

# RENEWING MULTILATERALISM FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

THE ROLE  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
AND OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION

DRAFTED BY  
the Istituto Affari Internazionali in coordination with  
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Drafted by the Istituto Affari Internazionali, in coordination with the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, under the direction of Ferdinando Nelli Feroci, Ettore Greco and Nicoletta Pirozzi, and edited by Ettore Greco.

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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>A4P</b>	Action for Peacekeeping	<b>LMICs</b>	Low and middle-income countries
<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence	<b>MERCOSUR</b>	(Spanish acronym, Mercado Común del Sur) Southern Common Market
<b>APEC</b>	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	<b>MFF</b>	Multiannual financial framework
<b>AU</b>	African Union	<b>MFN</b>	Most favoured nation
<b>BEPS</b>	Base erosion and profit shifting	<b>MPIA</b>	Multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement
<b>CD</b>	Conference on Disarmament	<b>New START</b>	New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
<b>CEB</b>	Chief Executive Board	<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	<b>NDCs</b>	Nationally determined contributions
<b>COPs</b>	Conferences of the Parties	<b>NPT</b>	Non-Proliferation Treaty
<b>CTBT</b>	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty	<b>ODA</b>	Official development assistance
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>DPO</b>	Department of Peace Operations	<b>OPCW</b>	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
<b>DPPA</b>	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs	<b>P5</b>	The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council
<b>DSU</b>	Dispute Settlement Understanding	<b>PBC</b>	Peacebuilding Commission
<b>ECI</b>	European Citizens Initiative	<b>PBF</b>	Peacebuilding Fund
<b>ECOSOC</b>	Economic and Social Council	<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and development
<b>EEG</b>	Eastern European Group	<b>RAPRISIT</b>	(Spanish acronym, Reunión de Autoridades sobre Privacidad y Seguridad de la Información e Infraestructura Tecnológica) a meeting of authorities on information security and privacy and technological infrastructure
<b>EPTA</b>	European Parliamentary Technology Assessment	<b>RTA</b>	Regional Trade Agreement
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>SALWs</b>	Small arms and light weapons
<b>FMCT</b>	Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty	<b>SARS-CoV-2</b>	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
<b>G7</b>	Group of Seven, brings together the world's seven leading industrial nations	<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>G20</b>	Group of Twenty, brings together the world's 20 major economies	<b>SDRs</b>	Special drawing rights
<b>GAD</b>	(Spanish acronym, Grupo Agenda Digital) Digital Agenda Group	<b>SIDs</b>	Small island developing states
<b>GCM</b>	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration	<b>TCP IP</b>	Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol
<b>GCR</b>	Global Compact on Refugees	<b>TEU</b>	Treaty on European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product	<b>TiSA</b>	Trade in Services Agreement
<b>GDPR</b>	General Data Protection Regulation	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>GGE</b>	Group of Governmental Experts	<b>UNDC</b>	United Nations Disarmament Commission
<b>GNI</b>	Gross national income	<b>UNDS</b>	United Nations Development System
<b>GOARN</b>	Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network	<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>HLPF</b>	High-Level Political Forum	<b>UNGHRP</b>	United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology	<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>IEA</b>	International Energy Agency	<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>IFIs</b>	International financial institutions	<b>UNSG</b>	United Nations Secretary-General
<b>IHR</b>	International Health Regulation	<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization	<b>VAWG</b>	Violence against women and girls
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund	<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>INF</b>	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty	<b>WCI</b>	World Citizens Initiative
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration	<b>WEOG</b>	Western Europe and Others Group
<b>IRENA</b>	International Renewable Energy Agency	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunication Union	<b>WMD</b>	Weapons of mass destruction
<b>JCPOA</b>	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action	<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization
<b>LDCs</b>	Least developed countries		
<b>LLDCs</b>	Land-locked developing countries		

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## FOR A NEW, FAIR AND INCLUSIVE MULTILATERALISM

**Maria João Rodrigues, President, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, and leader of the FEPS New Multilateralism Project**

Is it possible to imagine a multilateralism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

**Human history is now reaching a new phase.** Humankind is not only united by common aspirations – peace, development, democracy, human rights, access to culture, knowledge and new technologies. It is also confronted with new common global challenges which are perceived as **vital** – human health, living conditions, survival on this planet. **Global governance needs to be re-invented to cope with this new situation.**

In the current global governance, **tensions over several unsolved issues** are accumulating.

- ◆ How can key political conflicts be reduced by enforcing better democratic standards and implementing the sustainable development goals?
- ◆ How can fundamental rights and the sustainable development goals be implemented with the necessary financial instruments?
- ◆ How can trade agreements be aligned with the sustainable development goals for all countries?
- ◆ How can migration be perceived as a win-win situation for host and origin countries?
- ◆ How can common but differentiated responsibilities be defined regarding the transition to low-carbon economies?
- ◆ How can we ensure a socially fair transition to low-carbon economies taking into account intra and inter-regional differences as well as intergenerational ones?
- ◆ How can tax resources be adapted to the new sources of added value creation?
- ◆ How can artificial intelligence be driven to support

inclusive development while respecting human rights and good governance?

As an example, let us just mention a key shaping factor of the emerging new global order, which must be fully understood in its implications. A new dimension of reality, **cyberspace, is being massively amplified and transformed** by the combined effect of the Internet of Things connecting trillions of objects and services to artificial intelligence. This can improve the algorithms of governance at all levels, including global governance. But it can only happen if we build up the global governance of cyberspace, which is still very inconsistent and fragile. So far, we are heading to a geostrategic competition in cyberspace which will have huge implications for all the other dimensions of reality. All this shows a new frontier to improve global governance.

Furthermore, and more recently, the **Covid-19 pandemic is now acting as a catalyst and a magnifier** of all these trends and tensions. This is a multidimensional crisis with strong impacts on the health, social, economic, political and cultural conditions of all countries. The crisis is unfolding over different phases: health emergency and lockdown, the re-opening and re-launch of human activity with several setbacks, countering a big recession, preparing recovery with transformation of our economies and societies. This is a make or break moment for international cooperation, and it will probably be **a turning point shaping the emerging new global order.**

The **decline of the current global order seems irreversible** due to the combined effect of several factors:

- ◆ the divide between the winners and losers of globalisation, particularly deep in some countries;
- ◆ the level of systemic risk reached by the financial crisis of the last decade with lasting social impacts, particularly on young people's life chances;
- ◆ the emergence of nationalist trends in several big players, the USA, Russia, Brazil and China – even if a Trump-led United States is alone in openly undermining the multilateral system (withdrawing from UNESCO, the Migration Compact, the Iran deal, the Paris Climate Agreement, and weakening WTO trade negotiations);



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- ◆ the level of systemic competition between great powers pushing for different global orders;
- ◆ the current difficulties in coping with urgent global challenges such as pandemics and climate change.

What will the new global order be like? In fact, there are three possible basic scenarios.

- 1) The ongoing **fragmentation of the current global order** and the **emergence of a polycentric structure with zones of influence, including the new zone of influence connected with China**. These different poles and zones of influence can also tend to become more inward-looking and to use a weakened multilateral system for their particular needs. So far, this seems to be the most likely scenario.
- 2) A **Western revival**, particularly if there is a reversal of the current situation in the USA. This might not change much as regards the American attitude to trade, but it could certainly bring a new American attitude to the climate or human-rights standards, as well as an American re-commitment to the UN system. Nevertheless, we have a new world now, and this Western revival would no longer be sufficient to prevent the first scenario.
- 3) **Renewing international cooperation with a multilateralism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**. The chances for such a scenario depend on building a large coalition of forces involving willing states, regional organisations, civil society entities of different kinds, and also willing citizens wherever they are in the world, even under authoritarian and anti-multilateral political regimes. This would be a global coalition of progressive forces, which could count on a core of strongly committed forces as well as on a variable geometry according to the different objectives.

The European Union is now on the path to developing stronger instruments of **European sovereignty** in the budgetary, economic, social and environmental fields, and it should aim at asserting itself as a **fully-fledged political entity with a vital interest in defending and updating a multilateral system at world level, and in building up a global coalition of allies**.

## RENEWING MULTILATERALISM FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

It is therefore high time to develop **a new multilateralism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century** – one which is more effective in the face of the current global challenges and more legitimate, not only because it is more effective, but also because it is **more inclusive and more fair**.

We need a new, inclusive and fair multilateralism. The strategy for the renewal should reconsider the objectives, principles and political method for renewal.

First of all, the **objectives** of multilateralism should be updated. Even if the main objectives of peace and security, human rights and development remain central, they should be understood with new concepts.

- ◆ **Peace and security** must include the new dimensions of outer space and of cyberspace, preventing their weaponisation, social divide and authoritarian drive.
- ◆ **Human rights** must be radically asserted against any kind of discrimination and incorporate full gender equality for half of humankind.
- ◆ **Development** is not only for countries catching up. It is for all countries because all countries need to change their development model.

Furthermore, **new objectives** with a global dimension should be explicitly added for a renewed multilateral system:

- ◆ the provision of **global public goods**, such as vaccines, health services and education;
- ◆ the common but differentiated responsibilities for **global commons** such as climate, natural resources and cyberspace;
- ◆ the governance of **global exchanges and interdependence** in different fields – finance, trade, investment, technologies, intellectual property rights and human mobility.

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Some **principles of renewal** should drive the transformation of the current multilateral system to:

- ◆ focus on **well-being for all** and on a new relationship with the planet and nature, according to the One Health principle;
- ◆ focus on reducing intra-country, inter-country and inter-generational **social inequalities**;
- ◆ be **inclusive** of all human beings, assuming the same fundamental rights for all;
- ◆ promote **upward convergence** towards the achievement of the common goals, beyond the variety of cultural and political preferences;
- ◆ deepen **democratic ownership** at all levels – local, national, regional and international;
- ◆ develop a **knowledge-intensive governance** using consultation, participation, cooperation, joint learning and artificial intelligence to promote all these principles.

The **political method** to renew should combine some key features:

- ◆ **focus on key unsolved issues** which require more policy coherence and consistency;
- ◆ **include** and **network** with all relevant organisations and actors in multilevel terms;
- ◆ use the multilateral **toolbox** in a tailor-made way for norm setting, capacity building, financial support and partnership building.

Against this background, a **political strategy** to transform the current multilateral system into a renewed one in the present circumstances can be to:

- ◆ focus on the **global challenges** that are better perceived as vital and universal, notably the Covid-19 pandemic, recession and job losses, and climate change, and to define common measurable goals. A **Global Health, Social and Green Deal** in line with

the sustainable development goals should be the compass;

- ◆ mobilise new **financial and technological solutions** to reduce social intra-country, inter-country and inter-generational inequalities;
- ◆ strengthen the **normative, technological and financial capacities** of key UN agencies or governance arrangements;
- ◆ involve all the **relevant organisations**, notably the regional organisations, to achieve these common and measurable goals;
- ◆ promote a **new generation of partnerships** which should be inclusive and effective over the entire policy-making cycle of designing, advising, implementing, financing, and assessing policy measures;
- ◆ deepen democratic **ownership of the multilateral system** with a larger involvement of national parliaments, national economic and social councils, and global citizenship initiatives;
- ◆ translate these new trends into **new working methods and a new composition of the UN governing bodies**.

## THE COVID CRISIS AS A CATALYST FOR A NEW MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

The Covid-19 crisis has magnified the current global challenges and added a new one, which has been very quickly perceived as planetary and unprecedented. The response to such a global challenge requires not only **global cooperation, but also global solidarity** and it will become **a big test to the current multilateral system, but also a big opportunity to renew it**.

From a progressive perspective, this global cooperation and solidarity should be organised on three fronts to:

- ◆ provide a powerful **backstop against a painful economic and social shock and recession** bringing a

# FOR A NEW, FAIR AND INCLUSIVE MULTILATERALISM

massive destruction of companies, jobs, incomes and livelihoods;

- ◆ prevent the **deepening of inequalities** between citizens and between countries when dealing with this Covid-19 crisis;
- ◆ pave the way for a **paradigm shift in our way of life**, building on a more generalised perception that something more fundamental is wrong and that we must go much further than just recovering and going back to the previous ‘normality’.

The Covid-19 crisis should become a wake-up call and a turning point in the behaviour of the wizard. The wizard – meaning us – has always acted assuming that he could exploit nature without any limits, but now it seems that the witchcraft has turned against the wizard. In fact, in the very worrying climate change that is underway, the deathly virus that threatens human life on the planet is humankind itself!

Beyond the **emergency phase aimed at saving lives** and the **recovery phase aimed at saving jobs**, we need to provide a vision in the response to the Covid-19 crisis – a vision for a Global Reconstruction Plan, ‘Marshall’-like in the sense of rebuilding the cultural, social, economic and political foundations of our life, promoting international cooperation and solidarity, and rebalancing the world to give real chances for development. This plan should be based on a Global Health, Social and Green Deal.

## THIS PROJECT AND THIS POLICY REPORT

As the year 2020 is the starting point for the UN system to discuss the **reform of the multilateral system at the UN General Assembly**, FEPS – in cooperation with the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York Office, the Fondation Jean-Jaurès, the Fundación Pablo Iglesias, the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale and the Olof Palme International Center - decided to contribute to this debate by launching a project to develop a progressive approach to:

- ◆ identify the main global challenges ahead;

- ◆ formulate some recommendations not only on the *what* but on the *how* in different policy areas of the multilateral system;

- ◆ formulate some recommendations on the architecture of the multilateral system.

This project has been able to count on a regular dialogue with insiders of the UN system and on a remarkable set of renowned experts who were organised in two high level groups, one European and the other with experts from different continents. Both groups undertook a fascinating debate together on these three discussion areas. The experts were Álvaro de Vasconcelos, Andrew Gamble, Enrico Giovannini, Paolo Guerrieri, Jo Leinen, Pierre Moscovici, Pier Carlo Padoan, Daniela Schwarzer, Jochen Steinhilber, Mario Telò, Nathalie Tocci, Raymond Torres, Luk Van Langenhove, Nico Schrijver, Amitav Acharya, Ibrahim Awad, Salma Bava, Ian Lesser, Qin Yaqing, Diego Trindade d’Ávila Magalhães, Zhou Hong and Vladimir Zuev.

The main outcomes of this project, which I had the privilege to chair, are now being launched for public debate, including this Policy Report which was prepared by the Istituto Affari Internazionali under the direction of Ferdinando Nelli Feroci, Ettore Greco and Nicoletta Pirozzi. It was edited by Ettore Greco, and offers an inspiring collection of chapters systematically addressing the issues indicated above. I would like to express our gratitude to all the authors, Margherita Bianchi, Nicola Bilotta, Fabrizio Botti, Francesca Caruso, Federica Dall’Arche, Daniele Fattibene, Luca Franza, Asli Okyay and Natalino Ronzitti, as well as Hedwig Giusto, Susanne Pfeil, Ainara Bascuñana and the whole team who made this publication possible in such a timely and creative way.

It was a real pleasure and honour to work with this large network of very qualified experts and engaged global citizens in order to start imagining a multilateral system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2020 must be the year to launch **an agenda for a 21st century multilateralism** – a new, fair and inclusive multilateralism.

- ◆ **New**, in order to address not only the permanent challenges of peace, human rights and development, but also the new global challenges of climate change, pandemics, scarce resources, digital transformation and cybersecurity.
- ◆ **Fair**, in order to eradicate poverty and overcome the current social inequalities, within and between countries, and between generations, in their access to global public goods such as education, health-care and environmental quality.
- ◆ **Inclusive**, in order to represent the whole of humankind on an equal footing, thus creating a real sense of common belonging and democratic participation, involving all relevant actors from international and regional organisations to a large range of civil society stakeholders.

## KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### ON COVID, RECOVERY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ The UN must improve the capabilities of its system to **prevent and counter pandemics**, and promote more effective international cooperation in the research for and production of therapies and vaccines. In particular, universal access should be granted **to Covid vaccine, which must be considered a vital global good**.
- ◆ The WHO should be provided with an enlarged mandate and enhanced enforcement mechanisms to ensure national compliance with international obligations. Public health funds should be increased through, inter alia, higher national assessed contributions from the WHO member states.
- ◆ ECOSOC should be assigned the responsibility of

coordinating the activities of other UN bodies and agencies to contain and limit **the social consequences of this pandemic: protecting and creating jobs, healthy and fair labour conditions, reducing working poverty and social inequalities** should be the pillars of such a strategy. The Covid crisis should be used to **re-design the Social Contract** ensuring basic services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens and improving their living conditions. The ILO has a key role to play in promoting higher labour standards and social protection.

