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Introduction

This is a Planetary Moment and a time for global leadership to generate Planetary Momentum. The United Nations Office at Geneva and World Academy of Art & Science in collaboration with partner organizations conducted the conference on “Global Leadership for the 21st Century” on December 15-16, 2020. The conference examined strategies and recommendations of this two-year project to fill the global leadership vacuum, enhance multilateral cooperation, promote human security, and accelerate implementation of the SDGs.

The conference was organized into ten interrelated pillars or themes: Human Security and Peace Building, Economy and Employment, Environment and Climate, Health and Food Security, Future Education, Mobilising Global Civil Society, Strategies for Financing SDGs, an integrated Approach to Research, Policy-making & Implementation, Youth Networks & Social Movements and the Role of Media. Here is a compilation of the panel papers prepared by the working groups for each of these themes or pillars.

Panel on Human Security and Peace Building

Peace and food security are closely interlinked. Hunger anywhere threatens peace everywhere. Hunger leads to political instability, social unrest, massive migrations, rebellions, civil war, crime and violence. Prosperity, which eliminates hunger, also tends to eliminate violence. Even in war-ravaged Africa, experience shows that where food is plentiful, war is avoided. The converse is also true. Historically, war and civil strife have been the single greatest cause of famines. In addition to destroying crops and food supplies, it disrupts food distribution through the use of sieges and blockades. In the past decade, war has had a greater impact on food supplies in Africa, particularly the Sahelian region, than have the severe droughts that periodically plague the continent.

So too, freedom from hunger and political freedom go hand in hand. As subsistence agriculture and periodic famine were the economic foundations of monarchy and feudalism, the generation of agricultural surpluses that stimulated commercialism, and later industrialization, have formed the basis for the rise of democratic institutions. Greater freedom for individual action and ownership both stimulate and are supported by greater productivity in agriculture. Authoritarian government is frequently either the result or the cause of food shortages – its use of force justified on the one hand to meet a crisis situation or necessitated on the other to restore order and initiate emergency measures. Only under democracy is government compelled to pay attention to the needs of people at the lowest levels of society. Democracy is the most potent fertilizer to ensure food security at the household level.¹

Advancing a Comprehensive Human Security Agenda

Global leadership requires a re-evaluation of security risks, a reconceptualization of security strategies, and re-prioritization of security measures to address the real threats to human security. No country can be safe without a stable and vibrant economy, sufficient jobs for all job seekers, and a good and safe social policy. The nations which have proven resilient in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic are those which have already shifted to a broader conception of security that also encompasses economy, ecology, health, education, social welfare and wellbeing. Failure to address the human security threats will only lead to more wars, more migration, more cultural tensions, a greater shift to populism, social polarization, autocracy and even more conflict.

The pandemic is not only an unprecedented threat. It is also an unprecedented opportunity. For it has generated unprecedented awareness of the fragility of our present global social system and created a felt need for rapid transition to a more resilient system for human security. Human Security is a people-centered, comprehensive, holistic perspective, a unifying framework for addressing both the direct and root causes of insecurity. We all have a role to play in building a new social contract. And this new social contract has to be between society, the economy, politics and nature – **a Global Green New Deal**. So also, we have the responsibility to collectively craft a new culture of multilateralism, of cooperation and solidarity, a multilateral system that is inclusive, efficient, relevant, accountable and truly connected to people's needs and lives.

A historical perspective confirms that today's achievements are the product of a long, slow process of translating universal values into human rights and transforming these lofty ideas into enforceable laws, achievable goals, actionable strategies, quantifiable targets, and institutions responsible and empowered for their realization. Thus, the SDGs are the embodiment of the universal values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 and now in various stages of practical implementation.

The solution to all humanity's pressing challenges start with a clear affirmation of the universal values on which an effective solutions must be founded. Thus, the only viable solution to the global employment challenge must be founded on recognition of the right of every citizen to employment. Affirmation of the right to work is the essential basis and the most effective strategy for generating the necessary political will to provide jobs for all.² **In a market economy, employment is the economic equivalent of the right to vote.** Without access to remunerative job opportunities, freedom of citizens in democratic societies is severely limited. This compels us to think about a New

¹ International Commission on Peace and Food, *Uncommon opportunities: an agenda for peace and equitable development* (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1995), 104.

² *Ibid.*

Social Contract for workers.³ The responsibility of national governments for generation of employment has long been acknowledged, even in the capitalist world. Articles 23 and 24 of the UDHR, the New Deal and US Employment Act of 1946, and similar legislation in many other countries affirm the right to work, free choice of employment, just and favorable working conditions, and protection against unemployment. The session on economy and employment examines practical strategies for realizing this right practically once it is fully acknowledged.

A similar approach is applied to the right for food security, environment, accessible affordable education, the voice of “we the people” to be heard and respected, migration resulting from conflict or ecological disasters, a free and independent media as a source of reliable knowledge, and other issues addressed during different sessions of this conference.

The Human Security approach is not only founded on the centrality of universal values. It recognizes and addresses the complexity and interconnected nature confronting people and their aspirations to be free from want, fear and indignity. It is based on recognition of interdependence between all dimensions of security – political, economic, food, health, personal, community and environmental. None of these dimensions can be addressed independently of the others. Human security is an integrated organic conception of life, not a mechanical assembly of independent parts. It is centered on living human beings. It encompasses the broad range of conditions that threaten the survival, livelihood and dignity of people and their communities, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

For this reason, achievement of the SDGs is severely impeded by the fragmented nature of our scientific disciplines, academic courses, policy-making institutions and implementation agencies. There is need to establish new types of transdisciplinary multi-stakeholder international research programs and institutes to bridge the gaps between academic research, political action, public support and practical results. This issue is addressed in the opening session on Day 2 of the conference.

A comprehensive approach to human security also recognizes variances among communities in space and time, including the differing capacities of people, civil society and governments, differences in context, culture, aspirations, and expectations and differences in the root causes behind ongoing and future challenges.

And most important of all, the human security approach recognizes the equal importance of the individual and the society in evolving effective solutions. It combines bottom-up approaches which consult, involve and empower communities with top-down laws, norms, processes, systems and institutions for early warning, good governance, rule of law and social protection. Human security can only be achieved and sustained when individuals, communities, nation-states and the global community collaborate for the common good of all.

Human Security is a unifying leadership concept to guide the future development of the multilateral system.

This session seeks to reconcile the objectives of political, economic, financial, social, wellbeing and ecological dimensions of security. It examines security as a comprehensive, inclusive, integrated conception. It will highlight the interrelations and interdependencies between different dimensions of human security and its implications for action. It will also examine human security from an evolutionary perspective to better understand sustainable and resilient development as expressions of a social process rather than merely a set of measurable goals and standards.

1. The benefits of an integrated approach to human security.
2. The role of the multilateral system in promoting Human Security for all.
3. Implications of the Human Security concept for the structure and functioning of UN agencies and the design, implementation and assessment of development programs.
4. Catalytic strategies for addressing the multi-dimensional challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic from an integrated, social process perspective.

³ <https://www.nelp.org/publication/a-new-social-contract-for-workers/>

Panel on Economy & Employment

“Given the gravity of this situation, the global economy needs investments in a human-centred recovery, which strengthens the capacities of people to benefit from change, reinforces the institutions of work so that everyone is properly protected and boosts the jobs of the future – with decent work for all,”

-- ILO Director-General Guy Ryder

COVID-19 has brought into stark relief the vulnerability and the critical role of employment as part of a comprehensive human security framework so essential to freedom, welfare, well-being and social stability. Global working-hour losses for the second quarter of 2020 relative to the last quarter of 2019 were estimated at 17.3%, equivalent to 495 million full-time jobs. Total loss in labour income during the first three quarters of 2020 were estimated at \$3.5 trillion.¹ And with the resurgence of the pandemic in recent months, the negative impact and downstream effects are likely to grow more severe.

