EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSING HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES
What would a Global Resilience Council bring?

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Content

Introduction and Background

The Global South Perspectives Network is a collective of universities, think tanks, non-profit organisations, and government institutions, brought together over three regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa. The Network was co-convened in 2023 by the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS) and the research group Humanitarian Journalism and Media Interventions (HumanizaCom), of the Postgraduate Program in Social Communication at the Methodist University of *São* Paulo.

The Network aims to constructively contribute to ensuring greater influence and equitable partnership of the states in the Global South on matters relating to effective, reformed and resilient multilateralism. Multilateralism that ensures adequate representation of the interests of the Global South.

As a whole, the Network seeks to produce research and insights mainly into the non-military threats and human security, with a particular focus on the Global South. These include environmental, economic and social issues, as well as the effects of pandemics and novel problems.

The Network offers an opportunity for amplified voices from the Global South. For broader contribution of these actors in the decision-making process relating to reforms and other actions affecting multilateralism, anchored in the United Nations system.

In light of the complex challenges facing the global governance architecture, considerations are being developed by various stakeholders to provide adequate and timely responses to contemporary, global threats.

The United Nations has recognised the need for such responses and is accordingly planning to host the Summit of the Future, in September 2024. This Summit presents a critical opportunity to chart a path for sustainable development and reformed multilateralism. Leading up to the Summit of the Future, stakeholders are introducing new or recalibrated approaches to address the world's most pressing challenges. In so doing, they are constructively contributing to the much-needed global governance reform process.

Among the various groups, civil society groups have a central role in discussing and developing new processes that are aimed at addressing global concerns. In its preparation documents, the Summit of the Future recognises that:

> "Keeping with the vision of a more networked and inclusive multilateralism enshrined in Our Common Agenda, the Secretary-General has underscored the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders from across the full spectrum of society. Their voices are essential to the preparation and success of the Summit of the Future. By tapping into their wealth of expertise and leveraging their platforms, we can support more informed policy decisions, amplify the impact of the Summit, and better tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow" (United Nations Summit of the Future, 2024: https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/stakeholders).

The United Nations' recognition of and appeal to civil society organisations, to make representations and to propose inclusive and critical approaches to addressing global concerns, offers an opportunity for the Global South Perspectives Network to develop and present its views and policy proposals towards a better future.

Global South Perspectives Network: Towards a systemic response

In 2023 the Network produced its first collaborative report: *Global South Perspectives on Global Governance Reform*. The report seeks to amplify the voices of the Global South in their conceptualisation and direction of reformed multilateralism. It notes the need for global governance innovation not only to exist in pockets of the Global North. But that the states from the Global South have a decided and critical role to play by sharing their experiences and putting forward solutions that advance their interests.

In its inaugural report, the Network looked at ways to ensure rapid and effective response by the United Nations to the crises around the world. It placed particular attention on the multitude of non-military threats. One of the central initiatives that are discussed and advanced in the report, is the proposal of a Global Resilience Council, as introduced and actively developed by the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability.

The ideation of a Global Resilience Council takes into consideration that the systemic crises the world faces have an impact on the social, economic and planetary systems that humanity and the environment depend on. To respond to systemic crises is thus more extensive and on a broader scale than the efforts to develop international cooperation and sectoral solutions. The Global Resilience Council is proposed to operate at the highest level of global governance, pursuant to non-military challenges faced by humanity. Such a Council is envisioned to function with similar authority to that of the United Nations Security Council, but without the impediments that hinder the Security Council's effectiveness. It would be an inclusive council actively engaging assemblies representing various constituencies of state and non-state actors globally, with its central purpose being to provide these actors with a dedicated and robust platform to pursue effective global governance.

The report assessed the appetite for and thoughts on such a Council. It found that among the contributors and participants of the surveys undertaken, there was broad agreement on the need for a structure such as the Global Resilience Council. Participants also broadly agreed that such a council promises to hold a number of opportunities, and that its potential benefits generally outweigh the possible drawbacks.

The report found that further work was needed to develop the concept of a Global Resilience Council, expanding it in detail and defining its various aspects. The report concluded that the concept should be taken to scholars and practitioners, to think tanks and conferences for interrogation.

ACUNS: A platform to introduce and discuss the GRC

The Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) is a significant organisation that seeks to bring together those studying and working on the practices and performance of the United Nations system. It does so to better understand the international body, and its various approaches to global issues and to provide insight and input into making it more effective. ACUNS recognises that:

> "In the 21st century, it is not only war, but also climate change, pandemic disease, new weapons, displacement, inequality, bigotry and extremism that threatens global well-being. Because these challenges disregard borders, no sovereign nation will succeed in countering them alone. Solutions to improve the human condition will most likely advance with evidence-based analysis, international legal agreement, and multilateral action. As the only institution with worldwide membership, an effective United Nations is an existential imperative for the global good. ACUNS serves to foster well-studied action in the UN system" (Academic Council on the United Nations System, 2024: https://acuns.org/purpose/).

