



How to save the world

TEN LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY
OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE REFORM

TOGETHER FIRST




A GLOBAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL

About Together First

Together First is a rapidly growing network of global citizens, civil society organisations, practitioners, parliamentarians, business leaders and activists from all regions of the world committed to fair, open and inclusive solutions to improve global governance.

We are driven by the urgent need to address global catastrophic risks and to expand the boundaries of political possibility.

Throughout 2019 and 2020 Together First is leading a global campaign to:

-  **Identify workable ways to address global risks through broad-based global consultations**
-  **Produce a 'to-do' list for the international community by prioritising the leading ideas**
-  **Mobilise our diverse network to make these solutions a reality**

We are most grateful for the support of the Global Challenges Foundation.

The United Nations Association – UK provides the secretariat for Together First.

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About this report

In 2019-20, Together First will conduct a series of consultations to identify solutions to global risks. This will be a pragmatic exercise, to determine feasible changes to global institutions that would: (1) improve our ability to manage risks, and (2) create a resilient and responsive multilateral system that can address them in a timely and effective fashion.

Initially, we will focus on influencing the various intergovernmental processes taking place in 2020, notably the UN's 75th anniversary commemoration. Governments have decided to mark this milestone with a leaders' summit in September 2020, and a declaration on "The Future We Want, the United Nations We Need".¹

This is a crucial opportunity to take stock of our current global system – and demand action to improve it. Together First's objective is to ensure we make the most of this historic moment.

Through our consultations, we will bring new voices into conversations on global governance, and work with them to push for concrete solutions – and implementation. Our efforts will be closely coordinated with the UN's 75th anniversary initiative, which will stimulate dialogues around the world on the future we need, and the UN2020 civil society coalition² lobbying for meaningful public engagement with the leaders' summit.

The first phase of consultations will run over the course of 2019. It will invite expert and public contributions, including through a web portal.³ Preliminary results will be released in September 2019, with further publications and advocacy work planned for 2020. It will be geared towards influencing the leaders' summit.

This report seeks to lay the groundwork for the consultations – by looking at why previous reform efforts have had only limited impact, and how we can avoid making the same mistakes.⁴ We commissioned Sam Daws, a UN expert based at Oxford University, to identify the barriers to implementing global solutions and potential strategies for overcoming them. The result is the 10 key lessons set out in this report. They will inform our future work and provide useful insights relevant to Together First's consultation. We also hope they will be useful to others working to improve decision-making on global issues.⁵

¹ UN General Assembly resolution 73/299 available online at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/299>

² For more information please see: <http://un2020.org/>

³ Available online at: www.together1st.org/consult

⁴ Available online at: www.together1st.org/list

⁵ The lessons contained within this report do not necessarily reflect the views of all of Together First's supporters or funders.

Summary of 10 key observations



1 Solutions don't mirror risks. Most global catastrophic risks already have agreed international pathways identifying what needs doing. The task is to facilitate smart solutions to the institutional, political, financial and psychological blockages to progress or ambition. **PAGE 8**

2 While global catastrophic risks are global in nature there is no corresponding unitary global governance system to be reformed or replaced. Instead there are cross-cutting, decentralised, and overlapping networks of interactions which differ in each issue area, and require correspondingly tailored solutions. Further, states retain a dominant role in the setting of laws and rules which govern activity, and so influencing them remains key to progress in strengthening global governance. Moreover, trends in multilateral cooperation favour voluntarism over top-down treaties, and the successful 'blending' of universal and mini-lateral forums, while legitimacy arising from universal membership remains key to progress in norm development. Therefore, the scope of the Together First campaign must extend beyond the UN system, to embrace a wide range of mini-lateral processes and innovative public-private partnerships. **PAGE 9**

3 In the case of short and medium time frames (up to at least 2030) a premium should be placed on the sourcing of solutions which build upon or help implement the international community's existing roadmaps for addressing global challenges. As prospects for multilateral cooperation are worsening, there is also a necessity for solutions which shore up and defend existing multilateral processes. **PAGE 11**

4 There is a need to better incentivise a prevention-based approach across international institutions. There is great value in improving expert sources of timely, accurate and transparent data to help do this, and to better inform decision making on global catastrophic risk responses. **PAGE 13**

5 The international community has a range of existing useful strategies to tackle risk multipliers such as conflict, poverty and inequality. **PAGE 14**

6 Building resilience, readiness, and strategic/ analytical capacity in institutions now, will determine the international system's ability to respond effectively to future unknown risks. **PAGE 16**

7 Nomenclature can be an obstacle to both recognition of existing global governance solutions, and their successful advocacy. **PAGE 17**

8 The credibility of the body making the recommendations, or the skill of those undertaking subsequent advocacy, is a significant factor in the likelihood of the recommendations being eventually adopted. **PAGE 18**

9 The existing global governance landscape varies considerably in nature and scope across each global catastrophic risk and risk multiplier requiring commensurately varied responses. **PAGE 19**

10 'Political will' is not a fixed constant, and smart coalitions of NGOs, member states, business leaders, and international civil servants can 'move the dial' to create the political and institutional incentives for implementing solutions and increasing ambition. **PAGE 26**

ONLINE RESOURCE

This report's accompanying online reference document features a (non-exhaustive) compilation of prior reform attempts. It is referred to throughout the report as "online list" and is available at: www.together1st.org/list

The context for Together First’s consultation

While not an exhaustive list there is broad consensus that the following five risks present an urgent and potentially catastrophic threat to humanity:



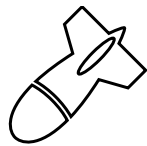
CLIMATE CHANGE



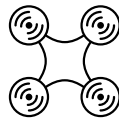
ECO-SYSTEM COLLAPSE



PANDEMICS AND ANTI-MICROBIAL RESISTANCE



WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION



THE THREAT FROM NEW AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

These have three factors in common:

- 1 ALL HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT TO HUMANITY
- 2 ALL HAVE BEEN CAUSED OR WORSENERD BY HUMAN ACTIVITY
- 3 THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS ALREADY GRAPPLED WITH PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR EACH

Key ‘risk multipliers’ – viewed as exacerbating the identified risks, impeding solutions, or both – include:

CONFLICT AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

INSTITUTIONS THAT LACK INCLUSIVITY OR ACCOUNTABILITY

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

As well as solutions to the catastrophic risks and multipliers above, there is also a need to look at solutions which might help address the ‘known unknown’ of future threats that have not yet emerged.

Representatives of civil society in Freetown, Sierra Leone, meeting Ban Ki-moon in 2014. © UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



IT IS NOT FOR A LACK OF IDEAS THAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN SLOW

There are many credible and established ideas for how to address the global challenges we face. Sources for these include the recommendations contained within:

- Strategies produced by the UN Secretary-General or inter-agency task forces (informed by expert international civil servants).
- International roadmaps to tackle issues negotiated by countries under the auspices of the UN or other international or regional organisations.
- Recommendations from international commissions (often called High-Level Panels) which have more leeway to make proposals that are less immediately implementable. These are of two kinds:
 - Created by the UN Secretary-General or groups of UN member states.
 - Created by think tanks, foundations or large international NGOs.
- Recommendations proposed by international consortia of universities (particularly in medicine and science) by businesses associations (particularly in the area of sustainability) or by networks of NGOs, on a range of issues.

The online resource list containing such proposals is explicitly *not* a list of all reports with either ‘global governance’ or a specific global catastrophic risk in the title.

