

---

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

## LEADERS FOR PEACE

---

General rapporteur

**Antonio PATRIOTA**

Ambassador of Brazil to the Arab Republic of Egypt, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Former Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, Chairperson of the 60th and 61st UN Commission on the Status of Women



Leaders pour la paix

# A NEW HUMANISM FOR A RENEWED MULTILATERALISM

---

**1. Introduction**

**2. Geopolitical Landscape**

**3. Multilateralism at a Crossroads**

**4. Systemic Renewal**

**5. Peace and Development in the Context of COVID-19 and Ukraine**

**6. Education and Intergenerational Dialogue**

**7. Conclusion: A New humanism for a New Multilateralism**

# A new humanism for a renewed multilateralism

## Introduction

How can we frame a discussion to promote enhanced international cooperation for a more peaceful world, as 2022 unfolds, when war has broken out in Ukraine and challenges in a variety of fields seem to multiply? After causing the death of more than 15 million people, the COVID-19 pandemic morphs into new variants and continues to impact societies across the globe. The security environment assumes more threatening features, as a military intervention in Europe - on a scale not seen since the end of World War II - increases tension among the major military powers, amidst a backlog of unresolved crises in Africa, the Middle East and beyond. While disruption in supply chains persist and inflationary pressures increase, full economic recovery remains a mirage in most quarters, with deepening inequality within and among States generating political polarization. Although climate change has established itself as a collective priority, national responses remain uneven and unsatisfactory by most counts.

Until the situation in Ukraine dominated the headlines, it was possible to draw encouragement from a few positive developments and trends. Vaccination proceeds at an accelerated pace in the developed world, Asia and Latin America, even if it still has to pick up pace in Africa. The new year began with the five Security Council permanent members assuming a commitment to consider the avoidance of war between nuclear-weapon states as their “foremost responsibility”<sup>1</sup>. While guns have not been silenced in most ongoing conflicts, cease-fires have been holding in the Middle East, military activity has decreased in the Horn of Africa, flashpoints in the Caucasus have not flared up. Government and business leaders seem willing to draw lessons from the asymmetrical globalization of the past decades and international trade was, until recently, again on the rise. Even if the avoidance of a climate catastrophe is far from assured, COP 26 brought together a significant number of Heads of State and delegates to Glasgow for common action to confront global warming.

Military aggression in Ukraine, however, has shattered the European status quo and cast a bleak shadow over our assessment of where the world stands today. Some of the questions associated with this dangerous development remain unanswered at this point: Will the conflict spread? What is the scope for diplomacy to put an end to the fighting? Is this the end of globalization and the liberal order? At the very least, a return to a status quo ante in Europe seems highly unlikely and the foreseeable future looms problematic in the security and economic spheres. Broader systemic questions come to mind, as the United Nations Charter is again violated in the field of peace and security and multilateralism is thereby undermined, while international humanitarian law is disregarded, with civilians at increased risk. At the same time, it is worth noting that the United Nations remains an authoritative forum for the international community to express concerns. It appears that, notwithstanding its shortcomings, multilateralism retains relevance in the face of defiance towards international law, including by powerful member States.

The annual report of the Leaders for Peace is drafted with readers who are concerned with the current international environment in mind, irrespective of their nationalities or beliefs. As representatives from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and cultures, we lend our voices to the collective search for sustainable development and peace, at a time when the post-1945 world order experiences renewed stress,

---

<sup>1</sup> Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races, released on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2022

and geopolitical tensions create difficulties for effective diplomacy and multilateral cooperation. We note that a deep malaise is widely disseminated today, as cynicism grows, solidarity is in short supply and democratic values come under attack. Is it possible to change direction and chart a more constructive course to address the interlinked security, economic, public health, social and environmental challenges that stand between us and a better future? We believe that the battles that must be won cannot be fought with weapons and instead require a new humanism for a renewed multilateralism.

Multilateralism, as it has evolved over three quarters of a century under the United Nations system, remains the most widely accepted, inclusive and fair platform to engage in the collective search for better answers. Irrespective of its imperfections, disengagement from multilateralism would only entail serious setbacks for human civilization. The alternatives are too tragic to be contemplated: no accountability, military, economic and technological supremacy dictating rules to the detriment of universal respect for international law. In the absence of enlightened leadership, however, multilateralism cannot deliver results on its own; multilateralism becomes power politics by different means. A readiness to confront shortcomings and learn from past mistakes, however, can rally decisive support for the necessary reforms that will promote progress for all. In establishing improved coordination and policy frameworks, it is possible to derive wisdom and inspiration from different legal, cultural and spiritual traditions. In principle this can take place without reinventing the system as such.

This report looks at information and insights from a variety of sources, with a view towards expressing support for a change in direction through a plural and democratic debate. As he celebrated his 99<sup>th</sup> birthday last year, French philosopher Edgar Morin published a text entitled “Let us Change Paths, the Lessons of the Coronavirus”, in which he suggests that for humanism to be regenerated it will need to be planetary: “awareness of our common destiny on Earth should be the key event of our century”<sup>2</sup>. Adolfo Perez Esquivel, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate from Argentina, reminds us that we cannot plant seeds with closed fists. In the same spirit, and on the basis of the intellectual clarity of three previous reports under the guidance of Ambassador Pierre Vimont, I am honored to assume the task of projecting the vision articulated by President Jean-Pierre Raffarin and my distinguished colleagues at *Leaders for Peace* on the current international landscape.

The following sections will look at the current geopolitical context, evaluate the status of the multilateral system as regards the promotion of peace, suggest some ideas for systemic renewal, highlight the interlinkage between peace and sustainable development and focus on education and intergenerational dialogue as a guide to the future. A final section will call upon our individual and collective responsibility to forge a renewed, planetary humanism as a path towards a more peaceful world.

## **Geopolitical Landscape**

The international system has not been devoid of tensions or crises, since the entry into force of the United Nations Charter and the Bretton Woods agreements. Dysfunction at the UN Security Council was only too familiar during the Cold War. Momentous geopolitical transformations have taken place since 1945, in particular as the collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in a “unipolar moment” of unmatched

---

<sup>2</sup> MORIN, Edgar. Changeons de voie: Les leçons du coronavirus. Éditions Flammarion, 2021.

military and economic preeminence by the United States three decades ago. What is perhaps unique to our contemporary context is the overlap of two distinct phenomena: on the one hand, a complex redistribution of power, which is most perceptible in the economic sphere - as China overtakes the US – and, on the other, global environmental and public health threats that cannot be tackled through individual or regional responses alone, and threaten humanity as a whole. To be sure, pandemics in themselves are not new, although in an interconnected, globalized world, they have acquired an unprecedented potential for wreaking havoc in the lives of individuals and societies.

According to the analysis in “The Great Reset”<sup>3</sup>, published by the World Economic Forum in reaction to the coronavirus outbreak, three main traits define today’s world: interdependence, velocity and complexity. In an interdependent world, risks are amplified by the linkages among economic, geopolitical, environmental, technological and social variables. At the same time, the internet has increased the speed at which facts and reactions unfold. An abundance of data overwhelms public and private agents, even as they are pressured into taking decisions at shorter intervals. Complexity, in turn, limits our ability to acquire true knowledge and understanding. Not surprisingly, our predicaments are being examined through catch phrases, while geopolitics has become a growth industry. Is the present world order coming to an end? Is the unipolar moment over? Has multipolarity come to stay, or are we in the initial stages of a new bipolarity? Is the decline of the West a reality? Has a new Cold War already begun?

