



Foundation for Global
Governance and Sustainability

A 'GLOBAL RESILIENCE COUNCIL': WHY AND IF YES, HOW?

Brainstorming Note

March 2021

UN 2100 Initiative

Background

An online brainstorming session entitled “A ‘Global Resilience Council’: Why and if Yes, How?” took place on Wednesday, 24 February 2021 under the Chatham House Rule. It was convened by FOGGS to discuss the Foundation’s proposal for the establishment of a “Global Resilience Council” (see November 2020 proposal iteration [here](#)). The list of participants can be found in the Annex to this Brainstorming Note, which is based on a compilation of views heard during the brainstorming. The Note, which builds on the points raised during the brainstorming, was prepared by the FOGGS associated participants, with the other participants bearing no responsibility for the way their opinions have been summarised or taken further. We hope that this Note advances the understanding regarding the need served by and alternative modalities for the creation of a “Global Resilience Council” (GRC) and may lead to actual steps forward.

Disclaimer

This Brainstorming Note is issued under the UN2100 Initiative of FOGGS and remains the property of the Foundation. Reproduction is authorised for non-commercial purposes provided the source is acknowledged.

The contents of this publication should not be interpreted as necessarily reflecting the views of any individual member of the FOGGS Executive or Advisory Boards, the FOGGS Secretariat or any of the brainstorming session participants.

© 2021 Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS)

BRAINSTORMING NOTE

A 'Global Resilience Council': Why and if Yes, How?¹

Building on points raised at the FOGGS online Brainstorming Session held on Wednesday, 24 February 2021

Table of contents

1. The need for a "whole-of-government" and a "whole-of-multilateralism" approach to addressing contemporary global threats of a non-military nature
2. Challenges identified at the brainstorming:
 - a. *Incremental vs. disruptive change*
 - b. *Systemic transformation vs. institutional reform*
 - c. *State-centred vs. stakeholder-centred approach*
 - d. *Issue specific vs. comprehensive approach*
 - e. *Formal vs. informal arrangement*
3. Legitimacy and accountability
4. Paving the way forward