In a market economy, employment is the economic equivalent of the right to vote. Recognizing the right of every citizen to employment is the essential basis and the most effective strategy for generating the necessary political will to provide jobs for all.¹

Catalytic strategies that can generate new employment and self-employment opportunities on a very large scale include: job guarantee programs, shifting taxation from employment to resource taxes on non-renewable resources and carbon, elimination of fossil fuel subsidies, and tax on short-term speculation, Complementary Regional

Digital Currencies designed to increase local circulation and velocity of money, access to investment and training for SMEs as the real engines of job creation, responsible public procurement programs targeting local sourcing, development of cooperative businesses and social enterprises, targeted vocational training and apprenticeship programs to fill the skill shortages, organizational innovation, and entrepreneurship.

This session examines national level job guarantee programs as an affordable, cost-effective, financially-feasible strategy to ensure the right to work and promote full employment with dignity. One proven model is India’s National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the world’s largest longest running jobs program providing at least 100 days of wage employment to 50 million Indian households.

The model examined here is for universal, voluntary, inclusive jobs program that ensures a job offer to anyone ready and willing to work at the established minimum wage level, including wages and benefits package. A minimum wage is a half-baked, discriminatory measure; for without assured access to a job, it protects only those fortunate enough to obtain a scarce job. National governments would provide the funding for direct job creation, but jobs could be created by state and local governments and by not-for-profit organizations. This would allow local communities to determine the priority public services in which funds are invested, which could include infrastructure, environmental remediation, health, child and elder care and other social services. Decentralization promotes targeting of projects to meet community needs and also to match new jobs to the skills of unemployed people in those communities.

The program is designed to be counter-cyclical to act as a balance to the variable demand of the market. It acts as a shock-absorber and powerful tool for economic stabilization. The Job Guarantee would act as an employment buffer stock scheme with the added benefit that it stabilizes the wage floor, overall prices, and the economy as a whole. The demand for jobs would grow when private sector activity slows and it would decline as private sector activity takes off and draws workers away from the public program for higher pay. Thus, one of the advantages of the program is to keep people working during recessions, so that unemployed labor can retain their skills and be readily available for reemployment when a downturn comes to an end, eliminating the despair generated by high levels of youth unemployment and curbing the rise of chronic long term unemployment. It would establish a new labor standard with an uncompromising living-wage floor for all working people, while offsetting deflationary pressures and stabilizing employment, inflation, and government spending more effectively than current practice. The program

includes training and apprenticeships to upgrade the skills and employability of participants, and will provide a successful work history for participants to use to obtain better, higher paying work.¹

A major obstacle to full employment programs has been the mistaken belief that they are unaffordable and therefore unsustainable. **High levels of unemployment can severely impact food and nutrition security, physical and mental health, education, violence, crime, drug usage, political stability, democracy and human rights.** The real costs of unemployment result from lost productivity and GDP, deterioration of work skills and re-employability, poor nutrition, impaired physical and mental health, rising levels of drug and alcohol use, crime, violence, political polarization, extremism and social instability. Studies confirm that the full social, economic, political and environmental costs of unemployment may indeed exceed the cost of providing sufficient job opportunities for all job seekers. Moreover, research confirms that the job guarantee program can create jobs at far lower cost than current stimulus programs, while raising tax revenues and reducing welfare expenditures.

Financing job programs is already an accepted feature of quantitative easing and various forms of Green Deal employment programs. But sustainable job programs can better be based on direct money creation as advocated by Modern Monetary Theory or by Central Bank Digital Currencies specifically created for investments in jobs and other dimensions of human security. These options are examined in the conference session on financial innovation.

The conference panel will examine catalytic strategies to promote sustainable full employment:

- The right to employment and its central place in strategies for human security
- Successful job creation strategies and programs
- Assessing the real social costs of prolonged unemployment
- Financing public job creation programs
- Decentralized implementation of national programs to optimize community development

Panel on Environment and Climate Session

Leadership for Peace, Sustainable Development and Human Rights

2020 marks the fifth anniversary of the Paris Climate Agreement and the launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Both are historical achievements that gave fresh impetus to global policy discussions and brought renewed hope for the long-awaited radical transformation. Five years down the line, much of the original excitement and anticipation has worn off. What was meant to be a ‘Super Year’, will be remembered by most as the year in which the convergence of the climate and biodiversity crises reached a tipping point and spilled over into a devastating pandemic, which has infected millions of people around the world and claimed over 700,000 lives, with numbers rising.

The emerging global health crisis is the symptom of a much deeper and longer-term disruption. Science tells us that deforestation, biodiversity loss, wildlife trafficking and meat consumption increase the risks of pandemics. Nearly three quarters of infectious diseases come from animals, as a spill-over effect of their natural habitat loss or industrial meat production. Our consumption patterns drive more and more resource-intensive industries, mining and agricultural production. We are in a Planetary Emergency and the existential risks are real. One which was already predicted 50 years ago by esteemed scientists and thought leaders in *The Limits to Growth*, yet disregarded and ridiculed as unrealistic. The current socio-economic system is the underlying driver of both existing social and ecological challenges, with assaults on natural systems compounding the limits to wellbeing.

The biggest challenge is that the current systems do not account for the negative effects that extraction, use, and disposal of natural resources have on human wellbeing. Financial growth is prioritised at the expense of all else; other indicators of wellbeing, such as health, education, and a clean environment, are undervalued or not valued at all. COVID-19 and the financial consequences of the economic lockdown have been dire, and yet have made it even more apparent how the global response to global warming and biodiversity loss has been inadequate.

The only way out of these multitude of interconnected crises is radical systemic transformation. The global community must act together, positively and urgently. It is time to step up with a triple goal: a just transition for all, by achieving net zero emissions well before 2050, and investing in a nature-positive recovery. We cannot go back to business as usual. It is not too late to build back balance between people, planet and prosperity - but time is not on our side. Ultimately, a green, just and healthy recovery post-COVID will only be successful if everyone is on board - from governments and business leaders to citizens of all ages. Now is the moment to ensure that nations declare a planetary emergency and put in place emergency action plans. It is through collective national, regional and local action that decision-makers and citizens can move forward towards a brighter future.

Staying within the Planetary Boundaries is essential to secure a green, just and healthy future for all on Earth. Development programmes and actions, however well-intended, will not be sustainable unless we respect those boundaries and protect our biosphere – Agenda 2030 is no exception. If done properly, the Paris Agreement and the SDGs, in essence, should provide a comprehensive (universal development) plan for people and planet, with the aim to guarantee peace, prosperity and opportunity for all on a healthy planet - by 2030. Since 2015, some progress has been made but it remains slow and uneven - both in terms of the implementation on the ground as well as the distribution of funds and compensation. This falls far short of the emergency at hand.

The [Planetary Emergency Plan](#) (PEP) Version 2.0, recently published by The Club of Rome, sets out such a comprehensive plan for emergence from emergency and provides a new narrative for change. In essence, the PEP is a roadmap for transformational leaders to respond to the ongoing planetary emergency and catalyse systemic change. The PEP does not provide a solution but rather an integrated approach to human security and pathway to emergence. It outlines 10 commitments and key actions towards 1) creating just and equitable societies, 2) transforming energy systems and 3) shifting towards a circular and regenerative economy. The manner and priority in which these actions are implemented will vary from country to country, but the overall objective of rapid carbon emissions reduction, nature regeneration and the common goal of enhancing human health and well-being over the next decade are central.

Since the first publication of the Planetary Emergency Plan in 2019, 33 countries have proclaimed a climate or planetary emergency. Such declarations do not lead to change unless they are being supported by action and policy transformation. Let us therefore not only declare a Planetary Emergency, but also show what can be done to emerge from it. This is where the Planetary Emergency Partnership, a global network of more than 300 organisations, is essential in ensuring implementation of the key actions outlined in the Planetary Emergency Plan. The [Planetary Emergency Partnership](#) has grown into an intergenerational global social movement, rallying around the emergence from emergency narrative and vision of radical collaboration for systemic transformation. For 2021, the Partnership will focus on thematic task forces, focused implementing specific key actions and policy priorities: Ending fossil fuel subsidies, introducing new progress indicators (such as wellbeing) and encouraging regenerative food systems.

