



WE WILL UPGRADE THE UNITED NATIONS

“The world of today is very different from what it was when the United Nations was created 75 years ago. There are more countries, more people, more challenges but more solutions. Our working methods need to keep pace and adapt. We support the ongoing reforms by the Secretary-General. They are creating a more agile, effective and accountable organization that can deliver better in the field and adapt to global challenges. We reiterate our call for reforms of three of the principal organs of the United Nations. We commit to instill new life in the discussions on the reform of the Security Council and continue the work to revitalize the General Assembly and strengthen the Economic and Social Council. The review of peacebuilding architecture has our full support.”

United Nations General Assembly, “[UN75 Declaration](#)”, September 2020, A/RES/75/1.

“Recognizing that the UN Charter is 75 years-old, we discussed the need for new structures to ensure continued progress. Even though the role of the UN in securing peace might have grown, much remains to be addressed, especially issues that depend on inter-state collaboration.”

Dialogues organized by UNA-USA, San Francisco, mixed ages, professions, genders.

UN75 DATA ON THIS COMMITMENT

UN75 dialogues



UN75 survey



Research snapshot



We organize the relevant UN75 data gathered across 2020 according to the [UN75 Declaration's 12 commitments](#). For the full methodology, see the UN75 report “[Shaping Our Future Together](#)”.

FROM THE UN75 DIALOGUES¹

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Many participants, particularly those in lower and middle human development countries, highlighted the limited, and at times shrinking opportunities for inclusion of civil society (especially for women and minority groups) and other stakeholders in the UN's decision-making and consultation processes.

Participants called for the Security Council to be more representative, particularly with increased representation from the African continent. Discussing the current unequal power balance in the Security Council, with five permanent members enjoying veto rights, participants questioned the impartiality of the UN. Others recalled the collapse of the League of Nations, and the need to ensure big powers remain at the table to avoid large-scale, interstate wars. These latter participants focused more on the need for increased geographic and regional representation in the Security Council.

Participants noted difficulty in accessing information to help them fully understand the UN and its work. They called for greater communication, transparency and accountability across the Organization, including on financial information.

“The UN and other development agencies conduct community engagement poorly. Sometimes they are extractive and do not provide communities with any demonstration of where information has gone.”

Ernest Gibson, Fiji, ages 16–30, mixed professions, mostly women.

Many were concerned about a lack of implementation of international agreements at country levels, particularly for development and conflict. They also emphasized insufficient monitoring and evaluation of UN programmes. Many stated that the organization often fails to effectively keep the peace.

“The whole system crumbles down if the recommendations given by the UN are ignored and disregarded and, consequently, public distrust becomes an issue. Escalation of a conflict does not need to happen for proper actions to be taken.”

Dialogue organized by UN Office in Baku, Azerbaijan, ages 31–45, managers and professionals, mixed genders.

A number of participants from low- and middle-income countries raised concerns about at times insufficient community engagement in the UN's implementation work, which was seen to potentially hinder support of local stakeholders and undermine effectiveness. Some participants were concerned that project implementation sometimes lacked respect of local cultures, practices and worldviews.

“[...] unless we, at the local level, come forward to engage in the system and take forward our rights in action, these goals just remain on paper.”

Confederation of Young Leaders, India, ages 16–30, students, mixed genders.

1. This report contains a summary of the analysis of 1,141 UN75 dialogue summaries received from 94 countries between 2 January and 7 November 2020. The dialogue summaries were analyzed in partnership with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. For the full methodology, see the UN75 report [“Shaping Our Future Together”](#).

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

Participants looked forward to a UN that has stronger involvement of minority stakeholders in policy processes. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Southern Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, many participants urged more participation from Indigenous communities, women, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and youth across the Organization’s work.

