



UNITED NATIONS
GENEVA



World Academy of
Art and Science

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Overview of Phase 1 Proceedings

October 2020



Global Leadership in the 21st Century

Overview of Preliminary Findings



The Context

Humanity is caught between the devastation now being wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing existential threat of climate change. These are but the tail ends of a broad spectrum of multi-dimensional global political, economic, social, technological and ecological challenges. They are results of rapid globalization, financialization of economies, the spread of neoliberalism, transformative technologies, outdated educational systems, and compartmentalized institutions, policies, social theories, and reductionist ways of thinking.

This nexus of challenges imposes unprecedented demands for change in all fields and at all levels of the global system. They occur at a time when the support of member nations and public confidence in multilateralism are in decline. Circumstances compel us to rethink and reinvent the multilateral system.

The UN is taking unparalleled efforts to promote a shared global consciousness and closer cooperation. The adoption of the 17 SDGs by 193 nations represents a landmark achievement transforming the ideals set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into practical commitments by the nations and people of the world to specific goals and targets. Yet, in spite of these efforts, the global leadership vacuum grows ever wider. Entrenched powers and vested interests resist essential change. Multilateral institutions are hampered and obstructed by narrow concepts of security and self-interest.

The findings of the UN75 Report *The Future We Want, The United Nations We Need* confirm the growing awareness, aspiration and support of people everywhere—most especially among the younger generations—for a more inclusive, participative, multi-stakeholder, multilateral system empowered and equipped to respond to the speed and complexity of the issues we face and committed to realize the human security goals set forth by the world community.

Objectives of GL-21

The challenge we face is to convert unparalleled crises into opportunities for global social progress. The situation calls for more dynamic, creative, diverse and distributed forms of leadership backed by more inclusive, effective, and networked forms of multilateral coordination able to mobilize the full spectrum of global stakeholders.

This joint project on *Global Leadership in the 21st Century* was initiated by the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Academy of Art & Science six months before COVID-19 dramatically intensified the urgency and magnitude of the challenges confronting humanity.

The objective of GL-21 is to identify a broad range of strategies which can be applied and implemented in the present context to foster awareness, release energy and generate social momentum for rapid change in different fields to support emergence of a more inclusive, effective multilateral system.

GL-21 is predicated on an understanding of leadership as a conscious instrument to convert the slow process of social evolution into a conscious process of social transformation.

Effective leadership depends on social awareness and preparedness as much as it does on individual and institutional initiative. Multilateral institutions can and do play a critically important leadership role. In addition, global leadership depends on a broad spectrum of other actors—national parliaments, local governments, business, finance, NGOs, universities, research institutes, and the media. It also includes a wide range of innovative leadership strategies, instruments and initiatives—political, economic, legal, social, organizational, educational, scientific, technological and cultural—for accelerating social progress.

Although efforts to transform multilateral institutions have been repeatedly stymied by forces within and outside the system, this project focuses on ways to bypass or overcome resistance by practical initiatives which can release energies and generate momentum for transformative change.

Methodology

The project is divided into three phases:

Phase I: Examination of challenges and their root causes and exploration of potential remedies and catalytic strategies through research by 14 ongoing working groups, a five-day international e-conference and a dozen smaller events since May 2020 involving nearly 80 partner and participating organizations and 250 contributing individuals. Session summaries and more than 80 hours of video recordings are contained in the *Research Proceedings* released by WAAS in October 2020.

Phase II: Formulation, analysis and debate of emergent opportunities for presentation at the main conference at UNOG on November 24-25, 2020.

Phase III: Recommendations for inclusion in the Final Report to UNOG, and dissemination through communication and educational outreach strategies.

Preliminary Findings

The Phase I Interim Report addresses five interdependent pillars of a comprehensive approach to building global leadership and social momentum—*Redefining Multilateralism, Sustaining Peace and Human Security, Mobilizing Civil Society, Financing Implementation of the SDGs, and Transforming Global Education*. Under each pillar the report identifies key thrust areas for breakthrough initiatives. It also outlines specific issues to be addressed at the upcoming conference in Geneva in November 2020.

