



A wake-up call

I. A wake-up call

1. Seventy-five years ago, the world emerged from a series of cataclysmic events: two successive world wars, genocide, a devastating influenza pandemic and a worldwide economic depression. Our founders gathered in San Francisco [promising](#) to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; to establish conditions under which justice and respect for international law can be maintained; and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. They believed in the value of collective efforts to achieve a better world and founded the United Nations to that end.

2. The Charter of the United Nations is an exceptional achievement. Since 1945, international norms and institutions have delivered independence, peace, prosperity, justice, human rights, hope and support for billions of people. For many others, however, these aspirations were never fully realized and are now receding. Too many people are also being excluded from the opportunities and benefits of technology and transitioning economies, facing a bleak future if we do not act fast.

3. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been a challenge like no other since the Second World War, revealing our shared vulnerability and interconnectedness. It has exposed human rights concerns and exacerbated deep fragilities and inequalities in our societies. It has amplified disenchantment with institutions and political leadership as the virus has lingered. We have also seen many examples of vaccine nationalism. Moreover, with less than a decade to go, the Sustainable Development Goals have been thrown [even further](#) off track.

4. At the same time, the pandemic has led to a surge of collective action, with people working together to respond to a truly global threat. The world needs to

THE COSTS OF COVID-19

- Global GDP decreased by [an estimated 3.5 per cent in 2020](#).
- The pandemic has pushed a further [124 million people into extreme poverty](#). The pandemic-induced poverty surge will also widen the gender poverty gap, meaning more women will be pushed into extreme poverty than men.
- Nearly [one in three people](#) in the world (2.37 billion) **did not have access to adequate food** in 2020 – an increase of almost 320 million people in just one year.
- Early estimates suggest a potential [increase of up to 45 per cent in child mortality](#) because of health-service shortfalls and reductions in access to food.
- [Total working hours fell by 8.8 per cent in 2020](#), the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs.
- Restricted movement, social isolation and economic insecurity are increasing **women's vulnerability to violence in the home** around the world.

unite to produce and distribute sufficient vaccines for everyone. We have been reminded of the vital role of the State in solving problems, but also the need for networks of actors stretching well beyond States to cities, corporations, scientists, health professionals, researchers, civil society, the media, faith-based groups and individuals. When we all face the same threat, cooperation and solidarity are the only solutions, within societies and between nations.

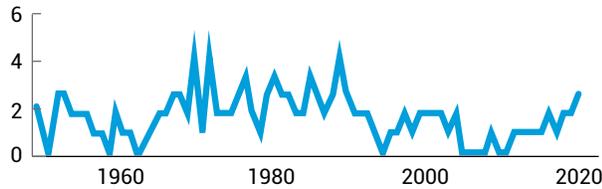
SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

PEACE



Despite ongoing international tensions, conflict and violence, the multilateral system with the United Nations at its centre has helped to **avert a third world war or a nuclear holocaust.**

Conflicts between States, 1946–2020



Source: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2020.

HUMAN RIGHTS



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) has helped to ensure that **billions of people live safer, longer and more dignified lives.**



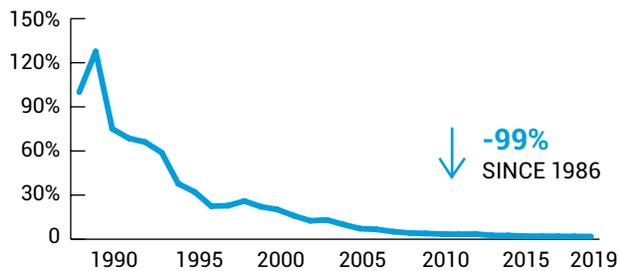
80% of Member States have ratified at least four core international human rights treaties, and all Member States have ratified at least one.

Source: OHCHR, 2021.

ENVIRONMENT



Ozone depleting emissions since the Montreal Protocol, Index 1986 = 100%



Source: UNEP, 2021.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION



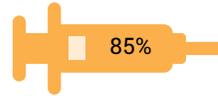
In 2020, the United Nations and partner organizations provided humanitarian assistance to more than **98 million people in 25 countries.**

Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2021.

