

# UNA-UK

1 // 2020

## A FIRST AID KIT FOR THE WORLD

FEATURE

### LESSONS FOR THE UN AT 75

Mark Malloch-Brown  
Leymah Gbowee  
Kristalina Georgieva

LAST WORD

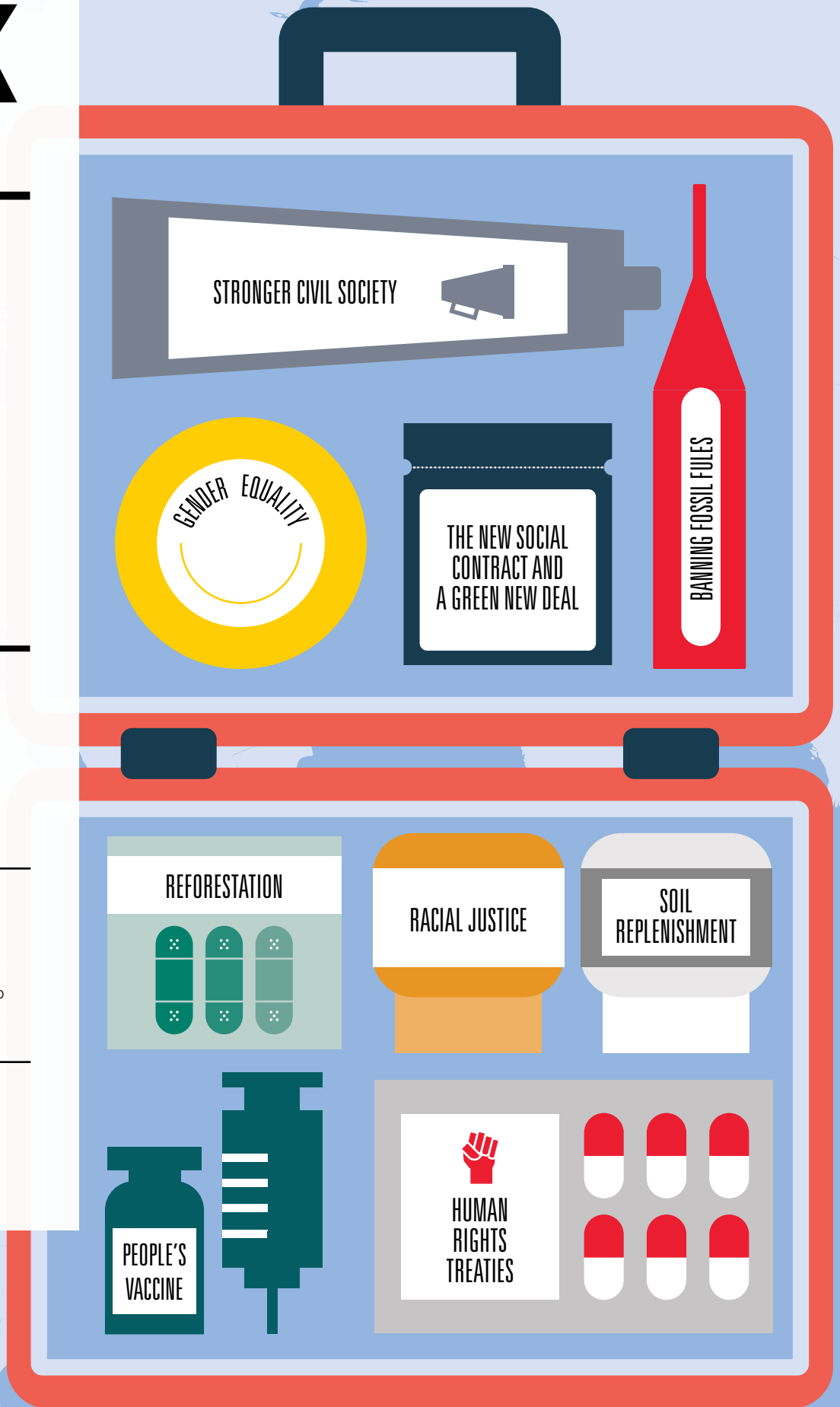
### THE FUTURE WE WANT

Pablo Emiliano Reyes Galindo  
Robert Kaminker

TEN

### WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE UN

Bryony Pike



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We believe that a strong, credible and effective UN is essential if we are to build a safer, fairer and more sustainable world. We push for government support for the UN, find ways to make it work better, and demonstrate why it matters to people everywhere.

Our members, supporters and local groups form a powerful network of global citizens with impact in the UK and beyond. Together, we've fought for more British peacekeepers, for children to learn about the UN at school and for a more transparent process to appoint the UN Secretary-General.

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#### UNA-UK

3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL  
Telephone: +44(0)20 7766 3454  
Email: [info@una.org.uk](mailto:info@una.org.uk)  
[www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk)

Chair // Lord Wood of Anfield  
Acting Executive Director // Angie Pankhania

Head of Campaigns // Ben Donaldson  
Finance and Events Officer // Bryony Pike  
Communications Officer // Enyseh Teimory  
Administrative Assistant // Lauren Muir  
Campaigns Assistant // Rianna Nayee  
Outreach Assistant // Chris Wallace  
Executive Director // Natalie Samarasinghe  
(on sabbatical)

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Editors // Natalie Samarasinghe and Fred Carver  
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UK action  
Stronger UN  
Better world



# A FIRST AID KIT FOR THE WORLD

Amid unprecedented turmoil, the UN crowdsourced priorities for a better future – now it's time to act

## NATALIE SAMARASINGHE

In 2020, the United Nations marked its 75th anniversary (UN75). Born from the ashes of war, it is often romanticised as a product of global idealism. It was also a hard-nosed response by wartime leaders, who recognised that the welfare of their citizens was best secured through cooperation and compromise.

In many ways, their calculation has paid off. The prospect of a third world war – one waged with nuclear weapons – seemed frighteningly real in 1945. Back then, one in three people did not live in sovereign states. Most of the global population lacked basic necessities and the means to call for them.

Since then, the UN has helped dozens of countries transition peacefully to independence. It has protected and empowered people by creating laws and standards on everything from human rights to arms control. It has spearheaded the eradication of smallpox and won 12 Nobel Peace Prizes – most recently for its World Food Programme.

Every day, the UN feeds, shelters and protects millions of people. Its peacekeepers are a vital lifeline in some of the world's most challenging situations. When disaster strikes, it is often the first on the scene and the last to leave. Over the past year, it has been on the frontlines of responding to COVID-19, from providing essential equipment and services, to combating misinformation and assisting

countries with research. And it does all this on a shoestring budget – less than what we in the UK spend at Christmas.

But the Organization has fallen short of its promise to future generations. It has said “never again” too many times in the aftermath of atrocities. Too many of us face discrimination and deprivation on a daily basis.

Even before COVID-19, one in three of us did not have access to safe drinking water. Now, we are seeing the first rise in global poverty in over two decades. Meanwhile long-standing challenges such as the climate emergency have faded only from the headlines. If we do not get a grip, they will cause far greater disruption than this pandemic.