It rather seeks to illuminate the different types of international roadmaps and recommendations that have been made by different bodies, as a source from which to draw lessons, and as a resource for participants of the Together First consultation. We will seek to add to this resource over time.

Together First wants to avoid reinventing the wheel – we encourage participants in the consultation to look to this and to the wider history of global governance reform, and to consider:

- Which ideas from previous exercises might be worthy of resurrection, and what is required to make them viable this time around?
- Which ideas from previous exercises are similar to any new proposal we might consider, and how will the new proposal avoid the barriers to implementation that thwarted its previous incarnations?



Observations

The following observations and reflections were prepared by global governance expert Sam Daws while working as a consultant for Together First, through funding from the Global Challenges Foundation. Sam has worked in UN-related policy roles for over three decades, including serving as First Officer to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He is now based at Oxford University and helps governments and foundations to navigate the politics and processes of the UN and other multilateral bodies.⁶

The Community Based Complaint Mechanism and Conduct and Discipline Unit of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) conduct an event to raise awareness of processes to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse in Goma, DRC, in 2018 © MONUSCO

Observation 1

The first – and perhaps the central observation to make is that the solutions are not mirrors of the risks. The task to address regarding risks is to *identify* them. The task with solutions is primarily to *facilitate* them. This is because:

- In large part there are already significantly developed international pathways that identify *what* needs to happen in response to the above global catastrophic risks. The reason that these roadmaps are not adequately addressed by the international community is not because of a lack of signposts, but because of conflict over interests, over prioritisation, over resources, because of institutional or political impediments, or even because of psychological denial.

In other words, the positive message is that valuable work, which can help address global catastrophic risks, has already been done. The gap is not in a dearth of good ideas, it is in the reality that implementing change is difficult. The international

community has acknowledged the central risks identified above and has set in chain a number of agreed strategies or commissioned proposed strategies to deal with them. But challenges/risks remain, so what should be the focus of those who want to mitigate risks – where is the gap?

The review of existing strategies and recommendations suggests that the key gap lies in helping facilitate *smart* solutions. Solutions are smart when:

- They identify the blockages to progress, and contain a plan to overcome these blockages, such as through increasing political support from key member states.
- They build institutional resilience or preventive capacity rather than just ameliorate.
- They mitigate more than one risk or risk multiplier.
- They simultaneously enhance fairness, cost effectiveness and efficacy.

Observation 2

A second observation is that while the risks may be global in nature, there is currently no corresponding unitary global governance ‘system’ that can be simply reformed or replaced.

- A notable characteristic of the current international environment is that (even if it can be described as a ‘system’) it is not one of globally coordinated governance but rather of decentralised, overlapping, and cross-cutting networks of interactions, one in which diverse actors (including states, businesses, city and regional authorities, regional organisations and individuals) all act at times semi-independently but also at times cooperate and compete in asserting rights and responsibilities. The Global Challenges Foundation has articulated a useful working definition: “By global governance we refer to the many different ways that institutions, both public and private, as well as individuals and organisations, manage common affairs on the global level.” The nature of this ‘system’ is that there is no straightforward hierarchy of global governance mandates by which universal international organisations are able to dictate to regional bodies, or regional bodies to states etc. While universal bodies typically imbue greater legitimacy in being able to establish and disseminate new norms, regional organisations (such as the European Union and the African Union) may be able to go beyond recommendations and place legal obligations on its members. Thus, the online list contains both global and regional examples of strategies intended to mitigate global catastrophic risks such as climate change.
- For different issue areas there are very different degrees of coercion and coordination. The only area with clear international legal coercion arises when the UN Security Council passes a Chapter VII resolution under the UN Charter, and obligates states to apply sanctions or authorises them to use force, in the face of threats to international peace and security. In international trade, disputes are decided by World Trade Organisation arbitration for those countries that agree to remain members of the WTO. In most areas relevant to mitigating global catastrophic risks (including climate change, human rights

and international development) the international system rests on voluntary cooperation by states, with some capacity for ‘naming and shaming’ outliers, but lacking ‘sticks’.

- Despite the globalisation of people, goods and services, states (countries) retain a dominant and tenacious (and in some cases increasing) role in the setting of the vast majority of laws and rules which govern human activity. They will at times, but infrequently, pool their sovereignty upwards (through regional organisations such as the EU) or delegate decisions downwards to local authorities but they retain the right to reverse such decisions, and they maintain a monopoly over all the key dimensions of both government and governance – including the raising of taxes and distribution of public services, the making of laws and regulations, and the raising of armed forces and police to defend territory and maintain public order.
- The current trends in global governance towards voluntarism (such as the structure of the Paris Agreement rather than top-down treaties) and agility (the trend of states towards ‘pick and mix’ multilateralism – blending and navigating universal and mini-lateral or hybrid bodies) have implications. There is also a positive premium on solutions which can encourage (and inspire) direct actions by individuals, as well as institutional actors.

“While universal bodies typically imbue greater legitimacy in being able to establish and disseminate new norms, regional organisations (such as the European Union and the African Union) may be able to go beyond recommendations and place legal obligations on its members.”

⁶ Sam Daws' biography available online at <https://www.politics.ox.ac.uk/associates/sam-daws.html>

The implications of this for consultation participants:

- There is no centralised global authority that can simply be handed a new schema for reformed global governance for implementation. Thus 'big bang' reform proposals that lack a path to political adoption will stay on the shelf.
- Incremental shifts in getting states to agree on domestic actions and international cooperation are a valuable focus since they remain the central actor in decisions on international issues.
- A range of other actors, from businesses to scientific institutions, from local government authorities to regional organisations will each need to make different contributions to the mitigation of a global catastrophic risk, and likely need to be incentivised appropriately to do so. For example, a business may take inspiration or guidance from the UN-brokered 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, but there is no global authority that will place obligatory responsibilities on it to do so. However, states and some regional organisations may have the powers to do so.
- Global governance solutions which take account of the drivers of individual behaviour change have added value. We know that for global catastrophic risks such as climate change,

pandemics and ecosystem collapse, personal behaviour by individuals is a vital element for durability, and requires inventive new forms of strategic communications and economic and other incentivisation – with lessons to be learnt from 'nudge' units which take account of the psychology of change.

- Credible solutions require clarity as to which actor is being asked to implement a particular part of a solution, and where the commensurate resources will come from.

“ There is no centralised global authority that can simply be handed a new schema for reformed global governance for implementation. Thus 'big bang' reform proposals that lack a path to political adoption will stay on the shelf. ”



At the conference of parties (COP) for the Paris Climate Treaty in Bonn in 2018 the cohosts, Fiji, led a "Taloana dialogue" – using traditional Fijian storytelling techniques to think differently about how to combat climate change.
© COP23 presidency

Observation 3

A third observation is that 'theories of change' for global governance solutions must vary to reflect the timescale within which change is sought.

In the case of short and medium time frames (up to at least 2030) a premium should be placed on the sourcing of solutions which build upon or help implement the international community's existing roadmaps for addressing global challenges.

