



Leaders pour la paix

ANNUAL REPORT

“LEADERS FOR PEACE”

By Ambassador :

Pierre Vimont

THE BOARD

LEADERS FOR PEACE

Mr Jean-Pierre RAFFARIN, President of *Leaders for Peace*, Former Prime minister-France

Mr Ki-Moon BAN, President of Ban Ki-Moon Foundation for a Better Future, former Secretary-General of The United Nations – Republic of Korea

Mr Enrique BARON-CRESPO, Chancellor of the United Nations University for Peace, former President of the European Parliament, Former Minister of Transport, Tourism and Communications, Former President of the Party of European Socialists of the European Parliament – Spain

Ms Assia BEN SALAH, Itinerant Ambassador of His Majesty King Mohammed VI – Morocco

Mr Antony BLINKEN, Foreign Policy Advisor to Mr. Joe Biden for the 2020 US presidential election, former US Deputy Secretary of State and former Deputy Advisor to the National Security Council under the chairmanship of Mr. Barack Obama, Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies – United States

Ms Irina BOKOVA, International Honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Former Director General of UNESCO, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Former Ambassador of Bulgaria to France – Bulgaria

Ms Ouided BOUCHAMAOU, Nobel Peace Prize 2015, Former President of the Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Crafts – Tunisia

Ms Rivka CARM, President of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev – Israel

Mr Jean CHAREST, Former Prime Minister of Quebec – Quebec

Ms Anna Maria CORAZZA BILDT, European Parliament Coordinator for Children's rights 2019. Member European Parliament – Sweden

Ms Justine COULIDIATI-KIELEM, Chairperson of the Action Group for the Promotion, Education and Training of the Woman and the Girl, President of the Network of Women Leaders Mediators of Burkina Faso, Founding Member of the UNESCO Chair in Women, Gender, Society and Sustainable Development, Former Regional Coordinator of the G5 Sahel Women's Platform – Burkina Faso

Ms Elisabeth DECREY, Founder of Geneva Call, Associate Fellow at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), Former President of the Parliament of the Republic and Canton of Geneva – Switzerland

Ms Vuslat DOĞAN SABANCI, Board Member of the Board of Doğan Group and Vice President of the Aydin Doğan Foundation, lifetime honorary member of the International Press Institute (IPI) – Turkey

Mr Moussa FAKI MAHAMAT, Chair of the African Union Commission, former Minister of Foreign affairs of Chad and former Prime Minister of Chad – Chad

Ms Donia KAOUACH, Executive Director of the *Leaders for Peace* Foundation, President of “*Tunisiennes Fières*”

Mr Kamal KHARAZI, President of Iran's Strategic Council for Foreign Relation, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Islamic Republic of Iran – The Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr Quan KONG, Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (C.C.P.P.C.), former Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to France – People's Republic of China

Mr Kabiné KOMARA, Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea Conakry, Former High Commissioner of the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River– Republic of Guinea Conakry

Mr Enrico LETTA, Former Prime Minister of Italy, Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) at Sciences Po Paris, partner of *Leaders for Peace* – Italy

Mr Eduardo MALONE, Co-President of Pathé, Conseil Diocèse – Argentina

Mr Peter MANDELSON, Former European Commissioner for Trade, Former First Secretary of State, Former Secretary of State for Business – United Kingdom

Mr Peter MEDGYESSY, Former Prime Minister of Hungary – Hungary

Mr Amre Mahmoud MOUSSA, Former minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Former Secretary-General of the Arab League – Egypt

Ms Yin MYO SU, Founder of the Inle Heritage Foundation – Burma

Ms. Ton Nu Thi NINH, President of the Ho Chi Minh City Peace and Development Foundation (HPDF), Vice-President of the Vietnam Committee for Peace, Former Ambassador of Vietnam to European Union, Former Vice President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly – Vietnam

Mr Chekib NOUIRA, Sponsor representative, President of the Orientation Committee of the Arab Institute of Entrepreneurs – Tunisia

Mr Alexandre ORLOV, Secretary General of the “Dialogue de Trianon”, former Ambassador of Russia to France – Russia

Mr Antonio PATRIOTA, Ambassador of Brazil to Egypt, former Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Brazil – Brazil

Mr Hans-Gert PÖTTERING, European Affairs Representative for the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, former President of the European Parliament, former President of the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation – Germany

Mr Romano PRODI, President of the Foundation for International Cooperation, former President of the Italian Council of Ministers and former President of the European Commission – Italy

Mr Cherif RAHMANI, Ambassador for Deserts and Arid Lands (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification), President of the World Deserts Foundation, former Minister of the Democratic and People's Republic of Algeria – Algeria

Ms Martha Isabel RUIZ CORZO, Director Grupo Ecologico, Wangari Maathai 2014 Price – Mexico

Mr Surakiart SATHIRATHAI, Former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, chairman of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council (APRC) – Thailand

Mr Kanwal SIBAL, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India, former Ambassador of India to France – India

Ms Maria VAN DER HOEVEN, Former Minister of Affairs of the Netherlands, former Executive Director of IEA, senior fellow at Clingendael Energy – Netherlands

Mr Pierre VIMONT, Rapporteur of the annual report of the Leaders for Peace Foundation, former French Ambassador to the United States, former Permanent Representative of France to the European Union, former Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service – France

Mr. Marius VIZER, President of the International Judo Federation – Austria

Mr Motohide YOSHIKAWA, Distinguished Professor at the International Christian University of Tokyo, Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations – Japan

Mr Tertius ZONGO, Former Prime Minister of Burkina Faso – Burkina Faso

Table of contents

“An Independent Laboratory for Multilateralism” by Jean-Pierre Raffarin.....	6
For a renewed multilateralism	8
Executive summary	9
A. Multilateralism today - put to the test by the virus-induced crisis.....	10
I. Doubts about multilateralism	11
a) Peace without the UN, slowly diminishing	
b) Challenges unable to find a response	12
c) A pandemic speeding up the loss of momentum	13
II. Multilateralism put to the test by geopolitics	14
a) The fragmentation of political globalisation	
b) The return of power politics	15
III. Multilateralism losing its fundamentals	16
a) Anticipation - the weakest link of multilateralism	
b) Methods to be refreshed	18
c) Adapting to new realities	
B. For a renewed multilateralism	20
I. Opportunity knocks?	
a) “Back to the future” or a change of paradigm?	
b) Current contradictions.....	21
c) The path to renew multilateralism	22
II. The conditions needed for an effective renewal	24
a) Leadership with a clear vision for a renewed multilateralism	
b) A realistic approach in line with the geopolitical realities	25
c) An ambitious agenda for the outcome of the health crisis	
d) Resolute action to overcome the weaknesses of a multilateral method	28
e) Dealing with the failures of crisis management	
f) The urgency of peace	
1. Recognising the importance of risk prevention.....	29
2. Renewing multilateral mediation	30
3. Promoting the regional dimension	31
4. Incorporating new realities	
Africa: the test for renewed multilateralism	33
I. African realities in the face of the health crisis	
a) African contradictions	
b) The aggravating factor of the pandemic	35
II. Multilateralism helping Africa	36
a) Changing the spirit of dialogue with Africa	
b) Addressing the urgency of the pandemic	38
c) Paving the way for solutions to basic problems	39
1. Giving multilateralism a true leadership role	40
2. The slow quest for an African model of governance	41
3. The long walk towards security	42
Leaders’ comments.....	43

An Independent Laboratory for Multilateralism

JEAN-PIERRE RAFFARIN
Former Prime Minister
President of Leaders for Peace

For the past two years, *Leaders for Peace*, has been working on numerous initiatives to put its leaders' experience to work for the benefit of peace.

A non-governmental organisation, *Leaders for Peace* is a thinktank that also provides a structure for operational initiatives.

In terms of ideas and proposals, we believe that to save multilateralism—now 75 years old—it must be overhauled. It could even be given a new name. “Omnilateralism” would perhaps be a more accurate term for a concept in which everyone can identify their own values and interests.

With this in mind, we are publishing our annual report by the Ambassador of France, Pierre Vimont, and discussed collectively by the organisation's members. An annual conference in New York, organised at the UN with António Guterres allows the integration of our thoughts with those of the international community. The report is then presented to the heads of state and government, and to the leaders of major international institutions.

At an operational level, we develop field initiatives such as the PeaceLab – meetings on specific subjects in small groups, which, based on a coordinated and creative dynamic, produce ideas and concrete solutions. This is action that can be adapted to any situation and has been deployed in Côte d'Ivoire, Tunisia, France and Vietnam. There are many other PeaceLabs in preparation. *Leaders for Peace* also runs sessions of the Roaming University for Peace during which leaders interact with young people. The initiative was launched in Abidjan and Hanoi. Young people—and in particular young women—are privileged partners of our action.

In addition, *Leaders for Peace* has organised the Spirit of Peace in Childcare prize, the first winner of which is the Genevan NGO, Graine de Paix (Seed of Peace).

We present our 2020 annual report.

Three convictions drive us forward through the grave situation that we are experiencing in the spring of 2020.

- The current threat is universal. Rich countries and poor, people from the North and the South, democratic and authoritarian regimes, any nation can be affected by the impact of internal crises and the resulting international tensions. During the current global pandemic, attempts to eradicate the virus have mainly been national efforts. Great dangers arise when a crisis triggers rivalries rather than solidarity. Let us cooperate to put an end to the tragic chain of crisis, nationalism and war. Experience has taught us that politics knows how to cause hatred, but is unable to stop it.
- The prospect of a new Cold War threatens multilateralism, with the WHO a particularly pertinent example. In the tug-of-war between the United States and China, independent nations want a future without the trading of blows between the two sides, yet multilateralism without the USA, or without China, would make no sense. Instead, we need a type of omnilateralism in which everyone can identify their own values and interests. Naturally, this

would apply for states and civil societies alike. Citizens can save global governance if they feel enfranchised by it, especially young people and women.

- The world tends to export all its miseries to Africa. Whether simultaneous or successive crises, Africans will face them all: Covid-19, hunger, unemployment and terrorism. The question posed by this report is a highly charged one: what if we turned two problems—the crisis of multilateralism and the African crisis—into an opportunity? Could Africa be the home of a multilateral revival, and the awakening of omnilateralism? The progress of the African Union allows such hope. There are many projects for Africa originating from within the continent, and we can encourage more to grow. Above all, we must mobilise the international community so that everyone shares the burden of solidarity. *Leaders for Peace* will do this by giving a voice to young Africans and providing a logical link between their ambition and our experience. As an “independent laboratory for multilateralism” *Leaders for Peace* hopes to bring multilateralism back as the core of independent international action.

In our 2019 report we observed that “peace does not simply fall from the sky”; that it requires work, and that we need schools of peace in the same way that there are schools of war. Effort is required. At all levels of leadership, peace must be given its rightful place. We cannot be satisfied with disengaged definitions of peace, such as “peace is a period between two wars”. As Philippe Moreau Defarges writes in *Une histoire mondiale de la Paix* (A world history of peace) (Odile Jacob), “war is a political delinquency.” Peace, on the other hand, is a political project, a policy for the planet by humanity, a meta policy.

For a renewed multilateralism

As with the previous two editions, this report aims to provide a **platform for discussion** for the annual meeting of the Leaders for Peace Forum.

Like last year, the report is divided in two sections: the first is devoted to a **discussion of the state of multilateralism** today and how it can make a more effective contribution to the search for peace; the second section focuses on a particular region of the world - this year, **Africa** - and considers various courses of action to bring more security and stability to this part of the world.

The report, like its predecessors, is not intended to be exhaustive. It simply provides an opportunity to take an uncompromising look at certain questions, linked to multilateralism today, offering answers that are as realistic as possible.

However, more so than previously, this year's report intends to **sound the alarm** on the relevance of the multilateral approach and on the urgency of fully restoring its effectiveness. The global **Covid-19** crisis, by its very magnitude and its unprecedented nature for our society, has generated a phenomenon of amazement which has led most countries to react with the attitude of *each man for himself*. The health crisis has acted in some respects to **further weaken** multilateral order, which was already in very bad shape. But at the same time, it has highlighted that we need multilateralism in order to emerge from the current crisis. In its own way, the pandemic reinforces the initial premise that international cooperation is essential, which can be stated in simple and clear terms: **unilateralism cannot be the answer to the challenges of our time**. Wherever we look, from the many parties confronting each other to the complexity of current crises, withdrawing into oneself and the fragmentation of international society lead to dead ends. In the absence of internationally accepted rules, anyone can see that the alternatives lead to fleeting results that leave problems unsolved. The virus crisis illustrates this with unprecedented acuteness.

Multilateralism needs a vote of confidence. That is the purpose of this report by reinvesting in the basic lessons which have shaped multilateral order. International diplomacy last century invented the language and tools of a system that has proven its worth. In the world that follows the current health crisis, we must **relearn and update the fundamentals of multilateralism** to rediscover the initial momentum.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Multilateralism is in a bad way and the Covid-19 crisis may weaken it further. Already faced with protracted conflicts that it is unable to stop and with the increasingly complex challenges of modern life, multilateral order is facing a pandemic that is shaking up all the paradigms of globalisation.

The health crisis may worsen all the underlying trends that had already heavily affected multilateralism and which have resulted in the return of power politics. With the coronavirus epidemic, the new geopolitics of globalisation are in danger of losing control: the reaction of every man for himself, conflicts escalating unhindered, the resurgence of struggles for influence, all leading to a leadership vacuum for international action. At the same time, the current dysfunctions of multilateralism - poor anticipation, the inability to stop conflicts or take into account the new realities of the world - threaten to worsen.

II. The coronavirus crisis and, crucially, its aftermath are therefore a test for multilateralism. Is it capable of taking the lead in international efforts that the very nature of the pandemic obviously requires? Is it able to rise to the health, economic and geopolitical challenges that the crisis will bring about? Faced with the temptation of withdrawing into itself, the multilateral system must instead prove that we can only emerge from the crisis with solidarity and close international cooperation. To achieve this, it will need a strong coalition of States to support it. The proponents of multilateralism will also need a clear strategic vision to manage the political and economic fallout from the current health upheaval in the short term and, beyond that, regain control of a globalisation movement whose limits have been revealed by the crisis.

III. For Africa, a partner traditionally attached to multilateralism, the coronavirus crisis could well exacerbate of all the continent's vulnerabilities. And this aggravating factor could be further increased by the power struggle that the big powers could engage in in African countries.

The multilateral system must also rise to this challenge. It must support Africa, first, in order to provide it with emergency health and economic assistance in order to overcome the looming epidemic. In response to Africa's structural problems, it also needs to find solutions better suited to African realities in order to finally achieve an effective cooperation policy.

A. MULTILATERALISM TODAY: PUT TO THE TEST BY THE VIRUS CRISIS

In 2020, the often-made observation that the **multilateral system** is in difficulty appears ever more relevant. The Covid-19 pandemic only worsens this impression, with governments making sporadic decisions without paying much attention to the instructions of specialised international agencies, none more so than the World Health Organization. When certain examples of consultation finally do appear, they still do so in a very reluctant and fragmented manner. Even more crucially, the health crisis is transforming before our eyes into a new example of geo-strategic competition between great powers to try to impose their model of a new multilateral order.