Annex: List of Participants

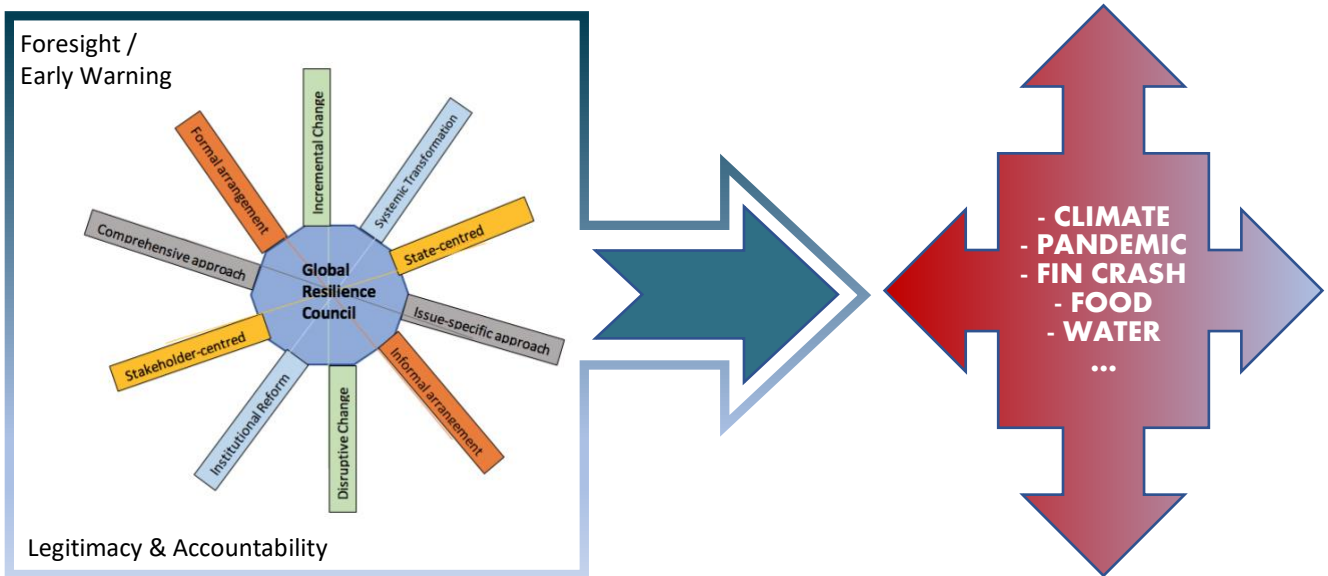


Figure: A 'Global Resilience Council' to power humanity's response to key global challenges

¹ The term 'Global Resilience Council' is given in this paper within quotation marks to indicate that this is the name currently suggested for the proposed body. As the idea develops, an appropriate name and legal form can be given further consideration.

1. The need for an "all-of-government" and an "all-of-multilateralism" approach to addressing contemporary global threats of a non-military nature

A set of multidimensional and interconnected global challenges are making themselves increasingly felt through crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing climate crisis, recurring financial crises, and the heightened food crisis. The global governance system built around the UN in the post-World War II period is organized on the basis of specialisation of agencies by sector / government ministry. This does not help form a holistic view of the multi-dimensional and interconnected crises of today nor does it enable an "all-of-government" response, which is necessary to address them.

The world lacks an equivalent body to the UN Security Council with the authority to lead large-scale collective responses to the range of non-military crises that are impacting the international community now and in the future. In the absence of such a body, the UN Security Council is occasionally requested to respond even to non-military threats. It does not have the authority, though, nor the legitimacy or expertise, or even the political will to do so.

The UN General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF), the Human Rights Council (HRC) and analogous intergovernmental and expert bodies in other parts of the UN system provide platforms for diplomatic exchanges and declaratory policy statements on some of the major global challenges of today but they have very limited operational authority. They cannot even require all UN system entities to work together in a cross-organisational manner, let alone define a programmatic response engaging other actors too. What is needed, though, is a body able not only to focus all the UN system intergovernmental capacities on addressing these macro-crises but also to provide clear directions to all relevant state and non-state actors.

Outside the UN system, the main cross-regional multilateral body that addresses non-hard-security threats is the G20, a "minilateral" body of choice for several of its members. The G20 played a key role in tackling previous financial crises but is increasingly becoming another declaratory body that lacks broad operational legitimacy.

Solutions to macro-crises like climate change, pandemics, biodiversity loss, global and regional economic crashes require action across sectoral boundaries within governments and multilateral institutions, as well as across a range of scientific disciplines and business sectors. In national governments and large corporations it is the Head of State/Government or the CEO and their corresponding Cabinets or Boards that integrate and steer cross-departmental efforts. No global governance institution today performs a corresponding function. In this situation, the international system cannot effectively address the complexities of multi-dimensional crises. Multilateralism is falling into disrepute and decline as a result.

Any effort by the state or intergovernmental sector to manage a global crisis today means grappling with the management of globalization. An effective response to major unresolved global crises requires innovative policies and actions by different government departments and different international agencies. It also involves reconfiguring the functioning of markets and commercial activities that may aggravate or even be among the causes of a given crisis. In this light, and recognising that the UN system should have a central role in dealing with all this, several proposals have been put forward in the past,

especially after the end of the Cold War, for the creation of a new body like an “Economic Security Council” or a “Human Security Council”; but none of those ideas have come to fruition.

What we are looking for here, what we refer to as “Global Resilience Council”, would be a body central to multilateralism, through which the political response to major multi-dimensional crises could move up from the level of individual specialized agencies to the global community at large, leading to concerted action across sectoral and ministerial agendas. The establishment of such a body with the ultimate responsibility of ensuring human resilience at global level could also help introduce a new generation of multilateral institutional arrangements fit for the UN75+25 period.