- This is because proposals intended to be implemented in the near future are more likely to be viable if they provide innovative solutions in support of (or at least not in conflict with) existing road maps established by member states. Thus, an innovative solution to avert eco-system collapse with a 2030 timeframe which is *aligned* with the SDG road map to 2030, as well as the UN's plans for a new biodiversity strategy through the 2020 Biodiversity Conference (COP15 of the CBD), has more likelihood navigating political will, even if the proposal itself has greater ambition than those in the relevant UN targets and indicators.
- There is also potential value in the contrarian view – i.e. those proposals that argue that the international community (UN and member states) have got it all wrong and a completely different approach is needed. However, if the timeframe for such an approach is short or medium-term the onus must be on the proposer to not just state why they feel the world is 'barking up the wrong tree', but also to propose how they will garner the political will to make such a substantive shift.

In the case of longer time frames, there is the intrinsic challenge that the further away the proposed solutions are envisaged to come into effect, the greater the risk that the uncertainty arising from so many intervening variables (including change in political and economic constellations, technological discoveries and changes to the physical environment) will mean that such proposals lack any practical – or provable – value. The implications are:

- That it is wise to focus on solutions which do not require major realignments in international relations.
- If solutions are also sought with a long-time horizon, then the onus on proposers should

be to clearly articulate which parameters must change for their proposal to be implementable, and how their 'theory of change' sees such a shift coming about.

There are two types of long-term contextual change which might enable proposals which are currently unimplementable (e.g. for political or financial reasons) to become viable:

The first is that there are unforeseen but hoped for improved conditions (e.g. that there is an upsurge in cooperative behaviour among states, a greater demand from consumers that businesses exhibit ethical behaviour, or that pathbreaking technological breakthroughs occur – such as affordable negative carbon emissions technologies that significantly suck greenhouse gases from the atmosphere).

Sadly, the current trend is the significant worsening of the conditions for multilateral cooperation, with greater competition among states, a rise of nationalism and polarisation within states, and since 2015 a significant decline in cooperative behaviour in international institutions. This has entailed significant reversals, including on international financing for development, climate mitigation and adaptation, increased divisions in the UN Security Council and pushback on the acceptance of the International Criminal Court and on human rights, including notably those of women, indigenous peoples, ethnic and religious minorities, and LGBTQI persons. The current view of the UN IPCC is that existing State commitments (and corporate plans and incentives) on climate change remain inadequate to prevent potentially catastrophic climate change. The successful implementation of the Paris Agreement not only requires significantly increased State ambition but also the scaled-up introduction of (yet undiscovered) negative carbon emissions technologies by 2050 – so any prospect of success already rests on a key uncertain requirement.

This has significant implications – but also presents opportunities. If the current direction of travel continues, there will likely come a point where the potential for international cooperation becomes so impaired by toxicity that it is difficult for any international institutions to mitigate global challenges, even at the current level of ambition.

Thus, there is added value in seeking out solutions which help to shore up multilateralism and existing and new forms of cooperation and understanding (at all levels of international society). Inversely the pursuit and promotion of solutions which seek to scrap existing institutions and replace them with new structures based on ‘coalitions of the willing’, risk undermining those existing institutions at a time when whatever would be put forward to replace them would inevitably garner less international support. In other words, we cannot assume that the existing level of international institutional cooperation is one in which the only direction is up, as the evidence points to the contrary. Existing multilateral gains (both institutions and norms) are hugely under fire at the moment, so moves to build new institutions to replace the current ones will likely end up with something worse.

This leads to the second potential contextual change – one in which things have got a lot worse and there is a crisis. How can we best prepare for the opportunities that a crisis might open up?

The economist Milton Friedman famously suggested that “when a crisis occurs, the actions that are taken *depend on the ideas that are lying around*. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable.” [italics added]. This anticipatory theory of changes places particular store on the identification of contrarian ideas which challenge the status quo but also require institutions that are able to incubate (“keep them alive and available”) over a long period (presumably at least decades). This approach is therefore likely better suited to the research units of government departments and university economics departments, as part of their long-term contingency planning/forecasting than it is to Together First’s campaign-oriented model, which places a premium on giving effect to evidenced real world change.

It does, however, mean that, while outside of the scope of Together First’s present strategy, there is considerable value for others to pursue long-term solutions that enhance the capacity of institutions (whether governments, city authorities or international organisations) in readiness and in the ability to learn lessons, and to encourage a greater focus on the study of prevention and resilience in academic research programmes. Indeed, the most dynamic parts of the UN system have historically

been precisely those such as the strategic planning unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the early warning, lessons-learnt and best-practices units in the UN Secretariat, funds, programmes and agencies. Member states have unfortunately been reluctant to fund such reflective work, in part because it doesn’t provide immediate ‘outputs’ which evidence that taxpayers money has been well spent (unlike, say, inoculating children against disease) and in part because states have been reluctant to give international organisations an independent analytical capability that can then may be used by them to critique states for failing to live up to their stated commitments. We can usefully anticipate crises (even if we can’t predict when crises will occur) by ensuring that governments and international institutions are more resilient and capable to respond when they do erupt.

In the wake of crises, societies can either ‘break down’ or ‘break through’. History suggests that which of these happens is largely down to two of the key ‘risk multipliers’ – the degree to which institutions are inclusive and accountable, and the level of inequality and poverty in society. In the US we saw a contrast between the cooperative response of New Yorkers to the 9/11 attacks, which actually strengthened community bonds in the aftermath, and the more fractured local reaction to Hurricane Katrina, reflecting both President Bush’s top-down and heavy-handed response and existing deep community tensions. Poverty and extreme inequality in Haiti similarly impacted on that country’s response to a major earthquake and subsequent cholera outbreak.

We may of course *already* be in a multiple crisis with climate change and eco-system collapse potentially heralding increased conflict and forced migration over water, food and energy, and at a time when multilateralism is under severe strain, buffeted by forces of by polarisation and inequality. Solutions which can be applied in the short and medium term to enhance social cohesion, social inclusion and equality in the face of growing polarisation (and in some cases also authoritarianism) may also therefore help contribute to future crises providing the opportunity for a ‘break through’ rather than a ‘break down’ moment.

Observation 4

A fourth observation is that the international community recognises – in theory – the need to build more resilient systems and focus more generically on ‘prevention’ rather than ‘cure’, but that there has always been a lack of incentives across human political institutions to enshrine prevention in their ‘DNA’.

Understanding better the obstacles to institutional investment in prevention is key to the discernment of the merits of particular global governance solutions. Indeed, successive UN Secretaries-General have called for prevention to be at the core of the Organisation’s work, none more so than the current Secretary-General, António Guterres, who has said he wants prevention – across the board – to be his legacy. But despite his appointment of multiple senior advisors in this area there is little concrete to show for it, two years on.

Similarly, the international community has in outcome documents also endorsed rigorous academic studies demonstrating the economic value of prevention over cure. The most notable of these was The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, and this is likely to be mirrored by the forthcoming UK Government Review of the Economics of Biodiversity, led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta of the Cambridge University Centre for the Study of Existential Risk.

Two areas where the international community has demonstrated an ability to act on its professed desire to prevent have been in the realms of Disaster Risk Reduction and International Health Prevention and Preparedness:

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) and the associated UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience [see online list] amount to an advanced ‘Roadmap’ and strategic plan that the international community can follow to better mitigate the risks of future natural and human-made disasters.

Sendai seeks to avoid the silos that some international responses are prone to, by focussing on the generic ‘solution multipliers’ that are helpful in responding to a variety of risks – these include actions which will help cultivate inclusive and accountable institutions, and ways to support the

collection and use of more timely, accurate and usable data for decision making. The UN Plan of Action’s first commitment/recommendation is: “Strengthen system-wide coherence in support of the *Sendai Framework* and other agreements, *through a risk-informed and integrated approach*” [italics added]. Advances in norms and strategies through international organizations require the agreement of member states, and negotiators place great store in language that has already been agreed in other universal multilateral forums. Thus, there may be opportunities to apply the Sendai Framework approach and language in other negotiation arenas that tackle global catastrophic risks.