The good news is that change is starting to happen all around us: COVID is offering transformational opportunities, and a growing number of leaders and champions acknowledge that going back to business as usual is not an option and advocate for radical transformation. The EU adopted an ambitious European Green Deal framework; Costa Rica is driving the force behind the Leaders' Pledge for Nature (which is currently supported by 80 Heads of State and the EU). Importantly, citizens are also increasingly aware of the intrinsic dependency of human beings on nature. Around the world, there is a bottom-up movement of mobilisation, which triggers and complements top-down policy-making. Business leaders are uniting to accelerate action for climate and biodiversity. The Fridays for the Future climate movement led by Greta Thunberg has made its way into the offices of the highest EU decision-makers and similar movements are now starting to emerge on nature based solutions. How do we build this momentum and unique opportunity for change to ensure a successful start to the Decade of Action?

This session will bring together champions on climate and environment for a discussion on the importance of systemic transformation. How can we effectively address the deep-rooted crises and design near-term solutions for long-term systems change in order to build resilience to future shocks? In other words, how do we redesign a system of which we are part? How do we get to a green, just and healthy recovery? What practical steps can we take to ensure implementation of the Planetary Emergency Plan and emerge from emergency? How do we set in stone the key targets called upon in the PEP to protect our global commons and ensure a low carbon economy and just transition?

Please reach out to Laura van der Zande at The Club of Rome (lhvdzande@clubofrome.org) to receive more information on the work of the [Planetary Emergency Impact Hub](#).

Panel on Health & Food Security

As of this writing, 68 million people in the world have been infected and nearly 1.6 million people have already died from the COVID-19 virus in 2020. The future impact is yet to be determined, but it may well exceed in magnitude what has already occurred before sufficient measures are in place to contain it. However, these astounding figures do not fully reflect the impact of the pandemic on humanity. According to World Bank, it is likely to push an additional 88 million people around the world into extreme poverty in 2020 and as many as 150 million by the end of 2021.¹

But the greatest, most immediate consequences of the pandemic on human health are its devastating impact of food security. Globally almost two billion people lack access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food and 690 million suffer from hunger. Even before the onset of the pandemic, about 113 million people were chronically food insecure and that number is on the rise². Due to the pandemic, life-threatening levels of food insecurity in the developing world are expected to nearly double in 2020 to 265 million.³ This number is 165 times greater than COVID-19 fatalities and four times greater than the number infected so far.

Health, food and nutrition security are inextricably interlinked. COVID-19 strikes hardest at the most vulnerable portions of the population, especially the very poor and underfed. So far most attention has been devoted to treatment, prevent and curtailing the spread of the disease itself. **Global leadership is needed with equal or greater urgency to address the devastating impact of the pandemic on food and nutritional insecurity.**

Health and food security are also inextricably interlinked with other dimensions of human security. Food security is a political, commercial, economic, financial, social, educational, ecological, legal, cultural and climate issue. It is dependent on factors such as production and availability of food, supply chain integration, entitlement, forex reserves, access and purchasing power, health and nutritional quality, and stability of supply related to weather, conflicts and ecological events.

Hunger anywhere threatens peace everywhere. Like most SDGs, achieving Zero Hunger (SDG 2) is interdependent on achieving all the other SDGs. The causes and remedies are myriad and must be addressed in a coordinated manner. A shift is needed to an integrated, transdisciplinary “Human Security” framework adapted to local conditions by fostering coordination between major stakeholders at all levels of the global society.

The world possesses the resources and capacities needed to achieve global food security, but it lacks the political will to do so. The “right to food” must be recognized as a universal human right.

The value of human life transcends political, economic, and social orthodoxies. A world dedicated to upholding political and property rights should not simultaneously fail to recognize and enforce the most fundamental of all human rights—the right to life.⁴ For rights to be protected, they must be translated into laws, safeguarded by institutions, embodied in policies and goals, and enforced in practice. The 2013 National Food Security Act (NFSA) adopted by India was the result of collective action through a domestic right to food campaign. It made the right to food a legal entitlement for approximately 75 percent of India’s rural population and 50 percent of its urban population.⁵ Notable efforts are already underway at the global and regional levels to address the multiple dimensions of food insecurity with a full spectrum of measures contained in the WFP Integrated Road Map, further plans for the UN Food Systems Summit 2021, and many other initiatives.

A comprehensive approach must include aspects of food security discussed in other sessions:

- The right to food and food security as an integral element as discussed in the Human Security session.
- Addressing food security through job guarantee programs as discussed in the Economy session.
- Environmental measures to prevent and remediate the impact of environmental degradation and climate change.
- School meal programs during the pandemic and their collateral impact on reducing dropout rates.
- The role of cooperatives, NGOs and food innovation hubs for enhancing food security.
- Innovative strategies to boost investment in food, employment and other dimensions of human security.

- Integration of research, policymaking and implementation to enhance coordination across disciplinary barriers, fragmented policy-making and between specialized agencies and programs encompassing academies, universities, governments, international organizations, businesses and civil society.

All these strategies are mutually reinforcing. investment in raising agricultural productivity and income generation schemes is a very effective means for enhancing food security, employment and economic security. Agricultural surpluses and rising farm incomes are preconditions and stimuli for rural development, economic growth and industrialization. Wherever agriculture becomes prosperous, rural labor becomes scarce and wages increase.

Food Buffer Stocks

A policy vacuum fostered by geopolitics, liberalization and commercial interests has thus far prevented effective steps to balance forces of markets, geopolitics and government intervention and thus, to manage excessive variations in supply and speculative pricing. The competitive food security model leads to wasteful over-production, widely fluctuating and unremunerative prices, unsustainable subsidies and non-ecological practices. It needs to be replaced by a cooperative food security system striking a balance between market forces and incentives on the one hand and local, regional and international food security on the other.

The focus of this session will be on the role buffer stock systems can play in increasing resilience by stabilizing the availability of supplies, farm prices, distribution, consumer access and affordability at the national, regional and global level. Already effective models exist at the national level such as the Food Corporation of India established in 1965, which played a central role in the country's remarkable strides toward food self-sufficiency when it doubled grain production within a single decade by ensuring remunerative prices to producers and distributing surpluses to food deficit regions while moderating prices against speculation. Lack of excess price stability is as important to food security as availability, since left to the market, food price often falls below the minimum level living wage needed to support agricultural operations, and often is too high and beyond the reach of low-income households. Buffer stock systems can support both goals of protecting farmers and consumers.

National buffer stock systems can incentivize production, stabilize domestic prices and discourage hoarding of and speculation on food. But vulnerabilities arising from climatic variations, civil war and other nation-wide phenomena such as the pandemic will still leave countries vulnerable. **International cooperation to establish regional buffer stocks can significantly reduce the risks to food security.**

Groups of vulnerable countries can set up regional buffer stocks managed by existing regional economic organizations. Regional stocks provide a higher level of protection at lower costs than when each nation maintains its own buffer stocks. For example, WFP estimated that regional stocks needed to provide 30 days of consumption for the most vulnerable populations in the 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States would be 35 percent smaller than the sum of national stocks.⁶ A pilot project in the region of West Africa on strategic grain reserves has seen positive results.⁷ Both national and regional buffer stock systems can provide a counter-cyclical mechanism by selling when prices are high and buying when they are low, thus reducing dependence on public funds during times of crises. Buffer stock systems are largely compatible with a market economy and recognized by the World Trade Organization. The government sells grain in the event that the market prices rise above the maximum sale price and buys grain in the event that the market price falls below a minimum procurement price. The price band can be periodically adjusted to take account of changes in economic fundamentals. Buffer systems can also reduce price volatility arising from the effect on crop yields rising from variations in the weather.

Such regional buffer stock programs could be recognized by The World Trade Organization which has already established seven working groups to address Domestic Support, Public Stockholding for Food Security purposes, Cotton, Market Access, Special Safeguard Mechanism, Export Competition and Export Restrictions in advance of next negotiations. Extending the mandate of existing international organizations could also reduce price fluctuations and enhance food security through measures such as the reactivation of the International Commodity Agreement and Bodies under the auspices of UNCTAD, assigning them an early warning role to trigger safeguard rules, and protect countries and populations from starvation.

At the international level, some international safeguard rules could be enforced when global food security is at risk, and suspend speculative transactions and price quotation in international commodity exchanges, prioritise inter-regional trade to food deficit regions and limit trade to self-sufficient regions like the developed countries. These kinds of measures need to be combined with a diversification of food and agricultural practices at the national level and strengthening of linkages, incentives and infrastructure to enhance local markets and rural-urban supply chains.

