



Foundation for Global
Governance and Sustainability

Pushing the Agenda – advocating for a

GLOBAL RESILIENCE COUNCIL

for the people and the planet

UN75+25 Proposal (II)
zero draft
August 2020

UN 2100 Initiative

In the period April to July 2020 [FOGGS](#) convened a series of online brainstorming sessions on the UN system's performance in response to the COVID-19 global emergency. The sessions were held under the Chatham House Rule and participants included country representatives to the United Nations, other country and regional organization officials, current and former international civil servants, academic experts and civil society organizers. This UN75+25 proposal is based on ideas exchanged during the brainstorming sessions, as reflected in the papers produced after the sessions under the [UN2100 Initiative](#) of FOGGS. The "zero draft" format has been adopted for this proposal to make clear that this is an initial presentation meant to stimulate dialogue. Subsequent iterations of the proposal will incorporate contributions from individuals and groups through the ongoing dialogue.

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PUSHING THE AGENDA - ADVOCATING FOR A

Global Resilience Council *for the people and the planet*

A mixture of idealism and realism, post-World War II multilateral institutions and notably the UN system have generally served the world well, providing a solid basis for international cooperation and global governance over the past 75 years. Nevertheless, as the UN turns 75 and in the wake of the huge disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, it is timely to reflect on new approaches that address 21st century needs, filling gaps and deploying tools unimagined in 1945 or in the years after.

Need for a Global Resilience Council

The UN system lacks an operational body that can effectively deliberate and act on non-military global threats. Whether it is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, food insecurity there is no equivalent body to the UN Security Council with mandatory authority to guide the response of the international community to a wide range of global non-armed-conflict-based crises. Creating a new Global Resilience Council is a global governance necessity; it is long overdue.

In the absence of such a body, the UN Security Council is occasionally requested to respond to a broad range of threats. Its remit, though, is limited to the actual or likely armed conflicts that might evolve from a “soft security” threat; the Security Council does not have the authority – nor the expertise – to address the underlying causes of non-military crises. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the Security Council is often questioned because of its two-tier composition and very limited size, while the Council is also increasingly paralysed due to competing geo-political interests of its five permanent members (P5).

Other bodies like the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF), and the Human Rights Council provide platforms for diplomatic exchanges and declaratory outcomes but have very limited operational authority. UN system bodies like the World Health Assembly, the FAO Conference and Council, the IMF Board of Governors, the ICAO Assembly and Council, and the UNFCCC COPs deal with issues falling under their respective areas of competence but cannot elevate those issues to the whole-of-government level, which is the only level where action can meaningfully be taken across all sectors against today’s interconnected global risks.

Outside the UN system, the main operational multilateral body that addresses non-hard-security threats is the G20. It is an ad hoc grouping of the 19 largest economies and the European Union, which brings together heads of state or government and key national ministers. While this body played a significant role in addressing the global financial crises of 1998 and 2008, the increasing expectations and hopes placed on it have not materialized, as it has tended to become another declaratory body. By design it has no standing support arrangements, relying on the country of its annually rotating presidency to provide them.

Related efforts and considerations

There have been discussions in the past about the need for a body that would deal with “soft security” threats, which are becoming ever more prominent in a globalized world and jeopardise the well-being of individuals and communities around the globe. The term “human security” is an accepted part of the UN vocabulary¹ and is used to describe those threats that do not fit into the traditional peace and security definitions. In search of a body that would cover a wide range of interconnected challenges of today, thus dealing with economic security as well as health security, food security, livelihood security, climate and

¹ See <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/reports-resolutions/>

environmental security, there have been calls for the establishment of an Economic Security Council² or a Sustainable Development Council³. The word “Council” is used to indicate the operational character of the body and the capacity to make decisions and react with speed and concrete measures to challenges as they arise.

One significant challenge in developing an institutional arrangement to deal with “soft” security issues is the proposed use of the nomenclature of “security” to cover issues that normally fall under (sustainable) development or human rights. In an effort to avoid entanglement in long-lasting debates, and to stress the need for all of the respective communities of practitioners and experts to come together, the provisional title for the proposed new body includes the term “resilience”, which can be seen as helping the world move to a more sustainable and safe place in every respect.

The proposed Council could be a body central to the entire UN system, scaling up the issues in importance and in terms of their interconnections from the level of individual specialised bodies to the global community at large, while decisively promoting concerted action cutting across sectoral agendas. The establishment of such a body that would be responsible for ensuring the resilience of individuals and communities vis-à-vis soft security risks would help introduce a new generation of multilateral institutional arrangements fit for the 21st century and for the UN75+25 period.