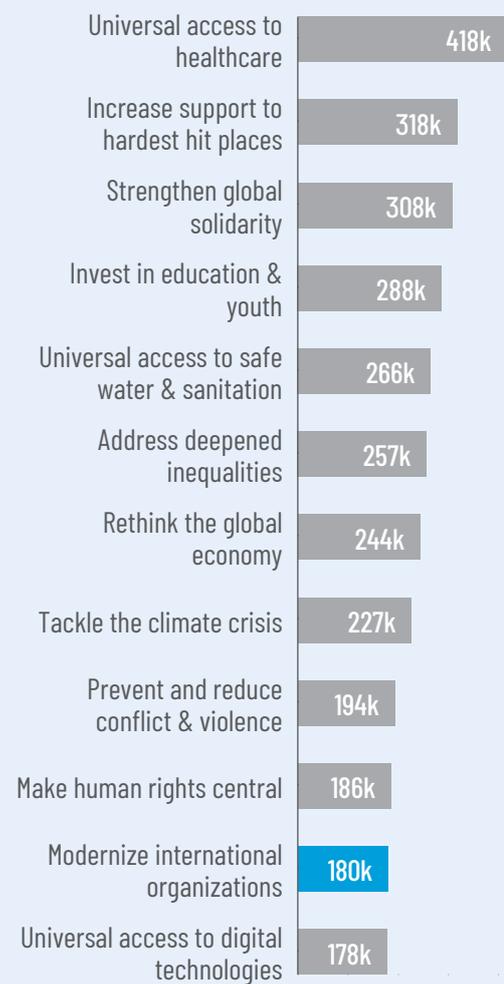
Participants from around the world wished for a more representative and balanced Security Council, that better represents the views of all Member States, and that develops a stronger equilibrium among all nations.

Participants wanted to see a more proactive, impartial and influential organization. They called for the UN to be stronger in holding Member States accountable for violations of international law and standards they have agreed to uphold.

Participants highlighted the value of strong local partnerships for implementation and to shift from a government-focused to people- and community-focused vision. They urged the UN to prioritize the concerns and needs of communities and to focus on localized solutions. They envisioned a future where the UN reduces its reliance on national governments and expands partnerships with local civil society organizations and community groups to promote more effective implementation.

Participants in all regions would like to see greater transparency and accountability, with further reforms of internal processes, including the UN’s complaints procedures and whistleblower protections, protection of staff and constituents from abuses, including sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation, among other forms of abuse.

UN75 Survey immediate priorities to recover from the pandemic: More than 180,000 respondents chose modernize international organizations in the short-term



UN75 Survey Question: What should the international community prioritize to recover better from the pandemic? Base: 1,133,501 (all respondents as from 22 April, when this question was added). Participants could select up to three responses.

Although they see the UN Charter as the foundation of global peace and multilateralism, many participants would like to [see the UN Charter revised to remove spent provisions](#)

[and introduce provisions referring to the new issues that the international community faces today, such as climate change, new technologies, and modern warfare.](#)

HOW WE CAN GET THERE

Participants offered many suggestions to help create the UN they want, ranging from improving the moral leadership of the UN, concrete steps to reform the Security Council, other institutional reforms and management and leadership reforms.

Moral leadership of the UN

[On defending multilateralism and avoiding the politicization of the UN.](#) Many participants called on the UN Secretary-General to advocate and champion multilateralism more and to call upon countries to respect their international obligations and their commitments under the 2030 Agenda. They also urged the Secretary-General to defend the UN's impartiality, to increase its autonomy and to mitigate the negative effects of tensions and disagreements between powerful countries and the withdrawal of funding by some Member States.

[On leading by example.](#) Participants urged the Secretary-General to ensure that the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund improves its reporting on Environmental, Social and Governance impacts and accelerates its efforts to divest from fossil fuels. Participants in several dialogues encouraged the UN Secretariat and the Secretary-General to introduce fair compensation for all UN interns. Participants in the United States and Sub-Saharan Africa suggested that the UN undertake an UN-wide effort to review all internal processes and governing documents to ensure that

they do not perpetuate ideologies on racial hierarchy, poverty stigmatization and gender discrimination.