These are some of the issues frequently raised in the media, academic webinars and Foreign Ministries. Events in Eastern Europe have only generated a new set of often conflicting views. Without pretending to give a single answer to these questions, it may be useful to make a few observations and distinctions to guide the conversation. The first relates to the geopolitical distribution of power and systemic change. According to Kenneth Waltz<sup>4</sup>, one should not confuse changes at the level of units in a system and changes at the level of the system. In this sense, it is possible to argue that neither bipolarity, nor unipolarity or multipolarity are necessarily incompatible with an international system founded on the sovereign equality of States, in which international law establishes conditions for legitimate resort to coercive action, as specified in Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Violations do not, per se, entail a change in the system – as witnessed on past occasions – even if they may generate crisis and soul-searching.

In truth, the changes within the units of the system may be of such consequence that a discussion regarding the sustainability of the system itself may not be out of place. Interestingly, however, the war in Ukraine has had the effect of bringing about a renewed commitment, by a vast majority of the international community, to notions such as respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inadmissibility of the unilateral use of force. In light of the overwhelming support for these principles, a radical replacement of the current world order by another does not seem to be on the agenda - at least with regard to the legal foundation for handling threats to international peace and security. This is not to say, as we shall examine in other sections, that the system would not benefit from reforms, or that the liberal economic world order can avoid a period of fragmentation. With respect to the changes in the relative power of units within the system, one approach may consist, as a first step, to identify certain quantitative realities in the military, economic and diplomatic spheres.

---

<sup>3</sup> SCHWAB, Klaus and MALLERET: COVID-19: The Great Reset. Agentur Schweiz (July 9, 2020)

<sup>4</sup> WALTZ, Kenneth. Theory of International Politics. 1979.

Starting with defense matters, the most recent available data gathered by the SIPRI Yearbook Summary<sup>5</sup> indicates that growth in total expenditure, has been influenced by an increase in the budgets of the two largest spenders: Washington and Beijing. US military spending reached US\$ 778 billion in 2020, a 4,4% increase over the previous year. China's military budget during the same period totaled US\$ 252 billion, representing an increase in 1,9%. India, was the third highest spender with a budget of US\$ 72,9 billion, while Russia was fourth at US\$ 61,7 billion. In both the cases of India and Russia, the increase was close to the world average at 2,6%. According to the same source, the US and Russia have undertaken expensive programs to replace and modernize their nuclear warheads and delivery systems. China is expanding its nuclear arsenal, while India and Pakistan are also increasing stockpiles. Estimated numbers for total inventories place Russia at the top in number of nuclear warheads, at 6,255, followed by the US with 5,550. The remaining seven nuclear states possess lower quantities of warheads, as follows: China (350), France (290), United Kingdom (225), Pakistan (165), India (156), Israel (90), North Korea (approximately 50). While a few countries diverted resources to address the pandemic, and most governments used military assets in their responses to the virus, world military expenses as a share of world GDP rose slightly by 0,2% during the period. In military terms, the US retains a significant lead with respect to the dimension of its budget - which represents more than a third of world total - while Russia retains a quantitative advantage in nuclear terms. A look at the number of military bases and armed forces personnel deployed abroad, however, further illustrates the relative strength of the United States, with outposts in every part of the world. China, by contrast has a handful of bases in Asia and one in Djibouti, while Russia, in addition to its ties to countries in the former USSR is increasingly active in Africa. France and the United Kingdom retain a number of bases in former colonies.

As a defense alliance, NATO is in a category by itself, with thirty members, extending from the US and Canada, through Europe, as far East as Turkey. In total, NATO has the capability to count on 3,5 million personnel, troops and civilian combined. According to the IISS<sup>6</sup>, Russia possesses 1,014,000 active military personnel and China 2,185,000. At the North Atlantic Council, in June 2021, NATO expressed concern with the “systemic challenges to the rules-based international order” posed by China. Russia and China, in turn, signed a joint statement, on 4 February 2022, in which NATO expansion is condemned and serious concern is manifested with the AUKUS security partnership among Australia, the US and the United Kingdom. The statement falls short of establishing a full-fledged military defense system, but evokes the scenario of an “anti-hegemonic alliance”, as described by former US National Security Advisor Brzezinski in “The Grand Chessboard”<sup>7</sup>. His view is that China and Russia are two major “geostrategic players”, in a tripolar field, along with the US.

On the economic front we are witnessing a historic transition, as China overtakes the US with the world's largest GDP in nominal terms. China's economic rise has brought it from the ninth position in 1978 to second only to the US in 2016, as its share of global GDP surged from 2% to 15%. Before 2000, the US was at the helm of global trade, with 80% of countries trading more with the US than with China. By 2018, that number had dropped sharply to just 30%, as China took the top position in 128 out of 190 countries. The dominance of the US dollar as global reserve currency, which has prevailed for decades,

---

<sup>5</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. SIPRI Yearbook Summary 2021. SIPRI. Available at [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/sipri\\_yb21\\_summary\\_en\\_v2\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/sipri_yb21_summary_en_v2_0.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 2022.

<sup>7</sup> BRZEZINSKI, ZBIGNIEW. The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives. 1998.

although still solid can no longer be considered unassailable. According to the Financial Times, one of the economic consequences of the Ukraine invasion may be a quickening of the shift to a bipolar financial system – one based on the dollar the other on the renminbi. As the experts from the World Economic Forum point out, however, the role of the dollar in international financial transactions remains far greater than in international trade.

The European Union, which comprises twenty-seven European countries, is the second largest economy in the world. It held the number one position from 2004, when ten new members joined the union, until 2014. The EU includes several of the most highly developed economies in the world, such as Germany, France and Italy, which retain significant competitive technological capacities and high profiles in international trade and finance. In addition to these three, G20 summits bring together the EU Commission, along with the United Kingdom, Canada and Japan, reflecting the continuing economic relevance of the West. G7 members still represent 46% of GDP globally, based on nominal values, or 32% based on PPP. It is not difficult to see, by adding the economic strength of Western countries to the military power of NATO, that their influence remains considerable. By comparison, the five emerging economies, which coordinate within the BRICS group, represent 25% of global GDP – with China by far the largest. Russia and Brazil positioned slightly under the ten biggest economies, and South Africa further down the list.

After the demise of the Soviet Union, military and economic power were concentrated in the hands of the US and the West, with the decisive diplomatic influence that such concentration of strength entails. This may have come to an end in 2003, as the Iraq war illustrated the limits of determining outcomes unilaterally through military force. Withdrawal from Afghanistan last year is further evidence of this trend. After the 2008 economic crisis, China established its credentials as the main rising economic power, and a more diverse landscape of actors with global influence emerged. As the G20 acquired prominence the term “multipolarity” became more commonly used. Hard power, measured in military and economic terms, is of course also linked to easily comparable factors such as territory, demography and natural resources. Soft power, in turn, involves less quantifiable variables, such as the ability to exercise leadership, creativity or imagination. Diplomatic influence can reflect both hard and soft power attributes, and may constitute a valuable geopolitical asset in its own right.