- ◆ The **UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan** must be properly implemented and monitored, so that it reaches out effectively to the most vulnerable groups of the population. ECOSOC should steer this work, boosting policy coherence among UN agencies, as well as between UN agencies and multilateral financial institutions such as the development banks.
- ◆ The UN, supported by top **SDG** performers, should ensure that immediate and **long-term recovery plans use the SDGs as the main framework for policy guidance**. It is essential that recovery be based on more sustainable development models.
- ◆ The EU and the UN should urge all donor countries to uphold the 0.7% aid target, i.e. to contribute 0.7% of their Gross National Income as ODA to provide the necessary funding for international development.

### ON HUMAN RIGHTS

- ◆ The control over implementation of **human rights** by the member states should be reinforced by entrusting independent organs with the task of scrutinising whether the human rights obligations are fulfilled. Complaints of **human rights violations** should be brought not only by states, but also by individual victims of the violation. The process should be concluded with a decision having an obligatory value, that is, a judgment.
- ◆ In order to promote **women's economic empowerment**, the UN should press national governments to

work on three areas: improve **public services, such as public childcare services and social protection**; build infrastructure in sectors such as **water, transport, energy and social housing**; and engage in awareness campaigns for greater recognition and redistribution of **unpaid work**. Governments and international organisations need to strengthen services for women and girls who experience **domestic violence** by assuring rapid assessments and psychological support, and by increasing the number of shelters.

- ◆ The multifaceted nature of **migration** requires going beyond the security framing that has thus far been dominant and ensuring full implementation of the UN Compacts on migration and refugees. Joining forces with multilateral actors and regional organisations, the UN should mobilise a joined-up, comprehensive and coordinated risk mitigation and recovery response, which should be inclusive of migrants and refugees, and embedded in the 2030 Agenda.

and fossil fuel subsidy phaseout. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) should be strengthened by expanding its role, mandate, funding and membership. It is crucial that IRENA strongly coordinates with UN agencies and with the IEA to avoid duplication of action.

- ◆ The development of **digital skills and broadband networks are of paramount importance for implementing the SDGs**. Global standards should be defined for **on-line platform workers**. A multilateral framework on **data governance** is key to maximising the economic, social and environmental benefits of cross-border data flows. The UN could set up a structure to promote the co-ordinated development of indicators to measure data flows and create a common classification on how different kinds of data are produced. The EU should promote the creation of a group of countries which commit to implementing legally binding rules of the GDPR.

## ON CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND DIGITAL

- ◆ The open coordination method in **climate** issues – COPs and NDCs being aspects of this – should be further promoted and strengthened, making sure that all relevant actors (at state level but also at a supra- and sub- state level) are effectively engaged. There should be a push for the adoption of **binding targets in other countries/regions. Climate objectives and the protection of global commons should be mainstreamed into trade, aid and foreign policy** in order to gain leverage in this lobbying effort. **The Green Climate Fund must be fully financed.**
- ◆ The scope of UN action on **energy** should be enlarged by **strengthening (horizontal) cross-agency coordination on energy and better integrating energy governance with climate governance**. Membership of the International Energy Agency (IEA) should be broadened so as to transform it into a truly global energy agency with the key function of guiding energy policymaking, promoting market openness

## ON GLOBAL ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

- ◆ A deeper interface of the WTO with the UN system through formal institutional links would enhance the **multilateral trading system** potential to provide a forum for collaborative actions towards the **achievement of the SDGs and coordinated responses to the challenges raised by the Covid-19 pandemic**. New forms of cooperation are needed to manage trade tensions, and the disruption of global supply chains. This applies, in particular, to multilateral dispute settlement. The MPIA initiative undertaken within the framework of WTO is especially promising as it is consistent with WTO rules and based on the principle of inclusiveness. Trade negotiations should aim at **upgrading environmental and labour standards** in the countries involved. As a major trading actor, the EU has a key role to play to promote the upgrading of such standards.
- ◆ Longer, unconditional and comprehensive **debt payment stand-still** should be granted with the aim of releasing resources in the short term for emergency expenses or economic recovery in the indebted



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

countries. Holistic proposals to **link investment and debt relief to the SDGs** deserve deep consideration. The IMF should undertake a new large-sized allocation of **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)** to support the reserves position of low and middle-income countries.

- ◆ The **multilateral development banks** should be re-capitalised in order to strengthen the credit lines to support health programmes, viable companies, jobs and vulnerable households.
- ◆ In the **taxation field**, the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters could take a lead in promoting a more inclusive dialogue, in synergy with the BEPS negotiation at the OECD, in view of establishing, inter alia, a consolidated taxation of multinational corporations, a regular country-by-country reporting and **a minimum effective corporate income tax rate, including in digital services**.

### ON PEACE AND SECURITY

- ◆ The **effective implementation of reforms under the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative** requires further political impulse from the UNSG, a more resolute engagement by member states, and a sound assessment of the results of **peacekeeping missions** to ensure measurable improvements on the ground. **Vertical consistency** requires greater effort to facilitate the adaptation of regional divisions and actors on the ground to the new reporting lines and processes, and to ensure their ownership of the A4P exercise.
- ◆ The 2018 'Agenda for Disarmament' should provide the basis for the UN General Assembly and the UN machinery to discuss and produce concrete progress in **disarmament and non-proliferation**, attaching realistic deadlines and timelines to the practical actions identified in the agenda. Further emphasis should be given to regional agreements, which have been, in some cases, surprisingly successful in the non-proliferation and disarmament realm.

### ON UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM REFORM

**The UN institutional structure, its effectiveness and representativeness should be enhanced by adopting the reform measures below.**

- ◆ **Expanding the role of UN agencies.** Tackling current global challenges requires the expansion of the mandate of UN specialised agencies, such as the WHO and the ILO. The status of other relevant agencies such as the IOM and the ITU should be enhanced, in order to bind them to the UN Charter and make them able to perform a norm-setting function.
- ◆ **Ensuring policy coherence by improving horizontal coordination in the UN system.** There is a need, in particular, to align the work of the WB and the IMF with the UN programmes, especially the SDGs by, inter alia, establishing closer ties between IFIs on the one hand, and ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly on the other. At the same time, **a better inter-agency coordination** of global efforts should be promoted in various issue areas: closer coordination between the IOM and the UNHCR to address the problems of migrants and refugees, between the UN and the IEA for energy policy-making, market openness and fossil fuel subsidy phaseout, and between the WHO and other actors of the UN humanitarian system to cope with health emergencies.
- ◆ **Engaging all relevant actors in order to enhance policy consistency.** New partnerships beyond the current state-centric global architecture are needed. To that end, it would be worth promoting flexible, **topic-focused coalitions of the willing, formed by stakeholders, including private and civil society actors**, that are capable of pursuing shared innovative goals. In order to avoid the risk of fragmentation in this scenario of 'poly-governance', the UN should create **worldwide platforms** for information sharing, identification of complementarities and strategic alignment of actions. These platforms would bring representatives of the UN together with regional organisations, ad hoc groupings and civil society actors.

- ◆ Each policy field has a particular **mode of multilevel governance** combining different types of tools: policy advice, monitoring, open method of coordination, promoting joint action, dispute resolution, norms setting, capacity building, financial support. Nevertheless, these specific modes of governance should upgrade their particular combination of tools in order to **increase effective action and upward convergence towards common priorities**. A **global open method of coordination** should be established in the different issue areas by creating or reinforcing instruments such as common guidelines, national plans and regular implementation reviews within global frameworks such as the UN GHRP for humanitarian response; the TCP IP dealing with data governance; GCM and the GCR in the migration field; and the UNFCCC/COPs processes on climate. This should not rule out, however, the search for agreements on more binding commitments in selected issue areas, such as taxation, labour standards or data protection.
  
- ◆ **Making the UN more legitimate and representative by improving democratic participation.** The creation of a **UN Parliamentary Assembly** remains a longer-term objective, which could be realised through a majority vote on the basis of the procedure provided for in Article 22 of the UN Charter. In the short term, a form of democratic representation could be created by setting up an **inter-parliamentary network** composed of representatives of national parliaments, and parliamentary assemblies of regional organisations. In addition, instruments of direct democracy could be established, such as **a World Citizens Initiative (WCI)**, modelled on the European Citizens Initiative (ECI). The role of civil society organisations should be further enlarged by reforming, inter alia, the working methods of the **ECOSOC Committee on NGOs**.
  
- ◆ **Enhancing the regional dimension of the UN governing bodies.** Regional players perform crucial tasks in implementing the UN agenda, and serve as a bridge between global and local actors. Regional representation could be introduced and enhanced both in the UNSC and in the UNGA without the need to amend the UN Charter. At the

UNSC, the regional dimension should be reinforced by (1) **making non-permanent members more accountable to the regions they represent**; and (2) reviewing existing electoral groups to better account for the changes that have occurred in the international power distribution and to **align these electoral groups with existing regional organisations**. Representatives of regional organisations (under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter) should be **regularly involved** in UNSC debates and deliberations. Regional organisations that have achieved a substantive level of integration should also be granted enhanced **observer status at the UN General Assembly**.



# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

**Ferdinando Nelli Feroci**

Even before the Covid-19 outbreak the international scene was characterised by a disorderly multipolar order facing a complex mix of interconnected global challenges and multiple factors of instability and uncertainty. Until a few years ago the main features of the multilateral world order were: a) a set of international rules of behaviour largely recognised and respected; b) a network of international institutions similarly respected and recognised, which were responsible for elaborating these rules and monitoring the governments' compliance with them; c) economic interdependence and cooperation widely seen as assets and values. Already before the health emergency this world order had been weakened by several factors: the crisis of globalisation, the increasing reluctance of the former hegemonic power to assume its responsibilities, the rise of new global and regional powers, the growing role of non-state actors, the surge of nationalism combined with widespread mistrust towards international/supranational organisations. Long-lasting international rules, regimes and institutions were contested and delegitimised.

The impact of Covid-19 could intensify and accelerate these trends and will most likely modify the pre-Covid-19 model of globalisation. A deep economic recession is expected to affect the planet, albeit not with the same intensity everywhere. The gaps between the rich and the poor, among and within countries will widen. Containing the dramatic economic and social consequences of the pandemic should be a top priority of national and international actors. There is a risk that nationalistic attitudes will prevail as shown by the rising popular support for strong executives and the revival of autocratic regimes. International institutions have not proven particularly effective in managing the crisis and have come under even stronger criticism, including from national governments. The decline of the multilateral world order risks being aggravated by the growing divide between the winners

and the losers of globalisation, by the current difficulties in coping with urgent global challenges such as pandemics or climate change, and by an increased systemic competition among big powers. A number of regional crises, which have been neglected because of Covid-19, are reappearing on the agendas of governments, regional and international institutions, testing the effectiveness and the capabilities of our collective instruments to ensure peace and stability.

The already existing tensions between the US and China on trade, new technologies and security have deepened and are expanding to other areas, as witnessed by the reciprocal accusations of responsibility for mishandling – or even triggering – the pandemic, and by the reciprocal accusations of covered illicit activities. Such deepening

rivalry between the two superpowers, which is more and more assuming the characteristics of a new cold war, is emerging as one the main features of the world scene, and may seriously affect the chances of reforming global governance.

This climate of mistrust has created major new obstacles to international cooperation. At the same time, no new hegemonic power capable of exerting responsible leadership is likely to emerge from this unprecedented crisis. This combination of heightening tensions between major players and the lack of global leadership is hugely complicating efforts to build more effective instruments of global governance.

Nevertheless, in such a challenging environment it is all the more evident that a number of issues – climate change, energy diversification, digitalisation, trade protectionism, massive migration flows, international terrorism, poverty and inequalities in wealth distribution, the erosion of the arms control architecture – will continue to require a better functioning global governance.

The international community should therefore engage in the search for a new multilateralism for the 21st century aimed at ensuring not only the fulfilment of traditional objectives – peace and security, protection of freedoms and fundamental rights, a fair and just economic and social

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***The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to create a more robust and resilient health governance***  
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# THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

development – but also the delivery of public goods, an adequate response to new global challenges, and an efficient governance of economic interdependence.

## ***A testing challenge but also an opportunity for the UN and the EU***

The crisis of multilateralism poses a demanding challenge to the UN system as the universal organisation responsible for the effective functioning of global order and international cooperation. Most of the rules of global governance currently under stress are at the very basis of the functioning of the UN and of its complex system of specialised agencies. The UN therefore has a primary interest in undertaking new initiatives and reform plans to re-establish a well-functioning multilateralism, particularly in light of the consequences of Covid-19. The present crisis provides an opportunity to the UN system to define new objectives, update its mission and tasks, and reform its working methods. The celebration of the 75th anniversary of the UN can be a valuable occasion to take stock of the results achieved so far, assess weaknesses and inadequacies, and define a strategy for the future based on better inclusiveness, greater democratic ownership, and more effective governance.

The present crisis of multilateralism is also a major challenge for the EU, by far the most advanced project of regional integration. The EU has a strong interest in preserving and, if possible, consolidating a rules-based order within which it can advance its values and interests. Despite an unfavourable international context – a complicated partnership with the United States, a growing competition with China, and a troubled relationship with Russia – and its persistent internal weaknesses, the EU has a wide range of instruments to contribute to a re-launch of multilateralism, and, in particular, to a strengthening of the UN system. The unprecedented challenge of the impact of Covid-19 cannot be a justification for the EU to abandon its declared geopolitical ambition. On the contrary, now that an important agreement has been reached within the EU on an ambitious strategy to respond to the economic emergency, the Union should reaffirm its role on the international scene as a leading actor of a renewed multilateralism and a driving force for

the reform of the UN. Other regional organisations also have a crucial role to play, within their competences and responsibilities, in the relaunch of multilateralism and the strengthening of the UN.

This report offers an overview of the greatest challenges that the UN multilateral governance faces in its main policy areas. For each policy area the report provides a set of focused policy recommendations and proposals to relaunch multilateralism by enhancing the role of the UN. The final section addresses some aspects of a possible reform of the UN system and of its architecture, with the objective of contributing to the ongoing reform process launched by UN Secretary-General António Guterres. An executive summary recapitulates the paper's main recommendations and proposals.

## THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

***Ferdinando Nelli Feroci***

The Covid-19 pandemic, with its tragic human, economic and social consequences, has been a dramatic wake-up call for mankind. Even though the rate of transmission has diminished in some countries, in others the pandemic is still raging. The evolution of the pandemic remains unpredictable. Covid-19 has hit practically every country in the world, albeit with different intensity, causing a high number of casualties. It has put national health systems under an extraordinary pressure, revealing a striking degree of unpreparedness of both national authorities and international organisations. It is also having a dramatic impact on the economies and social fabrics of most countries in the world.

We are far from the end of the pandemic, and much will depend on its duration and its effects on mobility, suspension of industrial production, fragmentation of global value chains and changing consumer behaviour. However, it is already possible to draw some preliminary lessons on its implications for global governance and international cooperation.

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## ***The health emergency***

The first challenge relates to the health emergency. The pandemic has shown that both national governments and international institutions were not equipped to manage a health emergency of the scope and dimension of Covid-19. Governments have generally reacted in a disorderly manner, without sufficient coordination on the nature and timing of the measures needed to counter the pandemic. Only through a slow process of 'learning by doing' have national and regional authorities been able to contain the contagion, reduce the numbers of hospitalised patients and collaborate at least on the exchange of information on health protocols and therapies. The emergency has highlighted the need for much more efficient and concerted action at the international level to equip national health services with the necessary human and technical resources, improve transparency on the exchange of data about the pandemic, and define common standards on the measures needed to contain the contagion. Transparency, the exchange of correct information and best practices, standardised methodologies for the collection of data, and cooperation on the supply of medical equipment are the minimum requirements for an effective short-term international response. Major international efforts are required to develop effective therapies and vaccines.

The actions undertaken by international organisations have also not been up to the challenge, revealing structural shortcomings. The World Health Organization (WHO) has very limited competences since it is practically only entrusted with the tasks of monitoring the situation and addressing non-binding recommendations to national governments. In the case of Covid-19, the WHO has been rather slow in recognising the dimension of the crisis, not particularly effective in addressing consistent policy recommendations to member states, and seemingly reluctant in the search for the origin of and responsibilities for the transmission of the virus. The investigation into the origin of the pandemic that the WHO has been requested to conduct gives it the opportunity to demonstrate its independence and authority. Similarly, regional organisations have not been particularly helpful in providing a rapid and satisfactory answer to the health emergency. Even the EU, by far the most advanced case of regional integration, lacks adequate competences on health as it can only support and complement measures that remain the responsibility of national governments.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to create a more robust and resilient health governance architecture. A top priority is to address the shortcomings of the WHO by expanding its mandate, improving its procedures and enhancing its institutional tools so that it can become more proactive, ensure a more rapid and transparent information sharing and independent verification of findings, and conduct an effective monitoring of national compliance with international health obligations. In particular, the WHO's International Health Regulation (IHR) requires credible enforcement mechanisms. The WHO's alert and response capacity can also be enhanced by strengthening its Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) Initiative. Another major problem is the lack of adequate funds to deal with global health problems. National assessed contributions for the WHO should be increased. This would contribute to reducing the WHO's excessive dependence on voluntary contributions.

