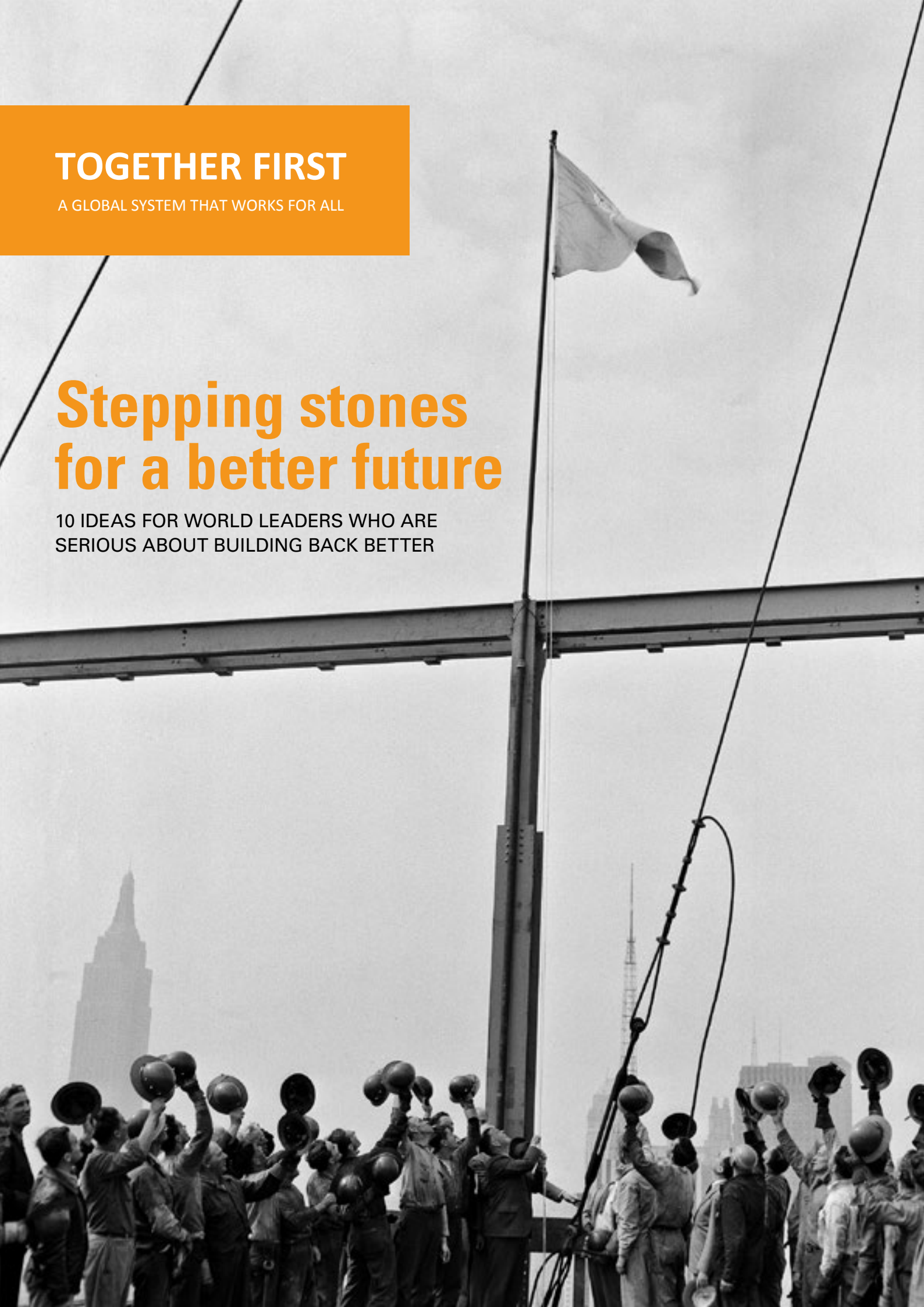


# TOGETHER FIRST

A GLOBAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL

## Stepping stones for a better future

10 IDEAS FOR WORLD LEADERS WHO ARE  
SERIOUS ABOUT BUILDING BACK BETTER






## About Together First


Together First is a rapidly growing network of people and organisations committed to building a global system that works for all.

From activists to business leaders, parliamentarians to community workers, we support solutions for making global governance more open, inclusive, equitable and effective. We are driven by the urgent need to address global catastrophic risks and to expand the boundaries of political possibility.

Launched in 2018, Together First is leading a global campaign throughout 2020 to:

 Find workable ways to address global risks by consulting people from all walks of life

 Compile the most promising ideas into this “to-do” list for world leaders

 Mobilise our network to make these solutions a reality

The United Nations Association – UK provides the secretariat for Together First. We are grateful to the Global Challenges Foundation for its financial and practical support, and to our partners, advisers and focus group members for their guidance.

[www.together1st.org](http://www.together1st.org) | @TogetherFirst

## Introduction

**Seventy-five years ago, the United Nations was founded on a promise to “we the peoples” to build a better future. Its aims – peace, development and human rights for all – have always stood in tension with the realpolitik compromises that led to its creation in the aftermath of the Second World War.**

When the political climate has permitted, the international community has achieved lasting success through the UN, from supporting the peaceful transition to independence of scores of countries to eradicating smallpox – a global effort that has yet to be replicated. But too often, political interests – or lack of interest – has led to tragic failures. Gains have not been shared equally, and progress has remained partial at best.

The world is facing an unprecedented global health crisis, with profound impacts on our societies and economies. Covid-19 has exposed our underlying vulnerabilities – the deep inequalities within and between countries, the fragility of our systems and institutions, the lack of trust between people and governments, and the chasm between what politicians say and what they do.

It has also shown that nothing is impossible when political will is aligned with popular support. The past months have seen governments take far-reaching action to protect populations, with consequences for all sectors and segments of society. And it has made clear that, for better and worse, our world is deeply interconnected. We are only as secure as the most vulnerable among us.

### BUILDING BACK BETTER

The UN Secretary-General has called on leaders to “build back better”. As governments lay the foundations for recovery, it is vital that they look beyond the immediate future. They must address other global catastrophic risks, such as the climate emergency, that have not disappeared. They must tackle long-standing issues such as inequality that are undermining resilience to future crises.

Together First was founded in 2018 to promote tangible steps towards the wholesale transformation we need to mitigate the risks that threaten humanity. We are campaigners and experts; former diplomats and policy-makers; youth leaders and innovators committed to making change – in the short, medium and long-term – to create a global governance system that is effective, equitable, open, inclusive and capable of ongoing renewal.

Our movement seeks to overcome the factors that have thwarted reform in the past: lack of political will, insufficient trust and coordination between stakeholders, and prioritising what should be done over how to get there.

Palestinian children fly kites resembling Japanese and Palestinian flags during an event marking the anniversary of Japan's earthquake, organized by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), at Khan Younis refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip. © UN Photo/Shareef Sarhan



## 10 STEPPING STONES

The 10 proposals are drawn from a larger pool featured on our [ideas hub](#). Following extensive consultations with current and former policy-makers and shapers, the 10 ideas included in this report are those considered to be at or near a “tipping point” moment, where a concerted campaign could lead to implementation in the foreseeable future.

In short, they are 10 ideas whose time has come. This does not mean that other ideas, particularly more ambitious proposals, are not as necessary or meritorious. Indeed, we are aware that the 10 proposals featured here do not come close to meeting the scale of the challenges we face. For example, while the planet may have reached a tipping point, our consultation did not identify climate governance proposals that have reached the moment for implementation. And while pandemic preparedness was a core strand of our consultations, we had not anticipated a crisis unfolding at the time our proposals were due to be released. Covid-19 has called into question many of the political considerations on which our work was based. It is too early to know what the lasting impacts of this crisis will be.