This is a sphere in which military or economic strength are not necessarily determinant: one need only consider the influence wielded by the Vatican. But can one measure global diplomatic influence? A country’s network of embassies, permanent missions and consulates can be taken as a clear sign of interest in what goes on beyond their regional environment. According to the Australian Lowy Institute<sup>8</sup>, China overtook the US in 2019 as the country with the most diplomatic posts in the world, at 276 offices – three more than the US. The top ten largest networks include, in quantitative order, France, Japan, Russia, Turkey, Germany, Brazil, Spain and Italy, closely followed by the UK in the 11<sup>th</sup> position. The European Union is represented through some 142 delegations and offices around the world, including 8 missions to international organizations. The rise in China’s international diplomatic presence has been rapid, taking advantage of governments that have ended their ties with the authorities in Taiwan. Also noteworthy is the fact that less than twenty countries possess diplomatic relations with all other UN member States. If

---

<sup>8</sup> Global Diplomacy Index 2019. Lowy Institute at [globaldiplomacyindex.lowyinstitute.org/](http://globaldiplomacyindex.lowyinstitute.org/)

one includes relations with the two permanent UN observer States (Holy See and Palestine) only Brazil and India fall into such a category.

Other aspects that may enter into consideration, in this regard, are the regularity with which a country is elected to major multilateral organs such as the UN Security Council (P5 excluded), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), ECOSOC, the Human Rights Council (HRC). One may also look at how many high-level positions a country occupies in international organizations. More recently, non-governmental actors have been demonstrating increasing diplomatic clout, as illustrated by the successful efforts by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to mobilize the UN General Assembly into negotiating a treaty on their prohibition. At a time when individuals are amassing fortunes on a par with medium sized economies, it has been suggested that the day may be near when participation in multilateral negotiations will include their voices. A recent editorial by the Financial Times insinuated that the CEO of SpaceX<sup>9</sup>, Elon Musk, may become involved in future discussions on the peaceful uses of outer space under UN auspices.

When it comes to diplomatic influence, small countries also play decisive roles: witness the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) at the Paris Conference on climate change. Perhaps the most important ingredient in determining whether that influence will be effectively used is the coherence and competence with which a specific objective is pursued, as well as the international resonance of that objective. It is thus apparent that, geopolitically, today's panorama is not as binary as implied in some articles that speak of a new Cold War between the US and China. At the same time, it is undeniable that these two countries loom as the two most significant players in contemporary international affairs, and their governments will continue to wield major influence, militarily, economically and diplomatically, for the coming decades. This does not mean that outcomes will be pre-determined by them only, or that there is no scope for others, individually or in groups, to shape policy and advance alternatives. When it comes to contemporary geopolitics, the best available term may be "multidimensional multipolarity".

## **Multilateralism at a Crossroads**

Chinese President Xi Jinping stated at this year's virtual Session of the World Economic Forum that "we need to learn from comparing long history cycles"<sup>10</sup>. Ours is indeed a time when comparisons with events that took place 100 years ago, or more, have become commonplace. The greatest pandemic in a century is with us. As a country from the East assumes the leading economic position, a long cycle of Western preeminence, that began midway through the last millennium, is about to be replaced by a geopolitical configuration in which the West will not be as dominant. The notion of territorial sovereignty has been a bedrock of the international system since the adoption of the treaties of Westphalia in 1648. More recently, however, states began to accept the trade-off between limits to their sovereign freedom and adherence to global norms. After the failure of the League of Nations, the United Nations came into

---

<sup>9</sup> "The world needs to set new rules in space" In: Financial Times. Opinion. Available online: <https://www.ft.com/content/20fb8386-6ce1-4e54-8955-9f5dab3824ea>

<sup>10</sup> XI, Jinping. Message to The Davos Agenda. Davos. Janeiro 2022. Available online: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/01/address-chinese-president-xi-jinping-2022-world-economic-forum-virtual-session/>

being with the mission of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war through a new commitment to collective security.

As stated by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, “over the past 100 years, the desire to settle conflicts peacefully on the basis of common rules has been converted into a universal system of institutions in the political, economic, social and environmental spheres”<sup>11</sup>. But he has also warned against what he considers as poisonous threats, such as a weakening of the democratic spirit of compromise and an indifference to collective rules. Although the multilateral system has demonstrated a certain longevity, after 76 years, it would be foolish to assume it is capable of self-regeneration. At a speech in 2020, Guterres summoned the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse<sup>12</sup>, to identify the most serious challenges facing us today: an increase in geopolitical tensions, the climate crisis, rising inequality at the heart of inequitable globalization, and the ominous side of technology. To these was added the social and economic impact of the pandemic as a fifth challenge. The latest events in Eastern Europe add considerable drama to this grim picture.

Having experienced the Cold War and a “unipolar moment”, however, multilateralism need not be considered intrinsically unable to withstand crisis or shifts in the global distribution of power. When it comes to addressing new concerns in the economic, social and environmental domains, for example, it is possible to affirm that the UN has been successful in articulating widely accepted global responses, even if their implementation leaves to be desired: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement of 2015 are cases in point. Also worthy of acknowledgement is the replacement of the Human Rights Commission by a Council entrusted with a broad mandate to undertake universal periodic reviews of every Member State’s performance. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic at the multilateral level has been the subject of mixed reviews, even if the World Health Organization (WHO) was ill equipped to deal with a challenge on such a scale. To a large extent, the greater success or failure to control the disease has been a consequence of national policies.

To undertake a fair assessment of the WHO’s response to the COVID-19 crisis it is worth bearing in mind that, with a biannual budget of USD 4,4 billion, it is less well funded than a single big city hospital - as pointed out by Adam Tooze in his book “Shutdown – how Covid Shook the World’s Economy”<sup>13</sup>. The same author is careful to add that the Geneva based organization is staffed by “thousands of highly professional, motivated, and well-intentioned individuals from all over the world who fight the good fight”. Once vaccines began to be applied in 2021, with global production at nearly 1,5 billion doses per month, the WHO made clear that there was enough supply to achieve the goal of global vaccination by mid-2022. In other words, the problem was not one of supply but of allocation. It is important to note, at the same time, that the UN General Assembly has expressed serious concern over the disparity between developing countries and developed countries in terms of the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines (UNGA resolution A/RES/76/175).

---

<sup>11</sup> GUTERRES, António. Message to the Paris Peace Forum. November 2018. Available. Disponível em: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-11-11/address-paris-peace-forum>.

<sup>12</sup> GUTERRES, António. Remarks to the General Assembly on the Secretary-General's priorities for 2020. New York. January 2020. Available online: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-01-22/remarks-general-assembly-priorities-for-2020>

<sup>13</sup> TOOZE, Adam. Shutdown: How Covid Shook the World's Economy. Viking (September 7, 2021).

In 2021, the world manufactured more than 11 billion COVID-19 vaccines, thanks in large measure to the opportunities offered by international trade. As it turns out, 11 billion is a much higher number than would have been achieved had there been reliance exclusively on domestic supply chains. The multilateral trading system was essential to keep the adoption of damaging protectionist measures in check. According to WTO data, 50 measures restricting exports of vaccines, medical devices and their inputs had been rolled back by January 2022, with 27 remaining in place. WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, along with the heads of the International Financial Organizations participate in a task force to support WHO objectives for 2022. The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution last year on “Ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to vaccines”<sup>14</sup>. Since April 2020 a United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund was launched by the Secretary-General. Of significance for future emergencies was the decision by a Special Session of the World Health Assembly, in December 2021, to establish a negotiating body to draft and negotiate a WHO international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. This was only the second time, since the organization’s founding, in 1948, that a Special Session was convened.