HEALTH



After a 10-year global effort led by WHO involving over **500 million vaccinations**, smallpox was officially eradicated in 1980.



Today, 85% of the world's children are vaccinated and protected from debilitating diseases.

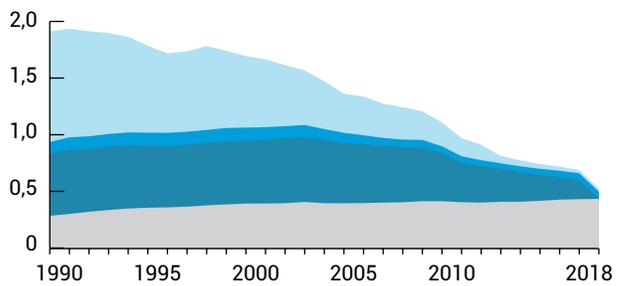
Source: WHO, 2020.

POVERTY ERADICATION



- East Asia and Pacific
- South Asia
- Rest of the World
- Sub-Saharan Africa

Total population (in billions) living in extreme poverty



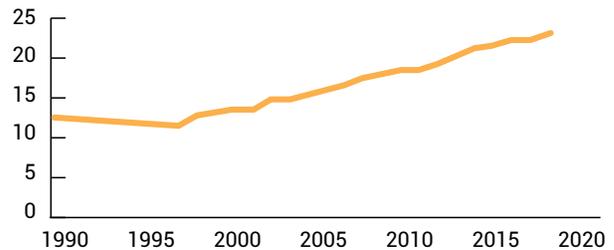
Source: World Bank, 2018.

GENDER EQUALITY



90% of United Nations Member States have ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (percentage)



Source: Statistics Division, 2021.

A. The choice before us

5. Let there be no illusion: COVID-19 may pale in comparison to future challenges if we do not learn from failures that have cost lives and livelihoods. Our best projections show that a stark choice confronts us: to continue with business as usual and risk significant breakdown and perpetual crisis, or to make concerted efforts to break through and achieve an international system that delivers for people and the planet. These omens must not be ignored, nor these opportunities squandered.

B. Renewing solidarity

6. As the United Nations marked its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020, people around the world [expressed](#) their belief in international cooperation while also conveying their concern at the mismatch between its promises and the realities in their daily lives. Member States echoed this in their [declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations \(see General Assembly resolution 75/1\)](#), resolving to keep the promises that they have already made and asking for recommendations to advance our common agenda and respond to current and future challenges.

7. This report seeks to answer these calls, taking stock of challenges and recommending actions that build on what is working and improve what is not. Multilateralism has evolved considerably since the United Nations was founded, and we have shown that we can come together to forge collective solutions. However, this does not happen often, effectively or inclusively enough.

8. Everything proposed in this report depends on a **deepening of solidarity**. Solidarity is not charity; in an interconnected world, it is common sense. It is the principle of working together, recognizing that we are bound to each other and that no community or country can solve its challenges alone. It is about our shared responsibilities to and for each other, taking account of our common humanity and each

WHAT WE MEAN BY *SOLIDARITY*



Solidarity is a fundamental value “by virtue of which global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes costs and burdens fairly, in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice, and ensures that those who suffer or benefit the least receive help from those who benefit the most” (General Assembly, resolution 57/213).

person's dignity, our diversity and our varying levels of capacity and need. The importance of solidarity has been thrown into sharp relief by COVID-19 and the race against variants, even for countries that are well advanced with vaccination campaigns. No one is safe until everyone is safe. The same is true of our biodiversity, without which none of us can survive, and for actions to address the climate crisis. In the absence of solidarity, we have arrived at a critical paradox: international cooperation is more needed than ever but also harder to achieve.

9. Through a deeper commitment to solidarity, at the national level, between generations and in the multilateral system, we can avoid the breakdown scenario and, instead, break through towards a more positive future. This report proposes a **path forward**, centred around a **renewal of our social contract**, adapted to the challenges of this century, taking into account young people and future generations and complemented by a **new global deal**.