## ***Policy recommendations***

- ◆ The UN should make a major effort to improve the capabilities of system to prevent and counter global pandemics, and promote more international cooperation in the research for and production of therapies and vaccines.
- ◆ The WHO should be at the forefront of this effort. Its competences should be revised so as to enable the organisation to dispose of more effective instruments to provide alerts on health emergencies and monitor them, supply national governments with more timely and effective recommendations, and stimulate international cooperation for the development of therapies and vaccines. The WHO should also be provided with enhanced enforcement mechanisms to ensure national compliance with international obligations. Public health funds should be increased. In particular, the WHO member states should increase their national assessed contributions.
- ◆ The WHO should also better coordinate its strategies and activities with other UN agencies to ensure a comprehensive response to health emergencies.

# THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

- ◆ Under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, the whole UN system should endeavour to acquire an improved capability to deal with pandemics and with their consequences, with a holistic approach and by mobilising the expertise, instruments and resources of all the relevant bodies of the UN and all relevant UN agencies.
- ◆ Regional organisations in most cases do not have the competences to deal with a pandemic. They should therefore envisage the possibility of strengthening their capabilities to foster cooperation among their member states and stakeholders in the prevention, containment and stoppage of pandemics.
- ◆ The EU for its part, and even within the scope of existing Treaties, should foster closer cooperation among its members in the health sector, and contribute to strengthening UN capabilities in the sector.

## ***The economic emergency***

A second challenge is the concrete risk that the health emergency will cause a global economic recession of an unprecedented scope and nature. The social impact of Covid-19 will most likely be equally devastating. Economic forecasts published by several authoritative sources (including the IMF, OECD and EU Commission) have confirmed that the pandemic will provoke a dramatic reduction in GDPs this year, particularly in industrial output, and a significant contraction in the service sector (in particular educational activities, and services related to mobility, tourism and retail commerce) in most countries of the world. International trade and global value chains will also be affected, with inevitable effects on the dynamics of globalisation.

In order to alleviate the economic and social impact of coronavirus, national governments have enacted significant

measures, even though of different scope and intensity, including financial support to individuals and companies, and the injection of massive public funds into the economy. These measures, even when similar and convergent, have generally been adopted without prior coordination or consultation.

The experience nevertheless shows that there is a need for concerted action also at the international level to limit the scope, depth and duration of the economic recession, and to avoid beggar-thy-neighbour policies.

So far, international cooperation to deal with such a dramatic recession has lagged behind. The Bretton Woods institutions are still struggling to adapt and to define strategies to cope with the new economic scenario. At the global level the only noticeable initiative of the G20 so far has been an appeal for a suspension of the repayment of public debts for the least developed countries. This suspension should at least become a permanent moratorium of public debt repayment by the least developed. The G20 countries have also made a vague

promise to use all available policy tools to minimise the economic impact of the crisis but, due to deep political divergences, no agreement has yet been reached for truly concerted international action. More generally, the G20 has failed to provide a collective response of the level and ambition of that carried out during the 2008 financial crisis.

Given the scope and depth of the economic crisis worldwide, there is a need for a concerted massive stimulus aimed at reviving the global economy, through public and private investment plans, relaunching international trade, and restoring international value chains, to reduce inequalities in wealth distribution both among countries and within them. The EU has adopted an unprecedented set of measures to complement national efforts to limit the immediate effects of the pandemic on economies and societies. Certainly, the EU is a unique case, given the degree of interdependence of the economies of its member states. Nevertheless, and even considering the necessary differences, these measures could set a benchmark for initiatives and measures to be adopted at the international level.

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***Multilateral cooperation on the supply of medical equipment and the development of a vaccine is key to ensuring a robust and resilient global health system***

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General Assembly hall at the United Nations New York headquarters in times of Covid-19; Credit\_UN Photo Eskinder Debebe.

### ***Policy recommendations***

- ◆ The UN should take the lead in coordinating an international global strategy to react to the economic consequences of Covid-19, on the basis of an appropriate mix of policies to be adopted by national governments, international organisations and regional groupings.
- ◆ Such a plan of action should aim at helping nation states, and in particular the least developed, to relaunch their economies, and support employment and welfare systems, in a manner consistent with the objectives of sustainable development as defined by the UN with the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda.
- ◆ More specifically the UN should address policy recommendations to the IMF, World Bank, regional development banks and other public financial institutions, encouraging them to develop a credible and effective response to the economic and social consequences of Covid-19.
- ◆ The multilateral development banks should be re-capitalised in order to strengthen the credit lines aimed at supporting health programmes, viable companies, jobs and vulnerable households.
- ◆ The G20 should assume a political initiative aimed at coordinating a common response to the risk of a global recession.
- ◆ The EU should contribute to the international efforts to mitigate the economic and social effects of Covid-19 by mobilising additional resources to help the poorest and most affected countries, and by promoting common standards for the recovery of the economy.

# THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

## ***The social emergency***

In the absence of effective therapies and vaccines, physical distancing has been the most common means to break the chain of transmission of the virus, contain contagion, protect populations and reduce hospitalisation. Full or partial lockdown measures have therefore been implemented all around the world, with the consequent suspension or closure of economic activity. The impact of these measures has been significant, particularly on some sectors of the population and workforce (the self-employed, those employed in manufacturing industries, tourism, mobility services, and agriculture). Other sectors of the population have been affected less dramatically. Covid-19 has therefore widened the already huge gaps in wealth distribution. The informal economy sector, in particular, has been severely hit.

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***Covid-19 has widened the already huge gaps in wealth distribution***

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Covid-19 has also largely blocked migratory flows, which may nevertheless soon resume if the economic crisis deepens. New waves of migrants may increase pressure on national health services already under stress. Lockdowns and social distancing measures have also affected the education sector, with schools at all levels and universities forced to suspend their activities and to shift from physical to digital teaching. More generally, the widespread use of digital platforms to maintain communication and exchanges in times of social distancing entails the risk of increasing the digital divide both within and among countries.

Covid-19 has demonstrated the imperative of strengthening national health service capacities and resilience in emergency situations. It has underlined the worrying consequences of insufficient health coverage and the existence of efficiency gaps in social protection. It has also highlighted the importance of social protection for all. Providing an appropriate stimulus to the economy and

employment remains the essential precondition to ensure that the social and economic consequences of the crisis are overcome. In order to be both equitable and effective, stimulus packages should be adopted in the context of a social dialogue, and it should be ensured that they respect human rights, equality of opportunities and the principle of non-discrimination. Particular attention should be paid to the situation of migrants and foreigners with no legal status who live or work in countries of destination, and who should become beneficiaries of specific integration programmes.

## ***Policy recommendations***

- ◆ The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) should identify the major challenges deriving from Covid-19 in the social domain, and define a strategy to contain and limit the social consequences of the disease. ECOSOC should be assigned the responsibility of coordinating the activities of other UN bodies and agencies in this endeavour. As basic labour rights are far from ensured in many countries and risk to be further eroded as a result of the pandemic, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has a key role to play in promoting higher labour standards and social protection.
- ◆ Poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities, fair labour conditions, and health programmes for all should be the pillars of such a strategy.
- ◆ The EU and the UN should urge all donor countries to uphold the 0.7% aid target, i.e. to contribute 0.7% of their Gross National Income as ODA to provide the necessary funding for international development.
- ◆ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) should assess the consequences of Covid-19 on migratory flows, identify the most urgent challenges and needs, and elaborate policy recommendations for governments, other UN bodies and civil society actors.
- ◆ On the basis of their respective experiences, regional organisations should also contribute to this effort by providing data and information on the best practices that they have developed within their responsibilities.

# THE UN SYSTEM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

## THE UN SYSTEM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**Natalino Ronzitti**

Unlike the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Charter of the United Nations embodies several provisions on human rights, even though most of them are not immediately binding and need to be translated into norms having obligatory value. The Preamble to the Charter opens with a lofty proposition reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human persons and equal rights of men and women. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights set the basis for drafting two universal treaties – the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both of 1966 – and a number of treaties that cover a specific field, such as genocide, refugee seekers, racial discrimination and torture. Moreover, the UN Security Council may take action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter if it considers a widespread violation of human rights as a threat to peace. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has also prompted the codification of human rights at the regional level, the best example being the 1950 European Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. International criminal law has seen significant developments in recent years. In particular, the widespread violation of human rights is now considered a crime against humanity that involves the penal responsibility of wrongdoers.

Despite such undoubted progress the system of human rights protection still suffers from gaps and shortcomings. The two 1966 covenants have reached a quasi-universal ratification. However, several states have expressed reservations, which often water down the rights protected. Economic rights are not immediately prescriptive and need to be implemented. New codifications are not easy, as proven by the two 2018 global compacts (migration and

refugees) adopted by the UN General Assembly which have been opposed by important states. The statute of the International Criminal Court has not been ratified by three of the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, the Russian Federation and the United States) and the Court has been accused of being an instrument for prosecuting only people from Africa and the weakest countries.

However, the major shortcoming of the current system of human rights is the lack of adequate control and supervision mechanisms. Unlike the European Convention on

human rights and its additional protocols, the two covenants rely on mechanisms that may be triggered only by states. Individuals may make a complaint only if the responsible state has ratified both the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and an optional protocol. The procedure does not terminate with a judgment, but with a decision having a hortatory nature. Also, the UN Human Rights Council cannot be praised for its efficiency and impartiality. The voting procedure for electing its members does not guarantee that they are chosen among those states most respectful of human rights.

UN members are obliged to submit a report on the status of human rights in their territory at regular intervals. However, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is in the hands of member states which often act too leniently. NGOs are the most active in denouncing human

rights infringements, but they do not take part in drafting the UPR country reports containing the recommendations addressed to the individual states. The UN system for the protection of human rights lacks a mechanism that can be triggered by individuals to start a process that concludes with a judgment against the responsible state. It is true that human rights obligations are erga omnes obligations and any member of the international community, in case of a violation of a customary norm, or each state party, if a treaty obligation is invoked, may ask the responsible state to abide by the obligation it has failed to implement. However, for diplomatic reasons, states are reluctant to

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***Despite undoubted progress the system of human rights protection still suffers from gaps and shortcomings***  
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denounce a violation of human rights. As pointed out above, the Security Council may declare a gross violation of human rights as a threat to peace and impose sanctions or even authorise the use of force, but such a deliberation is subject to the veto of permanent members.

States have taken several measures to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic, such as the closure of external borders and severe limits to the freedom of movement, which are usually justified by derogations set out by human rights instruments. However, some of those measures are of such magnitude that they raise the question of whether they are fully justified. The right to life and the right to health are human rights that need special protection and in the current circumstances they have not been properly ensured by the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO is a UN agency with a limited budget and limited powers, but the regulations adopted by its Assembly are obligatory for members that do not raise any objection. However, the WHO lacks a system of inquiry to conduct independent inspections in states suspected of concealing pandemic data. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has released a document entitled 'A Call for Action for Human Rights' (2020). After underlining the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the document contains several chapters setting out situations, goals and possible actions to be undertaken. The document reaffirms the central importance of gender equality and the full implementation of women's rights, and points out the need to preserve the human rights of future generations in the light of climate change and sustainable development. Collective action for the protection of human rights is also recommended.

Human rights and democracy are fundamental values inspiring the action of the European Union as set out in its constitutive treaty. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, an instrument endowed with legal value, has enlarged the human rights horizon of the EU. The EU can contribute to the multilateral process of the development of human rights in several ways. For instance, EU member states can contribute to qualifying a widespread

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***The EU can contribute to a further development of the codification of human rights through the establishment of new rights***

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violation of human rights as a threat to peace, and push the Security Council to take appropriate action. The EU can also contribute to a further development of the codification of human rights, especially through the establishment of new rights, such as the preservation of the environment or the prevention of the negative impact of artificial intelligence on human rights. Multilateralism also means to act when the Security Council is unable to take a decision because of the veto power entrusted to the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5). Countermeasures may be taken by the willing states in case of gross violation of human rights and the inability of the Security Council to act.

The European Union can also act within the G20 by, for instance, promoting principles that oblige multinational enterprises to abide by human rights.

## **Policy recommendations**

- ◆ The control over implementation of, and respect for, human rights by the member states should be reinforced by entrusting independent organs with the task of scrutinising whether the human rights obligations are fulfilled. To that end, organs made up of independent persons should be created in addition to the Human Rights Council and its UPR. Complaints of human rights violations should be brought not only by states, but also by individual victims of the violation. States may initiate a complaint even if they have not suffered a particular wrong, since a violation of human rights should be construed as an *erga omnes* obligation. The process should be concluded with a decision having an obligatory value, that is, a judgment.
- ◆ The codification of human rights should be implemented according to the lines recommended by the UN Secretary-General in his 'Call for Action for Human Rights'. Gender equality should be reaffirmed and women's rights strengthened. Human rights codification should include new fields

# THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

such as digitalisation, robotics and cyberspace. Multiculturalism should be a value and not an excuse to undermine human rights. For instance, local/religious traditions should not be used as a justification for discriminating in the attribution of rights or for upholding gender inequality.

- ◆ A serious violation of human rights may be declared by the Security Council as a threat to peace, and remedial measures may be taken accordingly. There is a need to limit the veto power of the P5. An informal agreement between them through a political declaration before the Security Council is the best way to proceed, since amendments of the Charter under Article 108 are difficult to achieve. The same can be said for the transmission of pandemic diseases and action that can be carried out by the Security Council, alone or in cooperation with the UN agencies, such as the WHO.
- ◆ The WHO should be equipped with a system of inquiry to conduct independent inspections in states suspected of concealing pandemic data. This system should include an inquiry mechanism that can be activated even against the will of the territorial state, similar to the mechanism of challenge inspections of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).
- ◆ The international community is witnessing significant violations of basic human rights, amounting to genocide, crimes against humanity and crimes of war. It is necessary to render international criminal justice, now perceived as a tool against third world countries, a true universal devise.
- ◆ The European Union and its member states should contribute to the codification of human

rights and their implementation by bringing the situations of countries where violations are widespread to the attention of multilateral fora. In cases of violation of *erga omnes* human rights obligations, the European Union should be ready to adopt countermeasures if the Security Council does not take appropriate sanctions to redress the violation.

## THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**Daniele Fattibene**

The UN 2030 Agenda aims at an unprecedented transformation of our societies. States are required to meet a series of challenging performance indicators to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Yet indicators and political declarations need to be coupled with clear commitments and effective investments to monitor progress. The first review of all 17 SDGs by the 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) showed that several countries were not on track in implementing the SDGs.<sup>1</sup> Confirming these trends, the 2020 HLPF<sup>2</sup> has underlined the need to accelerate action to realise the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. During the meeting, 47 countries submitted their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), to present the progress made on achieving the SDGs.<sup>3</sup> In this context, the ECOSOC High-level Segment was mandated by the UN General Assembly to address the economic, social and environmental effects of the pandemic on the SDGs and draw future scenarios.<sup>4</sup>

1 United Nations (2019) High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019#docs>.

2 United Nations (2020) Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2020. Available at: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26727SDG\\_Chart\\_2020.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26727SDG_Chart_2020.pdf).

3 United Nations (2020) High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Voluntary National Reviews. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020>.

4 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 23 July 2018, 'Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council'. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/305>.

# THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The spread of SARS-CoV-2 will have a profound impact on sustainable development efforts,<sup>5</sup> hitting hard the most vulnerable groups such as women, children,<sup>6</sup> the elderly, internally displaced persons, migrants and informal workers.

In particular, least developed countries (LDCs), land-locked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), and countries in humanitarian or fragile situations are likely to bear the biggest burden as they suffer from weak health systems, limited social protection coverage, limited financial and other resources, vulnerability to shocks, and dependence on international trade.<sup>7</sup> According to the United Nations University the number of people affected by poverty will skyrocket up to 580 million.<sup>8</sup> The Global Health Security Index has warned that most countries lack the fundamental healthcare capacity to respond to the pandemic.<sup>9</sup> Against this backdrop, the recent report by the UN secretary-general has highlighted the importance of boosting the efforts in the next decade to fully achieve the SDGs. The pandemic risks reverting the positive results achieved in poverty reduction (SDG 1), ensuring good health (SDG 3) and supporting the transition towards clean energy (SDG 7). In particular, the crisis may have huge implications for those countries that

have fallen behind or even worsened their performances, for instance in the fight against zero hunger (SDG 2).<sup>10</sup> According to the recent 'State of Food Security in the World' report, the pandemic could tip 130 million more

people into chronic hunger by the end of 2020.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the 2020 'Sustainable Development Report'<sup>12</sup> has highlighted that the spread of SARS-CoV-2 is likely to affect multiple SDGs, including health (SDG 3), access to education – as schools have been shut down and online courses are not available to everyone (SDG 4), job losses (SDG 8) and gender equality – with women at the frontline as they account for more than half of all doctors and 90 per cent of nurses (SDG 5).

