

# The UN at 70: Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance

Madeleine K. Albright and Ibrahim A. Gambari  
*Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance*

This fall, the United Nations (UN) marks its 70th anniversary. Mandated to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war' and to seek a 'life in larger freedom' the UN has helped the world succeed in halving extreme global poverty, slowing the spread of nuclear weapons, and managing many long-standing conflicts (United Nations, 1945).

Yet, hardly anybody with an insight into global politics or economics would use the words 'just' or 'secure' to describe the world today. Global governance finds itself in a state of deep crisis. Mounting evidence suggests that global institutions and the broader international community are losing the battle against the most pressing security and justice challenges of our time. From Syria and Ukraine to sub-Saharan Africa, rising violence has erased human rights, increased mass atrocities, and reversed the global decline in political violence seen since the end of the Cold War (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014). Climate change, cyber attacks and the cross-border economic shocks all carry grave implications for global security and justice too.

Against this backdrop, the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance set out one year ago to address the present crisis of global governance. Our effort complemented other reviews focused solely on climate, cyberspace, financial contagion, peacekeeping, or peacebuilding, touching instead on all of these, their relationships, and their implications for global institutions and governance. We concluded that the world needs a new kind of leadership that transcends national borders and leverages new tools, networks, and different kinds of public, private, and mixed institutions designed to deal effectively with 21st century global challenges.<sup>1</sup> We further believe that the period between the UN's 70th anniversary and its 75th anniversary – while not the underlying reason for a new reform effort – offers a unique opportunity to intensify efforts to tackle these challenges through innovative approaches to global governance.

## A new global ethic

One of the Commission's founding aims was to ensure that neither security nor justice imperatives are brushed

aside in debates over global governance. Indeed, contemporary understanding of security extends far beyond the interests of and pressures on the state to include the needs of and the pressures on people. But security is a hollow concept unless accompanied by justice. Justice, in turn, needs to be framed in terms of achieving a basic level of liberty and opportunity, while reducing social and economic inequalities in order to benefit, in particular, the least advantaged in the world at large. In other words, the quest for justice should aim at reducing the abuses, discrimination, and inequities perceived and experienced by much of humankind.<sup>2</sup>

To us, it is clear that justice is essential to safeguarding human security and that a just society is an illusion without security. The Commission's report, 'Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance', therefore brings these two concepts together through the prism of 'just security' (Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance, 2015). Serving as both a new global ethic and analytical lens, just security fosters a combined focus on inclusive decision making, fairness and personal safety, and a sense of greater urgency to tackling often intractable problems across and within borders.

The goal of just security is to forge a mutually supportive global system of accountable, fair, and effective governance and sustainable peace. This vision is rooted in long-standing international commitments to human rights, international law, and the critical role of flexible and evolving multilateral institutions, states and nonstate actors in global governance.

Beyond the UN and other global institutions, a growing number of regional organizations, including the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the EU and the Union of South American Nations are shaping global trends. Equally important are civil society, the business community, municipalities and the media, each offering unique perspectives and assets varying in size and reach.

For good global governance and a resilient global order that empowers people and nations, security and justice must prevail across each of these actors and levels of governance, and their linkages actively promoted. Lack of either security or justice on any level, from local to global, not only contributes to instability,

but produces destabilizing spillovers both horizontally (to neighboring regions) and vertically (to higher or lower levels of governance).

Applied to three inter-related and pivotal global problem sets, namely state fragility, climate governance and the hyperconnected global economy,<sup>3</sup> just security allows for new thinking and reframing of complex, long-standing global issues. It further informs a focused, five-year roadmap for policy and institutional reform, including innovations to overcome perennial global governance roadblocks. A chief vehicle proposed for navigating the deal making and trade-offs required to achieve durable change in the international system for the promotion of just security is a World Conference on Global Institutions (WCGI), to be initiated by UN member states in the lead-up to the world body's 75th anniversary in 2020.