UN Security Council Reform

[On increasing representation in the UN Security Council.](#) Participants from across the world, and especially those from Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, urged governments to expand representation of the Security Council, particularly from the African Continent. Students from Switzerland suggested assigning the status of permanent member to continents, rather than countries, with specific Member States from each region rotating in holding the permanent seats and the related 'veto power'. They also proposed that governments affected by a specific issue being discussed in the UN Security Council (for example, due to being parties in a conflict) be recused from voting.

[“The UNSC must allow a more inclusive and equitable representation from African nations; not represented at the level of permanent members on the Security Council and under-represented in the non-permanent member category of the Security Council.”](#)

Dialogue organized by UN Information Centre Bujumbura, Burundi, ages 31-45, mixed professions and genders.

Some participants dreamed of a more representative body to replace the UN Security Council, such as a global parliamentary assembly open to the participation of all Member States.

“The UN’s legitimacy is largely based on representation and thus the Security Council should be expanded, the use of veto should be banned, and the proportion and formation of the Permanent Members should be adjusted.”

Kexin Yu, China, ages 16–30, students, mixed genders.

On changing the UN Charter rules on veto power. Participants in Afghanistan proposed granting more countries veto power under Article 27 of the UN Charter. In Slovenia, participants suggested changing the veto rules to require a minimum of two vetoes from permanent Security Council members, to block substantive resolutions, rather than one. Participants in several dialogues from across the world, and particularly young participants, suggested that the veto power of permanent members be abolished altogether so that all Security Council members have equal voting rights.

Others reflected on the collapse of the League of Nations when large powers began to walk away, and discussed the need to keep some incentives for larger powers to remain committed to the UN (such as the veto power of permanent Security Council members). These latter participants focused on the question of whom should enjoy the right to use the veto in an expanded and more representative Security Council, and whether two vetoes should be required to block resolutions, rather than only one.

In India, participants suggested replacing the veto with weighted voting, apportioned based on a country’s population. Other participants in an online dialogue proposed a review of the issues areas for which the veto can be used.

On revising peace-keeping and peace-building interventions

Dialogues in both developed and developing countries asked governments and the UN Secretary General to **improve peace-keeping interventions, especially by re-examining the role of peacekeepers.** Students in the United Kingdom affirmed the importance to :

“prevent and redress crimes by peacekeepers”

LondonMet Model UN, United Kingdom, ages 16–30, students.

Participants in Canada highlighted the importance of developing more effective and transparent vetting programmes during the selection of UN Peacekeeping Forces.

“Peace is about building bridges, communication and integration which cannot be put in practice if everyone is not included in the conversation.”

Sillamäe Society for Child Welfare, Peace Child International, and We Love Sousse, Estonia, mixed ages, professions, genders.

For more recommendations from UN75 dialogues on how the UN can upgrade to better promote peace and prevent conflicts, see Commitment three, Promoting Peace and Preventing Conflicts.

Other institutional reforms

On updating the UN Charter. Participants across the world urged governments to update the UN Charter to include addressing new global challenges, especially climate change and other environmental issues. Participants in the United Kingdom asked governments to reconsider the UN Charter's 'spent provisions', for example removing the Trusteeship Council.

On the role of Intergovernmental negotiations on a new UN structure. In Italy, participants encouraged governments to convene a global intergovernmental conference to reformulate key aspects and mechanisms of global governance and collaboration, in the light of the geopolitical, economic and technological developments of the last 75 years. Participants from several dialogues in Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia suggested governments develop a governance model in which regions, rather than countries, constitute the basic unit of decision-making at the UN.

On strengthening existing institutions and establishing new ones. In Italy, participants called on governments to democratize the UN through reforms that do not need amendments to the UN Charter, including: (a) establishing a UN parliamentary assembly as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly under article 22 of the Charter; and (b) introducing a 'citizen proposal initiative' to the UN General Assembly or another permanent consultation tool.