While it is therefore urgent to undertake effective global initiatives to counter the immediate health emergency, it is essential that all responses are in line with the broader and interlinked targets of the UN 2030 Agenda. As pointed out at the ECOSOC briefing held in May 2020, effective coordination does not

necessarily require new structures, but rather a more coordinated multilateral response, supported by strong political will, leadership and global solidarity to protect the most vulnerable groups of the population and leave no one behind.<sup>13</sup>

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5 United Nations Economic and Social Council, 8 May 2020, 'Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development', Report of the Secretary-General. Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/E/2020/59>.

6 United Nations (2020) 'Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on children', 15 April. Available at: [www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy\\_brief\\_on\\_COVID\\_impact\\_on\\_children\\_16\\_april\\_2020.pdf](http://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_COVID_impact_on_children_16_april_2020.pdf).

7 IISD, SDG Knowledge Hub, UN Secretary-General Releases 2020 SDG Progress Report. Available at: <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-general-releases-2020-sdg-progress-report/>.

8 United Nations University, UNU-WIDER, 'Estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty', Working Paper 43/2020. Available at: [www.wider.unu.edu/publication/estimates-impact-COVID-19-global-poverty](http://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/estimates-impact-COVID-19-global-poverty).

9 GHS Index, Welcome to the 2019 Global Health Security Index. Available at: [www.ghsindex.org/](http://www.ghsindex.org/).

10 IISD, SDG Knowledge Hub, UN Secretary-General Releases 2020 SDG Progress Report. Available at <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-general-releases-2020-sdg-progress-report/>.

11 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, SOFI 2020, 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets'. Available at: [www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/](http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/).

12 Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G., Woelm, F. (2020) 'The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020'. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2020/2020\\_sustainable\\_development\\_report.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2020/2020_sustainable_development_report.pdf).

13 ECOSOC Briefing on Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for COVID-19 Response 11 May 2020, Informal summary. Available at: [www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2020doc/Summary-COVID19-briefing.pdf](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2020doc/Summary-COVID19-briefing.pdf).





General Assembly hall at the United Nations New York headquarters. Photo by Marie Gandois

Nonetheless, so far it seems that most of the measures taken to deal with the crisis at the national level make little or no reference to the SDGs as a guiding policy framework. Managing the health crisis while ensuring coherence with the SDGs requires both national and multilateral action. At the domestic level, it will be crucial to strengthen health and sanitation services, support the poorest households, preserve access to education for all and ensure that when the economy restarts, investments respect global climate commitments. At the international level, it will be pivotal to reinforce international cooperation on public health, promote trust in multilateralism and avoid donors reducing their levels of official development assistance (ODA) for the most fragile countries, particularly those afflicted by conflicts. Funding and aid to improve data and statistical capacities will be essential as the lack of human and financial resources (only

0.34 per cent of total official ODA is earmarked for this purpose) undermines states' capacity to monitor performances.<sup>14</sup>

The United Nations has launched a USD 2 billion Global Humanitarian Response Plan<sup>15</sup> to address the immediate health and non-health needs of vulnerable populations through a multi-partner multi-sectoral response to the pandemic. The UN Response and Recovery Fund should foster inter-agency fund cooperation at the UN-level to mobilise adequate resources and ensure that they benefit the neediest, alleviating the social impact of the crisis. The fund is also meant to help lay the groundwork for a swift recovery. Several low and middle-income countries (LMICs) that are in trouble have already sought financial support from the International Monetary Fund, as well as other

14 United Nations Economic and Social Council, 28 April 2020, 'Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals', Report of the Secretary-General. Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/E/2020/57>.

15 United Nations Coordinated Appeal, 'Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19', April – December 2020. Available at: [www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf](http://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf).

international, regional, national or sub-national public development banks.<sup>16</sup>

Amid such global uncertainty, the EU needs to further develop its role as a global leader in sustainable development. The Union has done impressive work to streamline the SDGs into its policy agenda, creating solid metrics to monitor progress that involve civil society organisations and the private sector, as outlined in the latest Eurostat report on the implementation of the SDGs in the EU.<sup>17</sup> Such metrics could be used as a model for the whole international community to design more effective reporting schemes. However, despite progress in some sectors (eg, health, education, or emissions reduction) no EU country is on track in achieving the targets set in the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, some EU policies continue to generate negative economic, environmental and security spillovers into third countries. In addition, the Union still lags behind the UN target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) allocated to ODA.<sup>18</sup> The risk is that major donors hit by economic recession due to the pandemic opt to reduce foreign aid, reversing a positive trend that has lasted for more than two decades. Increasing the resources available in the new multi-annual financial framework (MFF), and harnessing the potential of the newly unveiled Recovery Fund to unlock investments in sustainable development and reshape the EU financial architecture for development,<sup>19</sup> will be essential to react effectively to the internal and external challenges of the pandemic.

The EU Recovery Plan, as well as key reform undertakings (eg, the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Farm to Fork Strategy,<sup>20</sup> the European Green Deal), need to be fully in line with the SDGs. Only then can the EU's ambition to lead by example have real chances of being fulfilled. There are multiple ways the SDGs can be integrated

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***Amid such global uncertainty the EU needs to further develop its role as a global leader in sustainable development***

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into the global economic recovery and that of the EU. They include boosting investments in healthcare equipment and expanding universal access to healthcare (SDG 3), ending poverty (SDG 1), reducing the impact of climate change (SDG 13), harnessing the potential for the circular economy and ensuring responsible sourcing policies by businesses (SDG 12), creating decent jobs (SDG 8), eradicating hunger and promoting sustainable agriculture (SDG 2), developing sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and supporting the transition to clean energy (SDG 7). The global health crisis shows that a radical change is needed to reshape the world's development path – and Europe has the tools to become a truly global leader.

### ***Policy recommendations***

- ◆ The UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan must be properly implemented and monitored, so that it reaches out effectively to the most vulnerable groups of the population. Horizontal intra-agency cooperation, as well as the involvement of multi-stakeholder partnerships, is pivotal for launching an effective response, restoring trust in multilateralism and sustaining international cooperation on public health. ECOSOC should steer this work,

16 IDDDRI (2020) 'The role of Public Development Banks in supporting the post-COVID-19 crisis recovery in emerging and developing countries', Blog post, 23 June. Available at: [www.idddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/role-public-development-banks-supporting-post-COVID-19-crisis](http://www.idddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/role-public-development-banks-supporting-post-COVID-19-crisis).

17 Eurostat (2020) 'Sustainable development in the European Union. Overview of progress towards the SDGs in an EU context', 2020 edition. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4031688/11010788/KS-01-20-192-EN-N.pdf/ae63aff0-a6f3-1d47-da83-c6886b9daaab>.

18 European Commission (2019) 'Europe remains the world's biggest development donor – €74.4 billion in 2018', Press release, 11 April. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_19\\_2075](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_2075).

19 Council of the European Union General Secretariat (2019) 'Europe in the World. The future of the European financial architecture for development. An independent report by the High-Level Group of Wise Persons on the European financial architecture for development', October. Available at [www.consilium.europa.eu/media/40967/efad-report\\_final.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/40967/efad-report_final.pdf).

20 European Commission (2020) 'A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system', Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2020) 381 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381>.

## GENDER EQUALITY

boosting policy coherence among UN agencies, as well as between UN agencies and multilateral financial institutions or actors such as the WTO.

- ◆ The UN, supported by top SDG performers, should ensure that immediate and long-term recovery plans use SDGs as the main framework for policy guidance. It is essential that recovery be based on more sustainable development models.
- ◆ The EU should ensure that all measures adopted to tackle the crisis and support social and economic development are taken in line with the SDGs through an adequate monitoring system that tracks the performances of member states and helps avoid negative spillovers.
- ◆ The EU should also develop proper tools to prevent major donors from diverting resources away from international aid and cooperation. Developing proper EU finance for development architecture is key to boosting financial assistance and development cooperation.

## GENDER EQUALITY

### **Francesca Caruso**

Fighting against women's oppression and gender inequality is one of the paramount moral challenges of this era.<sup>21</sup> In the last decades, historical pillars such as the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 2000 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, have pushed the gender equality issue forward and catalysed the attention of many organisations and single states.

In 2015 women's equality was included among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all the UN member states. It indeed plays a critical role in the quest for inclusive and sustainable development. Women's equality is recognised not only as an objective but also as part of the solution for the achievement of a peaceful and equal world. On the same path, regional organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) have elaborated their own gender strategy – the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and The African Union Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018-2028 respectively – in an effort to fully address gender gaps according to the different regional contexts.

All these efforts have brought – and will hopefully continue to bring – some indisputable results: since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, which is the most comprehensive policy agenda for gender equality, more girls are in school than ever before; many countries have passed laws to end violence against women; genital mutilation and child marriage have been internationally recognised as human rights violations; and the share of women in parliaments has doubled. Yet discrimination against women persists in many areas so that the gap between aspirations and reality is still huge.

Women and girls are still facing serious forms of discrimination, which hamper their full access to health, employment, education, politics and various economic resources, including land ownership. This is mostly due to discriminatory laws and policies, gender-based stereotypes, and social norms and practices that expose women and girls to several forms of violence, including domestic violence.<sup>22</sup>

Covid-19 has exacerbated the pre-existing inequalities and could reverse the small progress of the last decades. Domestic violence has escalated,<sup>23</sup> humanitarian funds for maternity and reproductive health have been reduced, and women are bearing most of the burden of the economic consequences of the pandemic, such as unemployment and domestic care.

21 Kristof, N. D. and WuDunn, S. (2010) *Half of the Sky. Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, London: Hachette Digital.

22 According to the Global Gender Gap Report, in 2020 only 57 per cent of the economic participation and opportunities gap, and 24.7 per cent of the global political empowerment gap, has been closed. In addition, women's participation in the labour market is stalling (only 55 per cent of adult women are in the labour market, and in many countries, women are disadvantaged in accessing credit, land or financial opportunities) and educational attainment is still relatively small. Gender parity in education is achieved only in 35 countries and 10 per cent of girls aged 15-24 in the world are illiterate.

23 According to UN Women, globally 243 million women and girls aged 15-49 were subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the 12 months before the outbreak of the pandemic. Covid-19 has exacerbated this phenomenon: as stressed by the WHO, although data is scarce, member states reported up to a 60 per cent increase in emergency calls by women subjected to domestic violence in April 2020 compared to 2019.



In order not to jeopardise the fragile gains that have been made on gender equality it is essential that commitments made in the past are fully implemented. However, concrete changes also need to be made. International organisations and national governments should increasingly shift the focus from protective to empowerment policies by emphasising women's agency rather than their vulnerability. They should give priority to the most crucial areas for a more inclusive and sustainable development.

## Policy recommendations

- ◆ Today, less than a quarter of the information required to monitor gender-specific elements of the 2030 SDGs is available.<sup>24</sup> Women and girls are still largely invisible in official statistics. The lack of statistics and data about the condition of disparity for women and girls impedes progress. Without an accurate and reliable picture, the aspirations for gender equality will never turn into reality. International organisations and single states need to work further to revise traditional classifications, methodologies and definitions. All populations should be included in official statistics through the use of disaggregated data. Official statistics should be developed in synergy with data collected by citizens – the so-called 'citizen-generated data' – and by non-state actors, especially in the regions where data and information gathering is difficult or obstructed. The UN should urge the member states to dedicate specific budgets to data collection and analysis. Furthermore, international organisations should foster the harmonisation of key sector definitions to ensure that the comparison of outcomes across countries is reliable, and global monitoring efforts adequate. Additionally, in order

to reduce the gap between data and policies and translate recommendations into action, synergies between statisticians and policymakers should be promoted.

- ◆ Fostering women's economic empowerment requires action in different areas.
  - Several studies show that when a country invests in girls' education, the dividends are immense.<sup>25</sup> Educated women have the potential to take care of themselves, their families, earn better wages, and consequently raise healthy families.<sup>26</sup> Like poverty, child marriage and gender-based violence are among the main barriers to girls' education. The UN and other international organisations should therefore tackle harmful practices, discriminatory gender norms and social constraints that prevent girls' access to school. In addition, the UN should press national governments to enact specific policies aimed at closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education, ensuring free compulsory and universal primary education for both girls and boys. As stressed by the AU's GEWE, 'out of school' should be a punishable offence in all countries.<sup>27</sup>
  - One of the main barriers to women's economic empowerment is unpaid domestic care and work.<sup>28</sup> Women's economic empowerment cannot come about if governments and international organisations do not develop policies that address and reduce unpaid care work. To that end, the UN should press national governments to work on three areas, according to the different geographical contexts: improve

24 United Nations (2019) 'Noting Major Gaps in Gender Statistics, Speaker Says Data Collection Must Ensure All Groups Are Represented, as Commission on Women Continues Session', Meetings coverage, Economic and Social Council, Commission on the Status of Women, 18 March. Available at: [www.un.org/press/en/2019/wom2178.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2019/wom2178.doc.htm).

25 World Vision Advocacy (2019) 'Keep Girls in School'. Available at: [www.worldvisionadvocacy.org/project/keep-girls-in-school/](http://www.worldvisionadvocacy.org/project/keep-girls-in-school/).

26 UNICEF, 'Girls' education. Gender equality in education benefits every child'. Available at: [www.unicef.org/education/girls-education](http://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education).

27 African Union, 'AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment'. Available at: <https://au.int/en/articles/au-strategy-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>.

28 The additional amount of domestic work that women bear represents a disadvantage in the labour market, particularly in developing regions, as progressively recognised by economists and policymakers in the last decades. According to the ILO, women carry out 76 per cent of the total amount of this work, and in the last three decades the gap between men and women's unpaid work narrowed by only 7 minutes. Women continue to work longer hours than men.



## MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

public services, such as public childcare services and social protection; build infrastructure in sectors such as water, transport and energy; and engage in awareness campaigns for greater recognition and redistribution of unpaid work.

- Violence against women and girls (VAWG) – which is a human rights violation – can have devastating physical, economic and psychological consequences for survivors and for society as a whole. For these reasons, governments and international organisations need to strengthen services for women and girls who experience domestic violence by assuring rapid assessments and psychological support, and by increasing the number of shelters. In addition, national governments and civil society organisations need to strengthen both helplines through innovative technological tools, and the capacity of police and judicial services to prevent impunity.
- ◆ Women and girls are among the most vulnerable groups in conflicts. However, a growing body of evidence shows that women’s participation increases the sustainability of peace agreements.<sup>29</sup> Women negotiators raise issues that are vital for sustainable peace; that are instrumental in expanding peace agendas by advocating the involvement of excluded groups; and that emphasise the need to address underlying causes of conflict, such as development. However, between 1992 and 2018, women constituted only 13 per cent of negotiators, 3 per cent of mediators and 4 per cent of signatories in major peace deals.<sup>30</sup> In order to overcome this shortcoming, the UN Security Council is called to fully implement UNSC Resolution 1325 and push for a more active participation of women peace-builders in peace processes, and in conflict prevention and resolution. The UN should also rely more on regional networks of women mediators which can help develop new mediation approaches. Furthermore, the UN, international organisations, and informal

mediators that are called to mediate in conflict zones, should add specific conditionality for engagement, not only ensuring that women have a seat at the table but that they are also considered full participants in negotiations for a post-conflict future.

## MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

*Asli Okyay*

Despite being an issue of interdependence, developing a robust institutional and normative framework for global migration governance has proven challenging due to sovereignty concerns and diverging state interests. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which was adopted under UN auspices in 2018, is thus a milestone for strengthening multilateral migration governance. The GCM provides a set of objectives and outlines a path for implementation by bringing clarity to the institutional framework and by introducing review, follow-up and monitoring mechanisms. The GCM provides room for win-win outcomes, as it aims to improve the protection of migrants’ rights, enhance states’ capacity to effectively manage cross-border human mobility, and boost the developmental benefits of migration for states and societies both at the receiving and the sending end. A global review mechanism was introduced through the quadrennial International Migration Review Forum, and regional reviews are to be held regularly in between. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), which became a related organisation of the UN in 2016, was given the lead of the multi-agency UN Network on Migration that supports implementation and coordinates review. Despite these improvements, many implementation challenges lie ahead.

One of the problems is the limited political backing that the GCM has received. Major destination countries, including the US and nine EU member states, did not endorse the document. The non-binding character of the document, the state-led approach to implementation, the voluntary nature of target-setting and review by states, as well as the lack of

29 Marie O’Reilly (2015) ‘Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies’, in *Inclusive Security Reports*, October, p. 6. Available at: [www.inclusivesecurity.org/?p=12964](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/?p=12964).