### Coping with state fragility

Wherever states are fragile or torn by conflict, they cease to be a part of the healthy global governance architecture; instead, they become fracture points in the international system. Today, the international landscape is more fractured than at any time since the creation of the UN.

Militant extremism, especially acute in Syria and Iraq, continues to take root in ungoverned spaces, where the rule of law has collapsed, and discrimination further threatens the rights of women, children and minorities worldwide. A series of civil wars, exploited by international terrorist and criminal organizations, have reversed the declining trends in armed violence witnessed since the end of the Cold War and created the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War.

At the same time, there are some positive trends. The growing roles of women, civil society organizations and businesses are amplified through new communications technologies and increased access to global markets. Many of the same technologies offer new opportunities for effective peacebuilding, governance renewal and transformational justice.

To seize such opportunities, while seeking to fill large gaps in security, justice and governance in fragile states and regions, the Commission recommends, first, the creation of a specialized track of 50 senior mediators and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General, on call to serve as the senior echelon of a larger professional civilian cadre for UN mediation efforts and field missions. We further call for greater inclusion and participation of

women at all levels and all stages of peace processes, especially as senior mediators and envoys, as further moves toward the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

In addition, we call on UN member states to make some military units of battalion or brigade size available for UN peace operations on 30–60 days' notice, and for the establishment of sizable standing and reserve policing capacity for UN operations. Remarkably, despite a steady growth in the UN's conflict management role in the past two decades, the current annual UN peacekeeping budget of US\$8.5 billion equals less than 0.5 per cent of world military expenditures (Briscoe and van Ginkel, 2013, p. 9; Elias and Chowdhury Fink, 2014). At the same time, greater coordination with local civil society and regional actors, learning from the hybrid UN–African Union mission in Darfur, should be promoted.

Third, strengthening the *Responsibility to Prevent, Protect, and Rebuild* involves investing in new early warning capabilities, R2P action plans and concrete goals for all international actors seeking to prevent, react to and rebuild after mass atrocities<sup>4</sup>. Although support for the R2P norm was a significant outcome of the UN's 60th anniversary summit in 2005, the realization of that norm

has met with considerable resistance in recent years, particularly following its de facto application in the case of Libya. UN member states need to work through the legitimate concerns of some states, while taking steps to operationalize and improve R2P's application in fragile and conflict-affected states and regions.

Finally, the prevention and peacebuilding roles of the courts in The Hague merit strengthening, including by, for example, expanding acceptance of the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and making use of its authoritative advisory opinions in innovative ways. In addition, we call for a new protocol that could guide the UN Security Council when it deliberates on the referral of a situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as Security Council support for sanctions, such as freezing assets, to enforce ICC arrest warrants.

### Innovating climate governance

The implications of climate change for global security and justice are great and growing. Humanity's unplanned impact on global climate – the backdrop to all other human achievement – reminds us daily of the need to diminish that impact and better manage attendant risks. The steady rise in emissions of greenhouse

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gases globally is heating the atmosphere and the oceans, melting polar and glacial ice, and raising sea levels and ocean acidity to the detriment of sea life and human security alike. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projects the number of persons displaced by climate change at 100 million in 2025 and 150 million in 2050. When the livelihoods, not to mention basic survival, of tens of millions of earth's inhabitants are threatened by rising sea levels, extreme drought, powerful floods and storm surges, climate change can certainly be understood as a paramount global justice and security concern.

The largest proportion of vulnerable people live in countries that have contributed the least to creating the present situation, and our changing climate strikes hardest at those with the least capacity to adapt, other than to move. How established and rising industrial powers act not just to mitigate but to support adaptation to a changing climate can redefine what constitutes security and justice for the remainder of the century and beyond. But as governments and nonstate actors prepare for this December's UN climate change conference in Paris, many are concerned that a binding climate agreement remains elusive.

The Commission approached climate governance from both the global and grassroots levels. With an eye on December's Paris meeting, we recommend new kinds of engagement between the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change and other international regimes, such as the International Civil Aviation and Maritime bodies. Equally important, however, are opportunities for mayors, civil society and business groups gathered in Paris to announce a parallel commitment and signing process, whereby they commit to deeper and faster action than that pledged by national leaders.