The impression continues that the progress made since the establishment in 1945 of multilateral institutions is **slowly unravelling**, maintained by the decline of humanitarian law observed almost daily in as the current crises develop. The most tried and tested methods of multilateral order to preserve peace no longer have a hold on the realities on the ground. Weary of war, a feeling of discouragement sets in that gradually undermines all progress made over the past 75 years and begins to weaken the most basic multilateral rules. In the increasingly blocked crises that we are currently witnessing, respect for international law and the use of dialogue are two objectives that appear out of reach. The fundamentals of multilateralism, i.e. **the values, rules and procedures** that shaped the international post-war order, are slowly regressing and are being lost in meandering negotiations where power struggles have supplanted diplomacy.

This observation is nothing new. It was already made in the first two reports presented to the Leaders for Peace Forum, and is shared by a growing number of commentators and even to the leaders of the main multilateral organisations. They no longer hide their concern over repeated violations of international law and admit their helplessness in the face of the growing perception that multilateralism itself is shaken by events and too often ignored, and even deliberately circumvented, by the most powerful nations of the world. This feeling is sometimes contested by pointing to more the specialised work of multilateral agencies in many fields related to the current transnational challenges: climate change, biodiversity, cyber attacks, and data protection to name a few. But we are forced to admit, even in these new fields, that progress remains extremely slow and modest in the face of the urgency of the challenges.¹

¹ *Pour un nouvel multilatéralisme [For a New Multilateralism] (Fondation Prospective Innovation). November 2019*

With the **health crisis** the world is going through today, this gap becomes even more evident. It is generally understood that the very dimension of the pandemic requires an exceptional collective mobilisation and an unprecedented effort of international cooperation and solidarity. But, subject to the anguish of their populations and the need to act quickly, governments in all countries have without exception taken a nationalistic approach. **Selfish reflexes** have prevailed while multilateral consultation at all levels, both global and regional, at first appeared to be overwhelmed before they eventually managed to get themselves organised. Once again, the multilateral response appeared to be unnatural. Instead, it was seen as a kind of **appendix to national efforts**, one that was possibly complementary but nonetheless secondary. This was the case with the WHO recommendations on the importance of emergency measures such as systematic screening and strict containment of infected patients. Generally, these recommendations were little followed by member countries. Instead, **competition between different national responses to the crisis** currently dominates, driven by a battle of influence to recognise the relevance of the approach each country has chosen.

I) DOUBTS ABOUT MULTILATERALISM

Even before the Covid-19 crisis, multilateralism was already losing momentum and on the brink of crisis. Its inability to maintain peace and meet the challenge of new global threats was already evident. The current health crisis has only reinforced this observation.

Peace without the UN, slowly diminishing

First of all, **peacekeeping** efforts are increasingly showing their limitations. In 2016, more countries were the scene of violent conflict than at any time in the past 30 years². With the effects of these conflicts on the economic situation of countries in crisis, the OECD estimates that by 2030 more than half of the population living in poverty will be found in countries affected by high levels of violence. At the same time, these confrontations spill over state boundaries since, according to the same sources, 18 of the 47 violent conflicts counted in 2015 can be described as international conflicts, i.e. the largest number since the end of World War II³.

² UCDP (Uppsala Conflict Data Program) *Armed Conflict Dataset 2017*

³ Idem: *UCDP Armed Conflict Dataset 2017*.

Even more telling, the agreements that have, over the last decade, led to the suspension or end of hostilities, were obtained **without direct facilitation from the United Nations** (Philippines, Myanmar, Mali, Ukraine, Central African Republic, Colombia, Iran, etc.). Between 1988 and 2008, nearly 30 peace agreements were signed with the support or direct involvement of the United Nations.

The ideal vision of a world where peace efforts continue to progress has faded over time. The objective of peace as a vector of general stability ("big peace") and the very idea of the peace process are disappearing in favour of a general impression of confusion and inefficiency.

Challenges unable to find a response

Peace efforts are not the only thing at fault. Many other threats, which have emerged in more recent years, have quickly posed similar problems for international organisations. Through the new value chains and development of trade, **economic globalisation** has led to an indisputable increase in prosperity but at the same time the emergence of increasingly unacceptable social inequalities as well as the persistence of areas of great poverty, especially in Africa. With the more or less controlled progression of **climate change**, all the commitments made in recent years in the context of multilateral conferences (COP 21, etc.) have proved powerless to reverse the deterioration of the climate. The same impression prevails for new **digital technology** whose implications for state security and the protection of citizens' personal data still elude international regulatory efforts. The establishment of common standards or rules of conduct agreed by all therefore falter given the contradictory interests of States.

To claim that multilateralism has abandoned these essential areas for the future of our countries would be unfair because international organisations are mobilising, holding meetings, and trying to find agreements. But too often the discussions get bogged down and multilateralism seems powerless to produce significant results.

A pandemic speeding up the loss of momentum

The health crisis affecting the entire world since the beginning of the year has only reinforced this perception of disarrayed multilateralism. This can be explained in several ways:

. The most obvious, as mentioned above, is the **lack of a collective response**. The policy of every man for himself led since the beginning of the crisis has exposed the weaknesses of all multilateral organisations at both an international and regional level. In none of the major regions of the world was there a common or even concerted initial reaction to the epidemic. Public decisions to contain or systematically use screening were made randomly and acts of solidarity, when they appeared, were sporadic. The general attitude of governments is all the more surprising given the nature of this crisis - a viral infection that knows no borders - which ought to have prompted international dialogue.

. The **crowding-out effect** seems to have played out fully by leading states to focus solely on protecting the health of their populations and ignoring the rest. One might have hoped that, faced with this unprecedented crisis, international solidarity would organise itself to manage the most obvious and critical points of weakness. War zones subjected to ceaseless fighting, refugee camps deprived of health protection, countries under sanctions affected by the pandemic, and even entire regions of the world lacking proper public health systems were all-natural candidates for solidarity from other countries. There were ways and means available: temporary cease-fire agreements, provisional lifting of sanctions, medical assistance and humanitarian aid are some of the measures that appeared necessary and were moreover called for by international organisations. But such action has not yet been taken.

. **The vacuum left by Western countries**, traditional supporters of multilateralism, reinforced this lack of international action. Directly affected by this type of health crisis which had hitherto spared them and consequently monopolised by an unprecedented ordeal, Western nations (in particular America and Europe) have deserted multilateral organisations to concentrate on national efforts alone. This **power vacuum**, if it were to continue, poses a serious risk to the multilateral system as a whole.

The Covid-19 crisis therefore brought to light the powerlessness of multilateralism when the very nature of the pandemic calls for enhanced international cooperation. It thus provides further evidence of the **disappointment** that has increased over the years among political leaders and populations over multilateral order. Multilateralism has fallen out of favour while a growing number of States distance themselves from the basic principles and are unaware of how useful this type of action can be. We must therefore try to analyse the symptoms and reasons for this aversion more closely.

II) MULTILATERALISM PUT TO THE TEST BY THE VIRUS CRISIS

One might have thought that multilateralism would be the big winner of globalisation. Paradoxically, the opposite is in fact true.

The fragmentation of political globalisation

From the 1980s to the present day, a contradiction emerged on the one hand between the **globalisation of the world economy** which continued to gain ground and, on the other hand, a geopolitical reality which, after appearing to take the same route as the economic world under the effect of American omnipotence, has slowly moved away from this trend resulting in **a growing fragmentation of the international stage**. We already know the most visible signs of this development: the growing weight of China, the restoration of the power of Russia, the emergence of actors with strong ambitions (Turkey, India, Iran, Brazil, etc.), the impact in the Arab world and in Latin America of opposition to the regimes in place leading to sharp divisions within these regions, and the development of groups of extremist militia in Africa.

This fragmentation is not confined to one level of relations between great world powers. It has seeped gradually into the field of conflict to bringing with it a new typology that borrows from all categories of conflict (civil, hybrid, asymmetric, frozen, etc.) to form a shifting and confused mixture. Confrontations with prolific forms have developed: sometimes marked by direct interference from foreign countries taking advantage of a civil war and openly ignoring national sovereignty, as in Syria or Libya; other times born of internal confrontations fomented by armed groups, themselves supported by external movements, as in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso or Nigeria; or even from confrontations between national communities, such as in Myanmar or Cameroon, or between political forces, such as in Venezuela, with shock waves that destabilise neighbouring countries, in particular under the weight of refugees seeking to escape violence and economic disorder. Geopolitical fragmentation has therefore had direct and concrete implications for the development of conflicts.

The return of power politics

At the same time, this geopolitical fragmentation has revived a form of diplomacy that we thought was over, based on the **primacy of power**.

It would be inaccurate to claim that the multilateral system established after 1945 has eliminated the political power relations between great powers. The long Cold War period between the end of World War II and the disappearance of the Soviet bloc was the scene of an uncompromising confrontation between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. But these confrontations have gradually led to the agreements that have reduced tension and allowed a period of relative stability of "neither peace nor war". Taking advantage of this coexistence, the **multilateral order was structured** through its regional organisations and its specialised agencies while developing its capacity for action (peacekeeping forces in the Middle East, Africa and the former Yugoslavia, progress in international law, the establishment of the International Criminal Court, etc.). In doing so, the multilateral system gradually emerged as the **natural solution** whenever peace was threatened.

With regards to the logic of the Cold War, **the turn of the century profoundly changed the situation**. The disappearance of this two-headed governance marked the **great return of power diplomacy** to the international stage, which took the multilateral system by surprise. As the most powerful states developed international action based on their comparative advantages in terms of military strength, technological superiority or financial sanctions, multilateralism lost much of its interest. Multilateral order is indeed fundamentally based on principles and values that oppose the logic of power. It favours zero-score games and prefers the transactional approach and compliance with the rules of law. **The ethics at the very basis of multilateralism** were gradually ignored.

With this lack of dialogue between two opposing value systems, the environment needed for the proper functioning of international organisations has disappeared, preventing them from operating effectively. This paved the way for an often-deadlocked **Security Council**, a disputed **International Court of Justice**, a deeply divided **Human Rights Council**, as well as an OSCE prevented from implementing an authentic cease-fire in Ukraine and an African Union hampered in its efforts to bring peace to Somalia. In other words, the system as a whole is now structurally dysfunctional owing to a fundamental challenge to the basic principles of multilateralism.

This is aggravated by the increasingly open confrontation between great powers taking hold of the multilateral system, which has become the object of a fierce battle of influence. The Covid-19 health crisis affecting the world is merely a further illustration of these conflicts. Through the management of this pandemic, the players of globalisation are committed to **promoting their respective models of governance**, some authoritarian, others liberal, at the risk of destabilising the multilateral system in all its dimensions: **health** firstly, with a struggle for influence for the future of the WHO; **commercial and economic** in the efforts to redefine the new rules of economic globalisation; and finally **geopolitical**, to establish the bases of new strategic balances around the world. In its own way, the virus crisis has precipitated a movement that was already in the making. However, it has had an **accelerating effect** the consequences of which it is still difficult to measure, but clearly it may have profound changes if nothing is done to save the very principles of multilateralism.

III) MULTILATERALISM LOSING ITS FUNDAMENTALS

Faced with the return of power diplomacy, the multilateral system is struggling. Its resilience has waned under the effects of various crises. This has resulted in what appears to be a **loss of multilateral fundamentals**. By constantly being confronted with the reality of the balance of power, the multilateral system has gradually lost its bearings and revealed its weaknesses: its inadequacy in times of crisis owing to a lack of anticipation; its outdated methods and its difficulty to take into account the new constraints of power diplomacy.

Anticipation - the weakest link of multilateralism

Anticipation - and the resulting action to prevent conflicts - are by nature difficult to achieve. International organisations are not generally known for their ability to anticipate events. The very nature of multilateralism does not predispose it to manage violent crises and disruptions. It is a slow and careful mechanism by construction; its genetic imprint is that of democratic regimes, based on dialogue and conviction. Crisis, on the other hand, is by nature abrupt, uncertain, threatening and it bends more easily to authoritarianism.

This inability of multilateralism to anticipate can today be seen in the management of the Covid-19 crisis, where multilateral organisations, like many governments, have been caught short for **ignoring the lessons** learned from epidemic crises since SARS in 2003⁴. However, numerous reports had warned of the risks of a pandemic, while preparatory exercises carried out by national health systems largely exposed State preparation for such risks of an epidemic. Beyond the field of public health, this inability to prevent crises is often found in the behaviour of governments faced with the emergence of opposition movements and who choose to wait and see in the hope that their demands will disappear by themselves. The multilateral system itself is not entirely immune to this, since its attempts to convince States to devote more effort to conflict prevention are still too often met with scepticism. The UN is well aware of this and has been trying since 2006 to promote this prevention approach within the framework of the Peacebuilding Fund⁵. The current limits of this effort, based on **voluntary work alone**, show the work that lies ahead to convince the members of the United Nations of the urgent nature of the preventive approach.

However, experience shows choosing procrastination over prevention generally comes at a high price. Studies led by the United Nations and the World Bank show that the **cost-benefit ratio of prevention** is clearly more **advantageous** than any other approach to deal with crises. According to these studies, preventive action results in average savings ranging from \$5 billion at the lower end to anywhere up to \$70 billion⁶. The mere mention of crises, such as those of Syria, Cameroon or Myanmar, which began with relatively limited clashes between communities before leading to considerable human loss and material destruction, is enough to demonstrate that confrontations of this kind would benefit from direct action as soon as the first upheavals occur using diplomacy to prevent them from degenerating into high intensity conflict.

⁴ SRAS in 2003, H1N1 in 2009, Poliomyelitis in 2014, Ebola in 2014, Zika in 2016, Ebola again in 2019.

⁵ The UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund during its last campaign (2017-2019) raised nearly \$500 million. These sums are devoted to projects relating to peace support actions which concern prevention but also the phases during and after violent conflict.

⁶ *Pathways for Peace: inclusive approaches to prevent violent conflict*. Executive summary. World Bank Group / United Nations (2018)

Methods to be refreshed

The insufficient refreshing of methods is another current weakness of the multilateral system which must learn to adapt to the reality of power politics.

This priority is particularly urgent for advancement of **peace efforts**. Bombings against civilians, attacks on humanitarian convoys or hospitals, attacks in urban centres, not to mention the agreements between government officials or rival groups barely signed and immediately forgotten, today form the daily environment in which representatives of international organisations strive to work. It is therefore not surprising to see the most proven practices of multilateral action lose their strength: **cease-fires or temporary truces** become almost obsolete tools when such agreements only last a few hours or a few days; the **round tables** between fighting parties are void of meaning and end up disappearing in general indifference; the constantly renewed **mediations** between rival camps slowly disappear under the effect of repeated deadlocks. These observations can be made everywhere, in Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen. They represent the daily lot of special envoys from the UN, the European Union and other organisations and their repetitive nature leads to a form of weariness.

It is interesting to note that this impression of a malfunctioning multilateral order also affects other types of mediation. The **more confidential channels of dialogue**, including those that appeal to countries particularly well versed in the role of discrete intermediaries (Norway, Switzerland), or even the mediations of private institutes (San Egidio, The Carter Center, etc.), meet the same obstacles. Take for example the inability to resume dialogue between the government and the opposition in Venezuela or between the United States and Iran.

Adapting to new realities

The new geopolitics of power is another challenge for a multilateral system that must learn to adapt to this changing reality.

