advancement of women. The Commission on the Status of Women has carried out these functions for over seven decades and is credited with introducing provisions for equality between women and men in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, building support for a landmark international treaty on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, as well as sponsoring numerous legal and policy developments at the national level.<sup>138</sup>

The challenges and opportunities in an era of digital transformation are no less complex and require a mission-oriented norm- and agenda-setting Commission with knowledge-mediation capacities.<sup>139</sup> Defining the specific tasks or competencies of the Commission should precede the design of the Commission itself which, whatever its ultimate form, should enable collective problem-solving.<sup>140</sup>

The proposed Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization might have four core competencies: (a) addressing human rights in the digital age;<sup>141</sup> (b) data governance; (c) inclusive and sustainable digitalization, including universal and meaningful connectivity;<sup>142</sup> and (d) a knowledge function, culminating in the preparation of comprehensive assessment reports on a regular basis about the state of scientific, technical, and socioeconomic knowledge on digital development, the definition and measurement of global digital harms, and options for ensuring fair and safe participation.

## Global Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization



A climate movement would be inconceivable without the reliable, timely, and objective information provided through IPCC reports.<sup>143</sup> No similar effort exists to map the potential and measure the harms of data and digital advances. Without a clear understanding of the challenges, risks, and opportunities — regularly revisited and updated — the international community will struggle to build a governance architecture fit for the digital age.

This Commission must heed calls for new forms of cooperation that go beyond traditional interstate cooperation; that is, it must innovate beyond traditional State-only membership.<sup>144</sup> The Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization will bring together multiple endeavours in the digital realm in a multi-stakeholder deliberative forum for States, civil society, and the private

sector, building on and possibly integrating the activities of the Internet Governance Forum. It will address the shortcomings of some of these forums, where civil society collaborates on a rights agenda but does not have the authority to implement it, or where States lag behind developments at the cutting edge of digital rights. It will consolidate and build on the work and expertise of entities such as the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The process of designing such a Commission should draw on best practices in recent years. Several initiatives offer useful insight into the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder coalitions in supporting inclusive institutional design.<sup>145</sup>

**We call on Member States to support, through the Global Digital Compact and with the support and participation of the UN Envoy for Technology, the establishment of a multi-stakeholder task force that will be responsible for developing terms of reference of a global Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization by the meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum in 2025, which clearly sets out the roles of decision-making responsibilities of its constituent groups.**

**B. Expand the definition of threats to peace and security to include digital harms and strengthen judicial capacity for the digital age.**

The United Nations has warned of a dramatic surge in malicious incidents linked to the growth of digital technologies.<sup>146</sup> The scale, disruptive potential, and sophistication of these incidents point to the need for a more significant shift in response capacities, going beyond the creation of deliberative forums such as the Group of Governmental Experts on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security, and the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies.

**We call on Member States to consider expanding the mandates of existing justice institutions, including the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, and other such mechanisms, to permit them to act in response to global threats to peace and security that emerge from digitalization.**

This includes responses to State-sponsored misinformation and disinformation campaigns designed to destabilize global politics, attempts at interfering with the digital infrastructure and online presence of foreign nations, extended violations of digital human rights through open-ended internet shutdowns, cybersecurity threats, and other hostile non-State actor actions aimed at exploiting the online space. This effort should also include an invitation for greater coordination

between national and regional institutions already addressing these developments.<sup>147</sup>

Because these threats may manifest locally or regionally first, we must also strengthen judicial capacity to respond to digital harms. Judiciaries can positively impact the realization of our SDGs by ensuring transparency, predictability, fairness, and accountability. We are encouraged by the investments made to scale judicial capacity to respond to climate and environmental change.<sup>148</sup> As a result of these investments, judiciaries have established policies and enacted or updated laws to address new environmental challenges. The specialized knowledge required to intervene effectively in the environmental domain is of similar complexity to the digital domain, notably where there are transnational dimensions to disputes.

**We urge Member States to commit to strengthening not only the capacity of policymakers but also the capacity of judiciaries, notably in developing countries, to ensure that they can effectively address new disputes and regulatory challenges arising from digitalization.**

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● **Recommendation 2.**  
**Lay the foundations of an enabling architecture for the data century with the explicit aim of removing all barriers to realizing the potential of data for the public good.**

**A. Seek convergence on principles for data governance through a Global Data Compact in a new International Decade for Data.**

Key organizations working on technical and policy aspects of data governance are looking for effective ways to respond to calls for joined-up principles that can improve both trust in and the effectiveness of data — their access, use, flow, and protection. The absence of trusted standards, agreed protocols, and robust safeguards across broad coalitions, sectors,

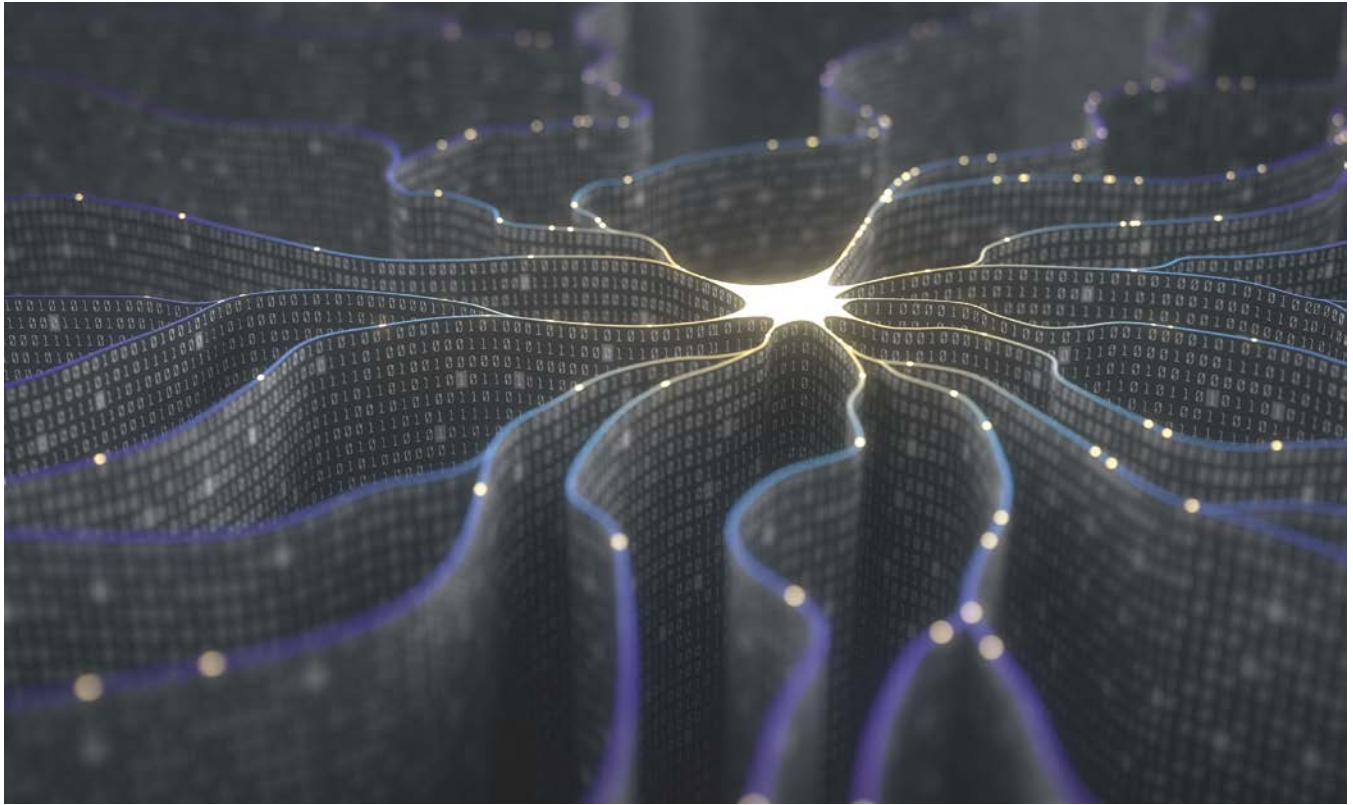


Photo: © ktsdesign – stock.adobe.com. “Data flows are expected to reach triple the current volume by 2026, yet we still lack coherent and joined-up data governance systems.”

and countries represents a shared set of disadvantages for private enterprise, States, and civil society groups.

We must leverage emerging-sector majorities to build towards convergence, ensuring sustained commitment to the goal of unlocking data potential safely. **Member States can begin by issuing a political declaration through the Global Digital Compact that commits to launching an International Decade for Data.**<sup>149</sup> United Nations International Decades have been used to expand access to safe drinking water, accelerate the protection of our oceans, and elevate the voice of peoples traditionally marginalized or left behind. International decades provide a multi-stakeholder, multilevel, and multidisciplinary scaffolding to support collaboration in domains of international concern.

**A first milestone of this Decade would be the creation of a multi-stakeholder core group tasked with preparing draft principles to be included in a Global Data Compact, which Member States could adopt before the end of 2030.**

This group should base its work on already existing initiatives such as the Open Data Charter, which has been endorsed by several multilateral organizations, pioneering cities, and private enterprise, and should ensure that the design of data governance principles adheres to a participatory process that involves data subjects (persons about whom data has been gathered).<sup>150</sup>

Modelled on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Global Data Compact would be legally non-binding and aim to fill gaps in hard law with respect to data governance, consolidating international obligations, standards, and stakeholders of a cross-cutting topic into one instrument.<sup>151</sup> Its principles should strengthen the ability of individuals and enterprises to exercise effective control over data that pertain to them,<sup>152</sup> balancing data privacy with access to data, and improve data sharing between Member States and the United Nations, notably where the UN has a mandate to generate and process data for the public good. The Global Data Compact may, in time, serve as the blueprint for a legally binding treaty framework.