Many participants also discussed the need to strengthen existing UN specialized agencies, bodies and offices or to establish new ones. In China, participants called on governments to strengthen the status and resources of the UN Environment Programme, for example by transforming it into a UN specialized agency. In Afghanistan, participants urged

governments and the UN Secretariat to strengthen the UN's capacity to monitor global inequality, by setting up a specialized body tasked with exploring the dynamics of unequal growth and extreme wealth accumulation and recommending changes to the General Assembly.

Many participants across the world called on the Secretary-General to create a formal follow up process on the results of the UN75 initiative and to implement its recommendations.

Management and leadership reform

On reforming hiring practices. In addition to their calls for the Secretary-General to introduce fair remuneration for interns, many participants urged the UN to establish more inclusive and effective hiring practices:

- Conducting a comprehensive analysis of its hiring processes and identifying negative impacts on upper- and middle-level management diversity and inclusion.
- Setting targets for proportional upper- and middle-level representation by persons from developing countries.
- Recruiting more independent experts from host countries and civil society organizations.
- Prioritizing local knowledge of issues, in addition to formal skills, including offering more opportunities to members of underprivileged communities who may not come from educational or professional backgrounds that traditionally feed into the UN system, yet who have specific insights on, and proximity to, local problems and solutions.

“Elitism in hiring practices can create echo chambers and reinforce mind-sets in policy-making that see the people we serve as victims who must be helped, rather than partners for sustainable development with valuable insights and contributions.”

Dialogue organized by UN Volunteers, UN75 initiative, Office of the President of the 74th General Assembly, I Am Your Protector and International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, USA, ages 31-45, mixed professions and genders.

On increasing transparency and accountability in UN operations.

Participants in China proposed introducing stringent targets and criteria for evaluating transparency in management operations, seeking inputs from Member States, other international organizations, and civil society.

To strengthen transparency and accountability of donations, including those from civil society, foundations and businesses, participants urged more transparent reporting, tracking the allocation of specific funds and linking it/evaluating it to specific projects and outcomes. Other proposals included enhancing the transparency of UN budgets and operations, including through the disclosure and publication of relevant reports.

Participants also suggested that governments could commit themselves to matching external funds, to ensure continued public funding of the organization. See Commitment nine, Ensuring Sustainable Financing, for further proposals on UN financing from UN75 dialogues.

Improved understanding of the work of the UN

On improving the organization’s communications and public relations efforts.

Many participants from across the world called on actors across the UN system to improve and enhance their communications and public outreach efforts so that citizens around the world are more aware of the UN’s mission, goals, projects, programmes and operations. As highlighted in Commitments six, We Will Build Trust, and Commitment 10, We Will Boost Partnerships, participants called for stronger partnerships with the culture and arts sectors and better communications of how UN funded projects lead to real-world change.

An inclusive and participatory UN system

On citizen and local communities’ participation in policy processes.

Participants across all regions called on actors throughout the UN system to improve participation of citizens, local communities and all stakeholders in UN processes, from negotiation and decision-making processes, to policy formation, programme implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects (also see Commitment 10, We Will Boost Partnerships).

Students in Chile highlighted the importance of:

“democratiz[ing] international organizations to obtain better and more legitimate results.”

2030 Agenda Ambassadors Program: Red Kimlu, región de la Araucanía, Chile, mixed ages, students.

Participants in several dialogues held in Bolivia, India, Turkey and the United States also stressed the need for a decentralized approach to decision-making, involving local communities, civil society, NGOs and other stakeholders in policy-making and implementation, to ensure the development of tailor-made solutions for different local realities.

“We strongly support a more democratic model for global governance, empowering individuals, in the aggregate form of civil society, to have a meaningful say over issues affecting their existence. They could do so in participating in negotiations, having a dialogue (or being represented) within global institutions. Ultimately be part of a new “omni-lateral” vision of international relations. Such a model would better pursue the goal of reducing inequality and fostering inclusiveness and gender equality.”

