

NO. 010 | MAY 2025

GLOBAL POLICY ANALYSIS

NIZAMI GANJAVI INTERNATIONAL CENTER

**THE WORLD AT THE CROSSROAD:
NAVIGATING THE STORMS AHEAD**

GLOBAL HEALTH | MULTILATERALISM | THE WATER CRISIS | HUMANITY AND PEACE
GLOBAL CHALLENGES OF TODAY'S WORLD | 2024 CLIMATE DISASTERS

Tenth edition

GLOBAL POLICY ANALYSIS

THE WORLD AT THE CROSSROAD:
NAVIGATING THE STORMS AHEAD

Managing Editor: Rovshan Muradov
Editor: Ilaha Ibrahimli
Graphic Designer: Nijat Ibrahimli

Applications for permission to reproduce or
translate all or any publication should be made to:

Nizami Ganjavi International Center
Baku, Azerbaijan, AZ 1014
Tel: +99412 597 48 65
Email: info@nizamiganjavi-ic.org
www.nizamiganjavi-ic.org

© 2025 NIZAMI GANJAVI INTERNATIONAL CENTER

FROM MANAGING EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the tenth edition of Global Policy Analysis, where we delve into the pressing issues that shape our world today. As we find ourselves at a crossroads, the insights and perspectives drawn from the rich legacy of Nizami Ganjavi remind us of the importance of wisdom, dialogue, and the pursuit of knowledge in addressing global challenges.

In this issue, we explore the multifaceted dimensions of international relations, economic development, role of the AI, health for all, and social justice. The contributions from our esteemed authors reflect a diverse range of viewpoints, each illuminating the complexities of our interconnected world. From climate change to geopolitical tensions, the challenges we face require innovative solutions and collective laborative efforts.

As we navigate these turbulent times, let us draw inspiration from Nizami Ganjavi's belief in the power of narratives to foster understanding and empathy among cultures. It is through shared stories and experiences that we can build bridges and create pathways toward a more harmonious future.

I encourage you to engage with the articles, reflect on the insights presented, and join the conversation. Together, we can forge a path forward that honors the legacy of our past while embracing the possibilities of our future.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment.

ROVSHAN MURADOV

Managing Editor, GPA
Secretary-General, NGIC

Table of Contents

06

Global Health

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

10

A New Era of Cooperation: Reimagining Multilateralism

Maria Fernanda Espinosa

17

Rising to the Challenge of the World's Water Crisis

Ismail Serageldin

26

In Times of Uncertainty, Climate Change must Stay Top of the Agenda

Mukhtar Babayev

28

Multilateralism

Tatiana Valovaya

32

The EU Asylum and Migration Pact: Key Aspects and Challenges

Benita Ferrero-Waldner

38

Analysis of the Impact of the US Reciprocal Tariff Policy on the Global Economy and Financial Stability

David Qinzhong Pan

43

Technology for Gender Equality in Global Governance

Milica Pejanovic-Duriscic

For a New Ethics in a World Shaped by Digital Technology

Rexhep Meidani

48

The Water Crisis

Rosalia Arteaga Serrano

53

Global Challenges of Today's World

Mirko Cvetkovic

57

The Need for Multilateralism to Reinvent itself once more

Julio Cobos

62

2024 Climate Disasters: A Historic Warning

Hakima El Haite

67

Humanity And Peace

Chiril Gaburici

74

Art and Intercultural Dialogue: A Path to Truth in the Age of Disinformation

Hedva Ser

77

Humans in the Age of Machines: Progress, Purpose, and Possibility

Dumitru Braghis

80

The Middle Corridor Renaissance: A New Silk Road Shaping Global Geopolitics and Trade

Rza Aliyev

84



TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

Director-General, World Health Organization

Global Health

We live at a time when multilateralism has not only been called into question, but actively undermined. But we also live at a time when it is needed more than ever. We do not live in a world of purely national or bilateral problems that can be addressed with purely national or bilateral solutions. We live in a world of multiple overlapping global crises, requiring a global response: wars and conflict, outbreaks, food insecurity, poverty, inequality and the overshadowing threat of climate change. As we speak, WHO is responding to many of these crises:

We're fighting outbreaks of Ebola, Marburg, mpox and more;

We're delivering humanitarian aid in Gaza, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and elsewhere;

We're supporting the rollout of malaria vaccines in Africa;

We're working to eradicate polio;

We're expanding equitable access to lifesaving medicines;

We're strengthening the foundations of health systems;

We're supporting countries to promote health and address the root causes of disease;

And so much more.

As you all know, the United States of America has announced its intention to withdraw from WHO. We believe this decision is a lose-lose-lose: it's bad for WHO, it's bad for the world, and it's bad for the United States.

The withdrawal of U.S. leadership from WHO and global health – its political, technical and financial leadership – will weaken the world's defences against epidemics and pandemics from diseases including influenza, Ebola and mpox, which will in turn put the U.S. at higher risk. A less safe world means a less safe U.S.

Of course, it's right to ask whether the multilateral system, and its component parts, are fit for purpose – including WHO.

Like all organizations, WHO must change with our changing world – and in fact, we have changed.

Over the past seven years, we have implemented the deepest and most far-reaching set of reforms in the Organization's history, transforming everything from our global strategy to our procurement of office supplies, and everything in between.

But there is always room for improvement, and we welcome ideas for how we can better serve the nations and people of the world – because that's what we're here for.

Like the United Nations of which we are part, WHO was born of the recognition that the only alternative to global conflict was global cooperation.



The WHO Constitution was the first instrument of international law to affirm that the highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental right for all people, without distinction. Not health for some but health for all.

But the writers of the Constitution went further, in affirming that the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security, and is dependent on the fullest co-operation of individuals and States. In other words, health can be a bridge to peace.

In our fractured world, health is one area in which nations can work together across ideological and economic divides to find shared solutions to shared threats. Now more than ever, our fractured world needs a common cause to bring it together – and health can be that common cause.

Health is not only a byproduct of peace, it can help to bring it about.

Health is not only an outcome of development, but the means.

Ultimately, health is not a luxury for the few, but a right for all.

That is the right for which I and the dedicated, committed people I am honoured to call my colleagues will continue to work every day.



MARIA FERNANDA ESPINOSA

President of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly;
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador 2017-2018

A New Era of Cooperation: Reimagining Multilateralism

Today, we are far removed from the uncertainty that marked the founding of the United Nations in 1945. The profound ideological divide that emerged after the Second World War is well known. Yet, despite these challenges, states found ways to cooperate and make concessions. A world that often seemed on the brink of destruction ultimately endured, thanks to dialogue, understanding, and cooperation, much of which was facilitated under the umbrella of the United Nations. This spirit of international cooperation would prove instrumental in shaping the post-war landscape and its emerging institutions.

In the aftermath of World War II, a new international order emerged. This was a time when nations sought to rebuild, reconcile, and reimagine a future defined by two bold concepts: collective security and shared prosperity. Our most prominent international institutions were born out of this common aspiration, to prevent the descent into war and to foster an environment where cooperation could lead to lasting peace and economic stability. Over the following decades, these institutions have helped mitigate conflict, catalyze development, and serve as pillars of a global order that has underpinned progress and relative peace across continents. These institutions have also adapted to address emerging challenges, demonstrating remarkable resilience and adaptability. Yet, as we enter an era defined by unprecedented global challenges, the need to reimagine and strengthen these multilateral frameworks has never been more urgent.

Our current multilateral architecture has profoundly reshaped global governance, institutionalizing cooperative mechanisms that have prevented or resolved conflict and enabled economic interdependence. The establishment of the United Nations represented a paradigm shift from balance-of-power diplomacy to structured multilateralism, embedding conflict resolution within a collective security framework. Other institutions augmented this foundation, exemplified by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, providing macroeconomic stabilization and development finance, preventing systemic economic collapse, and facilitating recovery. Despite their shortcomings and there are many these institutions have functioned along with their international counterparts as the scaffolding of global economic and political order. At the same time, regional organizations like the European Union and the African Union have further strengthened this framework by fostering deeper integration and cooperation at the continental level. However these institutions are also undergoing readjustment processes and there is an extended outcry for its modernization.



While this institutional architecture has served as the bedrock of international cooperation for over eight decades, we now find ourselves at a critical inflection point. Despite this impressive legacy, the very foundations of the multilateral system are under unprecedented strain. The current multipolar world, characterized by a broader distribution of power among an increasingly diverse set of influential actors, coupled with new global challenges, such as digital transformation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, organized crime, to name a few—presents complexities that many established institutions struggle to navigate. Adding to these mounting pressures is a significant erosion of trust. According to the 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer, 42% of respondents across 28 countries reported a lack of trust in the United Nations.

This decline in trust stems from multiple factors: perceived ineffectiveness in addressing global crises, concerns about institutional representation and legitimacy, and growing skepticism regarding the ability of international organizations to deliver tangible benefits to ordinary citizens. An additional factor is the emergence of regional and other groups and configurations, such as G7, G20, the BRICs, the European Union, The African Union, ASEAN, just to name a few. The disconnect between global institutions, regional structures and local communities has created fertile ground for movements that challenge the very premise of international cooperation. Without decisive action to rebuild public confidence, this trust deficit threatens to undermine the effectiveness and authority of multilateral institutions precisely when they are most needed.

The UN has made significant strides but has also faced notable challenges. What is urgently needed is a new narrative and a renewed capacity for transformative leadership among Member States and UN top-tier staff. Public opinion is largely formed by perception, and UN leadership has fallen short in at least three key areas. First, we have not successfully communicated what the United Nations stands for, allowing misconceptions about its role and impact. Second, we have collectively contributed to shaping an image of the Organization as separate from its main agents and decision makers—the Member States—who ultimately determine its priorities and effectiveness. Finally, despite the Organization’s foundational emphasis on cooperation and lasting peace, we have failed to uphold preventive diplomacy as the central instrument for achieving its mission. Today, the severe deficit in preventive action within global politics demands urgent and concerted efforts. If this failure to address these challenges persists, a prevailing sense of disillusionment with the UN’s role will only deepen. However, beyond narrative and perception, profound structural and operational changes are required to ensure that the Organization remains relevant and effective as it approaches its first century.

The implications of institutional failure will be profound if these mounting strains remain unchecked. It is imperative to critically assess the underlying causes of discontent with the United Nations, acknowledging that in an increasingly interconnected and digitalized world, accountability, efficiency, and impact-driven governance are as essential at the international level as they are in national politics. Imagine a world where the multilateral institutions we rely on deteriorate gradually under the weight of a legitimacy crisis, weak leadership, accountability deficits, and diminishing relevance in addressing global challenges and the international community’s expectations. Such a decline would unravel decades of institutional progress and heighten states’ vulnerabilities to transnational threats. The resulting volatility would disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, potentially triggering cascading effects—from increased poverty to forced migration.

The Summits of 2000, 2005, and 2015 and the Summit of the Future in 2024 have been part of the impulse to adapt the Organization and develop creative measures to address emerging challenges. However, adapting to new geopolitical realities is difficult for a pact-based Organization. Therefore, it is imperative to envision the United Nations we need, considering its inter-

governmental nature and the existence of two distinct dimensions of the UN: its constitutional pact and its organic and functional entities. These dimensions must be carefully balanced to ensure that any reforms preserve the organization's foundational principles while enabling necessary evolution. As a political entity, the UN embodies the complexities inherent in any political system, and its central dynamics and political processes have sustained and validated the basis of its constitutional pact, the UN Charter. Contrary to what some might assume, the Organization has not remained static. Over eight decades, its internal dynamics and outcomes have evolved in response to the demands of different historical contexts. The Organization has demonstrated an ability to adapt and respond to critical global phenomena—as diverse as decolonization, the ozone layer crisis, outer space, biodiversity, or the rights of the child. Likewise, with both successes and failures, it has addressed numerous international crises since its early years while adjusting to North-South tensions and the dynamics of the Cold War. This capacity for adaptation is a defining feature of the Organization and cannot be overlooked.

The main principles of the UN Charter were not, and are not today, under question. The purposes and principles of the Organization have remained the cornerstone of state cooperation even if there are voices and actors calling for a Charter review process, to adapt its mandates and structure without altering the main pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights. The continuous reaffirmation of the UN Charter's importance in international relations, expressed by states in every major global forum, demonstrates a persistent political legitimization and a renewed commitment to its objectives. This reality suggests that we must return to the United Nations Charter as a guiding framework to address emerging global challenges, skepticism, and discontent. The international community has navigated ideological confrontations and competing priorities for decades, yet dialogue and coexistence have prevailed. Today, the challenge is to create space for dialogue, acknowledge differences, and address the specific concerns of each state, just as was achieved in even more complex times when the world lacked the speed of communication and access to information that we have today. Cooperation, therefore, remains not only possible but essential in today's world.

The second dimension of the UN is one that has been under constant scrutiny and must be critically reassessed as a matter of urgency. The organic and functional entities represent two distinct expressions of the Organization. The organic entities refer to its deliberative, political, and administrative bodies, which

shape the institutional structure of the UN and are responsible for decision-making, governance, and oversight. On the other hand, the functional entities consist of specialized agencies, programs, and operational structures that implement Member States policies and initiatives across various fields. Their roles derive from the outcomes of the deliberative and political entities, mainly the General Assembly and the Security Council. A comprehensive reform agenda is essential. This agenda must acknowledge both progress and paralysis, as well as achievements and limitations of existing organic and functional frameworks, while boldly reimagining their future potential. Only through a critical, forward-looking approach can we ensure that the United Nations remains a credible and legitimate instrument of global cooperation. Building on lessons from decades of international collaboration and recognizing the evolving landscape of global challenges, this agenda should be structured around two fundamental pillars: institutional modernization and a strengthened accountability architecture.

The first pillar focuses on institutional modernization by enhancing agility and efficiency. Bureaucratic structures, often constrained by cumbersome processes and hierarchical silos, require targeted reforms to improve responsiveness and effectiveness. In spite of many processes and initiatives, such as

“delivering as one” and the recent reform of the development pillar of the UN, there is still a need to revisit mandates, governance frameworks, and leadership structures, particularly in key areas such as the peace and security, the development, human rights, and environment and climate-related agendas. Many of these processes are already outlined in the 2024 Pact of the Future. What is clear is that there is a need for a profound rethinking of decision-making mechanisms, resource allocation, and performance evaluation.

The second pillar is an accountability framework to rebuild trust through improved accountability and representation. This requires structural reforms to political, administrative, and functional bodies. A more inclusive governance model should reflect today’s multipolar reality, giving States more voice while maintaining operational effectiveness. Policy discussions within United Nations administrative and functional entities must better integrate the diverse perspectives of states by enhancing dialogue and stakeholder consultation through systematic and built-in structures. Enhanced accountability requires transparent, adaptive, yet predictable and reliable mechanisms for reporting and accountability.