1. *Redefining Multilateralism*

Multilateral institutions must be remolded to foster close collaboration between specialized agencies, support more decentralized and dynamic management and leadership initiatives, and devise and implement more effective ways to bridge the vast distance and surmount the barriers that separate “we the people” from decision-making in international affairs. Changes in the global system can only be achieved with the active and vocal involvement of global civil society exerting powerful influence on national governments and unleashing a global social movement.

Strategies under review:

- 1.1 *Opportunities to fortify multilateralism*: The Pandemic has presented conditions and circumstances which both necessitate and make possible concerted efforts to strengthen the multilateral system. Changes in the types and distribution of power in international relations have profound implications for the future of multilateralism. The

rapid evolution of global society presents new opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of multilateralism in spite of resistance from entrenched powers. Multilateral institutions are an essential counterweight against the retreat to unilateral and bilateral initiatives.

- 1.2 *UN Institutional and Cultural Reform*: Multi-sectoral networks engaging a cross-section of stakeholders from government, business, academia and civil society. Harnessing underutilized sources of power to support transformations of the international system. Reformulating the UN's strategy for guiding global evolution. Integrating strategy and structure for optimal performance by breaking down silos, inter-agency coordination, and closer networking between IGOs and with other stakeholders. Catalytic strategies for culture change within the multilateral system.
- 1.3 *Distributed leadership*: Ways to expand stakeholder participation. Impact of the transformation of the global community on the potential contributions and appropriate roles for a wider range of stakeholder groups. Promoting decentralized leadership and initiative. Enhancing leadership development programs and standards of performance evaluation.
- 1.4 *Building trust in multilateralism*: Engaging leaders of UN agencies, NGOs and the media to explore innovative strategies to enhance awareness, knowledge, understanding and support for multilateralism through relations with its vast and diverse network of stakeholders. Enhancing the public image of existing UN initiatives with parliaments, cities, business, academia, NGOs, educational institutions and other civil society organizations. Fostering a common global human identity and consciousness. Enhancing public confidence and support for international organizations and multilateral initiatives.

2. *Sustaining Peace, Human Security & Resilience*

A major paradigm shift is urgently needed to create a more inclusive, representative, participative, multi-stakeholder system of global security system equipped to take a leadership role in responding to the complex nexus of security threats and committed to realize the comprehensive agenda of human security goals set forth by the world community. This is the most appropriate leadership task of the UN system and its member nations on the 75th anniversary of its founding.

Strategies under review:

- 2.1 *Peace Building*: Engaging members of different agencies, departments, funds and programs responsible for peacekeeping, arms control, emergency relief, food-security, immigration, refugees, including UNHCR, WFP, ILO, UNICEF, ICRC, WHO, CTBTO, inter alia. Implications of the changing nature of security threats for reconceptualizing the effective role of multilateral institutions in the global security framework. Enhancing inter- agency coordination to anticipate, prevent and respond to emerging security threats. Envisioning a common global cooperative security system fit for purpose. Reviving the original concept of UN as a keeper of the peace and a non-partisan arbitrator rather than a peace enforcer. Clarifying the purpose, scope and structure of UN Mandates. Enhancing systemic trust in the UN as an institutional foundation for global security.
- 2.2 *Integrated Human Security Agenda*: Reconciling the objectives of political, economic, financial, social, wellbeing and ecological dimensions of security. Human Security as a comprehensive, inclusive, integrated conception. Interdependencies

between different dimensions of human security and their implications. Implications of the concept of development as a multidimensional, integrated human social process for the design of technical assistance programs, the structure and functioning of UN agencies, and the implementation and assessment of development programs. Implications of the interdependencies between dimensions on effective strategies to accelerate achievement of the SDGs. Catalytic strategies for addressing the multi-dimensional challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic from an integrated, social perspective.

Reorganizing development research as a multi-stakeholder, multidisciplinary integrated activity involving all stages from theory and analysis to policy-making, implementation and evaluation.