30 UN Women website, ‘Facts and Figures: Peace and Security’, October 2019. Available at: [www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures](http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures).

a timeline, all pose further implementation challenges. This makes strong leadership, coordination, and follow-up by the UN crucial not only for catalysing and measuring progress, but also for ensuring that implementation accounts for the rights and needs of both the migrants and the states of origin, transit, and destination in a balanced manner. The fact that the IOM's status, mandate, membership, and funding modalities are not fully aligned with the UN system limits its capacity to provide effective leadership to catalyse progress. It also raises accountability and impartiality issues. Furthermore, the IOM's status as a non-normative organisation means that the UN system continues to lack a specialised agency entrusted with a norm-setting function when it comes to non-asylum migration. This is a major flaw of the international system for the protection of migrants' rights.

Despite compliance challenges, the international protection regime is well-developed when it comes to refugee status, as written into the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol. However, due to the changing nature of displacement, the international legal and institutional framework falls short of systematically ensuring protection to people fleeing for reasons other than persecution – for example, 'survival migration'. The disproportionate sharing of responsibility for the protection of refugees also remains a major challenge. The problem of responsibility sharing is central to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018 and aims to relieve the pressure on host countries. With a view to enhancing refugee self-reliance and supporting host societies and states, the GCR aims at sustainable and inclusive refugee solutions through joined-up action across the humanitarian-development nexus. However, the paradigm shift that the GCR aims to promote is hamstrung by limited resettlement opportunities and shortcomings in ensuring long-term development funding. While clear leadership from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is an advantage for implementation and review – through the quadrennial Global Refugee Forum and

high-level mid-term reviews – putting the nexus approach into practice could benefit from a stronger alignment of the GCR with the reform of the UN Development System (UNDS). Furthermore, effective responses to mixed migration require enhanced synergies between the two global compacts and closer coordination between the IOM and UNHCR.

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***Developing a robust institutional and normative framework for global migration governance has proven challenging due to sovereignty concerns and diverging state interests***

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The Covid-19 crisis poses challenges but also presents opportunities for 're-imagining human mobility', and for strengthening multilateral migration and asylum governance. The crisis reconfirmed that poor living conditions and limited access to healthcare expose migrants and refugees to much greater health risks than other sections of the population, with disrupting implications for host societies. The effects of the health crisis on deepening inequality and poverty are likely to increase humanitarian and social protection needs of migrant and non-migrant populations, which may also lead to further migration and displacement. Job losses and reduced labour mobility have led to a fall in remittances, with adverse effects on development prospects in origin countries. Border closures restrict access to protection and cause disruptions in aid delivery, while increasing the risks associated with irregular migration.

At the systemic level, the diversion of humanitarian and development funding to other priorities stands as a major risk.

Politically, nativist and protectionist tendencies provoked by the economic and health repercussions of the pandemic may induce further restrictive approaches to immigration and cross-border mobility. However, greater visibility of the key role played by migrants and refugees in sectors such as agriculture, food retail and care may raise public awareness of the need for foreign-born workers, thus broadening the political space for improving the labour and social rights of migrant workers and expanding labour migration opportunities. Geopolitically, the crisis may reinforce the drive towards shorter supply chains, with possible positive effects on regional labour mobility and intra- and inter-regional cooperation in the longer run.

## **Policy recommendations**

- ◆ While potentially feeding into nativist and protectionist tendencies, the Covid-19 crisis has also highlighted the multifaceted nature of migration, which requires going beyond the security framing that has thus far been dominant. The health crisis has provided further evidence of the need for integrated and cross-sectorial policy responses, while reaffirming that migration is an issue marked by interdependence and in need of multilateral solutions. To meet these requirements, the UN system should work to turn the crisis into an opportunity for strengthening multilateral migration and asylum governance. Joining forces with multilateral actors and regional organisations, the UN should mobilise a joined-up, comprehensive and coordinated risk mitigation and recovery response, which should be inclusive of migrants and refugees, and embedded in the 2030 Agenda. This response should be anchored to a forward-looking agenda that accounts for the pandemic's social, economic, and (geo)political implications and its long-term impact on human mobility, and that aims to foster win-win outcomes for states, migrants and societies in origin, transit, and destination countries.
- ◆ Besides physical proximity, it is social, economic, and political interdependence that connect certain regions closer to each other through migration. Partnerships between the UN and regional organisations should thus be reinforced with a view to bolstering multilateral cooperation in general, and implementing the global compacts, in particular. For instance, the UN-AU-EU partnership could be deepened and expanded by building on existing issue-specific cooperation frameworks like the UN-AU-EU Task Force in Libya. Beyond addressing acute challenges, this trilateral mechanism could take a more structured form in order to catalyse GCM/GCR implementation and measure progress. In addition to the regional reviews under the GCM, regular trilateral reviews could be held to define priorities, share data and good practices, develop common benchmarks, and follow up on progress within an interregional framework.
- ◆ Enhancing the status and expanding the mandate of the IOM so as to fully incorporate it in the UN system would significantly help overcome GCM implementation challenges and fill the normative void in the global governance of non-asylum migration. A specialised UN migration agency would be better positioned not only to catalyse progress through enhancing the political buy-in and ownership of the GCM and providing more effective coordination and system-wide support, but also to ensure balanced implementation accounting for the needs and rights of migrants' and the priorities of states from both the Global North and South. Effective responses to mixed migration would benefit from enhanced complementarity between the GCM and the GCR and further clarity in terms of the division of labour and the mechanisms of coordination between the IOM and the UNHCR. The opportunity presented by the reform of the UNDS to more firmly embed migration and protection into the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and Common Country Analyses, which are crucial instruments of the UN development activities at country level, should be exploited to its full potential so as to develop integrated, tailored, and cross-sectorial policy responses and to improve inter-agency coordination.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY**

***Margherita Bianchi, Luca Franza***

Global climate action retains strong multilateral features thanks to international agreements and the annual Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UN Security Council has examined the impact of global warming on international peace and security since 2007 and the UN 2030 Agenda promotes specific climate action through Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13. Climate change is recognised as a 'threat multiplier' that encompasses all other SDGs. In the last decade, international climate agreements have

become increasingly ambitious and widely supported, but momentum has seemingly peaked with the 2015 Paris Agreement. Multilateral approaches to the fight against climate change are facing growing scepticism. The withdrawal of the US from the Paris Agreement has complicated global efforts to find an effective multilateral response to climate change, even if many US subnational actors continue to work towards climate goals. Moreover, all other countries have pledged to comply with their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

A key problem lies in the mismatch between declared and actual support to internationally agreed climate goals. In addition to the US, other large emitters that formally support the Paris Agreement have taken uncertain and contradictory measures. Brazil, where deforestation in the Amazon rainforest has accelerated, has adopted an increasingly critical rhetoric against the cost of energy transition. In China and India, progress in limiting local pollution and introducing renewables is continuing, but new coal capacity is also being built. While many countries set ambitious targets, actual implementation is often lacking. Countries are not moving in synchronisation. Moreover, the risk that carbon-intensive stimulus packages are enacted as a part of the response to the Covid-19 crisis is high. Airline bailouts without green conditionality, and the construction of new infrastructure with carbon lock-in effects threaten global climate efforts.

The EU is well positioned to play a leading role in global climate diplomacy thanks to the commitment to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the launch of the European Green Deal, and strong indications that green recovery will be a core principle of the newly launched Recovery Fund. However, there is a concrete risk that even some EU governments respond to the Covid-19 pandemic by making policy and investment decisions that exacerbate climate change. In order to conduct a credible global climate diplomacy, the EU needs to take bold steps to fight climate change at home.

Several global challenges need to be tackled, including the following: shortcomings in the UNFCCC/COPs processes; the inadequacy of existing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to keep the increase in global warming well below 2°C, as provided for by the Paris Agreement; the lack of consensus on how to achieve climate targets; and, perhaps most crucially, the difficulties in implementing them. There are significant disagreements particularly between developing and developed countries on governance issues (the former are critical, for example, of the way in which the issue of 'loss and damage' has been addressed through the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage), climate finance and carbon trading. Countries of the Global South generally argue that the Global North should put in place more resources to compensate for past emissions, and are often suspicious about governance schemes proposed by the Global North.

Energy is an important component of development and is specifically covered by SDG 7, although decarbonising energy use is key to reaching most SDGs. While energy is a lifeline for modern economies and societies, the international community lacks a global mechanism

to address its collective energy needs. One of the obstacles to greater multilateral cooperation is the difficulty in finding what constitutes a 'collective energy need'. Energy exporters and importers often have diverging interests and energy policies reflect a country's energy mix, which in turn tends to reflect a country's domestic energy resource endowment.

The first step to strengthen and expand multilateral cooperation on energy would be a more coherent mapping of such needs and agreeing on a common way forward to meet them. Efforts to identify and promote common energy objectives and strategies need to be stepped up. These should include protection of waterways and energy infrastructure from threats posed by non-state actors (piracy and terrorism); mitigation of the adverse effects of energy price volatility; the defence of contract sanctity; cooperative solutions for water

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***The mismatch between declared and actual support to internationally agreed climate goals continue to hamstringing their fulfilment***  
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demarcation issues and other territorial disputes that negatively impact on joint energy production and energy trade.

In the energy sector, international governance is fragmented and multi-layered: many organisations have a selective membership based on geography, size or importer/exporter status. The current multilateral bodies promoting energy cooperation have either low normativity or a weak mandate. UN agencies are promoting energy access and sustainable development, including through direct funding, but closer inter-agency coordination is needed to ensure a consistent approach to energy issues. A specific theme that deserves attention is the phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies, which is still poorly addressed and lacks adequate mechanisms.

## Policy recommendations

- ◆ At the moment, an open coordination method is the prevailing mode of governance in climate issues (COPs and NDCs being aspects of this).<sup>31</sup> Open coordination should be further promoted and strengthened, making sure that all relevant actors (at state level but also at a supra- and sub- state level) are effectively engaged. In the EU, binding laws are an increasingly important mode of governance (cf, the 2050 binding target of climate neutrality established by the EU Climate Law). The EU should continue to lobby for the adoption of binding targets in other countries/regions and enforcement in order to strengthen global climate governance, also within and through the UN. Mainstreaming climate objectives and policy into trade, aid and foreign policy is needed to gain leverage in this lobbying effort.
  - ◆ The scope of UN action on energy should be enlarged by:
    - strengthening (horizontal) cross-agency coordination on energy. In particular, the mandate, staffing and funding of UN-Energy, an inter-agency mechanism that aims to promote
- better integrating energy governance, where multilateralism is weak, with climate governance, which instead retains strong multilateral features in spite of persistent obstacles to the fulfilment of Paris Agreement commitments. This would serve both the purpose of making climate action more incisive (as the energy sector is the largest emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>) and streamlining otherwise fragmented UN initiatives in the field of energy.
- ◆ Membership of the International Energy Agency (IEA) should be broadened so as to transform it into a truly global energy agency with the key function of guiding energy policymaking, promoting market openness and fossil fuel subsidy phaseout. In the past years there have been steps in this direction as several countries, including China, India and Brazil, have joined the IEA as Association Countries.
  - ◆ The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) should be strengthened by expanding its role, mandate, funding and membership. It is crucial that IRENA strongly coordinates with UN agencies and with the IEA to avoid duplication of action.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, its mandate should be that of supporting the deployment of renewables as well as guaranteeing security and affordability of renewable energy supply.
  - ◆ The EU should promote green recovery in high-level global fora. The G7 and G20, in particular, stand out as especially important cooperation frameworks where coordination over recovery plans is likely to happen in the coming years. The external dimension of the EU Green Deal – sketched out by the European Commission in its Communication on the European Green Deal of 11 December 2019

<sup>31</sup> See, for example: Robert Falkner (2016) 'The Paris Agreement and the new logic of international climate politics', *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, No.5, pp. 1107-1125. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/92/5/1107/2688148>.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example: Federico Esu and Francesco Sindico (2016) 'IRENA and IEA: Moving Together towards a Sustainable Energy Future – Competition or Collaboration?', *Climate Law*, No.6, pp. 233-249; and 'IRENA and IEA Strengthen Cooperation for a Secure and Sustainable Energy Future', *IRENA News*, 9 April 2019. Available at: [www.irena.org/newsroom/pressreleases/2019/Apr/IRENA-and-IEA-strengthen-cooperation-for-a-secure-and-sustainable-energy-future](http://www.irena.org/newsroom/pressreleases/2019/Apr/IRENA-and-IEA-strengthen-cooperation-for-a-secure-and-sustainable-energy-future).



– should be better defined and translated into an actual foreign energy policy.<sup>33</sup> EU green diplomacy should be given appropriate instruments to implement this strategy, such as new energy and climate attachés in G20 capitals to deliver on the ground. In promoting green recovery and other key EU interests internationally (such as market openness), the EU should promote coalitions of the willing<sup>34</sup> with other energy importing democracies such as Japan, South Korea and India.

- ◆ The EU should put into effect the pledge contained in the European Green Deal to use trade policy to support decarbonisation.<sup>35</sup> Trade agreements should be made conditional on the respect of the Paris Agreement. Moving forward, the risk of ‘carbon leakage’ will become more and more pressing for the EU. The EU should lobby for the introduction of international carbon markets, which should be as wide as possible. Proposals for the introduction of a carbon adjusted border tax should be used as leverage but this is an instrument that needs to be handled with care due to its potentially adverse economic effects. The adoption of green bond standards, taxonomies and other indices to orient investors towards climate-conscious strategies at a global level should be the ultimate goal for the EU. Thanks to its pioneering work, the EU can set an example and should lobby for their wider adoption on a global level, ideally in the UN framework. These issues should also become priorities on the G20 agenda and the EU could help to make this happen.

## DIGITALISATION

**Nicola Bilotta**

As digitalisation is advancing at a quick pace, it is essential that global and national decision makers explore new ways and means to deal with its far-reaching impact on economy and society. Economic growth will be increasingly driven by digital technologies, but a growing lag between leading countries and the other nations is likely to increase inequality. The UN and other multilateral organisations have undertaken several initiatives to address these issues. Nonetheless, the multilateral efforts to frame digital challenges are experiencing severe downturns as the major powers (US, China, and EU) have different approaches and tend to pursue divergent interests.

The UN Secretary-General established a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation in 2018.<sup>36</sup> The panel produced a report providing recommendations to improve digital cooperation internationally. The 2020 report on the implementation of the roadmap drafted by the High-level Panel suggests that the UN is ready to serve as a platform for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on the challenges of emerging technologies. To foster such a dialogue, the UN Secretary-General intends to appoint an Envoy on Technology in 2021 with the role of advising and guiding the strategic approach of the UN on key trends in technology.<sup>37</sup>

Digital technology can contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), being also an integral part of the SDGs. However, digitalisation could also increase inequalities and generate negative

33 See, for example: Marc-Antoine Eyl-Mazzega (2020) ‘The Green Deal’s External Dimension. Re-Engaging with Neighbors to Avoid Carbon Walls’, *IfriEditoEnergie*, 3 March. Available at: [www.ifri.org/en/publications/editoriaux-de-lifri/edito-energie/green-deals-external-dimension-re-engaging-neighbors](http://www.ifri.org/en/publications/editoriaux-de-lifri/edito-energie/green-deals-external-dimension-re-engaging-neighbors); and Maria Pastukhova, Jacopo Maria Pepe, Kirsten Westphal, (2020) ‘Beyond the Green Deal: Upgrading the EU’s Energy Diplomacy for a New Era’, *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, No.31.

34 See, for example: Jon Hovi, Detlef F. Sprinz, Håkon Sælen and Arild Underdal (2017), *The Club Approach: A Gateway to Effective Climate Co-operation?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

35 See, for example: Susanne Dröge, Karsten Neuhoﬀ, Christian Egenhofer and Milan Elkerbout, (2019) ‘EU Trade policy can enhance climate action – Options to boost low-carbon investment and address carbon leakage’, *Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)*, Brussels, September. Available at: [www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/EU-trade-policy-can-enhance-climate-action.pdf](http://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/EU-trade-policy-can-enhance-climate-action.pdf); and Mehdi Abbas (2020) ‘Decarbonizing Trade Policy. Options towards a European Decarbonizing Trade Policy’, *Hal Working Papers*, March. Available at: <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02502577/document>.

36 United Nations, ‘The age of digital interdependence’, Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Available at: [www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf).

37 United Nations (2020) ‘Roadmap for Digital Cooperation’, Report of the Secretary-General, June. Available at: [www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/assets/pdf/Roadmap\\_for\\_Digital\\_Cooperation\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/assets/pdf/Roadmap_for_Digital_Cooperation_EN.pdf).



United Nations New York headquarters. Licensed via Adobe stock. Credit: Bluraz

externalities by excluding the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society. It would thus have highly disrupting effects on the labour market. The 2018 UN Secretary-General High-Level Panel discussed how digital technologies can contribute to the attainment of the SDGs. It suggested a Digital Commons Architecture that would foster synergic efforts by governments, civil society organisations and businesses to ensure that digital technologies promote the SDGs and that the risks of social exclusion be averted. The exploitation of data in areas such as health, agriculture and the environment can help identify solutions for crucial problems and, in particular, new ways to make progress on the SDGs. Nevertheless, an effective and safe management of data commons requires criteria to establish standards for interoperability, rules on access and safeguards to ensure privacy and security.<sup>38</sup>

The digitalisation of society poses many challenges, including: the normative framework for the development of the internet, cybersecurity, data governance and the protection of privacy, and the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on labour and production models.