Perhaps one of today's most critical issues is the trust deficit of people in institutions and in the capacity of those leading these institutions to deliver the rights and services that they expect and deserve. The UN and the multilateral system are undergoing a stress test. The future of multilateralism depends on our collective will to adapt, innovate, and cooperate. In this new era of complex and interconnected global challenges, our institutions must evolve to remain relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs of all peoples and nations. By emphasizing efficiency through modernization, investing in trust-building mechanisms, and rebalancing power relationships, we can strengthen the multilateral system and ensure its continued role as a force for stability and well-being. Just as the post-war generation built institutions to secure peace and prosperity, we must reinvigorate these structures to meet contemporary challenges. The path forward requires renewed commitment, visionary leadership, and collective action from all stakeholders in the international community. We can only build a more just, resilient, and prosperous world through such reinvigorated multilateralism.



ISMAIL SERAGELDIN

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

Rising to the Challenge of the World's Water Crisis

Background

Thirty years ago, when I was Vice-President of the World Bank for Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD), I was worried at the manner in which water was mismanaged, and how its continued availability was being taken for granted in a world where rapidly expanding populations, with rapidly expanding per capita water use, coupled with extravagant waste and pollution would lead to shortages in the available supplies of suitable water in future generations. For water is life. We ignore that reality at our peril.

Just recall that more than 40 percent of the world's people live in 263 river basins that straddle international borders. The Danube, Rhine, Congo, Nile, Niger, and Zambezi rivers all pass through nine or more countries. Transboundary Rivers contain 60 percent of the world's river flows – for two-thirds of them, there are no agreements on water sharing. Indeed in 1995 there were no global treaties on management of shared water resources.

At a meeting in Stockholm in 1995, I sounded the alarm saying:

“The wars of this century have been over oil, and the wars of the next century will be over water...”

It was a cry that would resonate with the media, and which led to focusing attention on the issues of water. Less attention was devoted to the second part of my statement which was: “... unless we change the way we manage water.”

In 1996 we created the World Water Council (WCC), with a primary mission of engaging the top decision-makers around the issues of Water. This council involved international organizations, professional associations and the private sector. The secretariat was located in Marseilles.

The stated mission of the WWC was articulated as: "to promote awareness, build political commitment and trigger action on critical water issues at all levels, including the highest decision-making level, to facilitate the efficient conservation, protection, development, planning, management, and use of water in all its dimensions on an environmentally sustainable basis for the benefit of all life on earth."

In 1996, we also created the Global Water Partnership (GWP), and reinvigorated the various international programs that dealt with water. These institutions have continued to thrive and grow since their early beginnings in the 1990s.

We also designed the World Water Forum to be held once every three years, to encourage those concerned with water issues to take stock, exchange views and reaffirm best practices. After a very limited start in Marrakesh in 1997, the Forum would explode on the world scene in The Hague in 2000, and become the most important recurrent event on the global water agenda.

Between the first (Marrakesh 1997) and second (The Hague 2000) World Water Forums, we launched an extremely ambitious effort to engage the world in thinking about water, through a “vision exercise” that was overseen by a major and extremely eminent global commission, and managed by an impeccable staff directed by my colleague William Cosgrove who oversaw an enormous bottom-up global participatory exercise. All this undergirded the second World Water Forum in The Hague in 2000.

The Hague in 2000

From March 17th to 22nd, 2000, The Hague was the center of world attention for all concerned with the issues of water. The second World Water Forum held in The Hague sparked a significant amount of discussion regarding the work that had been overseen by the Global Water Commission that I had the privilege of chairing, and which was the fundamental foundation for the event. That work was presented in “The World Water Vision” and the associated “Framework for Action”.

These documents focused on various aspects of water resources, including their state and ownership, development potential, management and financing models, and their effects on poverty, social, cultural, economic development, and the environment. And for the first time, it publicly called for the full-cost pricing of water.

As chairman of that commission, I was attacked by many that demanded that water be free as a human right to all. I pointed out that food was also a human right for all, but we paid farmers to grow it, and transporters to move it and processors to prepare it, and traders to ensure that it was available for sale to the people who want to eat. Besides, I argued that there is no example of anything given away for free that is being conserved or managed carefully.

2023: A New Awakening

But we noted that the financing of water projects raised a number of issues from the sheer magnitude of the requirements and the institutional mechanisms that would have to be used to raise and disburse the funds where they would be needed, especially in the poorest developing countries. Thus, another commission was organized to work between the second and third WWF, which was to be convened in Japan in 2003. That commission was chaired by Michel Camdessus, the Managing Director of the IMF. The report was presented to an even bigger WWF in Tokyo where over 20,000 persons attended. However, the event did not get the media coverage it deserved, because it coincided with the US invasion of Iraq.

Subsequent discussions and efforts dealing with water issues were in many places linked to the global efforts for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals.

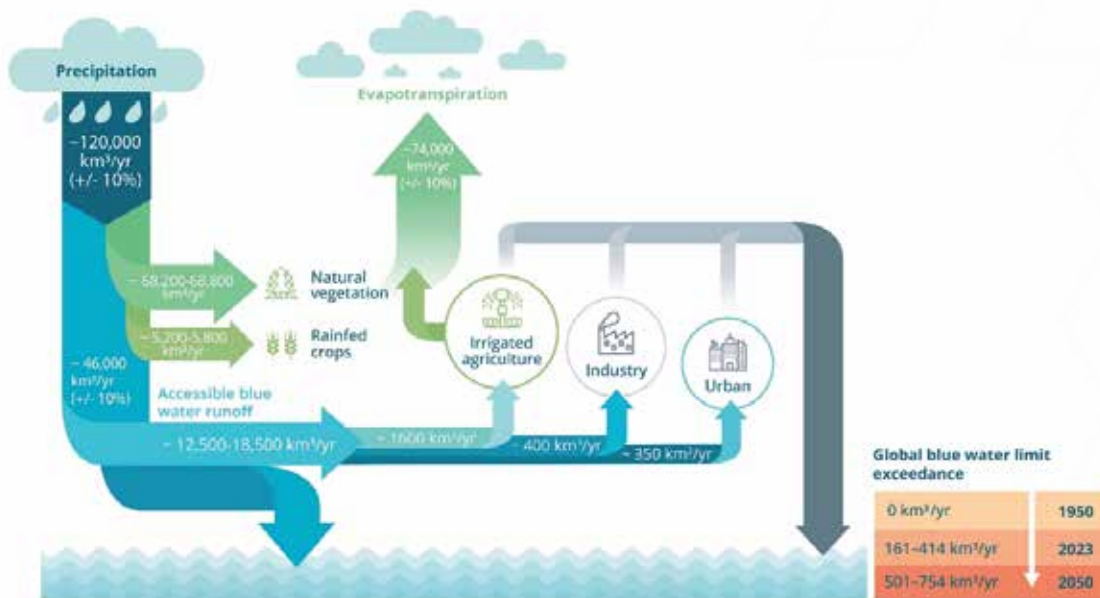
As the world faced an ever-deepening crisis in water management, the UN convened a truly major water conference in 2023. Arguably, it was the most important since the Mar de Plata in 1977 and Dublin in 1992, and at this UN meeting on Water in New York on 22-23 March 2023, the Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW) launched and distributed at the conference a special interim document, whose opening lines read:

We can no longer ignore the world's crisis of water. We will fail on climate change if we do not solve water, we will also fail on all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). No person, place or economy or ecosystem will be spared.

The full and final report of the commission was issued in 2024. But already, we could categorically say that the underlying water crisis is a major driver of some of the extreme weather phenomena that we have witnessed in the past few years, from droughts and floods, hurricanes, severe storms, not to mention unprecedented heatwaves and extended wildfires. The interaction effects between the Global Hydrological Cycle and Climate Change are only now being properly understood.

Furthermore, water challenges us in our daily lives in many ways. Whether it be entire regions suffering drought, and ensuing food shortages, or floods destroying everything in their path, extremes of water shortage and abundance are equally devastating. Also, pollution that makes available water dirty and unsafe spreads disease and death among the young and vulnerable. Indeed, almost every 60 seconds, a child under the age of five dies from a water-borne disease, and hundreds of millions more survive, but grow up stunted and their life prospects diminished.

Protecting the Global and Local Hydrological Cycle



The Water Cycle and the Economy

Source:

Global Commission on the Economics of Water. (2023, February). The What, Why and How of the World Water Crisis: Global Commission on the Economics of Water Phase 1 Review and Findings.

Grafton, R.Q. et al. (2023). "The price and value of water: An economic review", Mimeo-graph.

The Hydrological Cycle with water evaporating after use by humans and then coming back as rain which feeds blue water (surface water in lakes and rivers that is partially used by humans), and green water (that feeds underground reservoirs, plants and the eco-systems) is well known and taken for granted by many as an immutable, unchanging reality. But as we discovered with Climate Change that is being affected by human activity, the Hydrological Cycle is also being disturbed by human activity.

Furthermore, we are also learning a lot more about the complexities of the Hydrological Cycle and its interaction with Climate Change. It is being used in an unsustainable fashion, with underground aquifers being depleted faster than their recharge rate, with enormous waste in agriculture, and massive pollution in our cities and our industries.

A central part of the GCEW's work was devoted to calling on the world to recognize the Hydrological Cycle (the global water cycle) as a global (and local) common good, and manage it accordingly. This will require new ways of thinking, and rebalancing the needs of humans and the needs of the ecosystems on which we all depend. It will require better management guided by a just and fair vision that recognizes that access to water, and the food water allows to produce, as fundamental human rights, which must be ensured for all in an equitable manner.

New Policies

Since water cuts across so many human needs and activities, we need to bring focused attention to improving each and every aspect of these human activities. We must bring the best of science and innovative technologies to bear in a manner that ensures that the needs of all are recognized, and equitably attended to. New policies in our management of industry and agriculture and our growing urban environments, limiting pollution and recycling used water, have to be the hallmarks as we go forward with local programs that fit in a comprehensive setting, driven by a global, inclusive vision.

Water Pricing & Regulation

As the leaders of the GCEW have stated: “With proper pricing and targeted support for the poor, water would be used more efficiently in every sector, more equitably across every community, and more sustainably both locally and globally.” But the commissioners are also quick to point out that water has a profound

non-economic non-marketed value, as it undergirds our entire ecosystem on which our life depends – that will require evidence-based regulation.

Pricing must also involve cutting subsidies for agriculture which tend to encourage excessive water consumption and other environmentally damaging practices. We must also review the inadequate regulations for industrial water use and other activities that allow unwarranted pollution. Despite the likely objections that strengthening regulations would cripple industry, in fact it is not only necessary, but it will also spur innovation for water users to create novel ways to use water more wisely.

Indeed, in the US, the unregulated use of water by industry had resulted in toxic waste being dumped into rivers and waterways, reaching a level, where it seemed that “a river caught fire” as the floating waste and oil spills caught fire. This event captured the public imagination in the US.

As a result of the 1969 Cuyahoga River fire, measures were taken to control water pollution, including the establishment of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), and the passing of the Clean Water Act (1972) and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (1972).

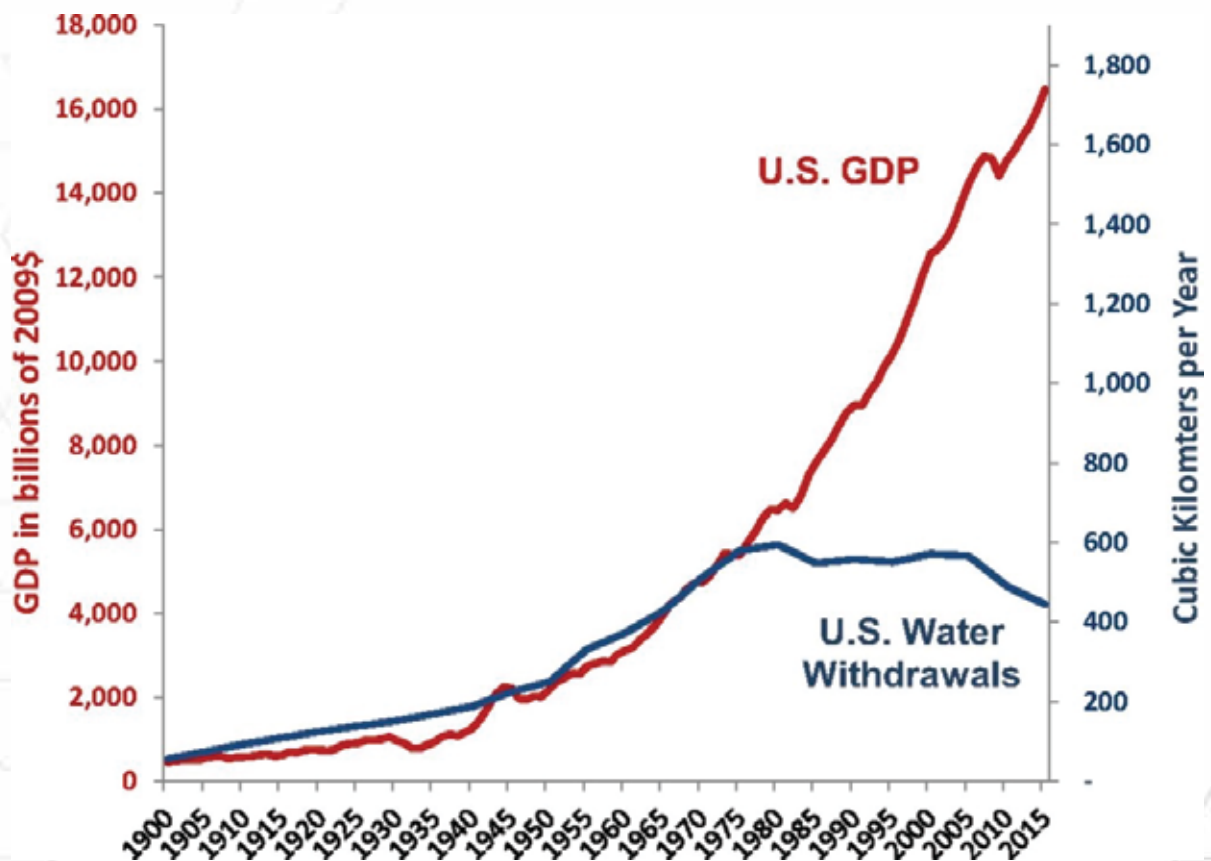


Fig 9 in Peter H. Gleick and Meena Palaniappan, "Peak water limits to freshwater withdrawal and use" in PNAS – 24 May 2010.