2. Challenges identified at the brainstorming

The lively discussion at the brainstorming session identified a number of issues that need to be addressed before any meaningful and effective proposal for a ‘Global Resilience Council’ (GRC) takes shape. These issues are summarized below.

a. Incremental vs. disruptive change

There are precedents in history, where a modest start eventually led to something big; see the initial European Coal and Steel Community that gradually led to the establishment of the European Union. Small steps may catalyse more real change than lofty pronouncements, as they allow to identify what needs to be changed and provide a platform to move forward strategically rather than speedily. A stepwise approach would also allow for time to integrate a new narrative for globalisation – like the Grand Narrative / Narrative of Hope that FOGGS [advances](#) – into the evolving structures and strategies.

The Alliance for Multilateralism, initiated by Germany and France and now counting some 70 participating countries, could be the instrument to use for building consensus on such transitional arrangements and eventually bring about any major change that will prove necessary.

Another approach, though, would be to capitalise on the historic opportunity of coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying recession to bring about disruptive change and rewrite the rules of the game. This may be the “San Francisco” moment of this generation, when the rules are written for the next 75, or at least the next 25 years of global governance. The failings of the current system have become obvious, so there may be an opening for large scale multilateral re-design. One should never let a good crisis go wasted. In politics, there is a need to use windows of opportunity as soon as they appear and this may be the time to introduce a Global Resilience Council.

Should one choose the EU / incremental or the UN / disruptive post-World War II precedent for institution building at the current juncture in human history? Or how could a “GRC” proposal combine the incremental and the disruptive both in the form that it takes and in the way it is implemented?

b. Systemic transformation vs. institutional reform

Reform has been on the UN agenda since its creation and has brought about varied outcomes, depending on the geopolitical circumstances and alignments each time. In recent years UN reform mostly refers to efforts to improve existing institutional arrangements in an operational and managerial

way, rather than to drastically rethink the arrangements themselves. The decades-long inconclusive process of Security Council reform shows where more ambitious approaches may lead, in this case nowhere. In this line of thought it may make sense to include some key functions of the proposed Global Resilience Council in an existing body or arrangement, without creating a whole new body from scratch. The UN Peacebuilding Commission might be able to play that role, as it covers issues at the intersection of conflict and development. However, in its record up to now it has not shown the ability to proactively engage all of the UN system and a diverse range of national ministries. Eventually, to be effective, any intergovernmental body that would be given the main responsibility in this area would have to possess some kind of sanction powers similar to those held by the Security Council in the peace and security area.

For others, though, the very slow and inadequate response to the COVID-19 pandemic shows that there is a serious problem with the multilateral system itself, as it now stands. Leadership and political will are two key factors that seem to be missing. Establishing a new, high-level and ambitious body might trigger the wide-ranging systemic transformation that is needed. In real-life, though, systems are not organised in a top-down manner but are defined by a set of multiple interrelationships. A drastic redesign may be needed to align the post-COVID multilateralism with SDG implementation and to bridge the global with the regional, the national and ultimately the local, where action needs to take place for citizens to benefit directly.

Can the broadly accepted rationale for some sort of Global Resilience Council be fulfilled through the reform of an existing body, like the UN Peacebuilding Commission? Or should a new Council be created as part of a drastic redesign of the post-COVID multilateral system, with SDG implementation, inclusiveness and action-oriented powers in mind, bridging the global with the local?

c. State-centred vs. stakeholder-centred approach

Sovereign states have been at the centre of the post-World War II multilateral system, populating intergovernmental bodies and making decisions by consensus or by casting their equal votes (except for the Security Council veto reserved for just five states, of course). New bodies have been created by them, for example through the 2005 World Summit that led to the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Should the Global Resilience Council be such a body that should come about as a subsidiary organ of one or more of the established UN system bodies?