Against this backdrop, Secretary-General António Guterres did not want UN75 to be treated as a celebration. Instead, he saw this as an opportunity to listen to the global public, to understand their hopes and fears for the future and their expectations of international cooperation – and the UN in particular.

To that end, in January 2020 the UN launched a global conversation, aimed at sparking discussions in all settings – from classrooms to boardrooms, parliaments to village halls – on how to navigate the gap between the future we want and where we are headed if current trends prevail.

The pandemic made that work more challenging – but also more urgent. Through UN75, we gave people the

opportunity to share their priorities for recovering better from the pandemic. Over 1.5 million people from all 195 UN member and observer states took part, with millions more joining the conversation through social media and through our partners on the ground, including UNA-UK's global Together First network and UNA groups in the UK.

And what did they tell us? Amid the current crisis, they called for better access to basic services, such as healthcare and education, and more support for those hardest hit. Beyond the pandemic, their top concerns were climate change and environmental destruction. They want action to protect human rights, address conflict and reduce corruption. And the vast majority believe that global cooperation is essential to overcoming the challenges we face.

In a world that feels increasingly polarised, it is striking that these views were shared across all regions, ages and social groups. And while the pandemic may have focused attention on basic needs, it also seems to have encouraged big-picture thinking.

In the dialogues we held, people called for the global economy to be transformed. They discussed universal health coverage, universal basic income and affordable access to technology. They demanded an end to fossil fuel subsidies and a ban on lethal autonomous weapons. And they issued a clear call for greater inclusion

of civil society and youth in decision-making at all levels, including the UN. (See Lysa John and Mandeep Tiwana's online article for concrete proposals, including a civil society champion at the UN at [www.una.org.uk/magazine](http://www.una.org.uk/magazine).)

This must be our turning point. Our aspiration cannot be to return to normal, because normal wasn't working for most people.

The pandemic has shown that huge transformations are possible, and that vast sums of money can be deployed quickly, when political will is aligned with public support. We can turn this crisis into an opportunity by taking decisions now that put us on the path to a better future for all.

Across these pages, you will find proposals on how we can get there, with essays from Mark Malloch-Brown (page 9), Leymah Gbowee (page 13) and Kristalina Georgieva (page 16), as well as reflections from Robert Kaminker, one of the UN's first employees and Pablo Emiliano Reyes Galindo, a UN75 youth essay competition winner (page 20). We also draw inspiration from ten women who changed the UN, and the world, for the better (page 18).

Our success will depend on whether we can muster the idealism and pragmatism that inspired the UN's founding 75 years ago – with bold leadership from governments, an inspiring vision from the

Secretary-General and support from civil society and the wider public. This combination is within reach: in September, the General Assembly adopted a UN75 Declaration that commits states to responding to the global consultation and tasked the Secretary-General with recommending next steps.

The world spoke. The UN listened. Now it's time to act. //

**NATALIE SAMARASINGHE** // Natalie

Samarasinghe is Chief of Strategy to the Special Adviser on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations. She is looking forward to returning to her position as Executive Director of UNA-UK in 2021.



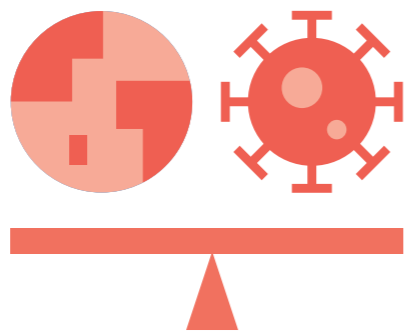
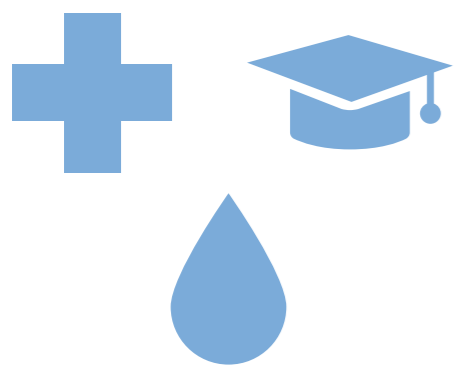
// Winning photograph from #TheWorldWeWant, a global photo contest hosted and organized by mobile app Agora in support of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations © Jay Juwan Vicencio

# WHAT THE WORLD THINKS

UNA-UK lets facts and figures speak for themselves

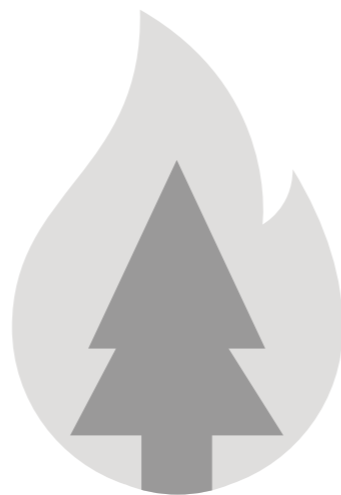
In 2020, the UN carried out a global consultation to mark its 75th anniversary – asking people from all walks of life about their hopes and fears for the future, their views and expectations of the UN, and their ideas on how to tackle the challenges we face. Over 1.5 million people took part in the process, from every region of the world, through surveys and dialogues. This is what they said.

Amid the current crisis, their immediate priority is better access to basic services, including healthcare, education and safe water and sanitation.



They also want greater international solidarity, increased support to the places hardest hit by the pandemic and action to reduce inequality.

Across all regions, people are most worried about the climate crisis and destruction of the natural environment.



# 87%

believe that **international cooperation** is vital to addressing today's challenges, with a majority believing that COVID-19 has made cooperation even more urgent.

Other priorities for building a better future include:

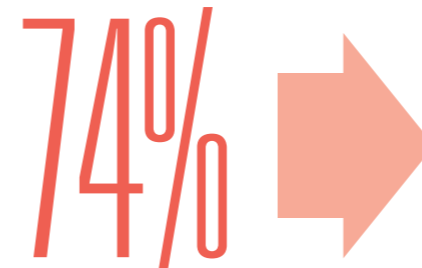


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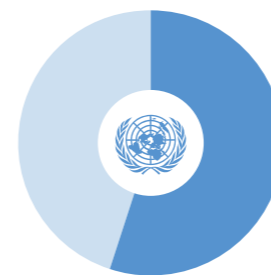
respondents felt the UN has made the world a better place.

Looking to the future,

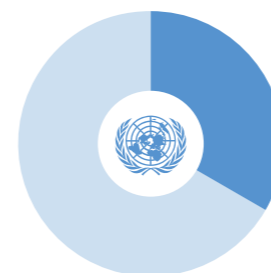


see the Organization as "essential" to solving global problems.