The US legislative response, especially the Clean Water Act, brought about dramatic results. Despite the claims and fear-mongering of industrial interests that argued that this regulation would lead to huge economic stagnation and job losses, the legislation curbed pollution and excessive water consumption without any noticeable impact on economic growth. In fact, the opposite happened. The dramatic results of the clean water act can be seen in the following graph reproduced from Peter Gleick’s paper published in PNAS in 2010, which shows that GDP growth continued unabated as US water withdrawals stabilized and even declined (despite a continued growth in both population and income).

So, proper pricing of water is an essential part of the Global Commission’s recommendations. However, the Commission’s views are now broader. Pricing is more than an essential tool to deal with both the actual water being used and its potential recycling. It must deal with a proper valuation of the hydrological cycle as a Common Public Good that must be protected for any sustainable future for humanity.

Management that Protects the Poor and Delivers Results

To implement all of that, we have called in the past for Public-Private- Partnerships (PPPs), to establish and manage institutions that have a major impact on critical resources and a strong social interest in how the benefits of these activities are shared. Given the occasional opaqueness and outright corruption that have been manifested in some PPPs, we also called for Public-Private-Peoples-Partnerships (PPPPs), to bring transparency and accountability to the operations of PPPs.

The GCEW calls for the establishment of Just Water Partnerships (JWPs) to ensure that low- and middle-income countries can invest in expanding water access for all, as they also confront the climate affected cycles of droughts and floods with investments that promote adaptation, resilience, and sustainability.

Finance

The proper management of water is an integral part of dealing with the SDGs and Climate Change. For many, the crucial challenge will be to accelerate the energy transformation if we are to have a hope of achieving zero net emissions by 2050. The energy transition is thus at the heart of many national and international discussions, and the discussions highlighted the significant investments that will be required . But what about the substantial financing required to globally and locally manage water sustainably?

The conventional mechanisms of aid and international finance need a major overhaul if they are going to help shift the world from its unsustainable path and seriously cope with the existential risks of climate change. This is equally true of the needs for major investments to achieve the proper management of water in our lives. We need to rethink funding structures, deployment vehicles, and finance mechanisms to maximize the effectiveness of public funds used to ensure that they support and accelerate private sector engagement.

We have to remember that in 2020 assets of financial institutions world-wide already amounted to 468.7 trillion U.S. dollars . The use of new instruments such as guarantees, insurance and other tools could very significantly tap into that enormous amount of finance in order to increase the amount of funding available for projects that accelerate the energy transition as well as help fund projects for adaptation and resilience.

Already during the discussions at COP27, we saw the emergence of a consensus that we should seek new or expanded roles for the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). By the International Financial Institutions, we mean the IMF, the World Bank and the

Multilateral Development Banks . The redesign of how these IFIs can interact with the private sector could unlock some of those many trillions, by taking or significantly reducing the perceived project and currency risks that currently hold back private and national-level finance. Also, there has been talk of using “debt swaps” in cases where structuring innovative debt swaps can help governments that have limited access to traditional grants or debt relief.

Innovation

We are living in a period of scientific and technological revolutions covering everything from Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Brain-Machine-Interface (BMI) to supercomputing, to genome editing, to nanotechnology to new materials and many other areas. Each of these opens avenues that are filled with promise and fraught with risks, but where sagacious management can lead to more innovative approaches to handling existing problems. Innovation in dealing with water issues is also badly needed. We must learn to deploy such innovations in ways that work with nature not against it.

In the agriculture sector, broadly defined to include forestry and aquatic resources, innovations can lead to reduced waste, increased water use efficiency at the level of plants as well as farms, not to mention at the scale of significant irrigation systems, while limiting the continued depletion of underground reservoirs. Crops that not only have higher yields, but also are more nutritious and more resistant to drought and salinity, with shorter growing seasons and

deeper roots and reduced senescence are within reach. They will not only help meet humanity’s needs, but would also improve the economic conditions of farmers, especially the smallholder farmers in the LMICs.

Indeed, such transformative agriculture can also help us address many environmental issues in better ways, such as how we manage wetlands and estuaries, replenish aquifers, avoid soil degradation, and even turn around the Agriculture and Food Sector from its current position of being an important emitter of GHGs to being a major contributor to Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS).

Industrial and urban water uses require attention to pollution and recycling. We have seen how the clean water act in the USA helped reduce water consumption as it reduced pollution. That will be equally true for the industries and urban cities of tomorrow when we espouse science-based policies and evidence-based regulations to lead us into the adoption of innovative technologies and the embrace of recycling and the circular economy as a dominant paradigm.



MUKHTAR BABAYEV

President of Azerbaijan's Representative for Climate Issues;
President of COP29; Minister of Ecology and Natural
Resources of Azerbaijan 2018-2025

**In Times of Uncertainty,
Climate Change Must Stay
Top of the Agenda**

There is no such thing as a simple or easy year in world history. But even by recent standards, 2025 is set to throw up extraordinary complexities that will challenge the foundations of our multilateral system.

During these uncertain times, governments and international organisations are facing many competing demands for their attention.

Week by week, governments are reshaping agendas and tweaking budgets to try to stay afloat amid a sea of change.

But as Governments review their priorities and allocate resources, we must remember that the best way to combat uncertainty is by delivering on the promises we have made.

On climate change, that means ensuring that climate finance does not slip down the agenda.

Last year, amid inflation, wars and changes of governments, COP29 rallied the world in Baku around our collective interest, and agreed to mobilise \$300 billion per year by 2035 in the Baku Finance Goal.

This historic agreement will provide the foundations for the next decade of climate action, and enhanced support for developing nations will encourage greater ambition in their climate plans.

This will work best if we have full confidence that we will follow through on our commitments.

That means climate finance progressing in 2025, delivering on our promises with concrete actions.

Donor countries must set out clear plans for how they will deliver their fair share towards the \$300 billion target, ensuring that we start the uplift in finance without delay.

Stepping away from our climate finance commitments would only exacerbate the climate crises and undermine the spirit of the multilateralism that prevailed in Baku. The world cannot afford such a course of action in this critical decade.



TATIANA VALOVAYA

Director-General, United Nations Office at Geneva

Multilateralism



It is a pivotal moment in history, as the world faces an array of unprecedented challenges. From geopolitical tensions, escalating armed conflicts and environmental crises to deepening inequalities and rising intolerance, our global landscape is increasingly fractured. Armed conflicts have reached their highest levels since World War II, with over 122.6 million people forcibly displaced due to violence and persecution. Meanwhile, progress on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is alarmingly off track – five years to 2030, less than one-fifth of the targets are on course – aggravated by a \$4 trillion annual financing gap.

In response to these crises, the United Nations continues its efforts through peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, human rights advocacy, and sustainable development initiatives. In 2024, our various agencies provided crucial support to millions of people worldwide, from refugee assistance to food aid, vaccination programs, and peacekeeping operations.

Just few examples:

- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assisted 119 million people fleeing war, famine, and persecution.
- The World Food Programme (WFP) provided food and assistance to 160 million people across more than 120 countries and territories.
- UNICEF supplied vaccines to 45% of the world's children, saving over 3 million lives.

The list of concrete positive impact on people's lives is long.

We see that multilateralism does matter. Multilateralism does have a huge impact. Cooperation and collaboration save lives. And, of course, multilateral system has to be reformed, has to be activated to the level of challenges of the 21st century.

Our Office at Geneva plays its part as a hub for multilateral diplomacy, bringing together governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, the private sector and young people to find common solutions. By facilitating dialogue, negotiations and cooperation, our office helps advance peace processes, forge international agreements and address global challenges in a spirit of collaboration.

On the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, despite our joint achievements, it is clear that the global governance system must evolve to address contemporary issues more effectively. Rethinking the world order and strengthening global cooperation are critical imperatives in addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century.

The Pact for the Future, adopted last year, aims at strengthening global governance and rebuilding trust in multilateralism. It outlines actions in five broad areas: sustainable development, international peace and security, science and technology, youth engagement, and transforming global governance.

The two adjoining commitments – the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations – offer enhanced opportunities for advancing international cooperation on emerging issues.

It is important to adapt to new realities, including the changing nature of conflict, the role of technology, and to empower women and youth. It is also essential to continue fostering inclusive multilateralism, promoting a more equitable system that involves diverse stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.

In presenting his list of priorities to the UN General Assembly at the beginning of this year, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for accelerated action in high-impact areas like poverty eradication, food security, quality education for all, social protection, universal health coverage, energy access, digitalization and reducing climate impact. All this with gender equality and equal opportunities in mind.

By steadfastly upholding our commitment to multilateralism and cooperation, we can transform current challenges into opportunities for progress. The insights and ideas generated at this Forum will be significant for reimagining the world order and bolstering global cooperation. Let us accelerate our joint global efforts for a more effective, inclusive, and responsive global governance system.



BENITA FERRERO-WALDNER

Foreign Minister of the Republic of Austria 2000-2004;
European Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood
Policy 2004-2010

The EU Asylum and Migration Pact: Key Aspects and Challenges



Let me start by mentioning first the official definitions:

This definition who are asylum-seekers and who are migrants comes from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration(IOM), being the following:

Asylum-Seekers: An asylum-seeker is a person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum (international protection) in another country but whose request has not yet been processed. The official explanation for asylum-seekers and migrants comes from organizations like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization. If granted asylum, the person is recognized as a refugee and receives legal protection under international law, including the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Migrants: A migrant is a broader term that refers to anyone moving from one country to another, typically for reasons such as economic opportunities, family reunification, or education. Migrants may move voluntarily, unlike asylum-seekers or refugees, who flee due to persecution, conflict, or violence. Migrants do not automatically qualify for international protection under refugee law.

The Key Differences being:

Legal Status- Asylum-seekers are waiting for a decision on their application, while migrants may move without seeking asylum; **The Reason for Movement:** Asylum-seekers flee due to persecution or conflict, while migrants move primarily for economic, social, or personal reasons; **Protection under International Law:** Asylum-seekers may gain refugee status and protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention, whereas migrants are subject to the immigration laws of their destination.

Migration is indeed a great European challenge that requires a European solution. Some EU-Member States have been asking for closed borders which would mean day by day that merchandises would be more expensive because of longer and lengthier transport costs etc. That would be a huge reduction of EU's competitiveness; people would need their pass-ports and would lose all the advantages of the "Schengen-system".

It is true that the European Union (EU) has long struggled with the complexities of migration and asylum policies. After many years of negotiations, in response to ongoing migration and asylum challenges, the EU introduced the New Pact on Migration and Asylum in 2020. Following its adoption by the European Parliament and Council, the new rules entered into force on 11 June 2024, but will only enter into application after two years. In the end this will ensure that the EU has strong and secure external borders, that people's rights are guaranteed, and that no EU entry is left alone under pressure.

This pact also aims to create a more unified, efficient, and fair system for managing migration across member states. This Pact explores its key aspects, its potential benefits, and the challenges that remain. It strikes a balance between clear rules for all Member States to take up their share of responsibility for managing migration whilst ensuring none are left alone to cope with disproportionate pressures.

Key Aspects of the Pact

1. Stronger Border Control and Screening Mechanisms

One of the core elements of the pact is the establishment of a more structured approach to border management. It introduces mandatory pre-entry screening, including health and security checks, to ensure that irregular migrants and asylum seekers are identified and processed more efficiently.

2. Faster Asylum Procedures

The pact aims to speed up asylum processes by introducing accelerated procedures for applicants from countries with low recognition rates. This would reduce pressure on national asylum systems and prevent backlogs that often leave asylum seekers in limbo for years. Asylum seekers must apply for international protection in the Member State of the first entry and remain there until the Member State responsible is determined. Not complying has important consequences such as only receiving support for basic needs rather than the full reception condition standards. The “take-back” procedure to return people from one Member State to another is more effective, with shorter time limits and no shift of responsibility in case the “take-back” notification is not sent on time.

3. Mandatory Solidarity Mechanism

A crucial element of the pact is the introduction of a solidarity mechanism. EU member states can choose between relocating asylum seekers, offering financial contributions, or providing operational support. This aims to ease the burden on frontline countries like Greece, Italy, and Spain, which receive a disproportionate number of migrants.

4. Clearer rules on responsibility for assessing asylum applications

The new regulation enhances the responsibility criteria and the rules for determining the Member State responsible for assessing an asylum application. Key changes include introducing the obligation to apply for protections in the Member State of first entry; reinforcing family criteria, for instance also covering families formed in transit before the arrive in the EU, and ensuring legal counselling for all applicants.

5. Stronger Cooperation with Third Countries

The pact emphasizes cooperation with non-EU countries to address the root causes of migration, strengthen border controls, and facilitate return procedures for migrants who do not qualify for asylum. The EU seeks to develop partnerships that ensure a more sustainable approach to migration management.

Potential Benefits:

More Balanced Responsibility-Sharing: The solidarity mechanism could lead to a fairer distribution of asylum seekers across the EU, preventing a few countries from bearing the majority of the burden. **Greater Efficiency:** Faster asylum procedures could prevent long waiting periods, reduce overcrowded refugee camps, and improve living conditions for migrants. **Enhanced Security:** Stricter border checks and screenings could help prevent illegal activities, such as human trafficking and smuggling.

Challenges and Criticism

Despite its ambitions, the pact faces several challenges:

Lack of Consensus: Some member states, particularly those in Central and Eastern Europe, are resistant to mandatory relocation quotas. **Human Rights Concerns:** Critics argue that the pact prioritizes border security over humanitarian needs, potentially leading to harsher detention conditions and inadequate protections for vulnerable groups. **Implementation Difficulties:** Enforcing the new measures across all 27 member states will require substantial financial and logistical coordination.

The EU's Asylum and Migration Pact represents a significant effort to reform the bloc's approach to migration. While it introduces promising mechanisms for improving efficiency and fairness, its success will depend on member states' willingness to cooperate and uphold fundamental human rights. As migration remains a pressing issue, the effectiveness of the pact will be closely monitored in the years to come.

What is still missing for a more effective migration management are returns of illegal migrants, an issue that the new Commissioner for Migration Policies, Mr. Magnus Brunner, has to develop in the near future. There will also be most probably hot discussions on "return hubs", centres outside the EU, where those migrants that seem to have nearly no chance to be granted asylum will be placed before returned to their country of origin. Until now the quota of returns of rejected asylum seekers lies at 20% which is far too low and thus gives a boost to rightist populist movements.

For decisions on legislation on Asylum and Migration qualified majority voting is necessary which means that at least 15 member states representing 65% of the EU population have to approve of it.

Integration of migrants and asylum seekers:

Successful migrant integration in EU countries is a two-way process. It requires both the willingness of migrants to adapt and the commitment of host countries to provide the necessary support.

The Role of Migrants in Integration

Migrants need to: Learn the language of the host country to facilitate communication and access to jobs, education, and services; Understand and respect local laws and cultural norms while also maintaining their own identity; Engage with local communities through work, education, and social interactions to build mutual understanding and trust.