First, there are the **new fields of action** where multilateralism must learn to deal with the great powers. Public health obviously after the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, the digital economy, climate change, and artificial intelligence are drawing the new horizons of multilateral action grappling with States that are increasingly reluctant to accept the constraint of international cooperation. Climate change commitments are struggling to be fulfilled; negotiations on personal data protection in digital

technology come up against opposition between the legal models of the United States, China and Europe; the WHO itself has been and will likely continue to be submissive in the coming years in struggles over the best model for addressing the looming pandemics. The ability to take these new issues into account and overcome the opposition of the major powers largely depends on the return of multilateralism.

The place and role of civil society in the multilateral system represents another challenge for international organisations. In today's world, citizens have become part of international life, often as victims, still too seldom as proactive players. The reasons for taking them into account are becoming more and more evident every day, if only to establish a counterweight to the influence of the great powers. The progress of participatory democracy in all its forms, the growing demand of citizens to be involved in the decisions that will shape their future, the acceleration of information and its increasingly easier access through digital networks are all factors that encourage citizens to participate in the affairs of the city.

The international sphere cannot afford to remain outside this general movement. Instead, it must rely on this desire to participate to remind States that these new players in the international community exist. Multilateralism has started to do this, for example, in the area of climate change by involving **youth representatives**. The same imperative is equally true for the **role of women** in peacebuilding efforts that touch on all aspects of security, employment, health and the environment. Citizens today demand the right to have their say and their natural disposition to hear support for multilateralism make them natural allies in the effort to revive international order.

B. FOR A RENEWED MULTILATERALISM

For this faltering multilateralism, the question now is whether the Covid-19 crisis will offer the opportunity for a revival. Could it provide an opportunity to breathe new life into the international order giving it a central place in the post-coronavirus crisis?

I) MERE OPPORTUNISM?

First of all, in the midst of the coronavirus crisis that has led the world to a state of amazement, forecasts for the post-crisis remain difficult if not impossible to make. The great epidemics of history (Athens in Antiquity, the black plague in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, the Spanish flu in the 20th century) have all brought about **civilizational upheavals** of such magnitude that it would be unwise to imagine the long-term consequences of the pandemic we are experiencing. In addition, the temptation in this kind of exercise is too often to **think about the future through the eyes of the past** and, therefore, to minimise the seriousness of the events and their consequences. Everyone hopes that the recession will be limited and that, after having absorbed the economic and financial repercussions of the pandemic, everything will go back to how it was before. But, at the same time, we all realise that the unprecedented situation the world is currently going through does little to advance such assumptions with certainty.

“Back to the future” or a change of paradigm?

For the time being, we should therefore limit ourselves to better defining the contours of what could happen **after** the health crisis. Will it confirm the **rise of the Asian countries**, led by China, which have demonstrated their best ability to overcome the epidemic threat? Or will it result in a paradigm shift leading to an in-depth review of all aspects of globalisation (health, of course, but also political, economic, social, societal, cultural, technological, environmental, security) as they have existed until now. In this case, there would be a **“before and after”** the coronavirus and this perspective could lead to significant progress in how our societies are organised and function: better management of new technology, a reduction in climate change and damage to biodiversity, reorientation of value chains to better balance the global division of labour and better distribute wealth. This would take us from a **savage style of globalisation to a more controlled one** for the benefit of all and this new orientation would have positive repercussions for multilateralism itself, finally back in the saddle to carry out this reordering of the world affairs.

Current contradictions

Will the **underlying trends** that existed prior to the pandemic **continue**, or will there be a **complete paradigm shift**? These reflections must take place in a context that is still full of uncertainties, and even contradictions.

It is indeed difficult to clearly decipher the **various often contradictory aspirations** attached today to the end of the crisis. Calls for a more controlled and united globalisation coexist alongside the temptation to withdraw into oneself. The same discourse advocates the reestablishment of national borders but recognises that the challenges to be faced know no borders. Others argue the need for international cooperation, but are reluctant to share national resources that are considered a priority. In addition, praise for multilateralism coexists alongside the resurgence of the power struggles between great powers. Despite the severity of the health crisis, the **reconciliation between national preference and multilateral solidarity** is far from striking the right balance.

Moreover, there is no guarantee that the outcome of the crisis will occur in an orderly and inclusive manner. The current tensions between China and the United States, on the contrary, suggest the risk of strong competition on the international stage. The post-crisis period could also be **longer and more eventful** than some scenarios predict: Africa is just beginning to suffer the first attacks of the pandemic and will therefore need more time and solidarity to emerge from it; epidemic 'rebounds' cannot be excluded; the likelihood of strong tensions around the research and dissemination of the Covid-19 vaccine risks undermining multilateral goodwill; and finally, the magnitude of the looming economic recession will put international cooperation under great strain and awaken the temptation of national egotism.

The **precedent** of the serious **financial crisis of 2008** also calls for caution. Great hopes were raised at the time for the emergence of a form of financial globalisation that had left its bad past practices behind and would promote more harmonious growth. The results were far from expectations, with weak growth, continued rising debt, financial stability largely supported by the intervention of central banks, the growing challenge of free trade and the increase in income inequality. Experience therefore prompts us to realistically assess the road ahead in order to set up a profound transformation of economic globalisation.

Furthermore, while the current pandemic is disrupting the daily lives of citizens around the world, its repercussions on the management of **ongoing conflicts** and the related peace efforts have above all resulted in a fairly broad **status quo**. Despite the United Nations Secretary General's call for a ceasefire on all battlefields and a suspension of the many sanctions applied (against Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, etc.), **developments on the ground** do not encourage optimism. Attempts to secure a truce in Libya, Yemen or Syria remain largely unsuccessful despite new efforts. Clashes in Africa are experiencing no respite, as seen in the Sahel. Attempts to suspend the application of sanctions against Iran, a country particularly affected by the contamination of Covid-19, have stalled. As for the situation in the camps for immigrant and displaced populations, no improvement has been observed despite the risk of the pandemic causing considerable damage. One could add to this long list the fact that cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns continue with the same intensity as before the crisis.

Added to these various uncertainties is an **internal political environment that is just as unstable**. In many countries, governments are grappling with new problems arising from the implementation of unprecedented containment measures. As the crisis continues, the **choices** between public health imperatives and the risk of a collapsing economy test national unity and the ability of leaders to maintain the confidence of their citizens. This political context therefore increases the unpredictability of the international commitments that many countries will be able to make when they emerge from the crisis and of which we will be able to measure the full impact.

The road to renewed multilateralism

These various uncertainties are therefore paving a very vague road ahead for the revival of multilateral cooperation.

Indeed, the **first signs of a movement of will** are emerging, in particular to determine an international response to the risks of economic and financial recession that are looming. Dialogue within the G7 and G20 bodies is being organised, informed by the experience of the previous crisis of 2008. In health matters, after a long period of uncertainty, solidarity is beginning to emerge at European level and through emergency aid from States or philanthropic associations.

But these first encouraging acts do not answer the question of whether and how the multilateral system can play its part in ending the crisis. To discuss the idea, three possible scenarios can be put forward:

. **A return to the past.** In this hypothesis, efforts to relaunch international dialogue would prove unproductive due to national egotism and clashes between powers. We would then return to the starting point with multilateralism still trapped by its contradictions.

. **A struggle for influence.** Competition would break out among great powers seeking to take advantage of the opportunity created by this crisis to impose their vision of multilateralism largely inspired by their own interests. The consequence would probably be a risk of prolonged competition and strong tensions between the main actors within the multilateral order.

. **The establishment of renewed multilateralism.** In this scenario, an effort would be made to promote a more effective and better controlled form of international order. The aim would be to stay true to the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and make the most of the awareness that emerged during the crisis to find innovative responses to the various cross-border challenges of the virus crisis.

This **positive solution** to the crisis is of course the ideal solution. It is also the only one likely to be able to return to the basics of multilateralism. But is it realistic? In order to head in this direction, we need to challenge the conditions needed for such a hypothesis to have a chance of becoming true.

II) THE CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR AN EFFECTIVE RENEWAL

In order for multilateralism to return to the international stage, several conditions are needed: true leadership, a realistic approach, a solid agenda to emerge from the health crisis and determined action to overcome the weaknesses of the current system.

Leadership with a clear vision for renewed multilateralism

Leadership must first emerge at the State level. The idea is not to select or exclude from among the governments likely to take part in this multilateral revival. Moreover, initiatives already exist which could lead to a coalition of States who share the same ideas on a deep reform of the multilateral system⁷. The group of friends of multilateralism which could thus emerge in the coming months, once the health crisis has been overcome, will in any case have to share a **common conception of the multilateral order** it wishes to promote. Will it return to the sources of multilateralism as defined in 1945 and largely inspired by the principles defended by Western democracies or should we move towards different values, more suited to the challenges of the modern world and put forward by the new emerging powers?

The debate is far from theoretical. It is a long-standing and persistent demand from countries which have long perceived themselves as marginalised from international organisations. They demand both

⁷ Germany and France launched an initiative in 2018 called the 'Alliance for Multilateralism' which has already garnered widespread support.

a **fair place in these institutions** (through the reform of the United Nations Security Council, the place of regional organisations, positions of responsibility, the priorities of the multilateral agenda, etc.) and better acknowledgement within this renewed international order of their own conceptions in political, economic, social, cultural, technological, environmental and obviously health matters. Through these demands emerges the content of the discussions to come on the **various** post-crisis **themes**: a better organised and more equitable public health policy, greener and more egalitarian economic growth, more balanced free trade, aid more focused on sustainable development, controlled use of new technology to preserve collective and individual freedoms, etc. For those who take this initiative, it will therefore be essential to accurately understand the objectives that must be set by this renewed multilateralism.

A realistic approach in line with geopolitical realities

In this perspective, the reform work should also define the **spirit of the approach**. Will the approach chosen be **ambitious**, aiming to return the multilateral order to its original state and seeking to fully restore the responsibilities and prerogatives of the multilateral system? Or will it be **pragmatic** by taking into account the reality of the power relationships and making progress through improvements obtained step by step and with patience? Should we take the risk of causing great upheaval and re-shaping of the multilateral system to bring about a **new world order**⁸ or should we prefer more realistic and lucid action, striving to make multilateral organisations more **agile** and capable of gradually building a balance of forces more favourable to their cause?

This is the **pragmatic approach** that will probably have to be taken to emerge from the Covid-19 crisis. It will have to start from the field of crises to measure the constraints and determine the diplomatic space available in order to advance multilateral interests. Without flouting the law and the cardinal values of multilateralism, it should not put itself in a difficult position with the great powers, but should instead work to advance the multilateral cause by staying in step with the new geopolitical order.

⁸ The Secretary General of the OECD, Angel Gurría, proposes a New Deal on a global scale which would deal with all unresolved international problems: trade, migration, environment, terrorism, etc.

An ambitious agenda to emerge from the health crisis

The Covid-19 health crisis and its unpredictable aftermath form the backdrop that must be kept in mind in this revival of multilateralism. All the parameters of the crisis, from public health to the management of the common property, must be given top priority to reinvigorate international cooperation.

Health must be the highest priority. To emerge from the Covid-19 crisis, the multilateral system must have a real capacity for coordination with the prospect of possible recurrences of the global epidemic. The repetition in recent years of these waves of contamination underscores the vulnerability of health policies. It is therefore necessary to develop a real health security policy based on these specific components:

.) **Research** to establish strong international cooperation on the risks of infectious diseases and vaccine discoveries. The establishment of a network of centres of excellence, modelled on the IPCC for climate change, would bring together global expertise for this purpose;

.) International consultation in liaison with the States to coordinate the production, supply and storage of **protective medical equipment**, with particular attention paid to the countries least prepared in this area;

.) The **sharing of experiences** and good practices to avoid making the same mistakes;

.) **Financial resources** to support the poorest states by raising the ambition of current funds (Gavi, Unitaïd) and by imposing compulsory contributions.

Such proposals, put forward by many experts, must begin to be implemented as soon as possible⁹. In this general effort, the WHO must regain its place at the centre of the multilateral system.

⁹ See for instance the article in the Diplomatic Courier on 19 March 2020 "Coronavirus shows healthcare needs global governance" by Irina Bokova, Hakima EL Haite, George Papandreou and Joël Ruet.

Environmental protection must follow the same logic. Regarding climate change, instruments already exist such as expert panels (IPCC) or the International Financial Funds (Green Climate Fund); State by State commitment objectives were defined at COPS 21 in Paris and similar procedures exist for the protection of biodiversity. The shock created by the Covid-19 pandemic must be used to make the **next COPS 26 in Glasgow** a success.

But the other aspects of the environmental question must not be forgotten. The current coronavirus crisis (whose origin at the Wuhan market has drawn attention to the possible link between deforestation and the spread of infectious agents out of their normal reservoirs) forces us to consider the international risks linked to the reduction of living spaces, the fragmentation of ecosystems or damage to biodiversity.

The **economic consequences** of the crisis must also be examined in the same way. The first step is to call on international cooperation to lead the **difficult emergence from an unprecedented crisis** that has halted most of the world's production and consumption. In this case, the economy appears to be where multilateral dialogue has managed to make rapid and significant decisions through its various entities (G20, G7, IMF, World Bank and the States' network of central banks) with the objective of reigniting economic activity and restoring market confidence. But the **gravity of the problems** that will arise once we emerge from the lockdown (budget deficits, public and private debt, inflation, capital circulation, etc.) will force the international system to innovate to prevent the world economy from collapsing.

In the longer term, an **in-depth review of the global economy model** will be needed by placing this process under the supervision of the relevant multilateral bodies (IMF, WTO, ILO, UNCTAD, etc.) to avoid the risk of a chain of unilateral reactions. The multilateral approach must set itself the objective of pragmatically rectifying the excesses of globalisation and **offer solutions for the imbalances** that appeared during the recent crisis: lack of security of strategic supplies, excessive specialisation, drift of deindustrialisation, extreme fragmentation of value chains, inadequate management of common goods, etc. Beyond that, a **review of the liberal business model**, adopted over the last thirty years by companies and which has extended to public administrations, will have to be initiated. Multilateralism therefore has a role in correcting the excesses of economic globalisation which has shown its limits in the management of common goods as essential as health and the climate.

The **digital challenge** must also be on the post-crisis agenda. The fight against the epidemic has indeed raised new issues (individual surveillance, appropriation of personal data, privacy intrusion, profiling, etc.) which multilateral organisations must address to prevent States from **depriving freedom**. In this area essential for the protection of human rights, it is important for competent United Nations bodies to fully regain their role in defining the principles of action in this area.

Resolute action to overcome the weaknesses multilateralism

The analysis of the symptoms of multilateral disenchantment point to specific weaknesses (prevention, methods, new realities). The multilateral agenda must also take into account these aspects of the reform.

Dealing with the failures of crisis management

The first step to be taken is an internal review of the multilateral system. The Covid-19 crisis has brought to light **old dysfunctions** of the multilateral system linked to crisis management, which the heads of international organisations and member States must address:

- . the lack of effective **warning systems**,
- . the excessive **compartmentalisation** of specialised agencies,
- . insufficient circulation of information and **lack of transparency** between States and the multilateral level,
- . public health funding too dependent on **voluntary contributions**.

These are some of the failures that need urgent action by multilateral actors to regain flexibility and agility.

The urgency of peace

The upheaval caused by the coronavirus crisis should not obscure the urgency of peace. It carries the risk of being the **great absentee** in these troubled times. As we have seen, conflicts continue, unresponsive to the pandemic and to calls to suspend them. Multilateralism must therefore persevere in its efforts to advance peace and stability, particularly in the regions of the world where the current clashes will make the fight against the spread of the coronavirus even more problematic.