It is in the critical area of safeguarding international peace and security that the system has been most consistently disappointing. If we concentrate on the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a few ominous statistics illustrate a chronic inability to prevent conflict and promote sustainable peace. Since the late 1990s, there have been three million deaths by virtue of the second Congo war, half a million in Syria, 400 thousand in Yemen, more than 300 thousand in Darfur and in the war against Boko Haram, hundreds of thousands in Iraq and Afghanistan, perhaps more than a million (figures vary in this regard). The number of refugees worldwide has never been so high, with new records being broken as millions flee Ukraine in search of shelter in neighboring countries. Theirs is only the latest chapter in a series of forced departures from their lands by Syrians, Afghans, South Sudanese, Eritreans, among others from Myanmar or the Central African Republic. Such outcomes represent a failure of diplomacy and poor strategic thinking. This is not to overlook valiant UN efforts at mediation and peacekeeping.

With a regular budget of US\$ 3,121 billion and a peacekeeping budget of US\$ 6,38 billion, United Nations financial resources pale in comparison with those of even minor defense departments. By the end of 2021, uniformed UN personnel, including experts, police, staff officers and troops barely exceeded 75,000. Even if efforts undertaken through UN Security Council mandates should not be undervalued, as they often contribute to curtail or circumscribe conflict, the overall record at promoting peace is not a reassuring one. There is no single explanation for this, but a few thoughts come to mind. Conflicts would not spin out of control in the absence of weapons, more often than not obtained illicitly. Arms embargoes, however, are not easily enforceable, with Libya as a telling example. Particularly problematic are military interventions that, notwithstanding their stated intention to promote improved governance, have rendered life even more precarious for civilians, particularly in the Muslim world. How wise have the veto wielding powers at the Security Council been in this respect?

Nor is the record more encouraging in the realm of disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament (CD) has been in a prolonged state of paralysis since the negotiations of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996. No other agreement has been produced and not even a Program of Work has been adopted since. Some attribute this dysfunctionality to the rigorous application of the consensus rule. The only

---

<sup>14</sup> UNGA Resolution A/RES/76/175

multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements concluded in recent times have been a product of General Assembly negotiations, in particular the 2017 treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was adopted on the understanding that both vertical and horizontal non-proliferation would proceed in tandem, but this has not prevented nuclear weapon States from increasing their stockpiles and perfecting their weapons systems. Still, at the very least, the CD and the Security Council perform vital roles as venues for exchanges that would otherwise find no channel for communication.

Frustration with the UN's inability to discharge itself more convincingly of its mandate in the area of peace and security has been mounting for several years. Under former Secretary-General Kofi Annan a special panel was created to identify challenges and propose ideas. The Peace Building Commission (PBC) is a direct product of this exercise. Its aim has been to close the gap between situations that come under the scrutiny of the Security Council, as threats to international peace and security, and the attention required by cases of mounting tension that do not yet fulfill that requirement. Although the PBC represents a relatively new experiment, it has demonstrated a certain effectiveness in post-conflict peace-building as well as in prevention. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has placed emphasis on the importance of prevention since he took office. As he began his first term in office, he spoke in favor of a rebalanced approach towards sustaining peace and called for a "surge in diplomacy". In spite of these efforts, the system has yet to demonstrate a clear ability to anticipate crises and engage in effective preventive diplomacy.

Some observers sustain that multilateralism in the field of peace and security has been undergoing a severe crisis since the September 11 terrorist attacks. After a period of universal manifestations of solidarity towards the United States, serious divisions emerged in the Security Council over the justifications for military intervention in a country that did not have any direct responsibility for those attacks. As the Council withheld authorization for the military invasion of Iraq, the collective security framework of the UN Charter suffered a serious blow. As Kofi Annan observes in his memoirs<sup>15</sup>, however, far worse would have been a rubber stamp for a war fought on false premises. As he states, "from such a misjudgment the road back to credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the world would have been far harder". Almost two decades later, will the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly by more than a two thirds majority condemning "Aggression against Ukraine" become an opportunity to rebuild consensus on the inadmissibility of the unilateral use of force?

Many are skeptical and see a risk that war in Ukraine could accelerate a decline in the organization's role. In a book published in 2014 entitled "World Order", former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote that "a reconstruction of the international system is the ultimate challenge to statesmanship in our time"<sup>16</sup>. The penalty for failing, he contended, was not necessarily a major war but an evolution into spheres of influence identified with specific domestic structures and forms of governance. His forecast does not differ significantly from the warnings of a "great fracture" by Secretary-General Guterres. In order to continue to cooperate internationally in accordance with a universally accepted body of international law, some straightforward advice was provided by Josep Borell of the

---

<sup>15</sup> ANNAN, K. (2012). *Interventions – A life in war and peace*. New York: The Penguin Press.

<sup>16</sup> KISSINGER, Henry. *World Order*. New York: Penguin Press, 2014.

European Union in a recent article entitled “How to revive Multilateralism in a Multipolar World”<sup>17</sup>. The message is simple: “consolidate what works, reform what no longer works well and extend the scope of multilateralism to new areas”.

## Systemic Renewal

A platform for renewal and adaptation seems necessary if we are to preserve the essential understandings embodied by the UN Charter and prepare multilateralism for a new era. To the systemic failures in the promotion of peace and security must be added the new environmental, public health and other challenges in new technological areas, such as artificial intelligence. As a first consideration, there should be no backsliding with respect to commitments under Chapter VII, that outlaw the use of force - except in self-defense or as authorized by the Security Council. The anarchical consequences of the unilateral use of force in a multipolar world have become quite obvious. The West has been accused by Russia of resorting to the phrase “rules based international order” as a way to dilute the status of international law and its clear-cut prescriptions. In this regard, however, the General Assembly resolution on Ukraine may represent a welcome reaffirmation, with its reference to the “paramount importance of the Charter of the United Nations”<sup>18</sup> and extensive quotes from its fundamental provisions.

Although Russia voted against this resolution and China abstained, the February 4 joint statement adopted in Beijing upholds the central coordinating role of the United Nations in international affairs, defends the world order based on international law, including the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, advances multipolarity and speaks of the democratization of international relations. Surely, at least at declaratory level, there would seem to be scope for preserving central achievements of the current system. Even if the editor in chief of the “Russia in Global Affairs” magazine has written that “the page of cooperation with the West has been turned” and “the new Cold War will not end quickly”<sup>19</sup>, it would be a mistake to conclude that this automatically translates into rejection of international law and the role of the UN. Herein lies perhaps an open door for the UN to affirm itself with renewed authority. For the majority of member States, who have been respectful of international law, there is no reason to abdicate from defending the system.

Preservation of essential tenets does not imply shying away from improvements in governance structures or conceptual refinement. The task, as aptly summarized by a former president of the ICJ, Mohamed Bedjaoui<sup>20</sup>, is to subject the use of force to rigorous discipline, eliminate the practices that lead it astray, and endow such recourse with a legitimacy that can only be provided by a world order founded on justice. Even before Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic had already produced a high degree of introspection on the part of the international community and the UN Secretariat. At the onset of 76<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> BORELL, Josep. How to revive multilateralism in a multipolar world. March, 2021. Available online: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/how-revive-multilateralism-multipolar-world\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/how-revive-multilateralism-multipolar-world_en)

<sup>18</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1

<sup>19</sup> LUKYANOV, A. Fyodor. “The End of an Era: The Page of Cooperation with the West Has Been ‘Turned’ “ Opinion. In: Russia in Global Affairs. Available online: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/the-end-of-an-era/>

<sup>20</sup> BEDJAOUI, M. The New World order and the security council: Testing the legality of its acts. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publisher. 1993.