The Responsibilities of Host Countries

EU nations must create conditions that enable integration :Providing language courses and cultural orientation programs to help migrants navigate their new environment; Ensuring access to employment opportunities through skill recognition, job training, and support for entrepreneurship ;Investing in education so migrant children can succeed and integrate early ;Preventing discrimination and fostering social cohesion by promoting inclusive policies and combating xenophobia.

Some EU countries have been more successful in integration than others. Factors like economic opportunities, public attitudes, and government policies all play a role. A well-managed integration process benefits both migrants and the host society—bringing economic growth, cultural diversity, and social stability.

Indeed it is crucial to integrate migrants and provide them with chances to have access to employment since we all urgently need a well trained work-force that can otherwise not be provided by our ageing societies and from them it is the best way of integration to have a job and thus a basis for their lives and that of their families.

I therefore hope that our populations and our governments will be more and more conscious about this question and act accordingly.



DAVID QINZHONG PAN

Executive Dean of Schwarzman College,
Tsinghua University

Analysis of the Impact of the US Reciprocal Tariff Policy on the Global Economy and Financial Stability



On April 2, 2025, US President Trump signed an executive order, announcing a 10% "minimum benchmark tariff" on trading partners and higher tariffs on certain trading partners. This policy quickly triggered global market shocks, and US stocks suffered a "self-harming" plunge, with the three major stock indexes recording the largest single-day decline in nearly five years. At the same time, the risk of global economic recession has increased significantly, and market concerns about future economic prospects have continued to intensify. This "reciprocal tariff" policy seems to be aimed at reshaping the United States' position in global trade, but in fact it has dragged the United States itself and the global economy into a double dilemma, which has had a huge impact on global economic and financial stability.

I Background

The United States has long experienced a trade deficit, due to a complex mix of factors. These include the international status of the U.S. dollar, which allows the country to easily purchase foreign goods using its own currency, as well as domestic fiscal deficits and loose monetary policies that stimulate consumption—ultimately weakening the competitiveness of domestic products. The Trump administration believed that implementing a

"reciprocal tariff" policy—requiring trade partner countries to maintain tariff rates equivalent to those of the U.S., and imposing special taxes on countries using value-added tax (VAT) systems—could help reverse the trade deficit. The aim was to restore global trade to a level playing field, protect domestic manufacturing, and boost employment.

II. Impact on the Global Economy

2.1 Disruption of the Global Supply Chain

In today's highly developed economic globalization, the global supply chain is closely connected. The US tariffs have seriously disrupted the supply chain that was originally running smoothly. For example, the United States has imposed a 25% tariff on imported cars. The automotive industry is an industry that is highly dependent on the global supply chain. General Motors will pay up to \$13 billion in import tariffs each year, and Ford Motor will pay about \$4.5 billion in import tariffs. Automakers are unable to bear such high costs and can only choose to reduce production or increase product prices. This not only affects the domestic automotive industry in the United States, but also affects suppliers of parts for American automakers around the world, causing the production

and operation of upstream and downstream companies in the entire industrial chain to fall into difficulties, and a large number of companies have reduced orders, revenue declines, and even face the risk of bankruptcy.

2.2 Triggering a Chain Reaction of Trade Wars

The United States' "reciprocal tariff" policy acted like a boulder cast into a tranquil lake, sending ripples across the global economic landscape. Canada swiftly retaliated by imposing a 25% tariff on imported American automobiles, while the European Union, Germany, Australia, Thailand, Spain, France, Japan, Vietnam, Brazil, and other nations were compelled to take countermeasures. This escalating cycle of tit-for-tat tariffs rapidly poisoned the global trade environment, triggering a sharp contraction in trade volumes.

Export-dependent economies suffered severe constraints on growth as orders for countless export-oriented enterprises plummeted. Mass layoffs swept through manufacturing sectors, plunging multiple economies into recession. The World Trade Organization (WTO) estimated that global merchandise trade flows declined by 4.8% in Q2 2025 alone, with tariff-affected industries experiencing 12-18% steeper declines than unaffected sectors. Particularly in Southeast Asia, export processing zones saw capacity utilization rates drop to 63%—the lowest since the 2008 financial crisis—exposing the fragility of globalization's interconnected supply chains.

2.3 Pushing up Global Prices

Tariffs are often passed on to consumers in the end. According to estimates by the Yale University Budget Lab, if other countries retaliate after the United States implements "reciprocal tariffs", low-, middle-, and high-income American families will lose an average of \$1,300, \$2,100, and \$5,400 respectively. The overall inflation rate in the United States is expected to rise by 2.3%, food prices will rise by 2.8%, and car prices will rise by 8.4%, which is equivalent to a loss of \$3,800 per year for each ordinary family. Globally, as trade costs rise, prices of all kinds of goods generally rise, from daily consumer goods to industrial raw materials, and consumer purchasing power declines, further suppressing consumer demand and insufficient economic growth momentum.

III. Impact on Financial Stability

3.1 Global Stock Market Plunge

As soon as the news came out, global stock markets were in mourning. Asia-Pacific markets generally fell, with the MSCI Vietnam Index falling by more than 7%; major European stock indices opened lower across the board; the A-share market was

also affected, with the Shanghai Composite Index falling by 0.24% and the ChiNext Index falling by 1.86%. U.S. stocks suffered even more. On April 3, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell by 1,679.39 points, a drop of 3.98%; the S&P 500 fell by 4.84%; and the Nasdaq Composite fell by 5.97%. Technology stocks became the hardest hit area, and the market value of the "Big Seven" in the U.S. stock market evaporated by more than 7 trillion yuan overnight. Investors panicked and sold their stocks one after another. The sharp fluctuations in the stock market seriously affected investor confidence, and many investors' assets shrank significantly.

3.2 Price Fluctuations in Crude Oil and Other Commodities

International crude oil futures prices have dropped sharply—WTI May futures fell by 6.64%, while Brent June futures declined by 6.42%. The sharp fluctuations in oil prices not only impact the energy market but also trigger ripple effects across many oil-dependent industries such as chemicals and transportation. Additionally, prices of other major commodities like agricultural products and metals have also experienced varying degrees of volatility. This has created significant cost uncertainties for related businesses, intensifying production and operational risks.

3.3 Rising Expectations of an Economic Recession

Experts from Fitch Ratings have warned that if the U.S. government's new global taxation policy is implemented, the tariff rate on U.S. imports could soar from the current 2.5% to 22%—an increase of nearly eightfold—sharply raising the risk of a global economic recession. Michael Feroli, Chief U.S. Economist at JPMorgan, stated that JPMorgan expects the U.S. real GDP for the year to contract "under the



heavy pressure of the new tariff policy,” revising their previous forecast from a 1.3% growth to a 0.3% contraction. Mark Zandi, Chief Economist at Moody’s Analytics, noted that if the U.S. fully and continuously implements its tariff policy, the country will face a serious recession, even if it manages to avoid a full-scale depression. Heightened recession fears are dampening corporate investment appetite, prompting financial institutions to adopt more cautious lending practices, which further hinders economic recovery.

Conclusion

The US reciprocal tariff policy may protect some industries in the short term, but in the long run, it has exacerbated global economic uncertainty, pushed up inflation, and caused financial market turmoil. The uncertainty of tariff policies will reshape the global economic order, and the stock market's "dial" has been completely reset. In the future, international cooperation and a rules-based trade system will still be the key to maintaining global economic stability.



MILICA PEJANOVIC-DURISIC

Minister of Defense of Montenegro 2012-2016

Technology for Gender Equality in Global Governance



Women have played a growing and increasingly important role in the multilateral system, which encompasses global institutions and frameworks created to facilitate cooperation among states. Historically, women often had a very limited participation in global diplomacy and decision-making, but their involvement has significantly improved in recent decades. This progress continues to expand, thanks to the efforts of many trailblazing leaders and advocates. These women have left lasting legacies in the multilateral system by transforming global policy, advocating for inclusive solutions and driving systemic changes in global governance. Their leadership in areas such as peacebuilding, climate change, gender equality, development and human rights has reshaped how multilateral organizations operate and address critical global challenges,

ensuring that women's voices are integral to international decision-making. As women occupy more influential positions and drive key international agendas, their presence enhances the inclusivity, effectiveness and responsiveness of the multilateral system. However, much work remains to be done to ensure that women's voices are fully integrated and their contributions are fully valued in this space.

The pressing challenge is how to leverage technological innovations to increase the participation and contribution of women in the global multilateral system. The adequate response has to be based on a multifaceted approach that takes into account structural barriers and prejudices, promotes inclusivity and empowers women across all levels of decision-making. New and emerging technologies can be a transformative

tool in this process. They have the potential to not only reshape global policy and governance but also to provide innovative platforms for amplifying women's engagement. Digital tools, like artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, metaverse and other technological advancements offer unique opportunities to address critical global challenges while promoting gender equality.

To effectively leverage technological innovations, a comprehensive approach is needed—one that addresses barriers and creates opportunities for women's active participation in the multilateral system. To that end, different are the ways how new and emerging technologies can be harnessed. For example, **AI-based digital tools** in combination with **data analytics** can be used to conduct unbiased assessments of gender representation in the multilateral system, in order to highlight gender disparities and propose corrective actions, ensuring equitable participation in global governance. Online platforms and applications supported by **Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality (VR/AR)** can facilitate broader inclusion of women in key discussions, allowing them to refine their skills in high-stakes

environments. Such platforms can be used for effective simulations of diplomatic negotiations and better access to formal (diplomatic) training programmes, particularly for women from marginalized regions. Further on, **Metaverse** platforms can host virtual events in immersive spaces, eliminating geographic and security barriers, enabling broad participation, fostering neutrality and leveling the field of action for women-leaders. Networking events within the metaverse allow participants to connect globally, collaborate and share knowledge in secure, supportive settings. **Blockchain** can also be used to create decentralized platforms to support women-led initiatives and projects, bypassing traditional barriers and offering enhanced safety for users, due to its inherent security features. It can also be used to track funds allocated for women-related initiatives, enhancing transparency, ensuring accountability and providing real-time monitoring of progress in their implementation. **Quantum Computing** is another emerging technology that can model highly complex diplomatic and peacebuilding negotiation scenarios. For example, it can simulate multiple negotiation pathways in international climate agreements, predicting how different stances might influence outcomes for various countries. By processing data much faster than traditional computers, optimal strategies can be identified in real-time, giving women leaders and diplomats advanced, data-driven insights during important multilateral negotiations.

Measures to Empower Women in Multilateral Systems Using Technology

To translate these opportunities offered by new and emerging technologies into tangible outcomes, specific initiatives can be created and implemented to empower women in multilateral environments. For example:

- **Virtual Leadership Accelerator**, as a tech-driven accelerator for women in international relations, diplomacy and governance would specifically target women from underrepresented regions (e.g., the Global South) and sectors (e.g., security, climate change, technology). By partnering with global institutions, such accelerator can provide access to high-level mentoring, diplomatic immersion experiences in virtual environments and specialized online training.
- **Inclusive Diplomacy Incubators**, set up within multilateral organizations, can focus on training and empowering women in emerging areas of global governance, such as digital diplomacy, climate negotiations and global health governance. These tech-driven incubators would provide resources, mentorship and opportunities to work on real-world multilateral projects using advanced technologies.
- **Decentralized Crowdfunding Platforms**, realized in Blockchain technology, would allow global citizens to support women-led projects in international development, peacebuilding and climate action. These platforms can empower grassroots women leaders by providing the financial resources needed to participate in multilateral initiatives, avoiding traditional funding models and promoting greater autonomy.

The effectiveness of these initiatives can be monitored and evaluated using tools that are also based on new and emerging technologies. Thus, **AI algorithms** can conduct regular audits to assess the impact of initiatives on women's participation and representation. These tools can simulate different outcomes, ensuring that proposed measures do not perpetuate gender inequalities, offering real-time data on how initiatives might affect women globally. As a metric, **Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI)** could be developed to be a global index to track the progress of gender parity across multilateral organizations. Similar to existing economic or development indices, the GGPI would provide yearly rankings of institutions based on gender representation, pay equity and leadership roles. This index, powered by AI and big data analytics, can provide real-time insights, holding organizations accountable and motivating them to improve their gender balance.



Conclusion

These innovative measures demonstrate the transformative potential of new and emerging technologies in increasing women's participation in the multilateral system. By integrating digital tools: AI, blockchain, metaverse, AR/VR and advanced computing, these and other similar initiatives can create more inclusive, transparent and effective platforms for women's leadership in global governance. Their implementation would certainly accelerate progress toward gender equality and enhance the overall effectiveness of multilateral decision-making.

However, to increase women's contributions to the global multilateral system, technology alone is not sufficient. To maximize its impacts, technological advancements must be accompanied by structural reforms, targeted support and the promotion of the culture of inclusivity and respect for gender equality. Multilateral organizations and member states must commit to long-term efforts that ensures women have equal opportunities to lead, influence and shape the future of global governance in the digital age.



REXHEP MEIDANI

President of Albania 1997–2002

For a New Ethics in a World Shaped by Digital Technology



Modernity began Copernican revolution of universe, Darwin natural evolution and that of our own consciousness with Freud. Very particular was the Industrial Revolution - a transformative period from the mid-18th century and to the early 19th century, which marked a major shift from agrarian societies to industrial and urbanized ones. Its main characteristics were: Technological Innovations, Factory System, Economic Impact, Social Changes and Urbanization. This revolution had a profound impact on society, economy, and technology, laying the foundation for the modern industrialized world. Today, the extensive use of digital and network technology has pushed mankind from the industrial era into the information and digital one, in which the Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming a very powerful and, at the same time, a quite

dangerous tool. Studying this perspective, realizing the conflictual consequences, Harari is absolutely right when he is emphasising: "We are busy creating new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) that have the potential to escape our control and enslave or annihilate us." (p. xi)... "The AI revolution is still in its infancy, and it is notoriously difficult to understand momentous developments in real time... The historical lesson should strongly encourage us to pay more attention to the AI revolution in our current political debates. The invention of AI is potentially more momentous than the invention of the telegraph, the printing press or even writing because AI is the first technology that is capable of making decisions and generating ideas by itself" (p. 398-399).