1. Recognising the importance of crisis prevention

Preventive action, as we have already pointed out, has too often been seen as a disguised form of interference in the internal affairs of a nation. A **paradigm shift** is therefore essential if we want to promote the idea, which is difficult to contest, that it is always better to anticipate crises rather than having to put out the fire afterwards.

The concept of a “**sovereignty multiplier**” can no doubt best reinvigorate conflict prevention action. It may seem counterintuitive to say that prevention, rather than interfering in domestic affairs, actually protects the sovereignty of a State. But such an assertion is well founded if we look at the chain of events around a growing crisis: intervention by external state or non-state actors, review by the United Nations Security Council, the use of mediators, possible sanctions, etc. Experience has generally shown that if a State fails to make decisions to stop a threatening conflict in time, it can gradually lose its sovereignty.

This idea of a sovereignty multiplier must be understood as an **eminently political choice** for the countries that decide to get involved. It requires a resolute commitment on their part to define a government policy taking into account all the factors of stability, ranging from the improvement of governance, the promotion of the rule of law, the fight against inequalities and poverty, the implementation of sustainable development objectives (health, environment, education, agriculture, etc.) to the actions of social inclusion and integration of the various communities within the nation. The ultimate goal is therefore to promote **work on reconciliation and national solidarity**.

However, we must be aware that this prevention effort goes against the trend of recent years. Today **the United Nations repairs far more than it warns.**¹⁰ Promoting the preventive approach therefore remains a long-term endeavour. But it must be relentlessly restated that it remains to this day the strongest defence of state sovereignty.

2. Renewing multilateral mediation

The mediation bodies of the international system are already patiently trying to regain the upper hand in the face of the movement which seems to gradually wear down the gains of the international order. Lucid attempts are made to find a way out of the uncompromising confrontations of the ongoing conflicts. Recent examples in this area abound: the establishment of **local cease-fires** (as for the port of Al Hudaydah in Yemen) which can be extended to other theatres of conflict; **channels of dialogue** (such as the constitutional committee in Syria) to promote a de-escalation of violence and gradually initiate a substantive negotiation on peace; **consultation** between all components of **civil society** (the unfortunately aborted National Conference in Libya); **uniting all stakeholders**, both direct (political and fighting forces) and indirect (regional neighbours and third countries), in order to draw up a roadmap for ending the fighting (Berlin Conference on Libya).

The characteristic of these different efforts is their **pragmatism** and **gradual approach**. The best chance for multilateral order to find hope probably lies in an approach of trial and error, attempts repeated several times, ephemeral successes and overcome failures. It has the merit of realism by incorporating lessons learned from field experience:

. **Avoid trying to solve the whole problem from the outset**, and instead distinguish between the various aspects (political, security, social, etc.) and manage each of them separately, without losing the overall vision;

. **Prioritise the end to violence** without which all negotiation efforts are doomed to fail;

¹⁰ The UNGS Peacebuilding Fund committed a total of \$500 million while peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations have amassed more than \$12 billion.

. **Accept the multiplication of negotiation forums** set up, often informally, on the fringes of conflict. Rather than fighting against these “outgrowths”, we must instead accept them while **coordinating** them with the work of international organisations;

. **Promote cooperation between the parties that can influence the reality on the ground.** In other words, take into account the existing balance of power in ongoing conflicts as well as the authority of certain leaders (the “wise ones”) which can prove to be a precious resource for finding solutions.

3. Promoting the regional dimension

This third area for improving multilateral order could develop in two directions.

. Recognise the contribution of the **regional dimension**. It brings local knowledge which is very often efficient in nature. The most recent successes in crisis prevention are therefore to the credit of regional organisations like the **African Union**, when it came to avoiding clashes following presidential elections in the DRC or The Gambia or when mediation was entrusted to the **Prime Minister of Ethiopia** during the Sudanese uprisings. Over the years the African Union has managed to acquire a capacity for diplomatic mediation and peacekeeping forces which assures it of a real role in the search for stability on the African continent.

. Encourage **consultation between the most influential leaders** of a region to give their views and actions all the necessary weight. One could thus imagine that, in line with the reflections in progress between German and French leaders on a **European security council**, the leaders of other **regions of the world** could also consider a **similar format** to promote security and stability in their own environment. Such formats would make it possible to launch dialogues to defuse emerging crises and gradually consolidate regional multilateral practice.

4. Incorporating new realities

Taking into account new realities implies **giving representatives of civil society their full place**. This is particularly true for young people and women who must henceforth be considered as players in their own right for peace actions.

The United Nations understands the scope this new reality. It pays particular attention to involve **women** as early as possible in conflict prevention efforts by offering them to participate in **intra-community dialogue** or in **exchanges between governments and oppositions**. At the same time, the Secretaries General of the United Nations have appointed special envoys to better understand the role and place of women in times of war and clarify what their potential contribution in promoting peace. This active role in peace granted to women is increasingly seen in the experiences of recent civil conflicts, such as in Libya or Syria, where we have seen women's movements carry the rare attempts at dialogue in the midst of a growing climate of violence. Considered an important factor of peace, women are also encouraged by the United Nations to play an increasing part in social life, in particular in elections and association or union activities.

This same direction must also prevail for **young people**. In many regions of the world, they represent a large part, if not the majority¹¹ of civil society. Their voice must be heard all the more since young people are often at the centre of a power struggle between established authorities and radical movements and the attraction of dissent can seduce young people with no great prospect for the future. Here again, multilateral action to promote the participation of young people in the political and social activities of their nations must be encouraged, as provided for in the youth strategy adopted by the United Nations¹².

¹¹ In Africa, young people under 25 currently make up 60% of the total population.

¹² Resolutions 2250 and 2419 of the Security Council.

AFRICA: THE TEST FOR RENEWED MULTILATERALISM

For several analysts, Africa remains the continent of dashed hopes; for many others, it is, on the contrary, the land of new growth, that will take over from the economic progress made by the Asian nations over the past thirty years.

I. AFRICAN REALITIES IN THE FACE OF THE HEALTH CRISIS

This **contradictory vision of African reality** is not new; it has been developing since African countries embarked on the postcolonial phase of their history. This new era was the scene of more or less muted opposition between former colonial powers, who recovered poorly from the advantages they had lost, and African nations in search of a new partnership, constantly reinvented but never really consolidated. In unstable equilibrium, nourished by historical grudges and the multiple torments that Africa has had to face for more than half a century, the economic and social development of the African continent at the same time as its political stability and security were at the centre of difficult relations with most of its partners and, in particular, with European nations, many of which were the colonial powers of the past.

African contradictions

From a multilateral perspective, there is an **African paradox**. In many respects, Africa has been and remains a privileged partner of the multilateral system, for which it constitutes a form of laboratory in terms of both peacekeeping and sustainable development. **The African Union** is one of the most active regional organisations in international order. Its various **sub-regional organisations** (ECOWAS, ECCAS, IGAD, SADC, etc.) complete this system and have repeatedly demonstrated a recognised ability to anticipate crises. We can still see this with the numerous United Nations **peacekeeping operations** in Africa (Mali, DRC, etc.), for which the AU accepts its share of the burden as in Sudan for Darfur, or even assumes direct responsibility for other military interventions like in Somalia. Finally, African countries have intelligently managed to articulate their own development strategy, **Agenda 2063**, with that of **Agenda 2030** implemented by the United Nations within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, and this is the paradox, **the results of this partnership** are far from convincing:

. Africa remains a continent where widespread **violence** and open conflict are among the most intense in the world. The list of “hot spots” that confront the armed forces of States, radicalised groups or local militias (Libya, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Somalia, etc.) is out of all proportion with the other regions of the world. More than 87,500 peacekeepers out of 100,000 deployed worldwide are currently in Africa, as part of seven United Nations missions¹³.

. The **rule of law** and governance systems remain on average unsatisfactory compared to the rest of the world.

. The **African economy** is significantly behind in the fight against poverty and hunger. There is still much progress to be made to improve results in areas such as clean energy, the environment, education and the advancement of women. In public health and even before the Covid-19 pandemic, Africa was responsible for two of the four major health emergencies since 2005.

. The issue of **demography** with an African population that is expected to double by 2050 to reach 2.5 billion people is creating migratory pressure inside and outside Africa that is not slowing down.

With these internal weaknesses, the return to the international scene of the **logic of power** adds an additional vulnerability. This global external pressure does not spare the African continent which is gradually turning into a hunting ground for the respective interests of great powers. Far from promoting the stability and security of Africa, this perspective instead leads to more struggles for influence and division and could delay efforts to catch up that this continent so badly needs.

¹³ Mali, Central African Republic, DR Congo, Western Sahara, Sudan/Darfur, Sudan/Abiyé, South Sudan

The aggravating factor of the pandemic

At the time of writing, the impact of the health crisis in Africa is beginning to show its first effects. All experts predict a major **humanitarian disaster** for the continent already heavily hit in recent years by epidemic plagues. The addition of a weak and under-equipped public health system¹⁴, an economy plagued by poverty and regions experiencing chronic insecurity leaves little hope that Africa will be spared by the crisis. Several additional factors are likely to worsen this already very worrying situation:

. The presence in Africa of an **urban reality** characterised by constantly growing cities, escaping all control and subject to an unpredictable style of municipal management. As the pandemic spreads, these huge urban areas are likely to experience serious failures in the supply of basic necessities (water, electricity, food, etc.).

. As a consequence of the city phenomenon, a large part of the survival of these urban populations rests on an **informal economy** whose already fragile balance threatens to be swept away by the ravages of the epidemic.

. An aggravating factor is the current **drop in oil prices** hitting the economy of African exporting countries (Gabon, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Angola, Algeria, etc.) and accentuating the fragility of the economic environment for the entire continent.

Several African observers see this new threat to Africa as “**the one crisis too many**” that will tip the entire continent into uncontrollable political, economic and social disorder in the face of local governments incapable of ensuring the protection of their citizens. Others prefer to hope that the crisis will mark the long-awaited African revival by spurring the emergence of a new form of governance, led by politicians who will have learned from the experience of crisis.

¹⁴ For 10,000 inhabitants, Africa has one doctor and ten hospital beds compared to 37 doctors and 52 beds on average for the countries of the European Union.

II. MULTILATERALISM HELPING AFRICA

Against this background, we must ask ourselves if and how multilateralism, currently weakened and even contested, can nevertheless help Africa to overcome the pandemic crisis and move forward in a quest for peace and stability. Again, this report is not intended to be exhaustive of all possible actions. It simply wants to offer three lines of thought to better manage what should be considered the African exception:

.) First, **define a new attitude** to grasp the African problem. What is often lacking in the management of African difficulties is the inability to find the ways and means of a dialogue able to adapt to the specific nature of a continent that is more complex than can generally be seen from the outside.

.) Then, **act multilaterally on the emergency**, in other words, the arrival of the pandemic in Africa, and provide massive aid for the continent.

.) Lastly, beyond this particular urgency, extend multilateral action to help Africa **provide fundamental responses** to its structural problems of governance and the return of peace.

Changing the spirit of dialogue with Africa

A certain form of contrition has begun to take shape within international and European multilateral institutions. It is increasingly recognised that, for too long, the multilateral approach has mainly consisted of **speaking on behalf of and for Africa and not with Africa**. The need to rethink dialogue with Africans and find new ways of working together is now evident. From an attitude too often based on condescension and prejudices we must show greater concern for listening and better understanding which is probably the first essential step for more fruitful relationships.

How do we transform these good intentions into concrete actions? First, by developing the channels to initiate or renew a substantive discussion between official authorities. These contacts never really stopped but they often failed because of their **formalism** which deprived them of any real substance. The proliferation of summits between African leaders and their foreign partners (European Union, China, Russia, Great Britain, etc.) are now at the heart of diplomatic rites, but their practical benefits are often difficult to trace. Summit meetings have shown they cannot be the only answer to the complexity of the problems facing Africa. It is therefore necessary to encourage **greater commitment** on both sides to listen, understand and work together.

Listening involves meetings that are more open, less formal and as operational as possible. In their own way, the members of the new European Commission, led by their President, Ms von der Leyen, seem to have understood the need for a renewed approach when they almost all went to Addis Ababa earlier this year to meet their African counterparts from the African Union and extend these meetings with field visits. This trip by European officials marked the start of a **joint work sequence** (including a presentation of a cooperation program which will be discussed between European member states and then with their African counterparts, the meeting of the foreign ministers of the two blocs in the summer, a summit between Africa and Europe in Brussels at the end of October) which we hope will be served by lessons learned from the field.

It is obvious, however, that this effort to listen must develop beyond the level of the leaders and also involve all those who, within multilateral organisations, have to deal with African issues. More **empathy** and **attention** towards African partners and their representatives are essential. This demand is heard constantly in all diplomatic conferences and academic symposia, whose delegates from northern countries do not always appreciate the importance it has for African participants. On such sensitive challenges as the migration issue, demographic pressure, protection of the environment and biodiversity, Africans parties often feel that their experience and their knowledge of the reality of their countries are minimised and insufficiently utilised. We need to put an end to this “Northern monologue” and establish a **two-way dialogue** with the South.

Understanding requires policy makers to make better use of the abundant and high-quality expertise that exists on African issues in multilateral institutions and within States. To leave behind the prejudices that too often affect decisions made in multilateral forums, we need to grasp the exact state of African realities. In this regard, methodical work to obtain reliable and exhaustive **statistics** on all African data remains an essential prerequisite for effective progress. This is a demand that many public and private organisations specialising in African affairs regularly put forward. It must be the priority for future cooperation.

Working together must lead to the establishment of consultation methods or even new bodies to promote cross-exchanges between representatives of countries from the North and Africa and better understand the concerns of African partners. The method should include the main actors at work in the various countries, i.e. politicians, companies, research communities and representatives of civil society, to establish an agenda defining the priority targets and concrete cooperation. The establishment of such multi-stakeholder consultation would ensure a broader and more documented acknowledgement of the problems facing Africa and allow solutions to be defined in line with the needs of actors on the ground.

This would allow discussions and proposals to emerge on themes whose urgency may sometimes have escaped the attention of non-Africans but which nevertheless represent the **challenges of tomorrow** for those responsible for the continent: the **place of youth** within society and the economy, the exponential and often anarchic **growth** of cities with its consequences on social inequality, pollution and public order, the **digital revolution** which could open perspectives for African economies given the good level of expertise among young people in this area, the **green economy** which, if it is taken in time, is the opportunity for Africa to skip (or leapfrog, as it is also referred to) the intermediate stages and make up for its economic lag.

Addressing the urgency of the pandemic

The priority for multilateral institutions in Africa, as for the entire world but with a particular responsibility, must today focus on mobilisation against the scourge of the coronavirus. It must act on both the **health and economic aspects** of this emergency.

We know that Africa is lagging far behind in terms of public health, and this weakness could have dramatic consequences once the coronavirus has largely invaded the continent. International organisations estimate immediate needs at more than \$10 billion to cover drugs and protective medical equipment. But these estimates will probably have to be reassessed when we know that at present a country like Germany has more intensive care beds than all African countries put together.

The economic consequences of the crisis appear just as heavy according to the forecasts of research institutes. They estimate that more than \$100 billion in **international financial aid** (macro-financial aid, loans at concessional rates, loan guarantees, etc.) will have to be granted to African countries to help them overcome the looming depression. Some experts are considering **more radical measures** such as

re-establishing capital controls or drastically rearranging African debt for the time needed to weather the storm.

