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GLOBAL POLICY ANALYSIS

NIZAMI GANJAVI INTERNATIONAL CENTER

Multilateralism in a Turbulent
& Changing World

Eighth edition

GLOBAL POLICY ANALYSIS

MULTILATERALISM

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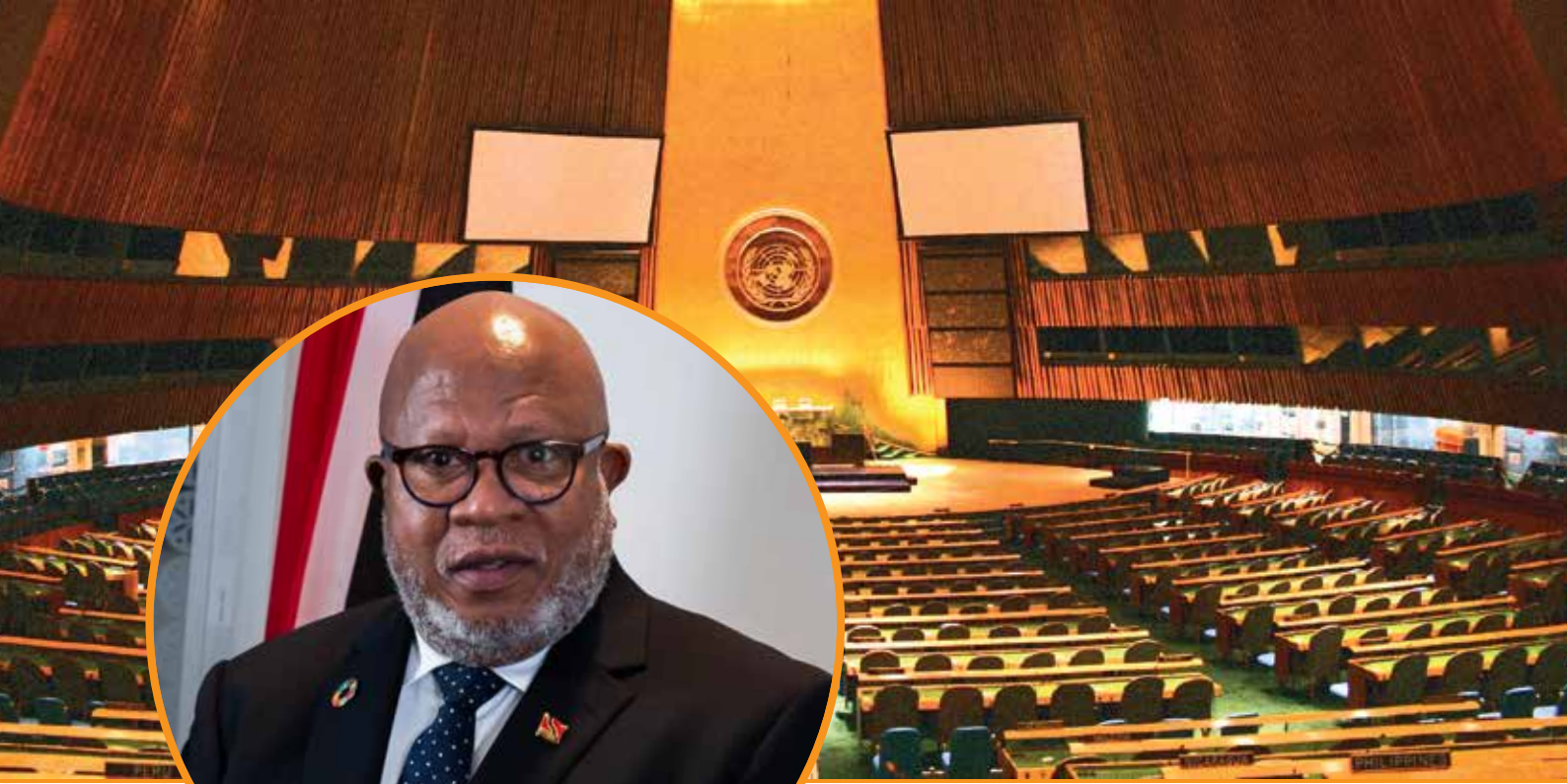
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NGIC MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS



Dennis Francis

President of the 78th session of the
United Nations General Assembly

SPECIAL REMARK AT THE XXVI HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE NGIC

Your Excellencies, members of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center,
 Your Excellencies, former Presidents of the UN General Assembly,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,

You honor me today by inviting my participation in this esteemed conference and so I am humbled and at the same time lifted to have the opportunity to engage this forum on issues that in significant measure will shape our world in the future.

The Nizami Ganjavi International Center is broadly regarded as a convenor of some of the most influential persons in international affairs. Allow me, therefore, to take pause to acknowledge and indeed pay homage to my senior Colleagues from the alumni of the Presidency of the General Assembly – who will take part in the next panel discussion.

I have full confidence that my predecessors will enrich the discussions at this conference as they are among a select few who have a better, more insightful grasp of what we truly need to do to reestablish a UN-led multilateral system that is fit for purpose, to address the common challenges that currently confront us, and indeed those ahead.

While I am here to speak to you about the 78th session – and the meaningful reforms that are very much needed within the United Nations and across the multilateral world – I hope too to benefit from the collective wisdom of those of you here today.

Colleagues,

I will begin by noting the watchwords that underpin the theme I have identified for the 78th session of the General Assembly: peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability.

I carefully chose these words specifically in the context of the immense challenges we face – and because they are at once the goals and ideals that we must all work towards as they are in jeopardy.

While the world yearns for peace and sustainable progress, we are regrettably being dragged back and restricted by geopolitical and environmental crises that are undermining decades of hard-won development progress and the general mood of confidence that accompanied it.

COVID-19. Climate change. War. Inequality. Poverty. Famine.

These cascading crises are pushing people into cynicism and despair; they are eroding the progress made across each and every one of the Sustainable Development Goals.

And they undermine faith in the integrity and credibility of multilateralism and of the United Nations.