But it is equally clear that we cannot wait for clarity. We must start shaping our post-Covid world now. We believe that the 10 proposals here serve as stepping stones towards a more effective global system, by giving “we the peoples” a more meaningful role in decision-making and helping to create the conditions required for the transformation we need.

## OPEN, FAIR AND INCLUSIVE

Our ideas are anchored in a simple theory of change. First, **citizen engagement**. We aim to overcome the lack of trust in institutions by finding ways to strengthen participation – in particular of young people and civil society.

Second, **leadership and accountability**. We then seek to boost confidence that reform is possible by building on best practice and positive examples of change. This requires transparent decision-making processes and greater alignment with, and accountability to, stakeholders.

Third, **peace and security**. This goes to the heart of our international system, founding on the promise to protect future generations from the scourge of war. It is in this area where failures are most tragic and visible. Our proposals here build on the

themes of inclusion and accountability to change the parameters of power, particularly in relation to preventing and responding to crises.

Finally, **weapons governance**. We champion two campaigns that act as a “proof of concept” to show how we can create the sort of changes we want to see. They have been selected because they address two existential risks – emerging technologies and weapons of mass destruction – that arguably receive far less attention than others, and because there is momentum for action thanks to powerful global coalitions that have mobilised.

Taking these steps will make our global system more open, inclusive and fair. They can also serve as a launchpad for the more ambitious transformation we need.



Construction Workers Hoist Peace Monument Sculpture from United Nations North Lawn. © UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras



In this report

The 10 ideas are united by common themes, including the strengthening of the role of the peoples of the United Nations, the elevation of management of global problems to an above state level, and a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of risk and security. In addition, the ideas build upon each other in four distinct steps, and so provide a launchpad for the transformation our global system needs.



Open, fair and inclusive  
Global Cooperation

Launchpad



## Methodology

This to-do list is the outcome of an 18-month consultation programme. Our methodology follows an approach to global governance reform outlined in our report, [How to save the world](#) written by Sam Daws. This approach posits that it is not for an absence of good ideas that meaningful reform attempts have so frequently faltered but due to an absence of political will and implementation. Our consultation, therefore, concentrated less on sourcing ideas for reforming our global system and more on investigating the implementation strategies and assessing the campaigns behind the ideas.

Citizens and organizations were invited to make submissions through our [web portal](#) and in addition we conducted proactive outreach to over 200 targets with specific knowledge and expertise we wished to tap in to. We also provided a small number of grants to encourage responses from a more diverse array of individuals with specific expertise and from outside of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). As a consequence we had over 100 submissions, the vast majority of which are available on our website [ideas hub](#).

Proposals were finessed and developed, and gaps identified, during a two-day online conference with over 70 participants and over 440 comments across 5 discussion threads. Participants joined us from every region of the globe, everyone from senior representatives of major organisations and former senior UN officials to youth leaders and ordinary members of the public.

The Together First secretariat then assessed these proposals using a detailed methodology to translate the rationale of the Daws report into an assessment of which campaigns were at a “tipping point”, where they had reached a critical level of political will whereby our coalition’s championing of the ideas could make a meaningful difference to their implementation.

You can read about the detailed consultation methodology, viability criteria and scoring system we used, the detailed mapping of member states and key stakeholders’ positions, and the assessments given to the entries we have used, [here](#).

The Together First secretariat recommendations were then sent to our focus group. Our focus group is gender balanced, contains at least one person from each of the UN’s geographic regions, and is roughly equally split between:

- Coordination team members;
- Experts on global governance;
- Experts on global catastrophic risks; and
- Representatives of marginalised and less heard from groups.

You can read their biographies on our [website](#).

The report was finalised following discussion with the focus group and the incorporation of the comments made.





## STEP 1: Citizen engagement

Erskine Childers once pointed out that the United Nations Charter starts with the words “we the peoples” but then the peoples are scarcely heard from again. The population at large feels alienated from the work of our international institutions, and this sentiment has been exacerbated by the recent upsurge in populist nationalism. Not only does this place the entire system at risk of collapse by calling its legitimacy into question, but it seriously limits our international institutions’ efficacy. The UN Secretary-General identified this as one of the four major challenges facing the world in a speech at the start of 2020.

Meaningful change is no longer delivered by states or institutions alone, but in complex partnerships involving large numbers of individuals and organisations from overlapping political, commercial and voluntary institutions. This idea that partnerships are vital for shaping the world we want by 2030 is expressed in Sustainable Development Goal 17.

Stronger engagement is needed with citizens: the public, civil society, the private sector, local and regional government are essential for not only making the system we have work, but also to building a better system.

In this section, we call for bolstering of our global system’s ability to engage with the public and civil society in order to make it more able to implement further changes. A comprehensive recalibration of our international institutions is required, including changes to the way civil society organisations are accredited, to ensure they can meaningfully participate in discussions, and the establishment of the principle that all meetings should be webcast as a matter of course.

We are particularly determined to push for two comprehensive reforms that would mark a step towards improved relations between our global system and the people it was set up to serve.

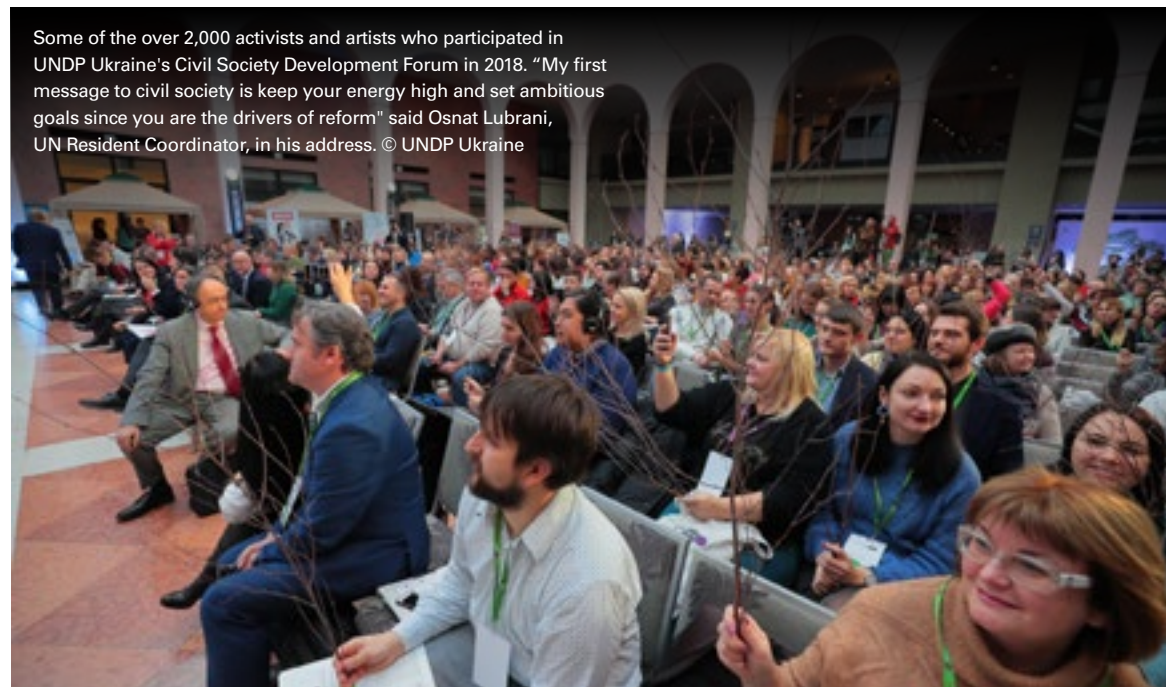
## 1. A high-level champion for Civil Society

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

The United Nations needs a high-level focal point to empower, convene and coordinate civil society. It would powerfully contribute to strengthening citizen engagement and empowering citizens and civil society to help deliver the world we want and the UN we need.