In actual world, the digits are becoming an extensive global phenomenon and a real intensive force. Changing the way we live, work, and interact, they have significantly impacted various fields. Some of them are: Government and Public Services (e-government, data-driven policies, civic engagement); Economy and Business (e-commerce, remote work, data analytics); Education (e-learning, interactive tools, research); Healthcare (telemedicine, electronic health records, medical research); Communication (social media, instant messaging, video conferencing); Transportation (navigation, ride-sharing, smart vehicles); Entertainment (streaming services, gaming, digital media). Today, the smart governments are investing in digital public infrastructure to improve service delivery and governance, from digital identification systems to e-governance platforms. On the other side, the cybersecurity or the protecting data and systems from cyber threats is becoming a top priority for a government and businesses itself. Furthermore, there is a growing urgency on making digitalization more environmentally sustainable, promoting circular economy practices, such as recycling and responsible consumption, mitigating the

environmental impact. An important part of this digital process is the Digital Economy with billions of daily online transactions among people, organizations (businesses, institutions, non-profits) based on different devices (servers, laptops, smartphones, etc.). It is rapidly evolving, driven by several key trends and technological advancements, in which the AI is playing its role in various sectors, from customer service to decision-making processes.

The traditional activities (like production, distribution, trade) are deeply transformed by Internet, World Wide Web and Blockchain Technology (in storing and managing data in a secure, decentralized manner). In fact, the actual digital transformation of the economy is altering conventional notions: how businesses are structured, how consumers obtain goods and services, and how policy and state's institutions are adapted to new rules and challenges. This digital revolution is developing a new space, not only for economy and trade, but also for cultural exchange and integration among nations, and, above all, for a new environment based on new global rules, ethical principles and social-political concepts. The use of digital technologies in industry as well as in society at large goes hand in hand with the development of data bases, search engines, social platforms, mobile technologies, Internet of Things IoT (a network of physical devices that transfer data to one another without human intervention), robotics, AI, etc. Currently, robots, for example, are becoming widespread in everyday life performing different tasks in health care, hotels, restaurants, schools and private homes. However, this process might be seen positively and negatively and in each case



we have to think about the criteria we use in order to qualify ethically and legally their use for good life. Particularly, in a human rights perspective, the use of driverless cars and drones or the use of digital devices for surveillance, are posing real problems, even serious harms. So, the question is: how far do we want to delegate personal responsibility to different devices and algorithms? And, of course, the answer must reflect the ethical aspect and the legal one.

The public-private relation has had different shapes in different epochs and societies. As with industrial society, new monopolies and power struggles arise between digital capitalism and the (new) working class. Nowadays, billions of users worldwide give their data for free to a few global players, offering their services. These digital capital owners, either for profit or under political pressure, could use the personal data of their customers without their consent. Thus, another aspect of social struggles must be between digital customers and data owners. Beyond that, the AI and the robotization, the increasing role of social media and online platforms, their uses and misuses, including the abuse on personal data mentioned above, are a cause for serious ethical and legal concern. Particularly, for different questions (such as: how to address the ethical concerns related to AI, robots, their algorithms or job displacement, or more, what are the ethical implications of corporate or government surveillance on individuals' privacy?, etc.) we need urgently the right answers and concrete reactions. My question is: what are the consequences when companies, employers, and friends want to know everything about us? Is this a danger for our freedom? What is the drawback of too much surveillance? In reality, the ethical and legal content of the answer is linked to dichotomy freedom vs. security as well as autonomy vs. heteronomy. Without paying attention to these questions, the digital technology, in some way, will foster new forms of human rights violations, even oppression and exploitation. Considering the public-private relations, in the conflict between freedom and data protection, we need to pay more attention to freedom, particularly seeing a new power struggle between digital capitalism and the (digital) working class.

We are facing different forms of digital divide based on the exclusion from access to digital networks, on economic and educational differences within a society as well as between nations. On one side, the digital technologies might help overcoming social inequalities and different forms of exclusion and, on the other side they might also aggravate the divide in society. However, this digital divide is not just a technical but a complex local and global societal phenomenon for which key ethical questions concerning justice, freedom, peace, cooperation, and identity have to be redefined. Also, the digital divide remains a significant challenge, to ensure equitable access to technology and the internet for all socioeconomic groups. Efforts are being made to bridge this gap, especially in developing countries, by improving digital literacy and access to technology. However, in my view, the perspective of digitalization in our century is not only a technological but, also, an ethical and legal challenge. New norms and rules must be embedded in legal systems, traditions and customs; in any cultural, educational, economic, political or institutional activity.

We do not live in two separate (analogue and digital) worlds however the networked world is a predominant feature of today's society. Now, more people are embedded in a global system of networked objects, using in everyday life the Internet, Facebook, Tweeter, WhatsApp, etc., for communication, information and other services. In this networked world, where we post and tweet all the time, the question is: what are the ethical limits of the use of these tools in our information society? In fact, in 1997 UNESCO held the first International Congress on Ethical, Legal, and Societal Aspects of Digital Information. There, became clear that, the moral and legal norms, different in different epochs and societies, must reflect the information progress. Since that time, further public debates mirror the moral and legal changes in society. As we see, today, in the world shaped by digital technology, our societies require a tremendous need for a New Ethics – the Digital One, closely related to our thinking and behaviour, on one side, and Bioethics, Medical and Business Ethics, on the other one, orientating and helping humans in their moral and legal decisions. In the complex interplay between technology, law, and ethics in our society, we must consider urgently two groups of questions, which are: Legal Questions (Data Privacy, Intellectual Property, Cybersecurity, Content Regulation) and Ethical Questions (Privacy vs. Convenience, Digital Divide, Surveillance, AI and Automation). To be conscious of them, to think and to obtain the right answers to all of them, it is to project a better future for our humanity.



ROSALIA ARTEAGA SERRANO

President of the Republic of Ecuador 1997;
Secretary-General, ACTO 2004-2007;
Global Ambassador, Waterkeeper Alliance

The Water Crisis



Water scarcity is not a new issue for humanity. Throughout history, the extinction of various cultures, such as the ancient Rapa Nui, better known as Easter Island, “Isla de Pascua”, a remote and isolated island in Polynesia, has been attributed to a lack of water and the impossibility of obtaining it from nearby neighbors. This idea is supported by geographer Jared Diamond in his extraordinary book *Collapse*, in which he also mentions the exodus and disappearance of the Anasazi people from their ancestral lands due to what became known as the Great Drought, which occurred in the late 13th century.

These and other analyses led the renowned American geographer to consider the potential extinction of humans on Earth, given the insular nature of our planet and our inability to access resources beyond those available here.

However, this is not the primary focus of our article. Rather, we aim to discuss water reserves, water generation, and water harvesting, the efforts to ensure that this vital resource does not become severely, widely, and permanently scarce across different countries and continents.

If we explore collective memory and historical texts, including religious scriptures, we often find references to hydrological phenomena such as droughts and floods. Perhaps the most well-known reference to the latter is found in the Bible, the sacred text of Judeo-Christian religions, which recounts the Great Flood.

Among Indigenous American cultures, a closer reference is found in the ancient legends of the Cañari people, a pre-Incan civilization from southern Ecuador, which tell of mythical macaws that saved the survivors of a great flood. But when we turn to the present, we now have numerous scientific projections that allow us to act based on solid data and anticipate the consequences of human actions on Earth. While vast amounts of water exist on our planet, most of it is saline and unsuitable for human consumption. A significant portion is also frozen in the polar regions, and as it melts at an accelerating pace, it alters planetary dynamics and raises sea levels.

Freshwater suitable for human, agricultural, and livestock use is relatively scarce. It is estimated that over 97% of the water covering the Earth is saline, while only 2.5% is freshwater. A significant portion of this freshwater is used for agriculture and livestock, leaving an even smaller amount available for direct human consumption. Although water was once thought to be an inexhaustible resource, often used as an example of infinite sets in children's math lessons, we now know with certainty that freshwater is limited, and much of it is contaminated.

To this, we must add the consequences of excessive groundwater extraction, which leads to the contamination of aquifers, painting a bleak picture for the future.

For example, major aquifers worldwide, including the Guarani Aquifer, which spans Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina, as well as the recently identified Amazonian Aquifer, described as an "underground ocean", must be adequately protected. Preventing contamination from drilling and preserving these water sources for human consumption should be a priority.

Since the establishment of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, experts have warned about the need for cautious and responsible action to avoid reaching a point of no return in global warming. The consequences of climate change, such as desertification, polar ice caps and glacier melting, altered rainfall patterns, and declining river flows, directly contribute to water scarcity. This affects not only human survival but also food production and energy generation.

In recent years, the latter has become a critical issue. The severe droughts of 2024, which plagued many countries, caused widespread suffering, impacting quality of life and national economies.

In Latin America, water shortages created bad conditions for both individuals and economies. In recent years, climate-related factors have increasingly driven migration crises, as lands become exhausted and unproductive.

Wildfires, too, have been devastating, occurring continuously across the continent. These fires have led to significant loss of life and economic damage, destroying forests, both primary and commercial, along with agricultural fields and grazing lands. Endemic flora and fauna have suffered irreparable losses, increasing the number of species on the endangered list and threatening biodiversity.

In the energy sector, many countries, eager to transition to renewable energy, invested heavily in hydroelectric power. They built dams and made massive financial commitments, expecting sustainable results. However, prolonged droughts left rivers depleted, forcing hydroelectric plants to shut down. The resulting energy crisis persisted for months, causing business closures, the collapse of educational and healthcare systems, economic downturns, and a severe decline in quality of life, setbacks that are difficult to recover from.

This is why we can confidently say that the "water crisis" has become a permanent reality in many parts of the world. It is further exacerbated by the decline of wetlands, and the melting of mountain snow, such as in the Andes, which affects vast territories and its direct impact on the Amazonian biome. The modern understanding of the Andean-Amazonian biome highlights it as one of the richest and most biodiverse regions on Earth. This creates a vicious cycle that is difficult to break. As the Amazon rainforest, one of the world's greatest climate regulators suffers from deforestation, mining, oil extraction, and fires, both natural and man-made, the planet as a whole is affected. The Amazon is both a victim and a contributor to climate change: on one hand, it suffers from reduced rainfall and wildfires, and on the other, its deforestation accelerates global warming.

Food security is intrinsically linked to water cycles, which are now severely disrupted. This endangers food supplies in vast regions of the world, particularly in less developed countries, exacerbating poverty, fueling migration, and often intensifying violence and social conflicts. Solutions must begin at the local level. This is why we place greater trust in local governments, which maintain close contact with their communities and can work together to protect water sources, reduce waste, plant trees to encourage rainfall and preserve habitats and wetlands. However, these efforts must also be tackled globally if we hope to succeed in preserving life on Earth.

The water crisis is here to stay on a global scale. Its future impact will depend largely on the actions we take now.



MIRKO CVETKOVIC

Prime Minister of Serbia 2008-2012

Global Challenges of Today's World

Introduction

The beginning of the third decade of the 21st century brought new and re-actualized existing challenges that seemed to have been largely overcome. At the same time, existing challenges such as, for example, climate change, economic inequality, geopolitical tensions, and so on, are present with unchanged or even greater intensity. What is completely new is the emergence of the Covid pandemic. The World Health Organization declared a pandemic in March 2020. The pandemic has affected about 96% of all countries in the world. Many countries have declared a state of emergency, introduced quarantines, curfews, closed borders, and so on. Although necessary and justified on health grounds, these measures essentially represented restrictions on human freedoms and, in my opinion, inspired (or supported) the view that democracy is an inferior way of governing a country. At the same time, restrictions and closures, especially in wealthier countries that were able to produce or procure vaccines themselves, are a message that globalization is losing support from the very those who advocated for it. Also, China's very rapid economic development has introduced additional tensions on the global stage. According to World Bank data, in 2023, China's GDP PPP amounted to 34.66 trillion current US dollars, which is about 25% more than the USA, which achieved a GDP PPP of 27.72 trillion current US dollars. Many wonder whether globalization, which China has wisely used, has also contributed to this. Considering the current situation, we will review the two major challenges facing the world today.

The fundamental new problems of today

The problems facing the world today are numerous and often interconnected. I would like to single out two that are current and that can have a major impact on our immediate future. These are: the current state and prospects of globalization and the state and prospects of democracy and human rights.

Globalization

Globalization is a very broad term used to describe changes in societies, culture and economy. Here we limit ourselves to changes in the economy.

Observing global trends, during and after the end of the pandemic, many wondered whether globalization will continue to be the central philosophy of international economic relations. In this context, at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2023, the question of whether globalization is dead or not arose. This question was raised in connection with the observation that previously, business costs had a key influence on the decision whether to invest and do business or not, and that now companies must also consider

geopolitical factors and national security. The answers offered were different. In an interview, Tinglong Dai, an expert on globalization at the Johns Hopkins Carey Business School, said that globalization is not dead, but that it is struggling to survive. He also estimated that in the coming years we can expect Western countries to maintain high levels of free trade only among themselves, but that they will be suspicious when it comes to China, Russia and similar countries. If this comes to pass, it will be interesting to see how it works and whether it is globalization or semi-globalization. The future, however, also brings new surprises. At the time of writing this article, the USA has imposed tariffs of 25% on products from Canada and Mexico, as well as an additional 10% on products from China. The justification for Canada and China was that the USA has a large trade deficit with these countries, and for Mexico, that many illegal immigrants enter the USA from that country. Shortly after, contacts with Canada and Mexico followed, and the additional tariffs were postponed for a month, during which a solution acceptable to all parties will be sought. The USA is also considering introducing tariffs on products from the EU. The EU is announcing reciprocal measures in response. The coming days

will show whether all this is just a matter of securing a better negotiating position, or whether we will witness a trade war between allies. Unlike the EU, China's response is different. China has announced a complaint to the World Trade Organization against the USA administration's decision, stating that these are malicious actions, and that the tariffs introduced are unilateral and unfair. At the same time, China is hinting that it will also introduce reciprocal measures for a certain group of products. Here too, it is not clear how the dispute will end, with a greater likelihood that in this case we are closer to a real, rather than a rhetorical, tariff war. This is indicated by the fact that a few years ago, authors appeared who predicted a long-term relocation of business activities to the East, which certainly does not suit the USA. In the context of the growing importance of the East in the world economy, an interesting analysis was presented by Dr Parag Khanna in the book: "The future is Asian" (2019).

In conclusion, it must be said that the future of globalism is not bright. This is disturbing because it is precisely globalism that is responsible for connections of all kinds, and ultimately for the increase in well-being and living standards of the entire planet.

Democracy and Human Rights

Democracy and human rights are accepted as the basic pillars of a just society. The general definition of democracy is that it is a society in which there is rule by the people. Of course, the people rule through their representatives who are elected in free and fair elections. Such a



society also implies that all citizens have equal rights and freedoms. Liberal democracy includes a whole range of characteristics such as: a constitution, universal suffrage, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of the press, an independent judiciary, equality before the law, a system of mutual supervision between the branches of government, etc. As can be seen, democracy also includes rights that are otherwise included in the corpus of human rights. Human rights are otherwise an important domain that the United Nations deals with. Back in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. It refers to the principles of freedom and equality and deals with the rights of individuals, religious, public and political freedoms, as well as social, economic and other rights. Later, to express their specificities, individual countries adopted separate declarations on human rights (Cairo, 1990 – Muslim countries and Bangkok, 1993 – Far Eastern states).