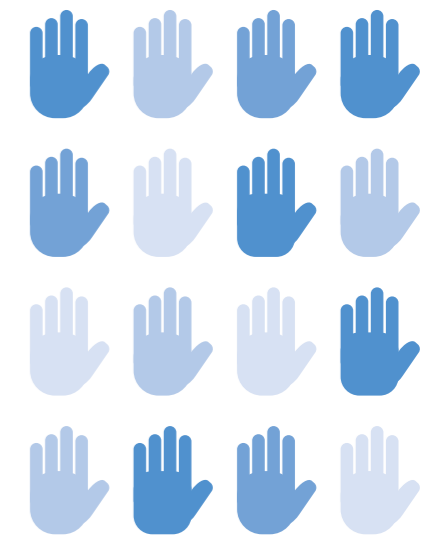
But over half see the UN as **remote from their lives...**



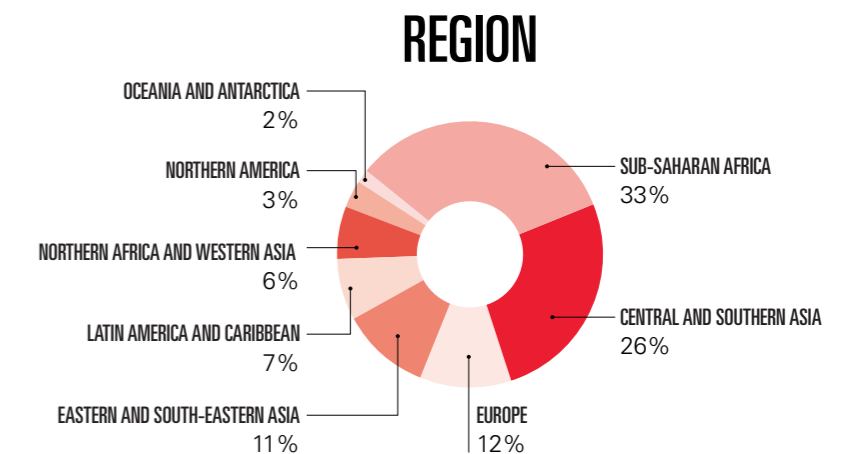
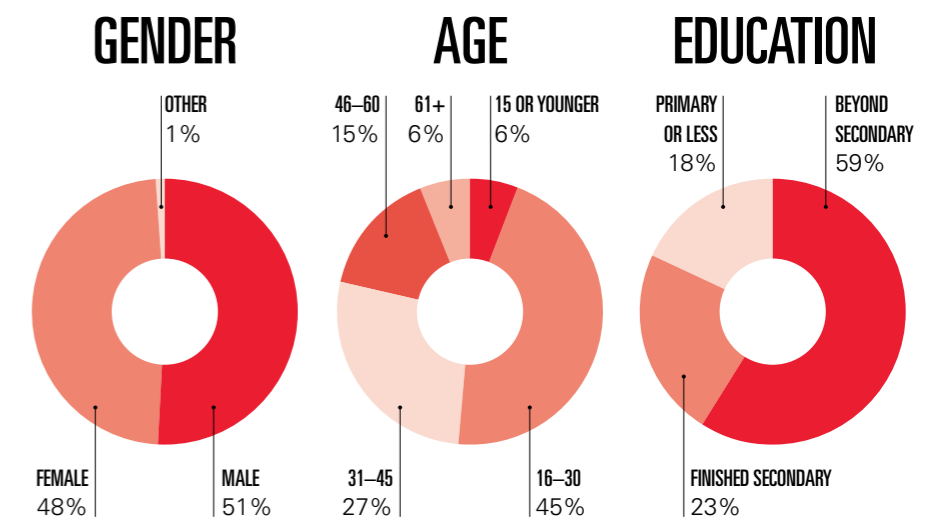
...and **only a third** believe it is contributing "a lot" to managing global challenges.



People called for the UN to be more inclusive – in terms of civil society, youth, women, vulnerable groups, business, cities and regional organisations.



## UN75 RESPONDENTS



You can view the full data at [www.un75.online](http://www.un75.online)



# LESSONS FOR THE UN AT 75

*Three essays to  
strengthen the  
Organization in  
the years ahead.*



// UNRWA campers attempt Guinness World Record for biggest basketball bounce in Gaza, on 22 July 2010 © UN Photo/Shareef Sarhan

## SLOW DEATH OR A NEW DIRECTION?

**Mark Malloch-Brown**

Let me begin with an appeal to our venerable friend, the United Nations: get down on the ground with the grandchildren! For as long as I have known it, the UN has often seemed prematurely old. Today, as it marks its 75th anniversary, a youth challenge is being mounted to the ways in which we live, organise and govern ourselves. This challenge is much larger than the UN. A digital revolution on the one hand, and rising social and economic inequality on the other, will unseat a ruling establishment that has failed to navigate these ideas. The UN must be part of that future or it will be pushed aside.

While the Organization has proved it can be flexible and innovative – think peace operations, private sector partnerships and blockchain in the field – it has struggled from the outset with its Anglo-Saxon DNA, as the world began its march to more globally distributed power.

The UN Charter's vision of a world order managed by the Allied victors of the Second World War was out of date before the ink was dry. The Organization's vision and mission had universal appeal, but were framed in Western language and approaches, even as its membership swelled from 51 states in 1945 to 193 today. One of the UN's proudest achievements is undoubtedly its role in supporting this transition – from a world where almost a third of the global population lived in non-self governing territories, to today's multipolar international community.

There was early opposition to Western dominance in the General Assembly, where new Member States sought to correct the historical and structural imbalances in the global political economy. The Non-Aligned Movement and Group of 77 championed a 'new international economic order'. At the time, it seemed likely to remain a permanent backbench cause.

Now, however, it is not a simple division of East and West or North and South. Many of us have added collective social and economic rights to our own agendas. Issues such as climate justice, structural inequalities and the injustices of the global economic system are just as likely to come from a British human rights NGO as they are from a Rwandan farming cooperative.

At the same time, a more authoritarian model of government is gaining traction across the world. It embraces leaders who come to power by the ballot box as well as those who did not, but all share a preference for a nationalist foreign policy, weakening of domestic institutions and the rule of law including the political rights of its citizens, and a casual disregard for minority and, in some cases, majority rights.

Between them, Brazil, China, Hungary, India, Russia, Turkey and the United States (under Donald Trump until 21 January) represent a demographic majority. And many others are borrowing from their playbook. Freedom House notes that last year was the 14th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, with 64 countries experiencing an erosion of political rights.

The appeal of their arguments is unlikely to dissolve any time soon. The uneven impact of economic change, now accelerated by COVID-19, has produced political divisions across the world: urban versus rural; young versus old; university-educated versus high school or less; those employed in new services sectors versus those in failing industrial sectors. Economic security, cultural identity and a strong anti-immigration stance are the flagship issues of a new populist politics that reaches those who feel they are being left behind by unsettling change.

As a consequence this is, perhaps inevitably, an age of UN caution. In a way, it was ever thus.