The conference panel will examine catalytic strategies to effectively address global food security as an urgent priority to reduce the devastating impact of the pandemic on health and human security.

- Impact of food and nutrition insecurity on health, before and as result of the pandemic
- Buffer stock programs and related strategies to ensure availability of food to low income consumers at affordable prices
- Integrated strategies linking health, food security and employment security

Panel on Future Education

Leadership is needed today to reconfigure the educational landscape in response to the emerging requirements of the 21st century. That leadership is needed at all levels and in all fields to meet the pressing political, economic, social, cultural and ecological challenges confronting global society today. The quality of that leadership will depend on the quality, type, accessibility and affordability of education made available to younger generations, as well as continuing education for adults. The latter takes on special urgency and importance in view of the quantum changes in the world and the consequences of the 4th Industrial Revolution, which will require a totally altered workforce and organization of work.

The GL-21 project has already called in the June 2020 conference for concerted efforts to foster new content based on the inclusive, global, multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral, human-centered, value-based, evolutionary perspective needed for effectively educating future leaders in different fields. This session of the December conference focuses on the kind of leadership initiatives needed to foster transformation of the global system of higher education to enhance quality, accessibility, affordability for the growing number of youth seeking higher and continuing educational opportunities.

The high cost of the existing model is placing unsustainable financial burdens on governments and students. It is also limiting the number of students who can afford and opt for higher education at a time when remunerative jobs are available only for those with higher education. At the same time, the explosive growth of college-age populations in developing nations is generating problems related to shortages of competent instructors, facilities, institutions and financial resources to expand rapidly enough to meet demand. Where new institutions do multiply rapidly, quality of education has declined dramatically.

Recent projections show that tertiary enrollment will rise by 120 million students or 56% between 2015 and 2030.¹ Expansion of the existing delivery system to meet this surge in demand is unrealistic given the enormous time and cost involved and the already severe shortage of trained teachers.

There is also growing awareness of the need for a radical shift in pedagogy and context from passive to active learning, from information transfer to developing the capacity for independent thinking, from subject-centered to person-centered education, from abstract theory to contextual knowledge, from narrow disciplinary specialization to broader multi- and transdisciplinary and intersectoral perspectives.¹ Studies confirm that video-based learning systems, digital learning materials, especially open-sourced content, and gamification of learning are strongly favored by the younger generations.¹

Innovative Learning Systems

Rapid expansion of the educational system is feasible, affordable and absolutely essential to prepare youth for successful adulthood in the fast changing economic environment. It will require major changes in content, pedagogy, certification and delivery systems. The remarkable advances in technology have opened up promising alternatives at much lower cost than the existing model, but the conservative nature of educational institutions has retarded their widespread adoption. COVID-19 has radically altered the situation in 2020. The suspension of physical classroom education generated a sudden rapid transition to online learning at all levels of education around the world.

The pandemic has compelled higher educational institutions around the world to very quickly make up for a decade of slow adoption of online learning systems and pedagogy. The results have been mixed due to the lack of instructors trained and experienced working in the new medium, but the demand for online courses in higher education continues to soar.¹

Recent experience confirms that online learning has an important role to play in the future. But it also highlights the broad array of difficulties encountered in moving education online. The technological hurdles include poor access and quality of internet connectivity and limited access to computers. But these problems can be addressed at a fraction of the time and cost of expanding conventional delivery systems to accommodate the growing number of students. More serious are the barriers resulting from the difficulty for instructors to acquire both the pedagogical and technical

skills required for effective online learning, to alter their teaching styles, to actively involve and engage students who are not physically present, and to foster creative forms of student interaction both online and outside the online classroom. These problems can and are being solved by training. Indeed, over the last six months many students and educators report a successful transition to online learning.

A growing number of educators and researchers have concluded that a combination of online and classroom learning can provide the highest quality of education to the most students in a cost-effective manner both locally and globally. Hybrid models combine delivery of lectures on line with personal classroom student-instructor and student-student engagement. A permanent shift to a hybrid model might involve a repurposing of existing brick and mortar institutions to focus on active student engagement rather than information transfer. This would enable them to admit larger numbers of students at a significantly lower cost of education.

The future of many existing educational institutions is already under siege due to declining numbers of students, rising costs and reduced public support. Hybrid models could enable these institutions to expand the variety of courses offered and the number of students they can accommodate, while reducing the cost of faculty sufficiently to make it affordable for much larger numbers of youth. Now that reputed universities around the world have embraced hybrid and online courses, these segments are expected to grow rapidly in coming years.

Issues for discussion

Apart from altering the system for knowledge delivery, COVID-19 has also spurred other innovations in higher education, such as micro-credentials, career certificates, and nanodegree programs. More importantly, **it has broken the monopolistic high-cost system for knowledge certification, which has been one of the principal reasons for the slow adoption of alternative delivery systems by existing brick and mortar institutions.**

The pandemic is accelerating the shift to verified credentials.¹ During the past year, enrollment in short-term credential courses rose by 70% in USA.¹ MOOCs are partnering with major corporations such as AT&T and Google to deliver sophisticated nanodegree programs. Companies such as Amazon, and Microsoft are launching programs which certify vocational competence and offer well-paying tech jobs in or outside their companies. Google's micro-credential certification program offers six-month career certificates for \$300 which are regarded as equivalent to a four-year college degree by employers.^{1,1}

These developments reflect the growing demand for personalized learning pathways and learn-on-demand delivery systems available 24 hours a day.¹ They are opening up the field of higher education to a vast reservoir of underutilized educational resources and non-traditional partners. The switch to online delivery makes it possible to tap vast numbers of qualified, experienced instructors who are retired or engaged in other occupations in business, government, civil society and different professions. **The separation of knowledge delivery from credentialing will make it possible for many different types of institutions – public, private and CSO – to expand their educational offerings, since standardized, credible credentialing will then be available from independent sources, through government, universities, businesses in different fields of competence and independent expert agencies. The increasing competition will also increase the affordability of higher education.**

This session will examine the feasibility of rapid transition to more affordable, adaptable, innovative, equitable and cost-effective delivery systems for global higher education.

1. What would be the potential benefits of delivery systems for university level instruction which make lectures by the world's best instructors and courses in multiple languages universally accessible at a fraction of the cost of the existing system?
2. What would be the pros and cons of modifying the present system of certification in higher education so that knowledge delivery and certification of competencies can be independently acquired?
3. How could hybrid systems compensate for the barriers to personal, physical interaction in online learning systems?
4. How can the educational system be modified to draw on the expertise of qualified instructors such as retired teachers and industry experts who are not presently part of the formal delivery system?

Panel on Leadership for financing implementation of the SDGs

For many decades, we have lived in a period of global prosperity, unrivalled in human history, with the economies of the world having generated wealth at a near unprecedented rate. While economic activity has driven progress in human development and the quality of life globally, the world is today facing a series of increasingly urgent challenges that, if left unaddressed, threaten to derail or potentially undo the progress the world has made in the previous decades. Many of these challenges have been inadvertently fueled by the same mechanisms that have driven global growth and prosperity and are intrinsically linked with them. The pandemic has exposed the lack of resilience of many nations and systems.

There is widespread and growing recognition of both the urgency and the interconnected nature of the challenges facing the world, and they have become increasingly critical areas of focus for international institutions, governments, and the private sector to address. The United Nations' formulation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been a landmark in the development of global awareness and action, signed by 193 countries, setting a series of targets for 2030 that are form the basis for building a sustainable future for the world. The SDGs having given rise to an increasing number of government and private sector initiatives, both in partnership with the UN and independently, that seek to drive tangible action for the achievement of the goals. Given the interrelated nature of the world's engine of prosperity and its major challenges however, comprehensively achieving the 2030 goals will require a coordinated effort that drives systemic changes to the economic system that inadvertently has given rise to several of the challenges in the first place.