Similarly, the global health regime (including the strategies of key organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) [see online list] and the Global Alliance on Vaccines have focussed more of their efforts on preventive health measures, and on regional, national and local capacity building. These strategies tackle health prevention within a broader development and climate change context, as well as the through the three key risk multipliers (the effects of conflict, poverty/inequality, and institutional deficiencies).

The WHO has also developed specific strategies to tackle pandemics, including on influenza [see online list] and Ebola, and the UN General Assembly has taken an integrated approach to Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) through a GA Resolution built on resolutions passed in other bodies on the human (WHO), agricultural (FAO) and animal (World Organisation for Animal Health – OIE) dimensions of AMR. This cumulative and ‘bottom-up’ institutional approach to ‘socialising’ internationally-agreed language on responses to new threats like AMR might also usefully be employed when dealing with global catastrophic risks such as the risk from new technologies, since this challenge is similarly multi-faceted.

The international community has also sought to take a primarily preventive approach in areas such as migration (through the Global Compact for Migration) and conflict. A number of frameworks, strategies and recommendations in these areas are included in the online list, as they have relevance to risk multipliers.

“ *There has always been a lack of incentive across human political institutions to enshrine prevention in their ‘DNA’.* ”

Observation 5

A fifth observation is that the international community has a range of existing useful strategies to tackle risk multipliers.

A range of international frameworks, strategies and recommendations have been included in the online list which address one or more of the identified risk multipliers. The first and foremost of these is Agenda 2030 – the roadmap for implementing the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals over the next 11 years. The set of 169 targets and 230 indicators provide the first truly international integrated framework for sustainable development, based on partnerships and the search for peace societies, inclusive and accountable institutions and a ‘leave no one behind’ human rights mainstreaming. The 2030 framework also directly addresses inequality as a risk multiplier which serves to undermine a range of international objectives.

The African Union’s integrated 50-year plan to 2063 (which is also cross-cutting in scope) is valuable to read because, like the SDGs, it focusses on the ‘how’ as well as the ‘what’, providing a detailed strategy for the continent’s renaissance, as an explicit response to identified risks, and with clear proposals on: ‘Making it Happen – Monitoring, Evaluation, Financing, Communication & Capacities for Implementation’.

A number of strategies and reports have been included [see online list] which provide a roadmap to reducing intra- and inter-state conflict and political violence (including terrorism and violent extremism). Frameworks that focus on capacity building – such as the UN’s Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, also highlight the importance of accountable and inclusive institutions, and the issue of generational fairness.

Children in Ukraine use art to better understand the Sustainable Development Goals at a workshop run by the UN Development Programme.
© UNDP Ukraine



Observation 6

A sixth observation is that addressing unknown risks requires a different ‘theory of change’ – one which values the maintenance of a functioning multilateral system beyond its immediate transactional value.

There are similarities and differences to the way that known and unknown risks can be responded to. In the case of *known* risks we are aware of the tools and obstacles that exist today to support or impede solutions. In the case of *unknown* risks we are preparing for a future time when a new risk will emerge. We therefore don’t know what technological wizardry or malign political divisions will exist at that future moment in time, to help or hinder addressing a newly emerged risk. So solutions to future unknown risks will lie in what we can do now to ensure that the durability of credible systems, which are able to both predict and respond to new risks. This places value on the preservation and strengthening of international institutions. And past studies suggest that there are at least three areas where international organisations have value above and beyond whatever value they may have in the present in the transactional sense – i.e. their ability to deliver global public goods in a cost-effective way. These include:

- The value of keeping credible (e.g. both effective and legitimate) existing forums governed by agreed rules of procedure for solving global problems. The convening power of the UN owes much to the universality of its membership, and the fact that all member states, large and small, agreed to abide by the principles of the UN Charter. One of the challenges for global governance will be developing new forms of agile multi-stakeholder forum that go beyond State members. A longstanding example is the International Labour Organisation, and newer forms have emerged in recent years. The *High-level Political Forum* meets under the auspices of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, with a remit to review progress on the SDGs including partnerships, and brings together many of the stakeholders that characterised the ‘main groups’ system of the Rio+20 negotiation process. The *Global Alliance on Vaccines (GAVI)* is another example of a hybrid entity – a successful public-private partnership that contributes to eradicating diseases that might otherwise evolve to present a pandemic risk. But GAVI is only able to do so because it operates in the context of the universal agreement by states on *International Health*

“ In the case of known risks we are aware of the tools and obstacles that exist today to support or impede solutions. In the case of unknown risks we are preparing for a future time when a new risk will emerge. ”

Regulations, agreed through the UN’s World Health Organisation Assembly. This illustrates the value of the maintenance of an agile international ecosystem which ‘blends’ organisations to ensure universal legitimisation with efficacy in delivery.

- The value of expert sources of information and data to inform decision making. In the past global data sets have been maintained by international organisations and specialised think tanks, and individual country data collected by National Statistical Offices. In the future the use of data will be transformed through the mining of unstructured data through Artificial Intelligence (AI) and algorithms. An innovative example of the use of such data was announced at the Nairobi Environment Assembly in March 2019, where UN Environment unveiled a web-based platform to monitor global freshwater ecosystems, opening the door to a new era of data-rich analysis that could reshape how we measure humanity’s environmental footprint. The platform is a partnership which utilises Google’s expertise in satellite data, cloud computing, earth observation and AI, the European Commission’s data analysis expertise, and UN Environment’s scientific knowledge. It is thus a striking example of how solutions that address global problems can best be addressed by a smart coalition of actors (in this case an international organisation, a regional organisation and a leading corporation). This data platform will likely prove a key tool to mitigating ecosystem collapse because while freshwater ecosystems (including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes) amount to just 0.01% of the world’s water, they provide habitat for almost 10 per cent of known species. And there is evidence produced by the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation that there has been a rapid loss in freshwater biodiversity.

Observation 7

A seventh observation is on nomenclature.

While Together First believes there is significant value in using the lens of global catastrophic risks as a way to focus attention on the major issues we face, a key challenge in assessing the role that ‘global governance solutions’ play in mitigating ‘global catastrophic risks’ is that neither ‘global governance’ nor ‘catastrophic risk’ typically resonate in terms of nomenclature with how the international community approaches international challenges. This, crucially, is therefore not in itself evidence of neglect of an issue area, or of an insufficient response to it.

- International organisations place their focus on defining global and regional problems and then on addressing them through specific actors, such as states or regional organisations. The strategies and frameworks established by such organisations, often through member state negotiation processes, amount to a ‘global governance solution’ but may not be framed in that way. Sometimes the international community defines its work as responding to ‘risks’ (as in The UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience) [see online list] but at other times it doesn’t use ‘risk’ nomenclature even when it is clearly acting to mitigate risks.
- The word ‘risk’ may be avoided in a policy making context simply to avoid ambiguity, since it has variable meanings (relating to likelihood or degree) according to context – namely ‘a situation involving exposure to danger’, ‘the possibility that something unwelcome will happen’ and ‘something regarded as a threat or likely source of danger’. Of course, for the existential risks identified in this report there is already little doubt that, unchecked, they pose an existential threat as well as a current danger.
- Recommendations made by High-level Panels and International Commissions will be framed through the lens of the particular *Terms of Reference* of the Panel. The resultant proposals

may vary from the elaboration of new norms or goals, how a particular institution should reform, how to mainstream issues (such as gender or climate) across institutions, and what a range of actors should do next. The utility and transferability of such proposals will inevitably reduce over time, since proposals to strengthen or reform institutions are often ‘a child of their time’, but some will retain longer term salience. A section on ‘historically significant reform proposals’ has therefore been included in the online list (although for space reasons the historical recommendations themselves have not been reproduced there).