- 2.3 *Anti-crisis Transition Economy*: Dimensions of a comprehensive anti-crisis economic strategy focusing on rapid recovery from COVID-19 and rapid transformation to a more stable, inclusive, equitable and sustainable economy. Reconciling economic growth with ecological sustainability. Internalizing externalities to reflect the true cost and benefit of economic activities. Changing the metrics for evaluation of economic progress. Redefining the proper blend of markets and governments, competition and regulation. Eliminating invisible barriers to equitable markets—regulatory capture and rent-seeking.
- 2.4 *Employment Generation – national job creation programs*: Strategies to move economies to full employment and the financial mechanisms available to do so in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner. The central place of the right to employment in strategies for human security. Assessing the real social costs of prolonged unemployment. Successful job creation strategies and programs. Decentralized implementation of national programs to optimize community development. Financing public job creation programs.
- 2.5 *Food Security – international food corporation*: Integrated strategies leveraging the linkage between food security, health, buffer stocks, price stability, employment, education, environment, financial mechanisms, and civil society.
- 2.6 *Environment & Climate*: Integrated approach for effectively addressing the relationships between climate, ecology, energy, environment, economy, employment, finance and civil society based on the work of the Planetary Emergency Partnership.

3. Mobilizing Civil Society

A new form of multilateralism or plurilateralism is needed that effectively engages a substantially larger number and wider range of stakeholders. Subnational structures, megacities, national academies, networks of research institutions and universities, pressure groups, national and international civil society organizations and social movements are all key stakeholders and players in global affairs.

Strategies under review:

- 3.1 *Civil Society & Youth Networks – Global Polling & Referendum*: Engaging representatives from international civil society organizations, social media, AI and telecom, UN agencies and prominent NGO leaders to examine ways to magnify the voice of civil society in global affairs. Strengthening specialized global NGO networks. Linking special interest networks to forge a unifying network. Uniting individual youth groups into specialized and general global networks. Mobilizing the combined resources of civil society to create a direct voice for humanity through global platforms for polling and referendums directly involving the world citizenry.

- 3.2 *Energizing Local Communities*: Engaging urban political, social and civil society leaders to examine catalytic strategies to broaden the active participation and contribution of civil society and subnational agencies in the multilateral system. Effective strategies and models for national and international collaboration between sub-national groups related to SDG implementation. Fostering subnational global networks on key issues on the UN agenda. Enhancing the public impact of existing UN initiatives in collaboration with parliaments, cities, business, academia, NGOs, educational institutions and other civil society organizations.
- 3.3 *Restoring Trust in Media – International News Service Rating System*: Engaging leading journalists, social media experts, political leaders and social activists to examine potential strategies and models for establishment of independent, non-partisan international rating agency as a means to measure commitment to objectivity and as a guide to the general public. Criteria for non-partisan objectivity for assessing the journalistic policies and standards of global news media. Models for regulating the reliability of news content. Standards and procedures for ensuring independence and credibility of the Arts.
- 3.4 *Power of Art & Culture*: Engaging visual and performing artists, media and UN communication specialists, corporate marketing experts, catalytic strategies and political campaigners to examine the potential for multiplying the impact of art as an effective form of leadership to address global challenges, enhance support for the multilateral system, and strengthen global solidarity. Characteristics of instances in which the arts have served as an effective medium for generating public awareness and stirring public opinion to address global challenges. High potential applications of the arts to enhance awareness and commitment to implementation of the SDGs. Educating, motivating and incentivizing artists and writers on how to direct their creative abilities toward promoting the global common good.
- 3.5 *Academic Networks*: Expanding and integrating academic and scientific networks into a coordinated global system to address global and regional challenges. Identifying the most effective inter-academic networking models for international scientific collaboration on the SDGs and other regional and global challenges. Shift from competitive to collaborative funding strategies for inter-academy, inter-university and inter-research institutional projects. Enhancing effectiveness of communication and outreach strategies for widest dissemination, application and impact of evidence-based research findings.
- 3.6 *Transformative Leadership – Unifying Multi-sectoral Social Movements*: Examining the process of social evolution to identify catalytic strategies which can be applied to address the major issues under consideration by GL-21. Strategies to promote social awareness and release social energies for change. The role of inspiring values and goals such as the SDGs as catalyst for change. The role of organization in channeling social energies. Leadership as a catalyst for all stages of the social process.

4. Innovative SDG Financing

Proposing Sustainable Finance as SDG 18. The ‘democratisation of finance’ is the future. Digitisation and cyber technology enable the decentralisation of finance and empowerment of individual level financial systems. Increased awareness and self-empowerment of people regarding their condition and human rights are drivers of change. The financial system needs a major shift towards sustainability-based capitalism. Working groups are examining the issues listed below.