States remain the titular owners of the multilateral system but their power has been significantly eroded over time. New actors have appeared, notably businesses and even extremely rich individuals and their foundations, who command at least as much effective power and influence as small and medium-sized states. With the decrease in the funding provided to UN system organizations through assessed contributions, those organizations have had to look for alternative sources of finance and thus encourage voluntary contributions, be they from governments or non-state actors. And it is not only business but also civil society, professional and activist organizations, religious groups and others, who have been staking a claim in greater participation in global governance. A number of “public-private partnerships” have been set up to deal with issues that otherwise would have been dealt with directly by the international organizations themselves, such as sustainable energy (Sustainable Energy for All, see more in e. below) and COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX).

Should the proposed Global Resilience Council be an intergovernmental body with states as its members, an intergovernmental body with other intergovernmental bodies as members, a hybrid body with direct non-state actor participation or some other innovative arrangement?

d. Issue-specific vs. comprehensive approach

The proposed Global Resilience Council could have a comprehensive agenda, dealing with several global challenges at the same time. Alternatively, the new body in whatever form it would be created could adopt an issue-specific approach, choosing one or two “grey rhino” topics that are already recognized as global challenges to start with (e.g. climate change, pandemics). Otherwise, it is easy to get wrapped up in everything on a large scale but make little progress in practice. Of course, one should keep in mind the multidimensional character of most challenges. We see it clearly with the COVID-19 pandemic, which beyond health systems has affected the economy and society worldwide, while its causes are traced to strained human interactions with our environment.

The global threats and risks of today come in multiple forms and shapes. Some emergencies come to international attention because of abrupt events; other emergencies evolve from long-term, systemic factors; still other threats and emergencies are relatively latent and have been brought to international attention thanks to the combined efforts of a range of academic disciplines. Each of these forms of emergency might require a different global institutional response. And clearly the effective institutional response to each type of emergency would be expected to operate on a different timetable.

An emergency brought on by an abrupt event quite reasonably needs both a humanitarian relief system and a prompt and timely intervention plan to minimize similar threats or to prevent the repetition of the same situation. An emergency derived from a systemic crisis will take longer to ‘solve’ as for that one would face a complex array of entrenched political and economic forces. And threats and emergencies that are identified by sound science also will take longer to develop a comprehensive response to, as each may need a different type of global institutional arrangement that is built in response to the unique characteristics of the newly identified threat.

An additional level of complexity is introduced if one wants to not only respond to crises after they have fully manifested themselves but rather act in foresight. That means being prepared and using early warning systems on ecological, social and economic issues to get to the root causes and tackle them before they turn into a crisis. This would require extensive data collection and solid scientific preparedness. It would also require a clear mapping of the inter-connectedness of risks, actors and systemic interactions, as well as response mechanisms. Irrespective of the future of the ‘Global Resilience Council’, an early warning system at the international level regarding global challenges is a good idea and has to be pursued.

Should the proposed Global Resilience Council have a comprehensive agenda of global risks / challenges that it should address already from the start of its existence or should it begin modestly, with a couple of broadly recognized risks / challenges first, although it would inevitably be drawn into dealing with other interconnected risks in the process? What about not just reacting to crises but setting up early warning systems for prevention and the tackling of root causes?

e. Formal vs. informal arrangement

Whether drastic or incremental, issue-specific or comprehensive, any change in the existing global governance system can come about with a varying degree of formality. The most formal, legally clear and binding way would be through the adoption of a new legal instrument, like the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court. Equally formal would be to amend an existing legal

instrument, notably the UN Charter. In both cases one should also count, in addition to the time needed for the negotiations on the new body or arrangement to conclude, the time that the process of ratification by states around the world would take.

Especially for UN Charter amendment, a couple of additional complications should be kept in mind. They include the fact that the five permanent members of the Security Council have each a de facto veto on the Charter amendment process too, as their ratifications are specifically required, as part of the two-thirds of the membership ratification threshold. Also, if the Charter is to be opened up for an amendment there will be strong pressure to include other items, such as the composition of the Security Council, which may derail the whole process. In the case of the Rome Statute, the formal negotiation process lasted for two years, from 1996 to 1998, while it took four more years after the Statute's adoption for enough ratifications to be made so that it could come into force in 2002.