- Particular HLPs have had enduring impact in the area of norm generation. The World Commission on Environment and Development (known as ‘the Brundtland Report’) [see online list] popularised the concept of ‘sustainable development’ bringing together two previously incommensurate policy worlds of economic development and environmental protection. The Independent Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty [see online list] coined the concept of ‘The Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) bringing together the exigencies of humanitarian intervention and sovereignty state responsibility. The ‘Brahimi’ Panel on UN peacekeeping continues to resonate in contemporary discussions with its exhortation that ‘mandates must be commensurate with resources’. Such norm generation can play a crucial role in fostering integrated international approaches to challenges, but again the Panels themselves will typically not articulate their recommendations within the framing of ‘risk mitigation’ or addressing ‘global governance gaps’. Thus reformers should recognise the potential relevance and value of work which has not necessarily been articulated as a response to a risk, or formally presented as a global governance solution.

“ A key challenge in assessing the role that ‘global governance solutions’ play in mitigating ‘global catastrophic risks’ is that neither ‘global governance’ nor ‘catastrophic risk’ typically resonate in terms of nomenclature with how the international community approaches international challenges. ”

Observation 8

An eighth observation is that the credibility of the body making the recommendations, or the skill of those undertaking subsequent advocacy, is a significant factor in the likelihood of the recommendations being eventually adopted. Credibility arises in part from membership (including the level of recognised expertise or seniority of those making the recommendations), partly from a transparent and inclusive consultation or rigorous review process, but most of all from the ability of the body, or its advocates, to reach and influence decision-makers. Studies of UN High-level Panels suggest that the publication of their reports is only the half-way point. An amount of time at least equal to a panel’s prior existence needs to be invested by panel members, or by external actors such as NGOs and supportive states, in navigating the political and institutional hurdles to implementation. Moreover, proposals that do not already embody an explicit or implicit theory of change which would facilitate their implementation will have dramatically reduced prospects. Thus, for an idea to fly, “technical brilliance” is insufficient, it also needs to politically and institutionally ‘dock’.

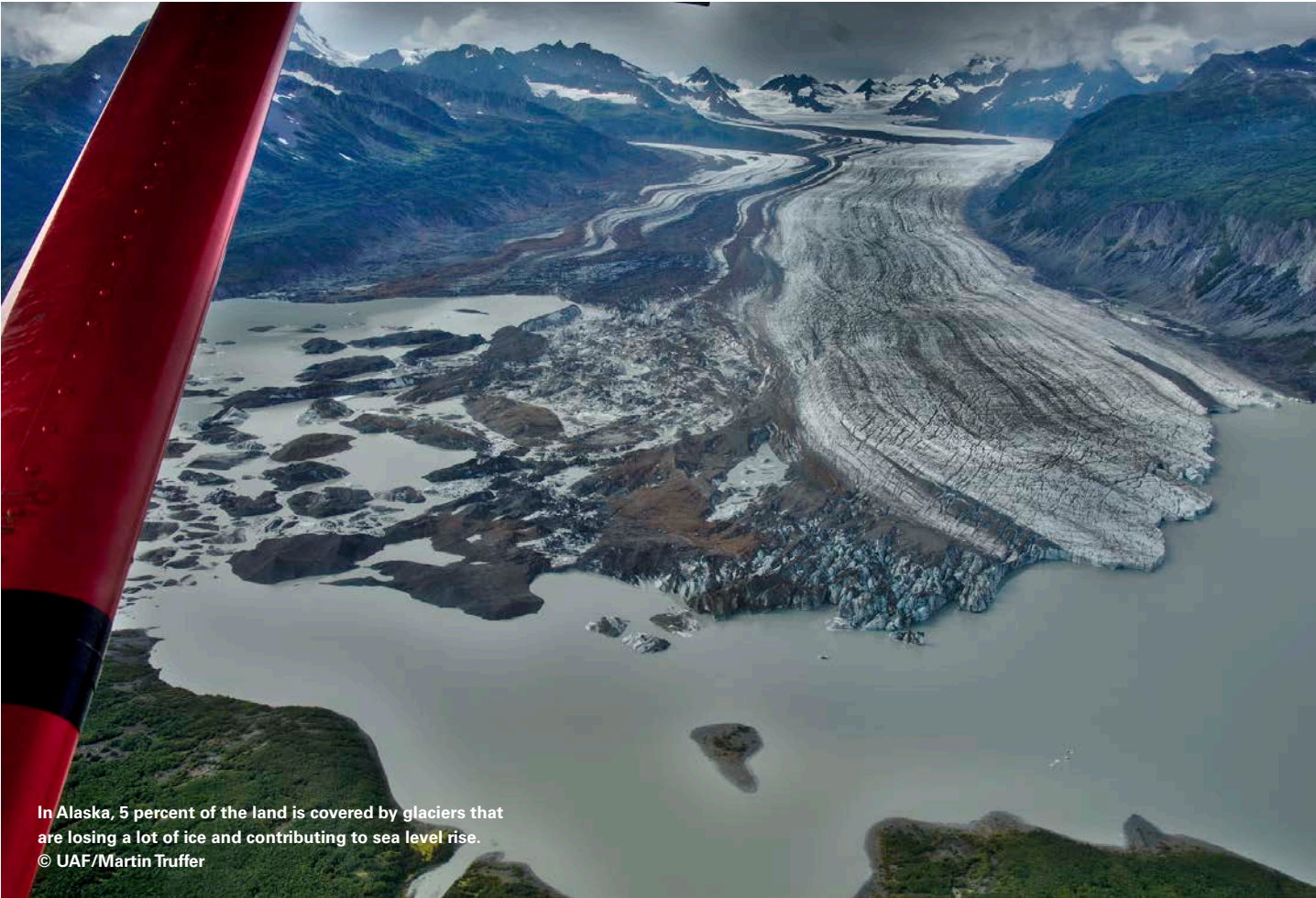
The accompanying online list of strategies and recommendations reflects the *wide variety* of bodies that have made such recommendations, and each body brings with it advantages and disadvantages when it comes to their credibility and implementability. Strategies produced by the UN Secretary-General can at times rise above the current level of ambition collectively exhibited by states, but at other times may be limited by a focus on what the UN system of entities should be doing

on an issue, even in areas where the UN is not the main actor to address it. Strategies produced by UN member states can serve as a barometer to the level of collective ambition that exists (even if subsequent implementation by individual countries is variable), and the target setting role of UN conferences, Summits and processes has been shown to positively influence State behaviour and global outcomes over time. Both UN- and independently convened- High-level Panels and Commissions (where members serve in their individual capacities even if current or former Heads of State) have typically occupied a middle ground producing recommendations that can exceed the lowest common denominator outputs that sometimes characterise intergovernmental processes, but which have still been subject to a degree of political road testing which increases the prospects of their implementation. Recommendations from international scientific or medical collaborations (such as the Lancet studies in the online list, or the many reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) bring with them the credibility of the academic review process, but are not totally free of the risk of political bias, interference or contestation. But what all of these processes have in common is that vast amounts of time and money has been spent at bringing together experts and/ or decision-makers to try to advance multilateral solutions to global challenges.