I remember in my first UN year, 1976, an older generation – including the self-named 'last of the Mohicans' founded by those who has joined the UN Secretariat before 15 August 1946 (see Robert Kaminker's piece on page 20 and online) – complaining in not dissimilar terms. The place already seemed stiff, cautiously bureaucratic and a bit rundown.

Then, as now, the UN sought to make up for the Cold War's political black hole by swarming the humanitarian and development space with compensating activity. From the 1960s to the 1980s, its direct operational capacities – to address refugee flows and hunger, to boost literacy and vaccinations – grew rapidly. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) went from a small



staff of lawyers to a large staff of logisticians. This year's Nobel Peace Prize winner, the World Food Programme, was spun out of the Food & Agriculture Organization. The technical assistance of specialised agencies provided critical support to newly independent governments.

In 1980, UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim visited a UNHCR-supported refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border where I was the field officer in charge. He turned to me in bewilderment, as we toured the encampment with its heavy UN and NGO presence and asked how this huge operation could have been set up without him knowing almost anything about it.

I tell this story to illustrate a simple truth. The political and security UN in New York may have been gridlocked but there was ample space for activism and innovation as long as you stayed well away from that graveyard, the Security Council. Operations like mine were run in the field and from Geneva, based on a mandate derived from international law, not the Council's permission.

As I crisscrossed the world for UNHCR from refugee hotspots in South East Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Central America and the Horn of Africa, I saw their impact first-hand: countless lives saved and re-started. The politics were never easy, the compromises often disappointing, and the motives of major interested powers and donors only rarely altruistic, but the space was carved out and generally held.

Today, the UN has also found space – notably around the Sustainable Development Goals (the SDGs) which play to the UN's convening and standard-setting roles; climate change which three Secretaries-General have made a priority; and a tragically expanded humanitarian function as grim conflicts in Yemen, Syria and elsewhere stubbornly run on.

A UN seeking to focus on issues where it won't be bullied by its stronger members, or ignored by others, is not new. In fact, it has been condemned to this condition for most of its 75 years. Its glorious conception period ended after a few months, around the time of Churchill's 'iron curtain' speech in March 1946.

Kofi Annan's Secretary-Generalship was a second honeymoon: coming six years after the fall of the Berlin Wall it was a moment of hope and alignment between the major powers of which he took ample advantage to advance political, security and human rights matters. Yet in the aftermath of a Security Council broken on the anvil of the US-UK invasion of Iraq a gale turned on him, too. So it is only for 10% – at most – of the UN's 75 years that the wind has blown strongly in the right direction.

**BENDING THE SAIL**

Annan was fond of quoting the African proverb, "you cannot bend the wind so bend the sail." I want to suggest a manifesto for a re-purposed UN that is both true to its Charter; but recognises the direction the winds are blowing; that does not cling to the mast of a failing Western liberalism alone, but understands and responds to the dynamics that have left that liberalism, and it seems multilateralism, on the rocks.

This is a comeback strategy for the world as it is; in order to allow us to make the world as we want it to be. And the vehicle for this cannot be our grandparents' UN.

The world needs to believe the UN matters. While the Organization still enjoys high levels of support, as the UN75 global consultation (see page 6) shows, this seems to be grounded

in what people think it should do, rather than what it actually does. Support falls when pollsters ask about the UN's performance in specific areas.

Without a more passionate public embrace it will be hard to overcome the inter-state fault lines. Annan was possibly unique among Secretaries-General in being able to appeal directly to people, citing the opening words of the Charter in justification: "We, the Peoples of the United Nations." Those before and since have been largely captives of governments and their disagreements.

I often wish the UN's supporters would accept a more pragmatic UN rather than the aspirational "save the world" version that lights up the top line poll findings. It will always disappoint such hopes. The UN is of the world, not above it.

The UN75 global consultation found that across very different national economies and circumstances there is a demand for better delivery of basic services; for action to address climate change and protect the environment; and for honest accountable government that delivers and protects its citizens. This is already the UN's agenda.

The UN is not going to replace governments as an agent of service delivery. It does not command the resources or the authority. But the UN must deploy its convening, campaigning and normative roles to double down on its SDG agenda. COVID-19 has attacked that agenda, as Bill and Melinda Gates have said setting back 25 years of progress in 25 weeks; driving 115 million people back into extreme poverty this year and raising fears for economic security in almost every family. The UN has a unique platform to measure a country's progress, league table it, and name and shame those whose social and economic indicators fall behind.

The current Secretary-General António Guterres dedicated most of his early period in office to conflict resolution – including in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Cyprus. His efforts were not blessed with any major breakthroughs. He then embraced the SDGs and climate action, a pivot illustrated by a *Time* magazine



// Fishing boat off the island of Mombasa © UN Photo/Milton Grant



// Commemoration of International Women's Day 2018 at United Nations Headquarters © UN Women/Ryan Brown

cover featuring him wearing a suit, standing in rising sea water. This July, he delivered the Mandela lecture and called for "a new social contract for a new era", eloquently setting out the longstanding risks laid bare by the pandemic, such as inequality. It was probably his most noticed speech to date.

Secretaries-General were elected to be the world's chief diplomat; today, successful ones quickly learn they have to be the world's chief campaigner. And like any campaigning organisation, the UN must begin by understanding its base constituency: "We, the Peoples".

The Bennett Institute at Cambridge University has recently released a study of the state of global democracy that draws on more than 3,500 country surveys. It finds support for democracy is at a low ebb: a clear majority are dissatisfied with democracy, with 18-34 year olds the most disenchanted in almost all regions of the world.

But the report stressed that, much like it is for the UN, this is not a rejection of the theory of democracy but disappointment with its results. Indeed, where governments do deliver results, notably in some Asian countries, dissatisfaction is much lower.

This is a protest against poorly performing incumbents. People don't feel protected. In rich countries, they don't see a better future; they see wave after wave of threatening change driven not only by pandemics but by technology, trade, environmental degradation and deepening inequality. In developing countries there is more optimism about the future, but also growing frustration at structural insecurity – and the knowledge that aspiring to return to "normal" will not improve their lives.

The protests of a generation cannot be brushed under the COVID carpet much longer. The world was not a happy place before the pandemic, with soaring youth unemployment, exclusion and skewed inter-generational distribution of wealth and government benefits. And we know there is worse to come.

*"The protests of a generation cannot be brushed under the COVID carpet much longer."*



Here is the UN's great cause. It should throw caution to the winds and lay out Guterres' new social contract for the world to see. It should mobilise younger citizens and convene governments to build a new global bargain. It should put governments on the spot by indexing and spotlighting performance to expose which are delivering and which aren't.

And on the coattails of this campaign, it should remake the argument for multilateralism. Once the UN is reconnected to grassroots concerns, it is not a hard argument to make – that problems such as climate change require global cooperation and action.

To have legs, such a campaign must find allies where it can – including, and especially, outside the UN system – and it must not be constrained by the foot-dragging back end of the General Assembly. When the UN has touched the stars, the lift has come from civil society not government, from San Francisco to human rights advances, environmental action and the SDGs.