In any case, this **period of extreme vulnerability** for Africa must be an opportunity for the multilateral system to show its solidarity and fully play its role as a privileged and disinterested partner which is its real added value compared to the other partners. In the ordeal ahead, geopolitical calculations will never be far away. The **positions of strength** of some (countries already out of the epidemic) compared to the constraints of others (States still struggling with Covid-19) will define the **battle of influence** over the coming months on the African continent over medical aid and financial assistance. Faced with this prospect, it will be the responsibility of the United Nations, in conjunction with other actors such as the European Union, to **take the lead in a global campaign** for Africa, founded on the basic principles of multilateralism, capable of mobilising aid in all areas and free from any concern of national interest. This will be an important test of the ability of multilateral order to regain control and **assert its leadership** over rivalries between great powers.

Paving the way for solutions to basic problems

As in the rest of the world, emerging from the crisis may be for African countries an opportunity to tackle the continent's structural problems. But the dilemma observed at the global level will be even more acute for Africans: will there be a return to “**business as usual**” by rediscovering the stigmas of their past condition (political immobilism, security instability and social inequality)? Or will they be able to find the path towards the **substantive reforms** needed to overcome the challenges that Africa has faced for so long?

1. Giving multilateralism a true leadership role

Faced with this choice, the multilateral system can be **the partner Africa needs**. Even weakened and contested, multilateralism remains the guardian of the principles enshrined in international law and the arbiter of the general interest. It has a **legitimacy** that no State can claim. Its presence alongside Africa and its role in **coordinating international solidarity** put it in a position, if it is ready to assume such a responsibility, to guide cooperation efforts for African countries in the right direction. To do this, two preconditions must be met: the major powers must agree to stand behind the multilateral banner; and the multilateral system itself must have the capacity to define with its African partners realistic and ambitious directions to enable Africa, after the crisis, to resume its development efforts with better chances of success.

It is reasonable to think that the great powers, particularly active in spreading their influence on the African continent, will not willingly accept multilateral leadership. It is therefore up to multilateral bodies to impose themselves based on their ability to mobilise a **coalition of States** in support of their approach. Voices are already being heard: the European Union wants to engage with its member States in a plan to support Africa to help it face the post-crisis; G20 countries have discussed global financial assistance programs. The United Nations must therefore take advantage of this goodwill and coordinate these efforts. To make this mobilisation as effective as possible, the Secretary-General of the United Nations could set up a **task force dedicated** to solidarity for Africa, comprising of representatives of donor states ready to commit to the cause. The idea is to move beyond the struggles of influence between powers and provide international organisations with a real political authority to enable them to present, in partnership with the African countries, an **action program** that differs from those of the past.

The challenge for multilateralism is to prove itself worthy of the trust of the international community by providing **the keys to achieve a real African recovery**. From this point of view, the references already exist: the Sustainable Development Goals, included in the 2030 Agenda are gradually being implemented, in coordination with Africa's own Agenda 2063. But progress is being made slowly and the assessments made so far¹⁵ *underline the permanence of the two major vulnerabilities faced by African countries, namely the establishment of an effective model of **governance** and the reestablishment of real conditions of **security**. It is on these two issues that multilateral organisations could focus their efforts.*

¹⁵ See for example the 2019 African Governance Report by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, *Agendas 2063 & 2030: Is Africa on track?*

2. The slow quest for an African model of governance

Understood as the ability to provide common goods and services (in all areas of politics, the economy, society or security) to which any citizen can claim and which the State has the responsibility of ensuring, governance in Africa remains the **basic foundation** on which all future progress rests. Democracy, the rule of law, constitutional reform, the electoral system, administrative capacity, decentralisation, participation of citizens, in particular women and young people, integration of communities and many other aspects of the organisation of African nations are among the multiple obstacles noted in the search for the right balance for African-style governance. This is the keystone of all progress, from the commitment of companies, reassured by an environment free from bad practices of local administrations and corruption, to the participation of citizens ready to band together for the future of their country or the confidence of disadvantaged populations in their governments to ensure their protection and prosperity.

This objective of governance often seems unattainable, in particular owing to the **lack of dialogue between North and South** which has gone on for some time. Donor countries tire of the idiosyncrasies of African public authorities, which they accuse of poor state administration, without always realising that the Western model of governance is perceived in Africa as an increasingly ill-accepted colonial heritage. Their African counterparts on the other hand argue that their specific nature should be acknowledged, ignoring the attacks on some of the most essential principles of law. In the absence of agreement, the problem spirals into a series of decisions by Africa contrary to the principles of multilateralism and severe reactions from the international community in the form of sanctions or other restrictive measures.

However, we see **signs of change** appearing which can provide multilateral officials with the material to build on these examples of more constructive cooperation. Several African heads of state have recently decided to stick to the provisions of their national constitutions and not to stand for re-election. Moreover, mediations led by several African leaders have managed to find solutions in several cases of institutional blockage following elections. These advances are still limited and do not extend to the multiple aspects of everyday life in African societies (informal economy, corruption, etc.). But they must be recognised and encouraged by the international community. Better still, they offer a **pragmatic method that acknowledges** the efforts led by the Africans themselves. Over time, it has come to form the heart of the multilateral approach.

This slow search for peaceful and inclusive African governance remains essential to ensure the spread of basic common goods without which the economic and social development of Africa will always remain unsatisfactory. The **progress reports** published regularly on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals are very clear in this regard: the progress observed in education,

health, nutrition, infrastructure, housing and public order are all dependent on the **progress made in the rule of law**. This correlation is the crux of the issue of governance: only with the establishment of the rule of law, accountability, judicial independence, property rights, the fight against corruption and even the social inclusion of women and young people can African countries hope to break the current deadlock preventing them from achieving prosperity.

3. The long walk towards security

The other priority in multilateral mobilisation for Africa must be security. Nothing solid can be built to advance cooperation with Africa if it is to unfold in an **environment of permanent conflict**. However, that is exactly what is happening today in many African regions. Violence is spreading in the Sahel, it has not disappeared in central Africa, and it remains endemic in the Horn of Africa.

To break the deadlock, African countries and multilateral actors, States as international organisations must **build together a strategy** that is shared by all with an objective clearly summarised by a player on the ground in the Sahel: security will return when the African farmer prefers to put away his weapons because he can find a job and better social conditions. It is the **trio of defence, development, and diplomacy** that must be highlighted with the commitment of all the actors involved in the field (political and military leaders, multilateral organisations, cooperation agencies, financial institutions, NGOs), who must **learn to work together** in a complementary way, by inventing new modes of coordination.

The multilateral approach must therefore focus on these three areas:

.) In the **military field**, the various components (national forces, external support from international organisations or other countries) must be structured to complement one another based on the type of mission (stationing, operational, training), the forces deployed (national, multilateral) and the geographical area (on the front, rear lines, the rest of the territory).

.) In **development projects**, emphasis must be placed on good coordination between politico-military officials and actors in humanitarian or cooperation action. The distrust between the two groups must give way to a **constructive dialogue** on projects that must complement each other usefully. If necessary, the dialogue should invent new methods within **multidisciplinary operational centres**, focused on clearly delimited areas of action. Here, the objective is to move beyond the usual working methods to combine military operation and the developmental approach in a process of continuity.

.) **Diplomatic action** must finally accompany these first two aspects with a dual objective: take action in the **short term** to limit the risk of error (de-escalation channels), temporarily suspend fighting (through cease-fire) or, better yet, put an end to hostilities; then pursue a **long-term objective of stability** by negotiating peace agreements or even regional collective security pacts.

In any case, multilateral action must be fed by the two lessons learned from extensive experience with cooperation in Africa:

. **pragmatically move forward** from African realities and by listening to local actors whose experience and knowledge of the field are irreplaceable;

. **mobilise and involve African partners** so that they can appropriate this cooperation.

These principles are also important for the success of the multilateral approach, in Africa as elsewhere in the world. At the heart of the Covid-19 crisis and in view of the many challenges that it will pose for Africans, they form the essential **code of conduct** allowing multilateral actors to effectively support the African continent at a time when it will have to face one of the major tests of its history.



Leaders pour la paix



Plenary 2020

LEADERS' COMMENTS



Plenary 2018



Plenary 2019

Ms Assia BEN SALAH

Ambassador at large of His Majesty the King of Morocco - Morocco

First of all, I largely share the observation that Pierre Vimont describes in great detail, on the structural dysfunctions of an obsolete and increasingly criticised global system, and which seems to be left floundering under the weight of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting global economic and social storm.

This unprecedented crisis has in fact exposed the inability of the United Nations system to cope with it and has revealed the extent of the rejection of multilateralism as a whole.

While cooperation appears to all to be a vital need in the face of the crisis, leaders have failed to embody and support such an approach.

We could talk endlessly about the reasons that the multilateral system is unable to reform despite multiple attempts. One thing is certain: to save multilateralism, it is urgent and imperative to renew it.

I / This much-needed renewal raises two major and related questions: HOW and WHO should carry out this titanic task?

A/ The question of “how” comes up against the many differences and great uncertainties that generate the “epidemic of fear”. Fear is certainly the characteristic most shared in this crisis, so rare are men like Giono in *The Horseman on the Roof*, who would not give in to fear.

Everything in fact calls for caution, while responses must be quick, robust and even daring thanks to “cooperation between states and the support of the most fragile” as Jean Tirole, Nobel laureate in economics, says.

- Despite unprecedented efforts on a global scale, scientific research, which is necessarily a long-term project, continues to fumble. The ferocity and eagerness of competition can compromise fairness and solidarity, the cardinal virtues of the treatment and vaccines to be developed, needed for their very effectiveness on a global scale.
- The many paradoxes of the situation also raise questions: mountains of liquidity, an economy on the brink of the abyss, but robust financial markets! The future holds greater inequality between individuals and more concentrations of large firms - already underway - and of course generalised over-indebtedness, an unbearable legacy for future generations.
- Without going into the intricacies of the hyper-complexity of global governance, various “models”, some contradictory, appear to be in competition rather than searching for both a global plan to end the crisis and a vigorous recovery strengthened from the many lessons learned.
- However, new common rules are urgently needed to renew universal institutions, essential for the coherent functioning of international activities for the survival of humanity “confined” to planet Earth.

B/ WHO therefore to mobilise in favour of the revival of multilateralism?

Obviously, it is a global crisis and the responses were first national, dispersed and even selfish. The lack of leadership gives way to confrontation/competition at the top, between the United States and China, which puts the world on the brink of a new “cold war”. The entire multilateral system therefore seems to be held hostage, jeopardising the meagre potential advances.

1/ How, against this background, can we encourage the **position of states** to move in the direction of a revival of multilateralism?

a/ What influence could be exerted, first of all on the policies of **the two great powers** to encourage them to cooperate?

- On the one hand, the positions of President Donald Trump, of unbridled unilateralism, are well known. Perhaps we could point out that the “change of era” inaugurated by this presidency is much more in the particular style of excessively pushing “American exceptionalism”, thanks to the “America first” approach to making “America great again”. This objective is largely compromised by the deep fractures and violence that tear apart the greatest power in the world.
- Internationally, diplomatic reserve is no longer appropriate. Moreover, the approach seeks to unravel the entire system, initially set up under American leadership, but also the achievement of the common rules of multilateralism, developed since 1945, which were often fiercely negotiated!
- The tsunami of US withdrawals from many international institutions sometimes puts them on the verge of paralysis. The latest withdrawal from the WHO, on 30 May, poses a new problem for these institutions, namely the potential “guardianship” of a private sector, in this case of the Bill Gates Foundation, also increasingly subject to raging controversy.
- Much more dangerous for international peace and security, is the withdrawal of the first military power, announced on 21 May, from the Open Skies agreement and the absence of renegotiations of New Starts to reduce armaments. Just like that of the Paris Agreement, it seriously compromises such a difficult fight against climate change for the very survival of humanity on the planet.

In addition, this practice will make negotiations of legally binding agreements particularly difficult or even impossible in the future.

The Covid-19 crisis, paradoxically marks the singular abandonment by the first power of all leadership to head the health battle as in 2015 against the Ebola virus, and to coordinate the responses to the global economic recession, as during the 2008 Great Financial Crisis.

Furthermore, may President Trump have found in the accusations against China - beyond the diversionary effect of his management of the pandemic - the high point of his pre-campaign to be re-elected?

We could ask to what extent, on 6 November, a return of the Democrats to power would change the situation, with such a poor image of multilateralism among American public opinion, and the major unknowns of the reconfiguration of powers in the USA and elsewhere (see scenarios below.)

* On the other hand, in this power struggle, Xi Jinping's much more assertive China wants to lose neither face nor the trade war. Galvanised by the ambition to conquer first place on the international stage, by 2049, its strategies have everything to gain from multilateralism, which some suspect it of "manipulating" for this purpose.

For the time being, China is still trying to have us to forget its increasingly criticized role in the expansion of the pandemic. In particular, despite the extreme tensions, it needs to manage the foreseeable vertiginous fall in growth of "the workshop of the world", if not deserted to say the least. But a weakened China will have to give more guarantees of its multilateralism (see scenarios below).

How far could it go to gain credibility with multilateralism and with Africa? A great challenge would be to persuade it to go far beyond the soft power of its "facemask" diplomacy, to allow Africa, in need of liquidity, the substantial financial support it needs to cope with the serious looming economic and food crisis, without further increasing its debt.

b/ Strengthen the entire UN system

A natural extension of the states and theatre of their cooperation/competition (take for example the voting instructions to be followed) - the UN system seems more and more powerless:

- A blocked Security Council, as demonstrated by its inability to pass a resolution on the Covid-19 and perhaps even more so in the future, if the America/China Cold War sets in.
- A Secretary General, whose repeated activism and calls for a cease-fire do little to change the situation of conflicts on the ground. We can even see the intensification of some, like in Libya and the resurgence of attacks by terrorist groups, in Africa in particular.
- Specialised institutions, destitute or even on the verge of suffocation.

However, a virtuous dynamic should not be ruled out in the transitional period, if those who believe in the multilateral system mobilise:

- Awareness everywhere, to at least combat common dangers!
- Mobilise like-minded states around shared issues to be saved;
- Develop advocacy/lobbying to try to change the positions of recalcitrant parties on urgent priority issues;
- Resolve some "misunderstandings" and "minor" blockages, to move forward;
- Try to gradually integrate stubborn differences, which sometimes survive very long negotiations. It is a long-term project that will have to be sustained over time.

c/ Can regional responses be the drivers for this renewal?

1 / **Europe** appears to have no other choice than multilateralism to exist between the USA and China. Can it, after the initial dispersion, overcome its own differences, to unite? We will have to wait for the response in July, notably from the four so-called "frugal" wealthy states (Austria, Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden) to the robust recovery plan which makes the Commission the holder of the astronomical debt to be raised - €750 billion- to revive the economy and support the most affected members.

This unprecedented approach could, if validated, strengthen the credibility of the EU to bring together more countries than the 60 who responded to the call from France and Germany in 2018, to put multilateralism back in the saddle.

Europe could weigh even more, if it succeeds in organising its strategic and security independence, in establishing more balanced relations with its South Mediterranean border and the ambitious partnership it wishes to establish with Africa.

2/ **Africa**, on the other hand, appears too dependent and marginal, to constitute in itself the engine required to serve as a test for the revival of multilateralism, as proposed by the report. However, if it succeeds with the political and economic structural changes necessary for good governance and the release of energy to enhance its many strengths, the continent of young people may well create surprise. (See below)

Africa, which is much more a passive object than an active subject on the international stage, now more than ever appears to be the theatre of confrontation/competition between the United States and China and also of lesser powers, both for raw materials and arable land as a promising market.