## **B. Establish a data impact hub underpinned by a mutual commitment framework.**

The global response to many of humanity's greatest challenges<sup>153</sup> relies on the ability to collect, share, and analyse quality (and real-time) data that transcend national borders, as well as public and private domains — and, increasingly, non-traditional data.<sup>154</sup> We lack a framework that makes clear how data, including real-time data, can be made available to multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, i.e., how it will be processed, shared, and safeguarded, and through which specific channels of communication.

Data identified as having public good benefits should be subject to distinct governance and sharing arrangements, allowing this specific data to move more easily across borders and between the private and public sectors. This movement depends on clear “ground rules” for the production, processing, and exchange of data between commercial use and public good uses.<sup>155</sup> Models such as the Industry Data for Society Partnership, centred on four data sharing commitments, illustrate this principle and are evidence of the growing appetite to unlock the value of data for social purpose supported by tailor-made data-sharing frameworks.<sup>156</sup>

The proposed data impact hub has as its explicit goal the creation and coordination of a “data first responders’ network.” The network will be made up of public and private entities coordinating to achieve better data preparedness for crises and development. This will be achieved by pre-positioning data capacities based on advance commitments by data holders and processors. The mutual commitment framework supports these commitments by putting in place pre-authorized safeguards for limited data transfers.

This data impact hub can ensure a swifter response to global shocks and a more reliable and comprehensive provision of global public goods.<sup>157</sup> To function as envisaged, the platform must be able to draw on data assets within and outside of the United Nations based on the proposed data-sharing, processing, and safeguarding framework. Investment in such

an impact hub could enhance the capabilities of the Secretary-General’s Global Crisis Response Group and the Emergency Platform, called for in *Our Common Agenda*, allowing a more robust response to complex global crises.

**We encourage Member States, through the Global Digital Compact, to support the build-up of a data impact hub and a network of data first responders by elaborating a mutual commitment framework between the United Nations and data actors including data intermediaries.**

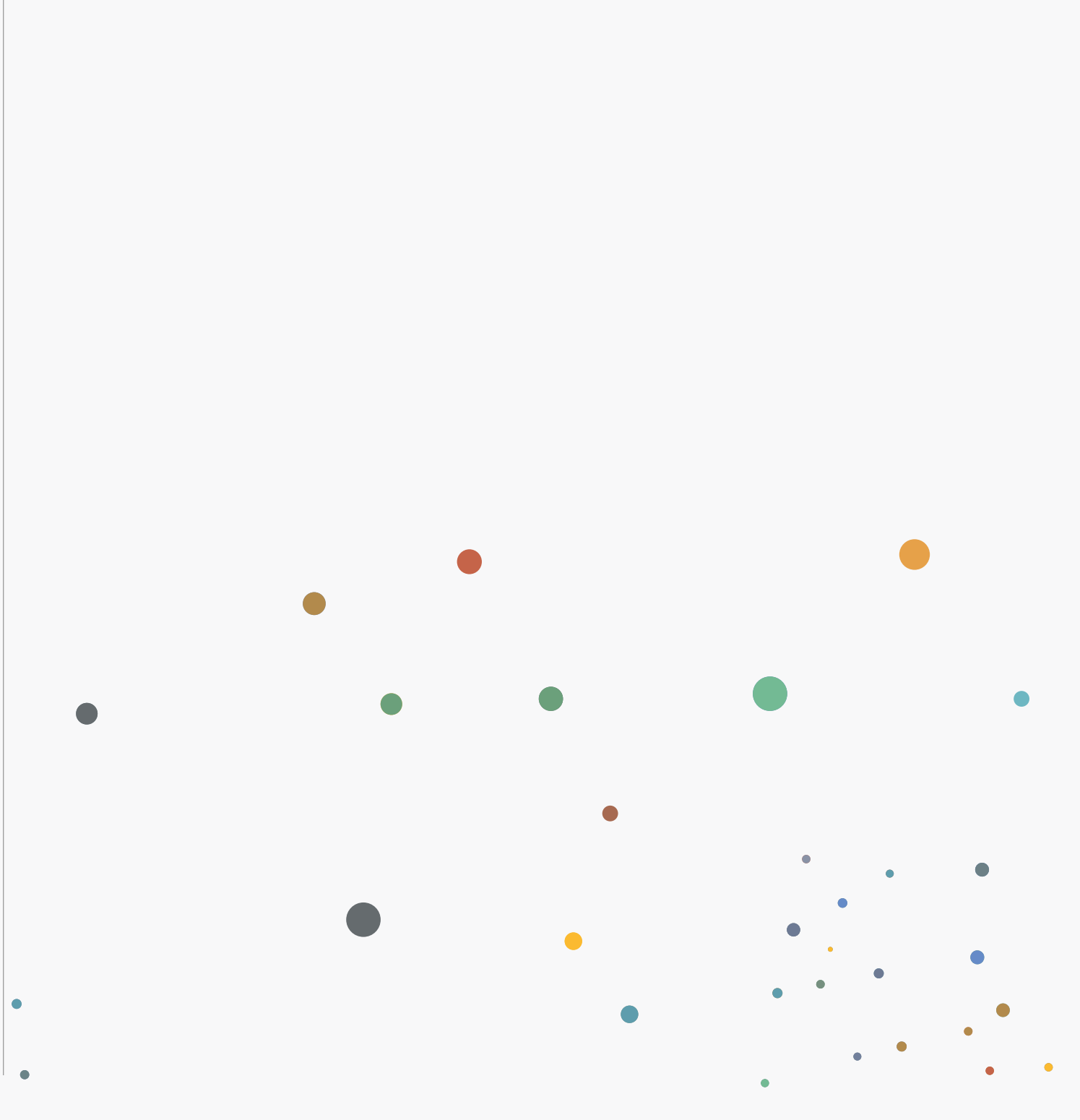
**C. Support research, data collection, and dissemination capacities of the multilateral system by ensuring they are adequately funded and remain free of political influence.**

The United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions are important producers of knowledge for the public interest. Communities depend on the timely production and dissemination of accurate and impartial data by these organizations to support sustainable development and monitor and respond to global change. Research and data initiatives launched by and with the United Nations contribute immeasurably to improving transparency and accountability and must be adequately resourced and remain free of political influence. These capacities are one of the most effective ways of countering disinformation.<sup>158</sup>

Drawing on the fundamental principles of official statistics adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2014, which emphasize the importance of impartiality in statistics, **we call on Member States to request the Executive Boards of United Nations system entities and the Bretton Woods Institutions to adopt an explicit policy committing the membership to respect and preserve the impartial research functions within the multilateral system and to support these activities with appropriate funding models.**

# Shift Five | Peace and Prevention

Empower Equitable,  
Effective Collective Security  
Arrangements



*“We must stop thinking of security in narrow, nationalistic frames and accept that our collective survival depends on greater investment in peace.”*



**The United Nations was established in 1945 to “save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. Today, however, it is failing to realize that core purpose of maintaining international peace and security, even as threats have multiplied and grown. In addition to traditional military threats, we now understand that a wide range of social, political, economic, and environmental factors play an important role in our security.**

The interconnected nature of this risk landscape gives rise to our call for collective security, recognizing that countries and their citizens can only feel safe when all feel safe. Rather than a negative and reactive approach, collective security is a vision of positive peace that can be achieved if peace is treated as a global public good.<sup>159</sup> It may seem paradoxical to call for such a vision at a time of intense geopolitical competition and dramatic rises in military spending, but this moment of heightened risk is precisely the time for a recommitment to mutually assured survival.

This commitment to collective security will require a paradigm shift. We must stop thinking of security in narrow, nationalistic frames and accept that our collective survival depends on greater investment in peace. Our global governance arrangements should generate far more financing for peace and human security, leading to a gradual but consistent transition of spending away from militarization.<sup>160</sup> To this end, they should provide forums for collaboration, deconfliction, trust-building, and eventual demilitarization.<sup>161</sup> Our systems should be able to shift focus and resources quickly to new and

emerging risks, positioning us for more effective prevention. Ultimately, we should see prevention as a universal obligation, understanding that every State has a role in prevention and peacebuilding.