Today around each SDG clusters a network of champions. In many, corporates show greater ambition than governments; in all, the most innovative thinking comes from the many corners of the civil society mosaic: local and international NGOs, mayors and their cities, activists and academics.

Building a variegated coalition of states and non-state actors willing to be first movers on different parts of this agenda is a not a new path to action in the UN. Now it needs to be turbo-charged. The world won't wait for the most plodding and resistant nations to sign up to action.

This same approach needs to be applied across the board: the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be able to marshal states and NGOs that champion rights and raise their voices when she cannot. UN country teams must be critical protectors and promoters of local civil society voices. Too many governments see the current political climate as a license to step on their home critics. The UN needs to step in and protect its partners on the ground. A global social contract would be stillborn without them.

And the final step to restored effectiveness must be recovering authority in the political and security space. If there is a silver lining here, it is that the character of conflict continues to change opening grim new opportunity. Not only is peacekeeping less than ever the 'thin blue line' between states, it is not even, in many cases policing full-blown internal conflicts in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Syria, as it has done in the past.

The more likely future of conflict, at least where the UN will have a role, is low level but persistent political violence around exclusion, suppression of minority rights and inter-generational conflict in a context of deteriorating state institutions such as policing, justice and social service delivery. The World Bank has estimated that by 2030 two thirds of the world's extreme poor could be living in areas of conflict and violence. The way into these situations will be via humanitarian, development and human rights work. The UN will not have to wait for the permission of the Security Council: it is there already.

This not a manifesto to change the world overnight. Rather it is a call for the UN to seize the moment and take advantage of the opportunities it has at this moment of global crisis to recover relevance and to drive a new global consensus on tackling our collective weaknesses that COVID-19 has so cruelly exposed. There is a majority out there for a better governed and prepared, more caring and inclusive world but that same majority has grown terminally impatient with existing institutions. The UN can be part of that failed past or attach itself to an emerging future.

Let the campaign begin. //

**MARK MALLOCH-BROWN** // Mark Malloch-Brown is Patron of UNA-UK. A former UN Deputy Secretary-General (under Kofi Annan) and administrator of the UN Development Programme, he currently co-chairs the UN Foundation and International Crisis Group, and will shortly become President of the Open Society Foundation. This article is adapted from the UN University WIDER Annual Lecture – find the full recording at [www.wider.unu.edu](http://www.wider.unu.edu).



// A UN World Food Programme helicopter discharges supplies in South Sudan. WFP won the Nobel Prize this year in recognition of their work as the backbone of UN logistics © UNICEF/Peter Martell

## WHAT COMES NEXT? FEMINIST PRINCIPLES FOR A POST-COVID-19 FUTURE

Leymah Gbowee

This year, as the United Nations turns 75, the world is in crisis.

When the UN was conceived, it was met with true optimism about its potential to generate genuine, collective commitment to peace and stewardship of the world. Yet, in so many ways, it has failed to live up to its aspirational goals of peace, development and human rights for all.

The Organization was created to deal with global challenges – such as conflict, health, economic justice and the environment. These issues are all inter-connected, but they have been siloed within the UN, seriously curtailing efforts to deliver tangible progress for “We the Peoples”. In its worst moments, Member States have allowed corrupt and selfish interests to paralyse its ability to enact any change at all.

COVID-19 has cast a harsh spotlight on these issues. The pandemic has shaken us all and given us reason to pause. Stark divisions and inequities – and the structures that produce and uphold them – are now more visible than ever. And the crisis has underscored that issues as seemingly disparate as climate change, gender-based violence and the economy are all critically linked. For many years, we have unpacked all of these issues and put them in separate containers. This moment requires us to recognise that those issues are linked in ways one cannot overstate.

In my early days as an activist in Liberia, I saw that the impact of conflict on women's lives is a reflection of their situation during peacetime. This is something I have carried with me throughout my life – and it is not merely true of conflict and crisis, when inequities are magnified, and our institutions' weaknesses are laid bare. Rather, it is grounded in how our systems and institutions are designed to function.

Who would have thought that in the midst of a health pandemic, we would be talking about gender-based violence reaching an all-time high? For those of us that have seen first-hand how women's safety, wellbeing and health are consistently underfunded and deprioritised, it has come as no surprise. It is a reflection of these systemic failures.

This is just one glaring example of the urgent need for new ways of thinking and approaching the age-old problems that continue to haunt us. To do so, we need to evaluate the principles underpinning the divisions among and within member states, and among and within communities, whatever the cause. And we need to look at what solutions are possible – to bring about change and transformation collectively, and to imagine what institutions that are truly responsive to this reality should look like.



*“Now is the moment to take forward what civil society has been saying for the last 100 years: let us recognise that our fates are intertwined and humanity’s survival is based on solidarity, and put in place new ways of working and being together.”*

Over the last few months, we have heard calls from around the world for new global organisations. This is typical. When faced with a crisis, we look first to replace our flawed institutions, instead of reflecting on why they are flawed and asking: “Where did we go wrong? How have we failed? How can we do it differently?”

My take is that even if we create a new UN – or a new NATO, a new AU, a new EU – we will still be faced with the same core problems.

We do not need to build new institutions; we need to build back those we have differently.

The big problems we are facing will persist if nation states and leaders around the world continue to rely on the same restrictive ideas about competition, greed and state sovereignty. This pandemic has made painfully clear that we can no longer just think of economies in the monetary sense. We must make care, solidarity and our common humanity central to them. One of the reasons multilateral cooperation is so vital at this juncture is that none of us are excused from these systems of militaristic thinking and greed.

This autumn a group of international feminist organisations and movements came together to analyse the most pressing, interlocking issues facing the world right now, and to rethink our systems and societies. They developed six feminist principles for the future on: ceasefire, gender-based violence, health, environment, economy, and militarism and security. They demonstrate that we do ourselves a disservice when we fool ourselves into thinking that any single one of these issues can be separated from the others. Instead, we must put people and planet first. But what does that mean in practice?

Let’s take “ceasefire” as an example. From a feminist perspective, ceasefire means more than cessation of hostilities during armed conflict. It means the ability to imagine a future – and a pathway to that future – where all guns stop, where all violence ends, including police violence and state violence.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, these feminist principles build upon the common mantra among world leaders that we must “build back better” and lay out the foundations for **building back differently**.

The contrast, as I see it, is about having the courage to think outside the box and avoid repeating the same failed tactics that have destined us to arrive at this moment. We must not continue

falling into the same traps and abiding by the same so-called solutions, thinking they will lead to different outcomes.

Rethinking our institutions will also require us to rethink their leadership. Who is qualified to lead and why? Institutions need to work in partnership, with and respond to, the communities they serve, not merely what their leadership perceives as priorities or needs.

Now is the moment to take forward what civil society has been saying for the last 100 years: let us recognise that our fates are intertwined and humanity’s survival is based on solidarity, and put in place new ways of working and being together.