Its relations with Europe remain complex, at least with the former colonising countries. Will they be able, in order to “normalise”, to take up the immense challenges as the EU and the AU want to take together? Will they be able to establish a “balanced” partnership, the wishes of so many summits, and implement joint strategies in many priority areas, as recommended by the “High level Panel” set up following the Europe-Africa summit in Abidjan (2017) ¹⁶? We will have to wait for the next Summit (in November?) for an initial response.

d/ Civil societies are increasingly becoming essential players in new societal realities. Although clearly they cannot replace States, they must be better informed about the real issues and the benefits of an amended multilateralism, far from the stereotypes that tarnish it. Their support would then undoubtedly consolidate its legitimacy. It is a question of instilling the need for dialogue and concertation as vectors of peace, at the heart of societies. To be heard, this long-term pedagogy will have to insist on the need to renovate multilateralism, adapt it to new realities and provide some avenues for reviving hope.

e/ As some dream, we could - after the dramatic test of Covid-19 is over - consider the revival of multilateralism based on **common goods of humanity**?

- The origins and developments of the health crisis require us to take a different look at **ecology, biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development**. A lifeline for continuing the adventure of humanity on this planet, these areas, alas, remain perceived by the “productivists”

¹⁶ In the wake of the Europe Africa Summit in Abidjan in 2017, the European Commission, with the support of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the ONE organisation by singer Bono, as well as the think tank Friends of Europe, set up a platform for reflection in the form of a group of high-level personalities, in particular to address the subjects of industrialisation, youth employment, and the digital challenge. The group has met several times in Brussels and Abidjan, and has produced several reference documents, including a report on the Africa Europe digital partnership.

as a hurdle and objects of denial on the part of many. The Covid-19 crisis should, however, convince traumatised producers and consumers to make these topics the driver of change, as much literature devoted to “green” revivals has emphasized.

- **New fields**, including digital, artificial intelligence, robotics, etc. will also largely determine our future lifestyles. At the heart of the competition between the various dominant models, better regulation thanks to a renewed multilateralism would ensure it operates more harmoniously or is at least more stable to avoid the chaos of one-upmanship and divisions.

To conclude this section, a few words on the **scenarios** proposed by Pierre Vimont.

The intensity and duration of both the pandemic and the socio-economic crisis will impact the collective imagination of the world in different ways. The post Covid-19 period points to a different “normality”, deeply altered by the upheavals of production, consumption, travel, and gathering; in short, our entire lifestyles.

We will no doubt have to learn to live with the virus and the unpredictable in order to “wait for the unexpected” as Edgar Morin puts it.

Developing “scenarios” therefore appears to be a particularly perilous exercise.

- It seems to me, however, that the first and second scenario proposed by Pierre Vimont would not be mutually exclusive and could coexist in a hybrid system. Without returning to the status quo, “multilateralism trapped in its contradictions” will perhaps continue to worsen, with at the same time an exacerbation of the confrontation between the United States and China, particularly in this pre-electoral period in America, of extreme violence on all counts and if Donald Trump is re-elected.
- The third scenario does not seem feasible to me in a foreseeable period given the great uncertainties. Nevertheless, under the constraint of necessity, we could benefit from some clarifications for more effective international cooperation. First in certain fields such as proven therapies and effective vaccines when they are developed, for example. The **fear** of new waves of contamination could dissuade the protagonists from tearing each other apart and finding common ground to better share the benefits with all parties. We could also see, under the need to revive the devastated international economy, the emergence of many and varied forms of multilateralism, with ad-hoc agreements on issues to make life “work” on the planet.

A fourth scenario could be envisaged - a more “cautious” multilateralism, if Joe Biden is elected President of the United States on 6 November.

As a good Democrat, he would prefer the return of a form of leadership of America which “wants what is good for the world.”

--- In this scenario, the multilateral system, which would no longer be the target of a planned destruction by the United States, but remains unpopular among the American public, could, despite everything, be given some leeway for a revival. In this form of cautious multilateralism, the new American President should be attentive to economic justice and the social impact of trade liberalism, dear to the left wing of the party which has rallied behind him.

--- American leadership also found by a Western camp, less divided thanks to a certain “restoration” of previously damaged confidence, where Europe would no longer be the target of manifest American hostility. Transatlantic détente, which would certainly be reinforced by strategic autonomy and greater responsibility for a safer and more secure Europe. A Europe that would probably be forced to decide between America and China on issues like digital technology!

--- This returning American leadership would hinder the rise of a China weakened by Covid-19. Tensions would perhaps be lost in violent polemics, without decreasing in intensity! Indeed, a clearer policy of the United States would force China, among other things, to update its “derogatory” practices within the WTO for example, to bring them into line with the evolution of its status since its accession as a developing country in 2001. Besides the trade and security rivalry, human rights, dear to the Democrats, is also a subject of strong friction.

II Africa

To thwart catastrophism, gain credibility and erase negative images, Africa must first of all become an "adult" and gain autonomy. To do this, major structural, political, economic and governance changes are needed.

- Fulfilling the famous call of the King of Morocco Mohammed VI “Africa must trust Africa” would facilitate the implementation of both the ambitious Agenda 2063 and the Free Trade Agreement across the continent, suitable to strengthen multilateralism, which should enter into force in June, but which is struggling to prepare on the ground.
- The vigorous and anticipated responses of states and the African Union to this pandemic allow for some hope.
- To coordinate health action first, the African Union, which had already revived the CDC (Center for Disease Control) in 2019 and strengthened its partnership with WHO, has aligned the best African specialists in this area. It also appointed five big names in Africa from the world of finance as special envoys to coordinate the response to an unprecedented economic recession and international support.
- In terms of **debt**, the moratorium decided by the G20 would relieve the least developed countries for the time being, but many believe that it should be extended to African middle-income countries.
- One of the African Union's five special envoys, Tidjane Thiam, former president of Credit Suisse, pleads instead for the exit of Africa from the vicious cycle of debt.
- Substantial investment is what Africa will need to create the 18 million annual jobs needed by 2035¹⁷ and unlock the full potential of young people (60% of the population under 25), in particular women.

¹⁷ In Africa, 40% of the workforce recruited by terrorist and organised crime groups are unemployed young people.

- In addition, to prevent the crisis from setting in after Covid-19, the Continent would need \$100 billion, while all donors combined have only agreed to \$44 billion.

So far, Africa seems more spared from the health crisis, (As of 26 May: 120,000 cases with 3,550 deaths)¹⁸

However, the socio-economic crisis is already there. Everything seems to be faltering: from behemoths like Ethiopian Airlines to street vendors, with an incredible increase in violence against women and groups like Boko Haram. The poor, women - primary caregivers and teachers - and the large informal sectors are hit hard, despite local creativity, solidarity and community mobilisation.

The spectre of the "Latin America syndrome", which would see a late massive contamination of Africa, however haunts the minds and gives credit to the catastrophic scenario: Fragile health systems and insufficient equipment; exploding poverty; containment impossible due to the density of mega-cities and the surrounding shantytowns; protective measures impossible to follow: lack of water, soap and masks everywhere ubiquitous culture of sharing societies and the reason by embrace (French: *étreinte raison*) so dear to Léopold Sedar Senghor, where they are three "kisses" and not a...

It is still too early to assess the global impact of the pandemic on the Continent. The African Union, despite the rapid reactions to the crisis, will need to respond to immense expectations, in particular from the **angry African youth**¹⁹ and transform the test, by inscribing effective multilateral governance into reality.

¹⁸ Various hypotheses have been put forward: The continent is more isolated, hotter, younger, and more experienced with previous epidemics, and therefore has early management skills of the looming crisis.

¹⁹ We will know more about these when the results of the survey launched two months ago by "Afrobarometer" are published.

Ms Ton Nu Thi NINH

President of the Ho Chi Minh City Peace and Development Foundation (HPDF), Vice-President of the Vietnam Peace Committee, Former Ambassador of Vietnam to the European Union, Former Vice-President of the National Assembly's Committee on Foreign Affairs - Vietnam

The world's emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic should not replace the Cold War of the second half of the twentieth century with a new cold war, swapping one bipolarity with another. The majority of countries refuse the logic of "either you're with us or against us". Medium-sized and, in particular, small countries would prefer a new, rethought and reframed non-alignment, based on adherence to a healthy and lasting interdependence characterised not by the law of the strongest, but instead a truly mutually beneficial cooperation. We need to be able to build a realistic and dynamic multilateralism, underpinned by modular multipolarity depending on the issue, the field, the challenge, and the interests involved.

In this regard, the middle powers and regional engagement frameworks should make more use of their voices and contributions. In other words, reformed multilateralism should be the result of a more democratic international process which would better reflect the world of today rather than that of the second half of the last century.

In the disturbing context of US-China antagonism, it would perhaps be wise to include in our circle of Leaders For Peace some American and Chinese academics/thinktankers: this would have the two-fold advantage of hearing perspectives and more thoughtful and detached analyses from the two sides, and for them to be exposed to the thoughts of personalities outside the antagonism.

I support Irina Bokova's call regarding Oxfam's petition for free access for all to the future Covid-19 vaccine, based on the conviction reinforced by the current pandemic that, fundamentally, health is or should be a public good, as highlighted in the petition "after all, no one is safe unless we are all safe".

Perhaps our group could consider signing the petition collectively. This would be a strong sign of support and underline the message that peace also includes health security.

As for Africa, I will end with two suggestions:

- Our group could work with the WHO and the African Union to build a preventive approach capable of better preparing the most vulnerable African countries to face the current or future pandemic.
- Some Asian countries could share with them their success stories, best practices, and lessons learned, such as the "one size fits all" approach does not work, or as in the case of Vietnam what the Financial Times calls a "low cost strategy" better suited to its level of resources, unlike much richer South Korea.

Ms Maria VAN DER HOEVEN

Former Minister of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands, member of the Committee on Economy and Climate - Netherlands

The two parts of the 2020 report on the state of multilateralism today and on Africa provide an excellent analysis of the current situation and the courses of action envisaged.

The Covid-19 crisis highlights the importance of a multilateral approach. It is obvious that unilateral measures do not lead to good sustainable solutions.

The crisis is an example of an increasingly populous world, but it is also one that reveals the failure of our current footprint on unilateral action.

Obviously the approach to the Covid-19 crisis is today's emergency. However, the post-pandemic development scenario must be considered; a scenario focusing on sustainable development, because we must not forget that there is another major crisis: the climate. The global crisis is already affecting African countries now. The countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, lack access to clean energy and heating as demonstrated by the organization SE4ALL.

The global crisis demands real multilateral cooperation because the climate knows no borders.

Without mentioning it, the report contains several fair, but unfortunately negative, references to unilateral American practices. A fact that comes up in all American policy.

I fully agree with the need to redefine the fundamentals of multilateralism, based on common values, resulting in generally supported rules and procedures. And it is true that some of our multilateral organisations no longer function as originally intended. They are politicised, and many are part of geopolitical discussions.

We need to study their function and protocols in order to change and update them.

So, how do we go about this? Where do we start? Who is in charge?

I don't expect this new definition to come only from the organisations themselves: there are too many vested interests. And let us not forget: a multilateral organisation is only as powerful as the Member States want it to be!

However, all the efforts of "Leaders for Peace" regarding the United Nations and other multilateral organisations will be useful. A reforming vision is needed in order to update them.

In my opinion, at the same time we need to start a movement from the outside, using social media; by involving new stakeholders.

In other words: it needs the active participation of citizens, specifically women and young people.

I would like to add a little comment on the chapter on Africa.

First I would like to support the suggestion in the report regarding the exploration of the work of GAVI, the vaccine alliance, which supports research and universal access to the future vaccine against Covid-19.

GAVI receives donations from many European countries and others, as well as foundations like the Bill & Melissa Gates Foundation.

Secondly, I recognise the structural problems such as governance and the return of peace, as well as the need to speak with Africa instead of talking about it. *Let's not start colonialism again!* However, in this chapter I believe two important points are missing:

- the first concerns the often religious and ethnic origin of many conflicts.
- the second concerns China's growing influence and power in Africa, which, unfortunately, does not largely lead to the sustainable development of the economy and prosperity. *A confrontation between China and the United States would lead to a new cold war, which could develop into a proxy war in Africa.*

Both are also African realities.

Mr Eduardo MALONE

Joint CEO of Pathé, Diocesan Council – Argentina

This new report is a continuation of the search for ways to strengthen dialogue and the rule of law between the nations of the world, the two pillars of "multilateralism".

Multilateralism has spread for more than 40 years, starting from the partnership and development pact offered in 1978 by the USA to China.

Recently, multilateralism has been gradually moving backwards on all major issues for the vital interests of humanity. Why?

The so-called "multilateralist" process in place focuses mainly on advancing "freedom" between nations. It has not managed in time or with the same force to tackle two very negative effects on the populations of Western democracies, namely: the decrease in physical security of people and the excessive increase in inequalities. Considerable and permanent imbalances in trade between the most powerful nations have gradually caused mass unemployment, followed by state deficits, a rise in unsustainable debts, diminished purchasing power and finally a sharp increase in inequalities. At the same time, the opening of borders, insufficiently managed from a scientific perspective, has led to a worsening of the quality of life of the populations because of:

- a) increasing immigration, either as a result of the destruction of the borders of countries (e.g. Iraq, Libya, and Syria), or for economic or climatic reasons,
- b) rising insecurity of the population resulting from the terrorist attacks,
- c) heightened insecurity in the health and lives of people with the appearance of Covid-19.

For half a century, these imbalances in very powerful and key countries of multilateralism (USA, UK, Brazil, Italy, etc.) have been fuelled by the rise of populist and unilateral leaders, and recent violent revolts of populations against the established order and the model of society. The reflections and actions of the Leaders for Peace will surely integrate this contribution in the future to identify and publicise the best means to rapidly diminish the cumulative negative effects of a "liberal-multilateralism" in favour of a "protective-multilateralism".

Mr Peter MEDGYESSY

Former Prime Minister of Hungary - Hungary

I agree that the greatest danger to multilateralism comes from the United States. American politicians feel their global hegemony in danger, so they want to prevent the balance of power from shifting. It is regrettable that we must prepare for a protracted conflict between the United States and China and continuing rivalry between the two countries. It should be noted that, if a Democratic president were elected in 2021, this serious conflict of interest would still persist, albeit in a more civilized form and more open to compromise. The underlying discord however would not change. So, in the future, our foundation must try to represent and achieve its noble goals under these circumstances.

In my speech, I do not wish to take the traditional approach to assessing the overall political situation, and instead would prefer to draw attention to a special aspect.

President Jean-Pierre Raffarin is undoubtedly right when he says that the main characteristic of the current crisis and danger is that the entire world is affected by it. Special attention should be paid to the following aspect: what are the areas where the epidemic has caused the greatest damage? It is obvious that the pandemic has caused major problems in the health of the population and the economic and social consequences are no less serious. But, sooner or later, all that can be put right. However, what requires a longer period of time is to compensate for the effects that the pandemic has had on people's minds, to cheer them up, to repair mental damage. People have lost their sense of security, their optimism, their hope in a good future. The mission of our foundation is to offer a solution to these problems.