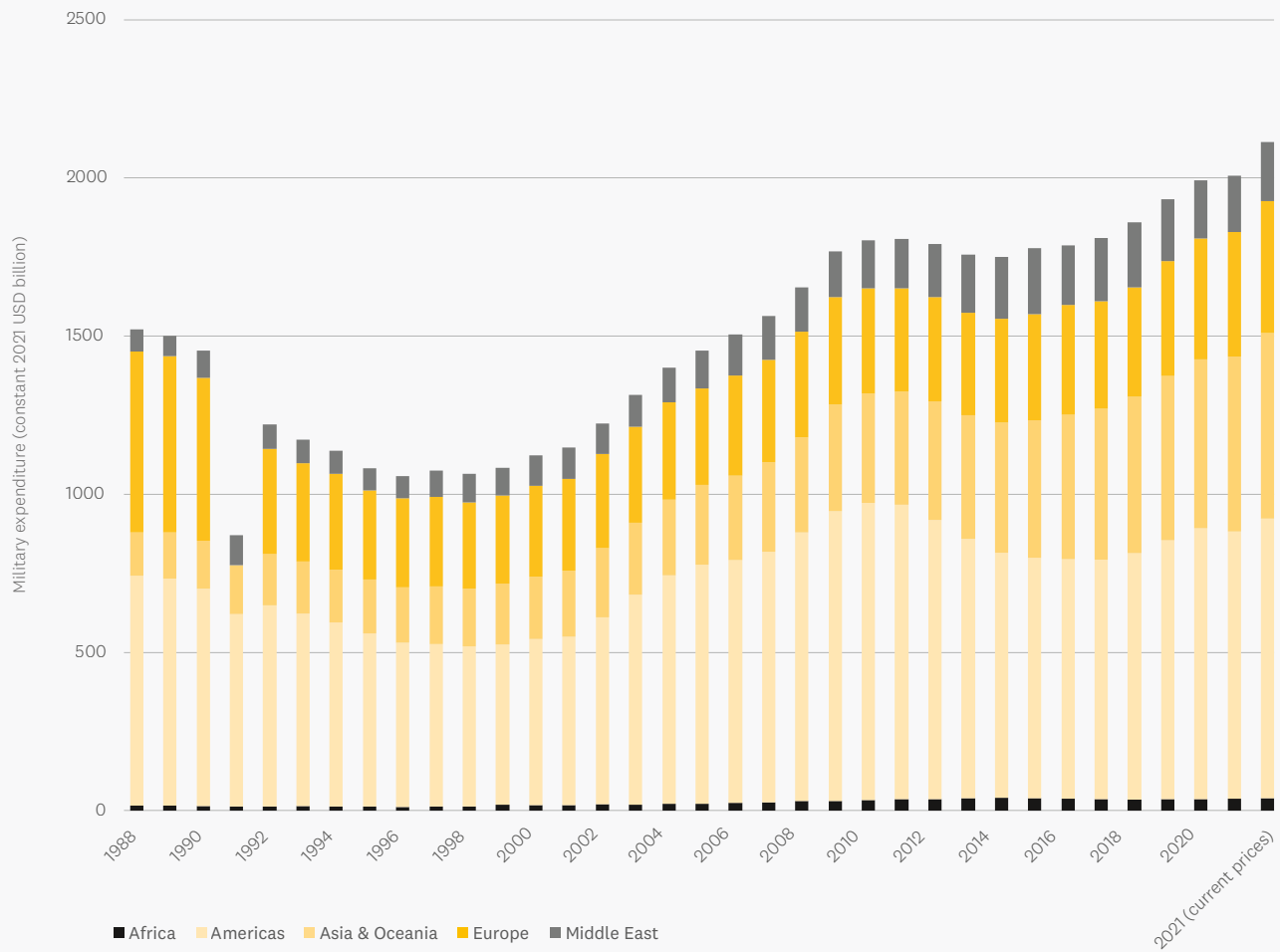
This requires the United Nations to become a more effective body at the centre of the global security architecture. The steps we propose here aim to harness the existing potential of the United Nations Charter in a more robust and effective manner, while taking advantage of the Summit of the Future to advance innovative collective global security arrangements.<sup>162</sup>

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### ● Recommendation 1. **Commit to our collective security.**

**The Summit of the Future should adopt a definition of collective security** that includes not only traditional threats contained in Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter but also a broader range of risks, including from the triple planetary crisis, transnational organized crime, and deepening socioeconomic inequalities. Such a definition should acknowledge the risks associated with technological advancement, including artificial intelligence and cyberweaponry. And it should be clear that collective security is unachievable without addressing the specific security risks facing women and girls worldwide, and impossible without more meaningful inclusion of women in our prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

## World Military Expenditure has Passed USD 2 Trillion



Adapted from data provided by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Accessible at: [www.sipri.org](http://www.sipri.org).

A commitment to collective security would have the important effect of universalizing an agenda of prevention and catalysing positive investment in peace alongside more traditional defensive responses. Rather than focus exclusively on conflict-affected, fragile States, collective security understands that all States must play a role in contributing to prevention and peacebuilding. Indeed, a universal paradigm of prevention and peace could be translated into global commitments on prevention. The following recommendations all follow from this definition of collective security and are designed to position the multilateral system to better anticipate, prevent, and respond to threats to our collective security.

### ● Recommendation 2. **Reform the United Nations Security Council and strengthen the Peacebuilding Commission.**

Today's Security Council is the highest profile example of failure in the multilateral system. Dominated by a small number of States and hampered by geopolitical polarization, it has proven itself unable to respond to major risks to international peace and security. Without meaningful reform, the Security Council risks irrelevance.



We call for a renewed effort to reform the Security Council. **The Summit of the Future is an opportunity to reaffirm our common commitment to the United Nations Charter and announce a Charter Review conference focused on Security Council reform.**<sup>163</sup> We urge all Member States to commit to the following principles to guide the reform process:

- ▶ **Equity:** The Security Council should be expanded to reflect equitably those regions that are chronically underrepresented, including those with large and growing youth populations, and to ensure that voices from conflict-affected regions are more meaningfully included in the Security Council's decision-making.
- ▶ **Legitimacy:** The Security Council's decisions should not be controlled by a single veto-wielding State; ways must be found to democratize its actions. A key aspect of legitimacy is effective, unified action – reform should aim to build that unity.
- ▶ **Modernization:** The Security Council must be able to adapt to emerging trends, including by finding creative ways to reflect new geopolitical landscapes, incorporate emerging topics on its agenda, and bring a wide range of voices into its deliberations.<sup>164</sup>

While the Board is not proposing a specific composition for the Security Council, it is of the view that **the principles of equity and legitimacy can only fully be met by the expansion of the membership of the Security Council and reform of its decision-making procedures.** Expansion should focus on increasing representation from underrepresented regions. Options for allocating seats to regions rather than specific countries, and for extending the tenure of non-permanent seats, should also be explored.

Permanent membership in the Security Council carries an enormous responsibility to all peoples and countries everywhere. That responsibility is flouted when permanent members paralyse the core work of the Security Council. A future-oriented process to reform the Security Council should focus on placing greater limits on the

use of the veto and explore other approaches to prevent States from blocking actions favoured by a decisive majority of members.

We strongly support recent efforts to hold Security Council members more accountable to justify their use of the veto to the General Assembly,<sup>165</sup> and propose that a clearer sense of who will act when the Security Council fails is needed. **If the Security Council cannot or will not act in the face of threats to international security, then the matter should immediately be placed before the General Assembly for action.**<sup>166</sup> Efforts to empower the General Assembly to take more frequent and robust responses to security threats should be strengthened. And while Article 53 of the United Nations Charter places limitations on the ability of regional organizations to undertake peace enforcement without Security Council authorization, greater efforts should be made to empower the regional level to take a lead role in conflict prevention in line with the principle of subsidiarity. Improving the prevention mandates of and resourcing for regional bodies to strengthen the implementation of subsidiarity is the core intention of the global/regional framework proposed below.

While a process to reform the Security Council would help to address long-standing problems of representation and legitimacy, it should be accompanied by several steps to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to respond to a broader range of non-military threats to our collective security. To that end, **we propose that the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) be provided with an expanded mandate to address a broader range of risks and resourced with greater investigative and decision-making powers.** Specifically, an upgrade of the PBC should include more formal links with international financial institutions, helping to align global financial flows with actions addressing the root causes of violent conflict.<sup>167</sup> It should be mandated to identify and address a wider range of gender-related security issues including, for example, the relationship between violent misogyny and violent extremism.<sup>168</sup> Its mandate should include the growing impacts of climate change and environmental changes on security risks (described in Shift Six, below).



Photo by Gregorio Cunha/UNMISS. “Collective security is impossible without the more meaningful inclusion of women in our prevention and peacebuilding efforts.”

An empowered peacebuilding body could also strengthen regional prevention by supporting the creation of “regional resilience councils” or other regionally-based bodies tasked with prevention and peacebuilding work.<sup>169</sup> Such a body could support a new generation of peacebuilding operations that would aim to more effectively address the root causes of violent conflict. **This expansion and strengthening of the United Nations’ peacebuilding mandate could lead to the transformation of the PBC into a Peacebuilding Council.**<sup>170</sup>

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**Recommendation 3.**  
**Establish a collective security framework between the United Nations and major regional bodies.**

A commitment to collective security should lead to a renewed investment in subsidiarity, based

on a deeper relationship between the United Nations and major regional bodies aimed at addressing the cross-cutting risks to human security. In this context, **the Summit of the Future should commit to an international conference to agree on a set of global/regional security arrangements based on three pillars of cooperation: (1) security (including fundamental freedoms, confidence-building measures, and military transparency), (2) economy/sustainable development (including scientific and environmental cooperation, anti-corruption, and financial sector risks), and (3) humanitarian cooperation (food/water security and basic protections).** This approach draws from the Helsinki process that created the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe almost 50 years ago, but would be updated to reflect the far-broader range of risks to regional and global stability today.<sup>171</sup> It would align with recent Security Council discussions on the need for a more strategic relationship with regional bodies, allowing Member States and regional organizations to reinvigorate and broaden their relationships.<sup>172</sup>

Importantly, such a global/regional framework would provide a more strategic basis for large-scale investments, incentivizing the international community to resource “peace responsive” approaches with long-term impacts, rather than ad hoc financing to address specific crises.<sup>173</sup> It would enable strategic alignment across the main areas of cooperation region-by-region, but founded on a recognition that security cannot be siloed away from development, human rights, and basic protections. In regions with particularly weak regional prevention structures, for example, support could be tailored to avoid ineffective use of resources and/or to bolster specific capacities needed for better prevention. And it could include provisions to protect the rights and capabilities of women and girls where risks are identified. This more strategic relationship would be the basis for more meaningful involvement of regional financial bodies, private sector actors, and civil society in multilateral prevention. As such, **this framework would directly align with the New Agenda for Peace, which prioritizes “investing in regional prevention”, and could enable regional bodies to access United Nations prevention resources more effectively.**<sup>174</sup>

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#### Recommendation 4. Increase transparency on peace and security.