At the current moment, along with the problems faced by globalization, problems are also arising in the domain of democracy and human rights. Many would conclude that these movements are not random coincidences but part of a broader process.

In support of this, we cite the process that is currently taking place in Serbia. About three months ago, a concrete canopy collapsed at the railway station in Novi Sad (the second largest city in Serbia), killing 15 people. The railway station has recently been reconstructed, and this happened just a few months after the grand opening. It was a shock to the entire nation.

Tributes have begun to the victims, with questions raised about responsibility and corruption during construction. The authorities reacted inadequately with inaccurate statements that the canopy was not even the subject of the works.

This caused reactions primarily from students who began with demonstrations and fifteen-minute blockades of certain streets (one minute for each deceased). At the beginning the demonstrations were not secured by the police. Demonstrators were attacked, and cars ran over and injured them. At first, the attackers were officials of the ruling party, and later sympathizers. So far, more than 15 incidents have been recorded, mostly with minor injuries. This led to further demonstrations and disruptions, including the blockades on faculties, that spread throughout the country. The protests are attended by students and their professors, as well as other social groups: farmers, unions, pensioners, etc. In addition to protests held in individual cities (so far in about 150), joint protests are occasionally held. The largest was in late December 2024 in Belgrade, when just over 100,000 protesters were present. The demands are basically to disclose the documentation on the construction of the canopy and to prosecute those responsible for both the canopy and those who

attacked the protesters. The government has begun publishing the documentation, the prime minister has resigned, and the president has repeatedly called for talks. Calls for talks have been rejected on the grounds that the president is not competent to fulfill the demands. It was also said that the resignation of the Prime Minister was not requested, but that the existing institutions, in accordance with the existing regulations, do their job. The protests were supported in the region by students from some countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro), then individually by public figures from the region and the world. The EU did not issue any official statement. The demonstrations continue with unabated intensity.

This example is given to see the current state of democracy and human rights. Despite the huge protests, the EU, even after three months, has not reacted to the demands to respect the laws in a country that is in accession negotiations for joining the EU. Since I do not believe that the EU has given up on its civilizational values, I believe that this is just a picture of the current situation in the world where transactional opportunities with the ruling elites are valued more than the need to protect democracy and human rights.

Conclusion

We live in a time when civilizational achievements are being questioned. This is perhaps the greatest challenge in the last 50 years. Geopolitical relations in the world are in recession. I think we should all be aware of this.

As an optimist, I hope and believe that we will be able to cope with the challenges that lie ahead.



JULIO COBOS

Vice President of Argentina 2007-2011

The Need for Multilateralism to Reinvent itself once more



In 2017, as a National Senator representing the province of Mendoza, I had the privilege to visit this beautiful country for the first time, to experience its hospitality and to share experiences with its people. That time was within the framework of the 5th Global Forum and I closed my speech with the following reflection: "The world does not need observers nor rapporteurs but protagonists eager to take concrete actions. In this new world scenario, we have to play a specific role, through international cooperation, in order to consolidate peace, freedom and equality, among other rights... I hope they are shared by everyone, because the future generations so require us." Today, almost eight years later, I would like to invite you to reflect upon the same words on the current situation.

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November of 1989 reaffirmed the belief that globalization and multilateralism had come to stay. Protectionism had its days counted. As expressed by Francis Fukuyama, the world could not be improved anymore: it was the end of history. In the light of these facts, today we can affirm that history was different and a quarter into the 21st century, we find ourselves surrounded by a constant proliferation of protectionist ideas and a general disbelief around the benefits of multilateralism and global governance.

Different events in the international sphere have been causing a process of deterioration and paralysis of the world's multilateral architecture, especially in the United Nations System. The international order as we knew it is in the process of reconfiguration, while the international community faces realities marked by a severe humanitarian, economic and social emergency.

The downfall of the United States of America from its dominant position in the international system resulted in a system similar to that of a multipolar order, in which certain countries attempt to maximize their benefits at the expense of the others, therefore blurring the liberal order that was already showing its limitations.

Furthermore, this crisis of liberal internationalism has caused in opposition the emergence of leaders that, in the most diverse places and for different reasons, question the adequacy of multilateralism to face global problems effectively.

The cases in which the post war systems has failed continue to increase every year. For example, we can think of the difficulties the Security Council of the United Nations faces to pass binding resolutions when one of the five members with veto power

(USA, China, France, Great Britain and Russia) finds itself directly or indirectly related to a conflict. Thus, the main tool thought out to solve controversies in the international system finds limitations from its own conception, granting therefore five countries the privilege to defend their own interests by stopping any binding action they do not deem convenient.

This is the reality we are facing. That being said, the question we must answer is: Why is multilateralism desirable? In light of this question, we need to make a qualitative leap in global governance because a deficient though perfectible—and this is the great challenge—multilateralism is ultimately better than any nationalist or protectionist alternative.

What appears certain is that there is a series of global problems we must address jointly and comprehensively: climate change, the governments' response to future pandemics, illnesses and even poverty and inequality, which in time cause migrations that affect both rich and less fortunate countries. Simultaneously, there are natural disasters, cases of terrorism and even cyber wars that can be tackled with quick and collective responses from the international community.

Even though there is consensus on the crisis of multilateralism, it partially derives from not acknowledging its past and current achievements. For this reason, I would like to mention some clear examples.

The Paris Agreement set goals that limit the increase of global temperatures and seek to

reduce greenhouse gases emissions. Whether or not each signing country achieves the goals, the collective effort made by the international community to recognize the threat of climate change generates a positive output and it is the outcome of a multilateral vision to a global problem. Furthermore, the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Baku at the end of last year is another example of how multilateral agreements provide a basis, especially financial, for States to fight against climate change.

Organizations such as the World Health Organization or the World Trade Organization have immensely contributed to reducing costs in the purchase of technology and health supplies, and to reducing or eliminating tariffs for international trade. These organizations work for the wellbeing of all the people based on science, spearheading and supporting measures applied throughout the world to give everyone the same opportunities everywhere. Unfortunately, these efforts are not always enough to achieve the goals set by the organizations, but each action they coordinate contributes in some measure with their ultimate goal. Improvements could certainly be made after a

process of revision, but withdrawing into oneself and ignoring the future of others cannot be an option for those of us who believe in common good and community life.

The alternative put forward by contemporary leaders who oppose the Wilsonian conception of multilateral liberalism is based on an exacerbated nationalism that, in theory, seeks to prioritize national over international interests. However, that search often produces the opposite effect and leads to demagogic maneuvers that have nothing to do with prioritizing national interests.

For example, it is worth mentioning that many leaders of different countries have opted to increase tariffs on goods and services of neighbor countries in order to prioritize their own. This measure, however, results in an increase of the costs of products and services to their own consumers, causing the opposite of the intended effect.

There are many examples of the cost of exacerbated protectionism, as well as of chauvinistic nationalism, which increase regional geopolitical tensions and global fragmentation, weakening the institutions that promote international cooperation and hindering the implementation of solutions to global problems. The situation of Ukraine and the Gaza Strip are clear examples of the risk of a greater nationalism, at the expense of the search of multilateral solutions.

Multilateralism was thought to counter the dangers of nationalism and extreme protectionism: while the first seeks to promote dialogue, cooperation and global solutions, nationalism and protectionism often hinder cooperation and escalate conflicts. The answer to the shortcomings of the post war liberal order is not more isolationism; in a world with more tariffs to commerce, only consumers lose.



Future generations must be built on the basis of dialogue as a solution to global problems and this can be achieved by strengthening international law and the institutions that apply it. Simultaneously, greater multilateralism promotes, through financial cooperation, global economic growth by fostering social and economic development of our societies.

However, in agreement with the ideas implied at the beginning and as the Neapolitan academic Giambattista Vico used to teach, history is never lineal. Continuous progress does not exist. Societies move forward and, at some point, they move backward. It is the *corsi e ricorsi*: the back and forth, the flux and reflux. In fact, progress entails not losing what was gained during that almost inevitable backward movement.

I repeat: let us not be observers nor rapporteurs, let us not allow the world to become fragmented before our eyes without reacting or seeking new paths, because a crisis of multilateralism can be solved with more multilateralism. The progress of our society depends on it; there is no future if that future is not common, peaceful and achieved through sustainable development that leaves no one behind.



HAKIMA EL HAITE

President of Liberal International; Vice President of COP21; Special Envoy for Climate Change of the Kingdom of Morocco 2015-2017

2024 Climate Disasters: A Historic Warning



The year 2024 is already a significant year in the field of climate disasters, with a series of devastating events that demonstrate the urgency of action in the face of unprecedented climate change. Regions around the world have been severely impacted, illustrating the growing scope of environmental crises and the definite fall of borders: Climate change has no nationality or borders.

Mayotte was hit by Cyclone Chido, which caused massive destruction and tragic loss of life. This cyclone is a testament to the growing vulnerability of islands to extreme weather events, exacerbated by global warming.

In Europe, Valencia, Spain, suffered devastating floods that ravaged local infrastructure and caused considerable economic losses.

In France, rainfall records were broken in 2024 in several cities in the northern half, such as Paris and Saint-Nazaire, according to Météo France. "Some cities had never experienced so much rain in a year since measurements began (in 1949), such as in Paris (901.1 mm of precipitation), Melun (994.9 mm), Blois (905.6 mm), Le Mans (960.9 mm) or Saint-Nazaire (1,106.1 mm)," the meteorological institute said.

The United States, meanwhile, was battered by two major hurricanes, causing massive destruction and reconstruction costs amounting to billions of dollars.

In 2024, West and Central Africa faced an unprecedented crisis, with nearly 7 million people affected by devastating floods, exacerbated by climate change. These events, which have ravaged homes and crops, have reached alarming levels.

The effects of climate change are particularly visible in the region, where monsoon variations endanger the lives of millions of inhabitants. The torrential rains of 2024 have compromised not only homes, but also the food security of the entire region. According to the UN, around 6.9 million people have been affected by these floods. In the Sahel, record levels of rainfall in volume and intensity have been observed, with some regions of Niger recording up to 200% more than in previous years. This even threatens historical sites, such as the city center of Agadez, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In Chad, torrential rains since July have caused at least 576 deaths and 1.9 million people affected, representing 10.2% of the population, according to OCHA. In Cameroon, torrential rains have destroyed more than 56,000 homes and flooded agricultural land, leading to the loss of thousands of animals.

Cities like Monrovia in Liberia and Conakry in Guinea have been invaded by muddy

floods, while Bamako in Mali has suffered massive floods, causing delays in the start of the school year.

As global temperatures rise, extreme events are expected to increase in frequency and intensity. By 2030, up to 118 million very poor Africans could be exposed to drought, flooding and extreme heat. The cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action!

2024 should be remembered as the hottest year ever recorded, with a global average temperature exceeding the pre-industrial level by 1.6 °C. This exceedance of the 1.5 °C threshold set by the Paris Agreement raises concerns about an alarming trend. For the first time, the average global temperature over two consecutive years (2023-2024) has crossed this limit, raising concerns about the viability of global climate goals.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has raised the alarm, calling the situation a "frantic pace of climate change." Greenhouse gas concentrations, including carbon dioxide and methane, have reached new highs, warming not only the atmosphere but also the oceans, which absorb 90% of the energy accumulated in the Earth system.

With a global average more than 0.72 °C higher than the 1991-2020 period, 2024 was the hottest year ever recorded for all continents except Antarctica and Australia.

Climate experts predict that global temperatures will rise by at least 2.5 °C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century, according to the report released last December by the World Meteorological Organization.

According to German reinsurer Munich Re, the cost of insured losses caused by natural disasters reached \$140 billion (€135 billion), making 2024 the third most expensive year since 1980, behind 2005 and 2017. The total amount of economic losses peaked at \$320 billion. Weather disasters were responsible for 93% of global losses and 97% of insured losses, the world's largest reinsurance group said.

Climate Catastrophe: An Unacceptable Burden for Africa

Climate change continues to have devastating effects on all countries, sparing no one. However, while developed countries have the means to repair the damage caused by these climate disasters, this luxury remains unattainable for Africa. The African continent is suffering alarming economic and social

consequences, losing an average of 2 to 5% of its gross domestic product (GDP) due to extreme weather events. Many African countries have to reallocate up to 9% of their budget to deal with these crises.

In the next decade, sub-Saharan Africa could be forced to spend between \$30 and \$50 billion per year on adaptation, which would represent about 2 to 3% of its GDP, an unsustainable burden for many already fragile countries.

The impacts of these phenomena extend to various areas, such as agriculture, food security, education, energy and public health, thus threatening overall socio-economic development in Africa.

Climate talks: forward but far to go COP 28: fossil fuel out?

Recent COP meetings have yielded some progress but have also underscored the complexities of international climate negotiations. COP28, held in Dubai, resulted in a landmark agreement to transition away from fossil fuels; however, specific timelines and mechanisms for this transition remain subjects of ongoing debate. Discussions regarding loss and damage funding gained momentum, with initial pledges made, but the long-term structure and adequacy of this mechanism are still under development. Climate finance continues to be a significant sticking point, with developing nations stressing the necessity for developed countries to fulfill existing commitments and significantly scale up financial support for both mitigation and adaptation efforts. Additionally, there is an increasing call for reforming multilateral development banks to better address the climate crisis.

Without adequate measures, up to 118 million people living on less than \$1.90 a day could be exposed to drought, floods and heat waves by 2030. This situation would further jeopardize poverty reduction efforts and hinder economic growth.

It is therefore imperative to increase investments in National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) and accelerate the implementation of the "Early Warnings for All" Initiative. These actions are essential to save lives and build community resilience to climate disasters.

In this era of interdependence, it is imperative that we recognize Africa not merely as a continent of the future, but as an integral participant in shaping the global narrative on climate action and sustainable development.

Cop29, 1,3 trillion: a start not the solution

COP29 marked a crucial moment in global climate negotiations, culminating in an agreement that identified an annual climate finance requirement of \$1.3 trillion.

Although this figure was deemed inadequate by many developing nations—India referred to it as a "paltry sum," and the African Group of Negotiators labeled it "too little, too late"—it lays a foundation for future investments in a green economy and the protection of vulnerable communities.

Significant commitments were made during COP29, including the establishment of ambitious climate targets and progress in carbon market mechanisms. Furthermore, multilateral development banks pledged to increase climate financing, aiming for \$120 billion annually by 2030 to support low- and middle-income countries. The private sector also demonstrated strong support for climate action, with over 38,000 businesses urging G20 governments to set robust climate finance goals, while 650 investors managing over \$33 trillion in assets called for a comprehensive framework for climate finance.