The members of *Leaders for Peace*, during our interviews and our actions, have always affirmed the fundamental importance of:

- dialogue
- open exchange of views and discussions
- training, education and teaching.

Our main goal always remains to spread rationalism, have a forward-looking approach and cultivate optimism and hope. We must dispel uncertainty and strengthen mutual understanding and respect in different relationships (between individuals, countries, regions or ethnic groups).

Ms Elisabeth DECREY

Founder of Geneva Call. Associate researcher at the Centre for Security Policy, Former President of the Parliament of the Republic and Canton of Geneva - Switzerland

1. Human rights.

The report emphasises the lack of anticipation and the need to prevent conflict, and gives several relevant leads. I feel that one of them should be given more prominence - respect for human rights. The source of most conflict today (at least in the beginning, because later other actors and/or governments get involved in conflicts to strengthen their power and influence), the main cause is failure to respect of Human Rights. (Colombia, rights of rural folk flouted = birth of the Colombian guerrillas, Myanmar, rights of minorities flouted = birth of numerous ethnic conflicts, Syria, rights to freedom of expression flouted = birth of the Free Syrian Army. And the list goes on.) Rarely do we see people taking up arms when they feel heard and their fundamental rights respected.

2. The fight against impunity

Pierre Vimont insists in a very relevant way on the need to find new methods to advance peace efforts.

We must realise that peace cannot be built on atrocities. Today, violations of International Humanitarian Law have become so frequent that they become commonplace for the international community (bombings of hospitals and schools are no longer even reported in the press). And impunity reigns supreme. Impunity always means more violations and violence, and therefore extremely difficult peace processes.

The international community must find the means to revive a credible and effective monitoring and sanctions system, a prerequisite for peace.

3. A reinforced role of the United Nations General Assembly

The Security Council has lost its *raison d'être*, and so far, it has largely failed in its mission. Faced with this observation, the United Nations General Assembly should take on more responsibility and adopt certain resolutions that the Security Council is unable to unblock. We can always hope - perhaps some time in the future - for a reform of the Security Council...But in the meantime, strengthening the role of the General Assembly would be a real possibility to revive multilateralism. It must - and it can - do it.

4. Multilateralism of cities

In the document, under "relaunching of multilateral negotiations" (point 2, p. 24) it seems to me that promoting a multilateralism of cities could be an equally interesting process. Dialogue between cities on their issues - more localised, simpler, and more concrete - could encourage the emergence of new and common ideas, multilateralism at the city level. These processes could then go back to the level of state multilateralism. (Note the holding of the "Mayors' Forum" in October 2020 in Geneva)

5. Rename multilateralism (complementary to point 4)

At the international level, it is unlikely to be effective trying to convince heads of state and members of government to make multilateralism a priority of their national policy. Heads of state and government are elected by the people who are fearful of future crises, loss of confidence in international politics, and protectionism. With leaders seeking most of the time to be elected or re-elected, they will respond - for electoral purposes - to the wishes of the population: protectionism and nationalism.

It is therefore imperative first of all to address the population, in order to explain to them that multilateralism is the only possible path, because it is ultimately a win-win project. But currently the word "multilateralism" provokes negative reactions; it is a frowned upon word, which scares and repulses. Perhaps we should rename multilateralism? 100 years ago, at the birth of the League of Nations, the international community coined the word "multilateralism". Could this be the chance for us to re-invigorate it, and give it a new name? And launch a great, original, global campaign via social networks, the media, blogs, slogans, the dissemination of actions and concrete examples, etc. to launch this new name and explain the positive aspects of the principles of multilateralism. Youth and women's networks could play a vital role in this global campaign.

6. European Union Peace and Security Council

The idea of creating a regional European security council, like the African Union, is an interesting proposition. We could call it the European Peace and Security Council ... This is the name the African Union has chosen for its council, and these are the terms that are most often used internationally. (Only the United Nations Security Council does not mention the word "peace", which is unfortunate.)

7. Involvement of civil society and training

As for the need to include civil society mentioned in the report, I thank Pierre Vimont for this approach. I sincerely believe this is truly what is needed today. Nothing will happen without the support of the population. But to gain that support, it must have access to the right information, free and respectful of divergent opinions.

Furthermore, young people must receive adequate training enabling them to pursue paid professional activity. Poverty and unemployment create despair and revolt among young people, and it is these same young people who will then join violent and extremist groups. After all, they have nothing else to lose. (There is a saying that "a soldier is never hungry". The choice can be quickly made for these young people.)

8. The fight against corruption

On a more general level, I also feel there should be a greater focus on corruption in this report. It is gangrene for multilateralism. Indeed, multilateralism cannot develop with states whose leaders are corrupt, divert common goods for their benefit, etc. Multilateralism must develop a common global objective: the well-being of populations, but this is destroyed by corruption.

9. Africa

Finally, prioritising Africa is today a judicious and necessary approach to anticipate an imbalance which could increase seriously in the coming years.

Mr Antonio PATRIOTA

Ambassador of Brazil to Egypt, former Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Brazil – Brazil

Multilateralism

1 How can we respond to the global health, economic and social crisis brought about by the coronavirus pandemic and use it as an opportunity to enhance international cooperation, at a time of geopolitical realignments? Is multilateralism as we know it fatally ill? Can it be preserved? What are the reforms that can realistically be envisaged?

2 It is possible to argue that the pandemic and the challenges posed by global warming are both vivid contemporary examples of phenomena that cannot be confronted single handed by any state or group of states.

3 Climate change and the pandemic are already shaping national debates, with electoral implications. By now it has become clear that unilateral, self-centered approaches can be counter-productive. Such a context opens up opportunities for the emergence of political leadership interested in enhanced international cooperation.

4 As the unipolar moment, marked by US economic and military hegemony, fades away a rising China becomes increasingly influential. We are witnessing a geopolitical transition that will place China in the number one position as an economic power, while the US retains considerable military advantage. Preventing this key bilateral relationship from generating global disruption is in the interest of the international community as a whole. In other words, helping to create an environment for cooperation between Beijing and Washington is of global strategic value.

5 The current health and climate challenges, coupled with an epoch changing geopolitical transition, generate international tensions that expose the shortcomings of the current multilateral arrangements. However, it would be incorrect to imply that unilateral approaches to peace and security or international trade are something new. In fact the single most destabilizing unilateral act of the XXI Century may have been the invasion of Iraq of 2003. Unilateral sanctions have been with us for decades. Unilateral trade retaliation has been going on in spite of the existence of GATT or WTO.

6 If multilateralism, as embodied by the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions, survived the Cold War and the unipolar moment, there is no structural reason why it should be incompatible with a multipolar world. It may seem we are heading towards a new kind of bipolarity. But a more careful observation will reveal the capacity of other actors, individually or in coalitions, to advance or block certain agendas by working together. These actors include established powers, such as the large European economies, Japan and the Russian Federation, as well as new or so-called "emerging" powers in the developing world. In strict military terms we may be in a geopolitical environment in which only a handful of players can determine outcomes. But in economic terms power is more widely distributed, and as regards diplomacy there are numerous manifestations of multipolarity in today's world.

7 Multilateralism has already delivered important results in the XXI Century. The consensus 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are noteworthy examples. It is also worth noting that neither of these achievements were led by Washington or Beijing. In the first case both powers joined in the final consensus. In the second, the Obama administration signed the Paris Agreement, and only under President Trump did Washington decide on a different course. It is therefore possible to say that among the major players there is either a willingness to cooperate multilaterally on issues of universal concern (China, Russia, EU and others), and that even those governments who display a unilateral predisposition rule over societies in which a significant portion of the electorate supports international cooperation through multilateral approaches.

8 In other areas calling for international cooperation the picture is less encouraging. When it comes to peace and security, there is a widespread perception that neither the existing mechanisms are adequate (UN Security Council) nor is the conceptual framework satisfactory. But there is also a sense that Chapter VII of the UN Charter represented a step forward for Civilization, to the extent that it ruled out the use of force except in self-defense or as authorized by the Security Council. Long overdue additional steps will involve enlarging the membership of the Security Council and circumscribing the scope for resort to the veto by permanent members.

9 Conceptually, there have been increasing calls for admitting intervention to curtail cases of mass atrocities, genocide or ethnic cleansing, when other non-coercive efforts have failed. The debate on R2P (responsibility to protect) and RwP (responsibility while protecting) points towards this direction. These concerns may be seen as a drive to include under the umbrella of the Security Council new provisions relating to a sense of "collective responsibility", in addition to a purely "collective security" perspective.

10 No doubt the challenges posed by global pandemics and climate change also call for a sense of collective responsibility. However, it would be unwise to introduce them into the Agenda of the Security Council for two main reasons:

(a) none of the remedies which the Council can prescribe will help to address those challenges - neither peace keeping operations, nor sanctions or military interventions have a major role to play, except in specific conflict areas - where indeed cease-fires are of paramount relevance;

(b) to place topics of such universal interest in the hands of a body of limited membership, in which five permanent members wield veto power, would be tantamount to hijacking issues from the General Assembly, the most inclusive and democratic multilateral forum at our disposal.

11 The General Assembly is also under pressure to streamline an agenda that is too broad, lacks focus and has become unwieldy. No doubt a revived multilateralism will need to propose a narrower, more result oriented, list of priorities for the GA to acquire renewed prestige and authority.

12 Current IMF and World Bank weighed voting rules are viewed as anachronistic by the BRICs and other emerging actors for justifiable reasons. The WTO is being prevented from exercising its dispute settlement role due to its consensus rule, which gives veto power to any individual member. The time has come to review such procedural aspects of governance that contribute to a sense of paralysis. On the other hand, the expansion of the G-7, which became the G-20 after the 2008 economic crisis,

revealed a collective capacity for more inclusive coordination on economic and financial matters, in line with a more multipolar international environment.

13 These thoughts are an attempt to provide an answer to the questions outlined in the first paragraph above. Multilateralism may be in disrepair and in need of an overhaul, but it remains alive. The multilateral institutions created in the aftermath of World War II continue to provide an indispensable venue for international cooperation on a wide-range of issues. The UN is producing results in several areas, from sustainable development to climate change. The WHO and other specialized agencies provide valuable assistance and help to coordinate responses to common challenges. At the same time, it is undeniable that in several key spheres, including peace and security or international trade, unilateralism has placed the UN and other organizations under considerable stress.

14 It is also possible to argue that there is sufficient international support for preserving the essential tenets of multilateralism. China, as the world's major rising power, does not seem intent upon replacing current institutions with new ones, even as it promotes regional initiatives such as the Asia Development Bank or the One Belt One Road project. On the contrary, it appears interested in assuming greater responsibilities within the existing UN system, by presenting candidacies to several high profile positions. Notwithstanding the Iraq war, and other unilateral attitudes assumed by the United States in the XXI Century, American society is not unanimously against international cooperation within multilateral arrangements as such. Other major players in the developed and developing world are, broadly speaking, supportive of enhanced international cooperation, even when avoiding the word "multilateralism".

15 As the international community acknowledges that international cooperation is fundamental to confront universal challenges, the coronavirus pandemic can add to the awareness raised by global warming, the fight against Terrorism, a review the pros and cons of globalization, inter alia, to help trigger a collective drive towards enhanced international cooperation. Such a process should build upon the many important achievements of the past, while embracing ambitious reform agendas both in terms of governance as well as substance. There is scope for regenerating the UN General Assembly, through the establishment of an agreed set of priorities. Security Council expansion and reform is long overdue. Voting procedures at the IFI's and WTO may have outlived their usefulness. A gradual reform process that tackles those issues is not an unrealistic proposition.

16 How can the two major powers, US and China, become engaged in this process? The Leaders for Peace have placed emphasis on outreach to youth and women. These efforts could offer a starting point. Twenty five years after the "Beijing Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace", a debate could be envisaged involving groups engaged in the promotion of gender equality in both countries with a view towards renewed international cooperation in the XXI Century. A similar effort could be deployed to attract youth representatives from China and the US for discussions around issues of global concern.

17. The utopia of a post-hegemonic world of enhanced cooperation around common values and objectives may remain a mirage for the foreseeable future. But the inspiration sought to keep alive the vision of a more peaceful civilization for mankind requires tapping into the resources provided by culture and academia. In this respect, there will be much to be gained by listening to intellectuals whose messages match those of our group. One such individual is the franco-lebanese author Amin Maalouf, whose "Disordered World" remains a seminal work.

18. Two additional thoughts come to mind as important elements in our effort to reunite the international community around collective aspirations. The first implies differentiating between globalization and international cooperation. A critique of globalization, with its positive and negative consequences has become a necessary undertaking, as the world witnesses the economic, social and political impacts of rising inequality within and among nations. There have been winners and losers in this process; the benefits have not been evenly distributed. But a pause for reflexion need not be incompatible with an agenda for improved international cooperation. On the contrary, a resumption of cooperation, under a new more democratic spirit, will greatly benefit from a collective evaluation of the pros and cons of globalization as the world has experienced it for the past few decades. Secondly, it is worth bearing in mind the high levels of military expenditure worldwide as the international community tries to grapple with the most serious economic downturn in a century. Is it acceptable that, according to SIPRI estimates, 1, 9 trillion US dollars be annually spent on weapons?

Africa

1 Even as Africa undergoes rapid demographic, economic and social change, it continues to face multiple security, environmental and governance challenges. The Continent deserves priority attention from the Leaders for Peace as a part of the world where conflict is still rife in many of its regions and millions continue to subsist under extreme poverty. Coronavirus will further disrupt the fragile economies of many African countries, with additional potential for instability.

2 On the other hand Africa has been able to create effective coordination mechanisms, that find no parallel in other parts of the developing world. The African Union is a functional organization with a respected Peace and Security Council that has been instrumental in withdrawing legitimacy from undemocratic regimes. With the establishment of a Continent wide free trade area, Africa demonstrates its commitment to closer economic and infra-structural integration.

3 A new partnership with African countries implies replacing attitudes inherited from colonialism, or donor/recipient mindsets, that fail to recognize the win-win nature of a prosperous, democratic, peaceful Continent for both Africans and non-Africans.

4 An anti-Covid 19 Fund has been proposed by the AU, which deserves international support as it enlists scientific research and public health expertise to fight the coronavirus, with the Pasteur institute in Dakar, Senegal, at its core.

5 Outreach to young Africans can be undertaken through initiatives that tap into established networks. The United Nations Special Representative on Youth, whom the Leaders for Peace visited last January, can help to identify leading personalities and organizations in this regard.

6 As a new generation of Africans prepare themselves to shape their region's destiny, educational matters deserve special attention. Strategies for sustainable development and improved governance will not emerge in the absence of quality education.

7 Weapons transfers to Africa have been igniting and prolonging conflicts, often with foreign interference. Neither peacekeeping efforts undertaken under the aegis of the Security Council nor the "silencing the guns" initiative led by the AU will succeed in the absence of observation by all of existing arms embargoes and curbs on the introduction of arms into the region.

8. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which addresses the impact of war on women and the importance of women's full and equal participation in conflict resolution. From the outset this was an initiative that relied on strong African support, with a leading role played by Namibia. Several African women deserve credit for promoting peace and understanding throughout the region, including Graça Machel from Mozambique, Louise Mushikawobo from Rwanda, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf from Liberia, Nkosasana Dlamini Zuma from South Africa. African male leaders are also increasingly engaged in the promotion of gender equality. Good practices in amending discriminatory laws, advancing women's rights and involving women in peace efforts deserve to be acknowledged and brought to the attention of a wider public.