10. A strong **social contract** anchored in human rights at the national level is the necessary foundation for us to work together. It may not be written down in any single document, but the social contract has profound consequences for people, underpinning their rights and obligations and shaping their life chances. It is also vital for international cooperation, since bonds across countries do not work when bonds within them are broken. The inequality, mistrust and intolerance that we are seeing in many countries and regions,

THE CHOICE BEFORE US: A SCENARIO OF BREAKDOWN AND PERPETUAL CRISIS



DEADLY PANDEMICS



- **COVID-19 is endemic, constantly mutating**
- Richer countries **hoard vaccines**, no plan for equitable distribution
- **Health systems** are overwhelmed
- **No preparedness** for future pandemics
- A number of countries are poorer in 2030 than before the pandemic hit

UNINHABITABLE PLANET



- Owing to unchanged emission levels from human activity, **global warming of 2°C will be exceeded** during the twenty-first century
- **Heatwaves, floods, droughts, tropical cyclones** and other extremes are unprecedented in magnitude, frequency and timing and occur in regions that have never been affected before
- The **Arctic is ice free** in the summer; most **permafrost is lost** and **extreme sea levels** occur every year
- One million species are on the **verge of extinction, with irreversible biodiversity loss**
- More than **1 billion people live with heat that is so extreme that it threatens their lives**

DESTABILIZING INEQUALITIES



- Continuous **erosion of human rights**
- **Growing poverty**, and massive loss of jobs and income
- Public goods like education and social protection systems are underfunded
- **Protests spread across borders**, often met with violent repression
- Technology fuels division
- **New types of warfare** invented faster than new ways of making peace

WARNING SIGNS



\$9.2 trillion – estimated cost to the global economy in 2021 alone if developing countries do not have equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines
Source: International Chamber of Commerce, 2021.



Increases in **concentrations of greenhouse gases since around 1750 are unequivocally caused by human activities** and have led to ~1.1°C of warming between 1850 and 1900
Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021.



36 low-income countries are in sovereign debt distress or at a high risk of falling into debt distress (February 2021)
Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020.



Up to **827,000 viruses** that could infect humans exist in mammals and birds
Source: International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021.

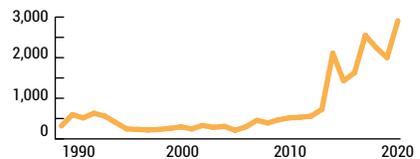


The **extinction rate** is now **10–100 times higher than at any other time in the past 10 million years**
Source: United Nations, 2019.



By **2050 there could be more plastic than fish** in the sea
Source: UNEP, 2020.

Rapid increase in non-State conflicts since 2010



Source: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2020.

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MULTILATERALISM



Social contract is eroded and geopolitical tensions rise



International institutions are trapped in a **cycle of underinvestment and underperformance**



Preference for **unilateralism over solidarity**



No consensus on facts, science or knowledge

THE CHOICE BEFORE US: A SCENARIO OF BREAKTHROUGH AND THE PROSPECT OF A GREENER, SAFER, BETTER FUTURE



SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY



- **Vaccines shared widely and equitably**
- Capacity to produce vaccines for future pandemics within 100 days and to distribute them globally within a year
- People in crisis and conflict settings have a **bridge to better lives**
- Revised international debt architecture
- Business incentives are reshaped to support global public goods
- **Progress** to address illicit financial flows, tax avoidance and climate finance
- Financial and economic systems **support more sustainable, resilient and inclusive patterns of growth**

HEALTHY PEOPLE AND PLANET



- Global temperature rise is limited to 1.5°C
- All countries and sectors **decarbonize by 2050**
- Support provided to countries heavily affected by climate emergencies
- Just transitions to a new labour ecosystem are ensured
- A functioning **ecosystem is preserved** for succeeding generations
- Communities are equipped to adapt and be resilient to climate change impacts

TRUST AND SOCIAL PROTECTION



- Strong commitment to the **universality and indivisibility of human rights**
- **Universal social protection floors, including universal health coverage**
- **Universal digital connectivity**
- **Quality education, skills enhancement** and lifelong learning
- Progress on addressing gender, racial, economic and other inequalities
- **Equal partnership between institutions and the people they serve** and among and within communities to strengthen social cohesion

SIGNS OF HOPE



146 million people lifted out of extreme poverty by 2030 through investments in governance, social protection, the green economy and digitalization (including 74 million women and girls)

Source: UNDP, 2020.