With its broader, incisive view of the various global crises, with human security at its centre, and with it bringing together United Nations practitioners from across the world to find collective effective approaches, ACUNS offers an opportune platform for the Network to present its thinking and proposal of a Global Resilience Council.

ACUNS' flagship event is its annual meeting where practitioners and scholars consider, debate and analyse the work and direction of the United Nations. Between 20 and 22 June 2024, ACUNS' annual meeting was held in Tokyo under the theme: *Global Governance and Sustainable Development: Revitalizing Research to Support Multilateral Solutions*. The meeting offered the Global South Perspectives Network the opportunity to introduce its thinking on the ways that global governance can be reformed, so as to make it more equitable and effective at addressing global concerns.

A panel was accordingly held under the title: *Effectively addressing Human Security Challenges: What would a Global Resilience Council bring?*

The following participants took part in the panel:

- Buyelwa Sonjica (Chair), Former Government Minister (South Africa) and current chair of the Advisory Council of the Inclusive Society Institute
- Georgios Kostakos, Executive Director: Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability
- Harris Gleckman, Senior Fellow at the Centre for Governance and Sustainability, and Executive Board Member at the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability
- Shabnam Delfan, associated to the Buckingham University and the Open University

Chairperson's opening remarks

Buyelwa Sonjica

The world faces significant challenges. Historian Adam Tooze has described the state of global affairs as one resembling a polycrisis. The name describes how there exists an interplay between various crises and that due to the pervasive reality of global connection, the effects are more immediate on everyone. Emerging and critical approaches are required to effectively address this polycrisis.

When the world came together almost 80 years ago to form the United Nations, it was as a response to the immediate threat that nations inflicted upon each other during the second world war. The response was to collectively form a body that would effectively and legitimately address the world's most immediate crisis – war.

Today, while the United Nations stands proud, it is increasingly challenged as not being fit for purpose. Its power structures are out of date. They do not reflect the social and political realities of today's world. Neither is the United Nations able to adequately address these realities nor is it set up to attend to the emergence of new global challenges, whether related to climate change, or what we have recently seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In sum, the dominant peace and security approach of the United Nations, steered by the Security Council, cannot address the increasing human security challenges as captured by the polycrisis. In fact, there is currently no coherent and effective way of dealing with global human security challenges. The predominance of the veto bearing permanent members of the Security Council (P5) compromises the United Nations' broader power, as it does the equality of nations. Currently, the P5 involve themselves in everything, but not everything is related to peace and conflict. The ineffectiveness of the current system plays itself out as a violation of basic human rights. Civilians from around the world are suffering from a system that is unable to effectively discharge its mandate and attend to emergent issues.

What the world needs is a stronger, more representative global system. A move towards inclusive multilateralism will not only highlight but also attend to broader matters affecting the world's population. The questions, therefore, remain: where are these changes to be brought? How does the United Nations become fit for purpose? In other words, how does it go about changing its policy, structure and process?

This panel offered the opportunity to explore these matters. Recognising that major structural, global crises go unanswered, the panel discussed the proposal of a Global Resilience Council. An institution that will speak to systemic crises, from a human security approach.

This panel allowed for the thinking of the Council to be expanded, to look at human security aspects such as poverty, migration, climate change and the effect of pandemics. Since the thought about such a Council is still at its development stage, this panel and the discussion that followed among participants and the audience allowed for critical engagement and further development.

A case for the Global Resilience Council

Georgios Kostakos

The thinking behind a Global Resilience Council commenced from one main observation. It recognises that the reforms required for the United Nations system cannot be accomplished by one centralised and specialised agency. Instead, it asks: how could the whole system be brought together as a whole to address prevailing human security issues? Such an approach recognises that singular mandates, or departments only addressing internal matters, do not address the prevailing systemic problems. To address that, the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability came up with the idea of the Global Resilience Council.

The reason for the focus on resilience is simply because that is what is most needed in the world today. It recognises that while there will always be crises that affect humanity, it is important that there should be effective and adequate responses. Ways for the people of the world to get back on their feet, and in a better position than before. Put in another way: get back better.

The idea is that the Council will be analogous to the United Nations Security Council for non-military threats. A Council for systemic crises that have many dimensions. Such an approach should leverage learning from the past so as to better address future events. For example, it should not get stuck in a situation akin to the Security Council, which empowers some powerful states with the veto power to stop decisions from being carried out. This results in the United Nations not being able to address big problems.

A Global Resilience Council will be more representative than the Security Council. With 15 members, the Security Council is not representative of the world's 193 member states with different interests and concerns. The new body will supplement the Security Council. Whereas the Secretary-General has proposed something similar in his *Our Common Agenda* report, these suggestions have shortcomings, as he suggests the creation of emergency platforms for each shock that emerges. In such a situation, authorisation from member states would be required for each event. This would mean that the Secretary-General will decide which countries, which civil society organisations, and which private sector players to invite to best address each crisis. It is also proposed not to be permanent, but should be run on an ad hoc basis, so as to allow flexibility. Each structure will then end when that concomitant crisis ends.

Such an approach is short-sighted and will prove to be ineffective. The crises of today, such as climate change, are not ad hoc crises. They are deeply ingrained in the way the world functions, affecting how people produce and consume. How the economy and politics work. In other words, it is not possible to get rid of these systemic crises with an ad hoc structure. Such suggestions also face transparency and legitimacy concerns.

A Global Resilience Council will be an intergovernmental body; governments carry final responsibility for their citizens, and collectively for the whole of humanity. A mix of various (external) actors cannot be expected to

deal with existential questions facing countries. As evidenced by the COVAX facility during the COVID-19 pandemic. This facility proved to only work for the wealthy countries that could pay the high costs. These states were the first to receive their vaccines and often other, poorer states were denied their share until the richer states had more than enough. New structures, when set up, must be more representative. This will further ensure their legitimacy.

The Global Resilience Council starts from the basis that climate change, for example, has an impact on the core planetary, social and economic systems. Its solution must therefore also bring all these components together. The world must respond to systemic crises by looking at the big picture – in terms of systems.

Such a council must be able to impose some sanctions when various actors, states or non-state actors, do not follow the rules that have been agreed to. Platforms such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would be able to bring their grievances to the Council, so as to pressure actors for their compliance. The World Health Organization could do the same for pandemics. Furthermore, the Secretary-General, or individual countries could bring issues to the Council, which will then see to it that separate organisations deal with the separate issues. The differentiated agencies are supplemented by this high-level body, which has an intergovernmental core. Governments are at the centre. They are the ones who are making decisions. But around them, they are supported by an advisory assembly of constituencies. The scientific community will be central, so too the indigenous communities and local authorities. All bringing in their wisdom and advice. And once the decision is taken by the central body, these supplementary bodies also help with implementation.

What a Global Resilience Council would look like

Harris Gleckman
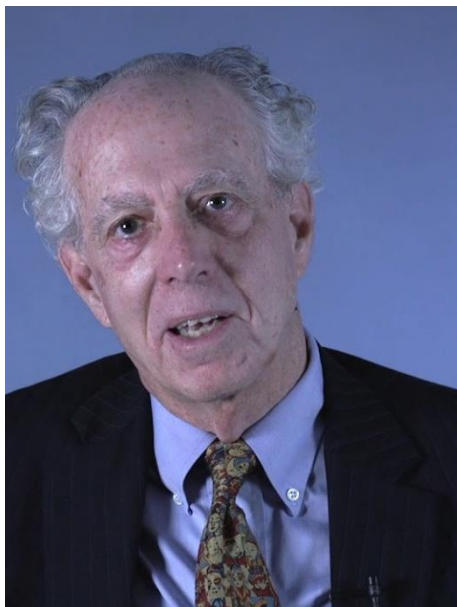
At the time that the current global governance system was initiated, largely following World War Two, the organisations to emerge were given discreet tasks. These tasks were economic and social. It did not attend to matters that are today topical and important, such as matters regarding the environment and gender. The significant change in the landscape suggests that a new array of tasks requires a new array of organisations. Or that a new platform is required. This is what is being suggested here with the introduction of a Global Resilience Council.

It is now imperative to rethink the fundamentals that the world has become so accustomed to. The ongoing approach, which sees specific concerns addressed by separate organisational structures, such as development and habitat, is clearly proving to be lacking. The people of the world should step back and ask: in what way could the world best address these emergent concerns through a multilateral body, given the nature of the crises? This is where the suggestion for the new Council comes in. It should be noted that additional thoughts about the structure and composition of the Council should be greatly welcomed. At its core, the idea of a Council is a challenging one. One that is open to discussion and revision where needed and deemed appropriate by the differing people who will be affected by the consequences of ongoing human insecurity.

On an institutional basis, such a Council would need a formal treaty or a change in the United Nations Charter. To get it going, it could be established as a subcommittee of the General Assembly that all other United Nations system organisations would recognise as a co-facilitated committee. In this way, it would provide a platform for all parts of the United Nations at the intergovernmental level to start to meet the diversity of its challenges. While the United Nations has an existing chief executive office, that is on the administrative side. The tough part would be to get the political side aligned with the nature of contemporary issues that they are trying to address. In time, it should be turned, in the fashion of the International Criminal Court, into a self-standing treaty organisation.

When looking at the proposed composition, the agents should be states. But perhaps it would be best for states to be represented on a regional basis. This will be an innovative way to have regional bodies such as the African Union, the European Commission and other regional bodies be part of the coordination structure of the arrangement.

Unlike the voluntary Economic and Social Council, or the voluntary Paris Agreement, the Global Resilience Council is proposed to have some obligatory powers. The suggestion is that in the startup period, it could make direct proposals to governments, international finance institutions and judicial authorities. These organisations and institutions would act under their own authority. Leveraging or addressing the blocking of issues under their own auspices. It could, in a court-like way, insist upon accessing public data from the key actors in the field. As such it would be able to hold actors accountable.

It could further propose to international banks and financial institutions that certain actors be removed as they are undermining international financial stability. It could advise and counsel other agencies. To advise on their business and where they should take up a certain issue as a serious matter.

An outcome of such an approach will be to attend to the existing fragmented system. It will ensure that for the first time, organisations such as the World Food Council or any of the governing bodies that in practice have no authority to send a formal request to another intergovernmental body, would now be able to do so. It will assist in the partnership and collaboration between organisations, where one will be able to initiate ideas about concomitant concerns and allow different departments and organisations to make requests and to elevate issues onto the agenda of partner organisations.

The thinking behind a Global Resilience Council is thus envisioning a multilateral body that has a starting structure, a set of ways that it can exert some degree of power. Some new ways that the multiple and diverse civil society actors can be a part of and advise upon. And some structure of a platform to allow the existing organisations to have intergovernmental discussions with one another about how to address structural crises.

In conclusion, the concept of a Global Resilience Council offers to be a body that will be central to reformed multilateralism. Through its collective response capabilities to major systemic crises, it would escalate concerns from the level of individual specialised agencies to the global community at large. This would contribute to a concerted effort across various issue areas. It would function in the spirit of a 'whole of government' approach, but on a planetary level. Such a body bodes well for the much-needed innovations that would bring about adequate and representative global governance reform.

Building resilience against climate threats

Shabnam Delfan

Climate change has a direct impact on human security around the world. The failure to meet the maximum 1.5 degrees rise in global temperature stemming from the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement shows the imminent risk. Its concomitant disruptions pose an enormous challenge to global society. The interlinked nature of climate, disease, economic and other factors have a direct impact on human security.

Demographic trends, including migration and rapid urbanisation, are raising the threats to the most vulnerable. Climate change is also a threat multiplier. This means that food insecurity, persistent poverty, displacement and other insecurities can trigger a competition for scarce natural resources and fuel social tension and increase crime and insecurity in societies around the world. It, therefore, emerges that the imminent threat of climate change is the increase in poverty and other persisting inequalities. People with lower incomes are the most likely to depend on resources provided by nature. By disrupting natural systems and the resources they provide, dependent people and animals are directly affected.

By hitting the poorest the hardest, climate change increases existing inequalities and causes more people to fall into poverty. It is therefore critical to respond to the climate change crisis comprehensively. Human security takes this approach and United Nations member states have overwhelmingly highlighted the importance of acting on climate change. But what is happening is not enough, nor have these measures been implemented sufficiently.

There are four ways in which climate change affects human security when human security is understood as safety from chronic threats, such as hunger, disease and poverty, but also the protection from sudden and harmful destruction of the patterns of daily life.

1. Climate change is increasingly impacting human security when changes (such as in rainfall) trigger competition for food and water. This takes place especially in the Middle East and North Africa regions and the Global South more broadly. Declining agricultural output can lead to a loss of income for a broad segment of the population. These changes have already led to more than 20 million people being either internally or externally displaced from their places of stay.

   Climate change functions as a threat multiplier. It worsens the existing social and economic conditions. Climate change is thus an aggravating factor for instability, conflict and terrorism. It disrupts social relations where it pits groups against one another, such as farmers against communities. In Somalia, for instance, years of conflict have degraded the resilience of the state and have severely affected the stability of local communities. The ongoing drought has simply worsened this tension. In Iraq, the water crisis is a serious and aggravating factor that is bringing the country to a point of existential crisis.