Climate change mitigation has a global goal: limit atmospheric warming to no more than 2 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels. Climate change adaptation has no such goal. We judge this has contributed to the rather anemic level of funding for adaptation worldwide. In 2013, for instance, best estimates were that the amount of international funding for climate adaptation accounted for only 7 per cent of total climate finance (Buchner et al., 2014; Falconer and Stadelmann, 2014; Figueres, 2015). An adaptation goal would need to be context-adjustable but could encourage much needed funding and projects that would, in many cases, build resilience to many kinds of disasters.

To engage the business sector and civil society innovators directly, the Commission calls for the creation of a Green Technology Licensing Facility within the recently established Green Climate Fund. The Facility would harness private sector innovation for climate mitigation and adaptation, especially in support of vulnerable populations in developing countries. In line with corporate

social responsibility principles, the Facility would help remove barriers to technology transfer, including by promoting the sharing of intellectual property rights with developing countries.

### Governing the hyperconnected global economy

Our global economy, more aptly described today as 'hyperconnected' (Xuequan, 2013) is characterized by openness and low costs of communication and transport, facilitating flows of trade, capital, information and labor. This increasingly digitalized space holds many questions for global security and justice. The more humanity conducts business at the speed of light, the more vulnerable it becomes to cascading failure. The more its economic and political discourses shift to the Internet, the more exposed they become to government surveillance as well as criminal and terrorist cyber attacks.

Consequently, our global economy is highly vulnerable to capital flight and illicit financial flows, diverting billions of dollars annually. Spreading throughout the global financial system, the US financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 caused international bank losses of more than US \$4.1 trillion and drove global unemployment up by 30 million (Dattels and Kodres, 2009). Between 2003 and 2012, the developing world lost US\$6.6 trillion to illicit financial flows based on estimates of trade mis-invoicing and leakages from national balances of payment (Kar and Spanjers, 2014). Another related downside of connectivity is its potential to facilitate novel kinds of crime, espionage and intellectual property and natural resource theft.

At the same time, expanding access to new technologies and participation in the global economy has the potential to lift tens of millions of people out of abject poverty and to advance the post 2015 Development Agenda, creating a more secure and just world. Today, three billion people (and climbing) can access the Internet, contributing – along with other means of modern communication – to an explosive growth in global trade (BBC, 2015).

In response to these inherent risks and opportunities for global security and justice, the Commission proposes key enhancements to how the G20 operates within a new framework of global economic cooperation, a 'G20+'. The plus signifies a modest (possibly virtual) secretariat to ensure greater continuity of focus, and a significantly strengthened level of institutional coordination with the UN (including the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, International Labor Organization and regional organizations. It would aim to not only prevent the spread of future cross-border financial shocks, but to promote inclusive economic reform and foster the equitable

growth necessary for achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals finalized in September 2015 in New York.

In terms of how the G20+ would work, it should meet at the heads of state level every two years at UN headquarters (as its normal 20 member grouping, which itself should remain flexible and open to change), timed in conjunction with the start of the new UN General Assembly annual session every third week of September in New York. Whereas the chief policy focus of the G20+ should remain priority setting on critical issues for the world economy, including in the area of crisis response, it should depend on formal international organizations and states for implementation and follow-through. Prior to the G20+ biennial heads of state meeting in New York, its rotating president could engage in direct dialogue on policy priorities with regional and sub-regional organizations, especially from regions underrepresented in the G20 itself (Central America, Andean South America, Africa, Southwest and Central Asia and much of Southeast Asia).