Capital is naturally one of the key global requirements for meeting the 2030 SDG goals. Financing the SDGs in developing countries alone is expected to require up to US\$5-7 trillion over the next ten years, with an annual funding gap of US\$2.5 trillion. The finance industry, by nature of its privileged position in the allocation of global capital, has a disproportionate role to play in addressing the SDGs and thereby ensuring the long-term sustainability of the system of enterprise that has driven the world's development and prosperity. The finance industry's leaders have begun to take an increasingly proactive position in addressing the world's challenges for the common good. They are redefining their purpose from shareholder capitalism to encompass a broader responsibility to stakeholders, and thereby positioning themselves as a potential 'force for good' in the world. The transition to such a state sees the industry on both sides of the equation, financing what is increasingly being seen as good for the environment and stakeholders as well as continuing to finance things that are generally considered damaging.

Fundamentally, the industry's ability to act as a 'force for good' rests upon its impact across three areas: mindful conduct promoting environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals, caring for the planet through sustainability, and through demonstrating compassion for all stakeholders. All these areas are fundamentally aligned to the SDGs and their overarching objective of long-term sustainability. An increasing number of industry leaders are also explicitly focusing on the SDGs to focus (and manage) their sustainability efforts and to effectively communicate these, both internally and to external stakeholders. Companies are prioritizing specific SDGs and setting benchmark targets against which to measure their contribution and sustainability impact, as well as to identify potential areas of focus for new initiatives to be launched.

In a detailed study of the finance industry's leading global participants⁴, it was found that there is a broad common ground emerging among these leaders in acting in the common good and while there is much further to go, the progress is substantial. While its ability to allocate capital to finance SDGs and other sustainability goals is clearly the finance industry's most powerful tool, its engagement as what can be defined a 'force for good' is substantial, multipronged and growing, spanning three categories of activities: (i) 'being good' initiatives that internalize the values the organization is trying to promote or see it engaging with stakeholders in *corporate social responsibility and citizenship initiatives*, (ii) 'doing good' initiatives in which the finance industry aligns it business with its values and by allocating capital using ESG or impact investing criteria, and (iii) 'leading for good' initiatives where leaders align their own organizations, their capital and the broader stakeholder community to make direct impacts on major issues and opportunities.

⁴ 'Capital As A Force For Good, Global Finance Industry Leaders Transforming Capitalism For A Sustainable Future', In Publication

It is the cumulative impact of all these initiatives that have the potential to make the finance industry and its actors a potent “force for good” in the world, both individually and collectively. The efforts of the leading financial institutions provide foresights into a series of mega-trends, big ideas and themes, with the potential to reshape not just the finance industry, but the wider financial system, and even the shape of the world over the coming decades. The conference panel will examine several of these big ideas and themes from the detailed study¹, including:

- **Beyond Money, Leading Change in the World.** The scope of actions being taken by major financial institutions - drive mass inclusion to address structural poverty, regenerate impoverished cities, restore ecosystems and address racial equity in their communities – is expanding their role in the global community and making them leaders in society beyond finance. Leaders in other industries will follow their lead to address other major global issues - healthcare leaders tackling healthcare inclusion, food companies tackling hunger, and media and technology companies tackling education and illiteracy on a global stage in the future.
- **Collective Action Across All Boundaries.** Having embraced the principle of collective action for the purpose organizing markets and transactions, the finance industry is now collaborating with transnational organizations, such as the UN, on major objectives like climate change and the SDGs. This engagement has prepared the leaders of the finance industry to work collectively on major issues beyond finance and to do so across national boundaries. This experience places every major world issue on the potential agenda for the industry to consider as a cause for collective action leveraging its commitment, capital and relationships.
- **Capitalism Revitalizes Through Every Stakeholder’s Choices.** Addressing the systemic issues built into consumption driven economic models requires all participants to make different choices, such as consumers buying only from businesses that ‘do good’, manufacturers adopting sustainable processes, financiers only funding those companies that adhere to them and governments setting the rules of engagement to promote appropriate behaviours. The finance industry, which touches over 90% of the net liquid assets in the world, is a highly effective catalyst for systemic changes to the way capital is allocated globally. Other participants, consumers and businesses, need comparable and coordinated measures of being, doing and leading for good to be able to do their part and create lasting changes to the system.
- **Closing the SDG Funding Gap.** While the annual funding gap for the SDGs of US\$2.5 trillion is substantial the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated that there is no shortage of capital for the right issues; with US\$15 trillion committed by governments globally in less than six months. With the leaders of the finance industry increasingly focused on sustainability a path to fully funding the SDG goals is increasingly visible. Closing the funding gap and coordinating spending to allocate capital to where it is most needed requires a new plan and tighter mechanisms to co-opt the energies of the entire industry.
- **Carbon Defunded, Alternatives Funded, Energy Transition Supported.** Our industrial economy is built on carbon energy sources. Going beyond the current level of achievement of humankind will require a cheaper, cleaner and more abundant energy source. While it is uncertain what this new energy source will be, what is certain is that the transition is underway. The leading institutions in the finance industry are prioritizing a growing number of initiatives related to reducing carbon including new energy. These include plans to defund industries contributing to carbon based pollution, reduce or freeze investments for fossil fuels and to fund alternatives and renewables to achieve global carbon neutrality.
- **Creating Mass Inclusion, In the Developed World Too.** Capitalism’s successes in generating wealth has not reached enough people and so have seen divisions within nations and across the world. Housing is an issue for more than 20% of the world’s population, half the world lacks access to adequate healthcare, and education is an issue for the 43% of the population in advanced economies without tertiary education. Without these challenges being solved, the world can expect more severe disruption. The future sees those ‘with’ solving for those ‘without’ if there is to be peace within nations and across them.
- **The Democratization of Finance.** Three quarters of the world’s population are still not active participants in the banking system. Technology provides the means to drive mass financial inclusion globally in the coming decade, and finance and financial services will be increasingly democratized, decentralized and personalized as network technologies continue to eliminate intermediaries and governing agencies that provide insufficient value in key areas of financial services. Innovations in digital money and crypto currency are pave the way to a new monetary system. While hurdles such as security challenges, questions of standards and governance and the need to create

mass digital literacy remain, the companies that solve these challenges will likely emerge as future leaders of the industry.

- **Post Crisis Capitalism: A More Conscious Values Based Responsible Approach.** The coronavirus pandemic has, triggered an unprecedented health and economic crisis that has found many of the world's leading nations wanting, but has also pointed to the possible transformation of the world through environmental regeneration, a rethinking of urbanization and work, global digital participation in education, payments and healthcare, and a new approach to healthcare and the development of medicines among many other changes.
- **Funding the Future.** In addition to the world's challenges, its long-term future also needs to be financed - innovations that change the scale and reach of humanity like artificial intelligence, energy innovations, material sciences, synthetic biology and space travel. The lessons learned by the finance industry in addressing sustainability are building the skills, innovation and risk management capabilities needed to develop financing solutions that accurately consider and allocate risk and reward for this innovation funding, ensuring the availability of sufficient capital for the next stage in the journey for the world.

Panel on Integrated Approach to Research, Policy-making & Implementation

The UN has assumed an outstanding leadership role in dedicating all its resources, expertise and organizational capabilities to achieve the SDGs, which embody and seek to give practical expression to the universal values and principles embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Achievement of goals of this magnitude and in such a short timeframe will require the commitment, endorsement and efforts of the whole society—locally, nationally and globally. It requires the active participation of the full spectrum of social institutions. It also requires close coordination between different scientific disciplines, specialized policy-making experts, government departments, businesses and civil society organizations. This session examines the role of the UN system in promoting more tightly integrated institutional framework for effective implementation of the SDGs.

The challenge of SDG implementation is greatly magnified by the interdependence between the goals. Some of the goals could be achieved by strategies which undermine or imperil achievement of other SDGs. None of them can be fully achieved independent of improvements in the others. So too, peace and development are inextricably linked. Extensive research is required to understand the interrelationships and interdependencies between these goals and the most effective strategies to achieve them in a mutually reinforcing rather than mutually conflicting manner. And once that is achieved, implementation will still face considerable institutional barriers.