General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General presented a document entitled “Our Common Agenda”<sup>21</sup> with a series of concrete suggestions. He begins by declaring that we are at an inflection point in History and elevates the challenge posed by the pandemic to the level of the biggest shared test since the Second World War. The choice before the membership is described as “breakdown or breakthrough”.

A Summit of the Future is proposed, to coincide with the General Assembly’s high-level week in September 2023, with a view to forming a new global consensus on what our future should look like and advance ideas for governance arrangements in areas of concern. Among those ideas is the repurposing of the Trusteeship Council to turn it into a multi-stakeholder body and serve as a forum to act on behalf of succeeding generations, as well as organizing biennial summits among the members of the G20, the heads of International Financial Institutions and ECOSOC. Conspicuously absent from his agenda are suggestions on how to deal with the frequent impasses in the Security Council. The impotence of the Council in the face of breaches of the Charter by veto-wielding States has not only revived interest in the possibilities offered by the “Uniting for Peace” mechanism, to transfer deliberations on the maintenance of international peace and security to the General Assembly, but also renewed discussions on the veto itself.

A group of countries submitted a draft resolution on a standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council. The proposal, which came to be adopted by consensus, reflects widespread dissatisfaction with the system’s decision-making process in the vital area of promoting peace, which provides a shield to five veto-wielding nations that can be misused to advance individual agendas rather than collective security. The question of the veto is only one of the aspects under discussion in the context of Security Council reform, which continues to face obstruction and delays in a negotiating group that has found it impossible to promote convergence on a blueprint – even if there is no disagreement as to the urgent need for an increase the organ’s membership and improvements in its working methods. As long ago as the 1990’s, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan used to declare that no reform of the United Nations would be complete without Security Council reform. Will the sense that multilateralism is facing a breakdown, as we experience a historic “inflection”, finally drive forward the process?

Governance and decision-making also require examination in other areas. The consensus rule is coming under criticism in different bodies, including the Conference on Disarmament as already mentioned, as well as at the WTO - whose dispute settlement mechanism is being stymied through failure in appointing judges to its Appellate Body. The environmental area calls for special attention, as pointed out in a recent article in the magazine *Foreign Affairs*, under the title “The International Order isn’t Ready for the Climate Crisis”<sup>22</sup>. In supporting a Global Pact for the Environment, under UN discussion since 2018, the author argues that there are hundreds of overlapping and conflicting multilateral treaties to promote cooperation on specific issues, such as endangered species or hazardous waste, without an overarching legal framework. It is suggested that a nonbinding political declaration, along the lines of the

---

<sup>21</sup> GUTERRES, António. *Our Common Agenda*. Report of the UN Secretary General. New York. September 2021. Available online: <https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/#download> .

<sup>22</sup> PATRICK, M. Stewart. “ The International Order Isn’t Ready for the Climate Crisis. In *Foreign Affairs*. November/December 2021 Edition.

1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, lay the groundwork for a more formal comprehensive approach in the future.

The nexus between economic, social and environmental issues has already given rise to a High-Level Political Forum, that meets to oversee implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic would perhaps justify including public health in a revitalized Economic, Social, Environmental and Public Health Council to replace the ailing ECOSOC. Even a strengthened WHO will remain ill-suited to cope with the manifold spinoffs of a public health phenomenon on the scale such as we have been experiencing. When it assumed dramatic proportions in 2020, many authoritative voices challenged the Security Council to consider measures capable of curtailing the pandemic's lethal advance. Although slow to respond, the Council did meet and reacted within the scope of its mandate, with a focus on conflict areas. In the past, the AIDS pandemic was also brought to the attention of the Council. Similarly, there is some support for introducing environmental concerns into the Security Council's agenda.

Is it reasonable, however, to expect the tools at the disposal of the Security Council to provide comprehensive answers to the challenges raised by climate change or health crises? Neither peacekeeping missions, nor sanctions or military interventions will provide solutions in this regard. Furthermore, the Council's limited membership and decision-making procedures, which admit veto rights by five permanent members, would highly politicize the consideration of topics that are of vital importance to the international community as a whole, and should be treated in inclusive and democratic assemblies. This is not to reduce the priority attention required by these matters. This set of considerations brings to mind the need to perhaps distinguish between threats to peace, which give rise to multilateral treatment within a collective security framework, and threats to the planet and human survival - including in regions that are otherwise peaceful - that may be said to involve a "collective responsibility".

At a time of crisis and uncertainty, the UN Secretary-General has called for combining the best of our achievements with the most creative look at the future in order to promote a breakthrough for human beings and the planet. Although he does not go as far as imagining a revitalized Charter, perhaps the moment has come to explore the avenue foreseen by Article 109. This could be one of the outcomes for the Summit of the Future. The date and place of a General Conference of the Members of the United Nations for the purpose of reviewing the Charter could be fixed by a two-thirds majority of the members of the General Assembly and by a vote in the Security Council that is not subject to veto. Until recently it was felt that such a move ran the risk of weakening provisions on the use of force and diluting the relevance of multilateralism. In the face of a combination of rising tension among the major military powers, an unprecedented geopolitical transition as well as global existential threats posed by climate change and disease, systemic renewal may require such a display of ambition.

### **Peace and Development in the Context of COVID-19 and Ukraine**

The Washington consensus regarding policy prescriptions for economic development focused primarily on market forces at the expense of functions of the State in key areas such as health and education. That approach has been upended by a combination of factors, including concerns with environmental sustainability and the social dimension of development. The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable

Development can be considered a new consensus that ascribes equal importance to economic, environmental and social variables in shaping effective policy options. Since its adoption in 2015, however, implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) has been disappointing and subject to setbacks. The world was already off-track in realizing ambitions and fulfilling commitments before the COVID-19 health emergency magnified pre-existing problems. The war in Ukraine has created additional difficulties with its impact on food security, energy supplies and trade. Several countries that were on a positive path to economic recovery will be facing downturns.

A World Bank report issued at the beginning of the year had<sup>23</sup> identified certain encouraging signs. Output had rebounded in a number of countries, after sharp declines in 2020, and trade was expanding, as higher commodity prices benefitted many exporters from the developing world. At the same time, growing inequality across and within countries was translating into negative social trends, with women, unskilled and informal workers hit hardest. Sustainable Goal number 10 broke new ground in calling for a reduction in inequality domestically and among nations. Instead of advances, however, an alarming process of concentration of wealth in the hands of a very small minority has dramatically increased the distance between a minute elite of super rich and a growing segment of very poor. A recent Oxfam study entitled “Inequality kills”<sup>24</sup> illustrates with graphic emphasis this situation. The wealth of the ten richest men has doubled, while the incomes of 99% are worse off because of COVID-19. The gap between rich and poor nations is now expected to rise for the first time in a generation.

As we are all aware, wealth does not guarantee peace. The most destructive wars, historically, have been waged by affluent aggressors. Still, both the Security Council and the Peace Building Commission have recognized the interdependence between security and development, while admitting that their relationship is “complex, multifaceted and case specific”. There is widespread recognition that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and that failed state institutions associated with extreme poverty or economic mismanagement provide fertile ground for instability. Although regions with relatively high standards of living, such as the Balkans, have failed to avoid the ravages of war, it appears that a potential trigger for conflict is a pattern of disrespect for the fundamental rights of minorities and disadvantaged segments of society. As wealth accumulates in the hands of the few at an unprecedented pace and poverty grows, it is not only the moral, political and environmental implications of profound inequality that warrant attention, but the security issues it raises as well.

