

## **A GLOBAL RESILIENCE COUNCIL (GRC)** **TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS NON-MILITARY THREATS TO HUMAN SECURITY**

*Proposal submitted by FOGGS  
to the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB)  
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▪ **Introduction – Why a Global Resilience Council (GRC)**

The world lacks an equivalent body to the UN Security Council with the authority to lead large-scale collective responses to non-military threats that are significantly impacting – and will continue to significantly impact – human security and planetary sustainability. In recent decades some of these threats have become multidimensional mega-crises well beyond the capacity of the multilateral system to address them. Part of the reason for that is that the post-World War II (WWII) global governance system, as reflected in the structure of the UN system, is organized on the basis of agencies specialized by sector / corresponding government ministry.

The net result is that each specialized organization has developed an autonomous identity, a separate budgeting process, and a restricted link to one part of its member state authorities. Over the years since the end of WWII, when a new topic is identified as requiring international attention, the drive has been to replicate the existing organizational approach and create a new agency, fund or programme to deal with it. The resulting global institutional proliferation and fragmentation clearly do not help formulate a holistic response to the multi-dimensional and interconnected crises of today.

The operational failings of the UN system as a whole have led to widespread frustration with multilateralism. We have seen it clearly very recently, with **the COVID-19 pandemic**. Such a mega-crisis is well beyond the capacity and terms of reference of even the best-intentioned WHO-led response. This is not because WHO lacks expertise in medical matters or in public health matters. It is because any effective response to a pandemic has to take into account not only its purely medical aspects but also the impacts on multiple sectors of the economy and society, and requires action from multiple government ministries and agencies, multiple intergovernmental bodies and a wide range of non-state actors. Epidemiologists do not have the tools, capacity or authority to reach across professional lines to bring together all the likely causes or downstream consequences of COVID-19. Similarly, the WHO cannot be expected to coordinate the global response to the major financial, social and environmental dimensions of COVID-19, for which the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and most UN system bodies have a role to play, along with the pharmaceutical industry, the financial sector and others.

Another crisis that is looming is the **sharply rising levels of food insecurity and hunger**. To take effective action against it there needs to be a high-level intergovernmental engagement not only

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through the Rome-based agricultural organizations (FAO, WFP, IFAD) but also UNCTAD to address internal and external market conditions and port and custom arrangements, UNEP to draw on its expertise on soil management and non-point sources of pollution, WHO to get the best balance between caloric and protein requirements, the WTO to manage the distortion of trade from agricultural subsidies, etc.

Similarly, to address the multifaceted *climate crisis* requires more than governments meeting at the annual Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC. There is need to also address biodiversity and desertification and align the activities of bodies like the World Bank, UNIDO, UNEP, FAO, UNWTO, ICAO and IMO.

What is currently missing from the multilateral system is an intergovernmental body capable of bringing together specialized multilateral agencies, the IFIs, government ministries and non-state actors to address mega-crises in a cross organizational manner and provide them with clear direction on how to do so. The system lacks a body where the response to a non-military crisis can move up from the level of individual specialized agencies or coordinating secretariat heads (see UN system Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)) to a body that has the political authority to engage the global community as a whole. In the absence of such a body, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is occasionally requested to respond even to global non-military threats. However, it does not have the mandate, expertise or political will to do so, restricted as it is to those aspects of a global threat that have or might have an armed consequence.

Today’s complex and multidimensional realities require a new “all-of-government”/“all-of-multilateralism” approach, as described below.

- **The GRC and Our Common Agenda**

In his *Our Common Agenda* report the UN Secretary-General called for the establishment of an Emergency Platform as a response to complex global crises. It would be an ad hoc gathering of member state leaders, UN agencies, regional organizations and country groupings, civil society and private sector bodies, research centres and experts. There is no clear provision regarding consultation and decision-making arrangements, implementation and monitoring mechanisms, sanctioning or redress procedures.

The FOGGS proposal for a Global Resilience Council (GRC) takes the Emergency Platform idea one step further by addressing the above-identified gaps, including through:

- a. The establishment of the GRC as a permanent intergovernmental body convened in principle at head of state/government level in order to provide intergovernmental direction, including task allocation, to the UN system and coherence among national actors;
- b. The creation of a series of consultative assemblies to provide global constituencies of key non-state actors a structured opportunity to influence the decisions of the GRC and participate in the implementation of the Council’s decisions.

More specifics on the GRC structure and functions follow.

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- **GRC creation and composition**

The UN General Assembly could establish the GRC as a subsidiary body, like it did for the Human Rights Council. Other intergovernmental bodies / organizations of the UN system and possibly beyond could agree to consider the GRC as their subsidiary body too. That would allow those organizations to place their issues on the GRC agenda, to have the GRC also report to them, and integrate the GRC decisions in their operation plans, programming and budgeting.

The GRC could include a representative number of countries and regional integration organizations so that all regions of the world and all main geographical and functional/issue-related groups of countries are represented on it. The exact number of members, membership duration and the selection process should be determined through negotiations among UN member states.

Unlike the Emergency Platform proposal mentioned earlier, the GRC would be a standing body with established membership, support structure and decision-making procedures. It would thus be a more transparent and effective version of the proposed Emergency Platform, that would not depend on a decision by the UN Secretary-General in order to be convened, like the Emergency Platform would. Moreover, the GRC would not require a UN Charter amendment for its creation, like repurposing the Trusteeship Council would (another relevant proposal included in the *Our Common Future* report), neither would it carry the baggage that the now-defunct Trusteeship Council carries with its mandated composition and historical connection to colonialism.

It would make good sense for the GRC to be located outside of New York, so that it is not associated with the political tensions and frequent failures to act that undermine the legitimacy of the Security Council.

- **The GRC and non-state actors**

Around the GRC there could be a set of advisory assemblies of non-state actors organized by constituencies, like scientists and scientific organizations, local authorities, parliamentarians, women’s groups, youth groups, the private sector, indigenous peoples, religious authorities, and more as necessary. Each one of them would have their own structures and decision-making procedures but they would all be able to address the GRC and submit their proposals on the issues under consideration by the Council. They could also collectively place items on the agenda of the GRC and engage with each other on the appropriate role for each constituency to play in addressing a specific global threat to human security. Moreover, they would commit to leading their worldwide constituency in implementing the decisions of the GRC.

- **GRC functions**

We could indeed compare the GRC to a “UN Security Council for non-military threats”. The idea is that the GRC would respond to threats to human security in a way analogous to the UN Security Council’s response to threats in the traditional peace and security field, namely by:

- (1) having the authority to determine the existence of an actual or imminent major threat to human security;
- (2) being sufficiently agile and quick acting to deal with threats ranging from abruptly occurring crisis to chronic systemic challenges;

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- (3) having at its disposal effective means to engage multiple non-state constituencies now recognized as powerful actors in global governance, while maintaining the centrality of a statebased and accountable multilateral system;
- (4) having the authority to take binding decisions on the allocation of tasks to UN system agencies and conferences of parties of intergovernmental conventions and treaties.

Certainly, there would be no veto prerogatives and no use of force provision in the case of the GRC, unlike what is currently the case with the UN Security Council. However, once the GRC would have agreed on the existence of an actual or imminent major threat to human security, some form of penalty could be considered and eventually implemented on non-complying state and/or non-state actors, as the new Council would gradually assert its authority and ensure its effectiveness.

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