Across all recommendations in this report, we propose that global governance be based on a shared understanding of risks, building more transparency and trust worldwide. Shared data on peace should be considered a global public good, given that common, scientifically vetted information on the risks to peace is fundamental to our collective security. Just as climate change needs an international forum of scientists to track the risks of increasing global temperatures, our global security architecture needs a global forum to understand the costs of conflict and the pathways to peace.

Unfortunately, eroding trust amongst States has led to a decline in the use of existing

transparency mechanisms, including at the regional level.<sup>175</sup> In addition to driving mistrust among States, lack of common information and analysis around security risks hampers more strategic partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations. Poor information-sharing globally has meant that misinformation and disinformation campaigns are able to gain greater traction, while the rights of human rights defenders and journalists are more easily trampled. And in an era where information security and cyberweapons are a massive and rapidly growing feature of our risk landscape, more should be done to strengthen and expand forums to build a common understanding of the security risks of technologies.<sup>176</sup>

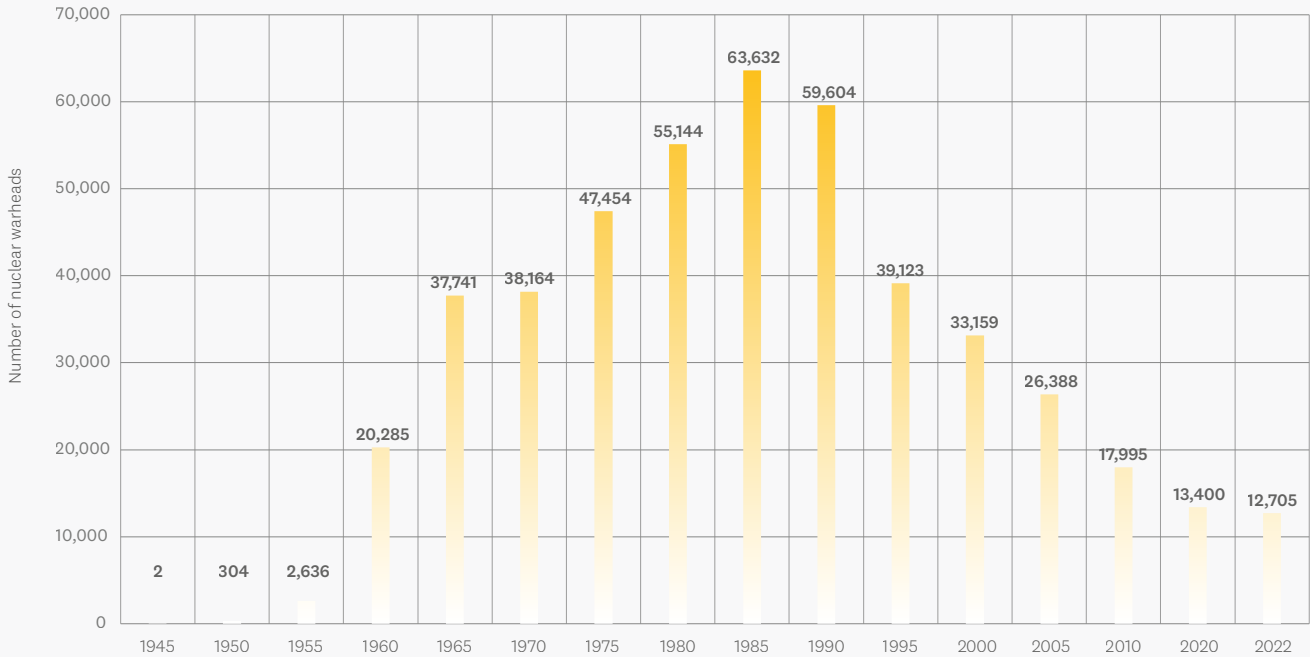
This could be accomplished in part by establishing a **Multi-Stakeholder Security Transparency Platform** to bring existing arms control bodies and registries together with a range of scientists and security experts to generate high-quality information, counter disinformation, increase knowledge of global arms flows and technological risks, and gradually build towards greater confidence and trust. Such a platform could be linked to regional transparency initiatives to jointly analyse security trends, share information, build capacities for regional prevention, and propose confidence-building measures.<sup>177</sup> Importantly, such a platform would not stand on its own but be a connective node bringing together and bolstering existing bodies of information and analysis.

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#### Recommendation 5. Strengthen and accelerate denuclearization.

Nuclear weapons are a threat to all of humanity and pose the most immediate existential risk to life on this planet. Today, we are closer to the use of nuclear weapons than at any time over the past 50 years. This is unacceptable and unnecessary. There is no way to eliminate this risk without the full eradication of all nuclear weapons everywhere, a step that is in the interests of all people and all States, including those with nuclear weapons. The ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts must be to live up to the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

## Number of Nuclear Warheads Worldwide from 1945 to 2022



Adapted from data provided by Statista Research Department.

**We call for a date for total denuclearization, with clear intermediate time-bound benchmarks and agreed verification processes.**

Eliminating nuclear weapons by 2045 would mean an end to a nuclear century. While such a step may seem unrealistic in today’s fractured geopolitical climate, dialogue must start on collective and sustainable security arrangements for a world free of nuclear weapons. There is no better place to articulate such commitments to our collective survival than at the Summit of the Future.

While remaining committed to eliminating nuclear weapons, our global governance arrangements must be strengthened to prevent any likelihood of nuclear weapons use. Any use of nuclear weapons would have global consequences; as such, the effective veto wielded by a few States over nuclear disarmament should be ended. While pressing for this, we must make all efforts to reduce the acute nuclear weapons risks facing us today. **The Summit of the Future should include a clear reaffirmation of the global norm against the use of nuclear weapons and**

**a commitment to “no first use” of nuclear weapons by all nuclear States, combined with full and independent verification processes.**

Such a declaration would be strengthened by a Security Council and/or General Assembly commitment to take action in case of any threat or use of nuclear weapons. The commitment could build on the well-developed concept of “nuclear responsibilities” and establish a clear set of agreed commitments to prevent the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>178</sup> However, we should be clear: acting responsibly should not be seen as a rationale for maintaining a nuclear arsenal. The only fully responsible act is to eliminate nuclear weapons.<sup>179</sup>

Moreover, addressing nuclear weapons should not be treated as a distinct issue from the full range of security risks worldwide. While nuclear weapons are unique in their destructive power, their exclusive and isolated governance regime has allowed major powers to take advantage of a narrative of nuclear exceptionalism.

Indeed, while we recognize that nuclear weapons are an existential threat for everyone, there are many parts of the world where the threat of small arms proliferation is the foremost concern, while conventional weapons continue to pose enormous risks to much of the planet.<sup>180</sup> The resources spent on maintaining our massive global nuclear arsenal could be far better spent on our collective well-being. Part of our commitment to collective security should include an assessment of how spending on nuclear weapons draws resources away from other crucial issues, including climate change, global inequities, gender inequality, and human insecurity. Taking nuclear weapons out of their governance silo will help us all realize the collective and unnecessary risk that they pose to the world.

The global governance arrangements around nuclear weapons are complex and contentious. Short-term fixes to the challenges of multilateral nuclear weapons agreements are extremely unlikely. However, we here identify some steps that could build a common understanding of the risks of nuclear weapons, better connectivity across siloed institutions, and a more effective approach to decision-making within existing bodies.

➤ **Establish a Global Commission on Military Nuclear Risks.** We recognize the important and effective work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which demonstrates that a coherent, evidence-based approach to nuclear issues can deliver results. An independent, scientifically driven approach should be applied to the security risks posed by nuclear weapons, to help unlock the diplomatic stagnation we see today.<sup>181</sup> While there is a wide range of actors tracking nuclear weapons risks, the multilateral system lacks an independent body acting as a common resource for all. **The Summit of the Future should mandate a global commission on the risks associated with military use of nuclear weapons, composed of globally recognized scientists and civil society actors nominated by Member States.**<sup>182</sup> The commission could identify the most likely pathways to nuclear use and the most pressing risk scenarios, and offer recommendations to nuclear States.<sup>183</sup>

➤ **Revitalize the Conference on Disarmament by adopting qualified majority voting.**

Since 1978, the United Nations Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors have been the primary forum for negotiation of multilateral agreements around strategic weaponry. And while it ostensibly covers the elimination of nuclear weapons and steps to prevent nuclear war, it has overseen little progress over the past 25 years. Despite repeated calls for its revitalization, the Conference remains mired in its own procedures, relying on consensus for its decisions.<sup>184</sup> An objection by a single country can prevent progress to protect all of humanity, while the agenda remains out of sync with today's priorities. As part of a broader effort at revitalization, the Conference of Disarmament could move towards a system of qualified majority voting for decision-making, thereby preventing a small number of States from blocking progress to reduce global catastrophic and existential risks. This system would also make the Conference more inclusive and equitable and give all actors a greater stake in governance.