Not surprisingly UN Secretary-General Guterres has included inequality as one of the contemporary “four horsemen of the apocalypse”. As pointed out by Schwab and Malleret<sup>25</sup>, the perception of the COVID-19 as a “great leveler” is misleading. In reality the pandemic has been a “great unequalizer” that compounded disparities in income, wealth and opportunity. The degree of risk to which different social classes are exposed has been illustrated in dramatic ways, including in developed countries such as the United States, where the virus took a disproportionate toll on African Americans and the homeless. The fact that poverty can reach tipping points leading to disruptive social action is one that bears heeding. This is one of the reasons why the pandemic has made governments important again. When

---

<sup>23</sup> WORLD BANK. World Development Report 2022: Finance for an equitable recovery. Available online: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2022#downloads>

<sup>24</sup> OXFAM. Inequality kills. Available: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-kills>

<sup>25</sup> SCHWAB, Klaus and MALLERET: COVID-19: The Great Reset. Agentur Schweiz (July 9, 2020)

good or unsatisfactory government can translate into life or death, it matters greatly if a country has a sound health service and competent bureaucrats, as well as financial means, conclude Schwab and Malleret.

Even before the Russian military invasion of Ukraine prompted many to speak of the end of an era, Henry Kissinger wrote about how the pandemic could alter the world order, in an article dated April 2020<sup>26</sup>. His verdict was that sustaining public trust in governments is crucial not only to domestic social solidarity, but also to the relation of societies with each other, and to international peace and stability. Two years later, it is not only the military, political and humanitarian consequences of the Ukraine crisis that raise serious concern, but a series of cascading effects deriving therefrom. As pointed out by the chief economist at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)<sup>27</sup> food prices were already high owing to the effects of the pandemic, but now a war involving two major agricultural exporters could drive the global food system into a disaster zone. At least 50 countries depend on Russia and Ukraine for 30% or more of their wheat, with many developing countries as the most reliant. The FAO foresees the possibility that a prolonged conflict could cause the number of chronically hungry people to grow significantly.

Similarly, the reliance of many in Europe and elsewhere on imports of oil and gas from Russia further highlights the interlinkages between war and economics, or peace and development. As stringent sanctions are imposed on Russia by several of its most important trading partners, it is not clear whether these measures will pressure Moscow to alter its military plans, or hurt civilians more than those responsible for current policies - while negatively affecting the world economy at large. As a historian from Cornell University points out, the speed, the sweep and the size of the sanctions package targeting the Russian economy are extraordinary<sup>28</sup>. Some have spoken of the “weaponization of finance”. In addition to the governmental sanctions there has also been a significant private sector reaction. On March 15, a group of countries including all G7 members circulated a joint statement at the WTO which invokes essential security interests as justification for considering the suspension of most-favored nation treatment to products and services of the Russian Federation. The impact on international trade will be considerable.

Sanctions are a form of coercion foreseen in the UN Charter as a tool to pressure governments into a change in bellicose behavior through non-military means. They range from arms embargoes to full-fledged economic measures. There is no consensus, however, as to their effectiveness. The above-mentioned academic study suggests that, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sanctions may have worked in about one third of situations. Judging from several of the speeches at the General Assembly during the Special Session on Ukraine, there was some discomfort among the organization’s membership towards coercive measures taken outside the purview of Chapter VII and the required approval of the Security Council. With few exceptions, most developing countries only contemplate resorting to sanctions within the UN framework. The veto, however, remains an unsurmountable obstacle to target a permanent member, or one of its close allies, with coercion. If we are to strengthen multilateralism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the manifold problems associated with sanctions may be an unavoidable topic.

---

<sup>26</sup> KISSINGER, H. “ The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order” in Wall Street Journal. Opinion. April 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Declaration by FAO Chief economist Maximo Torero. Available online: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k11/k11icphpbs>

<sup>28</sup> MULDER, Nicholas. The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War. Yale University Press, January 2022

Beyond the painful cost in innocent lives, the destruction of infra-structure and other material loss provoked by armed conflict, it cannot be said that the use of force, as carried out in the past two decades, has achieved any worthy security objectives or enhanced prospects for peace. The last instance in which such an outcome was produced may have been, in fact, the first Gulf war of 1990. Already, it can be said that Ukraine after this war will be a devastated country. Interventions, whether undertaken within or outside the UN framework, have tended to generate a host of unintended consequences that warrant a pause for reflection. A study by Brown University<sup>29</sup> revealed that twenty years of post-9/11 wars have cost the US an estimated US\$ 8 trillion and killed more than 900,000 people. Tax payers paid nearly US\$ 2 trillion in war-related costs on the Iraq war alone. If one adds to these figures the military budgets outlined above, it is clear that a minimal fraction of such amounts would go a long way towards alleviating poverty, protecting the environment and improving public health and education.

### **Education and Intergenerational dialogue**

Previously existing inequalities around the world have been exacerbated by school closures and exclusion from quality education due to the pandemic. Lack of contact with a school community has given rise to stress, anxiety and depression. Girls face unique barriers, as they are often expected to take on childcare responsibilities and household chores. Early marriage among out of school girls further reduces the chances they will continue their education. Afghanistan under Taliban rule and the destruction of school facilities in Ukraine are some recent developments that raise serious concerns in this area. A statement issued by UNESCO<sup>30</sup> on Ukraine calls for restraint from attacks on, or harm to, children, teachers, education personnel or schools. All children living in countries affected by conflict and insecurity face daunting challenges. Furthermore, without school to engage them, children are at an increased risk of being recruited by armed groups, a phenomenon that has been particularly troubling in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nobel peace prize laureate Denis Mukwege underlines the high price paid by women and children in the conflict in the DRC. In a letter addressed to our group, he appeals for support to civil society efforts towards respect for the rule of law, peace and sustainable development in his war-torn country

As part of their responses to the public health crisis, governments cannot afford to overlook the long-term damage from declining literacy and education levels. Conversely, by continuing to support education during public health emergencies, governments stand to strengthen their immediate responses and recoveries. Without financial and political support, however, the sustainability of education will remain at risk, and the promotion of values such as respect for human rights, the rule of law and diversity becomes more difficult. According to UN figures, low and middle-income countries will need US\$ 150 billion to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education. In the absence of such resources, more than half of all children globally will not be able to read or be proficient in mathematics. A Summit on Transforming Education is to be held by the end of 2022. This is a welcome initiative, given the fact that

---

<sup>29</sup>Cost of War Project 2021. Brown University. Available at: <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/figures/2021/WarDeathToll>

<sup>30</sup> UNESCO's statement on the recent developments in Ukraine available online: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unescos-statement-recent-developments-ukraine#:~:text=UNESCO%20is%20deeply%20concerned%20about,Charter%20of%20the%20United%20Nations.>

COVID-19 has already brought about the largest disruption of education systems in history, and that for young women, in particular, this interruption may become permanent.

Beyond the constraints posed by the pandemic, there is scope for looking at education as a passport for more just, peaceful and prosperous societies. Opportunities for contact between youth and public personalities committed to peace and sustainable development can provide incentives for the young to avoid the mistakes of the past and acquire the motivation to improve governance for all. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity<sup>31</sup>, affirms that respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation are among the best guarantees of international peace and security. A related topic, which has assumed alarming urgency is now referred to by the term “infodemic”. This is a man-made virus that can assume several variants, from disregard for scientific or evidence-based facts to the outright dissemination of falsehood. This insidious and malignant practice affects our ability to engage in discussions on the basis of objective information and can be highly detrimental to cooperation around common objectives at the domestic or international level.

