



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

12 April 2019

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to invite you to an informal policy forum that I will convene, in partnership with the International Peace Institute (IPI), on the theme “*Building Trust and the Importance of Multilateralism: Making the United Nations Relevant to All*” on Tuesday 23 April 2019 in Conference Room 1 of the United Nations Headquarters, in New York, from 1:15-2:45pm.

The UN-based multilateral system is being challenged on multiple fronts: from the growing number of crises demanding urgent attention, to shifting global power dynamics and a public that is increasingly skeptical of the system’s ability to deliver for them. In light of these challenges, I have decided to make strengthening multilateralism one of my priorities for the seventy-third session of the UN General Assembly, in particular the need to make the UN “relevant to all people”. This aspiration is central to building trust in multilateralism, and will be the focus of the policy forum on 23 April.

I would welcome your presence at this event, which will take stock of the factors that have contributed to a deficit of trust, and explore ideas and innovative practices to enhance the credibility, relevance and effectiveness of collective action.

I am delighted that the **Honourable Kevin Rudd, former Prime Minister of Australia** and Chair of the International Peace Institute, will moderate this forum and lead a conversation between leading thinkers, experienced practitioners and fresh voices. The audience will bring together permanent representatives, senior UN officials and representatives from academia, the private sector and civil society, including youth.

Kindly find attached herewith a concept note for the event. My Advisor, Khalilah Hackman, may be contacted for further information regarding this forum. Ms. Hackman may be reached at (Khalilah.hackman@un.org) or 917-367-8229.

Please accept Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

MUSAÍNOA
María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



Theme: “Building Trust and the Importance of Multilateralism: Making the UN Relevant to All People”

**Tuesday, April 23, 2019
1:15pm–2:45pm**

A partnership on multilateralism between the Office of the President of the of the Seventy-Third Session of the United Nations General Assembly and the International Peace Institute.

Background

For over seven decades, the rules-based international system, with the United Nations at its heart, has played a key role in fostering peace and prosperity in many parts of the world. But now, when it is needed more than ever, this system is facing multiple challenges.

A growing number of crises – political, economic, social and environmental – are demanding urgent action. Shifting global power dynamics are driving tensions between states, and rekindling demands for international institutions to reflect current realities. Rising nationalist sentiment is putting pressure on multilateral processes – and weakening commitments to international institutions and agreements. And across the world, people are increasingly skeptical of the system’s ability to deliver for them. Too many have been left behind.

Between 2014 and 2016, the Independent Commission on Multilateralism (ICM) – chaired by the Hon. Kevin Rudd, former Prime Minister of Australia and supported by the International Peace Institute – conducted a comprehensive review of the multilateral system, including through consultations in all regions. It concluded: “There is a lack of trust both among states and between states and the UN Secretariat. There is a lack of trust between governments and their citizens. There is a feeling that leaders and institutions are unable to cope with the challenges of change.”

Since then, Member States have adopted ambitious agreements – notably the 2030 Agenda and Paris climate agreement – which, if implemented, will go some way to restore trust in the international system. They have also taken a number of measures to increase the UN’s effectiveness – most recently, through the reform agenda put forward by the Secretary-General.

But the question of rebuilding trust remains pertinent. Mistrust erodes the legitimacy of the multilateral system. It leads to gridlock when stakeholders cannot agree on the appropriate path for collective action. It strengthens the hand of nationalist populists and extremists.

How can we work together to build trust? What steps can be taken by member states, international organizations, and civil society to build confidence in the system?

Rebuilding trust: a priority for the President of the General Assembly

In this globalized world, virtually all problems faced by governments require collective action. Crises cross borders. Civil wars become regional wars. Populations are on the move. And climate change is a global phenomenon. Even traditionally domestic areas, such as job creation, require international cooperation, as industry, labour and capital become ever more mobile.

But while the need for multilateral action grows, many leaders are turning inwards. While the everyday impact of multilateral decisions grows stronger, people feel more disconnected from them – and powerless to influence them.

So how can we make the multilateral system and the UN “relevant to all people?” This has been the overarching theme of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly.

Policy forum on 23 April: shared objectives, fresh thinking

On 23 April, the Hon. Kevin Rudd will chair an informal discussion featuring leading thinkers, experienced practitioners and new perspectives on this subject.

The conversation will seek to:

- Enhance understanding of the factors that have contributed to waning trust in the multilateral system, and gather views of future trends and factors;
- Share innovative practices that have served to build trust between constituencies at various levels;
- Assess the potential for further action to make the UN more transparent and accountable, and provide ideas on the most transformative steps that could be taken;
- Explore ways to lay the foundations for a more people-centered multilateralism;
- Exchange ideas on how to foster more meaningful involvement in multilateral processes by stakeholders, including youth

This forum will precede by one day the UN General Assembly’s High-Level Event to commemorate the first observance of the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, which will take place on 24 April 2019. The event is intended for Member States to discuss challenges to the multilateralism system and renew their commitment to the rules-based international order.

It is hoped that Member States will attend the policy forum on 23 April, at which they will hear perspectives on multilateralism from a broad range of stakeholders.

The views expressed at both events could provide useful insights for the international community as it prepares to mark the 75th anniversary of the UN in 2020.

Programme and format

Moderator: Honorable Kevin Rudd, 26th Prime Minister of Australia, Chair of the International Peace Institute and President of the Asia Society Policy Institute,

Opening remarks

- **H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés**, President of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly

Panellists

- **Dr. Cecelia Nahon**, Executive Director of the Model G20 Initiative, American University and former Ambassador of Argentina to the US
- **Ambassador Donald Steinberg**, CEO of World Learning and former deputy administrator at USAID
- **Prof. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr**, Professor of International Affairs and Program Director, The New School
- **Mr. Richard Gowan**, UN Director, International Crisis Group
- **Ms. Giovanna Kuele**, Representative of Together First and Researcher at the Igarapé Institute

Target Audience

Participants at the event will include Permanent Representatives to the UN, government officials, media representatives, and heads of civil society organizations, as well as academics and individuals from the field of international relations and the UN family.

Venue

Conference Room 1, United Nations Headquarters.

Reception

A light lunch will be served from 1:00pm