Colleagues,

While UN reform has been a hot topic for a long time, it is reaching a crescendo whereby everyone – in every sector, across every country – is now demanding and recognizing the value of change.

As also evidenced by some of the responses received from our global citizens during a survey conducted by the Secretary-General in the lead up to the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the UN, they would like to see more coming from the organization.

They are tired of outdated structures with uneven power balances; of political grandstanding and megaphone diplomacy over genuine results-oriented dialogue.

These concerns have become all the more pronounced in the context of the war against Ukraine – with one prominent member – in this case the initiator of the war – vetoing any effort of the Security Council to perform its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

Colleagues,

We do not dismiss the crisis of credibility, and we can only address it with meaningful reforms.

And this is not without precedent. Indeed, the UN and its constituent principal organs and subsidiary bodies are consistently evolving.

For instance, 22 years ago, this very city of New York and the whole world were rocked by the 9/11 attacks. Since then, we have created a global counter-terrorism strategy.

The effects of climate change are ravaging vulnerable nations and communities around the world. We created the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We recognised that sustaining peace is not an event, but a broad continuum requiring sustained buy-in and commitment from a range of actors. We responded by creating the Peacebuilding Commission.



So the fear of constant change and adaptation of UN institutions – for whatever reason – cannot be the reason for some to obstruct reforms.

While these evolutions are welcome, we all know that the Security Council is the ‘elephant in the room’.

The reality is that each time a veto is cast and action is not taken to save lives, the credibility of that body – and of the entire Organization – suffers. More importantly, the vulnerable people who rely on us for help and relief, suffer.

Reform of the Security Council has therefore become emblematic of reform of the entirety of the UN.

Member States understand this – and continue to voice their concerns throughout the General Debate including during the ongoing High-Level Week.

Their concerns are not borne of jealousy or greed, but are in fact a call for equity, and fair and just international systems; for recognition that the world has evolved and the Security Council must evolve alongside it.

Of course, that is easier said than done, and without amendments to the UN Charter and ratification, comprehensive reform will prove challenging.

Challenging, but not impossible. Indeed, innovations are possible – and there is always a one per cent possibility.

The Veto Initiative is a strong case in point. This initiative has opened the door for increased transparency and accountability of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

It was a truly groundbreaking initiative that has been activated five times now in just 18 months. This speaks to how important this precedent is in the long term.

As President, I am committed to supporting any and all initiatives from Member States to advance the discussions for further innovation at the General Assembly and the UN.

I therefore challenge you to generate any ideas at this conference which can take the Veto Initiative a further step forward.

Excellencies, and Dear Colleagues,

Beyond the Security Council, few areas are as fundamental to the credibility of the UN and our multilateral system as that of reforming the international financial architecture.

The system put in place decades ago has also not evolved to address the challenges of today – particularly the deprivation of an equal voice from the Global South and the impediments holding back development gains.

We see this in the inability of countries in special situations to access the very funding needed to deliver quality education, or healthcare, or clean energy, or any one of the 17 SDGs.

We see this in the entrenched reluctance to redistribute the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to benefit the countries that need urgent support to cope with the growing pressure on their economies.

Indeed, for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, the very resources that they need to deliver progress – especially on the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs – are being held up in red tape or are simply too expensive to access.

This has a domino effect, chilling investment opportunities and leaving the Global South persistently locked out of private financing.

This is exacerbating the divide between developed and developing nations, with the international financial architecture being one of systemic and structural inequity.

This opens the door to instability and a myriad of other crises, and diminishes the solidarity and unity we so desperately need to address our collective crises.

Colleagues,

If our collective ambition is to truly leave no one behind, then we need the financial backing to achieve that. Put simply, the international financial institutions must be restructured to prevent further deterioration and destabilization of

economies, and to build a more transparent and equitable global economic governance system.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Each one of us in this room understands that the challenges we face are global in nature, necessitating a global response through a robust UN-led multilateral system.

History has taught us that we do not do so well when guided by isolationist, nationalistic, or go-it-alone approaches. Here I want to refer once again to the African proverb that says: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

But for multilateralism to work in the twenty-first Century, it cannot be the multilateralism of 1945; institutions need to adapt to the world they are supposed to serve. Neither can it be a multilateralism designed for others and against others.

As I have said many times: when the UN was formed, my country, along with many of my peers, did not exist as an independent and sovereign state.

The number of UN Member States has swollen in the last seven decades – and the challenges we face have equally evolved time and again; each time becoming more interconnected, more tightly woven across borders and sectors; and importantly, very complex.

It is imperative that we find a way to speed up reform that is, to date, frustratingly slow.

I encourage each one of you to advocate for this, and to put forward ideas during your conference that can help to move us in the right direction.

And most of all, we need to remain hopeful. There are enough cynics, spoilers, and skeptics in the world, impugning progress.

We cannot allow them to stall progress. We must push forward. In the words of Nizami Ganjavi, "In the hour of adversity be not without hope, for crystal rain falls from black clouds".

I pledge to support all efforts in this regard, and I am committed to an open-door policy for anyone who would offer constructive solutions to the challenges we face.





ISMAIL SERAGELDIN

Co-Chair, NGIC;
Vice President of the World Bank 1992-2000

Multilateralism in a Turbulent and Changing World

Background

Multilateralism refers to a diplomatic approach that involves the participation and cooperation of multiple countries or international organizations to address global issues, advance common interests, and promote collective decision-making. It is based on the principles of inclusiveness, dialogue, and consensus-building, with the aim of finding mutually acceptable solutions that benefit all parties involved. In multilateralism, nations come together to negotiate and create frameworks, agreements, and institutions that foster collaboration and coordination on a wide range of issues, such as peace and security, trade, human rights, environmental protection, and development.

At its core, multilateralism recognizes the interconnectedness of the world and the need for joint efforts to tackle complex challenges that transcend national borders. It promotes a rules-based international order where states interact through established norms and institutions, rather than pursuing unilateral actions. By pooling resources, expertise, and perspectives, multilateralism seeks to amplify the collective influence of nations, encouraging dialogue, compromise, and the pursuit of shared goals. Through multilateral cooperation, countries can better address global problems that no single nation can effectively resolve on its own, and strive towards a more stable, equitable, and prosperous world for all.