Despite its increasing reliance on civil society organisations (CSOs) across the UN’s broad spectrum of work – from service provision to contributing to major policy initiatives like the SDGs – current arrangements for civil society participation across the UN system are piecemeal. Furthermore, civil society representation in UN decision making forums is incredibly uneven and therefore tends to be dominated by the “usual suspects” – well connected western and international NGOs with a significant New York office. Other important elements of civil society – indigenous peoples, farmers, parliamentarians, trade unions – are scarcely represented at all, and grassroots organisations, and those organisations whose politics cause member states to deny them accreditation have no representation at all.

Some of the over 2,000 activists and artists who participated in UNDP Ukraine’s Civil Society Development Forum in 2018. “My first message to civil society is keep your energy high and set ambitious goals since you are the drivers of reform” said Osnat Lubrani, UN Resident Coordinator, in his address. © UNDP Ukraine



Meanwhile the relationship between the private sector and the United Nations is unsatisfactory for all: the sector itself faces major hurdles to realising its full potential, the Organisation worries about political and reputational consequences, and civil society organisations raise concerns about the absence of accountability, transparency or oversight.

A senior focal point within the Organisation would level the playing field: providing accountability and transparency with respect to all partnerships, and making sure the usual civil society voices do not dominate. Furthermore, it would provide coherence and structure to the UN’s engagement with civil society, thus unleashing the true potential of the peoples, and not just the member states, of the world, and therefore enabling the kind of working in partnership that will be required to achieve the SDGs.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

In 2004 a Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations headed by Fernando Henrique Cardoso recommended that the UN establish “an Under-Secretary-General in charge of a new Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships” – in other words a senior member of staff to act as a focal point for civil society at the UN. This proposal built upon similar calls in Erskine Childers and Brian Urquhart’s 1994 study “Renewing the United Nations System” and has formed the

basis of subsequent calls from CIVICUS, UNA-UK and others.

The precedent of Kofi Annan’s Assistant Secretary-General for External Relations – a position that existed until 2003 – could also prove useful. The proposal would seek to recreate the strong elements of this office, while making the brief more encompassing of the whole of civil society.

The office of the focal point need not be large. The ASG for External Relations, widely regarded as a highly

effective office, had around six full time staffers. In terms of rank an Assistant Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General would give the post suitable seniority. However, what is vital is that the office be located within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, that the Secretary-General champion it, and that the office has access to many other departments including the press office and press spokesperson.

There is far more political will to make this happen than there has been at any time since 2003. Our mapping has revealed a broad but perhaps not well-unified group of states supportive of increased civil society inclusion in UN affairs, a call which was echoed. The proposal was raised time and again in various consultative forums, including at the 2019 UNA-UK – Chatham House joint conference on Kofi Annan’s legacy and the 2020 Pyeongchang Peace Conference. The Secretary-General’s 2020 Call to Action on human rights pledged “creating avenues for civil society participation”.

There is an urgent need to mobilise non-traditional voices in support of this proposal, in particular by reaching out to UN groups like the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the G77, and making the case to them that – far from being a threat – this is a means for broadening the range of stakeholders the UN consults with beyond the WEOG affiliated usual suspects, and therefore a way of getting less visible issues – particularly the development agenda as seen from the perspective of developing countries – raised in priority in New York.

### NEXT STEPS

There is growing frustration within civil society of the shortcomings of the current set-up, and coalescence around the UN’s 75th anniversary process as an opportunity to make progress on this proposal. As well as member states uniting around this idea, we would like to see the Secretary-General champion this idea. This would send a powerful signal of support to civil society, as he looks to cement his legacy and add a concrete deliverable to the ongoing processes of renewal to be established in the wake of the 75th anniversary and the world’s recovery from Covid-19.

Source: This proposal draws from proposals [137](#), [292](#) (all proposals can be reached at <https://together1st.org/proposals/>.. followed by the proposal number) and the expert input of UNA-UK, CIVICUS, Ian Martin, Gillian Sorensen and Fernando Henrique Cardoso.



## 2. A UN youth council



Youth Forum at CSW60 Scenes from the opening of the Youth Forum at the 60th session of the Commission of the Status of Women. © UN Women

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

As Secretary-General Guterres said “Young people are an enormous asset to our societies. We must cherish them, invest in them and empower them.” Our international system needs to better develop its mechanisms for engaging with youth through a youth advisory body.

One model for such a system is provided by the Council of Europe where young people are organised

in an advisory council, elected by other young people, and empowered with equal decision-making rights as their counterparts (governmental representatives dealing with youth).

Such an advisory body could be connected to the UN General Assembly as a “7th Committee”, as a mechanism established by the General Assembly (such as the Human Rights council) or, perhaps in the first instance, as an informal mechanism in parallel to the General Assembly. To add to its impact and efficacy it would work closely and supportively with the Secretary-General’s envoy on youth, the UN major group for children and youth, other UN Youth programmes (such as UNEP Young Champions of the Earth, UNODA Youth Champions for Disarmament, UNODC Youth Initiative, UN Young Leaders for the SDGs, UNESCO Youth Forum. UNV/ UNICEF Advocates, and the UN Youth Delegate programme) regional youth bodies such as the European Youth Forum and the Iberoamerican Youth Organization and existing youth networks such as the Model United Nations network and the youth elements of the global community of United Nations Associations.

A youth advisory body would have a twofold mandate, firstly to ensure that the work the UN does on youth is on point and meets the needs and rights of young people. This would support the implementation and follow-up of the UN youth strategy and ensure a bottom up approach as well as develop different standards to promote youth participation and young people’s access to rights in the member states. Secondly, the youth advisory body should also be mandated to mainstream youth across the UN system, ensuring that young people are represented in all areas that concern youth, and that young people with different backgrounds are heard in the development of the UN system, the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 and all other strategic operations of the UN.

The Advisory Council on Youth should report to the General Assembly of the UN and closely cooperate



Youth powering gender equality at CSW61. © UN Women

with the member states on topics relating to the three pillars of the UN’s work – particularly with respect to the Youth Peace and Security (YPS) agenda. This would not only have inherent value, but would unlock the flexibility, technical knowledge and connectivity of young people to address these issues in a more creative and effective manner.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

There is some support for this proposal. The idea won “The Future Policy Bronze Award 2019” given by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the support of the Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Youth Policy Labs. However, there is currently a huge latent potential in that so many states and institutions recognise that there is an enormous deficit when it comes to youth engagement and governance – this has been one of the primary findings of the UN’s UN75 dialogues – but no consensus as to how best to meet this need. Important questions with regards to selection of representatives, structure of the body and how it

would related to existing mechanisms require further consultation.

Therefore a two step approach is required, where first a consensus is developed via the UN75 process as to the nature of the problem and the desirability of this solution, and then a campaign is launched to implement the solution.

### NEXT STEPS

The UN75 process of dialogues has highlighted the need for better mechanisms for youth engagement, and there will be considerable pressure for member states to say something meaningful about youth as part of their 75th anniversary declaration. This proposal is therefore well positioned to use the moment of the UN’s 75th anniversary to claim the limelight and establish a solid base for future implementation.

Sources: This proposal stems from proposals [305](#), [295](#), [328](#) and work of the Global Challenges Foundation and Council of Europe. The joint governance model that is suggested by this proposal has parallels to that currently in use for the ILO and suggested by Natalie Samarasinghe in her winning entry to the Global Challenges Foundation New Shape Prize competition.





## STEP 2: Leadership and accountability

It is important to take steps to ensure that our global system is fit for purpose. Otherwise greater openness could lead to greater disillusionment. Our international institutions need to walk the talk, and civil society can help hold them to account to ensure this happens. Monitoring and appraisal mechanisms should be dramatically improved, and a culture of principled independent leadership engendered. As Brian Urquhart once said, “no amount of reform will compensate for the lack of leadership”. The four reforms proposed here will help cement that culture and provide mechanisms to hold our international institutions to account.