“Credibility arises...from the ability of the body, or its advocates, to reach and influence decision-makers.”



Activists campaigning in Burundi's elections.
© UN Photo/Martine Perret



In Alaska, 5 percent of the land is covered by glaciers that are losing a lot of ice and contributing to sea level rise.
© UAF/Martin Truffer

Observation 9

A ninth observation is that for each of the global catastrophic risks identified, the existing tool kit of the international community varies considerably in nature and scope.

Some brief comments – and these are by no means comprehensive – on the nature of the governance regimes for the five global catastrophic risks follows:

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is an area where the UN has achieved twin successes.

- First, through the IPCC it convened the world’s leading climate scientists, who concluded authoritatively that climate change is exacerbated by human behaviour and if we do not change our ways the result will be catastrophic.
- Second, through the UNFCCC, the UN created an innovative, bottom-up international framework (instead of a top-down treaty) for states to voluntarily submit their national climate-related

targets, and agree to accelerate their ambition as technology, price and other policy considerations allowed. All states were convinced by the scientific case to sign up to Paris (although the US has given notice to leave in 2020). Such greater ambition is essential since the sum of individual pledges falls well short of the Paris objective of keeping temperature rises to 1.5 degrees and at most 2 degrees Celsius.

Global governance proposals that relate to member state action will inevitably take Paris as their starting point. It is an area where action is also heavily impacted by the three risk multipliers (conflict, institutional shortfalls and poverty/inequality) and so strategies from conflict settlement, international development, and human rights also have salience. The drivers for change are also in flux (the unknown of technological innovation, including the need for scalable negative emissions technology well before 2050), and implementation owes much to non-state actors. Incentivising large scale, low carbon, pro-poor investment by Sovereign Wealth Funds, pension

funds and insurance companies, in developing country energy infrastructure is an example of one gamechanger – in line with the outgoing President of the World Bank’s prognosis that we need to ‘turn billions into trillions’ in SDG and climate financing. It is also an area where action or inaction by particular sovereign countries will be pivotal. China is building 240 new coal power plants as part of its Belt and Road Initiative at the same time as it has become the world’s leader in renewable energy. Brazil is host to the world’s vast Amazonian natural carbon ‘sink’, which is now under increased risk of deforestation following a change in government. Climate change is also an area (unlike WMDs) where strategies that transform the behaviour of businesses (sustainable production), people (sustainable consumption), and city authorities (smart cities), will need to be an integral part of international solutions.

The online list contains a variety of strategies and proposals to help mitigate (and adapt to) climate change. All take the Paris Agreement as their starting point, with the EU and AU plans looking at State implementation, and the World Bank action plan advising how to resource the fundamental shifts needed. A succession of High-level Panels has addressed key dimensions of climate change policy, such as how to incentivise private sector action (the Business and Sustainable Development Commission), how to reconcile competing international energy interests (the Global Commission on the Geopolitics of Energy Transformation) and the economics of climate change mitigation (the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate and The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change). Alliances of city authorities have also produced strategies, such as the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.

Much work has, and is being done on improving climate governance so a strategic focus on the following types of solutions may be most productive.

Those which focus on:

- Strategies that produce synergistic gains in other international areas (e.g. poverty alleviation, health, biodiversity).
- Strengthening member state ambition within the framework of the Paris Agreement.
- Reducing polarisation, politicisation or rebutting climate denial.
- More accountable and transparent international data on emissions, including leveraging AI.
- Changes by the largest emitters (countries, companies and state/city authorities), or on neglected areas (e.g. emissions from clothing and footwear production).
- Incentivising changes in the decisions of individuals (as consumers, investors etc.)
- Improved international mechanisms – e.g. carbon trading schemes, green finance.

Climate change is therefore a good illustration of how a focus on a new international “framework” to replace what has been achieved already would be counterproductive – there is no obvious gain in replacing the existing global framework to address climate change. The ‘gap’ lies in the insufficient ambition of key actors (including us as individuals) to take the necessary steps, and the need for intelligent strategies that navigate institutional, political, financial and psychological barriers to change.

Background:

The UN’s work in relation to the conservation of natural resources and the threat of species extinction began in earnest in 1949 when (through a US initiative) ECOSOC organised a UN Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Effective Utilization of Natural Resources. The issue has since been taken up in a variety of UN forums, including UN Environment, the Commission on Human Rights (now Human Rights Council), UNCTAD, the Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the FAO and the UN General Assembly. Other key landmarks, reports and entities included the UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, which produced a 26-principle Declaration

and led to the creation of UNEP, the World Commission on Environment and Development (the ‘Brundtland Commission’), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which also produced a Statement on Forestry Principles, ‘Agenda 21’, a new coordinating organ, the Commission on Sustainable Development (and later the High-Level Political Forum), the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, and the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio (known as ‘Rio+20’). Biodiversity is also addressed as part of the Agenda 2030 SDG and climate change framework.

ECO-SYSTEM COLLAPSE

The existential threat from eco-system collapse has risen in the public profile from a series of scientific papers (including in the journal Nature) documenting the rapid acceleration in species extinction, including pollinating insects. The international community’s global approach to the issue has so far been governed by the Aichi Targets, and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and through various workstreams of UN Environment. China will be hosting the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in late 2020 which aims to establish a new international plan of action from 2020 to 2030. The scale of international biodiversity loss suggests that the approach, the ambition, or the implementation of prior strategies has been woefully inadequate. One challenge for addressing biodiversity loss is that its causes are myriad and varied, from deforestation and mono-cultural production to overfishing and marine pollution.

There has been some improvement in both the measurement of loss and the identification of causes in strategies that have elaborated in other domains. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has played an important role in biodiversity loss and its implications for food security, and is host to the Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. This was also a concern of the Creating a Sustainable Food Future report [see online list]. A related threat to biodiversity lies in increased international chemical use. UN Environment launched its revised Global Chemicals Outlook in Nairobi in March 2019, detailing the contributions of phosphorous and nitrogen in agriculture to ocean dead zones, and that of antimicrobials, heavy metals and disinfectants to antimicrobial resistance. The size of the global chemical industry is set to double by 2030 with most of that growth in the Asia-Pacific region.



Bifrenaria vitellina- an orchid found in the Amazon rainforest. Reduction in biodiversity is a warning sign of an ecosystem under strain. © Dalton Holland Baptista



Ebola survivors welcome UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at an Ebola Treatment Unit near Freetown, Sierra Leone. © UN Photo/Martine Perret

PANDEMICS AND ANTI-MICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Global Governance proposals in the area of mitigating the risk of pandemics will likely wish to take as their starting point the current strategic plan and programme of work of WHO, and in particular the work of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, since this has a specific international remit to identify gaps in global systems to address pandemics and also advocate for effective measures to ensure global preparedness. Important work is also undertaken by regional bodies such as the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). This work has taken on a new urgency in 2019 with the rapid spread of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, crossing over the border with Uganda in June 2019. This outbreak, occurring in a war-

ravaged country the size of Western Europe, also demonstrates the impact of risk multipliers – conflict, inequality and poor institutional capacity – to a global catastrophic risk such as pandemic risk. Anticipating these developments, the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change [see online list] envisaged Security Council cooperation with WHO in enforcing effective quarantine measures and ‘cordon operations’ and mandating greater access for WHO personnel. In the area of health (as with climate change and ecosystem collapse risks) the recommendations of scientific collaborations are also an integrated part of the governance framework. The online list includes examples of three *Lancet-led international collaborations* in

the area of health resilience and capacity building, involving Oslo University, EAT and University College London.