History

Since the end of World War II, multilateralism has played a crucial role in shaping the international order and promoting global cooperation. The United Nations (UN) emerged as a central institution, established in 1945, to provide a platform for multilateral dialogue and collective decision-making among nations. The UN's founding charter emphasized the principles of peace, security, human rights, and economic development, serving as a key framework for multilateral engagement. Through its specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN has addressed various global challenges and fostered collaboration among member states.

One significant development in the history of multilateralism was the establishment of regional organizations. The formation of the European Union (EU) in the 1950s aimed to promote economic integration, political stability, and collective decision-making among European nations. Other organizations from the African Union to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have

sought to emulate the success of the EU. These regional organizations demonstrated the value of multilateral approaches in enhancing security, stability, and economic prosperity within specific geographic regions.

The late 20th century witnessed a growing recognition of the need for multilateral efforts to address global issues. The Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union highlighted the importance of diplomatic negotiations and arms control agreements. The signing of landmark treaties, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), exemplified multilateral efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote disarmament. Additionally, global challenges like environmental degradation, climate change, and poverty prompted the convening of multilateral conferences, including the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 and the Millennium Summit in 2000, which led to the adoption of important agreements and frameworks.

Indeed, the new century saw a remarkable achievement: all the nations of the world agreed on a set of eight goals that should govern global development efforts, these were the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to guide global efforts from 2000-2015, and again they agreed on the global development Goals (SDGs) covering 2015-2030. Again, in 2015 almost all nations signed on to the Paris Accord to curb Green House Gases (GHGs) in a bid to fight the global threats of Climate Change. But the 2020-2022 Covid-19 pandemic exposed deep problems with global solidarity and global cooperation, and set back the implementation of the SDGs in many countries.

Current Challenges

In today's world, multilateralism faces a range of challenges that affect its effectiveness and relevance. One key challenge is the rise of geopolitical tensions and power rivalries among major global players. The shifting dynamics of international relations, characterized by assertive nationalism and unilateralism, can undermine the spirit of cooperation and compromise that is essential for multilateralism to thrive. Disputes over trade, territorial claims, and strategic influence can hinder collective decision-making and lead to a breakdown of trust among nations, making it difficult to reach consensus on pressing global issues. Furthermore, in the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the very fundamentals of the UN charter (no acquisition of territory by force, no annexation of one member state by another member state) were being challenged by one of the permanent members of the UNSC. While other countries have invaded other member states (e.g. the US invasion of Iraq in 2003), they did not formally declare annexation of its territory. And in this domain, as in many others, two wrongs do not make a right. Additionally, the spread of nuclear weapons accompanying the slow demise of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the various arms limitation agreements add to the skepticism with which many nations view the multilateral approach to solving their problems.

Another challenge is the erosion of trust in international institutions and the questioning of their legitimacy. Some countries express skepticism towards multilateral organizations, perceiving them as inefficient, bureaucratic, or biased.

Additionally, the lack of representation and inclusivity within some existing multilateral institutions can undermine their credibility and hinder their ability to address the diverse needs and perspectives of all nations. This is particularly true of a clear and increasing global divide, between the rich and the poor, between the global North and the global South.

Moreover, the increasing complexity and urgency of global challenges pose significant obstacles to multilateralism. In the past international treaties took a very long time to negotiate. Treaty agreed, after some 20 years of discussion. Today, issues like climate change, pandemics, cybersecurity, guidelines for A.I. or thegovernance of risky Gain of Function virus Reseach, require swift and coordinated action, yet finding consensus and implementing effective solutions can be time-consuming and cumbersome within multilateral frameworks. Additionally, the sheer number of actors involved, with varying interests and priorities, can make it difficult to align and mobilize collective action. The need to balance the interests of developed and developing nations, as well as addressing historical inequalities, further complicates the multilateral decision-making process.

Future Prospects

The future prospects of multilateralism in the face of geopolitical tensions and polarizations are complex and uncertain. On one hand, these challenges can strain the multilateral system and impede collective decision-making. The rise of nationalism and the pursuit of unilateral interests may lead some countries to prioritize bilateral or regional approaches over multilateral cooperation. Geopolitical rivalries and power struggles can make it difficult to find common ground and reach consensus on global issues. The major powers seem to be drifting towards a multipolar version of the "Spheres of Influence" paradigm, if not a new "Cold War" between superpowers.

However, despite these challenges, there are reasons for cautious optimism regarding the future of multilateralism. First, the rise of overarching global issues, and the interconnected nature of today's world and the interdependencies among nations make it increasingly evident that addressing global challenges requires collaborative and collective action. Issues such as climate change, cybersecurity, and pandemics transcend national borders and cannot be effectively tackled in isolation. This recognition may incentivize nations to find ways to overcome divisions and work together through multilateral platforms.

Second, multilateralism provides a forum for smaller and less powerful nations to have a voice and influence global affairs.

It offers an opportunity to level the playing field and promote a more inclusive and equitable international order. By engaging in multilateral negotiations, countries can pool their resources and perspectives to address power imbalances and ensure that the interests and concerns of all nations, regardless of size or influence, are taken into account.

Third, increasing awareness of shared challenges and the demand for global solutions from civil society, businesses and non-governmental organizations can exert pressure on governments to engage in multilateral efforts. Public opinion and grassroots movements play a vital role in advocating for multilateral approaches and holding governments accountable for their actions or inactions. The mobilization of these actors can create momentum for multilateral cooperation and counterbalance divisive tendencies.

Ultimately, the future of multilateralism will depend on the willingness of nations to find common ground, build trust, and prioritize collective interests over narrow self-interests. Strengthening and reforming multilateral institutions to enhance transparency, inclusivity, and effectiveness will be crucial.