75% of methane emissions could be mitigated with existing technology today, up to 40% at no net cost

Source: UNEP, 2021.



Transitioning to **low-carbon, sustainable growth** approaches could deliver direct economic gains of \$26 trillion through to 2030 compared with business-as-usual approaches

Source: United Nations, 2021.

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MULTILATERALISM



New era for multilateralism, as countries and other actors work to solve the problems that matter most



The international system **acts fast for everyone in an emergency**



All actors accountable for keeping commitments made



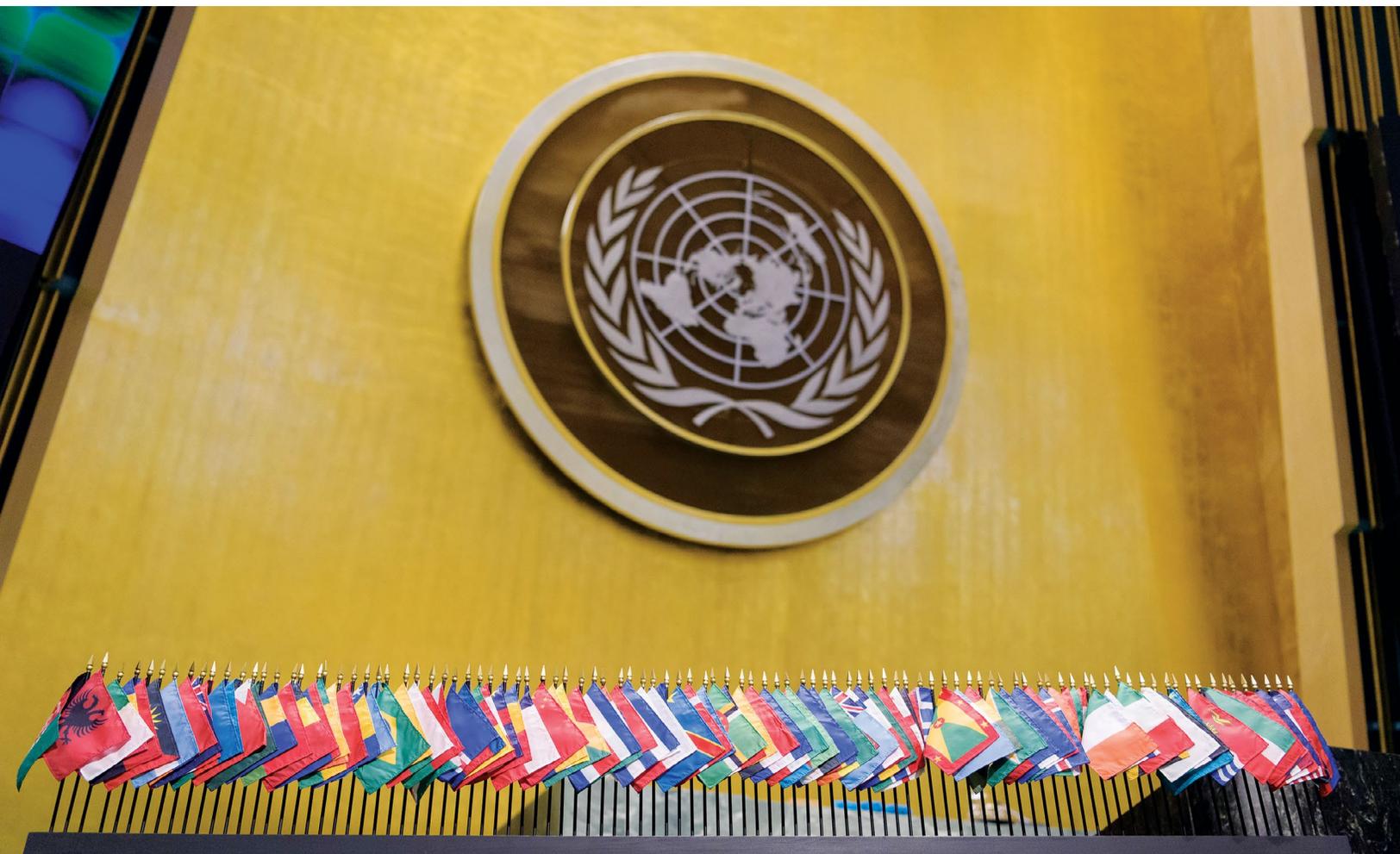
The **United Nations is a trusted platform** for collaboration between a growing number and diversity of actors