## 3. Merit based appointments

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

Our international institutions need to be led by independent, principled, bold individuals that reflect the people they serve in gender, age, nationality and race. Currently too many important appointments are earmarked for nationals from specific, normally powerful, states or subject to mechanisms of regional rotation which can prevent the best candidate for the job from rising to the fore. Weak, unaccountable, and highly politicised recruitment practices mean that senior appointments are often made in the interests of appointing the most pliant candidate not the most effective. The consequence is a system that is neither meritocratic nor diverse.

The successful 1 for 7 Billion campaign did much to reform the selection process for the Secretary-General of the United Nations – the most senior official in our international system and thus the appointment most in need of reform. The link between the UNSG selection and the skewing of senior appointments is well known and relates to the ugly practice of the P5 (and others) extracting promises of top positions from UNSG candidates in exchange for their support. In this regard and others, the work of reforming the UNSG selection process is far from complete. The full programme of reform of selections suggested by the 1 for 7 Billion campaign need to be implemented and institutionalised for future Secretary-General

selections and – with variations as appropriate – for all senior appointments in all international institutions. Furthermore, the United Nations and other international organisations besides need to overhaul their human resources programmes – with more effective mechanisms of recruitment, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation to reestablish the notion of an international civil service independent from political interference.

For the UN system to command authority and confidence, it needs to be seen to be applying the high standards of fairness and equality that it espouses from others. Perception of appointment stitch-ups at the top of the UN system are well-founded and do untold damage to the Organisation's reputation, giving critics of global governance ample material to work with. No senior appointment must ever again be ring-fenced for a candidate of a specific nationality. A fair, open and inclusive appointment process with candidates of multiple nationalities should be undertaken for all senior roles, and regard given, at the shortlisting stage, to gender and geographic balance. Recruitment should be depoliticised with candidacies not contingent on state support and independent minded international civil servants given due consideration for senior roles.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

There are significant allies in the General Assembly to pursue further work on reforming recruitment at the UN. There are also a large number of states (including members of the NAM and ACT) who have repeatedly stressed the crucial requirement that the Secretary-General should exercise full independence in making senior appointments on merit.

In February 2018 120 members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and 25 members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group in the annual debate of the Ad-Hoc Working Group Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (AHWG) – a representation of over two thirds of UN member states – called on the General Assembly to start consolidating the major improvements achieved in the run-up to the 2016 selection of the Secretary-General and to institutionalise lessons learned.

United Nations Headquarters Closed to Public. A view of an empty General Assembly building at the United Nations headquarters during lunchtime, when under normal circumstances the corridors and hallways are bustling with people. c. UN Photo/Mark Garten

Specifically, the following ideas have explicit state backing:

- Setting a deadline for nominating candidates (for example, by NAM);
- For the Security Council to propose multiple candidates to the General Assembly to choose from (for example, by NAM);
- The need to clarify the presentation and withdrawal of candidacies and for the Security Council to promptly publish the outcome of straw polls (for example, by Chile); and
- Appointing the Secretary-General for a longer, single term of office (for example, by South Africa).

We need to build on this, by establishing the principle of merit-based appointments and transparent recruitment processes for all senior appointments. Every time a senior appointment is made to a candidate of the same nationality that had previously held that role it should be treated as a matter of scandal.

### NEXT STEPS

In 2021 the UN will elect a new Secretary-General or re-elect Secretary-General Guterres. In accordance with our longstanding belief that the role of Secretary-General should be limited to a single term, we hope that Secretary-General Guterres decides not stand for reelection. This is not intended in any way as a commentary on his abilities or achievements, although we believe that deciding to stand down on principle would contribute to his legacy by establishing a precedent. In any case, the selection process that takes place, or does not take place, in 2021 will be a crucial test of the extent to which progress has been made.

Sources: This proposal draws from proposal [291](#) and builds on the work of the 1 for 7 Billion campaign, the most recent successful civil society UN reform campaign. The 1 for 7 Billion steering committee of Avaaz, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung – New York, United Nations Association – UK and the World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy support this proposal. It also builds on the research work and the policy papers that have been developed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation on the subject of an independent international civil service. Elements of proposal [119](#) from the Global Governance Forum are also relevant here.



## 4. Accountability for state violations of planetary boundaries

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

Our international institutions are the creation of sovereign states. As such they are rarely able to hold states to account. And yet so many of the global problems we face are the result of state action. How can a system designed by states hold states to account? This question is particularly pressing when it comes to threats to the very fabric of our ecosystem itself – our planetary boundaries.

We believe a large part of the answer is by working in partnership with civil society. Our global system has considerable potential to conduct monitoring and evaluation of member states. What it is less able to do is use this information to hold states to account – but this is a role civil society can play. By enhancing the monitoring and evaluation elements of our global system, and then using this information as the basis for accountability campaigns, accountability and standard setting can be enhanced.

Such an approach is already in evidence in a number of places such as in our response to sexual exploitation and abuse, financial corruption and human rights violations. But it is particularly important to further develop, enhance and systematise such processes when it comes to biodiversity.

There are currently five governance mechanisms that address biodiversity loss and ecosystems management: the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Yet in all cases, the level of implementation has not been empirically measured and is largely unknown. As a result, there is no baseline against which to assess performance, actions, or even expectations.

Work by the University of Massachusetts Boston and Universidad EAFIT seeks to address this through an analysis of the implementation of the global biodiversity conventions, assessing the actions signatory countries have taken to fulfil their commitments, the national and global synergies among the different instruments and the process of implementing the Post-2020 Framework.

The next step requires civil society to use this data to name and shame, name and praise and otherwise apply pressure to member states to meet these standards.

But it needn't stop there. Work by Common Home for Humanity has shown the possibility of giving ecosystems, global public goods, and ultimately our planetary boundaries themselves legal recognition. Such an approach would enable legal advocacy to take place in parallel to civil society advocacy and ultimately make the monitoring and evaluation of state behaviour a basis for legal action.



### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

Much of the data that is needed to hold states to account is already being collected. The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data have access to a wide range of data covering all of the sustainable development goals – which between them cover a significant amount of the data needed to understand our planetary boundaries particularly when it comes to biodiversity and the threats to our ecosystems.

However in other areas there are significant gaps – for example when it comes to biodiversity where the University of Massachusetts Boston and Universidad EAFIT study seeks to bridge them. There is also information that our international institutions possess but do not publish as a matter of course. (To take an example from another area: civil society vetting of the human rights records of UN peacekeepers would be much more straightforward if the United Nations were to systematically publish details of all units deployed and their unit commanders). Further strengthening of internal accountability and transparency mechanisms, including internal oversight and auditing, can further add value here.

There are more fundamental gaps when it comes to our international legal system. To this end Common

Home for Humanity are organising a conference to further develop the idea of meaningful international legal frameworks, and are then targeting upcoming events such as the 2021 UN Environmental Assembly in Nairobi and the 2022 50th anniversary commemorations of the founding of the UN Environment programme as hooks to promote the idea.

### NEXT STEPS

While data and legal provision may be imperfect, the real gap is when it comes to its systemic application by civil society. There have been a number of effective civil society accountability campaigns, but they are ad hoc in nature and not globally coordinated, and southern civil society is underrepresented with consequences for the movements' credibility and reach. By drawing attention to the impact and potential of this approach through the UN75 process, and by championing the notion of global coalitions of civil society, Together First hopes to encourage and strengthen such a strategy and broaden the network of civil society organisations working on the issue.

Sources: This proposal draws from proposals [155](#), [332](#), [298](#), and [286](#) and incorporates ideas from the University of Massachusetts Boston / Universidad EAFIT, Common Home for Humanity and Mona Ali Khalil. Elements of proposal [119](#) from the Global Governance Forum are also relevant here.

Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation and for the Enhancement of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage in Niue. Underwater landscape at Beveridge Reef, Niue. © UNDP



## STEP 3: A more inclusive approach to peace and security

Making our global system more effective and open would also change where power lies within that system – this transformation is most pressing when it comes to peace and security.