Additionally, fostering dialogue and diplomatic engagement to mitigate geopolitical tensions and polarization will be essential for creating an environment conducive to multilateral cooperation.

While challenges persist, the potential benefits of multilateralism in addressing global issues and promoting a more stable and prosperous world make it a valuable framework that nations should strive to uphold and strengthen in the face of geopolitical tensions and polarizations.

But the geopolitical tensions and polarizations are also strengthening the drive towards regional alliances, either military (such as NATO) or socio-economic (such as ASEAN). These address different challenges, and have different contributions to make. But we must also recognize that – by their very formation – they create different sets of problems for both member states and non-member states.

Rising Importance of Global Issues

The rising importance of global issues such as climate change, the water crisis, and the problems affecting our oceans underscores the critical need for multilateralism. These challenges transcend national boundaries and require collective action on a global scale. Multilateralism provides a platform for nations to come together, pool resources, and collaborate in developing comprehensive strategies and solutions.

Climate change, for instance, is a pressing global issue that requires concerted efforts from all nations. The interconnectedness of the Earth's climate system means that actions taken by one country can have far-reaching impacts on others. Multilateral frameworks like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement have facilitated dialogue and negotiation among nations, leading to commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the changing climate. Through multilateral cooperation, countries can share scientific knowledge, technological advancements, and best practices, and coordinate efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change and transition to a sustainable future.

The water crisis is another challenge that necessitates multilateral engagement. Fresh water on which our life depends, is a scarce resource (only some 2.5% of total water on the planet). 2/3 of that is locked in the ice caps, and of the rest frequently comes in unusable forms (floods after droughts). Of the water that humans use, and there we confront water scarcity, pollution, and inadequate access to clean water affect numerous regions across the globe. We need to recognize the International Hydrological Cycle as an International Public Good that needs protection, and new economic valuations and incentives are needed.

Prospects for Multilateralism

Addressing these issues requires collaboration in managing water resources, sharing expertise in water management and conservation, and promoting equitable access to water and sanitation. Multilateral organizations such as the initiatives of the United Nations provide platforms for dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and the development of effective water governance frameworks.

Similarly, the problems facing our oceans, including marine pollution, overfishing, and habitat destruction, require multilateral efforts. The health and sustainability of our oceans are vital for numerous aspects of human life, from food security to climate regulation. Through multilateral mechanisms such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and initiatives like the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, countries can collaborate on marine conservation, sustainable fishing practices, and the protection of marine biodiversity.

In summary, the rising importance of global issues such as climate change, the water crisis, and the problems affecting our oceans demand multilateralism. These challenges are too complex and interconnected to be tackled by individual nations alone. By working together through multilateral platforms, countries can leverage their collective expertise, resources, and influence to address these issues comprehensively and foster a more sustainable and resilient future for all. The SDGs and Agenda 2030 epitomize this approach.

The prospect of multilateralism evolving into a series of regional organizations and an overall global framework, with countries willing to give up some sovereignty for the larger collective construct, is both realistic and promising. The evolution of regional organizations like the European Union (EU) demonstrates that countries can voluntarily pool their sovereignty to address shared challenges and pursue common objectives. The EU, through its supranational institutions and decision-making processes, has established mechanisms for collective decision-making, harmonizing policies, and sharing resources.

The success of regional organizations can serve as a model for broader global multilateral frameworks. As countries increasingly recognize the interdependencies and interconnected nature of global challenges, there is a growing understanding that individual nations alone cannot adequately address complex issues such as climate change, pandemics, or global economic stability. By embracing multilateralism and forming global frameworks, countries can leverage their collective power, resources, and expertise to tackle these challenges more effectively.

However, the prospects for establishing an overarching global multilateral framework should be approached with some caution. The diversity of interests, priorities, and political systems among nations presents challenges to reaching a consensus on global governance structures. Additionally, concerns about the loss of national sovereignty and decision-making authority can be barriers to deeper multilateral integration.

Nonetheless, the need for multilateralism to address pressing global issues provides impetus for countries to find common ground and strike a balance between sovereignty and collective action. The gradual development of sector-specific multilateral frameworks, such as those addressing trade, climate change, or global health, can pave the way for a broader global framework while accommodating the specific needs and interests of participating nations.

To enhance the prospects of a global multilateral framework, it is essential to foster trust, promote transparency, and ensure inclusivity in decision-making processes. Engaging all nations, including both powerful and less powerful states, in meaningful dialogue and collaborative decision-making can help build consensus and ensure that the framework represents the interests of a wide range of stakeholders.

In conclusion, while challenges exist, the evolution of multilateralism into regional organizations and an overall global framework is realistic and holds significant prospects. By recognizing the benefits of collective action, countries can contribute to the development of effective multilateral frameworks that address global challenges while respecting national sovereignty and promoting the common interests of humanity as a whole.

What kind of regional organizations?

The EU is quite exceptional. Few organizations have so far-reaching a set of policies and programs, that stopped just short of moving to a common constitution and ultimately into a United States of Europe. Other regional organizations have more limited purposes and approaches to achieve these purposes. Let's mention two: NATO and ASEAN.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) are regional organizations that serve different purposes and operate in distinct geopolitical contexts. Comparing their advantages and disadvantages helps round up the discussion of regional organizations.

First, NATO: NATO is a military mutual defense alliance that is intended to deter potential aggression against its members and thereby advance peace and security in the region of its members and their neighbors. That structure has both advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of NATO:

- Security and collective defense: NATO's primary advantage lies in its robust collective defense mechanism, based on known and established military capabilities, and a clear commitment to mutual defense. This provides deterrence against potential threats.
- Established military capabilities: The organization leverages the combined military power of its member states, enhancing their ability to respond to security challenges effectively for smaller member states.
- Institutional framework: NATO possesses a well-established institutional structure that facilitates coordination, information sharing, and joint military planning. It enables member states to align their defense policies, conduct joint exercises, and engage in dialogue and decision-making.