Amid the devastation, this year has also brought us hope that we can get there. On 24 October 2020 the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons received its 50th ratification. That means it will enter into force on 21 January 2021 – an historic victory. The push for the treaty – and for divestment, disarmament and demilitarisation – came from grassroots activists and civil society, many of whom have been immersed in this work for years, if not decades. This is an example of what can be achieved through the UN, when it is grounded in collective commitments, driven by the work of civil society and built to work for the people.

The feminist principles our group has outlined can support future further collective efforts of this kind. Women – especially grassroots women activists – are playing a role in pushing our limited and collective imagination in ways that cannot be understated. Such activism and radical visions have been essential in shaping the foundations of our institutions today, including the UN. In order to build back differently, women’s leadership, activism and expertise must be valued and acknowledged as central to our rebuilding.

In Liberia, we brought together women of different faiths and backgrounds to end the war. We had different mindsets and ideologies but we united around a singular vision. We came together.

This is the spirit that infuses everything I do. This is why I believe in our vision for building back differently – it is a journey that can inspire others around the world to join in new sorts of imagining. And in doing so, we can bring about the transformation that many of us crave – and demand. //

**LEYMAH GBOWEE** // Leymah Gbowee is a Liberian peace activist and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate.



// Map © WILPF

## FEMINIST PRINCIPLES FOR A BETTER FUTURE



These principles were originally developed by the five-organisation Feminist Impact for Rights and Equality (FIRE) consortium for dissemination at the UN General Assembly and have since been re-worked by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) for broader distribution.

For more information, please see the report “Feminist Principles for a post-COVID-19 settlement” on the WILPF website.

- 1. Ceasefire.** Ceasefires to enable a cooperative, international COVID-19 response must be seen as a first step toward permanent peace and disarmed security and must take into account the gendered impacts of conflict and the role of women in promoting peace.
- 2. Gender-based violence.** Women-led action taken today to address the rise in gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, exacerbated by COVID-19 must guide and inform ongoing global strategies to enact a global “ceasefire” on gender-based violence.
- 3. Health.** Health is a basic human right and a prerequisite for the equal and sustainable development of our societies. The depletion of public healthcare infrastructures, which has a disproportionate impact on women and has been accelerated by COVID-19, must be immediately reversed as part of our recovery efforts.
- 4. Environment.** Action to address environmental degradation, climate change and the economic activities driving the destruction of our environment – all of which have led to the emergence of COVID-19 and are impacting our recovery from the pandemic – must be rooted in feminist perspectives of peace, equality, justice and solidarity.
- 5. Economy.** Transforming our economic system will enable a successful COVID-19 recovery, prepare our societies to respond to future challenges and advance equality, justice and the social and economic wellbeing of all people.
- 6. Militarism and security.** Divestment, disarmament and demilitarisation will promote equity, justice and human security while freeing up billions of dollars for investment into public, social and health infrastructure.



# AFTER THE PANDEMIC — A CHANCE TO BUILD FORWARD TO A BETTER FUTURE

Kristalina Georgieva



// International Women's Day in El Fasher, North Darfur, on 11 March 2013. Investing in health and social protection to underpin growth and resilience, together with policies to accelerate gender equality is a vital part of economic recovery after catastrophe  
© UNAMID/Albert González Farran

In 2020, we experienced a year like no other with a pandemic that has already claimed more than a million lives. The associated economic calamity is projected to make the world economy 4.4 per cent smaller this year and cost an estimated US\$28 trillion in lost output through 2025. The pandemic and huge economic disruptions add up to untold human desperation and rising poverty for the first time in decades.

Yet history shows us that in moments of such shared and extreme hardship, the world can come together in a spirit of solidarity to lay the foundations for a better future. Seventy-five years ago, the United Nations was founded in an historic moment for international dialogue and cooperation among nations.

A year earlier, the World Bank and IMF were founded to establish a system for economic development and financial relations among nations. At Bretton Woods, delegates faced two massive tasks: to deal with the immediate devastation caused by the Second World War; and to lay the foundation for a more peaceful, cooperative and prosperous postwar world.

Today, the challenge facing the world is not dissimilar. Once again, we face two massive tasks: to fight the crisis today and build a better tomorrow.

Right now, we know a durable economic recovery is only possible if we beat the pandemic. Stepping up vital health measures is critical, especially in countries that are seeing new waves of the virus. Equally important is stronger international cooperation on the development, production and distribution of effective vaccines and treatments.

While the pandemic continues, support for households, workers and businesses should continue.

So far, G20 governments have provided around US\$12 trillion in fiscal support to households and firms. And unprecedented monetary policy actions have maintained the flow of credit, helping millions of firms stay in business. The very strong policy response put a floor under the global economy and prevented the destructive macro-financial feedbacks we saw in previous crises.

This support should not be withdrawn prematurely. Doing so could derail the recovery since almost all countries are still hurting, especially emerging markets and low-income economies. And we face what I have called a “long ascent” for the global economy: a climb that will be difficult, uneven, uncertain – and prone to setbacks.

Along the way, we must also address some persistent problems that predate the crisis – low productivity, slow growth, high inequalities and the threat of climate change. We can do better than build back the pre-pandemic world – we can build forward to a world that is more resilient, sustainable and inclusive.

To do this, we must embrace three priorities.

## FIRST, ALL COUNTRIES SHOULD FOCUS ON THE RIGHT ECONOMIC POLICIES.

Prudent macroeconomic policies and robust institutions are critical for growth, jobs and improved living standards. Together with reforms to boost trade, competitiveness and productivity, strong policy frameworks can help create confidence for action now while building much-needed resilience for the future.

That includes keeping a careful watch on risks presented by elevated public debt. We expect debt levels to go up significantly in 2021, with global public debt close to 100 per cent of GDP in 2021.

The Fund is providing debt relief to its poorest members and, with the World Bank, we support the extension of the Debt

Service Suspension Initiative that has already led to an estimated \$5 billion of 2020 debt service being deferred. Beyond this, where debt is unsustainable, it should be restructured without delay with private sector participation, and we should move towards greater debt transparency and enhanced creditor coordination. The G20's recent action to facilitate efforts to address unsustainable debts is welcome.

## SECOND, TO REAP THE FULL BENEFITS OF SOUND ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS, COUNTRIES SHOULD FOCUS ON POLICIES FOR PEOPLE.

That means investing in health and social protection to underpin growth and resilience, together with policies to accelerate gender equality. It also means investing in education and training to reduce inequality, harness the potential of young people, improve productivity, and tap into new opportunities that come with the rapid advances in technology.

Access to the internet is critical because it connects people to the digital economy, which is essential for growth and development in the future. Expanding internet access in Sub-Saharan Africa by 10 per cent of the population could increase real per capita GDP growth by as much as 4 percentage points.

## FINALLY, TO BUILD FORWARD TO A BETTER FUTURE, ALL COUNTRIES MUST TAKE URGENT ACTION TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE.

The IMF is focused on climate change because it is macro-critical, posing profound threats to growth and prosperity. It is also people-critical and planet-critical. In the last decade, direct damage from climate-related disasters adds up to around US\$1.3 trillion, to say nothing of the indirect effects and human impact.