➤ **Ensure coherent support to disarmament.**

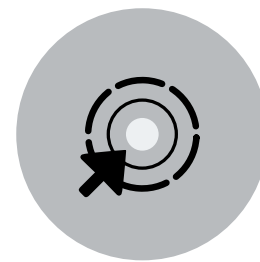
The disarmament agenda is fragmented across different bodies with distinct mandates and capacities, reflecting a patchwork of norms and treaty obligations.<sup>185</sup> These bodies are largely disconnected from the important efforts of civil society groups to advocate for and monitor nuclear disarmament, including those that focus on gender-specific impacts.<sup>186</sup> The United Nations should invest in a capacity to connect and support the various forums, processes, and actors associated with nuclear disarmament, thus helping to generate more sustained, inclusive, and effective engagement.

# Shift Six | **Anticipatory Action**

Strengthen Governance for  
Current and Emerging  
Transnational Risks



*“Tomorrow’s multilateralism can evolve alongside fast-changing risk landscapes, rising to emerging challenges with a common sense of purpose.”*



**The breakdown scenario in *Our Common Agenda* describes the multilateral system lagging behind emerging and re-emerging threats, unable to anticipate risks before they escalate, and chronically slow to generate the resources and political action to manage and reduce those risks.<sup>187</sup>**

We believe this must change – we should position the multilateral system to more nimbly and effectively respond to emerging threats and act quickly and decisively in situations of uncertainty. We believe the future of global governance is not heavy, bureaucratic bodies with endless time horizons and bulky mandates. Rather, it is a connective tissue, linking knowledge of collective risks to the capacities best placed to address them. It will not burden future generations with inflexible institutions, but position resources that can adapt to their needs. Tomorrow’s multilateralism can evolve alongside fast-changing risk landscapes, rising to emerging challenges with a common sense of purpose.

The following recommendations are based upon our assessment of the most critical gaps in global governance today and the urgent need to develop nimble, future-oriented responses that can evolve over time to the accelerating changes we see around the world.

### ● Recommendation 1. **Climate change, peace, and security.**

Climate change is far more than an environmental challenge; it poses a risk to every aspect of our lives. A growing body of scientific evidence is revealing how accelerated environmental changes are impacting human and collective security, including as a result of extreme heat, drought, flooding, crop failure, water shortages, desertification, disease, food insecurity, famine, forced migration, threats to critical social and physical infrastructure, and unprecedented disruptions.<sup>188</sup> These diverse impacts are disproportionately affecting regions and countries that are the least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation, such as less developed countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and countries with vulnerable areas, many of which are also suffering from conflict, fragility, violence, and other forms of instability. Predictably, it is the poorest and least-able to respond who bear the brunt of these changes.

The multilateral system should not be held hostage to a narrow definition of security limited to national borders and military power. Indeed, we recognize the significant efforts across the three pillars of the United Nations to enhance our collective knowledge of the empirical links between climate change and our collective security. We also acknowledge efforts to upgrade the capacities and instruments available to address and respond to climate-security risks, including through the United Nations Climate Security Mechanism and partnerships amongst UNEP and other international bodies.<sup>189</sup> A bolstered UNEP and UNEA, along the lines proposed in this report, would provide greater capabilities to the United Nations system and Member States to respond to climate-driven security risks.

To further improve the multilateral system's ability to understand and respond to these risks, the Board proposes that the Summit of the Future:

- › **Declare that the triple planetary crisis poses a grave risk to global stability and security.** The Summit of the Future should be an opportunity to make a leap forward in our collective recognition of the strong relationships between environment change and security, the unevenly distributed nature of these risks, and the critical importance of a United Nations system capable of addressing them.
- › **Bring climate change and security to a wider variety of debates at the General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Economic and Social Council, and Security Council.** While generating consensus on the links between climate change and security has proven challenging in some multilateral forums, the stakes are too high for inaction. The General Assembly should formally take up the issue and support awareness among Member States, while the Security Council should do more to recognize the broad and accelerating risks to international security. Indeed, the Security Council's incremental approach to these issues, despite a growing body of evidence in conflict-affected regions in particular, should serve as additional impetus for the reforms this Board proposes.
- › **Ensure that climate-driven risks are an explicit feature of United Nations peacebuilding mandates.** A strengthened Peacebuilding Commission, working in concert with UNEP and other relevant bodies, is ideally situated to help consolidate the various sources of data and evidence about the security risks posed by climate change. It is essential that empirical research be rapidly translated into strategies for inclusive mitigation and adaptation. Including climate-driven risks and the promotion of resilience in its updated mandate constitutes an important first step.
- › **Incorporate a gender perspective to climate responses.** Women and girls are often disproportionately affected by environmental harms, resource scarcity, and resulting tensions and conflict.<sup>190</sup> But they also possess vital knowledge, skills, and

capabilities for effective environmental protection and conflict mitigation. Including environmental changes as a more explicit aspect of the mandates of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, as well as the work of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the protection of human rights defenders, would help to link gender and environmental concerns more systematically in multilateralism.

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## ● Recommendation 2. Governance of biological and health risks.

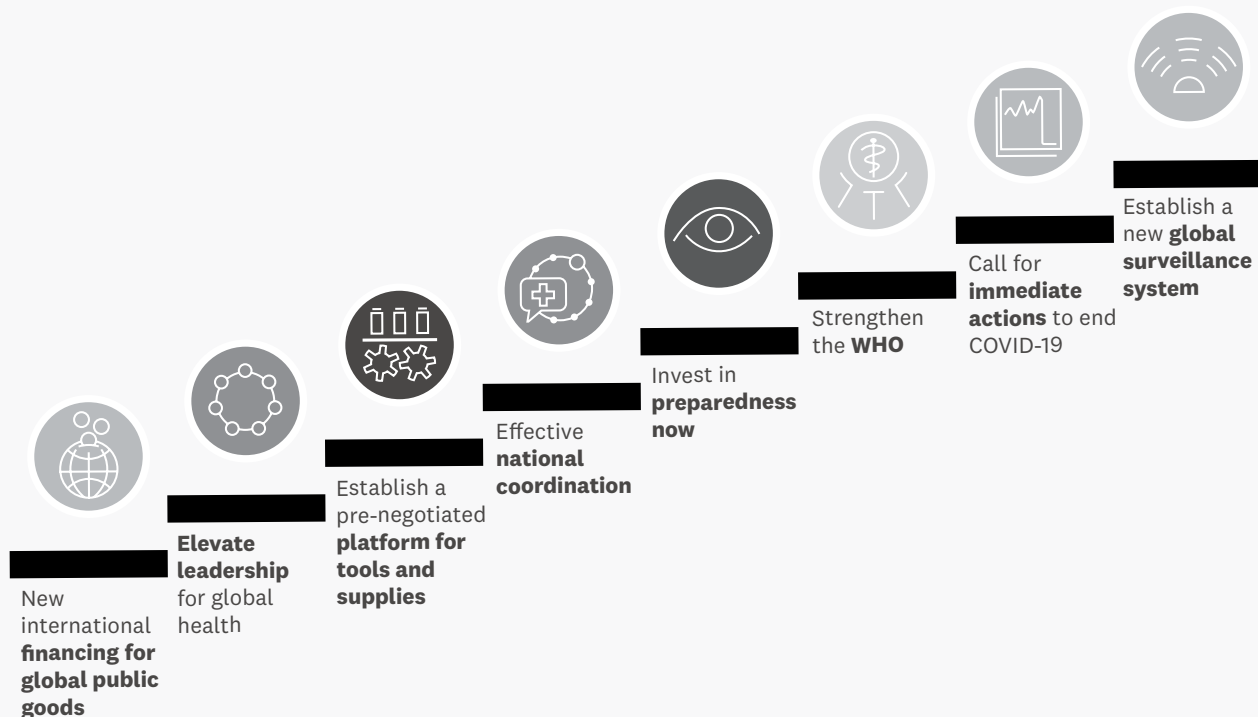
The COVID-19 pandemic made abundantly clear that health security is fundamental to global stability. Yet deep geopolitical rifts, siloed information and response institutions, and highly unequal capacities globally have hampered an effective global health architecture. Efforts to enhance the governance of global health systems are ongoing – including through a potential future pandemic treaty, revised international health regulations, and a strengthened WHO. Similar efforts are aimed at improving the governance of the risks posed by biological weapons. Nonetheless, critical gaps persist in our ability to assess the global health landscape, prepare for potentially lethal manifestations of biological threats, and act in the face of fast-moving health risks.

In this context, we recommend two steps to enhance the global health architecture and prepare us for future health risks.

- › **A global pandemics threats council.**<sup>191</sup> Reflecting the global and cross-cutting nature of pandemics, such a body should be established at the head-of-state level, with a mandate to engage with United Nations bodies, regional institutions, international financial institutions, and other relevant actors. Rather than act as a formal governing authority, such a council should be seen as an enabling node in a network, a diplomatic



## Steps Needed to Strengthen Protection Against Future Pandemics



Adapted from The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, 'COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic' (2021).

facilitator and forum for exchange of information and policy options across the international system, drawing on existing health capacities and helping to link with other arenas.

- › **An independent global health monitoring body.** As a complement to the pandemic agreement currently being negotiated, an independent expert monitoring body should be established. Such a body could be modelled on the IPCC and would replace the Global Pandemic Monitoring Board now hosted by WHO and the World Bank. Acting as a clearinghouse for a wide variety of sources of information and expertise, the independent body would offer a transparent, publicly accessible forum for assessing the implementation of commitments to prevent pandemic risks.<sup>192</sup>

Biological risks can emerge in several ways, including through the development and weaponization of new technologies. As the capacities to develop biological weapons accelerate and proliferate, the multilateral

system should build more dynamic and inclusive ways to identify risks and respond to them quickly.<sup>193</sup> This requires strengthening of existing frameworks to address biological weapons and a scientifically driven approach to governing emerging bio-risks. Some of the most important steps that should be taken here include:

- › **Global agreement on bio-risk management standards:** The Summit of the Future is an opportunity to recognize, consolidate, and globally agree on a common process to identify, assess, control, and monitor the risks associated with hazardous biological materials.<sup>194</sup> The foundation for this was already laid in October 2020, when a group of States submitted scientifically rigorous and widely accepted industry standards to assist States Parties to implement their obligations as set out under the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).<sup>195</sup> Clear adoption of these standards, by Member States and major industrial actors, would create a common basis for addressing some of the most dangerous risks on this planet.