In order to fight against this wave of disinformation, it has become necessary to engage with all sectors of society and to work with the media, in order to promote the dissemination of accurate reporting, as called for by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This must obviously be carried out while safeguarding freedom of expression. According to the International Press Institute, journalists are coming under increasing attack around the world, including in conflict zones. In his 2011 book “Disordered World”, Franco-Lebanese author Amin Maalouf suggested that the only battles truly worth fighting for in the centuries ahead are scientific and ethical ones<sup>32</sup>. The responsibility of the present generations towards the well-being of future generations has been the subject of a specific declaration, adopted in 1997 by the UNESCO General Conference<sup>33</sup>, which deserves to be built upon. It stresses that full respect for human rights and ideals of democracy constitute an essential basis for the protection of the needs and interests of future generations, and recognizes that the task of looking after their needs and interests, particularly through education, is fundamental to our ethical mission as an international community.

The largest generation of young people in history, at 1,8 billion people, is both a demographic challenge and opportunity. Close to 90% of these youngsters live in developing countries and nearly 270 million, within the 15 to 27 age group, are currently neither studying or employed. Population in Africa is projected to see the largest relative increase over the coming years and could reach 2,5 billion by mid-century, representing an increase in share of global population from 17% in 2020 to 26% in 2050. If, as announced in “Our Common Agenda”, a Special Envoy for Future Generations is to be appointed at the UN, it is clear that Africa will require special focus. *Leaders for Peace* is engaging with the young from different parts of the world, in order to support the emergence of a new generation committed to dialogue and cooperation and to enlist them as opponents of violence and conflict. To this effect, the *Itinerant Peace School* organizes courses on geopolitics, mediation, citizenship and human rights, as well as visits to international organizations and meetings with leaders in conciliation and diplomacy.

---

<sup>31</sup> UNESCO. Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. 2001

<sup>32</sup> MAALOUF, Amin. *Disordered World: Setting a New Course for the Twenty-first Century*. Bloomsbury USA; Translation edition (October 4, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> UNESCO. Declaration on the Responsibility of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations. 1997

Young men and women can also join forces in associating gender equality objectives with peace activism. In Africa, where by mid-century half the continent's population will be under the age of 25, women are becoming more directly involved in politics and international relations. Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in parliament worldwide, while several African countries include more than 40% female participation in their legislative bodies, including South Africa, Senegal, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique. African women have been assuming positions of command in the multilateral sphere, including at the WTO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The role played by gender equality in helping societies to realize their full potential is not in dispute. And yet, no country has fully achieved the objectives set out in the Beijing Declaration more than a quarter of a century ago. On the contrary, the persistence of discriminatory practices and the ongoing feminization of poverty warrant a renewed commitment to agreed objectives.

The latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)<sup>34</sup> leaves no room for complacency. Many of the impacts of global warming are now being considered irreversible, with over 40% of the world's population in a highly vulnerable position. The lead author of the report, Dr Helen Adams, makes clear that, although the outlook is worrisome, "the future depends on us, not the climate". A window of time is still available for the very worst to be avoided. The world's greatest polluters have a larger portion of responsibility in this respect. But leadership can be exercised by men and women of all nationalities and age groups, as Greta Thunberg has demonstrated. While short-term calculations continue to dominate policy-making, it has become unavoidable to consider the longer-term implications of decisions in a variety of areas, including industrial and rural development, energy production, urbanization, to name a few. Specific proposals to account for the interests of future generations will require special emphasis on environmental affairs.

UN Secretary-General Guterres has suggested that a repurposed Trusteeship Council be given the task of helping the multilateral system to develop its long-term thinking and foresight. Intergenerational dialogue is thus entering the international agenda as a template for considering the interests of younger and future generations. This dialogue need not start from scratch, as we already have the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the multilateral trading system embodied at the WTO, as well as several other instruments worth preserving. At the same time, we should heed the messages coming from the world of culture and art. Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado reminds us that "we are on edge of the end of our species (...) the planet is not in danger, the planet after us will regenerate very very fast"<sup>35</sup>. Artist Ibrahim Mahama from Ghana, in turn, has denounced our times as the "age of waste" illustrating through his installations the terrifying dimension of our "throwaway", unsustainable societies<sup>36</sup>.

---

<sup>34</sup> IPCC Report 2022. Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability available online: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

<sup>35</sup> SPERO, Josh. "Photographer Sebastião Salgado on why the Amazon is under threat" in Financial Times. October 2021. Available online: <https://www.ft.com/content/316b8bb8-d5b8-4e9d-ad9a-05231c450053>

<sup>36</sup>Waste Age is an exhibition by Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama on the eve of COP 26 at the Design Museum in London.

## **Conclusion – A New humanism for a New Multilateralism**

Although the roots of the term “humanism” are to be found in the Italian Renaissance, and more remotely in ancient Athens, a humanism for the 21st century will only succeed in achieving universal outreach, if it draws inspiration and derives wisdom from all cultural traditions, east, south, west, north. The impulse required to unite us in the search for improved international cooperation must also involve a resistance against drifts towards xenophobia, discrimination, massacres and reprisals – in the words of Maalouf, “the erosion of all that gives human civilization its moral dignity”<sup>37</sup>. Human civilization understood as both the collective trajectory of humankind towards increasingly rational forms of social organization, and the infinite displays of diversity through languages, crafts or knowledge. And as Pope Francis reminds us, human dignity is the same for all human beings: “when I trample on the dignity of another, I am trampling on my own”. In the same spirit, those who support democratic values at the domestic level, a worthy cause in and of itself, should embrace a parallel commitment towards the democratization of decision processes at the international level. And international democracy can only be achieved through multilateralism.

A new humanism for a new multilateralism may seem like a distant utopia in 2022. And yet, it is hard to imagine a majority of the world population foregoing coordinated efforts to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy or environmental degradation in order to take up weapons to fight avoidable wars. If coalitions for sustainable development and peace are to make a difference, however, more inclusive mechanisms will need to emerge for everyone’s voice to be heard. In this regard, a networked multilateralism, as proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General, can increase opportunities for wider consultation to underrepresented groups. But such efforts should not be carried out at the expense of necessary changes at the intergovernmental level. In this context, a list should start with updating the composition of the Security Council and its working methods. But it should also include other aspects of multilateral governance that reflect the geopolitics of another age. The process for the selection of the heads of International Financial Institutions comes to mind.

The “end of The end of history” was decreed by Francis Fukuyama himself, in an article recently published by the Financial Times. His argument is that the post-Cold War era has reached a turning point with the war in Ukraine, as conditions no longer seem to exist for a Western-led liberal world order to prevail as it did during the decades following the fall of the Berlin Wall. In truth, the limitations of a globalization centered on the free flow of goods, services and investments, were apparent before Ukraine. The expected economic growth from trade liberalization and financial deregulation did not translate into equal benefits to all parts of the world. There were winners and losers. Despite overall positive effects and opportunities for wealth creation, it became apparent that corrections had to be made - as globalization on neo-liberal terms demonstrated its inability to fulfil economic, social or environmental objectives considered vital to societies. This was made more starkly visible after the 2008 financial crisis and the pandemic. Still, the risk of an increasingly fragmented world in trade, technology and finance has perhaps become greater after Ukraine.