The discussion on governance of the internet encompasses the development of a new internet protocol to replace the existing Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP), on which the global internet is based. At the International Telecommunication Union<sup>39</sup>, a UN agency that establishes common global standards for technologies, countries are currently discussing whether and how the current internet infrastructure should be reformed. Some countries, particularly China and Russia, argue that the current infrastructure cannot effectively support the enablement and development of cutting-edge technolo-

38 United Nations, 'The age of digital interdependence', Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Available at: [www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf).

39 ITU (2020) ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector. Available at: [www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/Pages/default.aspx).



gies – such as holograms. However, according to other countries, the more centralised infrastructure advocated by China would give governments a worryingly greater control over internet activities.

The transborder mode of the internet also demands coordinated actions to prevent, mitigate and counter the risks of cyberattacks. The existing efforts at the UN to establish global cyber rules have reached an impasse due to the different national interests at stake. A Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) established by the Secretary-General<sup>40</sup> to develop a set of norms for cyberspace put forward a number of proposals in 2015. However, at the 2017 meetings no consensus was reached on the next steps. As a result, in 2019 the UN General Assembly started two parallel processes for dealing with cybersecurity. Alongside this, the EU Cybersecurity Act introduced a cybersecurity certification framework for ICT products, services and processes. However, one of the limitations of the Cybersecurity Act is that there are currently limited EU-wide standards for training, certification or cyber risk assessments. In addition, there have been differences in the application of the legal framework among member states. In 2019, MERCOSUR established the RAPRISIT<sup>41</sup> (Reunion de Autoridades sobre Privacidad y Seguridad de la Informacion e Infraestructura Tecnologica), a meeting of authorities on information security and privacy and technological infrastructure, which aims to propose common policies and initiatives relating to cybersecurity.

Artificial intelligence is impacting on the future of the economy and society. However, a global asymmetry exists in R&D investments and in the initiatives put in place to address the economic and political implications of AI developments. The OECD has been very active in the realm of

AI. In May 2019, it adopted a set of ‘Principles on Artificial Intelligence’<sup>42</sup> which constituted the first international standards agreed by governments. In addition, the OECD’s Going Digital Project<sup>43</sup> supports governments to measure and analyse the social and economic impacts of AI. The OECD.AI Policy Observatory,<sup>44</sup> an online platform launched

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***Digital technology can contribute to the attainment of SDGs, but may also generate negative externalities and have disrupting effects on the labour market***

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in February 2020, aims at sharing these policies across the globe. The EU has also proposed principles and rules to regulate the application of AI technologies. In 2019, the European Commission issued a document ‘Ethics guidelines for a trustworthy AI’<sup>45</sup> and in 2020, it released a white paper ‘On Artificial Intelligence – A European approach to excellence and trust’.<sup>46</sup> The OECD and EU documents might serve as sources of inspiration for national governments in drafting and implementing legislation on AI.

40 DWO Geneva Internet Platform, UN GGE and OEWG.

Available at: <https://dig.watch/processes/un-gge#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Group%20of,group%20in%20the%20field%20of.>

41 Reunión de Autoridades sobre Privacidad y Seguridad de la Información e Infraestructura Tecnológica del MERCOSUR (RAPRISIT).

Available at: [http://gd.mercosur.int/SAM/GestDoc/pubweb.nsf/Organo?ReadForm&lang=ESP&id=5B88C407F3FC77E783257D50004FB156.](http://gd.mercosur.int/SAM/GestDoc/pubweb.nsf/Organo?ReadForm&lang=ESP&id=5B88C407F3FC77E783257D50004FB156)

42 OECD, Artificial intelligence > OECD Principles on AI. Available at: [www.oecd.org/going-digital/ai/principles/#:~:text=The%20OECD%20AI%20Principles,-The%20Recommendation%20identifies&text=AI%20systems%20should%20be%20designed,a%20fair%20and%20just%20society.](http://www.oecd.org/going-digital/ai/principles/#:~:text=The%20OECD%20AI%20Principles,-The%20Recommendation%20identifies&text=AI%20systems%20should%20be%20designed,a%20fair%20and%20just%20society.)

43 OECD, Going Digital. Available at: [www.oecd.org/going-digital/.](http://www.oecd.org/going-digital/)

44 OECD (2020) OECD.AI Policy Observatory. A platform to share and shape AI policies. Available at: [www.oecd.org/going-digital/ai/about-the-oecd-ai-policy-observatory.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/going-digital/ai/about-the-oecd-ai-policy-observatory.pdf).

45 European Commission, ‘Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI’. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/ai-alliance-consultation>.

46 European Commission (2020) ‘White Paper on Artificial Intelligence. A European approach to excellence and trust’, COM(2020) 65 final, February. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission-white-paper-artificial-intelligence-feb2020\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission-white-paper-artificial-intelligence-feb2020_en.pdf).

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**Digital transformation has many implications for democratic political systems, posing multi-dimensional challenges for policymakers**

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As our society is hyperconnected, we produce an enormous quantity of data. However, there are currently multiple and diversified data protection and privacy laws in the world. The institutional landscape in data governance is crowded because numerous actors are competing to shape the normative framework of cyberspace. Many countries have multiple relevant ministries regulating online activity. This causes huge transaction costs for firms and uncertainty for users. In 2015, the UN established the Internet Governance Forum,<sup>47</sup> a multi-stakeholder venue with no negotiation mandate, to promote a high-level discussion on data governance. The UN Human Rights Council established the Special Rapporteur on the right of privacy,<sup>48</sup> who concentrates on specific measures to protect human rights in data governance, and reports on the situation in every country. In July 2019, the G20 launched the ‘Osaka Track’<sup>49</sup> with the goal of creating global rules for data governance, under the concept of the ‘free flow of data with trust’. The multilateral landscape remains unsettled because intergovernmental cooperation has largely stalled, owing to conflicting priorities among countries. The EU adopted a new General Data Protection<sup>50</sup> (GDPR) regulation in May 2018, which requires businesses to protect the user data of EU citizens. Another example is the Cross-Border Privacy Rules System of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation<sup>51</sup> (APEC) which aims to provide a model framework for protecting personal data flows across the APEC region.

Digital transformation has many implications for democratic political systems, posing multi-dimensional challenges for policymakers. Algorithmic power, domestic and foreign state interference, and e-participation rights<sup>52</sup> are all challenges that should be tackled on an international level. The European Parliamentary Technology Assessment (EPTA) led a conference in 2018, addressing the road towards a digital democracy, and the interplay between democracy, on the one hand, and artificial intelligence, blockchain and/or quantum technology on the other hand.<sup>53</sup> In a similar

fashion, the Club of Madrid focused their 2019 Annual Policy dialogue on digital transformation and the future of democracy.<sup>54</sup> These kinds of multi-stakeholder platforms can stimulate new thinking and identify the most effective policy response.

The digitalisation of the economy is also transforming the way in which private firms compete and create value. The OECD already offers research and policy advice on competition, while UN fact-finding missions have provided useful information – for example, in the antitrust case against Facebook. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has drafted a set of rules to deal with the challenges of digitalisation, which, if approved, would be incorporated into the UN Set of Principles and Rules on Competition.

47 United Nations (2020) IGF Internet Governance Forum. Available at: [www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/](http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/).

48 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Available at: [www.ohchr.org/en/issues/privacy/sr/pages/srprivacyindex.aspx#:~:text=Special%20Rapporteur%20on%20the%20right%20to%20privacy&text=A%20Special%20Rapporteur%20is%20an,a%20specific%20human%20rights%20theme.&text=The%20Special%20Rapporteurs%20are%20part,of%20the%20Human%20Rights%20Council](http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/privacy/sr/pages/srprivacyindex.aspx#:~:text=Special%20Rapporteur%20on%20the%20right%20to%20privacy&text=A%20Special%20Rapporteur%20is%20an,a%20specific%20human%20rights%20theme.&text=The%20Special%20Rapporteurs%20are%20part,of%20the%20Human%20Rights%20Council).

49 DWO Geneva Internet Platform (2019) ‘The G20 Osaka Track raises controversy’. Available at: <https://dig.watch/updates/g20-osaka-track-raises-controversy>.

50 ‘Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation)’ in *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 119/1, 4 May 2016. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0679>.

51 ‘Benefits of the APEC Cross-Border Privacy Rules. Protecting Information. Driving Growth. Enabling Innovation’, Discussion Draft, October 2018. Available at: [www.crowell.com/files/20181001-Benefits-of-CBPR-System%20Guide\\_Oct%202018\\_final.pdf](http://www.crowell.com/files/20181001-Benefits-of-CBPR-System%20Guide_Oct%202018_final.pdf).

52 Le Blanc, D. (2020) ‘E-participation: a quick overview of recent qualitative trends’, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, DESA Working Paper No. 163 ST/ESA/2020/DWP/163, January. Available at: [www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2020/wp163\\_2020.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2020/wp163_2020.pdf).

53 European Parliamentary Technology Assessment (2018) ‘Towards a digital democracy. Opportunities and challenges’, EPTA Report. Available at: <https://eptanetwork.org/images/documents/minutes/EPTA-Report2018.pdf>.

54 World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid & IE School of Global and Public Affairs (2019) ‘Digital Transformation and the Future of Democracy: How Can Artificial Intelligence Drive Democratic Governance?’, Annual Policy Dialogue, October. Available at: [www.clubmadrid.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PD-2019-Concept-Note-Final.pdf](http://www.clubmadrid.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PD-2019-Concept-Note-Final.pdf).

In addition, digitalisation has a profound impact on labour markets. The International Labour Organization, a UN agency, established a high-level Global Commission on the Future of Work<sup>55</sup> which produced a major report in 2019, identifying opportunities and challenges produced by digitalisation. The EU has established 20 principles and rights, under its Digitalisation and Social Pillars, to ensure a fair and well-functioning labour market capable of addressing digitalisation challenges.<sup>56</sup> APEC released a report in 2018,<sup>57</sup> urging its members to support workers in acquiring the skills needed to adapt to new technologies. In 2017, the MERCOSUR Common Market Council established the Digital Agenda Group (GAD), launching an Action Plan (2018-20).

### Policy recommendations

- ◆ With the failure of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the UN in 2015, the international regulation of cyberspace lacks a centralised forum. While the promotion of the establishment of a new international intergovernmental organisation within the UN seems to be a challenging solution due to the current global tensions, the OECD could take the lead in providing a multi-stakeholder forum to promote a dialogue on cybersecurity. This could facilitate coordinated efforts by states and the private sector to develop standards of responsible conduct in cyberspace. The OECD forum would not tackle politically divisive issues – such as cyberwar laws – but it would rather focus on developing standards against cybercrime that damage economic interests. In conjunction with the OECD's effort, the UN should continue to foster a global dialogue, providing global actors with a privileged forum for further discussions on the international regulation of cyberspace.

- ◆ As the first mover in technology regulation, the EU has influenced other jurisdictions and set up global standards – as seen by the impact of the GDPR, which has inspired the revision of privacy laws in 120 countries. The EU could promote further regulations in the field of AI, aiming at a global 'spillover effect'. The EU can influence the development of standards in other jurisdictions by allowing only firms that comply with its technical standards to sell goods in the common market.

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***The UN should step up its efforts to foster a global dialogue on the international regulation of cyberspace***

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- ◆ A multilateral framework on data governance is key to maximising the economic benefits of cross-border data flows. In this period of trade tensions, the WTO might not be the most appropriate forum to handle cross-border data flows. However, the UN could set up a forum to promote the co-ordinated development of indicators to measure data flows and create a common classification on how different kinds of data are produced. This would help develop a global framework on data governance. The EU could also promote the creation of a group of countries which commit to implementing legally binding rules of the GDPR. The members of this 'coalition' could establish a regime aimed at maximising the economic benefits of the free flow of data.

55 International Labour Organization (ILO), Global Commission on the Future of Work. Available at: [www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/WCMS\\_569528/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20formation%20of%20a%20ILO,justice%20in%20the%2021st%20century](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/WCMS_569528/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20formation%20of%20a%20ILO,justice%20in%20the%2021st%20century).

56 European Parliament (2018) 'The impact of new technologies on the labour market and the social economy', Study IP/G/STOA/FWC/2013-001/LOT 8/C1, February. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/communities/en/file/5347/download?token=-\\_O-oEHt](https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/communities/en/file/5347/download?token=-_O-oEHt).

57 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (2017) 'Data Science and Analytics Skills Shortage: Equipping the APEC Workforce with the Competencies Demanded by Employers', Report, November. Available at: [www.apec.org/Publications/2017/11/Data-Science-and-Analytics-Skills-Shortage](http://www.apec.org/Publications/2017/11/Data-Science-and-Analytics-Skills-Shortage).

## TRADE AND FINANCE

**Fabrizio Botti**

Economic multilateralism is under strain in a multipolar world marked by a growing number of global actors and rising demand for national sovereignty. Geopolitical tensions are hampering macroeconomic and trade policy coordination. The Covid-19 outbreak has shown how protectionist measures and the lack of global cooperation can endanger public health. A new multilateral agenda is needed to adapt and reform the weakening post-second world war order based on the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies international trade and finance for development as key engines for economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Preserving and strengthening a rules-based multilateral system is also a core element of the EU global strategy, but this can be achieved only by establishing new forms of economic cooperation.

### **Trade**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promotes a universal, rules-based and open multilateral system under the WTO, along with meaningful trade liberalisation. An intense international debate has developed over the reform of the WTO including, in particular, its rulemaking and dispute settlement functions. As for the former, the structural transformation of trade patterns and the rising protectionism under evolving power relations have led to the spread of bilateral or regional agreements (ie, Regional Trade Agreements – RTAs, and Mega-regional trade deals).

Even if non-multilateral tracks such as RTAs and plurilateral agreements are not universal, and entail the risk of leading to a growing regulatory fragmentation on a regional basis, they should be considered potentially innovative undertakings to achieve a consensus in rule-making that can find a wider application at a later stage. A major source of concern is the paralysis of the dispute settlement function of the WTO, a pillar of global trade governance, which has been provoked by the Trump Administration's obstruction to the filling of vacancies on the Appellate Body since 2017.

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***A new multilateral agenda is needed to reform the weakening global economic order based on the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO***

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The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge negative impact on world trade. This has been exacerbated by the spread of export curbs and other trade barriers to medical supplies, medicines and food, as observed in the wake of the global health emergency. Export restrictions applied to those items are not only counterproductive for the implementing nation in the context of global value chains, but they are especially devastating for the poorest nations, as global exports are extremely concentrated<sup>58</sup> and for specific Covid-19

medical products such as medical ventilators there is no exporting country in Africa, the Middle East or South Asia.<sup>59</sup>

The WTO nevertheless has the potential to provide a forum to coordinate global responses to the pandemic. The WTO's practice of maintaining a moratorium on customs duties on electronic commerce has set a precedent for a possible elimination of an entire class of global trade taxation. Enlarging the scope and membership of the WTO's initiative on trade in pharmaceuticals may foster the elimination of trade barriers on health-related products. Efforts to balance intellectual property regimes against the emergency raised by the pandemic in order to safeguard universal access to new vaccines and drugs may build on the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

58 The three main exporters of personal protective masks (China, Germany and the US) account for more than 40 per cent of world exports of protective supplies, while a small number of countries (Singapore, US, Netherlands and China) export more than half of breathing apparatus; WTO (2020), 'Trade in medical goods in the context of tackling COVID-19'. Available at: [www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news20\\_e/rese\\_03apr20\\_e.pdf](http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news20_e/rese_03apr20_e.pdf).

59 Evenett, S. J. (2020), 'Tackling COVID-19 together. The policy dimension', Global TradeAlert, University of St. Gallen.

Even if the WTO is not a specialised UN agency, it maintains strong ties with the UN system, mostly through participation in the Chief Executive Board (CEB), which is the organ devoted to the promotion of coordination between UN bodies, the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions. The WTO also collaborates with the UN's Department for Economic and Social Affairs and reports annually to the United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on the efforts to achieve trade-specific targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU remains committed to supporting the preservation of an open trade and investment environment as the only effective policy to contain the economic consequences of the coronavirus crisis. In this spirit, the EU has ensured transparency towards trade partners by notifying the WTO on coronavirus-related measures, and has pledged to ensure well-functioning global agriculture and agri-food supply chains, refraining from measures with a potentially negative impact on the food security, nutrition and health of other members of the WTO. The EU also aims at leading the WTO reform process, particularly on the issues of the Appellate Body, subsidies and the forced transfer of technology.