Disadvantages of NATO:

- May hinder cooperation with non-member neighbors. A military alliance naturally encourages an “US vs Them” framework of thinking about members and non-members.
- Overreliance on major powers: NATO's structure and decision-making dynamics can lead to an overreliance on the United States, the organization's most influential member. This dependence can create imbalances in burden-sharing and decision-making authority among member states.
- Geographical limitations: NATO's focus is primarily on the North Atlantic region, limiting its direct influence and operations beyond that area. This geographical constraint poses challenges when addressing global security issues in other regions.
- Divergent interests among member states: NATO consists of diverse member states with different strategic priorities and threat perceptions. Aligning these interests and maintaining unity can be challenging, particularly in relation to issues such as burden-sharing and military interventions.

Second, ASEAN:

But let's consider an economic associative structure such as ASEAN. Surprisingly it is also effective in promoting regional stability and peace among its member states. It has its advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of ASEAN:

- **Regional stability and conflict resolution:** ASEAN has played a crucial role in promoting peace, stability, and conflict resolution in Southeast Asia. Its emphasis on non-interference and consensus-based decision-making has helped prevent major conflicts among member states.
- **Economic integration and cooperation:** ASEAN has fostered economic integration through initiatives such as the ASEAN Economic Community, promoting trade, investment, and regional economic cooperation. It has facilitated the growth of a dynamic and interconnected regional economy.
- **Dialogue platform and regional centrality:** ASEAN provides a forum for dialogue and cooperation among member states and engages external partners through mechanisms like the ASEAN Regional Forum. It allows smaller states to have a voice and helps maintain the region's centrality in diplomatic affairs.

Disadvantages of ASEAN:

- **Limited institutional powers:** ASEAN's institutional framework lacks strong enforcement mechanisms and binding decision-making authority, making it challenging to address contentious issues effectively. The organization heavily relies on consensus-based decision-making, which can hinder timely and decisive action.
- **Diverse interests and differing priorities:** ASEAN comprises member states with diverse political systems, economic development levels, and strategic priorities. Reaching consensus and maintaining unity can be challenging when dealing with contentious issues, such as territorial disputes or human rights concerns.
- **Varied levels of commitment:** ASEAN member states exhibit varying levels of commitment to regional integration and adherence to shared principles. This can lead to implementation gaps and uneven progress in areas like human rights, democratic governance, and economic integration.

In summary, while the two regional organizations have radically different goals and objectives, and very different policies and programs they pursue to achieve these goals and objectives, they highlight the importance to design different organizations and varying tools for different purposes. NATO's advantages lie in its security cooperation and military capabilities, ASEAN's strengths lie in regional stability, economic integration, and dialogue. However, both organizations face challenges related to divergent interests among member states and the need to balance regional dynamics.



Variable geometry

The European approach of variable geometry, which allows for different levels of integration and cooperation among countries within a regional framework, could potentially work in other regions on a global scale. Variable geometry recognizes that not all countries have the same capacities, interests, or willingness to integrate fully, and allows for flexible arrangements based on shared objectives and common interests.

Applying this concept globally would involve recognizing and accommodating the diversity of nations and their varying levels of commitment to multilateralism, on varying sets of issues. It would mean creating frameworks where countries could participate based on their capabilities, preferences, and alignment with specific issue areas. It would enable collective action to be initiated without waiting for the last concerned party to agree to join. This approach acknowledges that not all countries may be ready or willing to fully engage in every aspect of global governance, but they can still contribute to specific multilateral initiatives based on their priorities and capacities.

Implementing a global variable geometry approach would require establishing mechanisms for coordination, information sharing, and decision-making among participating countries. It would necessitate flexibility in the design and functioning of multilateral frameworks to adapt to the specific needs and circumstances of different regions or issue areas.

The challenge lies in finding a balance between inclusivity and coherence, ensuring that the global multilateral system remains effective and representative while accommodating the diverse interests and capabilities of participating countries.

However, it's important to note that the global scale is inherently more complex than a regional framework like the EU, and certainly more complex than a single purpose regional framework such as for defense (e.g. NATO) or for an economic dimension like a single



market between two or more countries. The global context involves a larger number of diverse nations with different political systems, historical contexts, and levels of development. Achieving consensus and coherence on a global scale can be more challenging due to the sheer magnitude of stakeholders and diverging interests.

Nonetheless, a global variable geometry approach could provide a pragmatic way forward, recognizing the realities of the international system while allowing for collective action on pressing global issues. It would enable countries to engage and contribute based on their specific capacities and interests, fostering a more inclusive and flexible multilateral system that remains responsive to the evolving needs of the global community.

Envoi

In summary, since the end of World War II, the history of multilateralism has seen the rise of international organizations like the United Nations, the formation of regional alliances, and concerted efforts to address global challenges through multilateral diplomacy and cooperation. Despite the complexities and occasional setbacks, multilateralism remains a vital approach for nations to come together, find common ground, and collectively tackle shared problems in pursuit of a more peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world.

Multilateralism in today's world faces challenges stemming from geopolitical tensions, skepticism towards international institutions, and the complexity of global issues. Overcoming these challenges requires a renewed commitment to dialogue, cooperation, and strengthening the inclusivity and transparency of multilateral institutions. Building trust among nations, particularly through fostering effective communication and dialogue that addresses the concerns of all stakeholders, are essential for multilateralism to effectively address the pressing global challenges of the 21st century.



PETAR STOYANOV

President of Bulgaria 1997-2002;
BoT Member of NGIC

ARE WE WITNESSING THE END OF MULTILATERALISM?

The big question today, almost a year and a half after the start of the war in Ukraine is: Are we witnessing the end of the world order established after the Second World War and the end of multilateralism? I don't think so. Even after the start of the Ukrainian war in February last year, we witnessed events that could be defined as triumph of multilateralism, such as the COP27 climate conference in Sharm El-Sheikh and the G20 summit in Bali - both of them took place in November last year.

Obviously, the conclusion about the end of multilateralism is too hasty. Actually, this is not the first time such statements are being made and they have always been disproved.