---

<sup>37</sup> MAALOUF, Amin. *Disordered World: Setting a New Course for the Twenty-first Century*. Bloomsbury USA; Translation edition (October 4, 2011).

Those who speak of the end of an era today also describe it from the prism of a growing dichotomy between democratic and authoritarian governments, with the latter having become more assertive and posing a threat to the liberal order. But is this something entirely new? Democracy has assumed a variety of manifestations, historically and geographically, and cannot be said to have commanded universal reach at any time since the end of World War II. Furthermore, several democracies today struggle with anti-democratic pressures from within, while in many societies ruled by authoritarian regimes the aspiration for greater pluralism and political freedom has not disappeared. Lastly, the adherence to democratic values at the domestic level has not prevented powerful democracies from seeking to assert their international influence through non-democratic means. Adherence to democratic values at home and at the international level becomes more problematic in a fractured world between two opposing hegemonic agendas, as countries face a binary choice that most would prefer to avoid.

Singapore diplomat and academic Kishore Mahbubani has been a spokesman for independent thinking on international relations, from a perspective that can neither be considered in favor or against any world power, and is anchored in a pragmatism for which his country has become well known. As a proclaimed friend of both the US and China, he has called for a more civilized dialogue among all countries, in a world in which every nation abides by the same rules<sup>38</sup>. US President Joe Biden stated before the 76<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly that “we are not seeking a new Cold War or a world divided into rigid blocs”<sup>39</sup>. In the face of economic challenges, compounded by public health, climate emergencies and the fallout from war in Eastern Europe, the vast majority of the international community feels no nostalgia for the tensions associated with a bipolar past. Whether China-US relations evolve in a cooperative or adversarial trajectory, they will represent the central bilateral relationship in world affairs for the foreseeable future. The rest of the world has a stake in ensuring that cooperation prevails.

Notwithstanding a history of failures and inaction, international cooperation has persisted throughout most of the past century, since the creation of the League of Nations. Today, the United Nations system, and the world organizations that deal with finance and trade, still represent the most advanced stage of international cooperation reached by humanity. As Professor Guillaume Devin from Sciences Po suggests “international cooperation is neither peace nor coexistence. It is both less than peace and more than coexistence”<sup>40</sup>. As he acknowledges with realism, it produces common vision without suppressing differences, it pacifies without eradicating violence from our lives. But our conclusion is that a civilized world has become unthinkable without it. Although expressions of skepticism have become common, manifestations from a variety of quarters of the world have not given up on the emergence of a new global ethics or humanism. Leaders for Peace align themselves with those who are ready to join forces to take international cooperation to the next stage and make multilateralism great again.

As current impasses in the Security Council prevent multilateralism from performing its role in accordance with the UN Charter, the international community faces a dilemma between countenancing breakdown, or accepting the challenge of renewal. We are convinced that the only possible way forward

---

<sup>38</sup> MAHBUBANI, Kishore. This Contest Against China Shows How Insecure America is in: Conversation with Andrew Keen on the Keen on Podcast. July, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> BIDEN, Joseph. Remarks by President Biden Before the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. New York. September 2021. Available online: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-the-76th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/>

<sup>40</sup> DEVIN, Guillaume. Un seul monde: L'évolution de la coopération internationale. CNRS ÉDITIONS, Paris, 2013.

is to seek a new convergence around shared objectives, drawing inspiration from the consecutive waves of successful diplomacy that produced the legal foundation on which international cooperation has evolved. To this effect, it is essential to build peace in the minds of men and women, so that each of us can become its natural Ambassador – in line with the UNESCO motto. It is indeed through education, science, and culture that a new awareness of our common destiny can preserve the achievements of the past and promote the reforms required by our times.

There will be no future to speak of unless we fully recognize the new realities of our planetary interconnectedness. In upholding the imperative to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we can no longer assume that humans will be able to survive on Earth, in the absence of concerted international efforts at confronting global warming and environmental decay. This is perhaps the most striking difference between the multilateralism that is required today and that of 1945. The promotion of a planetary humanism, capable of uniting all forces committed to safeguarding human civilization on planet Earth, is the necessary pathway for the enactment of a new multilateral compact. *Leaders for Peace* stand ready to embrace this cause through pedagogic initiatives, such as the *Itinerant Peace School*.

\*\*\*\*

## REFERENCES

- ANNAN, K. (2012). *Interventions – A life in war and peace*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- BEDJAOUI, M. (1993). *The New World order and the security council: Testing the legality of its acts* (p. 6). Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publisher.
- BRZEZINSKI, ZBIGNIEW. *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. 1998.
- BIDEN, Joseph. Remarks by President Biden Before the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. New York. September 2021. Available online: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-the-76th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/>
- BORELL, Josep. How to revive multilateralism in a multipolar world. March, 2021. Available online: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/how-revive-multilateralism-multipolar-world\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/how-revive-multilateralism-multipolar-world_en)
- DEVIN, Guillaume. *Un seul monde: L'évolution de la coopération internationale*. CNRS ÉDITIONS, Paris, 2013.
- Global Diplomacy Index 2019. Lowy Institute at [globaldiplomacyindex.lowyinstitute.org/](http://globaldiplomacyindex.lowyinstitute.org/)
- GUTERRES, António. Message to the Paris Peace Forum. November 2018. Available. Disponível em: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-11-11/address-paris-peace-forum>.
- GUTERRES, António. *Our Common Agenda*. Report of the UN Secretary General. New York. September 2021. Available online: <https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/#download> .
- GUTERRES, António. Remarks to the General Assembly on the Secretary-General's priorities for 2020. New York. January 2020. Available online: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-01-22/remarks-general-assembly-priorities-for-2020>
- KISSINGER, Henry. *World Order*. New York: Penguin Press, 2014.
- MAALOUF, Amin. *Disordered World: Setting a New Course for the Twenty-first Century*. Bloomsbury USA; Translation edition (October 4, 2011).
- MAHBUBANI, Kishore. *This Contest Against China Shows How Insecure America is in: Conversation with Andrew Keen on the Keen on Podcast*. July, 2021.
- MORIN, Edgar. *Changeons de voie: Les leçons du coronavirus*. Éditions Flammarion, 2021.
- MULDER, Nicholas. *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War*. Yale University Press, January 2022.
- PATRIOTA, A. d. A. "The United Nations at 75: Multilateralism at a Crossroads". In *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*. Fall Edition 2020.

PATRICK, M. Stewart. “ The International Order Isn’t Ready for the Climate Crisis. In Foreign Affairs. November/December 2021 Edition.

SCHWAB, Klaus and MALLERET: COVID-19: The Great Reset. Agentur Schweiz (July 9, 2020)

SPERO, Josh. “Photographer Sebastião Salgado on why the Amazon is under threat” in Financial Times. October 2021. Available online: <https://www.ft.com/content/316b8bb8-d5b8-4e9d-ad9a-05231c450053>

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. SIPRI Yearbook Summary 2021. SIPRI. Available at [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/sipri\\_yb21\\_summary\\_en\\_v2\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/sipri_yb21_summary_en_v2_0.pdf)

TOOZE, Adam. Shutdown: How Covid Shook the World's Economy. Viking (September 7, 2021).

UNESCO. Declaration on the Responsibility of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations. 1997

UNESCO. Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. 2001.

XI, Jinping. Message to The Davos Agenda. Davos. Janeiro 2022. Available online: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/01/address-chinese-president-xi-jinping-2022-world-economic-forum-virtual-session/>

WALTZ, Kenneth. Theory of International Politics. Mc Graw-Hill. 1979.