Regarding dispute settlement, in March 2020 the EU and 15 other WTO members (including China, Brazil, Canada and Mexico) established a new system called The Multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA) which aims to bring appeals and solve trade disputes among participating WTO members while the current paralysis of the WTO Appellate Body persists.<sup>60</sup> The MPIA operates under the WTO framework, based on a provision in the WTO's Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) for dispute arbitration (Article 25 DSU). It is a temporary measure and appeals will be brought before the Appellate Body as soon as the WTO's appeal function for trade disputes is restored.

## **Policy recommendations**

- ◆ A deeper integration of the WTO into the UN system through formal institutional links would enhance the multilateral trading system potential to provide a forum for collaborative actions towards the achievement

of the SDGs and coordinated responses to the challenges raised by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- ◆ New forms of cooperation are needed to manage trade tensions and reduce international uncertainty. This applies, in particular, to multilateral dispute settlement. The MPIA initiative undertaken within the framework of WTO is especially promising as it is consistent with WTO rules and based on the principle of inclusiveness, as additional WTO members may join it at any time. Moreover, it has introduced innovative elements that can enhance procedural efficiency.
- ◆ Given that multilateral agreements based on the consensus of all WTO members are increasingly difficult to conclude, as shown, for example, by the failure of the Doha Round, trade negotiations could be carried out in the WTO context within more limited groups of countries interested in promoting trade liberalisation in specific sectors. The negotiated agreements could then be incorporated into the WTO rulebook at a later stage if accepted by all WTO members. Club arrangements such as plurilateral and critical mass agreements could bring progress in many policy areas, provided that they respect the principles of openness and transparency, and are in keeping with WTO rules. These state that inclusive plurilateral agreements operate under a critical mass approach (ie, 90 per cent of world trade) and are applied on a non-discriminatory basis (Most Favoured Nation, MFN) to all WTO members. They are open to the participation of all members either conditionally or unconditionally. Exclusive plurilateral agreements under Article II.3 of the WTO Agreement, allow smaller groups of members to make rules without a strict critical mass requirement. All categories of plurilateral agreements are expected to be negotiated within the scope of the WTO, with exceptions such as the Trade in Services Agreement (Tisa) which started outside the WTO.

60 'Multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement Pursuant to Article 25 of the DSU'. Available at: [https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2020/march/tradoc\\_158685.pdf](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2020/march/tradoc_158685.pdf).



## Finance

The UN 2030 Agenda also emphasises the role of international public finance (especially Official Development Assistance, ODA) in complementing efforts to mobilise domestic resources, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Furthermore, in the framework of promoting the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17), the 2030 Agenda aims at ensuring the long-term debt sustainability of developing countries through debt financing, and debt relief and restructuring.

The Covid-19 crisis is posing an unprecedented challenge to developing countries of all income categories already struggling with an unsustainable debt burden (total stock of debt equalled 191 per cent of combined GDP at the end of 2018). Owing to increasing exposure to volatile flows of short-term private capital from international financial markets and the corresponding expansion of their share of private debt (139 per cent of their combined GDP at the end of 2018), developing countries will face massive debt service payments in the coming years. The resulting shrinkage in their fiscal space is threatening their capacity to respond effectively to the consequences of the pandemic and to make progress towards the SDGs.

Early initiatives of debt service cancellation by the IMF ('Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust') and debt payment suspension by the G20 ('Debt Service Suspension Initiative for Poorest Countries') in response to the Covid-19 crisis, account only for a relatively limited share of the overall long-term public and publicly guaranteed external debt stocks of developing countries. Moreover, they are conditional on new or

ongoing concessional borrowing, are restricted to 2020, and apply only to official bilateral creditors.

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis, debt relief measures will have to address the liquidity and financing needs (estimated at USD 2.5 trillion) of developing countries in order to deal with the health emergency and its economic impact. In addition, structural insolvency and long-term debt sustainability need to be addressed to avoid past failures of debt relief mechanisms.

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***The Covid-19 crisis is posing an unprecedented challenge to developing countries struggling with an unsustainable debt burden***  
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In the fiscal sector, a major challenge relates to the need to reverse the trend towards tax erosion and profit shifting, which have considerably contributed to increasing inequalities and undermining the fiscal sustainability of welfare systems. The OECD is the leading organisation when it comes to addressing tax challenges and it is currently working on a revised inclusive tax framework of the economy (the Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting – BEPS<sup>61</sup>), which is due to be released by December 2020. The OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS negotiation includes 135 countries but developing countries may feel penalised by the preponderant role played by high and middle-income countries within the OECD. The UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, which is widely regarded as the forum in which developed and developing countries have equal standing in the development of tax policy norms, can take a lead in promoting a more inclusive dialogue. The UN Committee could take a lead, in synergy with the OECD, in establishing, inter alia, a consolidated taxation of multinational corporations, a regular country-by-country reporting and a minimum effective corporate income tax rate, including in digital services.

61 OECD, 'What is BEPS?' Available at: [www.oecd.org/tax/beps/about/](http://www.oecd.org/tax/beps/about/).



# PEACE AND SECURITY: PEACEBUILDING AND PEACEKEEPING

## Policy recommendations

- ◆ *Debt standstill mechanism.* Longer, unconditional and comprehensive debt payment suspensions should be granted with the aim of releasing resources in the short-term for emergency expenses or economic recovery on request of the developing country's government. While the creation of a new intergovernmental mechanism for a binding standstill is debated (see below for a recommended proposal), in the short-term any IMF member country can activate a debt standstill mechanism according to Article VIII, Section 2 (b) of the IMF Articles of Agreement.
- ◆ *Debt relief and the SDGs.* Sovereign debt restructuring should consider, on a case-by-case basis, the funds required to attain the SDGs and maintain a sustainable and inclusive growth pattern. In the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, new forms of international solidarity and innovative financing instruments are needed to promote a green, digital and resilient recovery. Holistic proposals such as the European Commission's global recovery initiative to link investment and debt relief to the SDGs deserve further and deeper consideration.
- ◆ *International Debt Authority.* The establishment of a global authority to oversee and secure sovereign debt relief and restructuring agreements should be promoted, building on the UN Secretary-General's call for a sovereign debt restructuring mechanism to be established as part of the longer-term response to the Covid-19 crisis and its economic impact, and the UNCTAD proposal for the establishment of an 'International Developing Country Debt Authority'. A global debt authority could ensure the establishment of a procedure involving all creditors and based on transparency and the respect of principles embedded in the SDGs (ie, human rights, development and climate commitments). The IMF and the World Bank have a key role in coordinating debt standstill and moratorium processes either as an International Debt Authority, or by creating and monitoring countries' Central Credit Facility.
- ◆ The IMF should undertake a new large-sized allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to support the reserves position of low and middle-income countries. This initiative would especially support the capacity of low-income and middle-income countries to contain the spread of SARS-CoV-2, promote progress towards the SDGs and economic recovery from Covid-19, and build confidence on cooperative solutions to the crisis.
- ◆ The effectiveness of global collective action at a time of health, economic and social crisis requires much closer coordination between the UN and the G20, which both have a truly global agenda. The more flexible decision making of the G20 and the universal participation and well-established legitimacy of the UN should be seen as complementary assets. The UN and the G20 should, in particular, cooperate in defining the key objectives and priorities of financial support for the poorest and most troubled countries.
- ◆ The UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters should take the lead, in synergy with the OECD, in establishing global fiscal norms such as a minimum effective corporate income tax rate, including in digital services.

## PEACE AND SECURITY: PEACEBUILDING AND PEACEKEEPING

**Nicoletta Pirozzi**

International peacekeeping has been increasingly under strain since the 1990s. Although the number of armed conflicts has declined, areas of persistent instability remain, especially on the African continent. At present, 110,000 UN blue helmets are deployed in 13 missions around the world. Moreover, the evolving nature of conflicts, which include intra-state disputes, hybrid warfare and regional crises, has prompted an effort to update the mandate and composition of peacekeeping operations. Their tasks now include facilitation of political and electoral processes, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

## PEACE AND SECURITY: PEACEBUILDING AND PEACEKEEPING

Alongside peacekeeping, the UN is also engaged in different peacebuilding efforts through missions and special envoys, which are aimed at preventing conflict and consolidating peace, strengthening political stability and good governance, fostering an inclusive political dialogue, and protecting and promoting human rights. The importance of partnering with regional organisations for peacekeeping and peacebuilding has also received wider recognition, including when mediation initiatives are pursued. However, current challenges – including the security implications of pandemics, as the recent Covid-19 emergency has shown – require the continuous adaptation of security structures, capabilities and working methods of both international and regional organisations.

Emphasising the profound social, economic and political consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, including those relating to international peace and security, UN Secretary-General (UNSG) António Guterres has issued an appeal for a global ceasefire and more rapid and effective diplomatic action and aid delivery,<sup>62</sup> but the UN Security Council (UNSC) has failed to approve a resolution backing the UNSG's call. This speaks volumes about the current stalemate of the UN Security Council as a guarantor of international peace and security, and calls for reform initiatives aimed at restoring its legitimacy and ensuring that it is able to exercise its primary responsibility in the security field.

Peace and security have been one of the key pillars of the reform efforts undertaken by UNSG Guterres.<sup>63</sup> In particular, the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative launched in 2018<sup>64</sup> has been endorsed by more than 150 countries and supported by four regional organisations (including the EU). The UNSG's reform plan stemmed from the recognition of structural shortcomings affecting UN

peacekeeping – from stalled political agreements and the high level of peacekeeper casualties, to failures to protect civilians, to sexual abuse scandals. The reform plan is mainly directed at ensuring more targeted peacekeeping

mandates, making UN operations stronger and safer, mobilising support for political solutions, and better equipping and training forces. It spells out 45 commitments for collective action by all peacekeeping stakeholders, including UN institutions, all member states, financial contributors, intergovernmental and regional organisations. And yet, the A4P is still struggling to become a platform for an innovative and up-to-date approach to peacekeeping, mainly due to the difficulty in making member states hold their commitments and to the difficulty in translating institutional innovations into effective action on the ground. Financial constraints are another major – and closely related – complicating factor.

One of the main objectives of recent UN reform efforts has been to make conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates more coordinated in order to increase their effectiveness. Significant changes have been made at UN headquarters including, in particular, the creation of two new UN departments – a strategic and operational Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), and a Department of Peace Operations (DPO) responsible for on-the-field interventions. In the new architecture, a single regional political-operational structure has been placed under the leadership of the Assistant Secretaries-General with regional responsibilities. However, the role of the different levels of governance in the new architecture, including regional divisions, needs to be streamlined to ensure adequate vertical consistency.

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***The evolving nature of conflicts has prompted an effort to update the mandate and composition of peacekeeping operations***  
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62 United Nations (2020) 'Secretary-General Calls for Global Ceasefire, Citing War-Ravaged Health Systems, Populations Most Vulnerable to Novel Coronavirus', Press Release, March. Available at: [www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20018.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20018.doc.htm).

63 See: 'Report of the Secretary-General: Restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar' A/72/525. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/72/525>; and 'Report of the Secretary-General: Peacebuilding and sustaining peace' A/72/707-S/2018/43. Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/72/707>.

64 See: 'Secretary-General's Initiative on Action for Peacekeeping Declaration'. Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p-declaration-en.pdf>.

In addition, the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review,<sup>65</sup> which will be discussed at the 74th session of the General Assembly, is expected to pave the way for a comprehensive reform of the UN institutional and financial instruments for peacebuilding, in particular the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

A key lesson from the Covid-19 pandemic is that global institutions are primarily called to address people's needs on the ground. This requires going beyond institutional restructuring by adopting a society-driven bottom-up approach to conflicts and crises through inclusive and timely interventions.

## Policy recommendations

- ◆ The effective implementation of reforms under the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative requires further political impulse from the UNSG, a more resolute engagement by member states, and a sound review of the missions' results to ensure measurable improvements on the ground. Vertical consistency requires greater effort to facilitate the adaptation of regional divisions and actors on the ground to the new reporting lines and processes, and to ensure their ownership of the A4P exercise.
- ◆ In the framework of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, special attention should be devoted to the clarification of the respective roles of the UN Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in dealing with policy areas that are

relevant for peacebuilding, namely peace and security, development, governance and human rights. In the new architecture, the Peacebuilding Commission should play a crucial role in ensuring both horizontal coherence and vertical consistency, by bridging the work of the three intergovernmental bodies and mitigating fragmentation, on the one hand, and ensuring the link with field activities through its organisational committee and its country configurations, on the other. In view of this, the advisory role of the Peacebuilding Commission towards the UNSC, but also towards the General Assembly and the ECOSOC, should be reinforced. A better harmonisation between the priority goals pursued by the PBC and the projects financed by the Peacebuilding Fund would allow for increased consistency between the overarching peacebuilding strategy and the action on the ground. With a view to improving effectiveness in the field, new mechanisms to measure impact should be explored, such as a 'Peacebuilding Audit' tool.

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**Partnering  
with regional  
organisations for  
peacekeeping and  
peacebuilding is  
crucial particularly  
when mediation  
initiatives are  
pursued**  
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- ◆ New mechanisms, including more robust standards and procedures, to embed local actors' perspectives into prevention, mediation and intervention strategies should be devised. More extensive exchanges with civil society, including actors beyond the well-known NGOs such as grassroots organisations, civic actors, women and youth, should be promoted both at PBC and at UN DPPA regional offices level.<sup>66</sup>
- ◆ Reinforcing strategic partnerships with regional and local actors would be crucial to reconcile different visions and realise a truly integrated, inclusive and conflict-sensitive approach. The UN should make better use of existing institutional frameworks of coo-

65 United Nations, '2020 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture'. Available at: [www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/2020-review](http://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/2020-review).

66 See: 'Non-Paper Main conclusions and recommendations for the UN Peacebuilding Support Office from Informal EU Consultation for the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review: Conflict Prevention, Human Rights and Agenda 2030 - 'leaving-no-one behind', 27 April 2020, Brussels (virtual)'. Available at: [www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/non\\_paper\\_un\\_pbso\\_main\\_conclusions\\_recommendations\\_final\\_27\\_may\\_2020.pdf](http://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/non_paper_un_pbso_main_conclusions_recommendations_final_27_may_2020.pdf).

# PEACE AND SECURITY: NON-PROLIFERATION, ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

peration with regional organisations and their role as entry points to local actors. The annual dialogue between the UN Security Council and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council and the UN-EU Steering Committee on Crisis Management should be opened to increased participation of civil society and local community representatives.

- ◆ In order to cope with cash flow problems and financial strains that ultimately affect mandate implementation, existing instruments should be improved to ensure sustainable, predictable and coherent funding for peacekeeping and peacebuilding. As regards the peacekeeping budget, the recent proposals put forward by the UNSG should be considered, such as creating a cash reserve for peacekeeping, managing the cash balances of active missions as a pool, and ensuring budgetary discipline by member states, especially large donors such as the US, through a mix of incentives and penalties. The potentialities of the Peacebuilding Fund should also be further exploited, in particular by establishing new partnerships with bilateral donors, international financial institutions and regional organisations, and by creating incentives through enhancing transparency and accountability for contributions of any size.

## PEACE AND SECURITY: NON-PROLIFERATION, ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

*Federica Dall'Arche*

International efforts towards the elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and the regulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) have achieved substantial results over the last four decades. Major bilateral and multilateral agreements have entered into force, including the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty. The United Nations has played a pivotal role, establishing a comprehensive architecture, known as the UN Disarmament Machinery, which is internationally recognised as the only forum in which to address multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

The nuclear threat is growing and is at the highest level since the second world war. In recent years, arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation have witnessed significant setbacks due to rearmament and modernisation plans by major powers,<sup>67</sup> and developments such as the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty,<sup>68</sup> the near-collapse of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA),<sup>69</sup> and the growing uncertainty surrounding the extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START).<sup>70</sup> The UN arenas entrusted with attesting and producing progress in these areas are also facing great challenges and have proved to be somewhat inadequate, as shown by the Disarmament

67 Lague, D. (2020) 'Special Report: U.S. rearms to nullify China's missile supremacy', Reuters, May. Available at: [www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-missiles-specialreport-us/special-report-u-s-rearms-to-nullify-chinas-missile-supremacy-idUSKBN21hEQ](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-missiles-specialreport-us/special-report-u-s-rearms-to-nullify-chinas-missile-supremacy-idUSKBN21hEQ); Trezza, C. (2018) 'The World in 2019. Nuclear Rearmament: The End of a "Taboo"?' Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), December. Available at: [www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/nuclear-rearmament-end-taboo-21864](http://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/nuclear-rearmament-end-taboo-21864); Connolly, R. and Boulègue, M. (2018) 'Russia's New State Armament Programme. Implications for the Russian Armed Forces and Military Capabilities to 2027', Research Paper, Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Available at: [www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-05-10-russia-state-armament-programme-connolly-boulegue.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-05-10-russia-state-armament-programme-connolly-boulegue.pdf).