9. Burkina Faso can provide a good entry point for an understanding of the intertwining security, economic, social and environmental dimensions of the challenges facing many African countries today. The Peace Building Support Office (PBSO) at the UN, under the guidance of Oscar Taranco, has considerable expertise regarding the current Burkinabe situation and may provide valuable assistance in this regard.

10. Africa has a rich literary, musical, artistic culture that has often influenced other parts of the world, as can be easily captured in Picasso's *Demiselles d'Avignon* or in jazz and samba. Laureates of the Nobel Prize for Literature include Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, Naguib Mafouz from Egypt, John Coetzee from South Africa. An African revival cannot overlook these vibrant cultural roots and expressions.

Ms Martha Isabel RUIZ CORZO

Director Grupo Ecologico, Wangari Maathai 2014 Price – Mexico

We reached the point of no return, we sensed it but we did not expect such a masterful blow to reach the core of our system; the world changed for much worse, this is here to stay is not just a matter of health, it's society falling apart. The associated externalities are of incalculable dimensions affecting not only the economy but the quality of life, education, the great impetus for a decadent society, its sick association with the obscure businesses behind the pandemic. How many levels of being: emotional, affective, childhood growing under fear, segregation, lack of social contact? How many situations and recreational spaces have we lost? Will we see everyone behind a mask, confined to seclusion? The impoverishment of society is in every way a loss of freedom. Collectively we enter a new shadow of unpredictable consequences in this pandemic-world.

Multilateralism needs, without a doubt, a commitment from the powerful of the planet. A commitment to face down a constellation of dark leaders and businessmen, nationalists, separatists full of hatred, breaking the ties of society, sowing antagonisms and resentment, leaders who are not willing to think beyond their power agenda, ready to sell every last drop of integrity, exchanging the well-being of humanity for copper coins, risking everything and dealing a low blow to the System, to modernity, breaking its spinal column. Who can we expect to make a commitment to change if blindness prevails due to an excessive ambition of the ruling class of the planet? The decreasing authority of the institutions at the global level, at the national level, makes it seem that there was a single voice of command. I do not understand where this support will come from, which will regain validity and open the door to dialogue and cooperation between countries.

Where are those global leaders who take on the tremendous challenges? That they have the strength to counteract the shadow that surrounds our society, that they understand the climate emergency as the central problem, the always ignored Mother Earth and the decline of their ecosystems and with them the loss of services that the natural infrastructure provides to this demanding society that is a voracious consumer of natural resources. Africa has a poverty rate of 84.5% of its population and like other continents, severe educational and economic disparities. Population growth rates continue to pose persistent problems for development efforts in Africa. The population is expected to double approximately by 2050. This will add 1.2 billion people to the 1.3 billion currently living on this continent. And their deserts advance on agricultural land at a rate of 6 to 7 million hectares per year, affecting the livelihoods of 60 million people and this has affected 80% of their grasslands, plus the deforestation that each year eliminates 4 million hectares of its remaining forests. And it is a continent with high vulnerability to climate change, with effects already present such as heat waves, droughts and atypical rains.

When opportunism and corruption consume the politicians, this translates into tremendous humanitarian deviations. We need a tremendous degree of reflection on the decomposition of society, although within each individual there is solidarity - there are many efforts that do not reach their destination. Civil society must play a more leading role with governance built from the bottom up, with authentic values of common good, and with the versatility and persistence that characterizes us, involving forces such as a wave of passion or love for a cause which generates an additional force. As weavers for freedom with which society and entrepreneurship can mobilize, jumping bureaucracy and borders of the conventional System toward something more creatively responsive and resilient.

Talking about disease is not the same as talking about Health that enters through the mouth, real organic food, not junk food nor dependence on the pharmaceutical industry. A system based on making society sick is not the same as a health system and this cannot occur in contaminated environments and food poisoned by agrochemicals. Your food is your health and that is something totally ignored - our system is a bad administrator of disease, a business plan based on the decline of the potential of the human being.

The global economic model must put natural resources first, the advanced climatic emergency of the biosphere, with ecosystems as its natural infrastructure that provides numerous services to our fragile house and its demanding and abundant society. We need a plan that understands that resources are finite and that everything we extract from the planet is returned to us as pollution, beware! The Earth is a closed system, nothing enters nothing leaves, only sunlight. We will be attentive to the next catastrophic news that will hit our society, while we mobilize all possibilities to act from the trenches with the people, seeking to strengthen regional resilience, promoting a regenerative culture among society.

The green growth behind the large renewable energy transactions is more of the same with a vision of gray agenda, mobility and energy efficiency, green business. Little is said about the planet's regenerative capacities, restoring ecosystems, economically valuing hydrological, carbon and pollination services, not to mention hurricane mitigation and climatization. The regenerative management of soils and forests, mangroves and jungles, training for producers and technicians in organic techniques, monetizing carbon footprint reduction services, alleviating poverty, the best formula for the development of rural communities who own the natural resources. An urgent solution has to be promoted, an economy that finances conservation.

Mr Kamal KHARRAZI

President of Iran's Strategic Council for Foreign Relation, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Islamic Republic of Iran – The Islamic Republic of Iran

I agree that multilateralism is in dire need of a review and that health crises, especially the coronavirus pandemic, provide a good opportunity for establishing a new system of multilateralism through fostering collective cooperation amongst the international community and identifying the weaknesses of the present global order, with the objective of playing a more effective role in reducing and resolving international crises.

Attention to Africa, I believe, is of great significance for removing obstacles, compensating shortages, and resolving crises and conflicts in the continent.

I hope that the Leaders for Peace Foundation could play a more effective role in alleviating the pains and improving the welfare of the African nations as well as contributing to the sustainable development of Africa.

I would like to add that the “International Institute of Muslim Physicians”, headquartered in Iran, is prepared to send doctors to African countries to help them combat the coronavirus outbreak.

I agree that other nations should not remain at ease when African countries are suffering from poverty and destitution which have their roots in Colonialism and continue to affect them in the post-Colonial era. Saadi, the famous Iranian poet of the thirteenth century, also closely known to the French people, has beautifully composed a poem which reads:

*Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain.*

Mr Kanwal SIBAL

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India, former Ambassador of India to France – India

The Covid-19 crisis will reinforce the already existing trends against multilateralism, even when the need of the hour is to combat the virus collectively through greater cooperation. President Trump's America First thinking, belief that the multilateral order that the US helped create had worked against US interests as others took advantage of it and left the country weakened, determination to reduce the burden on America to uphold the global order and insistence that other countries share it, cynicism about the UN, and his anti-globalisation and protectionist thinking had already damaged multilateralism. The grave consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic for the international community as a whole will intensify the tendency to look for more national solutions to challenges that have arisen.

If multilateralism had earlier received a blow from US policies under Trump, it is poised to receive a further blow because of the deepening US-China rivalry. The US was even earlier becoming cognisant of the Chinese challenge and had identified China as a strategic threat. The economic and social cost that America is bearing because of the pandemic has exacerbated anti-China sentiments in the US. If China, the source of the virus, and the US its biggest victim are unable to work together to deal with it, a multilateral effort to do so will be difficult to organise.

The question about the origin of the pandemic has become a very contentious issue, with the US insisting that it should be attributed to China and China opposing this vigorously. The G 7 could not issue a joint statement on the crisis because the US insisted on referring to it as the Wuhan virus and the others demurred. For them, the immediate need is to combat the pandemic and play the blame game later. The UN Security Council has not been able to address what is certainly a grave threat to international security because of continued US insistence that its origin should not be obfuscated. The G 20 held a video-conference on the issue, where the issue of the pandemic's origin was papered over, but the statement does not lay the basis of a concerted combined effort by representative members of the international community. It is more declaratory, with responsibilities to be borne by individual countries.

The controversy of the role of the WHO in the handling of the crisis and the perception that it was manipulated by China is another blow to multilateralism as it targets a body that has hitherto done good work. The US has withheld funding to the organisation for the time being. The Japanese Foreign Minister has called the WHO the China Health Organisation- the CHO.

Globalisation is going to receive a further blow because of the pandemic. A re-ordering of global supply chains to reduce dependence on China is bound to occur over time. A single country over-dependence, especially in the health sector, has been exposed by the pandemic. Countries will now seek to shift production on-shore in critical areas or to other countries, and look at shorter regional chains. This will be a slow process but an inevitable one. Japan has already announced a \$2.2 billion fund to assist Japanese companies to relocate out of China.

While the need for multilateral solidarity to deal with the pandemic is clear, US accusations against China for mishandling the disease in its initial stages and China's robust response disowning even the origin of the virus, much less mishandling it, has set the stage for a bitter confrontation. The suits filed against China in US courts will not help in lowering US-China tensions which, in turn, will hamper multilateral solidarity.

Europe is in disarray over the crisis, with Italy, France, Spain and the UK being very severely affected, countries in the EU closing borders, delay in finalising an EU financial package to deal with the pandemic, complaints from Italy or Hungary about lack of timely EU assistance, and so on. Europe is hardly in a position to take the lead in building a multilateral coalition to deal with the pandemic until it can address its internal strains. With the economies of Europe gravely hit by the virus and looming recession not only in Europe but the world at large, a meaningful multilateral economic package to assist countries in distress, including in Africa, will not be easy to put together.

Beyond this, European leaders are voicing concern about China's handling of the crisis, with president Macron pointing to lack of information about the crisis and questioning China's handling of it, UK Foreign Secretary Raab stating that hard questions will be asked of China with which it cannot be business as usual in the future.

Australia too has asked for China to be held accountable.

Ambassador Vimont's report lays out comprehensively and with great clarity the reasons for the weakening of multilateralism and the tension between multilateralism and power politics that has marked the international scene. While it may not be a return to the past, as one scenario that the ambassador posits, multilateralism will still be trapped by its contradictions. A struggle for influence among the great powers will continue, in which middle ranking powers would want to have their say, either on their own or as part of regional or plurilateral organisations on issues such as the reform of international institutions and global governance.

It is unlikely that any one great power will be able to impose its vision of multilateralism by taking advantage of the opportunity created by the current crisis. US and Europe would need to unite to infuse fresh life into multilateralism based on democracy and other liberal values that they espouse. But this will be resisted, as those who would oppose such a vision are now stronger. However, the latter have not become strong enough to impose their vision which suffers from an intrinsic contradiction as it combines authoritarianism and opaque governance at home and advocacy of liberal institutions and openness at the international level. Moreover, military superiority is necessary to impose one country's vision of multilateralism on the world, which China as well as Russia lack. Therefore, a prolonged competition and strong tensions between the main actors within the multilateral order should be the likely scenario. More so as China has a declared vision of ascending to the top of the world order, with set timelines, through instruments such as the Belt and Road Initiative, building constituencies in developing countries, especially in Africa, and bids to occupy key posts in the UN system.

The establishment of "renewed multilateralism" at the initiative of a select group of powers is the least likely scenario. Identifying a group of friends of multilateralism is possible, but as this will leave US, China and Russia out- even though China and Russia are votaries of multilateralism- the ability of such a group to effectively impose its vision is highly doubtful. A UNSC reform is most unlikely in the foreseeable future, even if the European permanent members support it. US and China will be major obstacles. A pragmatic approach would be a practical one, but positive results in reshaping the global order will be long in coming.

Health must be given the highest priority as ambassador Vimont's report rightly says, covering research, production of PPEs, sharing of experiences and good practices. Raising financial resources to support the poorest countries would be essential. A reform of the WHO would be required for this. The economic consequences of the crisis will require very close international cooperation, but with stressed national economies and a global recession in the offing, the challenge will be severe, especially in the context of big power rivalries that will continue. The role given to China, as both the originator of the crisis and the resources at its command to reignite economic activity and restore

market confidence, will have some political aspects that may not be easy to handle if accountability from China is sought and dependence on China has to be diluted.

Pragmatically rectifying the excesses of globalisation and offer solutions for the imbalances that have appeared during the current crisis is going to cost some economic actors and will require major adjustments on their part. How will burden sharing be done in this respect, will be the question. The “digital challenge”, as it gets related to the issue of deprivation of freedom, would raise the question of the kind of a surveillance state that China has built, which is tied up with internal political management in China and the role of the CCP.

Preventive action raises many issues that would be difficult to resolve without an effective UN system. “Sovereignty multiplier” would be resisted as a concept, whatever its logic, as it opens to doors to powerful countries to interfere in the internal affairs of countries. It also raises the question of the responsibility of external actors in creating domestic instability in a country, essentially a developing one.

The contribution of the African Union in handling crisis in Africa does show the utility of the regional dimension of mediation efforts. Encouraging consultation between the most influential leaders of a region is inherent in regional organisations, but it does not always work as we have seen in the South China Sea, for instance. It is difficult to encourage such consultation from the outside.

Whether Africa can be treated as one coherent entity, without distinguishing between Africa north of the Sahara and that south of it, is always an issue. Is there an “African problem” that covers the entire continent from the Mediterranean to the Cape of Good Hope?

Attitudes towards Africa by non-Africans are not uniform. Those of ex-colonial powers fall into one category and those of others, not burdened by that kind of history, fall into a different category. Condescension would not adequately describe the attitude of all countries towards Africa. It is hardly the case with attitudes towards Arab Africa.

The African continent does not have a permanent seat in the UNSC . Africa has not so far been able to decide on its candidates for the UNSC as and when the expansion of the UNSC becomes a realistic possibility.

Decisions on security issues pertaining to Africa are still taken by the western powers primarily, as they dominate UN institutions, though China has become a major player in Africa and is now economically involved in the continent in a big way, be it in infrastructure building, mining, investment, financial aid, and so on.

While not having a permanent membership Africa though the OAU exerts a lot of weight in UN affairs because of the voting bloc the OAU constitutes, even if this weight is primarily felt in UNGA resolutions and elections to UN bodies.

India too holds India-Africa summits. It has served as a good platform to engage African leaders as a whole, with positive results, even if limited, given the scale of Africa’s needs and resources at India’s command. Nevertheless, in the area of capacity building, training, education, health, IT and agriculture, the results have been fairly satisfactory. Military training, including in peace keeping operations, is a feature of India-Africa engagement.

The “Northern monologue” is not a feature of India-Africa relations , for instance.

International solidarity with Africa free of national interest, drastically re-arranging African debt, are issues that have inbuilt challenges. Geo-political competition in Africa, especially with China’s penetration of Africa, is a reality. Traditional partners of Africa see this as a challenge. China is Africa’s biggest creditor. In any action programme under the aegis of the UNSG, going beyond the struggles of influence between powers will require a change in thinking by all because so far countries have preferred to engage with Africa in their assistance programmes on a bilateral basis in order to earn maximum bilateral goodwill.

On the issue of addressing a major vulnerability faced by African countries, namely, an effective model of governance, will it be a liberal model based on democracy, constitutional reform, the electoral system etc. espoused by the West or a more authoritarian model, politically and economically, that China believes meets the need of developing countries better?

At its core, the issue is one of seeking to condition relations with African countries on the basis of how they govern themselves internally. This of necessity means interference in their internal affairs. If the partners of Africa totally ignore issues of internal governance they indirectly countenance corruption, arbitrary use of power, suppression of freedoms of the population, but, if, on the other hand, they make relations dependent on internal, inclusive governance reforms it is seen as interference in the political affairs of countries and disrespecting their sovereignty. Judgments on adhering to the rule of law can be seen as arbitrary. How to strike a balance is not easy.