Susanna Cafaro and Supranational Democracy Research Team at University of Salento, Italy, mixed ages, professions, genders.

In Tuvalu, participants highlighted the need to promote the inclusion of Small Island Developing States in UN policy formulation processes. Participants in several dialogues stressed the need to engage regional organizations more in the UN’s decision-making, policy formation and implementation processes.

Participants described online platforms and ongoing dialogues as useful tools to

enhance citizens’ participation. In the United States, participants proposed creating a “Parliamentary Assembly”, proportionally representative of humanity’s diversity, to serve as a citizens’ advisory body to the General Assembly. Similarly, students proposed enhancing the representation of citizens and youth through the establishment of a “Global People’s Parliament”, namely a consultative parliamentary assembly directly elected by the people, which would allow all people’s voices to be heard.

On improving the participation of women, Indigenous groups and other minorities.

Numerous dialogues stressed the need for more inclusion of Indigenous groups, minorities, women, youth and people with disabilities in UN processes. To enhance the inclusion of Indigenous groups, participants proposed establishing formal observer status for Indigenous peoples to the UN General Assembly, as well as increasing their representation in UN meetings, and a resolution that will ensure their voices are heard in decision-making. In Cameroon, participants requested more attention to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

“The youth/next generation needs to have designated spaces to exist and participate in handling the existing and/or next emergencies and problems. Peace is about building bridges, communication and integration which cannot be put in practice if everyone is not included in the conversation.”

Sillamäe Society for Child Welfare - Peace Child International - We Love Sousse, Estonia, mixed ages, professions, genders.

Participants highlighted the need to boost gender equality and inclusion of women in decision-making at the UN. Participants proposed to leverage COVID-19 to permit more remote and flexible working arrangements, and longer maternity and paternity leave. They further recommended gender-balanced interview panels, gender performance evaluations, and training programmes to prevent and recognize sexual assault and abuse.

“Participants wish to see a United Nations that could support young and mid-level staff, in particular women, on a UN career path that is challenging, fulfilling and viable. [...] They wanted improved flexible working arrangements to attain gender equality, onsite childcare, longer maternity and paternity leave. [...] Despite excellent progress on gender parity at the top levels of the organization, it had not trickled down.”

Young UN, online, ages 31-45, managers and professionals, mostly women.

See Commitments five, nine and eleven for more recommendations on Placing Women and Girls at the Centre, Boosting Partnerships, and Listening to and Working with Youth, respectively.

Improving implementation, monitoring and evaluation

On involving local communities, civil society, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to strengthen implementation.

Many participants, particularly from Fiji, Georgia, Mongolia and the United States, encouraged the UN to work in closer cooperation with local actors and vulnerable communities for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Students in the United States proposed that the IOM, UNHCR, UN Women and UNODC establish a joint “Survivor Migrant/Refugee Advisory Committee”, with the objective of including migrants, refugees, and survivors of human trafficking and related civil society organizations in the drafting and implementation of policies.

“Include a wide range of local stakeholders in policy formulation processes and emphasize first listening to community needs and prioritizing utilizing localized solutions. Increasing the participation of local stakeholders and leaders with UN efforts through inclusive multi stakeholder partnerships will increase local ownership of development agendas, augmenting implementation efforts.”

UN75, UN Volunteers, Office of the President of the 74th General Assembly, I Am Your Protector and International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, United States of America, ages 31-45, mixed professions and genders.

In Mongolia participants recommended that the performance of UN initiatives should be assessed by independent institutions. In Fiji, participants proposed upgrading evaluation processes to include an assessment of community engagement. Students in Lebanon asked for greater oversight of UN health projects implemented at the country level, to avoid corruption and mismanagement.

On overseeing and promoting the implementation of international agreements

Participants in numerous dialogues urged the UN Secretary General to hold Member States accountable for the implementation of international agreements at the sub-national and local level.

Many participants stressed the need to develop an action plan for the implementation of the results of the UN75 initiative.