After the founding of the United Nations - a historic achievement which laid the foundations of the new world order and rule of international law after the Second World War, we witnessed some very critical moments, as the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

In spite of that, in the late 1960s, the archenemies United States and the Soviet Union came together and created the draft of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and although the ideological war continued until the end of the Cold War, the Treaty allowed international law and order to prevail - this could be seen as a big success for multilateralism.

I am tempted to note here how relevant this document sounds today, more than 60 years later, in the backdrop of the events in Ukraine. We have to underline that in those days many of today's problems and challenges that we call "global" either did not exist or were not in the

focus of public attention. Moreover: immediately after the devastating Second World War, which claimed millions of lives and caused enormous destruction, humanity was still not ready to discuss issues such as climate change, green economy, carbon emissions, the threat of pandemics (such as AIDS and Covid, which appeared later).

Today, however, the situation is completely different. Humanity is far ahead in its understanding of global threats and how to overcome them.

Conclusion: The ideological enemies of yesterday today have the duty to resolve together the common problems that affect the entire world. And one of the worst consequences of the war in Ukraine could be deterring the tackling of those problems. We shouldn't allow this to happen! Because a lot has been achieved so far.

At the 2021 Glasgow climate summit world leaders continued what was started six years ago, at the Paris meeting of 2015.

In September 2021, during the UN General Assembly, the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, announced that China aimed to go carbon neutral by 2060.

It was very positive news when the country responsible for over 25% of world emissions made an unconditional commitment to do so.

And China's example was not isolated. The UK was the first major economy in the world to change its legislation in June 2019 towards achieving net zero commitment. The European Union made the next step in March 2020. Japan and South Korea followed and now more than 100 countries have net zero targets for mid-century. According to the UN assessment, they represent more than 65% of global emissions and more than 70% of the world economy.

After Joe Biden was elected President of the US, the biggest economy in the world has now re-joined the carbon cutting strategy.

During this period the United Nations initiated a number of programmes and campaigns related to economic, social and environmental issues. Collectively, these initiatives were called the "Post-2015 Development Agenda" and culminated in the formulation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and we all know them well.

Why should we remember those events which happened over the last decade? Because the conclusion is obvious: these years were very productive for international cooperation and multilateralism, so we must not lose momentum despite the war in Ukraine and the negative tendencies arising from it.



Miguel Angel Moratinos

High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

**A WORLD WITH A SHORTAGE OF DIALOGUE
AND WITH A SURPLUS OF MONOLOGUE**

Listen to each other and learn from each other, are key elements in any constructive dialogue.

Dialogue builds understanding, trust and respect.

Sadly today, there is a shortage of dialogue and a surplus of monologue.

It is a paradox to mention monologue when less than a mile from here, world leaders are delivering public statements and behind closed doors.

But are they listening to each other with open hearts and minds? I think not.

Geopolitical divisions are growing wider. Old conflicts are re-escalating and new conflicts are erupting everywhere.

Deep-rooted inequalities are fraying our societies.

Gender equality is in reverse mode and human rights is suffering a set-back in many parts of the world.

Toxic hate, xenophobia and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief including antisemitism, Islamophobia and Christophobia are mainstreamed and spreading at a pace never seen before enabled by the fast-growing new technologies.

Neo-Nazi and white supremacist movements are gaining both strength and traction.

They have become the fastest growing security threat in many countries.

In short, the global landscape as we see it today reminds us of difficult times that prevailed during the Cold war era, if not worse.

But back then, it was a bipolar world seen through the narrow lens of 2 super powers.

But now we are transitioning into a multipolar world. Multipolarity is not necessarily a blue print for the balance of power or a guarantee for peace.

A Multipolar world can be a complex and dynamic international system with multiple centers of power, complex alliances and shifting alliances which can lead to both opportunities and challenges.

Multipolarity requires strong global governance and effective networked multilateral institutions.

Equally we need to restore universal humanistic values that are embedded in the UN Charter.

His Holiness Pope Francis spoke about the "globalisation of indifference" in his apostolic exhortation titled "Evangelii Gaudium" or (The Joy of Gospel). He called instead for the globalization of solidarity and compassion.

We need a new narrative to address the current global context. One that is people-centered focusing on the vulnerable.

We need to rebuild trust and restore solidarity.

We need to invest in social cohesion through inclusion and protection of human rights and human dignity.

We need to enhance global citizenship education.

After this high-level week is over, we reflect and ask ourselves whether world leaders can muster political will and walk the talk.

I started my remarks by invoking the value of listening to and learning from the wisdom of others.

20th of September marks the death of Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary General of the United Nations. Sixty-three years after his death, Dag Hammarskjöld's wisdom still inspires all of us within the UN and beyond. He was a compassionate human being before being a skilled diplomat and a brave leader.

I wish to conclude by quoting Dag Hammarskjöld: "The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned."



Maria Fernanda Espinosa

73rd President of the UN General Assembly;
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador;
BoT Member of NGIC

Our Common Agenda: Rebooting Multilateralism

Notwithstanding its flaws, the United Nations is still the only genuinely representative multilateral organization.

The United Nations is an organisation that is irreplaceable. It brings the 193 countries together to discuss issues of global concern and if we did not have the United Nations, we would need to create one. It is the platform, space and place where the countries come together to agree on the fundamental issues, such as, Sustainable Development Goals that were adopted in 2015, which is the roadmap for the future of development of all nations.

Another good example of countries coming together is the Paris agreement on Climate Change, which is again has become the point of reference and in the blueprint for climate action. For example, the treaty of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. It requires cooperation, good faith in trust, and multilateral solutions. So, it is critical to have an organisation such as the UN of course, it is not perfect. It was created almost 80 years ago and it really requires a profound retooling and rejuvenation.

Why do we need to reboot and reform the UN? It's because we are facing a profound change in the global landscape. The world has undergone significant changes since the establishment of the UN in 1945 and other time we did not have climate change, cyber security challenges, the cross-national organised crime, terrorism.