heightened by the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, suggest that the time has come to renew the social contract for a new era in which individuals, States and other actors work in partnership to build trust, increase participation and inclusion and redefine human progress.

11. The deepening of solidarity at the national level must be matched by a new commitment to **young people and future generations**, to whom the opening words of the Charter of the United Nations make a solemn promise. Strengthened solidarity is long overdue with the existing generation of young people, who feel that our political, social and economic systems ignore their present and sacrifice their future. We must take steps to deliver

better education and jobs for them and to give them a greater voice in designing their own futures. We must also find ways to systematically consider the interests of the 10.9 billion people who are expected to be born this century, predominantly in Africa and Asia: we will achieve a breakthrough only if we think and act together on their behalf for the long term.

12. To support solidarity within societies and between generations, we also need a **new deal at the global level**. The purpose of international cooperation in the twenty-first century is to achieve a set of vital common goals on which our welfare, and indeed survival, as a human race depend. Notably, we need to improve the protection of **the global commons** and the provision of a broader



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set of **global public goods**, those issues that benefit humanity as a whole and that cannot be managed by any one State or actor alone. Many of these objectives (the “what”) are set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. I believe that it is high time for Member States, together with other relevant stakeholders, to devise strategies for achieving them (the “how”), through enhanced multilateral governance of global commons and global public goods. Furthermore, we must address **major risks** more robustly, learning lessons from our response to COVID-19.

13. Finally, States have at their disposal an organization whose very purpose is to solve international problems through cooperation. The **United Nations** presence is global, its membership is universal and its activities span the breadth of human need. Its fundamental values are not the preserve of any region. Indeed, they are found in every culture and religion around the world: peace, justice, human dignity, equity, tolerance and, of course, solidarity. However, while the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations endure, the Organization must evolve in response to a changing world to become more networked, inclusive and effective.

C. Our Common Agenda

14. We already have the blueprints for a better world, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on climate change and other key instruments. These are just some of the many resolutions and international instruments that have been painstakingly developed over 75 years and that constitute a crucial heritage. We can and must build on them and redouble our efforts to implement them.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *OUR COMMON AGENDA* AND THE *SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS*



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals are at the core of Our Common Agenda. The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity and peace, that seeks to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality. The Sustainable Development Goals are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. Many of the actions proposed in this report thus seek to accelerate achievement of the Goals, not least in the light of gaps and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Actions already under way to achieve the Goals will, in turn, be key for the implementation of Our Common Agenda.

15. The world has also changed, however, creating new needs that call for new understandings and arrangements to meet them. We must combine the best of our past achievements with the most creative look to the future if we are to deepen solidarity and achieve a breakthrough for people and the planet. The actions suggested in this report are urgent and transformative and fill critical gaps. Just as the founders of the United Nations came together determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we must now come together to save succeeding generations from war, climate change, pandemics, hunger, poverty, injustice and a host of risks that we may not yet foresee entirely. This is Our Common Agenda.