Our research shows that, with the right mix of green investment and higher carbon prices, we can steer toward zero emissions by 2050 and help create millions of new jobs.

We have an historic opportunity to build a greener world, and also a more prosperous and job-rich one. With low interest rates, the right spending decisions today can yield a quadruple dividend tomorrow: avert future losses, spur economic gains, save lives, and deliver social and environmental benefits for everyone.

At the IMF, we are working tirelessly to support a durable recovery and a resilient and inclusive future as countries adapt to structural transformations brought on by climate change, digital acceleration and the rise of the knowledge economy.

From our position at the centre of the global financial safety net, we have acted swiftly in this crisis like-no-other to provide policy advice, capacity development and financial resources. Since the pandemic began, we have made commitments totaling over US\$101 billion to 82 countries, including 49 low-income countries, and we stand ready to do more.

We will continue to give our full support to our members and pay special attention to the urgent needs of emerging markets and developing economies – especially small and fragile states. And we are ready to help countries build forward to a better post-pandemic world. //

**KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA** // Kristalina Georgieva is Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund.



# 10 women that changed the UN

After 75 years, the United Nations is yet to have a female Secretary-General. Only four women have served as President of the General Assembly – a position usually elected every year. And the newly-appointed UK and US Ambassadors to the UN – Barbara Woodward and Linda Thomas-Greenfield – bring the total number of female representatives to have ever served on the Security Council up to just 23, from the hundreds since 1945.

It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that we often fall into the trap of “great man history” when reflecting on the UN’s seven-and-a-half decades. We are still prone to eulogising a stereotypically masculine style of leadership, making heroes of the (generally white) men who broke the rules but got results. Meanwhile the women – many of whom were held to a higher standard than their male counterparts, and had to be more effective and more creative – are less likely to have books and films made about them.

In this feature, Bryony Pike puts a spotlight on ten women who have shaped the United Nations.

- 1.** A leader of India’s independence movement (thrice imprisoned by the British), **VL Pandit** headed India’s delegation to the UN for its first 12 years. In 1953, she became the first woman President of the General Assembly. Her strong influence on the General Assembly was key in transforming the balance of power in the early UN towards newly independent states and placing decolonisation at the heart of the Organization’s agenda.
- 2.** **Shaista Ikramullah** was another key player in drafting the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. An active defender of fundamental human rights throughout her career as a Pakistani politician and diplomat, she worked hard to ensure that freedom and equality were emphasised throughout the document. An advocate for ending child and forced marriage, she was the driving force behind inclusion of Article 16 which is dedicated to ensuring equal rights in marriage.
- 3.** Liberian diplomat **Angie Brooks** was instrumental in formulating the UN’s opposition to South Africa’s apartheid policy. During her two decades at the UN, she was an important voice in calling for the Organization to support the peaceful transition to independence of former colonies. As such, an increasing number of African countries joined the General Assembly, yet she is the only African woman to ever become its president, which she did in 1969.
- 4.** In 1972, **Jeanne Martin Cissé** of Guinea became the first female ambassador to the UN to serve on the Security Council. On the Council, and as an influential member of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid, she encouraged the Organization to take a firmer approach to South Africa. This included the adoption of sanctions that increased pressure on the government so supporting the eventual abolition of apartheid in South Africa.
- 5.** **Gro Harlem Brundtland** is often referred to as the mother of sustainable development, having led the 1983 World Commission on Environment and Development that revolutionised the UN’s work – paving the way for the environmental conferences of the 1990s as well as greater engagement with civil society and the private sector. Later, as Director-General of the WHO, she led the response to SARS and introduced the first global treaty on tobacco control.
- 6.** **Margaret Anstee’s** 40-year career at the UN included almost every conceivable “first”, from first female Under-Secretary-General, and to first female head of a peacekeeping mission. She earned a reputation as a troubleshooter, as well as a reformer, having produced perhaps the most comprehensive plan for transforming the UN development system. She was also one of the architects of the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
- 7.** Japan’s **Sadako Ogata**, the first female High Commissioner for Refugees, oversaw large-scale operations in Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and the Great Lakes region. She expanded the agency’s work to include internally displaced persons, championed the concept of human security, and strengthened UNHCR’s engagement with the Security Council and military. The agency’s budget and staff more than doubled during her time in office.
- 8.** Having held economic, social and gender portfolios at the UN, **Thoraya Obaid** of Saudi Arabia became Executive Director of the UN Population Fund in 2001. She led campaigns on combating HIV/AIDS, expanding reproductive services for adolescents and ending violence against women, facing deep resistance from many countries. As a Muslim, Obaid was sensitive to cultural critiques but unapologetic, charting a course for discussions that continue today.
- 9.** **Christiana Figueres**, the first female Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, is one of the reasons we have the Paris Climate Agreement. After years of failed negotiations on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, Figueres was at the helm of a new approach pairing ambition on universal emissions commitments and the target to keep temperature rises below 2 degrees with pragmatism on nationally determined contributions.
- 10.** Deputy Secretary-General **Amina J. Mohammed** first joined the UN in 2012, leading the process that resulted in the Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals have reshaped approaches to development – from traditional, aid-based targets to a universal agenda. She has won praise for “humanising” the UN, from country visits to social media, and for championing innovation in development finance, technology and engaging stakeholders.



# THE FUTURE WE WANT

The UN's global consultation showed that despite our differences, people the world over have similar hopes and fears for the future. It also highlighted the importance of working together – across borders, sectors and generations. In this spirit, we give the last word to representatives of the UN past and future.

Robert Kaminker, who served the UN from 1946 to 1983 provides his reflections in an interview. Meanwhile, Pablo Emiliano Reyes Galindo describes the world he wants in an essay produced for a competition run by the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. You can read both pieces in full at [una.org.uk/magazine](http://una.org.uk/magazine).

## ROBERT KAMINKER ON THE ENDURING PROMISE OF THE CHARTER

### Describe the atmosphere in those early days.

On 10 January 1946, the day on which the General Assembly held its first meeting in London, I reported to the UNO personnel office in Church House to take up the position of reader in the French language typing pool of the UN Secretariat. I was 18 years and 9 months old and I had been recruited in France out of school.

In my first few months, I met many people who had had the same set of feelings and hopes that I had. Most of them had just emerged from six or seven years of war, some in occupied territory, others as soldiers, or prisoners of war, or in resistance commandoes, a few as survivors of concentration camps. All had suffered from lack of food, clothes, and freedom to move or communicate. But all had now two characteristics in common: an intense desire to see the world achieve peace, and a strong hope that the aims expressed in the UN Charter would be fulfilled.

### What do you think it means to be an international civil servant?

As members of the Secretariat under oath, I would say that we were charged with the duty of doing our very best to implement the tasks given to us by our superiors who, in turn, were tasked through the resolutions adopted by the various governing bodies of member states.