In all of these require new approaches, and the UN reform if taken seriously can help enhance its capacity to respond to these evolving challenges in a more effective and efficient manner. The next reason is a representation and legitimacy deficit of the UN because the bodies that exist

nowadays and, in the way, negotiations are undertaken do not reflect the current political realities. So, reform in the UN's governance structure can ensure a greater representation in inclusivity, giving more voice to emerging powers, for example, under-represented regions of local governments, but also civil society, organisations, academia and the private sector.

This is absolutely critical for efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation, and that goes from improving internal coordination within the system, but also the connection of the UN work with the local needs of community's underground. An excellent example is the humanitarian deployment that the UN does in countries in conflict is the support of the UN for refugees underground. But all the structures need to be improved for sure. I would also say that there is also another reason is that the current peace and security architecture does not respond anymore to what we are witnessing in the world. We need a greater emphasis in focus on conflict prevention, on sustaining peace, on peace building in a more profound and clear way. That's why the new agenda for



peace that is going to be adopted during the Summit of the Future in 2024 is so important. The other reason is sustainable development, challenges ahead of us.

We know that because of Covid, the war in Ukraine, levels of poverty and inequalities have grown enormously, the gaps between the rich and the poor have widened and the issue of gender equality and women's rights that needs to be put back in track. So, I would say that we all agree that the UN has done a lot of good, has made the world a better place with significant milestones, but reforms, implementation of our common agenda of the Summit of Future next year are extremely important and highly needed. And I think that the NGIC can play critical role using the wisdom and experience of its members.



Tzipi Livni

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel 2006-2009;
BoT Member of the NGIC

**Multilateralism is needed
more than ever**

Multilateralism, that for many years was the dominant modus operandi of the international community, is being challenged.

After the horrors of the Second World War, the United Nations was established under the slogan of "never again", the Atlantic Charter evolved into NATO, conventions on human rights were agreed upon and the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the IMF) started functioning in order to create a better world.

Some of these institutions, structures and the democratic values are facing existential threats.

Understanding the reasons why, is crucial for healing.

The technological revolution has been extraordinary for human progress.

Globalization has led to the dissemination of knowledge, commerce and culture.

Progress and prosperity have been spread to billions of people around the world.

But it has also created new challenges for global society. It has also brought to prominence the extent of inequality. Too many people have been left behind in a fast-changing environment, with skills unfit to adjust to the new world that needs to address new challenges as global warming, pandemic, the giant influx of refugees and the mass migration of job seekers.

Fear and frustration are a fertile ground for hatred and nationalism. While a nation state gives its citizens feelings of belonging, identity and pride, globalization was portrayed as contradicting national identity.

While nationalism as being a patriot and love your country is understandable, it turned in some places into hatred against the other and created a fertile land for authoritarian leaders to flourish without the checks and balances of democracy.

The social networks created completely new possibilities and forms of connection between people around the world, but they also changed, for better or worse, other aspects of democracy. When users of the digital media platforms are exposed to a mass of unfiltered information including disinformation and incitement. Without shared reliable facts, there is no common ground for a discussion, but plenty of room for brainwashing and hatred.

All of these trends throw out the baby - the democratic system itself and the values it represents - with the bathwater. This wave of angry sentiment strengthens the new populist politicians and encourages them to break rules that the free world has embraced for many years.

Nationalism crossed the line between patriotism as loyalty and devotion to one's country, and nationalism as exalting one nation above all others.

Democracy is portrayed as a technical regime with the right to vote rather than one based on a set of liberal values which includes minority and human rights.

The admiration of so-called “strong” leaders brings to power populist leaders who move from the fringes of society to positions of power and influence by depicting their liberal-democratic opponents as weak or traitors who act against the good of the nation.

In order to keep their positions of power the populist leaders attack the institutions of democracy - the free press that exposes inconvenient facts, the legal systems that guarantee the principles of equality, human and minority rights, legal and law enforcement institutions.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia emphasized the inability of the United Nations to take any action against aggression of historical magnitude and its most effective arm, the United Nation Security Council is not functioning.

The free world resilience, unity and leadership is being tested.

Faced with challenges of this magnitude to the free world and its values, no one country or leader can meet these challenges alone therefore multilateralism is needed more than ever.

It should be an alliance between countries who share the same set of values that need to be preserved and defended. The same rules and values that created the historic Transatlantic Alliance should be applied. As the outcome of the war in Europe is yet unknown it's already clear that the military threat posed by Russia strengthened the Transatlantic Alliance.

It's time to share a vision and an action plan that addresses these challenges.

We do not need to reinvent the values that we believe in. The base includes adhering to liberal values, supporting democratic tools, striving to narrow social gaps while we need new ideas and tools to meet the new technology challenges.

We need to establish a set of rules balancing new technologies, privacy and human rights.

The reforms that are needed in some of the international organizations will also have to be implemented in order to adjust them to our new reality.



We must strive to create new partnerships by forming a coalition made up of like-minded states, leaders, political parties, entrepreneurs, scholars, artists and other public opinion makers.

It is crucial to bring the young generation on board, so that it will be a grassroots process that reaches from the citizens to the leaders.

We need an effective campaign in order to change and dominate the public discourse.

The success depends on the willingness of the United Nations, governments, private entities, individuals and other stakeholders to advance agreed upon principles.

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the United Nations flag. The flag is blue with a white emblem in the center. The emblem consists of a world map showing the Western Hemisphere, surrounded by two olive branches. The text is overlaid on a solid blue horizontal band that spans the width of the page.

NGIC MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

12-13 JUNE | 2023

NGIC members' High-Level Mission to New York

12-13 June, 2023

Members of the Nizami Ganjavi Ganjavi International Center paid a visit to New York on June 11-12, 2023, for bilateral meetings with the UN and UN-affiliated institutions on the theme of "Our Common Agenda: Rebooting Multilateralism".

Notwithstanding its flaws, the UN is still indispensable and the only genuinely representative multilateral organization. It is a key pillar of international law and order that we have to strengthen and rejuvenate in order to meet key and growing global challenges.