On fundamental global economy concerns associated with cyber governance and security, the Commission recommends the development of a global network of cyber crime centers, which would aim to bolster global and local responses to cyber attacks through INTERPOL and national-level Computer Emergency Response Teams. Central to this new, expanded capability to strengthen cyber security efforts would be a new standby roster of expert cyber crime fighters. Their two-part mandate would include building up cyber security and cyber crime fighting capacities within countries in need, and expanding efforts by governments, in particular in emerging economies of the global South, to promote good cyber hygiene, so that users can protect themselves, their data and assets from criminal activity. Further, to overcome the digital divide globally, we lend our support to multiple ongoing initiatives, including the International Telecommunications Union's Connect 2020 Agenda and the recently launched Global Forum on Cyber Expertise.

### Remaking global institutions

The Commission also addressed UN and broader global institutional reforms. Without effective and inclusive global governance that also safeguards fundamental human rights, the hard-fought gains of earlier generations may be lost and the extraordinary potential of future generations jeopardized. Repeated failures to achieve reform within the UN and other entities have deepened the global governance crisis with serious implications for security and justice.

Whether in advancing new norms and principles, creating new institutions or attempting to reform the current system of global governance, the chief obstacles to

change fall into three categories: first, a lack of political will to change, particularly among powerful countries and international bureaucratic interests capable of obstruction; second, failure to effectively design and advocate a specific policy or institutional reform; and third, limited skill and effort invested in sustaining a reform program through completion.

To successfully implement a comprehensive global governance reform agenda, each of these bottlenecks must be overcome. Progress in updating, let alone replacing, global institutions, also requires engaging effectively with nontraditional global governance actors from business, civil society and elsewhere, such as regional organizations, sub-national governance bodies and the media. To succeed then in the present era, the UN and other global institutions must extend their traditional convening role for member states to include these other increasingly influential actors and employ new information technologies to facilitate their participation.

We thus advocate the establishment of a UN Global Partnership, an innovative offline and online platform through which the entire UN system can better tap into the expertise of civil society and the business community. Meetings of the UN Global Partnership's apex steering committee, convened by the UN Secretary-General, would seek to further civil society and business groups' formal engagement in the UN agenda, including by giving voice to often underrepresented international policy issues. It is further why the Commission endorses the 1 for 7 Billion Campaign and initiatives to make more transparent and inclusive the procedures in the Security Council and General Assembly related to the appointment of the new Secretary-General next year, whoever he or she might be.

In this same spirit, we call for the creation of a formal consultative mechanism between the Security Council and business and civil society representatives, building on the successful, albeit informal 'Arria-formula' dialogues conducted since the early 1990s. On the subject of UN Security Council reform, we propose to expand the Council's membership, in line with present day realities, amending Article 23 of the Charter to allow nonpermanent members of the Council to be re-elected to consecutive terms. The Commission further recommends allowing permanent members of the Security Council the option of a 'dissenting' vote that does not rise formally to the level of a veto and, thus, does not block passage of a resolution.

Moreover, while the UN Peacebuilding Commission has made some progress in its first decade, engaging a diverse range of governmental and nongovernmental peacebuilding actors, it lacks teeth and real authority for resource mobilization and action. Therefore, we recommend upgrading it into a UN Peacebuilding Council, empowered with an expanded conflict prevention

mandate. This new body could either replace the Trusteeship Council, whose work has been suspended since 1994 with the independence of the Pacific island state of Palau, or be upgraded in a manner similar to the decision to transition the UN Human Rights Commission, in 2006, into a stronger Human Rights Council. In consultation with the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Council and the Secretary-General could employ ‘peacebuilding audits’ in identified countries and regions to generate critical early warning information to help prevent the spread of violent conflict.

Finally, as an important initial step toward more robust access and representation for ‘We the Peoples’ of the UN, we call for the creation of a UN Parliamentary Network (UNPN) to raise greater awareness of and participation in UN governance, consistent with other networks already in place for the international financial institutions and many regional organizations. Bringing together parliamentarians elected from their national legislatures and established under Article 22 of the UN Charter as a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly, the UNPN would meet every September to feed ideas into the work of the Assembly’s new annual session – and convene periodically during the rest of the year when critical issues come to the fore. Offering perspectives from beyond current government positions, UNPN members would be well-placed to highlight the priorities and concerns of civil society groups and the private sector.