68 US Department of State (2019) 'U.S. Withdrawal from the INF Treaty on August 2, 2019', Press Statement, Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, August. Available at: [www.state.gov/u-s-withdrawal-from-the-inf-treaty-on-august-2-2019/#:~:text=On%20February%20%2C%202019%2C%20the,continuing%20violation%20of%20the%20treaty.&text=Over%20the%20past%20six%20months,opportunity%20to%20correct%20its%20noncompliance](http://www.state.gov/u-s-withdrawal-from-the-inf-treaty-on-august-2-2019/#:~:text=On%20February%20%2C%202019%2C%20the,continuing%20violation%20of%20the%20treaty.&text=Over%20the%20past%20six%20months,opportunity%20to%20correct%20its%20noncompliance).

69 [www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-07/news/iran-continues-stockpile-uranium](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-07/news/iran-continues-stockpile-uranium); and: [www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-status-iran-nuclear-agreement](http://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-status-iran-nuclear-agreement); and: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1067492>.

70 As of August 2020, negotiations are still ongoing for a potential renewal or extension of the Treaty. In this regard, the two parties involved, the US and Russia, can either extend the treaty for an additional five years (until 2026); negotiate a new treaty; or abandon the regime, with serious consequences for arms control and bilateral strategic cooperation. While the least desirable for the international community, the latter option seems the most likely.

# PEACE AND SECURITY: NON-PROLIFERATION, ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

Commission (UNDC)'s inability to produce any substantial results since 2017,<sup>71</sup> the deadlock at the Conference on Disarmament (CD),<sup>72</sup> and the precarious future of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) due to insufficient progress on disarmament commitments.<sup>73</sup> Against this backdrop, other disarmament objectives are still far from being fulfilled, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the conclusion of a Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty (FMCT), and the preservation of the norm against the use of chemical weapons.<sup>74</sup>

In order to overturn the precarious state of affairs of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regimes, and to overcome the stalemate in specific bodies of the UN disarmament machinery, significant changes in the arms control process need to be evaluated.<sup>75</sup>

## Policy recommendations

- ◆ Concrete timelines and deadlines should be attached to specific actions and goals. Non-proliferation and disarmament objectives, especially when negotiated at the multilateral level, generally lack timelines and deadlines which are necessary, however, to evaluate progress and build trust. The lack of specific deadlines to achieve nuclear disarmament is one of the main sources of discontent among non-nuclear weapons countries.<sup>76</sup> In his 2018 'Agenda for Disarmament' entitled 'Securing our Common Future', UN Secretary-General António Guterres identified a set of priorities and specific practical

actions to achieve the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction, the mitigation of the impact of conventional weapons on humans and, more in general, the maintenance of international peace and security.<sup>77</sup> The new Agenda should provide the basis for the UN General Assembly and the UN machinery to discuss and produce concrete progress, attaching realistic deadlines and timelines to the practical actions identified in the Agenda.

- ◆ Some features of the modus operandi of the UN disarmament machinery should also be reconsidered. In particular, the UN Disarmament Machinery and its bodies should revise their rules of procedure to overcome the deadlock within the CD and to facilitate agreements within the UNDC. More specifically, the Conference on Disarmament should consider enlarging its membership to make it more representative and revise its consensus rule which, over the years, has served as a convenient tool for those unwilling to deal with certain issues at the multilateral level. In particular, the consensus rule should no longer be applied to the adoption of agenda items, a practice that makes the advancement of work extremely difficult. The UN Disarmament Commission, for its part, should focus on new ways to build consensus on conceptual and substantive progress, limiting to the minimum the reiteration of points of disagreement in its reports to the UN General Assembly.
- ◆ Further emphasis should be given to regional agreements, which have been, in some cases, surprisingly successful in the non-proliferation and

71 United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 'United Nations Disarmament Commission'. Available at: [www.un.org/disarmament/institutions/disarmament-commission/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/institutions/disarmament-commission/).

72 NTI, Conference on Disarmament (CD). Available at: [www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/conference-on-disarmament/developments](http://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/conference-on-disarmament/developments).

73 ICAN, 'Two-thirds of the world's countries support TPNW'. Available at: [www.icanw.org/two\\_thirds\\_of\\_the\\_world](http://www.icanw.org/two_thirds_of_the_world); Kile, S.K. and Erästö, T. (2018), '7. Nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation', SIPRI Yearbook 2018. Available at: [www.sipri.org/yearbook/2018/07](http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2018/07).

74 OPCW, 'Incident in Salisbury'. Available at: [www.opcw.org/media-centre/featured-topics/incident-salisbury](http://www.opcw.org/media-centre/featured-topics/incident-salisbury).

75 See, for example: Duarte, S. (2013) 'How to Revitalize Disarmament Efforts', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. European External Action Service (2020) 'Conference on Disarmament - EU Opening Statement'. Lewis, P. and Thakur, R. (2004) Arms Control, Disarmament and the United Nations. Disarmament Forum. Morales Pedraza, J. (2015) 'The Reform of the United Nations Disarmament Machinery', Public Organization Review, 16(3), 319-334. Non-Aligned Movement (2016) Proposal on the Objectives of the Fourth Special Session Devoted to Disarmament. The Netherlands (2019) 'Working Paper: Back to Basics - The Programme of Work'. Conference on Disarmament. UN General Assembly (2012) 'Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations'. UNIDIR (2010) 'Disarmament Machinery. A Fresh Approach'.

76 Kile, S.K. and Erästö, T. (2018), '7. Nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation', SIPRI Yearbook 2018. Available at: [www.sipri.org/yearbook/2018/07](http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2018/07).

77 United Nations, 'Securing our Common Future. An agenda for disarmament'. Available at: [www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda/en/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda/en/).



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***In order to overturn the precarious state of affairs of non-proliferation and disarmament significant changes in the arms control process need to be evaluated***

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disarmament realm. There are, in particular, several examples of nations of a specific region that have agreed on the establishment of a common area free of nuclear weapons – a so-called nuclear weapons free zone – despite the limited progress in global nuclear disarmament.<sup>78</sup> Five regions of the world – Latin America and the Caribbean, South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Africa – have succeeded in cooperating towards this common goal.<sup>79</sup> The creation of such a zone in the Middle East is a work in progress, although it still remains a distant prospect. Regional agreements by like-minded countries should also be encouraged to facilitate progress of the arms control and disarmament agenda at the global level.

- ◆ Nations grouped as a regional actor should take the lead on specific non-proliferation and disarmament areas. The EU, for instance, which has increasingly supported the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda both financially and politically with a variety of instruments, could act as a bridge-builder between nuclear and non-nuclear

weapons states in the context of the NPT. The EU should become the lead advocate of arms control and non-proliferation, advancing proposals and supporting confidence-building measures aimed at accommodating the concerns of both nuclear and non-nuclear states such as, for example, risk-reduction measures. Specifically, with regard to the JCPOA, the EU should live up to its commitments and keep its position firm, albeit with the necessary negotiation flexibility. This firm position should certainly be maintained even in the event of a new US Presidency. Finally, the EU should also reinforce partnerships with third countries to counter WMD proliferation challenges, and take the lead in promoting arms control measures regarding new domains such as cyber, outer space and autonomous weapons.

## REFORMING THE UNITED NATIONS

**Nicoletta Pirozzi**

The United Nations has been the target of heavy criticism due to a series of shortfalls: Security Council deadlocks in responding to ongoing crises, a lack of legitimacy, a waste of resources and heavy bureaucracy. Recently, even previous defenders of the UN system have been adopting an increasingly antagonistic approach towards UN multilateralism, and the decision by the current US administration during the Covid-19 emergency to withdraw from the WHO encapsulates this worrying trend in the clearest manner.

At the same time, other global actors with a proven capacity to identify at an early stage and tackle crisis situations and new challenges, such as regional and sub-regional organisations, civil society and the private sector, have emerged and pushed the UN to rethink its state-centric approach to global affairs.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 'Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones'. Available at: [www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/nwzf/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/nwzf/).

<sup>79</sup> Mongolia has unilaterally declared its nuclear-weapon-free status, positively contributing to security and stability of the region.

In particular, some regional organisations – with the EU at the forefront – have reached remarkable levels of integration and acquired increased competences on behalf of their member states. As such, they need to be considered both as players in the global order and building blocks of a multi-level global governance. Moreover, they are often better equipped to provide effective solutions to current transnational challenges than state actors, and are often driving forces of UN efforts on peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

The EU remains one of the staunchest supporters of a rules-based international order centred on the UN Charter, as stated in its Treaties (Articles 3 and 21 TEU) and emphasised in its main strategic documents, from the 2003 European Security Strategy to the 2016 European Union Global Strategy. However, the EU has encountered difficulty in articulating an effective common position on the reform of the UN due to divergent interests of the member states, especially concerning possible changes of the UN Security Council's composition.

Repeated attempts have been undertaken to restore the credibility of the UN through its reform at institutional, management and financial levels, particularly at the 2005 World Summit<sup>80</sup> at the initiative of the then UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Kofi Annan.<sup>81</sup> Since the beginning of his

mandate in 2017, UNSG Guterres has launched major reform initiatives, which have focused mainly on three strands: repositioning the UN development system,<sup>82</sup> shifting the management paradigm<sup>83</sup> and restructuring the peace and security pillar.<sup>84</sup>

The objective of these comprehensive reform efforts is to equip the UN with new instruments and procedures to respond more collectively, transparently, and quickly to new security threats and global imbalances, and to improve citizens' lives. The ultimate challenge is to enable the UN to reinvigorate the global multilateral system, in a time of increased uncertainty and complexity in international affairs, and of increasingly fierce geopolitical competition between global and regional powers.

The UN reform remains indeed an unaccomplished goal. Despite significant steps forward in various issue areas, tensions remain between different priorities: 1) improving the UN internal coherence through a stronger coordinating and supervising role of the central structures in New York; 2) enhancing the role of regional organisations under the aegis of, and in partnership with, the UN; and 3) making the UN more representative through new mechanisms of democratic accountability. All these elements have an impact on the composition and mandate of UN governing bodies and agencies.

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***The UN legitimacy crisis requires the adoption of robust reform measures and a steady effort to involve new actors and stakeholders in its activities***

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80 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 16 September 2005, '2005 World Summit Outcome'. Available at: [www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_60\\_1.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_60_1.pdf).

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# REFORMING THE UNITED NATIONS

A possible way to reconcile these diverging priorities is to change paradigm and promote new forms of multilateralism allowing for policy-based differentiation, multi-level consistency and a people-centred approach. But this would imply restoring the effectiveness and legitimacy of the UN, starting with enhancing policy coherence and inter-agency coordination and reforming the UN governing bodies, first and foremost the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Some of the necessary reforms, including those pertaining to the size of an enlarged Security Council, the categories of membership and the veto power of the permanent members, would require an amendment of the UN Charter through a hard-won two-thirds majority in the UN General Assembly, including the permanent members of the UNSC (Article 108 of the UN Charter). These reforms remain key elements of a longer-term progressive agenda. Nevertheless, there are crucial steps that could be made without amending the Charter that would allow the UN to respond more effectively to the most urgent challenges of our times. They are the focus of our proposals below, which are meant to equip policymakers and policy-shapers within and beyond the UN with a possible toolkit for multilateralism 2020.

## ***Policy recommendations***

- ◆ Developing policy effectiveness by expanding the role of UN agencies.
  - Being effective in tackling current global challenges requires the expansion of the mandate of UN specialised agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The status of other relevant agencies such as the International Organization on Migration (IOM) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) should be enhanced, in order to bind them to the UN Charter and make them able to perform a norm-setting function in their respective fields.
- ◆ Ensuring policy coherence by improving horizontal coordination.
  - Acting coherently requires finding new ways to overcome the silo mentality, for example by better aligning the work of the Bretton Woods institutions – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – and the WTO with the implementation of the UN programmes, especially the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by, inter alia, establishing closer ties between International Financial Institutions (IFIs) on the one hand, and ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly on the other.
  - At the same time, a better inter-agency coordination of global efforts should be promoted in various issue areas. There is the need in particular for closer coordination between the IOM and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to address the problems of migrants and refugees, between the UN and the International Energy Agency (IEA) for energy policy-making, market openness and fossil fuel subsidy phaseout, and between the WHO and other actors of the UN humanitarian system to cope with health emergencies.
- ◆ Engaging all relevant actors while enhancing policy consistency.
  - New sectors such as big data, AI, and the ethics of drones require new partnerships beyond the current state-centric global architecture, and more generally an effort to engage all relevant actors, from regional organisations to civil society and the private sector. To that end, it would be worth promoting flexible, topic-focused coalitions of the willing, formed by stakeholders that are capable of pursuing shared innovative goals, with a view to enlarging representation and improving efficiency.
  - In order to avoid the risk of fragmentation in this scenario of ‘poly-governance’, the UN should create additional fora for regular global dialogue, such as worldwide platforms that could promote annual meetings for

information sharing, identification of complementarities and strategic alignment of actions. These platforms would bring representatives of the UN – both the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, as well as the Directors-General of relevant UN agencies – together with regional organisations, ad hoc groupings and civil society actors involved in the different issue areas.

- In addition, a ‘global open method of coordination’ should be established in the different issue areas by creating or reinforcing instruments such as common guidelines, national plans and regular implementation reviews within global frameworks such as the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan; the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP); the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR); and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change/Conferences of the Parties (UNFCCC/COPs) processes. This should not rule out, however, the search for agreements on more binding commitments in selected issue areas through the adoption of new international law instruments and the necessary financial support instruments.
- ◆ Making the UN more legitimate and representative by improving democratic participation.
  - Making the UN more legitimate and representative means ensuring that appropriate participatory channels are put in place through which citizens can make their voice heard either directly or through their elected representatives. The creation of a UN Parliamentary Assembly remains a longer-term objective, which could be realised through a majority vote on the basis of the procedure provided for in Article 22 of the UN Charter.
  - In the short-term, a form of democratic representation could be created by setting-up
    - an inter-parliamentary network composed of representatives of national parliaments, and parliamentary assemblies of regional organisations such as the European Parliament, the Pan-African Parliament and others. This network would act as a complement to the UN General Assembly, with a view to establishing, in the longer term, an additional consultation mechanism and regular exchange of views among parliamentarians on the main issues of the UN agenda.
- In addition, instruments of direct democracy could be established, such as a World Citizens Initiative (WCI), modelled on the European Citizens Initiative (ECI), as an instrument that allows citizens to submit proposals to the UN General Assembly. A geographically representative Organising Committee would register the initiatives that are launched through such a mechanism and that receive a pre-identified quorum of citizens’ signatures. Advanced digital platforms could be developed to facilitate the dissemination process and the online signature collection system.
- The role of civil society organisations should be further enlarged by reforming, inter alia, the working methods of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs. This Committee is tasked with providing recommendations on the granting of consultative status with the UN to NGOs, which impacts on their access and participation in a range of UN fora and processes. A first step in this direction would be to webcast its sessions and formulate clearer criteria for considering applications. Among the NGOs applying for consultative status, special attention should be devoted to those dealing with gender equality, women’s empowerment, women’s rights, women, peace and security. Another option would be to establish a dedicated civil society focal point at the UN Secretariat.

# REFORMING THE UNITED NATIONS

- ◆ Reforming the UN governing bodies by enhancing the regional dimension.
  - Regional players perform crucial tasks in implementing the UN agenda, and serve as a bridge between global and local actors. There is a need to give institutional recognition to the role of regional organisations by placing them at the core of the UN security architecture and granting them greater representation within its main bodies, the Security Council and the General Assembly (UNGA). Regional representation could be introduced and enhanced both in the UNSC and in the UNGA without the need to amend the UN Charter.
  - At the UNSC, the regional dimension should be reinforced by (1) making non-permanent members more accountable to the regions they represent through stricter election/re-election and rotation mechanisms within each regional grouping; and (2) reviewing existing electoral groups – agreed on in General Assembly (GA) Resolution 1991 (XVIII) of 17 December 1963 – to better account for the changes that have occurred in the international power distribution and to align these electoral groups with existing regional organisations. For example, the EU members are dispersed over three electoral groupings: sixteen in Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG), eight in the Eastern European Group (EEG) and one (Cyprus) in the Asian group.
  - Moreover, a reinforced dialogue between UN institutions and regional organisations could facilitate the quest for more legitimate decision-making at the global level. This proposal could be implemented by regularly involving representatives of regional organisations (under Chapter VIII of the UN

Charter) in UNSC debates and deliberations by expanding the scope of Article 39 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council, which allows the UNSC to invite “[...] persons, whom it considers competent for the purpose, to supply it with information or to give other assistance in examining matters within its competence”.<sup>85</sup>

- Regional organisations that have achieved a substantive level of integration should also be granted enhanced observer status at the UN General Assembly, building on the 2011 GA Resolution on the participation of the EU in the work of the UNGA.<sup>86</sup>

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