Photo: World Bank/Henitsoa Rafalia. "The COVID-19 pandemic made abundantly clear that health security is fundamental to global stability."

► **A common scientific/technological advisory process for biological weapons:**

The rapid pace of biological weapons technologies requires a dynamic and scientifically rigorous review on a constant basis. The recent Ninth Review Conference of the BWC agreed to develop a scientific and technological advisory mechanism that could serve this function in an inclusive manner.<sup>196</sup> Provided such a process functions to break down silos and create a more holistic view of the risks of biological weapons, it would bring the BWC into line with many other multilateral science-diplomacy instruments and could play an important role in managing the risks and benefits inherent in the life sciences.

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● **Recommendation 3.  
Safe, effective management  
of emerging technologies.**

Emerging technologies are already impacting all aspects of our lives, offering us transformative benefits but also risking greater inequalities, accelerated security threats, and deep ruptures to our societies. In this context, the unregulated growth of transformative artificial intelligence (AI) poses massive – even existential – risks. And while there has been a proliferation of national and regional AI governance initiatives around the world, these suffer from problems of (1) fragmentation across different regions, with serious differences between standards and approaches; (2) lack of meaningful involvement of low- and middle-income countries and societies, potentially leading to greater gaps in technological advancement; (3) slow development, leaving the international system

far behind the private sector; (4) the dual-use nature and possible misuse of these technologies in the military domain by States and non-State actors; and (5) continuing silos where key issues such as the SDGs and climate action are often addressed without meaningful reference to the peace and security implications of emerging technologies.

To address these shortcomings, and in alignment with the work of the Global Digital Compact, the Summit of the Future should commit to:

- › **Agreeing on a timeline for the development of a global architecture for AI design, development, and use based on common standards and approaches.** This could be taken forward by a series of dialogues between governments, the private sector, and civil society under the aegis of the United Nations and, specifically, the proposed Global Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization. The proposed Secretary-General’s Scientific Advisory Board could engage with this process and report regularly on the evolving nature of AI technologies, feeding into the Global Commission’s knowledge function (its fourth competency).<sup>197</sup> The objective will be to generate a set of definitions and standards for identifying and mitigating global AI risks. It would be important to ground the process in existing AI standards<sup>198</sup> while developing additional standards that strengthen practices of safety and responsibility among AI practitioners.<sup>199</sup> This activity should take into account the pioneering global normative frameworks recently adopted on the ethics of AI.<sup>200</sup> It could also be linked to a fund that would incentivize research and preparedness on the existential risks that can arise from ungoverned AI evolutions.
- › **Accelerating and formalizing regulations on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).** International Humanitarian Law applies to LAWS, and there has been significant progress in achieving broad consensus on the need to maintain human control of these systems.<sup>201</sup> However, formal regulation has proven difficult to achieve. This is in part because the current forum — the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons — has been deadlocked. To re-energize this process,

the Summit of the Future could set a deadline for achieving draft regulations on LAWS within the current forum, after which the issue would be taken up within the General Assembly.<sup>202</sup>

- › Meanwhile, it is crucial to maintain human responsibility over decisions to resort to use of force, most importantly strategic and nuclear weapons. Member States should consider a **global ban on non-human controlled nuclear weapons platform launches**, building on existing commitments of some Member States, and the Secretary-General’s recent calls for action on AI-driven weapons systems.<sup>203</sup>

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#### ● Recommendation 4. **Combat transnational organized crime.**

Transnational organized crime (TOC) and related corruption are among the most pernicious and widespread factors undermining stability and security worldwide. They are not new, but criminal networks adapt to new opportunities in our changing world, posing a constantly shifting risk to global stability. Criminal networks are quick to seize opportunities created by conflict, instability, underdevelopment, and inequality.<sup>204</sup> They take advantage of new digital technologies, weak regulation, offshore havens, fragile States, free trade zones, and regions rich in natural resources.<sup>205</sup> As TOC has expanded, so too have links to the “upperworld” (for example, politicians, legal and financial experts, and transportation companies), making responses increasingly difficult and dangerous, especially for actors on the front line. The negative impacts from TOC – from extreme levels of violence and small arms proliferation to natural resource extraction – inhibit progress on the SDGs, reduce State capacities to govern and transition to a green economy, drive inequality, and are directly related to the spread of violent conflict.

Unfortunately, today's global governance system does not capture the full range of impacts of TOC and, as a result, has not generated a coherent or effective response. Lacking an overarching global strategy to bring together the many sources of information and array of actors working on TOC, our responses have been largely national, reactive, and disjointed.

To address this shortcoming, **we propose that the Summit of the Future agree on a global strategy on transnational organized crime,**

laying out the key areas for collaboration, strategic priorities, and common benchmarks for the multilateral system, and providing inspiration and direction for collaborative responses across a wide range of sectors and regions.<sup>206</sup> Such a strategy should identify how TOC inhibits progress on the SDGs, undermines good governance, contributes to environmental degradation, and presents risks to human security. It should include specific approaches for increasing transparency around beneficial ownership, environmental crimes, and small arms/light weapons flows. And it should help to advance the multilateral system's ability to understand and respond to the risks posed by cybercrime and illicit uses of digital space. Given the broad impacts of TOC and the need for independent sources of information, implementation of the strategy will require coordination across existing multilateral institutions, drawing especially on the existing capacities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and meaningful inclusion of a range of other actors, including regional bodies, civil society, and the private sector.

# The Summit of the Future and Beyond



**Over the past year, we heard hundreds of exciting ideas for how to improve our global governance systems. Many of these ideas were generated by young people and by a wide range of individuals, groups and organizations directly involved in driving change at local and national levels. We have taken inspiration from them in developing the recommendations in this report and will maintain a site featuring the major proposals made during our consultative process. We hope that this will offer a space for further dialogue and innovation.**

We also recognize the many deeply impactful initiatives already underway, which should be accelerated through investment of political commitment and resources. We have drawn from these initiatives as models to indicate where they could be better networked and supported, and to position our recommendations among the many exciting and innovative potential contributions to the 2024 Summit of the Future.

Rather than viewing this as an isolated set of proposals, we encourage readers to regard this report as part of a broader paradigm shift for the multilateral system that will extend well beyond the Summit of the Future. Global governance needs to move beyond the mahogany table where a small number of powerful actors can dictate terms to the rest of the world.

It must evolve into a less hierarchical, more networked system where decision-making is distributed, where the efforts of a large number of different actors are harnessed, and where the collective mission is driven by delivery for people and planet. Ultimately, the multilateral system will be judged by its results: were we able to achieve a breakthrough that put the SDGs back on track, shifted our trajectory away from planetary destruction, and helped to manage the many global risks that threaten us all?

We are living in a moment when there is great cause for pessimism. It is easy to become disheartened by seeing our world being destroyed by our endless need for economic growth, a world where inequalities are accepted as the natural outcome of a competitive system. We have seen decades of broken promises by political leaders, and may think that nothing will change. It may not: If we continue on our current path, the 100-year anniversary of the United Nations in 2045 might be more of a funeral for multilateralism than a celebration of its success. But just as global leaders came together after the Second World War to envision a different world brought together by the United Nations, leaders at the Summit of the Future must demonstrate the political and moral courage to reimagine global governance and set us on a new path. Future generations will judge us by the decisions we take today.

## **Terms of Reference of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism**

The main tasks of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism are to identify areas of common interest where governance improvements are most needed and to propose options for how this could be achieved, taking into account existing institutional and legal arrangements, gaps, and emerging priorities or levels of urgency, and the need for equity and fairness in global decision-making.

Further, the High-Level Advisory Board is encouraged to take into account the calls in the *Our Common Agenda* report for multilateralism that is more networked, more inclusive, and more effective and reflective of the broader array of actors needed to deliver solutions to our most pressing global challenges. The Board is encouraged to build upon the specific proposals for governance improvements made throughout the *Our Common Agenda* report. The Board is tasked with developing a report to inform United Nations Member State deliberations ahead of the proposed Summit of the Future.

## Members of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism



**Stefan Löfven**  
Co-chair

Stefan Löfven (Sweden) was Prime Minister of Sweden from 2014 to 2021. He was the leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party from 2012 to 2021, and previously the President of the Swedish Industrial and Metal Workers Union. In 2016, he launched the Global Deal, a global initiative for social dialogue and better conditions in the labour market. He has also been Co-chair of the ILO's Global Commission on the Future of Work, and initiated, together with the Prime Minister of Spain, the Leaders' Network for reinforcing multilateralism.



**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**  
Co-chair

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia) was the President of Liberia from 2006 to 2018 and the first democratically elected female Head of State in Africa. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. She has also served as the Chair of ECOWAS and founded the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development. She was the Co-chair of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response in 2020-2021.



**Xu Bu**

Xu Bu (China) is the President of the China Institute of International Studies. He has served as Ambassador to ASEAN and to Chile, as well as in other diplomatic posts in Pakistan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Canada.