Globalization compounds the SDGs challenge, because achievement of so many of the goals depends on actions by many or all countries as the pandemic and climate change so dramatically exemplify. This is also true of goals which were previously thought to concern strictly national issues. For example, full employment cannot be achieved based solely on national economic policies and a beggar-thy-neighbor strategy. More than half of the major factors influencing employment today can only be addressed by global policy coordination. Full employment can only be achieved by a comprehensive, coordinated global effort, by releasing and harnessing the enormous potential of human society for rapid advancement, and by measures to promote maximum development of social organization, innovation, entrepreneurship and social dynamism. Globally coordinated social research involving all major stakeholders—government, business, labor organizations, international organizations, research institutions, universities and a wide range of civil society organizations—can evolve an effective strategy for global full employment.

Successful achievement of the SDGs will require a radical change in public perceptions, attitudes and culture which cannot be achieved solely by changes in law and public policy. The press, educational institutions, NGOs and other civil society organizations have key roles to play in the process.

Overcoming Structural Barriers

Few policy initiatives succeed in releasing the necessary social awareness, engagement and commitment required to transform administrative programs into broad-based social movements. The existing structure of institutions is a principal barrier to rapid, effective action. Silo-based academic disciplines are ill-suited to generate the type of comprehensive knowledge and strategies required. Compartmentalized government agencies are rarely able to generate the type of communication and coordination within and between departments or to formulate the type of integrated policies and programs required to match the complex realities of real-world situations. Gaps also separate each step in the chain from researchers and policy-makers to implementing agencies, funding sources, business, civil society organizations and local communities.

Rare exceptions do exist in which an integrated approach has delivered astonishing results in a very short time span. The strategy implemented by India sixty years ago to double national food grain production within a single decade combined and integrated all the essential dimensions of food security, including nationally coordinated agricultural research, adoption of the latest technologies, national demonstration plots, farmer education and training, seed farms to produce hybrid varieties, corporations to produce sufficient fertilizers, warehousing to store surpluses, a national

food-grain marketing organization, minimum floor prices for food grains to incentivize production by farmers, and much more. But these efforts were made by extraordinary political effort from the top down and did not become the modus operandi for other development initiatives.

The same process is behind phenomenal accomplishments in other spheres of life around the world. The IT revolution in Silicon Valley was driven by educational and research institutions working in close collaboration with businesses to develop new products, new technologies, new organizational models and social systems. The achievements of Silicon Valley and its offshoots were made possible by remarkable technological advances backed by supportive policies. But the real driving force was the atmosphere of freedom, entrepreneurship and innovation that unleashed the creative energies and dynamic initiatives of innumerable organizations and individuals in North America and around the world.

Issues for Panel Discussion

This session examines an integrated multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder and multi-lateral political-social-intellectual strategy to bridge the prevailing gaps between academic research, public policy, business and civil society—between piecemeal, fragmented, sectoral approaches and between uncoordinated national initiatives. It seeks to ensure full social preparedness, acceptance and participation of civil society in order to more effectively engage, release and mobilize social energies for maximum impact. It aims to improve the speed, contextual relevance, quality, coordination, integration and overall effectiveness of human security policies, strategies, programs, implementation and assessment. It includes governments, international organizations, academies, universities, research institutes, business and civil society organizations. The goal is to formulate, disseminate and generate support for more effective and timely efforts to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The panel will consider the feasibility of establishing model institutions at the national, regional or global level based on this approach involving international organizations, national governments, research institutions, business and civil society organizations. It will examine

- What role can the UN system play in fostering closer coordination and integration between disciplines and stages of project from research and policy-making to implementation?
- What would be the anticipated benefits of new institutions models which foster closer integration and coordination as discussed in this paper?
- What examples exist of project development models which successfully bridge the gaps between research, policy-making, implementation and social involvement?
- What types of partnerships can be forged with national academies and research institutes to bridge the gap between research and practical implementation?

Panel on Mobilizing Global Civil Society

A new form of multilateralism or plurilateralism is needed that effectively engages a substantially larger number and wider range of civil society stakeholders. The last three decades have brought about a rapid expansion in the number and capabilities of civil society that possess the knowledge and capabilities essential for addressing global issues. Non-state actors are playing an increasingly important role in analyzing problems, shaping political discourse and influencing public opinion in global society. Subnational structures, megacities, national academies, networks of research institutions and universities, pressure groups, national and international civil society organizations and social movements are all stakeholders and players in global affairs.

International civil society institutions have multiplied exponentially and are now forging networks to multiply their reach and effective power. NGOs such as Fridays for the Future and Fire Drill Fridays have generated greater awareness of the climate threat than recent pronouncements by IPCC. From an estimated 28,000 NGOs in the whole world at the beginning of the 21st century, there are now about 10 million, representing a 350-fold multiplication in two decades. Approximately 41,000 of them from 300 countries and territories are actively engaged at the international level. This includes intergovernmental (IGOs) and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), with about 1,200 new organizations being added each year. In addition, lower level government institutions are also forming networks that extend beyond national boundaries.

The efforts of the NGO community to influence government policies are strongly supported by the public. The June 2020 GlobeScan survey found that 70-94 percent of those polled in 27 countries strongly or somewhat support NGO lobbying on issues ranging from education and social services to corporate behavior, boycotts and public protests.

Providing a Voice for Humanity

In addition to the enormous range of knowledge, experience, organizational capabilities and technological resources these institutions possess, they also represent the aspirations and interests of “we the people”—in most cases more directly and effectively than the institutions of national government. But only a few of the very largest have an effective voice at the international level. And most of them tend to operate independently from one another, often competing for funding and contracts from the same sources.

The collective power and potential impact of these organizations could be greatly magnified by linking together different special interest subgroups to forge a global network spanning a broad range of social issues. The association and partial unification of a great many organizations with shared values, common interests and commitment to the global common good could considerably magnify the influence of global civil society on global public opinion and decision-makers in government, international organizations, business, academia and civil society organizations themselves. *This session* engages representatives from different types of CSOs to examine ways to magnify the voice of civil society in global affairs.

Direct democracy worked well in the tiny city states of ancient Greece, but as large nation states evolved, indirect mechanisms were introduced to represent the views of citizens in government. Large constituencies, long distances, the intermediacy of political parties, special interests and political careerism have created a vast gap between public opinion and government action at the national level. At the global level, citizens have no voice at all except through the agency of their national governments and civil society organizations. Can humanity acquire a direct voice in the age of instant global communications?

This session examines the possibility of mobilizing the combined resources, membership and influence of global civil society to create a direct voice for humanity through global platforms for polling and referendums directly involving the world citizenry. WAAS is in discussion with other leading civil society organizations to shape a concept with the following characteristics:

- Objective: Informing and assessing global public opinion on major global issues such as peace, disarmament, climate, food-security, employment, immigration and other dimensions of human security.

- Mechanism: A global polling platform for obtaining information, projecting viewpoints and voting on key issues of relevance to global society.
- Technology: A blockchain based system accessible by mobile phone app to provide security and limit voting on any issue to one voter per unique mobile phone number.
- Platform: A liquid democracy platform to disseminate information, facilitate discussion and enable voting by millions or tens of millions of citizens around the world. (Facebook might be an alternative since it can be accessed in some countries without even an internet connection.)
- Participation: Membership open to NGO groups willing to share their mailing lists so that their members can be approached on issues and solutions.
- Benefits: The polling system could be used to support informal opinion surveys such as those which are now conducted by specialized polling agencies but at a small fraction of the cost, in a much shorter time, and with a much larger sample size than is feasible through traditional polling techniques.
- Referendum: The system could eventually form the basis for a legally binding system for direct participation of global society in decision-making.

This session focuses on the feasibility of creating a common global platform for people around the world to directly project their views and priorities regarding national and global issues without the intermediation of partisan, nation-centric political institutions. The panel will consider issues such as –

- How could the platform be structured and governed to ensure oversight and management of the system under the leadership with irrefutable international non-partisan credentials?
- How could it be managed to ensure access and fairness to its members?
- How could it be funded?

The session on youth networks and social movements will explore complementary strategies to more fully engage global civil society in the multilateral system.

Panel on Restoring Public Trust and the Role of Media

Leadership for a renewed multilateralism

Public Trust - Trust deficit is growing at all levels: between governments and the people, business leaders and the workforce, among scientists, population groups, and the public in general. The international community is facing challenging times; major transformations are taking place faster than most people realize. The institutions that structure our societies at local, national and international levels have not adjusted accordingly. With individuals and different non-State actors empowered by rapid technological change, the governance systems that are in place are becoming increasingly ineffective. Rules and norms are circumvented and broken openly. Problems are apparent, but solutions often appear too complex to grasp. As a result, people lose trust in institutions and in each other.