Opportunity to innovate and try out new arrangements

The proposed Global Resilience Council (GRC) could be characterised by innovative elements in all its aspects, namely in:

a. Its creation

It could be simultaneously a “subsidiary body” under the auspices of the UN General Assembly and ECOSOC, but also the assemblies of UN system specialised agencies and COPs like UNFCCC, UNCCD and CBD, as their respective memberships gradually adhere to the founding document of the new Council.

b. Its membership

- State representation
 - o “Continental-size” states with large populations (e.g. China, India, USA, Brazil, Russia)
 - o Other states through major organised regional groups (e.g. EU, AU, ASEAN, CARICOM)
 - o States not in these regions or not with large populations in rotation
- Non-state representation (to be determined)
- Observers:
 - o Relevant UN system entities and other international organisations
 - o Leaders of religious communities in rotation
 - o Leaders of scientific advisory bodies to the GRC

c. Potential advisory bodies

The RC may establish

- o Scientific advisory bodies to assist it in addressing long-term structural crises
- o Crisis-specific subsidiary bodies of the whole or part of its membership to effectively guide its contribution to addressing immediate or unexpected crises

d. Its chairing

Co-chaired by a rotating Presidency among its members (e.g. as in the UN Security Council) and the UN Secretary-General, the latter without a vote but with the responsibility of coordinating implementation of the Council’s decisions

e. Its agenda

The primary means to address global challenges would remain via the competent UN system bodies; however the GRC could address a specific cross-sectorial global issue or crisis when either one quarter of its “state representation” members or half of its “non-state representation” members

² See, for example, <https://euobserver.com/economic/27373>

³ See, for example, recommendation 52 in https://en.unesco.org/system/files/GSP_Report_web_final.pdf

would request it; or if the UN Secretary-General brought a specific global crisis to the attention of the Council.

f. Enforcement tools

The GRC will have a variety of tools available to address global crises, such as:

1. *Directed cross-organizational action*
Advise specific agenda items and proposed actions to any intergovernmental body or combination of bodies, the latter for issues of cross-sectoral nature
2. *Economic tools*
 - i. Directing intergovernmental financial, trade, and monetary bodies to consider sanctions or withdrawal of benefits from institutions/countries aggravating a global crisis (analogous to the UN Security Council’s freezing of assets)
 - ii. Allowing countries to impose tariff or non-tariff measures to compensate for costs incurred by non-conforming institutions/countries (e.g. carbon taxes)
3. *Public Engagement Economic tools*
Ability to establish public lists of non-complying institutions/countries or products to influence decisions by investors, consumers, and others (e.g. list of firms avoiding taxation through offshore arrangements; list of banned or severely restricted products and medicines)
4. *Criminal and Liability Referrals*
 - i. Ability to refer cases to the ICJ, ICC, Interpol, other related permanent or ad hoc, global or regional judicial or policing bodies
 - ii. Ability to refer cases to national governments for appropriate criminal review or civil liability procedures
5. *Standards Pre-emption*
Ability to define products, processes, and services the use of which is inconsistent with global norms and which would take precedence over other standards currently set by voluntary institutions (i.e. products using child labour, natural resources sales funding conflicts)
6. *Fact-finding and preventive measures*
 - i. Ability to establish fact-finding commissions to investigate the truthfulness of allegations before considering enforcement measures;
 - ii. Ability to demand the temporary freeze of state or non-state actions expected to have a negative impact on an ongoing crisis or precipitate a crisis, while the Council is considering whether to intervene more decisively.

g. Its decision-making

Clear voting procedure

- For major policy decisions (e.g. referrals to international judicial bodies for criminal, civil action or sanctions, or compulsory standard-setting or tariff-related measures): a two-thirds majority in the state group with a fifty per cent majority in the non-state group
- For routine decisions (e.g. referring items to the attention of intergovernmental bodies, fact-finding and preventive measures): a simple majority in both groups.

h. Its funding

Contributions by all participants on the basis of annual income of individual member or group, including “non-state representation” members

i. Its transparency

1. Open access to all working documents
2. Deliberations and decision-making broadcast live
3. Externally overseen conflict of interest standards

j. Its substantive and logistical support

The entire UN system under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General in coordination with colleagues at the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), involving non-CEB organisations of the broader UN system and beyond as necessary

k. Its seat and meeting venues

- Two regular meetings per year at the head of state/government or ministerial level, one physical and the other virtual, the physical rotating among country / regional organisation capitals.
- Emergency and special issue meetings as required, virtually in the first instance, with the members represented by the issue-specific ministers and experts, as appropriate.
- Subsidiary and advisory bodies to meet as necessary

The way forward

This brief presentation of the proposed Global Resilience Council is a first attempt to lay out the range of elements needed for such a body to be conceptualised – and thereby to provoke discussion and further thinking. The efforts and inputs of many activists, experts and officials will be needed to bring the Council into existence, but hopefully there will be a broad coalition established to that end. FOGGS remains open to discussing partnerships and to joining forces with all those interested in pushing in this direction.

UN2100 Initiative

Innovative and practical ideas towards a modern, more effective, ethical and people-centered United Nations.

For more on this FOGGS initiative see [here](#)