**A world conference on global institutions by 2020**

The Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance is committed to work with a range of partners – both within and outside of governments – to mobilize and sustain its far-reaching, yet practical, global governance reform agenda. An effective strategy for reform requires smart coalitions of like-minded states and nonstate actors,

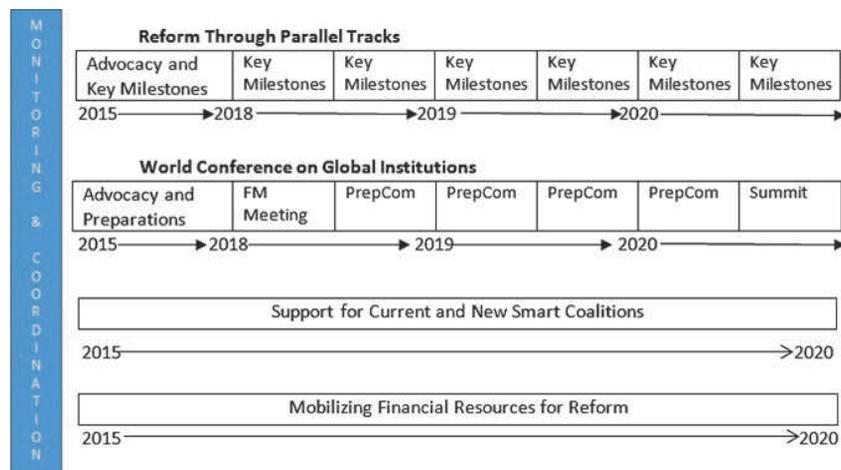
and in our research and consultations, we have learned from, in particular, the hard fought success stories of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and the international effort to adopt Responsibility to Protect as a global norm.

A successful reform strategy must harness a new kind of leadership combined with new kinds of tools and networks from among a diverse range of state, intergovernmental and nontraditional global governance actors. To build broad-based coalitions and advance innovation and institutional renewal, the Commission recommends investing in a hybrid approach (see Figure 1) that taps into the strengths of two major avenues to global governance reform designed to overcome deep-seated divisions in the international community.

First, a Reform Through Parallel Tracks approach acknowledges that different kinds of multilateral reform negotiations will require different negotiating forums and will proceed at different speeds. For example, specific UN task forces in New York (composed of a select group of permanent representatives from all major regions and co-chaired by two permanent representatives from the global North and South) could deliberate on reforming principal UN organs, such as a UN Parliamentary Network to advise the General Assembly and the creation of a new UN Peacebuilding Council, prior to final negotiation in the General Assembly or Security Council. In doing so, Reform Through Parallel Tracks can facilitate a careful sequencing of reforms based on criteria such as urgency, political feasibility and cost.

A second approach with a higher potential for garnering the political attention of thousands of political leaders and millions of their constituents is the idea of a WCGI. Marking the UN’s 75th anniversary in 2020 with the culmination of a three-year multi-stakeholder and multilateral negotiation on global institutional reforms, a WCGI could serve as a rallying point for smart coalitions

**Figure 1.** Implementing a Hybrid Approach to Global Governance Reform



and simultaneously generate political momentum for multiple, urgent global reforms.

Initiated at a meeting of foreign ministers in early 2018 in New York, Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meetings could be held every six months, each in a different region, the fourth and final one concluding at the level of foreign ministers. World leaders could then convene the WCGI in September 2020 at the time of their annual gathering in New York. Although consideration could be given to UN Charter Articles 108 or 109 for pursuing specific or a comprehensive set of amendments to the Charter, many, if not a fair majority of, global political and institutional changes deliberated on at the WCGI could be undertaken without Charter reform. The WCGI could serve as a vehicle for governments to advance major national foreign policy interests, while making the diplomatic deals and trade-offs necessary to achieve many of the global institutional and policy reforms introduced in this article. Every effort should also be made to engage the voices and ideas of civil society at the most local level, as well as under-represented groups, in the lead up to the World Conference.