It is in this context, that panelists will share their views, considering the role of media in reforming institutions and also helping to eliminate this trust deficit. The underlying question is : What role the media, the ‘Fourth Estate’ has facing the current flood of social media fake news and political rancor -- and how it can play its key role to help restore public trust at all levels?

The overarching question in today’s programme is “renewed multilateralism” that is absolutely essential to effectively address the global challenges confronting the world today. Yet some UN member states and large portions of humanity either underestimate its importance or rely on unilateral and bilateral initiatives which undermine its power to serve humanity. The UN system was established to serve its member states and the world community rather than to exercise authority over them. It depends for its mission on trust and confidence far more than on power. Anything that enhances public trust and confidence in the multilateral system enhances its capacity for effective service. Anything that diminishes public perception impairs its functioning as well as that of the tens of thousands of UN staff whose motivation is strongly influenced by public perceptions of the UN system.

In a June 2020 survey by GlobeScan, citizens of 27 member-states expressed nearly twice the level of trust in the UN system (26%) than they had in national government (15%). But both these figures were far below the ratings for medical professionals (82%), scientific and academic institutions (73%), and NGOs (41%). Even large national companies rated higher in trust (28%). A general decline of trust for all types of social institutions is observed in times of uncertainty about the future. This also highlights an opportunity that can be leveraged to strengthen the UN system and enhance its effectiveness by strategies which strive to build confidence and trust among the citizenship of member countries. While governments fight with one another across conference tables, a growing sense of solidarity among ordinary citizens may be the best way to reinforce the foundations of the system.

Innovative strategies can be adopted to enhance awareness, knowledge, understanding and support for multilateralism and multilateral cooperation. Their objectives could entail:

- Enhancing the public impact of UN initiatives with parliaments, cities, business, academia, NGOs, educational institutions and other civil society organizations.
- Fostering a common global human identity in the framework of international cooperation.
- Providing avenues for people around the world to directly project their views and priorities around global issues without the inter-mediation of partisan, polarized, political institutions.
- Mobilizing the combined resources of global civil society to create a direct voice for humanity.

A new form of multilateralism or plurilateralism is needed that effectively engages a substantially larger number and wider range of stakeholders. In the last three decades, the number and variety of institutions actively engaged at the global level have increased exponentially. Non-state actors are playing an important role in analyzing problems, shaping political discourse and influencing public opinion in global society. Today, there are approximately 41,000 active international organizations from 300 countries and territories. This includes intergovernmental (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), with about 1,200 new organizations being added each year.

In addition, lower-level government institutions are also forming networks that extend beyond national boundaries. A global network of 7,000 of the world's largest cities has committed to meeting global climate targets. Megacities and provinces are now playing a critical role in planning and organizing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This wide and expanding range of stakeholder institutions possesses an enormous range of knowledge, organizational capabilities and technological resources. They too represent the aspirations and interests of “we the people”—in many cases more directly and effectively than the institutions of national government. But only a few of the very largest have an effective voice at the international level. Multilateralism needs to be redefined to give voice to, engage and harness the capabilities of a much broader range of stakeholders.

The present multilateral system is severely limited in another respect. Although democracy was devised to empower citizens at the national level and give them a more direct voice in governance, in practice few of the actions of national governments, even in mature democracies, accurately reflect the will of their own people. The size of populations, the intermediacy of political parties, the professionalization of politics as a career, the influence of lobbying and special interest groups, and the inordinate power of business and money in politics present nearly impenetrable barriers preventing the general population from effectively influencing decision-making. This has been further complicated by the corporatization and politicization of the media as instruments of special interests.

The role of media - The infoglut generated by the exponential quantitative explosion of information overwhelms our individual and collective capacity for studied attention, analysis, comprehension and learning. The main risk posed by the explosion of electronic media, including social media, consists in raising the noise level without accurate fact-checking, reporting and thorough analysis.

At the same time, the qualitative dilution of information has multiplied the risks of inaccurate and fabricated news. The “fake news” phenomenon is the result of uncontrolled messaging meant to draw the attention of followers and other potential readers. It facilitates the entry and dissemination of false and misleading information of all descriptions. At the same time, it undermines the reliability of traditionally credible sources. Misinformation and disinformation are two sides of the same coin used by individuals and groups to provoke an emotional consent to a predetermined narrative and vision or simply to cater to partisan populist sentiments for commercial gain.

This phenomenon is coupled with sensationalist content, gossip and “emotainment”¹ that utilizes ready-to-use messaging around popular figures, politicians and trend-setters. Private-public boundaries are increasingly transgressed and news is often disseminated without oversight. Politically motivated, intentionally distorted messaging is undermining free and fair democratic elections. Conspiracy theorists, cyber activists and hackers add to the mix, further compromising the accuracy and transparency of the media landscape. We are not just battling the “virus” but what WHO terms an “infodemic, an overabundance of information and the rapid spread of misleading or fabricated news, images, and videos.”¹

The term “Fourth Estate” refers to the power of the press and news media for framing and influencing public opinion on governance issues of critical importance. The loss of faith and confidence in the credibility and impartiality of global news media severely impairs the functioning of democratic societies, undermining social cohesion, aggravating polarization and fostering social unrest. At the same time, it is a powerful means for strengthening the hold of autocratic regimes and entrenched interests. World Economic Forum has warned that misinformation is one of the most dangerous global threats of our time.¹

The dissemination of fake news through social media and the take-over of the media by partisan political and business organizations pose severe challenges to the institutions of global governance, democracy and evidence-based science. A recent survey of 27 major nations by GlobeScan shows that four out of five Internet users worry about what is real and fake on the Internet (79%), with nearly half (45%) strongly identifying with this concern.¹ In spite of rising public concern, most opinion polls show that citizens oppose direct government regulation of the Internet, suggesting that an acceptable solution will have to be directed by independent non-partisan parties.

These trends are undermining the essential role that the free press and impartial, neutral media have played in the development of democracy and civil society. They are transforming information dissemination into consciously shaped and motivated propaganda. Manipulated and unfiltered media provide ammunition to populist fears, socially polarizing messaging, ethnic and religious tensions, xenophobia and intercultural conflicts, and the rise of autocratic regimes. Scientific information is discredited and biased sound-bites replace rational discussion and debate.

The impact of the press on political outcomes and social stability is too apparent to require elaboration. But the challenge of generating and disseminating reliable information spans all fields of human security and requires a wide range of strategic solutions. For example:

- *UN as source of objective information:* The UN system has effected positive change by establishing good and reliable information sources, even if competition between UN agencies and the excessive desire to make news has not always served the spirit of “One UN” and the principles of true multilateralism and independence. The UN has always promoted access to information and freedom of expression. Adequate media training and objectivity of journalists have always been a major concern among UN agencies. There are striking examples of how UN agencies have broken stories and projected important information on a global basis and their impact. What more can they do?
- *Coordination of scientific information:* A recent WAAS study identified 43 UN, 36 other international organizations, and a great number of public health and other research institutions providing statistics and scenarios regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet there was little evidence of efforts of these agencies to standardize, compare and combine their research findings in order to arrive at a coherent, consistent and reliable source of information for decision-makers and the general public akin to the massive effort of the IPCC to provide consistent, authoritative scientific information on climate change.¹ What applies to COVID-19 applies also to many other fields where sources of information and research lack effective coordination to improve the quality of knowledge, reduce duplication and maximize learning outcomes.
- *Reliable market information:* Food quality standards and their enforcement, medicine drug approval systems, transparent corporate financial reporting, environmental disclosure statements, and many examples can be cited to show that the public has access to far more reliable information than in the past. Environmentally conscious impact investors now have access to information on the environmental and social policies of publicly listed corporations. The financial industry is making great strides to improve the availability of reliable information on companies’ environmental practices and impact. What more can be done? What role can the UN and other organizations such as WAAS play in this and related fields at the global level?
- *Cybersecurity:* The falsification of social media information for political purposes, the theft and manipulation of financial information, and the violation of personal privacy in cyberspace are immense challenges to personal freedom, a wide range of human rights, and all forms of human security. And the solutions encompass the full gamut of remedies from legal and police enforcement by advances in technology and AI.
- *Alternative media perspectives:* On the positive side, we welcome the emergence of strong, raw citizen journalism and innovative, investigative news oriented towards solutions that inspire wider understanding among people and news that is missed by conventional sources or suppressed by authorities. One single telling image or short feed can make the difference, particularly in dramatic situations. Nowadays, the alternative media perspective and the “whole story” approach of emerging media organizations such as the “Solutions Journalism Network” are particularly promising. Can the future of media and communication be oriented towards education and critical thinking through rigorous reporting and responses to social and evolutionary challenges?