The above strategic frameworks provide the ‘contours’ to the international community’s current strategy, and is informed by both member states and the world’s leading scientists and doctors. Recent reviews of the deficiencies of the WHO’s responses to previous Ebola outbreaks also inform the current strategy. Proposals which reflect on how to accelerate the achievement of WHO and GPMB objectives would likely be of direct help to the international community’s efforts. It is also an area where civil society campaigns to mobilise greater resources from member states will be fruitful.

Background:

- The World Health Organisation in May 2018 agreed a five-year plan (2018-2023) which focuses on building health system resilience, including the aim of protecting 1 billion people from health emergencies. In 2011 the World Health Assembly adopted the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework (PIP Framework), an innovative instrument regulating for the first time the entire cycle of pandemic influenza surveillance and response through the sharing of viruses, as well as best practice in diagnostics, antiviral medicines and vaccines. It seeks to enhance global equity through an explicit requirement for recipients of PIP biological material to equitably share benefits financially or in kind. PIP represents a breakthrough in the global governance of pandemics but it has not generated commensurate finances for full implementation. The most recent WHO strategy on influenza pandemics (2019) is included in the online list. When a significant public health event takes place, WHO’s global alert and response system seeks to ensure that information is available and response operations are coordinated effectively.
- WHO joined recently with the World Bank Group to establish the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB), a new body set up to monitor the world’s readiness to respond to outbreaks and other health emergencies. It also seeks to identify gaps and advocate for sustained, effective work to ensure global preparedness. It is chaired by Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and former WHO Director-General and Mr Elhadj As Sy, Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.
- WHO’s main normative and legal tool remains the International Health Regulations (IHR). The long-lasting contribution of WHO in the area of primary health care began with the ‘health for all’ process launched at the WHO-UNICEF 1978 Almaty conference, which saw the control of infectious disease predicated on safe water and sanitation, immunization, and the prevent and control of locally endemic diseases. The WHO’s subsequent holistic approach has integrated vertical programs addressing specific diseases with horizontal programmes focussing on health systems as a whole as well as on the institutional, social and political determinants of health. The UN General Assembly will be holding a High-level meeting at ministerial or head of state level in September 2019 to advance progress on Universal Health Coverage, a vital element in preventing pandemics.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (WMD)

Proposals in the area of WMD will likely wish to take account of the following:

- Existing treaties in this area (including the NPT, the CBTO, the BWC and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons);
- The ad hoc approaches taken to individual country situations (such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for Iran, and the Agreed Framework for North Korea);
- The UN Secretary-General’s ‘Securing our Future – An Agenda for Disarmament’, a strategy which contains a specific Implementation Plan, and addresses peace and security threats from new technologies as well as WMD [see online list].

WMD is an arena where there has been remarkably high compliance in the regime of biological weapons, general (with some exceptions – e.g. Syria and Russia) compliance in chemical weapons, and patchy but still impressive compliance in the nuclear area. But it is also now a set of regimes under strain. The international community has used different combinations of incentives and sanctions when states have sought to develop nuclear weapons contrary to NPT provisions, with more stress on sanctions in relation to Iran and North Korea than with India, Israel and Pakistan. A positive trend in recent decades has been the

development of continental ‘nuclear free zones’, most notably in Africa and Latin America, but 2018-19 saw reverses to disarmament agreements (e.g. the INF Treaty between the US and Russia) among existing nuclear states. In the areas of chemical weapons, the Conference of the Parties of OPCW has recently given its Director General more teeth (and a commensurate budget) through a mandate to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria. Over the years there have been a number of well-regarded High-level Panels in this area, including The Independent Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, and a strand of work in this area from the Independent Commission on Multilateralism. [see online list].

The most fruitful ‘new’ solutions in the WMD arena are likely to lie in:

- the navigation of member state security, political and economic incentives;
- the utilisation of creative mini-lateral and bilateral deals;
- bridging the divide between those states with, and without, nuclear weapons;
- the enhancement of confidence building among states; and
- innovative advances in verification technology.

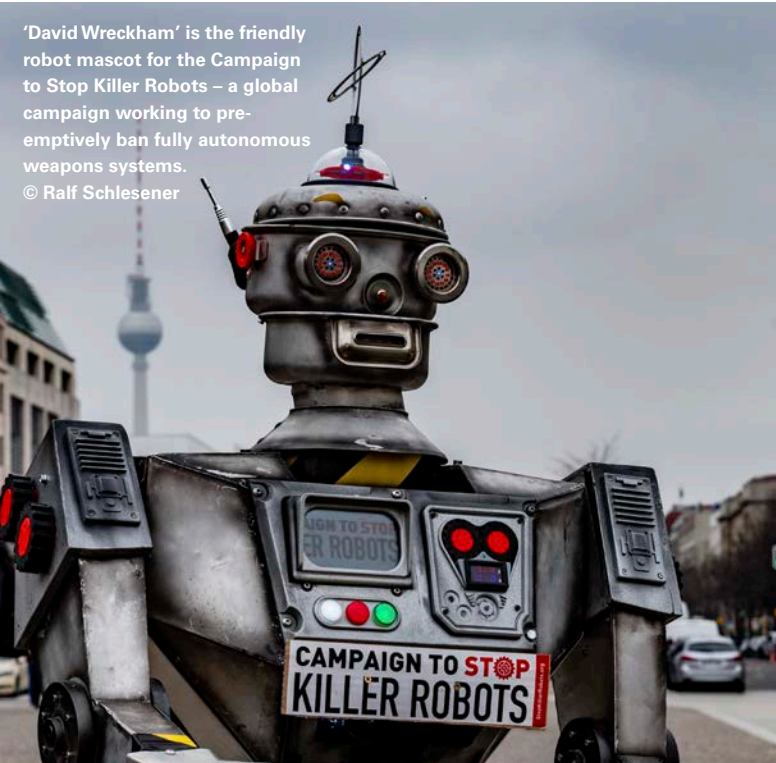
Proposals in the biological and chemical areas would take existing treaties and agreements as their first foundation. Proposals in the nuclear area would likely not want to undermine the continuing value of the NPT (when it was being negotiated experts expected there would by now be some 50 nuclear armed states – there are actually fewer than ten), but there is scope for innovative solutions that build substantially upon it. While most viable solutions will be ones directed at State behaviour (including mobilising public and expert opinion to impact on this), some may have an industry component, and there is also scope for reviewing how international organisations can help prevent non-state actors (especially terrorist networks) from accessing and using WMD. This comes down largely to assisting with individual State capacity, which in turn rests firmly on the risk multipliers – a lack of inclusive and accountable institutions at the State level.