“The UN policies, conventions, and treaties are well formulated at top level but their implementation is lacking at grass root or sub-national level [...] Therefore, the UN needs more attention on enforcement and implementation at these sub-national levels.”

Dialogue organized by UN Mongolia, Office of the Resident Coordinator, ages 16-30, with organizations supporting and protecting the rights of youth and children, mixed genders.

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT²

Academic publications

- Biersteker, T. 2020 [Kofi Annan's Legacy of UN Reform](#). Caribbean Journal of International Relations.
- Browne, S. 2019 [UN Reform: 75 years of Challenge and Change](#).
- Donini, A. 2020 “[Crashing Waves and Rising Tides: The Case for UN 2.0](#)” Global Governance.
- Harrington, J. 2017 “[The Working Methods of the UN Security Council: Maintaining the Implementation of Change](#)” International & Comparative Law Quarterly.
- Jeangène Vilmer, J. 2018 “[The Responsibility Not to Veto: A Genealogy](#)” Global Governance.
- Malone, D. & Day, A. 2020 “[Taking Measure of the UN's Legacy at Seventy-Five](#)” Ethics & International Affairs.
- Mao, R. 2020 “[古特雷斯联合国改革议程与中国的建设性角](#)” Global Review.
- Mustafa, S. 2019 “[ظل تزايد الازمات الدولية](#)” Academic Journal of Nawroz University.
- Nadin, P. 2018 [UN Security Council Reform](#).
- Nolan, A., Freedman, R. & Murphy, T. (eds) 2017 [The UN Special Procedures System](#).

2. This research snapshot includes a selection of top cited publications identified in the broader UN75 research mapping of academic and policy research focused on multilateralism, the United Nations, and the UN's areas of work, covering the six official UN languages. The research mapping was conducted in collaboration with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. For the full methodology, see the UN75 report “[Shaping Our Future Together](#)”.

- Williams, P. 2020 "[The Security Council's peacekeeping trilemma](#)" International Affairs.
- Winther, B. 2020 "[A Review of the Academic Debate about UN Security Council Reform](#)" Chinese Journal of Global Governance.

Policy research & reports

- Beishem, M. 2018 [UN Reforms for the 2030 Agenda: Are the HLPF's Working Methods and Practices "Fit for Purpose"?](#), German Institute for International and Security Affairs.
- Bertini, C. 2019 [Leading Change in UN Organizations](#), Chicago Council on Global Affairs.
- Deardorff Miller, S. 2019 [The Global Refugee Regime and UN System-wide Reforms](#), World Refugee Council/Centre for International Governance Innovation.
- Independent Commission on Multilateralism 2017 [Humanitarian Engagements](#).
- Khalil, M. 2020 [Reforming the UN Security Council](#), Together First.
- Morán Blanco, S. 2017 [Naciones Unidas en la sociedad internacional. Entre el deseo de reforma y la ausencia de voluntad política](#), Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos.
- Security Council Report 2018 [The Penholder System](#).

- Together First 2020 [Stepping Stones for a Better Future: 10 Ideas for World Leaders Who are Serious about Building Back Better](#).
- UN 2017 Shifting the management paradigm in the UN: ensuring a better future for all: Report of the Secretary-General .
- UN Sustainable Development Group 2020 [Innovating and Transforming the UN Development System for the 2030 Agenda: The Delivering Together Facility in 2019](#).

Commentaries & opinion pieces

- Azam, S. 2020 "[Reform of the UN Organization](#)" Inter Press Service.
- Deo, N. 2019 "[Failing to reform the UN](#)" Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations.
- Heen, C. et al. [Council of Councils] 2020 "[The UN Turns Seventy-Five. Here's How to Make it Relevant Again.](#)" Council on Foreign Relations.
- Le Monde & AFP 2020 «[Les membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies sur la sellette](#)» Le Monde.
- Ramcharan, B. 2017 "[Four Easy Steps to Reform the UN Human Rights Council](#)" PassBlue.