By comparison, the establishment of subsidiary bodies by existing intergovernmental organs, like the UN General Assembly, the FAO Council or the Conference of the Parties to an environmental convention can be done normally within months once the negotiations have been concluded, as no ratification process is required. Following decisions made at the 2005 World Summit, the Peacebuilding Commission was established already in 2005, as a joint subsidiary body of the General Assembly and the Security Council, with ECOSOC also involved in the election of its members, while the Human Rights Council was established in 2006 as a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly. After the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) was established in 2013, as a subsidiary body of both the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

Even faster and less formal can be the establishment of bodies like special commissions, panels or public-private partnerships, through a routine decision by an intergovernmental body or by the executive head of an organization, notably the UN Secretary-General. Of course, commensurate to the degree of legal strictness of the founding conditions are the legal powers and obligations, as well as the legitimacy and the accountability that a new body or arrangement would be expected to have. A new principal organ of the United Nations created after the Security Council but responsible for non-military threats would be expected to have a more clearly defined mandate and be endowed with more legally binding powers than a semi-formal partnership that would probably rely on a voluntary code of conduct and peer review or "naming and shaming" processes.

Potential ways of establishing a Global Resilience Council vary in terms of legal strictness and formality from a self-standing founding instrument, a UN Charter amendment that establishes a new body, through an intergovernmental body decision that establishes a subsidiary organ, to an executive decision that establishes a panel or partnership. Which one of these would be most appropriate to use for establishing the GRC under the current geopolitical circumstances, the state of multilateralism, the kind of actors involved and the expectations one would have of such a Council?

3. Legitimacy and accountability

Whatever choices are made regarding the establishment of a "Global Resilience Council", including the establishment process itself and the characteristics of the new body or arrangement, ensuring that it enjoys broad legitimacy is of paramount importance for its success. Moreover, in addition to this "input legitimacy" that the "Council" should have from the start, it would also need to enjoy strong "output

legitimacy". This means that the new body or arrangement would need to soon deliver better outcomes than what the existing arrangements deliver.

The new body or arrangement should also be seen to be transparent and accountable, to whatever hierarchy of other bodies it might report to, to the countries of the world and the global public at large. The notions of legitimacy and accountability comprise legal and perception-related elements. While the former could be debated among officials and experts, the latter would be most important for establishing the credibility and moral authority of the new body or arrangement. The higher the credibility and moral authority the easier it would be for the "Council" to have a positive impact by taking decisive measures and even imposing sanctions on those causing or contributing to a global challenge or not going along with collectively agreed upon response measures.

One should not forget that any "Global Resilience Council", be it a new body or arrangement, would need to be broadly seen as legitimate and accountable, if it is to have the credibility and moral authority necessary to take effective measures vis-à-vis key global challenges.

4. Paving the way forward

In order to define the final form a "Global Resilience Council" (GRC) should take, all considerations presented above should be taken into account. The final decision will no doubt come out of political calculations, state and individual expedience, as well as the pressure exerted by various civil society constituencies and business interests. The current multilateral system, consisting of international organizations dealing with health, economic, social, and environmental matters, is functioning on the basis of broad guidelines that hardly have any binding power and cannot be enforced.

Governments and sometimes business sectors are through a variety of means encouraged to voluntarily abide by certain principles and follow intergovernmental policy directions in implementation. One of the underlying causes of frustration and worry is that this system, while it remains popular with a wide range of government and business leaders, may well have outlived its usefulness in terms of effectively addressing global crises. Some form of obligatory intervention is now necessary if collective action by the international community is to have any meaning.

The GRC proposal grew in good part out of the recognition that a number of current crises have exceeded the capacities and terms of reference of existing global institutions. The efforts of these institutions to develop and manage a cogent international response have stumbled on the fact that they have neither the authority nor the effective means to change the behaviour of state and non-state actors that cause and/or perpetuate these crises. The GRC is envisaged as a platform to take on mega-crises that are beyond the siloed authorities and capacities of UN system, regional and other intergovernmental bodies.