THE THREAT FROM NEW AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

This is an area where global governance struggles to keep up with change. There is no comprehensive framework to address emerging technology risks, because many of those risks are new, the ‘target’ is constantly moving as technology evolves, and because it is an area of particular sensitivity, with many technologies having military or dual-use applications.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres is the first UN Secretary-General with an engineering and science background. He has sought to develop UN strategies to harness new technology to deliver UN objectives (e.g. using drones in peacekeeping or blockchain technology in humanitarian assistance) and to create new norms in response to the threats or challenges new technology may pose, such as changing work patterns resulting from automation. There are a number of developments in science, technology and medicine which may potentially pose a global catastrophic risk level risk now or in the future. These include the emergence of lethal autonomous weapons (LAWs), cyber weapons targeting critical national infrastructure, and gene editing. When combined with AI such new threats may become amplified when automated based on algorithms and without human supervision. In the area of LAWs, a UN group of governmental experts meets under the auspices of the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. At the March 2019 meeting of experts, the UN Secretary-General called for LAWs to be banned saying “machines with the power and discretion to take lives without human involvement are politically unacceptable, morally repugnant and should be prohibited under international law.” This is an area where progress is being made by a coalition of NGOs, academics and tech workers under the banner of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. This campaign seeks to increase demand for, and rapidly secure, a new treaty, using lobbying techniques modelled on those which led to the successful entry into force in 1999 of the “Ottawa Convention” (The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction). Assistance to existing established campaigns could thus be an effective and fruitful way to mitigate global catastrophic risks.

A separate UN process was initiated by the UN General Assembly to address cyberattacks. The central forum for the development of norms in this area has been the UN Group of Governmental Experts (UNGGE) on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, which receives support



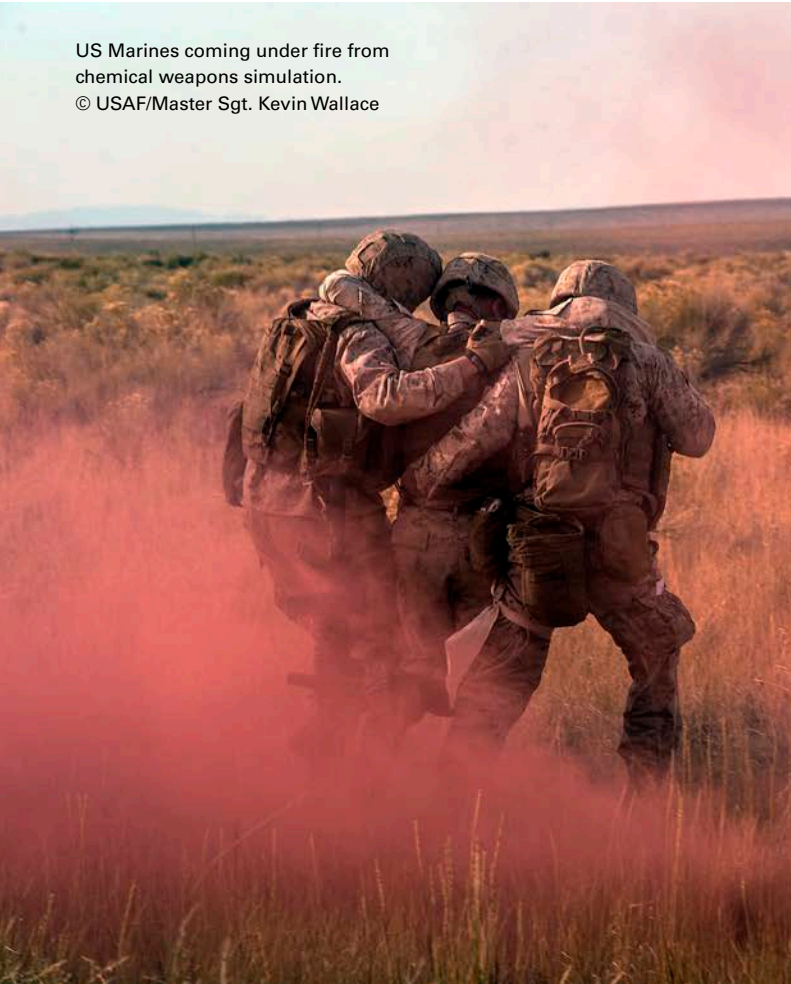
‘David Wreckham’ is the friendly robot mascot for the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots – a global campaign working to pre-emptively ban fully autonomous weapons systems. © Ralf Schlesener

from the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs. All five permanent members of the UN Security Council have taken part in the five rounds of UNGGE discussions that have been held. The Group has proposed that existing international law applies equally in cyberspace, and this in turn has generated further questions as to how to apply such laws in such an unfamiliar domain – for example it can be very difficult to prove who has committed an offensive cyberattack. The Group has also produced non-binding recommendations on new norms, including that states should not conduct activity that ‘intentionally damages critical national infrastructure or otherwise impairs the use and operation of critical infrastructure to provide services to the public.’ But UN norm creation in this area is at its infancy, and in the absence of global governance constraints, China, Russia and NATO are leading the development of new defensive and offensive cyber capabilities.

Strategies and recommendations in this area in the online list include the UN Secretary-General’s Strategy on New Technologies, the EU Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence, and the Charlevoix Common Vision for the Future of Artificial Intelligence. A large number of High-level Panels have also made recommendations in this area [see online list]. Academic institutions undertaking valuable work on global governance solutions in this area include the University of Cambridge Centre for Existential Risk and the Oxford University Centre for Technology and Global Affairs.

This fast-moving area is a potentially fruitful one for NGO coalitions ‘to move the dial’ in the design of treaties or codes of conduct that might serve as building blocks for a wider global governance new tech mechanism.

US Marines coming under fire from chemical weapons simulation. © USAF/Master Sgt. Kevin Wallace





Students in Sydney, Australia, take part in a protest to demand governments do more to tackle climate change.
© Greta Thunberg on Twitter

“ History demonstrates that smart coalitions working discretely with supportive member state foreign ministries and UN Secretariat champions, can ‘move the dial’ of political will at key moments. ”

Observation 10

A final, and tenth, observation is that ‘political will’ is not a fixed constant.

Throughout this paper there have been references to the political and institutional obstacles to the implementation of agreed international strategies. History demonstrates that smart coalitions working discretely with supportive member state foreign ministries and UN Secretariat champions, can ‘move the dial’ of political will at key moments. Such coalitions are effective when they bring together multiple stakeholders, including NGOs, the business community, regional and local leaders, and individual citizens. The proven success of the smart coalition model demonstrates the value of using and supporting existing coalition-based campaigns, where their objectives explicitly or implicitly address global catastrophic risks.

Examples have included the *1 for 7 Billion* campaign on the election of the UN Secretary-General, the *Make Poverty History* campaign that helped incubate the Millennium Development Goals, the *Coalition for an International Criminal Court* and the campaign that led to adoption of the *Ottawa Convention* on Landmines.

One notable initiative with direct parallels to Together First’s consultation is the work of the European Climate Foundation which supported a portal which coordinated all major NGO climate change lobbying in the run-up to the Paris Agreement, and which did so in consultation with the UNFCCC Secretariat. This strategic communications and coordination exercise has been credited with making a notable difference to member state ambition, and importantly, last minute compromises, at the Summit meeting in 2015.

COVER IMAGE “Enlightened Universe” art installation by Spanish artist Cristóbal Gabarrón, unveiled on 24 October 2015 in New York City’s Central Park in celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The commemorative work of art depicts seventy life-size figures joined in hand around a central globe, creating a human chain of global citizenship, respect for nature and shared responsibility.
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TOGETHER FIRST

A GLOBAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL