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# **Updating the United Nations to Confront 21st Century Threats:**

## **The Challenge to the High-Level Panel**

**39th Conference on the  
United Nations of the Next Decade**



**Sponsored by  
The Stanley Foundation**

**June 11-16, 2004  
Black Point Inn  
Prouts Neck, Maine**

## Executive Summary

*As is often noted, the United Nations was designed in 1945 for a world that is dramatically different from our own. While there have been useful and important organizational innovations over the past six decades, the United Nations' member states have by and large preserved it without significant change.*

The conceptual task of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change will be to weave together diverse threat perceptions into a common understanding. The threat most clearly identified as inimical to international peace and security is armed conflict, and the threat of armed conflict has dominated Security Council deliberations over the years. But can a collective security system intended to serve the widest interests of the community of nations remain so focused on halting wars? What about the structural factors—such as grinding poverty and the weakness of governance—that impede the development of countries and their citizens and sometimes contribute to conflict? What about the devastating new technologies of war and terrorism, whose threat transcends specific conflicts? In terms of institutional structure, can the world community tackle its agenda of threats and challenges with the main political and policy action still concentrated in one council? For that matter, can the Security Council preserve its legitimacy without adjusting its membership?

As the panel answers these questions, it will outline an agenda that takes in a fuller sweep of contemporary problems and takes stock of the concerns of the entire world community. Indeed, elaborating a new paradigm of international peace and security may be one of the most important conceptual contributions of the panel.

*The findings of the Stanley Foundation conference fell into three major areas: threats and challenges, institutional change, and maximizing the panel's impact, with the resulting recommendations listed below.*