The proposal for a GRC, as a significant shift in global governance, needs to be positioned in the context of the shifting geo-political realities among major state actors, the evolution of multi-stakeholder governance or "networking multilateralism" as a partial replacement for intergovernmental multilateralism, lessons still being learnt from the response to the COVID-19 crisis, the upsurge in nationalist approaches to inherently global problems, and the drive to implement the SDGs and achieve climate neutrality. Each of these factors also opens opportunities to advance a GRC proposal.

While waiting for the intergovernmental system to process all this and respond, a simulated 'Global Resilience Council' could be brought to life by a coalition of interested states and international organizations, experts and civil society. It could respond to emerging global issues in as realistic and at the same time innovative a way as possible. Of course, it would not have compulsory jurisdiction and implementation, something that would have to wait until its official creation in the intergovernmental universe.

Epilogue

FOGGS will continue to develop its 'Global Resilience Council' proposal keeping in mind the ideas and advice provided by the brainstorming session participants, on which this Brainstorming Note was based. We hope to have with us in this effort, in one way or another, all of the participants, other practitioners and experts, and eventually the wider public.

ANNEX: List of Participants

FIRST NAME	SURNAME	POSITION
Anita	AMORIM	Head, Emerging and Special Partnerships Unit, International Labour Organisation (ILO) - tbc
Juan	BATTALEME	Academic Secretary, The Argentine Council for International Relations
Stuart	BEST	Intern/Associate, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS)
Pascale	BRUDON	Former WHO Senior Scientist and representative for Vietnam, currently independent consultant on pharmaceutical and health issues
Linda	BURENIUS	Head of Development, Global Challenges Foundation, Stockholm
Manoela	CARNEIRO	Associate Professor of International Public Law, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, and
	ROLAND	Homa - Human Rights and Business Centre Coordinator (www.homacdhe.com)
Joanna	DEPLEDGE	Research Fellow, Cambridge Centre for Environment, Energy and Natural Resource Governance (CEENRG)
Alistair	EDGAR	Associate Professor of Political Science at Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada, with cross-appointment at the Balsillie School of International Affairs
Harris	GLECKMAN	Executive Board Member, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS)
José Luis	HERRERO	Advisory Board Member, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS);
	ANSOLA	former Ambassador, Council of Europe and OSCE
Margot	HURLBERT	Canada Research Chair in Climate Change, Energy and Sustainability Policy; Professor, Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Regina
Ronald A.	KINGHAM	Founder & Executive Director, Environment & Development Research Centre (EDRC)
Richard	KINLEY	President, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS)
Petros	KOKKALIS	Member of the European Parliament, Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
Georgios	KOSTAKOS	Executive Director, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS)
Paulo	MAGALHÃES	Director-General, Common Home of Humanity
Reinhard	MECHLER	Research Group Leader, Systemic Risk and Resilience Research Group, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)
Sofia	NORBERG	Head of Innovation, Global Challenges Foundation, Stockholm
Trícia	OLSEN	Associate Dean, University of Denver
Jens	ORBACK	Executive Director, Global Challenges Foundation, Stockholm
Daniel		Junior Policy and Project Management Advisor, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS)
	ORTH	
Maria João	RODRIGUES	President, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS); former Minister of Employment, Portugal; former Member of the European Parliament and Vice-President, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)
Michèle	ROTH	Executive Director, Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn
		Deputy Director General for Science, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)
Leena	SRIVASTAVA	
J. David	TÀBARA	Associate Senior Researcher, Autonomous University of Barcelona and Global Climate Forum, Berlin
Silke	WEINLICH	Senior Researcher, Inter- and Transnational Cooperation, German Development Institute (DIE/GDI)



*A Grand Narrative
to explain, challenge
and bind the world.*

Global Governance

Global Sustainability

Global Citizenship

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](#)