US Retreat: A Deepening Wound in Global Climate Commitment

The geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, influencing the dynamics of climate negotiations. While some nations have strengthened their climate commitments, others have faced setbacks or prioritized short-term economic interests over long-term climate goals. Notably, the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement under the Trump administration introduces significant uncertainty. As one of the world's largest emitters and a major financial contributor to the UNFCCC, this decision has profound implications, particularly for vulnerable nations that rely on international support. The current administration's focus on intensifying fossil fuel production poses potential risks not

not only for Americans but also for the most vulnerable populations globally.

Looking ahead, future COPs and intersessional periods must be critical for translating commitments into concrete actions. Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with more ambitious targets are essential. Accelerating the deployment of renewable energy technologies, improving energy efficiency, and developing sustainable infrastructure are vital for achieving necessary emissions reductions. Investing in climate adaptation measures, particularly in vulnerable regions of Africa, is equally important. Strengthening regional cooperation, fostering innovation, and engaging all stakeholders—including the private sector and civil society—are crucial for driving transformative change. The focus must shift from merely setting targets to effectively implementing them, ensuring a just and equitable transition that leaves no one behind.

Harnessing AI for Climate Action: Balancing Innovation with Responsibility

In this context, as we advance into the era of artificial intelligence (AI), it is crucial to address the dual challenge of reducing the carbon footprint of energy-intensive AI systems

while harnessing AI for climate action.

UNEP highlights that the development and deployment of AI pose significant environmental challenges. Training AI models requires substantial computational power, leading to high energy consumption often sourced from fossil fuels, which increases greenhouse gas emissions. The rapid advancement of AI also contributes to electronic waste due to frequent hardware upgrades, posing further environmental hazards.

Research indicates that training a single AI model can emit as much CO₂ as 125 gasoline-powered cars over their lifetime. For instance, Google reported that in 2021, its data centers consumed 15.4 TWh of energy, primarily due to AI, equivalent to the annual energy consumption of one million American homes.

However, AI also holds significant potential for combating climate change. Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being leveraged to combat climate change across various sectors, including health, education, and industry. The recent establishment of the UN-led AI Advisory Body highlights a global initiative to harness machine learning for addressing common challenges, supporting the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). AI technologies enhance data processing capabilities, improving climate modeling and predictive analytics. For instance, projects in Burundi, Chad, and Sudan utilize AI to analyze environmental changes and inform adaptation strategies for vulnerable communities. In Kenya, the MyAnga app provides pastoralists with timely weather data to help manage livestock during droughts.

Projects like Google's ClimateNet utilize AI to enhance weather forecasts and climate modeling, enabling better anticipation of extreme events. Additionally, DeepMind has developed AI systems that have reduced energy consumption in Google's data centers by 15%. Companies like Prospera are using AI to optimize irrigation and fertilizer use in agriculture, lowering water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Researchers are also exploring AI to discover sustainable materials for batteries and solar panels. AI also can play a crucial role in disaster prevention by identifying high-risk areas and integrating data into local response plans. Organizations like the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) employ AI for improved weather forecasts and disaster risk reduction. Additionally, AI aids in tracking pollution and enhancing urban planning, contributing to healthier and more sustainable cities. It optimizes energy systems, facilitating the transition to carbon neutrality by improving the efficiency of renewable energy sources and reducing downtime.

Google has committed to ensuring all its data centers operate on carbon-free energy 24/7 by 2030. Initiatives like Green AI aim to develop more efficient algorithms that

consume less energy. Moreover, the European Union is working on regulations to oversee AI usage, considering its environmental impact. Looking ahead, future COPs and intersessional periods must be critical for translating commitments into concrete actions. Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with more ambitious targets are essential.

Accelerating the deployment of renewable energy technologies, innovative and low carbon technologies, improving energy efficiency, developing sustainable infrastructure and balancing the energy demands of AI with its innovative applications for climate solutions are vital for achieving necessary emissions reductions.

Strengthening regional cooperation, fostering innovation, and engaging all stakeholders—including the private sector and civil society and investing in climate adaptation measures, particularly in vulnerable regions of Africa, are crucial for driving transformative change.

It is also essential to emphasize the need for a multilateral treaty on AI and significant support for its dissemination in developing and least developed countries to prevent a new and even more severe global divide.

Inaction is not any more an option!

Humanity has what is needed to shift from merely setting targets to effectively implementing them, ensuring a just and equitable transition that leaves no one behind.



CHIRIL GABURICI

Prime Minister of Moldova 2015

Humanity And Peace



All the challenges we face today—geopolitical tensions, global imbalances, and conflicts—stem from a fundamental deficit of humanity and decency. These are not merely political or economic problems; they are reflections of how we treat each other.

We, as people, are not perfect. We are not simply good or bad—we are different. But instead of accepting these differences, we divide ourselves into opposing camps. When we do so, we all lose.

Humanity has reached an exceptional level of economic and technological development. We build intelligent machines, invest billions in artificial intelligence, and explore the possibility of colonizing Mars. Yet, despite these advancements, we fail to understand each other. While achieving great technological progress, we struggle to find common ground for peaceful coexistence. Instead, we remain trapped in cycles of conflict and division.

Armed conflicts grow more destructive, taking thousands of lives every day. And rather than working toward peace, we treat war as a competition, analyzing who fights better and predicting victors. If we evaluate this from the perspective of humanity and decency, we see that we have lost our way.

We must have the wisdom to recognize that we have strayed too far from our core values. We have become desensitized to war, accepting reports of death and destruction as routine news. Instead of mobilizing to stop conflicts, we argue about who is right and who is wrong.

In the 21st century, we must acknowledge a simple truth: war is never right. The only just cause is peace—one that preserves life, dignity, and respect for all.

We have lost trust in one another, and with it, the mutual respect necessary for cooperation. Yet, beyond political rivalries and national interests, we share a common home—our planet. This is the only home we have, and nothing prevents us from living in peace except political selfishness and ambition.

To achieve peace, we need a different kind of politics—one rooted in dialogue, compromise, and cooperation. Politics should embody humanity and decency, not division and power struggles.

Our world is divided into powerful nations and struggling ones, but our shared humanity can help bridge these gaps. The United Nations has 193 member states, yet only a handful shape global decisions. This imbalance is not sustainable. The strength of countries outside the G7 and G20 lies in their desire for peace, social progress, and economic stability. They focus on creating opportunities for young people, improving healthcare and education, and fostering prosperity through peaceful cooperation. These priorities should define the global agenda, giving space for unity rather than division.

Wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, and beyond are the consequences of abandoning our humanity and decency. Even the mere discussions about the possibility of a third world war highlight how far we have strayed into selfishness and political ambition.

Albert Einstein once said, "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

We must take this warning seriously. Only leadership rooted in humanity and decency can guide us toward a future where peace is not an ideal, but a reality. The time to act is now.



HEDVA SER

Artist & UNESCO Goodwill
Ambassador for Cultural Diplomacy

Art and Intercultural Dialogue: A Path to Truth in the Age of Disinformation

The Power of Art in Times of Deception

Art has always been a mirror reflecting our collective humanity. It tells stories, conveys emotions, and preserves the truths of our past, ensuring that history is not rewritten by those who seek to manipulate it. Today, we find ourselves in an era where misinformation spreads like wildfire, blurring the line between reality and fabrication, dividing communities, and fostering mistrust.

I have dedicated my life to art and cultural diplomacy, believing firmly that art has the power to combat disinformation—not with arguments, but with the undeniable force of truth expressed through creativity and emotion. Art transcends language, nationality, and ideology. It communicates what words sometimes fail to capture: our shared humanity, our struggles, our dreams. I have seen this firsthand through my sculpture *The Tree of Peace*, now installed in 17 countries, and through the *Road to Peace* initiative. These projects are not just artistic expressions; they are symbols of resilience and unity, reminding us that peace, like a tree, must be nurtured. Its roots must run deep, anchoring us in truth, while its branches must stretch toward hope, offering shelter from the storms of misinformation.

When Lies Divide Us

Disinformation is not simply an inconvenience; it is a profound threat to peace. In communities where history is rewritten to divide, in societies where entire groups are scapegoated based on fabricated stories, I have witnessed how misinformation poisons relationships, turning neighbors into strangers and societies into silos.

Today's digital landscape amplifies this crisis. Falsehoods travel faster than truth, and algorithms favor outrage over dialogue. Young people, especially, are vulnerable to manipulation in online spaces. We need to equip them with the tools to recognize misinformation and to use their voices to counteract it with creativity, authenticity, and fact-based narratives.

Art as a Tool for Truth and Healing

If disinformation divides, cultural diplomacy heals. It fosters understanding, builds bridges, and reminds us that beyond political or ideological boundaries, we are all human. Through initiatives like *Art Camp*, which I have sponsored since 2012, artists from conflict zones come together to create messages of peace. Their art is not just a form of expression—it is a language of reconciliation, a way of countering distorted narratives with lived experiences. Art allows us to step into another person's reality, to feel what they feel, and to see the world through their eyes. This is why I have worked to bring *The Tree of Peace* into communities, ensuring that it stands as a testament to intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

One of my most moving experiences was working with young refugee artists in Rome, as part of the Healing project. These women, displaced by conflict and often silenced by circumstance, used their art to reclaim their narratives. Their paintings, sculptures, and performances stood in direct opposition to the falsehoods spread about them. They were not victims; they were storytellers, healers, and change-makers.

The Role of Youth: Architects of a New Narrative

If there is one force that gives me hope, it is the passion of young people. They are not only the future—they are the present. The battle against misinformation will be won or lost depending on how we empower this generation to think critically, to challenge falsehoods, and to create their own narratives of truth and unity. Through UNESCO's Odyssee program, I have worked with youth around the world to inspire them about heritage, peace, and tolerance. I have seen their curiosity, their hunger for knowledge, and their willingness to question what they are told. This is our greatest weapon against disinformation—education, creativity, and a fearless pursuit of truth.

We must encourage young artists, filmmakers, musicians, and writers to use their craft not just as a form of self-expression, but as a tool for justice. The stories they tell today will shape the world of tomorrow. They have the power to rewrite the narrative, not with manipulation, but with beauty, honesty, and authenticity.

Protecting Peace, Protecting Nature

Before I conclude, I want to return to The Tree of Peace. A tree does not grow in isolation. Its roots connect beneath the surface, unseen but essential. Its branches reach outward, offering shelter, embracing the sky.

Peace is the same. It does not exist in isolation. It is woven into the fabric of our relationships, our histories, and our shared human experience. And just like nature, it is fragile. It must be protected.

Disinformation seeks to sever these roots, to isolate us from one another. But art, intercultural dialogue, and the courage to seek truth can restore the connections that sustain peace.

We are not powerless. We have art. We have dialogue. We have the courage to stand up for truth. And most importantly, we have each other.

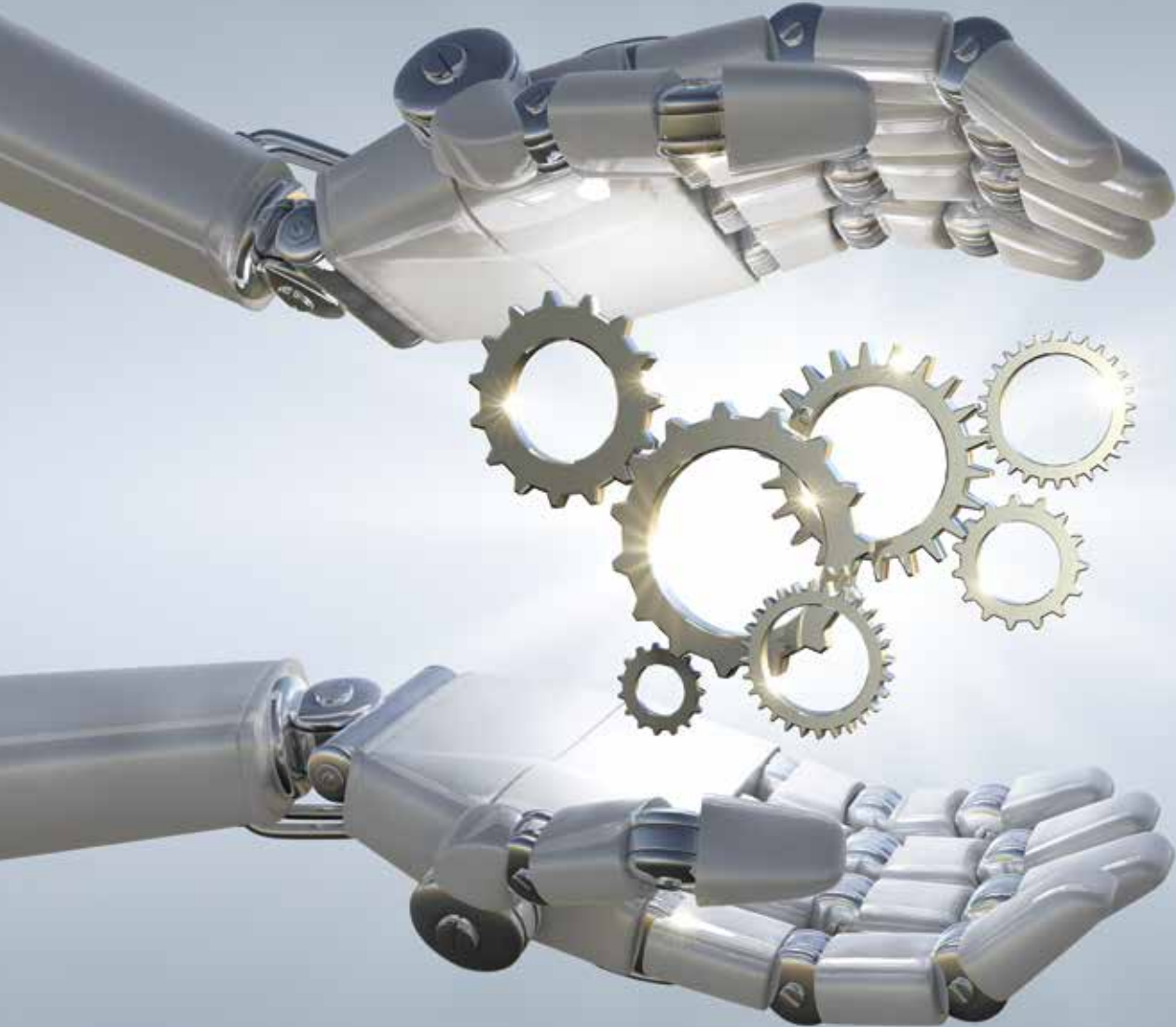
Peace is not a gift—it is a responsibility. And if we choose it, nurture it, and protect it, we will build a world where truth prevails over deception, where understanding triumphs over division, and where art becomes the light that guides us forward.