Pleased to join Members of the NGIC. Sharing insights & reflections on multilateralism, key directions of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 with special focus on governance & peace-building dimensions.

Achim Steiner

The two-day visit commenced with a breakfast meeting with Dennis Francis, President of the United Nations 78th General Assembly, who will start his tenure in September, followed by a meeting with Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women and Under-Secretary General of the United Nations. The following meetings were held with Achim Steiner, Administrator of the UNDP, Miguel Angel Moratinos, UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations and Csaba Korosi, 77th President of the UN General Assembly. The discussions were primarily devoted to concrete activities, including shared challenges, goals and values.





Appreciated the good dialogue with Presidents, Prime Ministers and Members of the NGIC on our common challenges. Gender equality underpins the solutions to peace, security and climate crises.

Sima Bahous

The succeeding meeting was held with Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, as a follow-up meeting that Members of the Center had in Fez, the Kingdom of Morocco, in the month of November 2022. The Secretary-General welcomed members of the NGIC and appreciated the work that the Center has accomplished to date. He highly evaluated Members' readiness and willingness to put their active bilateral and multilateral connections and activities at the disposal of the UN and the Secretary-General in the field of building and maintaining sustainable peace, security and development.

It was mentioned by the Members that NGIC is a unique organization with a proven active, agile, and adaptive institutional and individual capacity to cooperate within alliances of like-minded entities that is already working with the WHO, the UNAOC, UNAIDS, and other UN segments. Among the main topics that were discussed in the meetings were reviving and strengthening multilateralism, activities related to the "Summit of the Future" and regulation of artificial intelligence, international peace and security focusing on the war in Ukraine with potential spillover and



Today we welcomed the distinguished Members of the NGIC, including former Presidents & Prime Ministers. They reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism & reiterated support for the UNAOC work.

Miguel Angel Moratinos



reflections in the Western Balkans and the Caucasus regions, the reintegration process in Karabakh, the implementation of the SDGs, climate change, and health for all.

The Secretary-General and NGIC delegation's discussion was not only devoted to major topics but also the NGIC's possible contribution to the UN at large and joint initiatives, such as what the NGIC can do for the UN? as well as what can be done together?

It was agreed that two ways of communication and action will continue between the Secretary-General, UN organizations, and NGIC on specific projects, events, and committees. In that sense, NGIC and the Global Baku Forum will be active partners in supporting the overall UN agenda.

It was also announced that the Center will host its XXVI High-Level Meeting on "Our Common Agenda: Rebooting Multilateralism" on September 20–21, 2023, in New York, USA, as a side event to the UN General Assembly.

The NGIC delegation was comprised of:

- Jean Baderschneider, Chair of the Board, The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery; Vice-President ExxonMobil 2003–2013
- Ana Birchall, deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice of Romania 2018–2019
- Volkan Bozkir, 75th President of the UN General Assembly
- Susan Elliott, CEO, President of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy
- Werner Faymann, Chancellor of Austria 2008–2016
- Jan Fischer, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic 2009–2010
- Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, President of Croatia 2015–2020
- Ivo Josipovic, President of Croatia 2010–2015
- Zlatko Lagumdžija, Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2001– 2002, deputy Prime Minister 1993–1996, 2012– 2015
- Tzipi Livni, Vice Prime Minister of Israel, Minister of Foreign Affairs 2006–2009
- Igor Luksic, Prime Minister of Montenegro 2010–2012, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro 2012–2016
- Rovshan Muradov, Secretary-General, Nizami Ganjavi International Center
- Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta 2013–2020
- Ismail Serageldin, Co-Chair NGIC, Vice-President of the World Bank 1992–2000
- Petar Stoyanov, President of Bulgaria 1997–2002
- Boris Tadic, President of Serbia 2004–2012
- Eka Tkeshelashvili, deputy Prime Minister of Georgia 2010–2012, Minister of Foreign Affairs 2008

High-Level Meeting to United Nations

18-19 July, 2023

Following up the June 2023 meetings with the Secretary-General of the UN, the NGIC in July 2023 engaged in further high-level detailed discussions with the leaders of the UN system, to firm up existing cooperation around a number of important initiatives. The fact that former Prime Minister Zlatko Lagumdzija is currently posted as Bosnia and Herzegovina's Permanent Representative to the UN, and that NGIC Co-Chair Ismail Serageldin was already in NY, participating (with the International Science Council) in the UN's High Level Political Forum, was fortuitous. Joined by NGIC Secretary-General Rovshan Muradov, they represented the NGIC at these important follow-up meetings. The primary purpose of these meetings was to better prepare the NGIC XXVI High-Level meeting to New York (September 20-21, 2023), and the XI Global Baku Forum (March 14-16, 2024).

The delegation met with H.E. Csaba Korosi, 77th President of the UN General Assembly and H.E. Dennis Francis, 78th President of the UN General Assembly and both of them similarly promised to join both the XXVI High-Level meeting New York and the XI Global Baku Forum. But discussions also touched upon a broad program of cooperation in the coming year and a half, covering his full term as President of UNGA and beyond.

The delegation also met with Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator of UNDP, and he also promised to join the XXVI High-Level meeting to New York, and the invitation to the XI Global Baku Forum was also extended to him.

Delegation also met with Amb Susan Elliott, CEO and President of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, and worked on refining the program for the various sessions of the High-level event on 20-21 September.

Overall, it was a very positive and productive series of meetings, from sharing general insights to firming up the program for the XXVI High-Level meeting in September, to ensuring the participation of eminent persons at the XI GBF next March, to exploring additional avenues of collaboration with the UN and its most important bodies.



Zlatko Lagumdžija

Prime Minister of Bosnia
and Herzegovina 2001-2002

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Dialogue, respect, learning and understanding – 12th century Nizami philosophy needed in “mirrored” 21. Challenging century more than ever.

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Achim Steiner

Administrator of the United Nations
Development Programme

“

True wisdom lies in embracing lifelong learning and pursuing our dreams. As never before we need collective voices of wise people.

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NIZAMI GANJAVI INTERNATIONAL CENTER

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