Progress in these and similar areas can have significant impact, but the greatest and most important challenge will be to establish some standards for objective, non-partisan reporting of information in the public media which informs decision-makers, shapes public-opinion and influences voters around the world. The recent US elections dramatically demonstrate the importance of addressing this issue, in spite of the extreme difficulty of the challenge and the complexity of the task. Recent efforts of social media sites such as Facebook to accept some responsibility for identifying intentionally misleading media reports without suppressing provocative misinformation is a first attempt. But more needs to be done.

Should we accept as inevitable that public debates and opinion-making are only about inflammatory outbursts, public shaming, negativism, and overly simplistic thumbs up, thumbs down feedback?

- The public has the right to freedom of information, but doesn't it also have the right to be assisted in discriminating between fact from opinion, reality from fantasy?
- Which strategies and models could enhance the commitment of news agencies to factual reporting as an aid to decision-making and public opinion?
- What could be done to set up an ethical media code of conduct?
- Twitter and Facebook can remove allegedly false content in some extreme cases, but is this the rule for all misinformation and media?
- Could an independent, global agency rank public sources of news and information according to their performance in presenting information in an objective, non-partisan manner?

Panel on CSOs, Youth Networks & Social Movements in the Multilateral System

The findings of the UN75 Report 'The Future We Want, The United Nations We Need' confirm the growing awareness, aspiration and support of people everywhere—most especially among the younger generations—for a more inclusive, participative, multi-stakeholder, multilateral system empowered and equipped to respond to the speed and complexity of the issues we face and committed to realizing the human security goals set forth by the world community.

No single nation or group of the most powerful nations can lead the world. World leadership must represent rights, interests and aspirations of all humanity. Government are no longer the only nor necessarily the most inclusive representatives of global citizenry – “We the people”. Multilateralism needs to be redefined to give voice to, engage and harness the capabilities of a much broader range of these stakeholders. At a time when many nation-states are turning inward and re-forming into blocs, leadership in thought is needed to redefine the concept and practice of multilateralism to include all the legitimate stakeholders who represent the human community. If civil society organizations are to have a more direct voice in it, they will need to be more closely related, aligned and coordinated with one another to present a coherent message.

As the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) launched by six NGOs led ultimately to the international treaty so far signed by 164 countries, Fridays for the Future, Fire Drill Fridays, Sunrise Movement, Protect our Planet Movement and others now seek to forge a global coalition largely driven by youth with sufficient strength and coherence to accomplish what the IPCC and thousands of independent CSOs have been unable to accomplish in response to the climate threat.

The 10 million strong global NGO community is largely fragmented into tiny units and networks organized by location, broad field and special interest. Combined, they represent a formidable untapped organizational resource. Mostly working by themselves or in collaboration with other specialized agencies, they all share a common commitment to public action on behalf of humanity as a whole, yet lack appropriate organizational structures to act in unison. Strengthening global civil society networks represents a huge potential for bridging the gap between “we the people” and the multilateral system.

More organized global networks already exist. Facebook has 2.7 billion active users per month, making it not only the largest social network but also the largest interconnected group of individuals on the planet. But social networks of individuals lack the unifying vision, shared values and objectives, and organizational structures for collective action. Youth networks are a better candidate for that. Millennials belong to the networked next generation which grew up with unprecedented opportunities for interconnectedness spanning people, events and cultural perspectives around the world. Building networks of older generation organizations is hampered by the establishment of well-defined identities, traditional ways of independent functioning, and competition among themselves for funding and media attention. Millennials also represent the most environmentally conscious, concerned and committed community on earth – quite understandably since they are the generation which have stood up to confront the greatest threats from climate change, environmental deterioration, rising inequality and the impact of 4th IR technologies on employment.

Energizing Local Communities

Creativity and innovation thrive in small, compact communities. They acquire immense power when those communities forge links with others around the world. Subnational structures empowered by digital technology and capable of responding at faster speeds than states have already started to enter into their own trade agreements. Megacities and provinces are now playing a critical role in planning and organizing the response to the pandemic. In times of political polarization and paralysis at the national level, state and local communities provide enormous untapped opportunities for effective action. Cities and regions are small and near enough for local communities of citizens to have a direct input and powerful impact on public policies. Immediately after the US announced withdrawal from the Paris Accord, more than half of the states joined the US Climate Alliance affirming their commitment to the goals of the Paris Agreement. More than 100 cities, nearly 1000 businesses and a few hundred colleges and universities representing 120 million Americans made similar commitments.^{1,1}

Strengthening the Role of Civil Society in the Multilateral System

The role of civil society in the multilateral system can be enhanced in multiple ways. One approach could be to establish a tripartite permanent consultative system involving member states, socially responsible enterprises and CSOs. Another option would be to revamp the composition and mandate of the UN Trusteeship Council – which concluded its work in 1994 – into a forum of member states, CSOs and enterprises -- to discuss pressing issues. A third approach might be to constitute CSO coordinating committees within the UN system consisting of NGOs, academia, subnational groups, business and UN agencies to work together on major issues such as human rights, environment, employment. These and other proposals merit serious consideration.

Another important area is greater involvement of younger generation UN staff members working in agencies around the world who have not yet reached the middle of their careers and from whom future leaders of the system are most likely to emerge. *Navigating To The Next UN: A Journey Full Of Potential*, a 2019 report by Young UN, representing a global network of more than 1500 UN staff members from 100+ countries, addresses four critical types of change needed within the UN system to enhance transparency, innovation, flexibility and impact of the system.¹ Members of Young UN are also natural ambassadors for reaching out to and effectively engaging next generation youth networks. Change from within is a critical dimension of reshaping the multilateral system.

This session will examine ways to broaden the active participation and contribution of civil society and subnational agencies as effective agents of leadership in the multilateral system.

- How can the structure of the multilateral system be expanded to include a more formal and substantial role for the participation of CSOs, including youth groups, subnational groups, academies and enterprises?
- How can youth networks and NGOs working in different fields combine their membership and resources to foster the emergence of global social movements for actions to promote the common good of all humanity?
- How can the public impact of existing UN initiatives be enhanced by collaboration with parliaments, cities, business, academia, NGOs, educational institutions and other civil society organizations?
- What measures can be utilized to enhance the active participation and effective role of next-generation youth networks in the multilateral system?
- What steps can be taken to generate reliable data on the membership, magnitude, actions and achievements of social movements in order to improve understanding of their effectiveness and draw lessons from their experience?

Other events and papers forming part of the GL-21 Project focus on complementary strategies to mobilize and further empower youth networks and global civil society as more effective partners within the multilateral system.

¹ World Bank, “COVID-19 to Add as Many as 150 Million Extreme Poor by 2021, Oct. 7, 2020. www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/07/covid-19-to-add-as-many-as-150-million-extreme-poor-by-2021.

² *Global Report on Food Crises*
2020 World Food Programme 2020 https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114546/download/?_ga=2.95935263.207842619.1606031879-975943221.1605615402

³ “COVID-19 will double number of people facing food crises unless swift action is taken” 21 April 2020 *World Food Programme* <https://www.wfp.org/news/covid-19-will-double-number-people-facing-food-crises-unless-swift-action-taken>

⁵ “Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030” *Food and Agriculture Organization* 2020 <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf>

⁶ *Using Public Foodgrain Stocks to Enhance Food Security* (Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank, 2012) <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/pt/412711468336603745/pdf/712800ESWOP1130Foodgrain0Stocks0web.pdf>