



GLOBAL RESILIENCE COUNCIL

AND A REBALANCING OF THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

1. Vision for the UN system

In a context witnessing a crisis in multilateralism, it is important to have a systematic understanding of the contemporary challenges and opportunities, one that factors in a greater role for countries from the Global South. While continuities in global governance institutions may be prevalent, the UN system has to reform towards a post-imperial system with greater inclusion for both state and non-state actors operating across multiple tracks of diplomacy. This needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency lest the legitimacy and credibility of the current multilateral order is further eroded, and to avoid an unwelcome fragmentation into competing partial orders and spheres of influence.

While the principle of sovereign equality remains important, it is equally important to ensure that a transformed UN system is better able to address traditional and new existential threats to humanity and manage diversity with the common good in mind – this also entails a better balancing of diverse cultural and political systems.

The future of the UN system must also entail and entrench the principle of collective decision making, ensuring that while power asymmetries may always exist, there is greater joint ownership over agreements and socio-economic programmes. The UN will certainly remain a member state-driven organisation, yet it will need to engage meaningfully a variety of other actors that have the interest and capacity to influence global affairs.

While reforms to the UN Security Council (UNSC) remain ever more relevant in a changing geopolitical landscape, it is equally important to strengthen other organs of the UN to complement the Council. This will ensure a greater balance between the UNSC focus on managing and preventing traditional wars, the primary reason for the UN's creation at the end of World War II, and the work of numerous other UN bodies, which focus on socio-economic factors relevant to human well-being but also connected to the root causes of conflicts.

With multipolarity becoming a reality in more ways than one, a transformed UN will also enable a greater role for regional structures, which can assist in countering narrow nationalism. The reference here is to the UN's regional commissions but also regional integration organisations that already play major roles in Africa, part of Europe,

Southeast Asia and elsewhere. This regional approach could also lead to a reformulated system of UNSC membership.

In strengthening the capacity of the UN system to implement development programmes / advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address the root causes of conflicts, a transformed UN would also see countries in the global North and South channelling more development cooperation resources through UN regional bodies working with the various regional political and economic structures across the world. This would lead to a UN more responsive to international crises of both traditional peace and security and “human security”.

2. Global Resilience Council (GRC) idea and its objectives

In the 1940s the UN founders saw the need to face up to the ravages of war. They created an institution with obligatory authority on military issues in order to prevent future armed conflicts and their consequences. They also gave this institution a weaker mandate regarding coordination on economic and social matters.

Since then, global structural crises in the climate, health, biodiversity, race, finance, social, gender and other fields have led to massive human, environmental and economic consequences, even as they garnered wider public recognition. The initial response to each of these “human security” crises was to create separate organizations or legally autonomous treaty bodies to galvanize international action, treating each crisis as an independent global challenge.

The time has come to face up to the reality that each of these crises has many dimensions, which interconnect with the corresponding dimensions of other crises and threaten the foundations of human governance and resilience, rendering the current autonomous and largely voluntary and fragmented efforts to address them hopelessly insufficient. The broad normative framework for the required transformation already exists and has been recently articulated through concepts such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development/Sustainable Development Goals, “the Triple Crisis” of climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss, Earth System Governance, Health for All, and Human Security.

The international community now needs to take the next step to create a body that has enforcement authority, similar to that of the Security Council, over non-military crises facing humanity. The proposed Global Resilience Council (GRC) would interact with states and non-state actors to coordinate responses across multiple sectors and institutions. It would be focused on human security matters and the management of

systemic crises of developmental sustainability and resilience such as climate change, pandemics, economic development, and systemic issues giving rise to migration.

This way the GRC would deal with the root causes undermining the achievement of the SDGs and bringing about conflict. It would be a more inclusive body with no veto right and would have the possibility of engaging regional organisations and non-state actors in an advisory capacity. Such a body would of course have to be closely associated with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is the principal organ of the UN in the area of development.

3. Why a GRC?

The piecemeal and non-inclusive manner in which the COVID-19 pandemic was addressed, the inability to ensure implementation of decisions taken to tackle climate change, and the persistence and escalation of wars with systemic causes and effects have shown that the current system is not working – what can be characterised as a crisis of multilateralism. In the current global governance ecosystem, there is no dedicated body dealing with resilience and systemic crises.

The GRC would thus complement and enhance the development work of ECOSOC, adding a layer of long-term resilience in dealing with systemic crises, and would address the systemic, root causes of conflict to the extent that they are connected to developmental issues. It would also play a key role in reviving and strengthening multilateralism by effectively addressing international crises with a focus on collective problem-solving and concrete result delivery.

4. The GRC's functional characteristics / how will it work

The GRC would be an agile, non-bureaucratic structure associated with ECOSOC. It would consist of a representative core of some 20 UN member states, which will include regional representation and a formula that will also ensure functional representation for greater inclusivity, e.g. Small Island States. It may possibly be composed of the UNSC permanent members (P5), with no veto power, and 3 member states from each UN region to sit for a five year term. UN system agencies, regional and functional bodies, as well as non-state actor constituencies will also play an important role in the proposed structure, with observer status allowing for participation but no vote, since the UN membership comprises states only.

The agility of the GRC would enable it to convene at any point and would be serviced by the UN Secretariat that would bring in specialised personnel from UN agencies depending on the items on the GRC agenda each time. The GRC would also be able to



create teams comprising states and non-state actors such as scientific experts, civil society and the private sector, to advance the implementation of decisions on specific items of the Council's agenda.