2. Climate change affects food production and drives up hunger. When climate disaster threatens coastal fisheries and agricultural land, food production suffers. Food crises and hunger combine with existing inequalities. Political and social exclusion can also lead to unrest. In Africa, decimated food crops have driven food prices sky-high. In some Pacific islands, increased sea levels have threatened fisheries and thereby threatened the food supply. As many as 800 million people are facing hunger and concomitant displacement due to these disruptions. Each year more than 20 million people are forced to leave their homes and move to other areas due to floods, droughts and other extreme weather events.
   By and large, most of the displacement of peoples takes place in developing countries, which are already overburdened by conflicts, food shortages and broader instability.

   All indicators point to migration becoming one of the major policy challenges of the century. This is not only the case in the Global North, where political lines are being drawn and migrants are increasingly finding passage to safety and security difficult. Migration is equally, if not more of, a policy challenge to the states of the Global South, which does not have the registry and security mechanisms of the North. And where social tensions are reaching fever pitch as groups are pitted against each other for resources and employment. Adequate planning and management is going to be critical for human security. The degradation of the ecosystems and the demand for resources can also lead to chronic poverty and hunger and a high level of communicable diseases and broader conflict.

3. Climate change is increasing poverty and inequality. The United Nations Secretary-General has called for stimulation packages of at least 500 billion dollars per year to address the unfair global financial system, and thereby tackling the high cost of debt and exorbitant impacts of long-term financial obligations. Since 2015 there has not been adequate implementation of financial measures to tackle the crisis.

4. The final way that climate change affects human security is the impact it has on women and girls, on gender-related inequalities. Unequal access to resources can leave women and girls disproportionately vulnerable. Women and girls face significant risks from climate change and the disruptions it causes. In Somalia, for instance, shifting rain patterns due to climate change are leading to water quality worsening and leading to higher rates of violence, particularly towards women and girls.

   Forced displacement due to climate change has seen rates of sexual violence increase. Women are often responsible for providing water and fuel for households, especially in the developing countries. When women and girls have to venture further from their homes in search for water and fuel, they are at an increased risk of sexual harassment and violence. It also decreases their ability to pursue paid work and negatively impacts the opportunities for girls to stay enrolled in schools and become educated. By including women in local initiatives, it reduces the tension and contributes to greater social stability.

It is seen that in relation to climate change and its key priorities, proactivity and intervention are now essential. The international community has so far acted in an essentially reactive manner. By responding to the humanitarian crisis, to assist developing countries tackle urban growth and expansion of slums, the development community and international organisations have a central role to play. The combination of widespread land degradation, food insecurity and large-scale migration are contributing to an extensive and even existential crisis. While more work is needed to be done in these areas, to identify and prioritise the hotspots for intervention, forecasts and existing information provide some indicators for particularly vulnerable areas including small and developing states.

Both humanitarian and development assistance is clearly needed. While most of the burden falls to the least developed countries, it is essential that states take ownership of their own national prerogatives. The key

14

priorities are identified here as, first, gaining a better understanding and recognition of the main issues at hand. Second, the mitigation of the main causes. Especially through environmental management and climate change adaptations, mitigation and ensuring that the migration prospect is not emitted when strategies are developed. The third priority is better managing the environmental migration process, especially improving the carrying capacity of these areas. A fourth priority is the incorporation of these strategies and approaches into existing social structures and policy practices, guidelines and forecasts. As a last priority, it is critical to recognise that early action, planning and intervention on critical issues is needed.

Addressing all these environmentally induced matters is important. A multibillion-dollar process is needed. Yet, there exists a lack of current information and so a more accurate costing is necessary.

Finally, it is imperative for all of humanity to unite to push for practicable support for the most vulnerable countries and populations. This must be done by strengthening the capacity of the governments and all stakeholders to respond effectively to existing climate challenges.

Conclusion

The thinking towards a Global Resilience Council has both identified several failures of the existing global governance infrastructure as well as identified issues with those efforts that have been suggested to attend to these failures. These include the suggestion that ameliorative efforts be permanent, not ad hoc. That approaches must be inclusive and obligatory. Such an approach recognises the long-term and comprehensive nature of the complex polycrisis that the world faces, together.

Whereas this panel at this conference offered a wonderful opportunity to transmit the idea of the Council among decision-makers and scholars, it was concluded that much still needs to be done. The details and workings of the Council must be evolved, so as to ensure that it best addresses its targets. It is also important that its suggestions must be lobbied among influential stakeholders, so as to ensure appropriate buy-in and prominence.

Notes