DUMITRU BRAGHIS

Prime Minister of Moldova 1999-2001

Humans in the Age of Machines: Progress, Purpose, and Possibility



A few years ago, I had the opportunity to visit the automotive giant “Great Wall Motors”, and was, to put it mildly, profoundly, impressed by what I witnessed. In a facility spanning about 50 000 square meters, there were numerous robots in operation, with only 5-6 engineers overseeing the process. This starkly contrasted with my memories from nearly 40 years ago, when I commenced my professional journey at the Chishinau Tractor Plant, which at that time stood as the flagship of Moldova’s machine-building industry. In an assembly hall half the size of the one I visited at “Great Wall Motors”, several hundred people were employed. They all earned salaries, contributed taxes to the national budget and social fund, and benefited from various social protections. This got me thinking about some questions I want to share.

It is evident to everyone that technological progress is accelerating. It’s been barely two decades since the beginning of the smartphone era, and we’re being inundated with an array of new and improved models. Today, some models already exceed the capabilities of the computers we once relied on. What was only available to wealthy firms and individuals just a few years ago is now available to most people. For example, live streaming of any event – now every smartphone owner with a fast data service and a social media account can afford this capability.

At the same time, in the creation of these and other goods, the most difficult, monotonous, and time-consuming work is already performed by robots, automated machines, and Artificial Intelligence. These technologies will become far more interesting when they begin performing tasks beyond human capability, instead of just replacing human labor as is happening now. As a result, soon, these machines will be even more prevalent, and the scope of their application will expand significantly.

Along with this, new professions will emerge. Human work will become more strategic and intellectually driven, focusing on operating knowledge and applying it in non-standard situations.

The question is whether people will be able to “adapt and reinvent” themselves to fill these jobs. Moreover, we will be forced to reinvent ourselves perhaps every 10 years, as we experience not one technological revolution, but a whole cascade of them. Reinventing yourself at ages 20–30 is one thing, but changing later in life – at 40, 50, or 60 – is significantly more difficult.

People will eventually face a more unsettling reality than exploitation – their own obsolescence. While being exploited may feel bad, at least it

means you're still needed. The idea of having no role to play, however, is much harder to face.

For future generations to be successful, society must ensure they have continuous learning opportunities, especially in technology and engineering. But equally important are critical thinking, creativity, and emotional sensitivity. The rise of robots and artificial intelligence will lead to job losses, and it's inevitable. The big question is: what will come of it? Will AI take over, leading to the potential subjugation of humanity? Or will there be a peaceful coexistence between humans and technology, with a new form of global intelligence? Are we, as a society, prepared for such changes? Will individuals find new roles based on their abilities? Is the business world ready for the shift? The questions are many, and in my view, the answers aren't optimistic.

It's widely understood that the role of governments will grow, as they'll need to provide everyone with a basic income, regardless of whether they work, and guide citizens through these changes. But we can already see that people will likely resist these shifts, fearing the loss of personal freedom and global dependence. At the same time, governing authorities, worried about losing control, may try to curb the very advancements that could help humanity.

However, the effects of job loss won't just be financial. Work is more than a paycheck – it gives people purpose, a reason to get up every day, and a sense of belonging. When machines replace these roles, people will not only face financial insecurity but could also struggle with feelings of purposelessness, isolation, and a loss

identity. Communities that once thrived around shared work may become fractured and disconnected.

Even if governments provide basic income, it won't replace the value of meaningful work. Without daily challenges and social connections, people may experience mental health struggles like depression and anxiety. Older generations may feel left behind, while younger people could face the pressure of constant reinvention.

If we focus only on the economic impact and ignore the human side, we risk creating a world where people feel disconnected and undervalued. Governments and societies will need to invest not just in financial support, but in mental health resources, new ways to help people find purpose, and the encouragement of lifelong learning. Ultimately, it's not just about keeping up with technology – it's about making sure people still feel like they matter in this rapidly changing world.

Today, in my opinion, neither international organizations nor the governments of most countries are seriously addressing these issues. In this connection,

the question of taking the necessary measures arises. I think it is necessary to unite the efforts of all countries, as is the case with environmental issues, for instance.

It is also clear that most countries, especially the economically weak ones, will suffer the most from these processes. This will once again undermine the principles of sustainable development, green technology initiatives, and other priorities which have been declared as fundamental in the current stage of development by the UN and other structures.

At this point, I want to say a few more words about another aspect of new technologies. In the 21st century, the biotechnological revolution and the control of information will allow the world's elites (countries and human) to do something even more radical than a digital dictatorship. By "hacking" organisms, the elites will gain the opportunity to reshape the future of life. Many believe that human improvement awaits us – physically and mentally. Sooner or later, biotechnology will make us smarter, stronger, and potentially extend our lives.

This will be the greatest revolution in the history of not just humanity, but of all life on Earth. For many billions of years, the rules of existence of life on the planet did not change, all living things obeyed the laws of natural selection and organic biochemistry. But now, science is replacing evolution through natural selection with evolution by rational design – plans not divine, but human.

I think it's clear to everyone who will have access to these advancements. Along with this, as in all times,

there will be unscrupulous actors who will try to apply this knowledge and these opportunities for profit and for criminal purposes. What if they restrict the use of these achievements to ordinary citizens or to poor countries? What if they use their administrative or financial resources to create superhumans out of their citizens, relatives, and loved ones? What can poor countries do to counter this? Thus, wealthy individuals and countries – by being able to afford such optimization – can become literally better off than the rest: possessing more developed minds, stronger health, and longer life spans.

Could rampant progress in technology, genetics, and artificial intelligence lead us to embed economic inequality so widespread in this world at the biological level? Both processes – biological human enhancement and the development of artificial intelligence – can lead to the division of humanity into a very small class of superhumans and vast lower strata of “obsolete humans”.

It must be said that such ideas inspire certain doubts about their practical feasibility in the future. It is thought that virtually all states will pass laws severely restricting the use of genetic technologies. Only

therapeutic interventions, like treatments for genetic disorders, are likely to be allowed. Furthermore, we can't forget that in most countries, human cloning and transgenic therapy – the insertion of fragments of animal DNA into human DNA – are already banned.

But unless there are serious changes at a global level, in governments and society, technology will only be available to a small number of privileged people and countries, further exacerbating the current world order.

This can have disastrous consequences for the majority – not just humans, but all living things on Earth. If this issue is not settled, a tiny group of countries, people, and elites will gain access to these technologies and will determine the future of life on Earth.

Both phenomena – technical progress and genetic engineering – are of enormous importance to humanity. Once you lose your economic utility, the state – at least in part – loses the incentive to invest in your health, education, and welfare. Being excluded from the economic system is very dangerous. Your future depends on the goodwill of a few countries or a small elite. Sometimes, when you think about these possible future endings (not counting Armageddon, the extinction of humanity, or other catastrophic “ends of the world”), you involuntarily think about how wonderful the world we live in today is. Does it truly need to be replaced?



RZA ALIYEV

Chief Strategy and Sustainability Officer,
Nizami Ganjavi International Center

The Middle Corridor Renaissance: A New Silk Road Shaping Global Geopolitics and Trade

The year began with two distinct yet interconnected trends: the resurgence of geopolitics as a central force shaping global relations, and a significant strain on trade and multilateralism, marked by increasing tariffs and contested financing. Amid this geopolitical turbulence, one critical yet overlooked development deserves greater attention: the re-emergence of the “Middle Corridor” between Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Historically linked through their Soviet past, these nations have experienced differing trajectories over the past three and half decades, with the Caspian Sea—often seen as a regional barrier rather than a connector—symbolizing this divide. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the South Caucasus have pursued closer ties with the European Union, while Central Asia has gravitated toward Russia and China in matters of energy security, trade, and geopolitical influence.

As the world becomes simultaneously more interconnected yet also divided into spheres of influence, the revival of the Middle Corridor prompts reflection: how can this strategically significant and geographically central region have remained

relatively unexplored and underutilized in terms of business, tourism, trade, and regional unity? Indeed, looking at the world map often sparks a realization (depending on which map you use, of course) – this vast territory appears right at the world's centre, yet it remains fairly absent in global discussions. The strengthening ties among Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan mark a pivotal geopolitical and economic shift, potentially reshaping the global geopolitical order. Building upon the historical Silk Road, and endowed with substantial natural resources, this corridor holds considerable promise—not just for the countries themselves but also for global stakeholders invested in stability, trade, and sustainable development.

Geopolitical Importance: Bridging East and West

The Middle Corridor holds an essential position geopolitically as it forms an integral link between Europe, Asia, and the broader Middle East. This offers the region significant leverage, as major powers—including China, EU, Russia, Türkiye, and the United States—recognize its critical role in global geopolitical dynamics.

Azerbaijan, historically known as a gateway between East and West, is central to this corridor. Its diplomatic approach—balancing relationships with the US, EU, Türkiye, GCC states, Israel, Ukraine, Russia, and recently China—has enhanced its role as a regional mediator and facilitator of international diplomacy. Kazakhstan, the world's ninth-largest country by area, with approximately 2.7 million square kilometres, shares borders with both Russia and China, underscoring its geopolitical prominence.

Uzbekistan, with a population of over 36 million, is in the process of opening up, fostering significant value in terms of opportunities, economic stability, and regional integration.

As great power competition intensifies, the Middle Corridor's stability becomes increasingly vital. It offers alternative trade routes and diplomatic channels capable of mitigating regional risks stemming from great-power tensions. Additionally, sharing a Turkic heritage and linguistic background (Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Turkish languages all belong to the Turkic language family, enabling mutual understanding) provides a unique and cohesive platform, distinct from alliances like the EU. This shared heritage encompasses similar traditions and cultural values, fostering deeper regional cohesion. Moreover, the countries' common Soviet legacy, further strengthen their cultural and diplomatic bonds.

Historical Silk Road to Modern Trade Hub

The Silk Road, a network of trade routes that existed from the 2nd century BC to the mid-15th century, served as the foundation of global trade and cultural exchanges, with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan being crucial junctures. Today, this heritage is revitalized through significant infrastructure investments in railways, roads, and ports, establishing the Middle Corridor as a modern-day Silk Road, enhancing connectivity between China and Europe.

The trans-Caspian international transport route has notably reduced shipping times by approximately 10-15 days compared to traditional routes through Russia or the Suez Canal. Given many traditional routes are now blocked (including Russia and Iran facing sanctions and the Suez Canal being avoided due to Houthi attacks), the Middle Corridor has become the most economically beneficial, secure, and reliable route available. The route is projected to handle up to 75 million tons of cargo annually by 2030, creating substantial economic opportunities for regional development. Key logistics hubs include Azerbaijan's Port of Baku in Alat, Kazakhstan's Aktau port, and Uzbekistan's strategic logistics centers.

The growth in trade activity is striking. According to the Economist's Figure of the Day from early April 2025, containers sent from China to Europe via the Caspian Sea jumped from 25,000 in 2021 to 55,000 in 2024. Fast forward to 2025, and the numbers have surged further, with 76,800 containers passing through the port of Baku alone.

Natural Resources and Energy: Strategic Assets

Naturally, a major attraction to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan is their vast reserves of natural resources, including oil, gas, and crucial rare earth minerals such as lithium and copper. Azerbaijan's proven oil reserves are approximately 7 billion barrels, and its natural gas reserves exceed 2.6 trillion cubic meters. Kazakhstan possesses around 30 billion

barrels of proven oil reserves and ranks second globally in uranium reserves, holding about 12% of the world's total. With global energy security becoming increasingly vital and Europe seeking diversified energy sources, Azerbaijan has emerged as an essential partner in ensuring energy stability.

Moreover, as the global energy transition accelerates, the importance of rare earth minerals grows, significantly enhancing these countries' geopolitical value. Kazakhstan's substantial lithium deposits—estimated at around 50,000 metric tons—are crucial for electric vehicle production and green technologies. Recent developments include Kazakhstan's plans to build a nuclear power plant, significantly impacting regional geopolitics and economics. Uzbekistan is similarly advancing in renewable energy, aiming for 25% renewable energy use by 2030.

Azerbaijan has also pursued a robust green transition, notably hosting COP29 in Baku and under President Ilham Aliyev's directions to drive substantial investments into renewable energy projects, particularly solar and wind energy, in partnership with GCC countries and multinational corporations.

Future Prospects and Strategic Alliances

Looking forward, the Middle Corridor faces promising yet challenging prospects. Its strategic location and resource endowment attract significant international attention, positioning it at the heart of future global

dynamics. As global alliances shift and economic centres recalibrate, the importance of this triangle will only increase.

The US, China, Türkiye, Russia, GCC countries, Israel, and the European Union actively engage in diplomatic and economic strategies within the region, seeking to secure interests and enhance their influence. China's Belt and Road Initiative, valued at nearly \$1 trillion, Europe's €300 billion Global Gateway strategy, and various U.S. connectivity initiatives underline the strategic relevance of it. The region's increasing synergy with Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel creates a unique diplomatic platform, providing opportunities for collaboration among countries with otherwise complex relationships. For instance, Azerbaijan maintains close ties with Türkiye and Israel, recently signed a strategic partnership with China, provides vital energy security to Europe, and actively collaborates with GCC countries. Uzbekistan hosts a significant Jewish community in Bukhara and maintains strong ties with the GCC nations. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan's membership in organizations such as CSTO and SCO positions it uniquely as a bridge facilitating dialogue between China and Russia. These multilayered diplomatic relationships position the Middle Corridor as a unique nexus for potential win-win scenarios across a diverse geopolitical landscape.

A Corridor of Opportunities

The Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan triangle emerges not only as a multifaceted regional powerhouse but also as a sort of geopolitical Rorschach test—what you see depends entirely on where you're standing. Is it an energy lifeline? A revival of Silk Road glory? Enforcement of China's Belt and Road Initiative? A Turkic family reunion with global guest speakers? It may be all of the above.

Geopolitically pivotal, economically vibrant, culturally enriched, and strategically resource-abundant, the Middle Corridor is now being pencilled into playbooks from Brussels to Beijing. It connects continents, commodities, and cultures with a blend of ancient heritage and modern ambition. Whether it's facilitating the flow of lithium to gigafactories, oil to European ports, or ideas across diplomatic chess tables, this corridor offers more than transit—it offers transformation and hope.

As the world contemplates decoupling and realignment, perhaps the Middle Corridor is offering an alternative thesis: not fragmentation, but fusion. A place where shared language meets layered history, where old trade routes find new relevance, where words by leaders mean commitment, and where global powers might find common ground—not just because they must, but because it makes sense. After all, when the road less traveled suddenly becomes the fastest, safest, and most logical one—well, it's no longer just a corridor. It's the main stage.