Such a transformation could also open the door to push for further changes. We would like to see a dilution of power within international systems, to match the dilution of power that is happening more broadly within our multipolar world. Power no longer resides merely with sovereign states, and so that cannot be the limit of formal governance either. In a recent essay for the UNA-UK publication *Climate 2020* Edward Barbier suggested the establishment of a formal mechanism for sub-state and non-state actors to accede to the Paris Climate Treaty. This sort of diversification of governance should be the norm, not the exception.

When it comes to the architecture of our global system, the General Assembly, the most egalitarian body within our global system, should take a greater role and the Security Council – wedded to the power relations of 1945 – a lesser one. As global superpowers fade into regional superpowers, regional bodies should come to the fore and mechanisms for regional and international bodies to work together – with the African Union on Peacekeeping, with the G7 on reducing carbon emissions – should be strengthened.

As we have seen in recent quagmires in Syria and Yemen it is when it comes to peace and security that our global system is most publicly failing, with significant effects on the system's credibility. A fix here is badly needed and, when found, can then be applied to other areas of work.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 crisis has made it clear that we need to think differently more holistically about security and how we manage risk. The threats we are prepared for are not the most dangerous of the threats we face. So by reforming our global system's approach to peace and security we can reform the system itself.

These four proposals – on the Security Council, Peacebuilding Commission, Peacekeeping and climate and security governance – taken together, would radically alter the way in which our global system responds to risk.



The Security Council considers the situation in Syria.  
© UN Photo/Kim Haughton

## 5. A Security Council that acts or gets out of the way

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

As perhaps the most visible and one of the most heavily criticised parts of our global system, the UN Security Council has done much to test peoples' faith in international institutions, and little to prevent the most egregious acts of human behaviour. The Security Council has been unable to secure accountability for atrocities in Myanmar, a ceasefire in Syria, or even – thus far – a resolution on Covid-19.

There is therefore a pressing need to ensure that the Security Council does its job more efficiently and effectively. If it cannot, then it is important that those duties be discharged elsewhere in the international system – moving to regional bodies, the UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council or specialist institutions such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Together First has outlined its plans for reforming the Security Council in a previous report "Reforming the UN Security Council". It outlines three ideas in particular:

- For UN Member States to make better and more frequent use of the "Uniting for Peace" mechanism to move conversations from the Security Council to the General Assembly in situations where the Security Council is failing to make progress;
- For the UN Secretary-General to make greater use of his powers under article 99 of the UN charter to set the agenda of the Security Council and to push them to accept briefings from relevant officials; and
- For the UN Security Council to adopt more open and inclusive working methods: sharing out drafting responsibilities with the non permanent members and providing greater opportunities for engagement with civil society and non state groups.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

The proposals are in the gift of the Secretary-General and member states. A majority of Member States have indicated support for each of these measures in one form or another:

While the Secretary-General has not formally invoked article 99 in recent years, he has drawn matters to the Security Council's attention, most recently in his August 2017 letter concerning the situation in Myanmar (S/2017/753). He – or she – can and should use his Charter authority more frequently.

While the Uniting for Peace mechanism has been used 10 times in the past, it has not been initiated since 1997. However, it is clear that there is support for an approach of this kind: many member states have strongly urged permanent members of the Security Council to refrain from using the veto in situations involving mass atrocity crimes. In particular, over half the UN's membership have indicated support for the France/Mexico Initiative and the ACT Code of Conduct Regarding Security Council Action Against Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity or War Crimes.

The Security Council's established practice of convening Arria-formula meetings can be used to invite all legitimate parties to conflicts in order to give voice to non-State parties committed to peaceful resolution of conflicts. A number of states have indicated strong support for reforming the penholder system including in a June 2018 draft note from Russia and a letter of 13 November 2018 from the elected and incoming members of the Council. The United Kingdom has itself taken some steps to share the pen on certain issues like Sudan.

### NEXT STEPS

Opportunities such as the UN75 global dialogues should be used to restore confidence in multilateralism in general and the United Nations in particular. The political declaration from member states for UN75 will inevitably mention the need for Security Council reform, but rather than reworking old ground it should seek to advance this agenda.

It is a good time to recommit to the UN Charter and to a strong, credible and effective United Nations where the UN Secretary-General, the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and all UN Member States live up to the promise and the responsibility to take "prompt and effective action" for the maintenance of international peace and security, for the protection of civilians and for the rule of law and justice.

We therefore intend to push supportive member states and coalitions of states to champion this cause in this crucial 75th anniversary year.

Sources: The approach is outlined in the report "[Reforming the UN Security Council](#)" which is anchored within our ideas hub by proposal [334](#). Proposal [276](#) is also relevant.





## 6. A stronger Peacebuilding Commission

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) needs a more prominent role in the UN peace and security architecture.

The UN Security Council tends to focus its attention in crisis situations, and usually multilateral interventions take place when it is already too late. The necessity of a shift from crisis-oriented approach to longer-term engagement has a broad consensus within the UN. Indeed, the PBC was created in 2005 to address serious gaps in the UN's engagement with peace and security, particularly the attention gap: the international community does not pay attention to longer-term processes of recovery. The PBC is the only UN body with a cross-pillar coordination mandate. It emerges as the most appropriate forum for increasing the UN's capacity to prevent conflict. But it needs to be made stronger and more effective

To strengthen the PBC, in the short term, three interconnected processes are proposed:

- Enhance the PBC's capacities to host discussions about cross-cutting issues, such as the Women,

Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas, as well as the role of natural resources in conflict;

- Strengthen the PBC's advisory role to the Security Council (UNSC), particularly with regards to peacebuilding elements of missions' mandates, as well as during reconfigurations, drawdowns, and transitions; and
- Bolster the PBC's advisory role to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with a view to promote greater coherence among development and peacebuilding actors in the field.

In the medium term, the aim should be to upgrade the UN Peacebuilding Commission into a Council with enhanced powers and responsibilities; and mandated to lead on policy development, coordination, resource mobilization, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in areas not directly addressed by the Security Council.

The accomplishment of these steps would ultimately make the global peace and security decision making system more democratic and accountable.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

The PBC has assumed an increasingly fundamental role in the UN's peace and security architecture, as it has a unique mandate. It is capable of making recommendations to the UN Security Council, ECOSOC, and the General Assembly (UNGA). In the field, it usually converses more easily with the actors involved in a peace process—from national authorities and resident coordinators to financial institutions (for instance, as happened with respect to the peace process in the Central African Republic).

In addition, during the last few years, as part of his strategy of prioritizing conflict prevention, the UN Secretary-General has promoted a growing role of articulation and coordination to the PBC by highlighting the importance of the links between the different pillars of the Organization. This has been called "double-hinge role" of the Commission.

When it comes to peace and security governance, the PBC helps to mitigate the "representation gap" of the UN Peace and Security Architecture. First, it has a convening power to coordinate different actors: it can provide a platform of inclusive dialogue, bringing development actors, civil society, financial institutions, private sector, and others together. Second, the PBC's membership is more democratic than the Security Council. The Commission not only has twice (31) as many members as the Council (15) and so brings in more countries that are willing to make a substantive contribution to global peace – many of the largest Troop Contributing Countries and donor states are members of the PBC but not the Security Council. Further other international organizations, such as the World Bank and the European Union can participate in PBC meetings, helping to mitigate the "representation gap" of the UN Peace and Security Architecture. One can expect that the significance and inclusiveness of representation on the PBC would empower its political recommendations.

The recent UN Peace and Security Reform, led by the Secretary-General (UNSG), provided new capacities and skills to the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA). The regional desks and specialized structures (for example on Security Sector Reform) now also support the work of the PBA. However, it is only one step towards a longer process of strengthening the entire PBA. The 2020 Review of the PBA is the opportunity to continue the process that already started of giving the PBC a more prominent role.

These would create the enabling steps for later upgrading the PBC into a Council, mandated to lead on policy development, coordination, resource mobilization, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in areas not directly addressed by the UN Security Council.