At certain levels, this involved working in teams, and sometimes having to seek mediation between different ways of understanding the work. The different backgrounds and nationalities of staff did not cause problems: we were able to negotiate a shared understanding of what was required, and staff members who came from antagonistic countries participated in these conversations without any restraint.

### What message would you give the UN and its supporters on its 75th birthday?

The United Nations is 75 years old! And yet I still feel the UN and its basis, the Charter, have the possibility of guiding the world in all its aspects.

But the leaders of our world must give up selfish nationalism. In democracies, electors must take the state of the world into account when voting for their leaders. All media, including social media must emphasise that the world is in danger but can be saved by the concerted action of all and at all levels.

Will the current danger of COVID-19, which has been universally felt and will continue at least until a vaccine is found, induce the necessary mentality changes? This is my hope, but alas, not my certainty. //



// The world I would want my unborn children to exist in has been built on a foundation called love, where the pasture is green and fertile." – Nur'Din Musa. A winning photograph from #TheWorldWeWant, a global photo contest hosted and organized by mobile app Agora in support of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations © Nur'Din Musa





// A winning photograph from #TheWorldWeWant, a global photo contest hosted and organized by mobile app Agora in support of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations © Md. Nafiu Hasan-Nasim

**PABLO EMILIANO REYES GALINDO ON THE UN'S ROLE IN BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE**

I guess no one thought a tiny virus could change all the socio-economic structures of society, and yet, here we are, presented with a “new normal”. In my country, Mexico, the effects were belated, but we too saw its disruptive effects in Latin America and the world.

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, this three-pronged crisis – sanitary, human and economic – will have unprecedented effects, including an increase on unemployment of 5.3 to 24.7 million people or more, the worst economic contraction in the history of Latin America with a projected -5.3% drop, and of course, all those who have died.

And to make things more dire, the pandemic is having the biggest impact in the most vulnerable groups, including the youth. This will widen the intergenerational inequalities gap and hinder the development and wellbeing of millions of young people.

Right now, we are in the most important crossroad humanity has ever faced since the end of the Second World War. In addition to the three crises mentioned above, COVID-19 has sped up the fracturing of globalization. We must also contend with the climate emergency and crisis of social justice. The United Nations

faces a Hydra and we can only defeat it through cooperation and multilateralism.

The UN has always worked for the peace and security of nations. Today, it should spearhead the creation of a new, sustainable, green, inclusive and fair world. There must be coordinated governance to deal with multiple crises and solve problems together. The UN could help governments create plans and strategies to recover from the pandemic and mobilise resources. Countries should share the knowledge of their best practices for recovery, as well as coordinate action to help developing countries since they are going to be greatly affected – in health and economic terms.

To do so, we need resilient strategies and inclusivity based on sustainable development, a gender lens and the youth – who can be catalysts of change.

But it's not only about economic growth. In fact, we must look beyond measuring wellbeing by GDP; we must include new indicators to have a more holistic view of human development and sustainability. For example, Kate Raworth has created an economic model in which humanity lives within social and planetary boundaries to create a safe and just 21st century. It is an inclusive perspective that puts humanity before economic growth, and promotes progress for everyone.

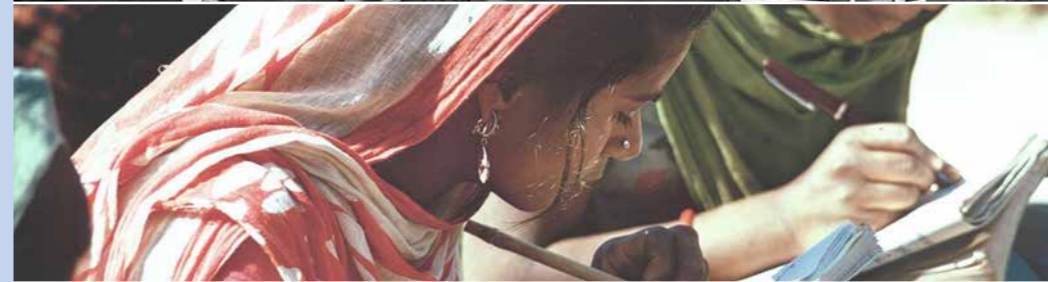
For our luck, we already have a roadmap: the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. This decade is crucial

for the UN, as we must shift gears and turbo charge progress, so all the goals are addressed and no one is left behind.

But first, we must first address the SDG 13 on climate action. Climate change will bring unprecedented challenges if we don't act now. According to Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac in their new book *The Future We Choose: Surviving the Climate Crisis*, we have to change our “Business as Usual” path, because “it is no exaggeration to say that what we do regarding emissions reductions between now and 2030 will determine the quality of human life on this planet for hundreds of years to come”.

Therefore, we need to change our paradigm to a green vision. According to the IMF's Kristalina Georgieva, if our world is to become more resilient “we need to do everything in our power to promote a green recovery”. This means measures to emerge from the pandemic triumphantly while fighting climate change. COVID-19 is the crisis of the moment; climate change is the crisis of the century. Countries must use public support wisely and commit to a decarbonisation. They must promote green finance so we can mobilise investment in green technologies, such as renewable energy. And achieving the Paris Agreement should become a priority.

The UN must be the catalyst of this change. We have no other options; we need to rebuild and create a better future for all. //



**75 YEARS OF HISTORY**

Visit [una.org.uk/magazine](http://una.org.uk/magazine) to read more fascinating articles, online exclusives, and a look back over 75 years of the history of the United Nations and the United Nations Association. In addition to lots of new content we are re-hosting our special editions looking back on the UN decade by decade, and providing a history of UNA-UK itself.

// Photographs, one from each decade of the UN's existence, from the UN's archive at [dam.media.un.org](http://dam.media.un.org) © UN Photo



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MESSAGE FROM  
**HIS MAJESTY THE KING**  
TO THE FIRST NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION  
AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL, 10TH OCTOBER, 1945

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*Buckingham Palace.*

We have overcome the greatest danger that ever faced us. Our enemies have been completely overthrown. But we all know that there is much to be done before we can make the peace secure. Mankind has created such terrible weapons that if they are ever used again everything for which we care may be destroyed.

The Charter of the United Nations has been made to prevent war and to increase human welfare. It provides the machinery by which this high purpose can be achieved. But more than machinery is needed. There must be the will and the intention to operate the Charter and to put its principles into practice. In this great task everyone can help by ensuring that they understand its purpose and by showing that they are ready to support its workings.

During the last six years the peoples of the British Commonwealth and Empire have for the second time within a generation made great sacrifices to defend their homes and to secure the liberty of all mankind. I am confident that they are determined to maintain the peace which they have won in conjunction with their Allies with the same courage, energy and endurance as they have shown in war. None of us has any illusions as to the difficulties of the task, but by God's help we shall overcome them.

I commend this cause to all my peoples. It is their cause and the cause of men and women of good will everywhere. If all play their part, the United Nations can be made the guardian of peace, the instrument of progress and a means by which the foundations of a new era in the history of mankind can be established.

**GEORGE R.I.**

*10th October, 1945*