### The UN at 75: global governance for a new era

Security and justice are both pivotal to global governance. Recognizing this is the first step in addressing and ultimately overcoming today's most urgent challenges. Just security, as a far-sighted, ethical vision, can inform a pragmatic reform program that innovates our global institutions, laws, policy tools and relationships. Leaders from all countries, including from powerful states and emerging global actors, have a particular responsibility to ensure that the UN and other global institutions continue to inspire, safeguard human rights and give even the most vulnerable people a reason for hope.

Guaranteeing security and justice for all peoples and nations is the practical and moral imperative of our time. Therefore, the recommendations of the Commission are intended, in this 70th anniversary year of the UN, to serve as a roadmap for broad-based policy dialogue and an ambitious institutional reform agenda aimed at 2020, the 75th anniversary of the UN. There will be no scarcity of opinions, initiatives and agendas for governance reform at the global level. The Commission sought to draw on the best data and proposals available to inform and shape its recommendations. We hope they both complement and serve as a point of reference for efforts undertaken in the same spirit of striving for better global governance, including the work of the Elders, the Independent Commission on Multilateralism, the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, the Future UN Development System Project, the Global Commission on Internet Governance, the High-Level Independent Panel

on UN Peace Operations and the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture.

Guided by a vision of justice that is backed up by security and security that is built on justice, the Commission aspires to contribute to a diverse platform or network of governments, organizations, and individuals dedicated to fundamental reform and strengthening of the UN as the world body enters its eighth decade. Sensitive to the present political context, we seek to ensure that global institutions and relationships, rooted in the 20th century, are up to the 21st century tasks ahead. We invite prospective partners from around the world – in governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, media and international organizations – to help build and sustain a coalition for global change, in pursuit of a vision of justice and security for all.

### Notes

1. For more information on the Commission, including its composition and its Report (launched in June from the Peace Palace in The Hague and subsequently at the UN in New York) [online]. Available from: <http://www.globalsecurityjusticegovernance.org> [Accessed 28 August 2015].
2. Key thinkers who have influenced our understanding of justice include: Beitz, 1999; Pogge, 1989; Rawls, 1971; Sen, 2009.
3. Each viewed as a major global governance challenge, these three complex sets of issues track highly in, for example, a new Pew Research Center survey on perceived global threats conducted this year (March–May) in 40 countries [online]. Available from: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/07/14/climate-change-seen-as-top-global-threat/> [Accessed 22 July 2015].
4. United Nations General Assembly (2005) 15 September. 2005 World Summit Outcome, A/60/L.1, paras. 139–139. New York: United Nations. Available from [http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/world%20summit%20outcome%20doc%202005\(1\).pdf](http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/world%20summit%20outcome%20doc%202005(1).pdf) [Accessed 09 October 2015]. Also see: Bellamy, A.J. (2015). *The Responsibility to Protect: A Defence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Other important documents defining R2P include: International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001). *The responsibility to protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre. Available from <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf> [Accessed 09 October 2015]. Ki-Moon, B. (2009) 12 January. *Implementing the responsibility to protect*; Report of the Secretary-General, A/63/677. New York: United Nations. Available from [http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/implementing\\_the\\_responsibility\\_to\\_protect.pdf](http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/implementing_the_responsibility_to_protect.pdf) [Accessed 09 October 2015].

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## Author Information

**Madeleine K. Albright** served as US Secretary of State and US Permanent Representative to the United Nations during the Clinton administration. Dr Albright is currently Chair of the Albright Stonebridge Group and is a Professor in the Practice of Diplomacy at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

**Ibrahim A. Gambari**, a scholar-diplomat, is the Founder and Chairman of the Savannah Center for Diplomacy, Democracy, and Development in Abuja, Nigeria. He served in various high postings in the United Nations, including Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Previously, Dr Gambari served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Representative to the United Nations for Nigeria.