### NEXT STEPS

Many of the next steps can be achieved through the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review.

First, to enhance the PBC's capacities to host discussions about cross-cutting issues, it is necessary to progressively redirect UN Security Council's briefers to the PBC, strengthen the PBC's relations with ECOSOC, and encourage countries to request PBC's advice. While the first two steps can be incorporated into the 2020 PBA Review, the latter is already possible: countries only need to be encouraged to use this important feature of the PBC.

Second, to strengthen the PBC's advisory role to the Security Council, it is necessary to expand PBC's participation in the negotiation of Peacekeeping and Special Political Mission mandates by removing the suggestion that this should only happen "upon request/requests for advice/at its request" in the 2020 PBA Review. Alternatively, UNSC's members can regularly request PBC advice by strengthening the mechanisms contained in OP 8 UNGA 70/262 and UNSC 2282(2016). In addition, 2020 Review should recommend regular meetings between PBC and UNSC's Committees, Working Groups and Ad Hoc Bodies.

Finally, to bolster the PBC's advisory role to ECOSOC, it is necessary to increase the dialogues between the PBC and ECOSOC by promoting joint meetings, which can be achieved by Chairpersons taking advantage of ECOSOC Resolutions 2009/32, 2008/30, and 2020/2. Increasing the cooperation between PBC and ECOSOC can also be achieved by using the Commission as a platform to bring attention to certain economic and social issues (using the precedent on Resolution 2020/2) as well as to enhance dialogue between ECOSOC and the Chairpersons of the Commission's country-specific configurations (use precedent on ECOSOC Resolution 2009/32 para.3).

Sources: This proposal draws from proposals 56 and 294 and the work of Together First partner the Stimson Centre, who developed the idea in the course of dialogues with, among others, another Together First partner, the Igarapé institute.



## 7. People centred peacekeeping

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

Peace operations are predominantly state-centric. A significant portion of their efforts are focused on supporting the host government and state institutions, or threats to them. Placing people at the center of peace operations will make them more accountable and locally grounded.

Achieving this shift towards a more people-centered approach in peace operations requires a change in the mindset of the actors involved in how peace operations are conducted. This requires missions to enhance a participatory approach, which meaningfully engages local populations, civil society and political parties in Security Council mandates. These small steps, together, will have the collective effect of making peacekeeping more answerable to approach to peacekeeping embodies a particular philosophy that can be implemented by a range of measures, from meaningfully including representatives of the society and local conflict affected communities.

This recalibration of how peacekeeping works and who peacekeeping is answerable to could both be facilitated by and have knock-on implications for other aspects of peace operations. Various proposals we have received complement it. For example, when it comes to peacekeeping finance there is currently a disconnect between the process of drafting mission mandates and resourcing missions – with the consequence that missions are often not able to meet local needs. If UN peacekeeping were to institutionalize a reporting requirement by which the UNSC is informed of the operational implications on a peacekeeping mission mandate of all peacekeeping budgets approved by the General Assembly's Fifth Committee, this would mark an important step in resolving this problem.

Another vital area, both for its own reasons and because of the consequences it has for peacekeeping's legitimacy and credibility is in its response to sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by United Nations troops and related personnel. Together First's partner, the Mission Justice campaign has outlined a number of responses that are needed, including by improving the quality of investigations, holding perpetrators to account, and providing adequate redress and support to victims. In all cases the approach is similarly to reimagine what peacekeeping is for and who it is accountable to: by placing the people at its heart.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

The idea of a shift towards more people-centered peace operations already holds broad political support. The Secretary-General's Action 4 Peacekeeping Agenda (which over 150 member states have endorsed), the 2015 report from the High-Level Independent Panel of Peace Operations, the 2015 peacebuilding architecture review and the subsequent 2016 dual Security Council and General Assembly 'sustaining peace' resolutions, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda have all put people at the centre. Therefore, to shift towards a more people-centered approach in peace operations does not need further approval from the UN member states in order to be implemented.

The Secretary-General's Action 4 Peacekeeping Agenda also committed "to seek measures to enable greater coherence between mandates and resources." Indeed, some tentative ad hoc efforts in the direction of institutionalize a reporting requirement between the UNSC and the General Assembly's Fifth Committee have recently been tried, which could serve as a model for further institutionalization, allowing UN member states to draft more realistic mandates.

Finally, on sexual exploitation and abuse, the UN has already put nearly twenty years of effort in policy, technical and administrative changes meant to address the problem—such as Security Council Resolution 2272, the UN's 2008 Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of SEA and the 2017 victim-centred approach.

These efforts are considerable, but in too many cases they increase accountability to New York, not to the affected communities themselves, or pose administrative and technical approaches to crimes which should require accountability through a judicial response.

### NEXT STEPS

The next steps to make peacekeeping more answerable to conflict affected communities can be taken up via the review of Action 4 Peacekeeping that will take place in the latter half of 2020 leading to the Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial conference in Seoul in 2021. Supportive member states, backed by civil society, should use this opportunity to advance this agenda.

On making peace operations more people centred, the achievement of four goals can produce the collective effect of making peacekeeping more answerable to conflict affected communities:

- To meaningfully involve local actors by establishing advisory groups that provide input to and feedback on assessments, analysis, planning, implementation, programming and evaluations;
- To consider how the mission affects the everyday life of the people by meaningfully engaging community and local CSO representatives in mission performance assessment processes;
- To make greater use of context specific local expertise by conducting participatory context and resilience analysis to identify the factors that drive local violence and harness existing capacities of local communities; and
- To ensure that the engagement with local populations, civil society, and political parties are core parts of the mandate, and part of the core tasks of the SRSG, Political Affairs, Civil Affairs and other sections.

A host of other more technical solutions and approaches are contained in the linked proposals.



Children salute UN peacekeepers (MONUSCO) in Katanga Province, Democratic Republic of Congo. © UN Photo/Abel Kavanagh.

Sources: This proposal draws on proposals [182](#), [127](#), [224](#) and the work of the International Peace Institute, the Mission Justice coalition, UNA-UK's PhD partnership with Sabrina White, and the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON).



## 8. An integrated approach to climate and security

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

There is growing evidence showing the world is approaching a “point of no return” on climate change. Climate change can magnify, accelerate and diversify insecurity: from violence and organized crime in the Amazon to violent extremism in the Sahel. Incorporating climate and security into the work of the UN and partner organizations is an essential yet severely overlooked dimension of climate action. Bringing attention to the security implications of climate change will mobilize not just Member States but also other stakeholders (civil society, private sector, other international organizations) to better understand and act against the security implications of climate change.

The UN can tackle climate and security risks by (1) incrementally boosting the institutional capacity and reach of the UN Climate Security Mechanism and (2) promoting the mainstreaming of climate- and security- sensitive risk assessments across the system.

This depends in part on persuading a number of key players, among them permanent seat holders at the Security Council, that incorporating climate change into security assessments will lead to more effective tackling of security issues rather than greater interventionism, excessive securitization, or undesired crossing over into firmly guarded policy territories.

Just as important as building and expanding governance structures is the need to make climate and security a more inclusive area. So far, the agenda is largely driven by rich countries, with a focus on poor conflict-affected states. Yet climate change affects the entire planet, and some of the more vulnerable parts of the globe are located within the global north, such as the Arctic region, which is also one of the world’s most politically sensitive areas. Leaving out the global nature of the climate and security challenge may reinforce suspicions among some Global South players that this is yet another North-driven agenda meant to advance the geopolitical and geoeconomic interests of global powers.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

At least six UN Security Council meetings have addressed the links between climate and security. The UN Secretary General has also referred to how climate can multiply insecurity in different contexts. At the Security Council, Germany currently leads efforts to institutionalize Climate and Security, with support from outside the Council from Switzerland. The UN Climate Security Mechanism has been implemented and is developing a risk assessment framework as well as a toolkit that can be used by other components of the UN system. Its associated Group of Friends already has over 40 states, both rich and developing countries. Given that the Mechanism is only one year old, this expansion in the membership of the Group of Friends indicates that – despite hesitation by some actors – interest in and awareness of climate and security risks have grown sharply over the past two years. Moreover, there is interest and even urgency on the part of senior UN officials from all three pillars of the architecture – development, human rights and peace and security – regarding integrating climate and security into a preventive approach.