Strategies under review:

- 4.1 *Special Purpose SDG Investing:* Engage financial and economic experts to address the potential for special purpose instruments to initially focus on SDG 5 and 10 and examine the tools to expand them for broader financial inclusion. Focus on women and their role in the financial system in developing countries to promote inclusion. Literacy as a tool for the poor to participate in the financial system. Special Purpose SDG Private Bonds specifically targeting funding of the SDGs.
- 4.2 *Next-Gen Impact Investing:* Engage the next generation wealthy to examine strategies to determine how their wealth can be both for profit and purpose, encompassing ESG and related impact investment criteria. Changing criteria for use of wealth to finance projects. Criteria to create profitable sustainable impact. Data and information platforms to supply a pipeline of major issues that meet the requirements. Formation of group financing initiatives that allow scale of capital deployment to major worthy initiatives.
- 4.3 *Mass Participation of the Poor:* Engaging financiers to create the funding pipeline to create inclusion for mass poor populations. Scaling an International Micro Housing Finance Inclusion Initiative that funds low cost housing for first-time home owners. Transfer of lessons to like-minded institutions to support an international program.
- 4.4 *System Change Investing:* Catalytic strategies to promote SCI as the next step in impact investing for maximum social impact. Rationale for System Change Investing in comparison with ESG Strategies. Potential impact on changing economic, social, environmental and political behavior.
- 4.5 *Digital Currency Funding SDGs:* The feasibility, potential benefits and risks of generating central bank digital currencies to finance the SDGs and support rapid recovery from the COVID-19 induced economic downturn. Feasibility of creating a parallel digital currency system administered by central banks for financing economic recovery and implementation of the SDGs. Impact on government budgets, the existing financial system, inflation and economic recovery. Steps required for implementation.

5. Transforming Global Education

Education is the most effective instrument so far created by humanity for conscious social transformation. The current global educational system is not fit for purpose. It reinforces adherence to outmoded ideas, theories, policies and practices through outdated pedagogy and unaffordable, inaccessible, inefficient delivery systems. The global system is grossly inadequate to meet the aspirations of hundreds of millions of youth and the rapidly changing needs of global economy and society. Conservatism becomes destructive when it fails to heed the need for change. Alternative models are already emerging which demand attention.

Strategies under review:

- 5.1 *Global Learning Delivery Systems – New Models Separating Instruction & Certification:* Examining the feasibility of rapid transition to more affordable, adaptable, innovative, equitable and effective delivery systems for higher education. Critique of the limitation of existing models of higher education. Characteristics of a new paradigm delivery system. Designs for alternative systems and learning networks which separate certification from learning to liberate the system from existing monopolies.
- 5.2 *Global Leadership Education:* Courses based on the research, conference proceedings and recommendations in the final report to UNOG. Engaging an international working

group to develop transdisciplinary courses to better equip leaders, diplomats, public administrators and policy-makers to understand and respond to the rapidly unfolding challenges of our time. Fundamental changes in perspective needed to overcome the limitations of prevailing approaches to the world. Exploration of rapid delivery systems for an integrated approach to leadership education.

5.3 *Transdisciplinary Initiatives – Integrated SDG Research Institutes:* New models for multidisciplinary education, research and policy-making to prepare leaders, decision-makers and thinkers for more effective SDG implementation. Characteristics of successful interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning models and programs. Catalytic strategies for rapid development and replication of successful models and learning networks globally.

5.4 *Integrated Thinking in Education:* Strategies to reorganize knowledge formulation, delivery and application to overcome the disciplinary divides at the root of global problems today. Implications for the leadership, staff, organization and activities of the UN system. Redesigning courses to develop the capacity to understand the world system as an integrated whole rather than independent, unconnected fragments. Contrasting the integrated nature of social reality with the compartmentalization of academic knowledge and research, political and administrative decision-making, and the strategies and programs for SDG implementation.

For a detailed discussion of each of the five pillars, the strategies under each and the issues under examination for them, please see the [UNOG-WAAS Phase I Interim Report](#).