**Poonam Ghimire**

Poonam Ghimire (Nepal) is a climate activist and Next Generation Fellow (2021) with the United Nations Foundation. She is the former Head of the International Policy Commission at the International Forestry Students Association and a Global Citizens' Youth Advocate, and was a Youth Power Climate Representative for COP26.



**Jayati Ghosh**

Jayati Ghosh (India) is a Professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and was previously Professor of economics and chairperson of the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She is also a board member of the High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs.



**Donald Kaberuka**

Donald Kaberuka (Rwanda) is Chairman and Managing Partner of SouthBridge, a Pan-African financial advisory and investment firm. Previously, he served as the President of the African Development Bank, and as Rwanda's Minister of Finance and Economic Planning. He is also the African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund and Board Chair of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.



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**Nanjala Nyabola**

Nanjala Nyabola (Kenya) is a writer and researcher based in Nairobi, Kenya. Her work focuses on the intersection between technology, media, and society. She is the author of *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics: How the Internet Era is Transforming Politics in Kenya* (Zed Books, 2018), *Travelling While Black: Essays Inspired by a Life on the Move* (Hurst Books, 2020), and *Strange and Difficult Times: Notes on a Global Pandemic* (Hurst, 2022).



**Tharman Shanmugaratnam**

Tharman Shanmugaratnam (Singapore) is Senior Minister, Singapore. He co-chairs the Global Commission on the Economics of Water and chairs the Board of the Group of Thirty. He co-chaired the 2021 G20 High-Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, and the 2018 G20 Eminent Persons Group on Global Financial Governance. He also co-chairs the Advisory Board for the UN Human Development Report and the Global Education Forum.



**Anne-Marie Slaughter**

Anne-Marie Slaughter (United States) is the CEO of New America, a think and action tank based in Washington, DC, and a Professor Emerita of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University. Her previous positions include Director of Policy and Planning at the US Department of State from 2009-2011. She has written extensively on networked global governance, including *The Chessboard and the Web: Strategies of Connection in a Networked World* (Yale, 2017).



**Ilona Szabó de Carvalho**

Ilona Szabó de Carvalho (Brazil) is the founder and president of the Igarapé Institute – a global think and do tank committed to human, digital, and climate security. She is an affiliate scholar at Princeton University Brazil Lab, a member of the Global Future Council on the Future of Nature and Security, and a former Young Global Leader at the World Economic Forum. She serves on several boards and is an author, podcaster, and columnist.





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**Danilo Türk**

Danilo Türk (Slovenia) was President of Slovenia from 2007-2012 and is currently President of Club de Madrid, an organization of over 100 democratic former Presidents and Prime Ministers of UN Member States. He previously served as UN Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and as the Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations.

**Secretariat**

The United Nations University Centre for Policy Research (UNU-CPR) served as the Secretariat of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism. The Secretariat was established in January 2022 and was co-led by Dr. David Passarelli and Dr. Adam Day. The Secretariat received invaluable support and guidance from experts and stakeholders from around the world, as well as from a core team at UNU-CPR and in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. We are especially grateful for guidance and support from Volker Türk, Guy Ryder, Michèle Griffin, and Claire Inder.



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**David Passarelli**



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Day'.

**Adam Day**

## Annex 1. A Pact for People and Planet

**As recommended in this report, a Pact for People and Planet should contain the following elements that would help to align existing treaty commitments and raise the level of collective ambition for global environmental governance. The goal of such a pact should be a global transition by States and non-State actors to a circular economy, addressing both supply and demand in a way that achieves balance with the planet. The essential elements of such a pact would include:**

### **1. A net-zero carbon pledge by 2050, with annual progress reports starting today.**

The Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC shows that limiting global warming to around 1.5 degrees Celsius will require global greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced by 43 per cent by 2030.<sup>207</sup> Current commitments and actions, besides varying on criteria and benchmarks, are not putting us on track to preserve a liveable planet.<sup>208</sup> Getting to net-zero by 2050 will require a whole-of-society approach and a just and green energy transition. We echo the recommendations in the report of the United Nations' High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of non-State Entities, particularly that a net-zero pledge should be announced by the leadership of non-State actors. This should include interim targets, concrete plans, and clear, credible, and accountable standards to reach net zero by 2050.<sup>209</sup>

### **2. Ending of the fossil fuel era via a phase-out plan, starting with coal, followed by oil and gas.** Coal, being the most polluting of all fossil fuels, is already fully replaceable by other sources, including gas.<sup>210</sup> The Pact should include a commitment to discontinue new contracts and auctions for coal by 2030, with the goal of banning the construction of any new coal-fired power plants by 2035. The use of oil should also be phased out by ceasing the exploration and extraction of new oil reserves by 2040 and commencing the decommissioning, reduction, and eventual phase-out of oil production by 2045, with residual production terminating by 2050. As new technologies are adopted to

facilitate this transition, it is imperative that gas, as the last fossil fuel to be phased out, serves as a reliable backup source of energy. The Pact should include a commitment to ending all subsidies for fossil fuels by 2030 and the implementation of a global fossil fuel registry to track progress. Taking into consideration the unique challenges faced by LDCs and some middle-income countries, the commitment to end the fossil fuel era must be accompanied by massive investment in clean energy (and open access to the necessary technologies) to support these countries in phasing out their reliance on fossil fuels. Differentiated targets might also be considered in this context.

### **3. A commitment to provide abundant energy to the 800 million people who lack sufficient access to electricity to meet their basic needs while prioritizing a rapid transition to clean energy, through a set of specified financing and implementation mechanisms.** This will require a concerted effort to increase the electrification of our planet, with the goal of doubling the share of electricity in our energy mix to 50 per cent by 2050.<sup>211</sup> Electrification holds great potential for mitigating emissions and decarbonizing energy supply chains, making it a crucial step in achieving net-zero goals.<sup>212</sup> The generation of renewable energy, particularly in the form of electricity from sources such as solar, wind, and water, is a vital component of this effort and is essential for advancing towards a circular economy. Besides providing electricity to the almost 800 million people worldwide who still lack access to it, there is also a pressing need to power livelihoods on a global scale. The narrative on energy access remains incomplete without a concerted emphasis on productive applications. Harnessing energy for the purpose of income generation and sustenance not only augments the overall capacity of communities, but also fortifies their resilience to invest in their own development. A viable solution could involve establishing a multilateral and multi-stakeholder platform that propels the widespread adoption of productive uses of renewable energy, thereby stimulating job creation and growth in rural economies worldwide.<sup>213</sup>

**4. Zero loss of forest cover by 2025 and zero deforestation by 2030.** Building on the Glasgow Leader’s Declaration on Forests and Land Use and aiming at accelerating SDG 15 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, this involves a multi-stage approach: first halting the loss of forest cover, then preventing further deforestation by 2030, and finally increasing forest cover by 2050.<sup>214</sup> Despite the ongoing challenge of deforestation, the world’s forests currently absorb more emissions than they emit. Beyond reforestation and preserving standing forests, ensuring the “quality” of such forests is also vital, for which it is necessary to guarantee genetic diversity. These commitments should be accompanied by accountability for environmental crimes and deforestation as proposed in the recommendation for advancing environmental rights within the multilateral system in this report, and will demand effective multilateral partnerships, such as the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative.<sup>215</sup> Achieving zero loss of forest cover would also significantly enhance the role of forests as carbon sinks to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

**5. A global incentive mechanism to protect standing forests, starting with tropical forests.** The value of forests is immeasurable. For instance, the Amazon Forest releases 20 billion tons of water into the atmosphere daily, an amount that would require six months of the world’s entire electrical energy capacity to replicate.<sup>216</sup> This environmental service alone has a value of USD 1 trillion per day, or USD 360 trillion per year — more than three times the world GDP (current prices) of USD 101.56 trillion in 2022.<sup>217</sup> The proposed incentive and compensation mechanism would pay for the conservation of forests through the creation of a payment system for environmental forest services based on a simple math of “dollars per hectare of forest preserved”. Establishing a payment per hectare per year scheme (which would be monitored by remote sensing) would not only achieve the goal of preserving the more than 1.8 billion hectares of existing tropical forest, but also accelerate the regeneration of an additional 1 billion hectares. Funding could also be covered through the taxation of the

fossil fuel industry (or by a fee for each barrel of oil produced). Given the crucial role that forests play in offsetting emissions and storing carbon, beyond relying solely on carbon markets and offsets, it is imperative to establish a broader mechanism that does not depend on carbon-specific measurements. Forest jurisdictions (nations and subnational governments), most of them still facing development challenges, might use funds to further reduce deforestation while generating income for Indigenous peoples and local communities through sustainable production activities and payments for environmental services, and to finance their transition to a low-carbon economy. Any mechanism to protect standing forests would need to reward the key actors on the ground, however; failure to do so will result in the continuation of deforestation and a failure to reach a net-zero carbon by 2050 pledge. Only if the world comes together can we secure the future of our forests.

**6. Biodiversity targets.** Building on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) agreed upon in COP15 in Montreal, and particularly acknowledging the roles, contributions, and rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) as custodians of biodiversity, the Pact should include specific and time-bound commitments to reverse biodiversity loss, to be measured by a set of ambitious biodiversity indicators, a public benchmark, and regular tracking and publication of progress via a dedicated registry.<sup>218</sup> These indicators would be set in partnership with IPLCs and cover a range of core issues, such as hydrological integrity, carbon sequestration, vegetative cover (desertification), habitat integrity, and species abundance. They should be linked with commitments to end harmful agricultural subsidies and transform our food and other production systems for the benefit of all. Additionally, as contained in the GBF, it will be necessary to raise, by 2030, at least USD 200 billion annually in domestic and international funding from all public and private sources to halt and reverse biodiversity decline. This financial support should flow primarily to developing countries and small islands.

## 7. Nature regeneration by 2050.

The imperatives above should be backed by the overarching goal of pursuing nature regeneration by 2050: in a circular economy, regenerating nature is a core principle, moving away from unsustainable extraction.<sup>219</sup> In this regard, advancing circular economy policies should be a top priority. The same is true for regenerative agriculture, which focuses on farming that more closely reflects natural ecosystems by using techniques such as agroecology and agroforestry. These processes support biodiversity conservation by providing a home for various species as well as by allowing nature to be in control of its own cycles.

**8. A pollution-free planet.** Building on the 2017 UNEA declaration, the 2018 UNEP proposal, and the full range of pollution targets already outlined in existing declarations, the Pact should include clear targets on chemical waste, air, water, soil, marine, and coastal sectors and designate a specific hub, secretariat, or other institution to monitor and publicize progress.

## Annex 2. A Decarbonizing Package

**As proposed in this report, a global approach to ending our reliance on carbon is needed. Some of the key elements of such a package would include:**

### 1. A global system of carbon pricing to meet the Paris Agreement obligations.

While it may be difficult to achieve a single global carbon price in the near term, a global system for pricing carbon should aim at disincentivizing carbon-based production and consumption and enabling a just, green transition. Recognizing the minimum global price proposed in the Report of the High-Level Commission on Carbon Prices,<sup>220</sup> it will be important to prioritize convergence around a global system of pricing that will allow us to meet the Paris Agreement goals. Even relatively modest taxation schemes on fossil fuel company windfall profits could play a central role, by transferring additional funds for developing countries in the context of just and green transition initiatives.<sup>221</sup> This should be accompanied by taxation of carbon-emitting consumption and other steps to incentivize renewables, and must be paired with the global financing shifts described in this report.

**2. A global carbon incentive.** One option for a carbon incentive would see every country emitting more than the global average paying a fixed price per tonne; the payment would be placed into a fund to support a green transition for those countries emitting less than the global average.<sup>222</sup> This would create an incentive for all countries to reduce carbon emissions, but would treat large emitters differently than small ones (aligning with the Paris Agreement's concept of common but differentiated responsibilities).

**3. Shifting subsidies from non-renewable to clean energy.** While ending fossil fuel subsidies is fundamentally necessary, it should be accompanied by massive investment for LDCs to transition and by affirmative steps to lower the costs of clean energy and industry.

Member States should commit to shifting financial resources out of fossil fuels and instead into the technology, infrastructure, and jobs that can underpin sustainable energy usage.<sup>223</sup>

#### **4. A global emissions liability management system.**

An improved carbon accounting structure is needed to enable visibility and management across corporate, national, and global carbon ledgers. Putting carbon liabilities (and assets) on balance sheets will address the arbitrary overcounting and reporting of activities out of one's control. Equally, it would serve as a more robust system to account for the quasi-permanent nature of a carbon liability, and the often less-than-permanent nature of a carbon asset.<sup>224</sup>

#### **5. A high-quality forest carbon market.**

The protocols for monitoring, verifying, and reporting on carbon markets should aim at increased transparency and efficiency, such as through straightforward reporting systems (on-the-ground verification to accounting reports) and avoiding excessive bureaucracy while ensuring environmental justice and accurate control methods. These methods should encompass all carbon schemes, including the Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+), which must do more to incorporate environmental quality services, human rights covenants, and free prior informed consent, among others. Jurisdictional-scale crediting should also be incentivized, as it has the potential to encourage governments to implement policies and actions for which only they have the authority, in order to tackle the drivers of deforestation. The scale of these programmes is an important determinant of the environmental integrity of carbon credits, with larger-scale programmes being better positioned to mitigate risks of leakage, non-additionality, permanence, and other issues compared to smaller, disconnected projects.<sup>225</sup>

#### **6. A transparent framework to define and ensure standards for the integrity of carbon credits.**

Such a framework should build on the United Nations' High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities proposal on "using voluntary credits", the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM), the Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative (VCMI), and the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) guidelines. It should ensure that credits are only used once a non-State actor's own mitigation efforts are in line with science, thus helping to bridge the huge financial gap necessary to decarbonize developing country economies.<sup>226</sup> Corporations should be required to adopt and report on their science-based targets towards decarbonization of value chains and commit to the UN Race to Zero Campaign or other initiatives with mid-century targets.<sup>227</sup>

Taken together, the elements of this decarbonizing package would support implementation of the Pact for People and Planet, forming part of a global **phase-out plan for fossil fuels**, an equitable shift to clean energy, and the birth of a circular economy that delivers energy and development for all.<sup>228</sup>

## Acknowledgements

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- › **The Stimson Center**
- › **United Nations Foundation**
- › **United Nations Office at Geneva**
- › **United Nations Office at Nairobi**

## Endnotes

- 1 An excellent example of this broader definition of the role of multilateralism can be found in the “Multilateralism Index: Pilot Report”, International Peace Institute and Institute for Economics and Peace, last accessed on 14 March 2023, <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Multilateralism-IndexFinal.pdf>.
- 2 “Common Security 2022 Report”, Common Security 2022 – For Our Shared Future, last accessed on 9 March 2023, <https://commonsecurity.org>.
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- 4 In accordance with established principles protecting minority rights.
- 5 The IMF, for example, has stated that reductions in gender disparities go hand-in-hand with greater economic growth. See, “IMF Strategy Toward Mainstreaming Gender”, International Monetary Fund, last accessed on 9 March 2023, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2022/07/28/IMF-Strategy-Toward-Mainstreaming-Gender-521344>.
- 6 See “UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-25”, UN Women, last accessed on 23 March 2023, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/UN-Women-Strategic-Plan-2022-2025-brochure-en.pdf>.
- 7 The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It adopts every year a set of agreed conclusions and conducts every five years a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- 8 “Global Gender Gap Report 2022”, World Economic Forum, last accessed on 9 March 2023, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/digest/>.
- 9 “Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected”, UN Women, last accessed on 14 March 2023, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2022/02/explainer-how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected>; “Impact On Women And Gender Equality”, GNWP – Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, last accessed on 9 March 2023, <https://gnwp.org/resources/covid-19-wps-database/impact-on-womens-economic-activity-and-livelihood-including-in-the-informal-sector-3/>.
- 10 “Devastatingly pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence”, World Health Organization, last accessed on 9 March 2023, <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>.
- 11 Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security (S/RES/1325): <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>.
- 12 See, e.g., “COVID-19 and fiscal policy: Applying gender-responsive budgeting in support and recovery”, UN Women, last accessed on 9 March 2023, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/03/policy-brief-covid-19-and-fiscal-policy>; “Establishing generation equality”, The Global Governance Project, last accessed on 9 March 2023, <https://www.globalgovernanceproject.org/establishing-generation-equality>.
- 13 “The UN and Civil Society”, United Nations, last accessed on 9 March 2023, [https://www.un.org/en/get-involved/un-and-civil-society#:~:text=A%20civil%20society%20organization%20\(CSO,local%2C%20national%20or%20international%20level](https://www.un.org/en/get-involved/un-and-civil-society#:~:text=A%20civil%20society%20organization%20(CSO,local%2C%20national%20or%20international%20level).
- 14 For a full list of related proposals, see <https://highleveladvisoryboard.org>. See also, “UNmute Civil Society”, Action for Sustainable Development, last accessed on 9 March 2023, <https://action4sd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Recommendations-for-meaningful-civil-society-participation-at-the-UN-FINAL-2021.pdf>.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 See, “Justice for Africa’s Children”, Laureates & Leaders for Children, last accessed on 23 March 2023, <https://www.laureatesandleaders.org/justice-for-africa-s-children-2023>.
- 17 The UN’s High-Level Committee on Programmes is developing a UN-wide set of principles to “future-fit” the organization. This is a positive step that could be expanded across the multilateral system. We also recognize the ongoing efforts to establish and expand the work of the UN Futures Lab Network, which could enable important foresight-related capacities across the multilateral system.
- 18 “World Cities Report 2022 – Envisaging the Future of Cities”, UN-Habitat, last accessed on 14 March 2023, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>.
- 19 See, e.g., the C-40 Group’s efforts to combat climate change, <https://www.c40.org/>. See also, “Engaging Local and Regional Governments in Multilateralism”, Geneva Cities Hub, last accessed on 14 March 2023, [https://www.genevacitieshub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GCH\\_3rd-Anniversary-report.pdf](https://www.genevacitieshub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GCH_3rd-Anniversary-report.pdf).
- 20 While only States can become members of the UN, other stakeholders can participate and contribute to the multilateral system, including non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, specific observer entities and invited experts. Cities and other LRGs however do not fall in either of those categories. Member States can agree to accord subnational governments a specific status, so that they may participate in UN processes in their own right. There is some precedent for this, such as the role of cities in the development of the [2030 Agenda](#). By putting the question of a specific status for LRGs on the agenda of the UNGA or ECOSOC, Member States would provide space for debate on how best to achieve inclusive and more-effective multilateralism.

- 21 “The case for engaging cities in the new multilateralism”, Igarapé Institute, last accessed on 14 March 2023, <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-12-07-Case-for-engaging-cities-in-the-new-multilateralism.pdf>.
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- 23 “United Nations treaty on plastic pollution”, WWF and Ellen MacArthur Foundation, last accessed on 14 March 2023, <https://unplasticstreaty.org>; International Labour Organization, last accessed on 15 March 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/global/lang-en/index.htm>.
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