The structural reforms led by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres offer an opportunity to build climate and security not only into UN structures at the Secretariat level, but also at the country level. At the NY headquarters, the merging of departments into the DPPA offers a space in which to incorporate climate and security into peacebuilding, peacemaking and mediation efforts, beyond the limitations of the Security Council. At the country level, it gives space to ease climate and security into policy dialogues with national and subnational governments, as well as civil society entities and private sector actors. This space now needs to be used.

### NEXT STEPS

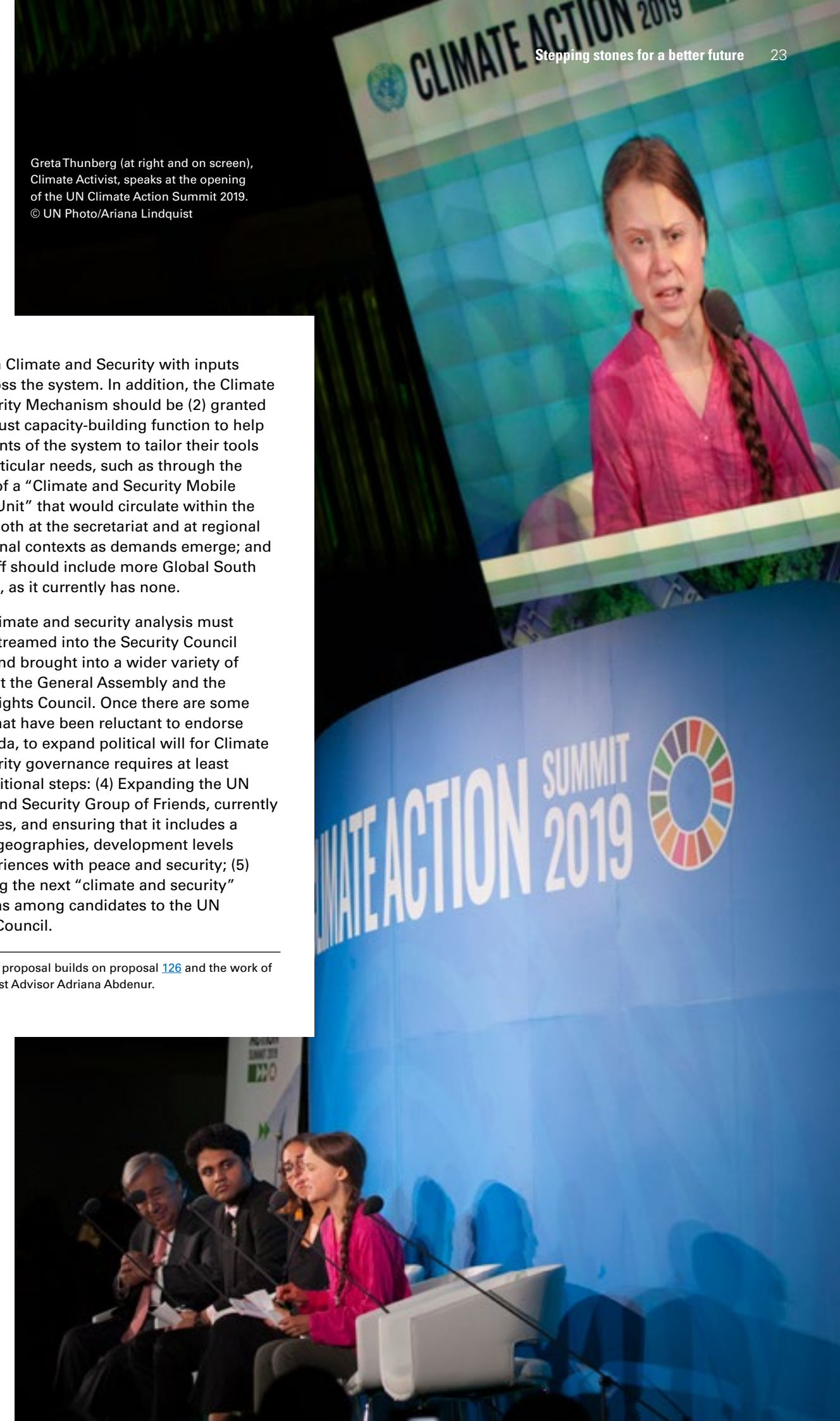
At the UN Secretariat, the first key step for institutionalization would consist of (1) getting the Secretary-General’s office to commit to an annual

Greta Thunberg (at right and on screen), Climate Activist, speaks at the opening of the UN Climate Action Summit 2019.  
© UN Photo/Ariana Lindquist

Report on Climate and Security with inputs from across the system. In addition, the Climate and Security Mechanism should be (2) granted more robust capacity-building function to help components of the system to tailor their tools to the particular needs, such as through the creation of a “Climate and Security Mobile Training Unit” that would circulate within the system, both at the secretariat and at regional and national contexts as demands emerge; and (3) its staff should include more Global South members, as it currently has none.

Finally, climate and security analysis must be mainstreamed into the Security Council agenda and brought into a wider variety of debates at the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Once there are some players that have been reluctant to endorse this agenda, to expand political will for Climate and Security governance requires at least three additional steps: (4) Expanding the UN Climate and Security Group of Friends, currently at 40 states, and ensuring that it includes a range of geographies, development levels and experiences with peace and security; (5) Identifying the next “climate and security” champions among candidates to the UN Security Council.

Source: This proposal builds on proposal [126](#) and the work of Together First Advisor Adriana Abdenur.





# STEP 4: Stronger treaties to reduce risk

What sort of actions could a new stronger, more egalitarian global system take? How can we elevate meaningful control of the decisions that have global impacts to a more appropriate international level without causing a crisis of legitimacy or creating a “two speed” universal system, thus damaging the universality that gives the system its value? How do we make enforcement meaningful without moving towards the coercive west-dominated system the global south has fought so hard to avoid? A recent paper (“Boosting the Reach and Resilience of International Justice Institutions” Stimson Centre UN 75 Policy Brief No. 5) outlined one potential approach, taking a country by country look at why states have not signed up to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court or the compulsory jurisdiction article of the International Court of Justice and mounting bespoke campaigns to have that effect.

In the meantime, the area in which the balance has perhaps most successfully been struck historically is when it comes to the laws of war: from the Geneva Conventions to bans on biological and chemical

weapons to landmines and cluster munitions, the world we live in is safer due to our system of global treaties.

This section contains two proposals relating to the prohibition of weapons at different stages in the treaty life-cycle: nuclear weapons and lethal autonomous weapons systems. The former is now the subject of an adopted UN treaty that could soon enter force while the latter looks likely to be the subject of a treaty-making process soon.

While this section focuses on the treaty-approach, of course this is not the only approach to arms control. The protection of civilians in urban warfare is a growing weapons governance issue for which states and civil society are focussing on the creation not of a treaty, but of a political declaration.

The proposals outlined in this section have merit themselves, but in addition could demonstrate the efficacy of the model of treaty based prohibitions, for the better management of global risks through treaty processes and the establishment of international standards.

## 9. A ban on killer robots

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

From mustard gas to cluster munitions our international system has a long history of prohibiting forms of warfare that society deems too barbaric and dangerous. As the 1995 Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons shows, it is not necessary to wait until new dangerous technologies are in use before banning them.

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, or “killer robots” are an emerging area of serious risk. By taking meaningful human control out of the decision to take away life we create all sorts of dangerous and undesirable effects. At the most extreme end there is a risk of such technology running out of control and causing major unintended loss of life. And even if this is avoided, the technology poses multiple grave threats to our mechanisms of accountability and our ability to prevent war crimes, as well as enabling dangerous and discriminatory practices of war. Given the

pace of military technology it is imperative that the international community negotiate a treaty to ban them before it is too late.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

An incredibly effective and powerful coalition of civil society organisations have come together to campaign for a legally binding treaty banning killer robots. Furthermore, 30 states have explicitly called for such a treaty, and there is general agreement among more than 80 countries on the need to retain meaningful human control over the use of force. The UN Secretary-General has made campaigning for a ban on killer robots a defining element of his term of office.

However, a small group of states are consistently thwarting progress towards a treaty under the auspices of the Convention on Conventional



Campaigners for WILPF Cameroon’s Campaign to Ban Killer Robots. © WILPF Cameroon

Weapons (CCW). As a consequence it is likely that, as with landmines and cluster munitions, the prohibition treaty may need to be developed by supportive member states meeting as part of a separate process.

### NEXT STEPS

The Secretary-General is determined to do what he can to establish a new treaty banning killer robots. He has the opportunity to push for it through the UN75 process, through the UN Panel on Digital Cooperation, and through any follow up mechanism either process establishes. With the support of a powerful coalition of states and civil society organisations he will not fail.

Sources: This proposal draws on proposals [248](#), [238](#), [216](#), and [297](#) and the work of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots and its various partners including WILPF, Human Rights Watch and UNA-UK



A view of a robot taking part in a press briefing held by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. © UN Photo/Evan Schneider



## 10. A ban on nuclear weapons

### THE IDEA IN A NUTSHELL

Weapons of Mass Destruction pose an existential threat to life on earth. They serve no useful purpose, and can never be used without committing an atrocity.

Biological and Chemical weapons have thankfully been banned, although with respect to biological weapons the treaty has no verification mechanism and has not been updated to keep track with their technological development – a significant threat states do not take sufficiently seriously. Nevertheless, they are prohibited, making their ownership a cause for significant political consequences. Yet there is no corresponding ban for nuclear weapons and nuclear armed states do not pay a corresponding diplomatic penalty.

The very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly expressed a desire to eliminate atomic weapons. While treaties have succeeded in curbing their spread, and in regulating the arms trade, the risk of nuclear war still hangs over us. Further the failure of nuclear armed states to uphold their side of the bargain at the heart of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and pursue negotiations in good faith towards disarmament leave these treaties on the brink of collapse.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), adopted at the UN in July 2017, grew out of a series of conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. It showed the powerful transformative approach of addressing problems in global politics through the lens of catastrophic risk. It fills the gap in our global system and asserts that when it comes to the unacceptability of weapons of mass destruction, there is no nuclear exception.

### WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has launched a comprehensive campaign to promote the entry into force of the TPNW. It is now on the verge of adoption: 122 countries voted in favour of the Treaty and of those, 36 (and counting) have subsequently ratified it. The Treaty will enter into force once it is ratified by 50, which is projected to happen over the next year or two.

It is unlikely that any nuclear armed state will accede to the TPNW any time soon, and so the TPNW will not directly lead to the abolition of nuclear weapons. But it is already significantly increasing stigma around their continued possession, and challenging the status quo which, under the NPT, does not put a completion date on the NPT's five recognised nuclear armed states.

Furthermore by banning nuclear weapons the TPNW and its growing list of supporters creates increasing legal and reputational risks for the arms industry to work on nuclear procurement or for banks, pension funds and other financial institutions to invest in companies in the nuclear supply chain. This adds practical pressures to the political considerations for nuclear armed states when it comes to maintaining and renewing their nuclear arsenals. The ban also challenges the philosophical legitimacy of the notion of deterrence by increasing the taboo around nuclear weapons and their use. In this same manner it is not politically acceptable to advance an argument for retaining biological or chemical weapons on the grounds of deterrence.

### NEXT STEPS

As world leaders convene in the UN's 75th anniversary year to discuss "the world we want" it should be clear that the world we want is a world free from nuclear weapons. States should say so, and indeed it would be a moral failure if the Organisation did not use the occasion of the 75th anniversary (which is also the 75th anniversary of the only occasions on which nuclear atrocities have been committed) to recommit itself to disarmament. It is likely and desirable that the TPNW receive the final few ratifications necessary for it to come into force as a consequence of this renewed attention.

Beyond that, separate specific approaches need to be taken with regard to each of the five NPT recognised nuclear powers, the four other nuclear powers, and any other state that develops nuclear weapons subsequently. In the first instance these states need to be encouraged to develop security strategies which do not depend on possessing nuclear arsenals.

Sources: This proposal builds on proposal [125](#) and the work of ICAN. Elements of proposal [119](#) from the Global Governance Forum are also relevant here.



ICAN Campaigners in Büchel, Germany on the 2nd anniversary of the TPNW. © Ralf Schlesener



## The launchpad to a global system that works for all

Four hands hold an image of the earth on International Mother Earth Day. c. UN Photo/Manuel Elias



**Taking the 10 steps outlined in this report would transform the way our global system relates to the public and the way our global system manages risk. It would make international institutions stronger, more accountable, more transparent and more effective.**

But to face the mid 21st century our international institutions need more than a tune up. Even before a global pandemic upended our understanding of what is possible and what is necessary, the climate emergency necessitated a completely different approach to the way we manage our society and live our lives. Combined with this was a creeping crisis of legitimacy caused by feelings of alienation from our increasingly remote and seemingly elite global system, exacerbated by runaway inequality and an upsurge in populist nationalism.

It is therefore vital that our recovery from the Covid-19 crisis fix not only the clear issues with the governance of our health system and climate, but also that we use the opportunity to redress longstanding grievances; to “rebuild differently” as the Secretary-General put it. Our global system must continue to do what it does now – contain crises between major powers by giving them a mechanism to save face and a location for diplomacy – and this vital, existential, objective must not be sacrificed in the interest of more ambitious goals. But we should not make the floor of our ambition also serve as its ceiling.

Moreover, the present intergovernmental negotiations on a “UN75 Declaration” must represent that start, rather than conclusion, of a global conversation on how we better manage transnational problems and chart a more just and hopeful future. It is, therefore, vital that governments empower the Secretary-General, with critical inputs and advice from external experts and global civil society, to guide a robust follow-through process to achieve specific commitments and realize the full vision of the Declaration.

Some of the steps to restrain the climate crisis are obvious – we must ban fossil fuel subsidies and phase out fossil fuels entirely as a matter of urgency. In other global catastrophic risks there is also a clear direction of travel – on healthcare for example the stakeholder governance

models that have seen, for example the GAVI vaccine alliance revolutionise the fight against Polio, are likely to be a vital element of the global campaign that will be needed to eliminate or contain Covid-19. There seems to be an emerging consensus around the need for a new social compact, and ideas like universal basic income are fast gaining in popularity.

In other places, however, the ideas are less clear, and we should not allow our ambition to limit us: perhaps the Trusteeship Council should be reestablished – or an Economic Security Council created – to provide shared custodianship for our global commons such as our oceans and atmosphere, perhaps citizens should be able to directly place items on the UN’s agenda through a world citizen’s initiative, perhaps the multipartite governance structure of the ILO, where states are represented by both government and non government (in their case union and employer) delegations should be applied to other parts of the United Nations family. We are able and indeed required to think differently and creatively.

**But as we know it is not for a lack of ideas that reforms do not happen but for a lack of political will and a coherent strategy. So please join us, and together we can push for these 10 steps first, and then continue to rebuild our systems of healthcare and climate governance, the UN we need, and ultimately the world we want.**

**Cover image** Steelworkers cheer as the UN flag is unfurled atop the completed steel framework for the 39-story UN HQ Building in accordance with the custom of construction workers. 05 October 1949. © UN Photo

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**TOGETHER FIRST**

A GLOBAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL