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Project: GenSouth

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GenSouth

New voices from the Global South for the
multilateral system of the future

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Executive Summary

Français Le système multilatéral actuel est confronté à des défis majeurs, notamment la perte de confiance dans les institutions internationales, la gestion inefficace des crises mondiales et la divergence des priorités entre puissances établies. Pour y remédier, il est essentiel d'inclure de nouvelles voix et perspectives. C'est dans cette optique que GenSouth, une initiative notamment soutenue par le foraus et le Département fédéral des affaires étrangères, a été lancée en 2024 pour réunir de jeunes chercheur·euse·s du Sud global et élaborer des recommandations pour un multilatéralisme plus inclusif et efficace.

Ce Project brief présente quatre axes majeurs proposant des pistes concrètes pour repenser le multilatéralisme et garantir un avenir plus équitable et durable à l'horizon 2040 :

1. Le renforcement du Droit International Humanitaire : Promouvoir une coopération accrue entre États, secteur privé et institutions internationales pour mieux prévenir et sanctionner les violations du DIH.

2. Une nouvelle coopération Sud-Sud : Mettre en place une plateforme pour des infrastructures durables, garantissant une intégration économique et une résilience climatique renforcées.

3. Une réforme financière mondiale : Assurer un accès direct et équitable aux financements climatiques pour les communautés locales du Sud global.

4. La transformation du Conseil de Sécurité de l'ONU : Élaborer un modèle plus inclusif et représentatif, limitant le droit de veto et intégrant davantage le Sud global dans la gouvernance mondiale.

Deutsch

Das multilaterale System steht derzeit vor grossen Herausforderungen: Das Vertrauen in internationale Institutionen schwindet, globale Krisen wie der Klimawandel, wirtschaftliche Ungleichheit und Pandemien werden ineffizient bewältigt, und die Prioritäten der Staaten driften zunehmend auseinander. Um diese Blockaden zu überwinden, ist es wichtiger denn je, neue und junge Stimmen stärker einzubeziehen. Nur durch diese Vielfalt kann das multilaterale System inklusivere und gerechtere Lösungen entwickeln, welche die Interessen aller widerspiegeln.

Vor diesem Hintergrund wurde 2024 die erste Ausgabe von GenSouth ins Leben gerufen – eine Initiative, die 14 junge Vordenker:innen aus acht Ländern des globalen Südens zusammenführt – organisiert von foraus mit Unterstützung des Eidgenössischen Departements für auswärtige Angelegenheiten.

Der vorliegende Project Brief präsentiert in vier Kapiteln die konkreten Ergebnisse, welche von den Teilnehmenden von GenSouth partizipativ entwickelt wurden um Multilateralismus neu zu denken und eine gerechtere sowie nachhaltigere Zukunft bis 2040 zu sichern:

1. Stärkung des humanitären Völkerrechts durch die intensivere Zusammenarbeit zwischen Staaten, dem Privatsektor und internationalen Institutionen, um Verstösse gegen das humanitäre Völkerrecht effizienter zu verhindern und zu ahnden.

2. Neue Süd-Süd-Kooperationen mittels des Aufbaus einer Plattform für nachhaltige Infrastrukturen, die eine stärkere wirtschaftliche Integration und höhere Klimaresilienz gewährleisten.

3. Eine globale Finanzreform, die einen direkten und gerechten Zugang zu Klimafinanzierungen für lokale Gemeinschaften im Globalen Süden sicherstellt.

4. Transformation des UN-Sicherheitsrats durch die Entwicklung eines inklusiveren und repräsentativeren Modells, das das Vetorecht einschränkt und den Globalen Süden stärker einbindet.

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving world, traditional power dynamics and long-established institutions often reflect outdated perspectives. The multilateral system currently faces pressing challenges, including the erosion of trust in global institutions, inefficiencies in addressing urgent crises like climate change, economic inequality, and global health pandemics, as well as the growing divergence of priorities among established powers. To overcome this blockage, it has become increasingly important to amplify new and younger voices. By embracing this diversity, the multilateral system can foster more inclusive, equitable solutions that reflect the interests of all, ensuring that the global decision-making process is both relevant and responsive to the complexities of today's world. It is within this context that foraus, with the support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the International Geneva Welcome Centre and a foundation from Geneva, launched the first edition of GenSouth in 2024.

About the project

GenSouth is a programme designed to bring together academics and Think tank researchers from the Global South, aged between 25 and 35, to engage in discussions about the multilateralism of the future and to develop actionable, ambitious recommendations.

In October 2024, the participants held their first online meeting, where they began to define the topics and research questions they wished to explore. They formed four distinct groups based on shared interests and complementary expertise. In December 2024, the participants convened for a two-day workshop in Geneva, organised and facilitated by foraus. Using foresight methodologies, the workshop enabled participants to envision the futures they aspire to and identify the pathways needed to achieve their visions. These pathways include concrete steps and recommendations for selected stakeholders within the multilateral system.

Each chapter begins with an introduction, followed by the author's vision and policy planning and recommendations.

About this Project Brief

The first chapter, written by Subia Ahmad, Kwaji Ble Ngida, Marième Cissé, and Luanda Mpungose, emphasises the need for collective responsibility in enforcing International Humanitarian Law, highlighting how violations have increased in recent years. It proposes a progressive vision where states, private sectors, and international institutions collaborate to strengthen the multilateral system, ensuring stronger accountability and proactive engagement in preventing IHL violations.

Afterwards, Marília Closs, Beatriz Pfeifer, Pratyush Sharma, and Malena Viú focused, on creating a new paradigm for South-South cooperation through sustainable infrastructure development that promotes economic integration, regional autonomy, and resilience to climate change, with an emphasis on sovereignty and social justice. It outlines a policy framework that envisions the creation of a "Global South Sustainable Green Infrastructure Platform" to facilitate collaboration, prioritise projects, and establish co-financing mechanisms to ensure equitable development across regions by 2040.

In the third chapter, Luis Gabriel Herrera Perez, Paula Lottenberg, Maria Dominika Mediana Rossa Budhisatrio, and Olumide Onitekun advocate for a transformation of the global financial architecture to create a more just and equitable system that prioritises community-led climate finance, focusing on the empowerment of vulnerable communities in the Global South. It proposes reforms to multilateral climate funds, decentralisation of decision-making, and the establishment of a „Community Access Window“ to ensure direct and equitable access to funding for local climate initiatives by 2040.

Finally, in the last chapter, Muhammad Nidhal Ezzat Luthfi and Parousia Tlhompho Shikwambane call for a major reform of the United Nations Security Council, envisioning an enlarged, more inclusive council with limited veto power to better represent the Global South and ensure equitable global peacekeeping. It outlines a clear timeline to achieve the transformation of the UNSC into the „International Peace Consortium“ by 2040, highlighting the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach involving national governments, financial institutions, international organisations, and civil society coalitions.

Chapter 1: Collective Responsibility and the Persistence of International Humanitarian Law Violations

Subia Ahmad, Kwaji Ble Ngida, Marième Cissé, and Luanda Mpungose

Introduction

With conflicts escalating in various geographical zones, the threat to multilateralism and the system it envisions has been exacerbating in recent years. These conflicts have also highlighted the weakness of multilateral institutions like the United Nations (UN) to effectively respond to them. What is stark is that the existing multilateral system requires collective action and will so that it is better equipped to deal with these conflicts and enforce the adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) across the global world order, with equal measure. It is against this backdrop that this chapter envisions a world built on collective responsibility where the international community does not stand by in the violation of IHL.

Underpinning this vision is a recognition that within the multilateral fora, a major part of IHL is contained in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 ([ICRC, 1949](#)). Nearly every state in the world has agreed to be bound by them. While many parts of humanitarian law

are now accepted as international customary law, it is increasingly being violated. Notably, these violations have significantly increased in the past 10 years ([Petrini, 2024](#)). The situation in Gaza is a dramatic example of the violation of IHL.

At the time of writing, a ceasefire agreement has been reached between Israel and Hamas ([Middle Eastern Eye, 2025](#)). However, the UN had previously attempted to reach the besieged area in North Gaza 165 times between 6 October and 31 December 2024, of which 149 attempts were denied by the Israeli authorities and 16 faced impediments. Moreover, between 7 October 2023 and 8 January 2024, at least 45,936 Palestinians were killed, and 109,274 were injured, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza ([OCHA, 2025](#)). Despite the International Criminal Court's (ICC) conclusion that Israel is committing a crime against humanity ([ICC, 2024](#)), the international community, particularly the West, has done very little to restore peace and hold Israel accountable for the crimes committed in Gaza.

Therefore, a stronger multilateral system would not only depend on adapting to a changing global landscape and cooperation, but also our collective responsibility to ensure the realisation and enforcement of humanitarian law, and prevent violations through collective action which sees a zero tolerance policy towards violations of the agreed principles of humanitarian law.

Vision

“A world built on collective responsibility where the international community does not stand by in the violation of International Humanitarian Law.”

By 2040, the concept of state sovereignty will evolve to emphasise responsibility towards human welfare and international human rights obligations. This approach could further see the reduction in military expenditure, redirecting resources towards human capital development. International institutions such as the International

Court of Justice (ICJ) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will gain greater power and independence to enforce humanitarian law, ensuring a more proactive and unified approach to human rights violations. This progression could see a shift from military to diplomatic and humanitarian priorities, coupled with a commitment to stronger global institutions, which ensures that the international community does not stand idly by when violations occur.

Policy Planning

The path towards this vision unfolds in several key stages:

1. 2025-2030:

The world should see a stronger integration of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to policy making by all states which could be a catalyst for better documentation of human rights violations ([UNSDG, 2025](#)), particularly by non-state actors such as civil society and private sector, at the domestic level. Moreover, to lend support in the establishment of an independent global fact checking organisation and assist in strengthening its tools and processes. This approach promotes the generation of comprehensive data which in turn strengthens accountability and advocacy, laying the foundation for broader international engagement on the key facets of humanitarian law.

2. 2030-2035:

The private sector would have engaged with approaches that promote human rights in their practices. As a result, they would be more inclined to become more actively involved in human rights adherence wherein companies across industries adopt policies to monitor and prevent abuses, making human rights a corporate norm.

3. 2035-2040:

Long-standing concepts such as state sovereignty will gradually evolve to emphasise human centrism rather than a primary focus on national security and national interests which necessitate resources

to be directed towards defence budgets and military alliances- this is responsibility towards human welfare and international human rights obligations rather than military capabilities. This engagement will shift global priorities, gradually diminishing the reliance on military alliances and power blocs by 2035 redirecting resources towards human capital development. The decline in military expenditure will result in a reallocation of resources toward humanitarian development and international law initiatives, creating opportunities for more diplomatic and peaceful solutions to conflicts.

This progression could see a shift from military to diplomatic and humanitarian priorities, coupled with a commitment to stronger global institutions, which ensures that the international community does not stand idly by when violations occur.

Key Recommendations

With this present scenario in mind, this chapter proposes the following policy recommendations:

- **Strengthening documentation of human rights violations by non-state actors:** At the domestic level, each country should strive to carry out better and unbiased documentation of human rights violations. Non-state actors like NGOs and Think tanks can help in this and also in providing more evidence-based research funded by the private sector to inform domestic policies. These non-state actors should have clearly outlined roles and deliverables and they can work with a consortium of similar organisations globally. The work of organisations such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in creating databases on multilateral peace operations ([SIPRI, 2025b](#)), and military expenditure ([SIPRI, 2025a](#)) can be a good example to consider.
- **Establishment of an independent global fact-checking organisation:** An organisation along the lines of the International

Fact-Checking Network ([IFCN, 2025](#)) would be useful in verifying the information collected at the domestic level, especially in light of the recent decision of Meta to suspend its fact-checking program across all its platforms in the United States of America (USA) and the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation in the global fora ([Hendrix, 2025](#)). This will enable the development of a global monitoring network, with an open data platform to document violations of IHL in real time.

- **Stronger adherence of UN Member States to incorporate HRBA into their policy-making:** The HRBA is already enshrined as a Universal Value in Agenda 2030 of the UN and is one of the six Guiding Principles of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework ([UNSDG, 2019](#)), but the uptake has been slow amongst Member States. With 2030 approaching, a definite time frame in embedding this approach and regular evaluations of the same would be the need of the hour and the UN already has a few tools designed such as the Universal Human Rights Index UHRI ([OHCHR, 2025](#)) and the Universal Periodic Review UPR ([UNSDG, 2006](#)) for the same. There are also NGOs like the UPR Info which raises awareness and provides capacity-building measures to all UPR stakeholders including UN Member States, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) ([UPR Info, 2025b](#)). Mozambique is a good case study of a country which utilised UPR recommendations to develop a common framework for harmonised actions, targets, and goals for the promotion of human rights ([UPR Info, 2025a](#)).
- **Using a sectoral approach:** Instead of tackling the implications of violations of IHL as a whole, countries can think of more innovative ways of diffusing tensions by focusing on issues in a particular sector such as water or food security which can be a cause of conflict in the first place or which contributes to the escalation of conflicts. Taking the example of water, with access to water being a fundamental right, a number of conflicts in water-stressed regions such as the Sahel and West Africa see water as a key source of tension ([Geneva Water Hub, 2025](#)). By using water as an entry point to prevent and contain conflicts

at the local and transboundary level, countries can take more tangible actions. The work of the Geneva Water Hub in this sphere is a good example to consider. The Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts (GASWAC) - a joint initiative of the Geneva Water Hub and the governments of Slovenia and Switzerland - launched in May 2024 at the UN in New York, USA, commits to reverse the trend of the weaponisation of water and protect water from all forms of armed conflict ([Geneva Water Hub, 2024](#)).

Chapter 2:

Reimagining South-South Cooperation: A Framework for Green and Sustainable Infrastructure

Marília Closs, Malena Viú, Pratyush Sharma, and Beatriz Pfeifer

Introduction

To conceptualise and establish effective South-South cooperation, it is essential first to conduct a critical analysis of our current position and thoroughly examine the historical and structural processes that have shaped the contemporary global order.

The international community agrees that there are several ongoing “megatrends” ([United Nations, 2020](#); [United Nations, 2017](#)). These trends are pivotal for comprehending global power dynamics and projecting informed courses of action. Among these trends, we observe persistent inequalities, both at domestic and international levels, a structurally unbalanced global order within international organisations, the accelerating impacts of climate change, significant demographic shifts, and the urgent need to address the challenges posed by emerging technologies ([United Nations, 2020](#)).

All these megatrends are unfolding within the geo-economic context as well. First, China is rising as a main actor in several spheres of international competition ([Merino et al., 2021](#)). Consequently,

there is an increasing tension between China and the United States ([Rosales, 2022](#)). On the other hand, there is an increased global military spending, a concerning regression in the human rights and feminist agendas, and the pressing need for the Global South to assert its voice within international organisations ([Scarazzato et al., 2024](#)). Overall, the rules-based international order faces a severe crisis, struggling to deliver innovative and effective mechanisms to address contemporary challenges ([Quincy Institute, 2025](#)).

Furthermore, the historical weight of colonialism and imperialism deepens these global trends in the Global South, where their consequences are often more acute and entrenched ([Madruga/Heredia, 2024](#)). As it is, the current international context, shaped by these megatrends, suggests we are witnessing a deep crisis both of multilateralism and the institutional frameworks established under the Bretton Woods system.

Given these structural challenges, it is imperative that the Global South collectively shapes a new paradigm of cooperation: one that prioritises resilience, sustainability, and sovereignty. Addressing historical asymmetries requires strategic investments in infrastructure that not only bridge physical gaps but also empower nations with more regional enhanced economic, technological, and governance capabilities. To this end, sustainable infrastructure emerges as a critical enabler of South-South integration, fostering deeper economic ties, improving connectivity, and creating shared opportunities for knowledge exchange. By embracing this vision, we can lay the foundation for a more balanced global order, where the Global South asserts its agency in defining the future of multilateralism.

Vision

We envision enhanced Global South collaboration, bolstered by collective investment in and implementation of sustainable physical infrastructure

projects that promote greater and better South-South connectivity, integration, and cooperation. This infrastructure will be based on governance frameworks that ensure popular sovereignty and the concept of a development compact. By 2040, this enhanced connectivity will foster more economic integration through the use of local currencies and expand knowledge and technology sharing.

Sustainable infrastructure, which is all infrastructure that “contributes to reducing carbon emissions, that is more resilient to the effects of climate change and that has positive impacts on peoples’ living conditions” (BNDES, 2020) is fundamental to the development and advancement of policies that reduce inequalities. Building and expanding adequate infrastructure is particularly critical for the Global South, since these countries have not only historically suffered from a severe lack of infrastructure—in terms of scale, reach, and quality—across multiple sectors, including energy, but the existing infrastructure is also insufficient to foster effective connectivity within the Global South (Jaeger, 2021). Given this structural gap and the urgent need to address it, now is the time to establish robust frameworks that ensure new infrastructure is both resilient—especially in the face of the climate crisis—and built in full compliance with human rights.

Developing sustainable and resilient infrastructure will boost trade, investment, and overall exchanges among Global South countries. It will also promote the use of local currencies for these exchanges, as part of a de-dollarisation process, paving the way for the future creation of a common currency. For this, some instruments and means of implementation are fundamental. It is necessary to expand knowledge sharing and knowledge regularly, with special emphasis on sharing mechanisms and co-production in science, technology, and innovation. Furthermore, regional organisations should be prioritised as fundamental spaces of international governance.

For this, it will be necessary to establish a common diagnosis on various global issues, and this requires identifying both the gaps and the key priorities on the agenda. Only with this will it be possible to establish common grammar and common principles and, from there, set common goals and shared objectives for the global south. The goal will be to establish a common grammar and a common political vision and with this, we will have our standards for the development of new, green, and resilient infrastructure. In this sense, it is fundamental that these common principles and these means of implementation be built directed towards the promotion of inclusion and social justice and the distribution of income, resources, and power, with special participation and importance of traditional peoples and communities and women. Therefore, the concept of popular sovereignty is necessarily applied in the construction of these principles and for the use of these means of implementation: South-South cooperation should be built and oriented towards the well-being of the general population, centered in people and its communities, not large corporations or economic elites.

Policy Planning

1. 2025-2030: Agreement on high-level principles, priority projects, and establishment of a basic multilateral governance structure

Establish the **Global South Sustainable Infrastructure Platform (GSSIP)** to define common principles, identify priority projects, and set up a multilateral governance structure. Furthermore, GSSIP will provide a platform for dialogue on critical global concerns, allowing countries from the Global South to come together to negotiate and reach agreements.

Key stakeholders: Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs from Global South countries, the World Bank, national and regional development banks, International Labor Organization (ILO), New Development Bank (NDB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and representatives of impacted communities.

Frameworks of Development Compact ([Chaturvedi, 2016](#)) and Popular Sovereignty ([MST, 2022](#)): Development Compact refers to not just the financing structure (grants, and concessional loans) required for the development of the Global South but goes beyond it to include capacity building and training, trade for development, and technology sharing. The idea of popular sovereignty involves broad consultations among nations, civil society, and different stakeholders. Development of mechanisms that guarantee the participation of civil society actors at various levels. Ensure the implementation of social and environmental safeguards in the development of projects, prioritising community participation and promoting the preservation and sustainable management of the environment. By involving the ideas of development compact and popular sovereignty, the means of implementation of the 'how' question of development for the Global South gets answered both at the empirical and conceptual levels, respectively.

In this governance structure, the GSSIP is composed of regional hubs (e.g., Latin American Hub, African Hub) to operationalise at the regional level. Their objective is to facilitate dialogue among country platforms,¹ coordinate efforts, and tailor GSSIP initiatives to regional contexts.

2. 2030-2035: Regional hubs validate priority projects

Regional hubs to work with country platforms to validate GSSIP's priority projects, focusing on:

- Economic and technical feasibility.
- Consolidation of public-private partnerships, which are necessary for priority infrastructure projects.
- Their contribution to capacity-building enhances the technical and institutional capacities of local governments and communities to engage with, implement, and monitor infrastructure projects.

An important element of this phase is consistent oversight by the GSSIP to ensure that priority projects are advancing equitably across the different regional hubs.

3. 2035-2040: The GSSIP has established co-financing mechanisms in the Global South, specifically using local currencies. It also begins the first cycle of impact evaluation, spearheaded by local/impacted communities.

Co-financing mechanisms and funders prioritise local currencies for financing, seeking to enhance Global South autonomy.

To this end, South-South financing institutions such as the NDB and AIIB are essential for coordinating the necessary funding mechanisms.

The impact evaluation must be led by impacted communities, and regional hubs must ensure community-driven processes for monitoring and evaluation of social, environmental, and economic impacts. These impacts must be monitored to comply with the governance principles laid out in 2025-2030, of popular sovereignty and development compact.

Key Recommendations

- **Establishing Country Platforms for Sustainable Infrastructure in the Global South.** These platforms should align agendas and policies, set priorities, and develop roadmaps to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Infrastructure agenda at the national level. Each country in the Global South should create its national platform, ensuring a multi-stakeholder approach that brings together representatives from ministries and governments at all levels—including subnational entities—alongside NGOs, social movements, the private sector, multilateral development banks (MDBs), and affected communities. Every Country Platform should have a dedicated coordinating body and a well-defined governance structure, supported by clear regulatory frameworks and robust mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and social participation.
- **Enhancing Civil Participation in Country Platforms at the National Level:** Strengthen civil participation in country platforms by incorporating diverse societal sectors. Public hearings and

consultations—virtual or in-person—enable citizens to engage in evaluating public works and shaping policies. Argentina serves as a valuable case study, where public hearings are legally required for major infrastructure projects ([Ministerio de Justicia, 2003](#)). These hearings promote transparency, inclusivity, and informed decision-making by integrating expert analyses and diverse perspectives. While non-binding, authorities must justify how public input influences final decisions. Institutionalising such mechanisms ensures sustained citizen engagement in governance.

- **Empowering Regional Institutions to Establish Regional Hubs:** Strengthen regional institutions to serve as intermediaries between country platforms and the GSSIP. These organisations play a key role in financing leverage and harmonising legislation and regulatory frameworks. Initiatives like COSIPLAN in South America should be resumed and enhanced to improve regional coordination and infrastructure development ([COSIPLAN, 2025](#)).
- **Developing a “Green Coalition” of multi-sectoral actors, both public and private, capable of leveraging financing for GSSIP projects.** This coalition should be led by national and regional development banks—with a special role for the NDB—alongside other key actors, such as international and multilateral banks (including the IDB and GCF). The Green Coalition must adhere to the principles established by international climate governance—particularly the UNFCCC—ensuring resilience, climate adaptation, and sustainability. The green coalition will be responsible for developing sustainable solutions and effective governance regarding the allocation of resources for infrastructure. Additionally, it will prioritise the use of currencies from Global South countries. The green coalition established by the Belém Declaration for Amazonian countries can serve as an example of best practices.

Chapter 3: Empowering Vulnerable Communities for Climate Finance Access within the International Financial Architecture

Luis Gabriel Herrera Perez, Paula Lottenberg, Maria Dominika Mediana Rossa Budhisatrio, and Olumide Onitekun

Introduction

Communities across the Global South face systemic injustices within the International Financial Architecture (IFA), which perpetuates inequalities and limits access to essential climate finance needed to address urgent climate challenges ([Global Policy Watch, 2024](#)). The current system does not prioritise projects aligned with sustainable development goals, thereby further marginalising vulnerable populations ([Jensen, 2023](#)). These communities, directly impacted by the inequities of global financial systems, have long called for justice, inclusivity, and equitable access to resources. Reforming the Bretton Woods Institutions has become a critical demand, as power imbalances in global governance—frequently highlighted by leaders like the UN Secretary-General at the 2023 G77 and China Summit — underscore the need for a just financial system that prioritizes community-led initiatives and sustainable development ([Global Policy Watch, 2024](#)).

This Project Brief outlines key recommendations for transforming the global financial architecture into a system that effectively addresses these challenges.

Vision

In the year 2040, the global financial architecture should be reformed into a just, equitable, and inclusive system that ensures transparent access to climate finance, prioritizes community-led initiatives, and drives sustainable development while addressing the urgent challenges of climate change.

A comprehensive course of action is pivotal to achieve a just and inclusive community-led economic and financial system in the Global South in 2040. Existing climate finance mechanisms often restrict inclusive access to climate finance, hence overlooking the urgent needs of vulnerable regional and local communities. Way forward, climate finance reform should focus on equitable access to funding and prioritise resource distribution to community-led initiatives ([Simon et al., 2019](#)). The empowerment of communities will have a positive impact on the community-driven multilateralism where concrete and meaningful participation with a contextualised nuance should enable a resilient framework that addresses climate change challenges faced by the communities in the Global South.

Policy Planning

To effectively address the urgent challenges posed by climate change and realise the vision of a just, equitable, and inclusive global financial architecture, multilateral climate funds (MCFs)—including the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund (AF), Climate Investment Funds (CIF), and Global Environment Facility (GEF)—must take a proactive leadership role in this transformation, as recently demonstrated at COP29 in Baku ([Ollikainen et al., 2024](#)). They should prioritise

equitable access to funding and ensure that resource distribution favors community-led initiatives.

Reforms within the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) should aim to create a governance structure that is more equitable and inclusive, enabling transparent access to climate finance. Additionally, collaboration among MCFs is necessary to streamline access to funding and enhance their support for developing countries, ensuring alignment with the specific needs of vulnerable communities. This policy framework outlines actionable steps to reshape the global financial architecture. The action plan below outlines a phased approach from 2026 to 2040 to transform the global financial architecture.

Phase 1: 2025 - 2030	Phase 2: 2031 - 2035	Phase 3: 2036 - 2040
Foundation Phase	Scaling up impact and institutionalising Reforms	Achieving Systemic Transformation
1.1 Establish Consensus Among Relevant Stakeholders: Convene global and regional summits with governments, CSO, private sector, and multilateral institutions to establish consensus Form a coalition of Global South countries.	2.1 Expand Funding for Community-Led Initiatives: Increase financial commitments by 50% across MCFs. Introduce regional investment hubs to streamline fund access for local actors.	3.1 Institutionalise Community-Led Climate Finance: Establish permanent MCF structures to support community-led projects. Governance integration of community-driven multilateralism.
1.2 Reform Multilateral Climate Funds (MCFs): Revise funding allocation frameworks in MCFs to prioritise community-led projects. Fast-track small-scale initiatives. Create a dedicated “Community Access Windows” in MCFs for vulnerable communities.	2.2 Strengthen Regional and Local Institutions: Establish regional climate finance bodies to decentralise decision-making. Provide resources for local governments to implement community-centric climate action plans.	3.2 Achieve Equity in Climate Finance Access: Ensure at least 75% of climate finance for vulnerable regions. Guarantee equitable access to climate finance for marginalised groups

Phase 1: 2025 - 2030	Phase 2: 2031 - 2035	Phase 3: 2036 - 2040
1.3 Advocate for Bretton Woods Institution Reforms: Equitable governance structure within IMF and WB. Climate finance integration. Develop mechanisms for transparent finance tracking.	2.3 Integrate Climate Justice into Global Governance: Institutionalise climate justice as a core principle within IFI. Ensure inclusive policy-making representation from youth, women and indigenous groups.	3.3 Transformational Policy Integration: Embed inclusive frameworks into national development policies and global agreements. Standardise decision-making processes across climate finance mechanisms.
1.4 Capacity Building and Technical Assistance: Regional programs for proposal development. Partnerships with NGOs and local governments to provide technical training.	2.4 Promote Public-Private Partnerships: Mobilise resources with the private sector. Create incentive structures to attract private investment in community-led initiatives.	3.4 Strengthen Global South Leadership: Empower Global South to take leading roles in global climate finance. Establish an autonomous Global South climate bloc to advocate for their collective interest.
1.5 Policy Alignment and Coordination: Global platform for harmonising MCF policies. Strengthened MCF coordination.	2.5 Expand Research and Innovation: Fund research on community-specific solutions. Knowledge-sharing platforms	3.5 Evaluate Progress and Adapt Strategies: Conduct a comprehensive evaluation by 2040. Ensure adaptation to emerging challenges.

Case Study

To realise this vision, a practical example can be drawn from Bangladesh's experience with community-based adaptation ([UNDP, 2025](#)). In the coastal regions of Bangladesh, communities vulnerable to climate change have successfully implemented locally-driven initiatives such as floating gardens and saline-resistant agriculture with support from organisations such as the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) ([Practical Action Bangladesh, 2023](#)). These projects, while impactful, often face challenges in securing adequate and direct funding from international climate finance mechanisms. By creating a „Community Access Window“ as proposed, directing at least 75% of climate finance flows to vulnerable communities, such initiatives could be scaled up and replicated across the Global South, ensuring resources are channeled effectively to contextually relevant

adaptation and mitigation projects. This approach aligns with the vision of a just and inclusive financial architecture that prioritises community-led initiatives and drives sustainable development.

Key Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to guide decision-makers in transforming the global financial architecture into a more equitable system that can effectively address the climate crisis and promote sustainable development.

1. Reform Bretton Woods Institutions for Inclusivity: Address the power imbalances within the Bretton Woods Institutions to ensure that the Global South has a more equitable voice in decision-making processes and establish special financing mechanisms for nations and communities most at risk.

2. Establish Decentralised Climate Finance Bodies: Create institutions like the Decentralised Climate Action Network (DCAN) to decentralise decision-making and empower community-led climate initiatives with direct funding access in the Global South.

3. Community-Led Climate Finance Access Window: Create a „Community Access Window“ in all MCFs, directing at least 75% of climate finance flows to vulnerable communities by 2040 and channeling it to locally driven initiatives within their contextually relevant adaptation and mitigation projects.

4. Build Local and Regional Capacity: Strengthen the capacity of local governments, NGOs, and regional climate investment hubs through technical training, financial management support, and knowledge-sharing programmes, with coordination from institutions such as the UNDP, Regional Development Banks, GCF, national governments, and international NGOs like the World Resources Institute.

5. Ensure transparency and accountability: Develop and enforce mechanisms to guarantee transparency in climate finance resource allocation, prevent misuse of funds, and improve monitoring, with oversight from institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, GEF, OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and civil society organisations like Transparency International.

Chapter 4: Security Council Reform: The Inclusion of Global South and the Future of Peace

Parousia Tlhompho Shikwambane and
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Introduction

For decades, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) stood as a pillar of global peace, yet its inability to adapt to evolving geopolitical realities and resolve multidimensional conflicts exposed its deep structural flaws ([Gould/Rablen, 2017](#)). Nearly 80 years after its formation, the Security Council retains the same five permanent members (P5), each wielding the power of veto. This allows any P5 member to unilaterally block Security Council resolutions inimical to its national interests—as Russia has done with respect to Ukraine and the U.S. stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict ([Patrick et al. 2023](#)).

Frequent paralysis within the council has rendered it increasingly ineffective. The rise of nations in the Global South has emerged as powerful forces in advocating for a more equitable and inclusive international community. Africa, for instance, a continent of 54 nations, lacks permanent representation on the UNSC, while over 70 percent of resolutions are centered around the continent ([Patrick et al. 2023](#)). Hence, reform of the UNSC is imperative.

While there's a consensus on reforming the UNSC system, member states diverge on priorities—some advocate for leveraging

powerful nations' capabilities, while others stress equitable representation. Past proposals have suggested expanding the number of permanent members to include Africa and other emerging powers, and adjusting veto privileges to prevent unilateral actions that contribute to paralysis. Some have even proposed dismantling the UNSC altogether and establishing a more effective replacement for safeguarding global peace ([Mahmood, 2013](#)).

Drawing from the pull of a hopeful future, the push of current demands for justice, and the weight of historical exclusion, an urgent reformed UNSC led by the Global South is crucial. Achieving this vision demands collective commitment, innovative approaches, and bold reforms. To this end, this chapter outlines an actionable vision, a timeline for policy planning, and a cross-stakeholder collaborative recommendation aimed at reforming and renaming the Security Council by 2040.

Vision

The UNSC reform is central to our vision of a Security Council that reflects contemporary global dynamics, devoid from any hegemonic dominance, and is inclusive of the Global South's collective interests, ensuring that all nations have equal representation and meaningful participation.

An urgent structural reform of the UNSC, with more permanent and elected seats and limited veto power, is pivotal to achieving an envisioned Security Council that reflects current global dynamics. To ensure that the council takes meaningful action, we propose the democratic process of two-thirds majority rule before the veto can be exercised, particularly in cases involving humanitarian crises, genocide, and crimes against humanity. The vision is to achieve a peace-centered UNSC that is fit-for-purpose to address contemporary challenges avouching peace and prosperity for all.

The reform agenda should strive to turbocharge the aspirations of the Global South, ensuring that multilateralism can deliver for the people and respond effectively to threats for present and future generations. To truly reflect the reform agenda and become a more legitimate organ of global governance, equity, fairness, and transparency within the council is essential. This permits broader perspectives and inclusiveness of member states in the implementation of sustainable solutions. Providing all states with the opportunity to influence deliberations significantly aimed at a peaceful international community.

Since the Global South has been previously marginalised by the Security Council ([Global Policy Watch, 2024](#)), we propose a name change of the UNSC to the “International Peace Consortium” to reflect collective action that is guided by shared interest in achieving durable peace.

This vision of 2040 represents not only an aspiration but an achievable goal, leveraging the wisdom of the Global South to build a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world for all.

Policy Planning

1. 2025-2030:

By 2026, comprehensive policy research has been conducted to support the UN reform. The research conducted will produce a policy communiqué titled the “Pact of the Global South” or “The Pact”, inspired by the United Nations Pact for the Future ([United Nations, 2024](#)). This communiqué will serve as a guideline document for reform advocacy, with strong emphasis on structural reform, with limited veto power, an enlarged council, and veto power privileges to additional permanent members. Mapping out relevant stakeholders is crucial to bring together global leaders, policymakers, and civil society to promote reform and build a strong coalition. Importantly, engagements across cross-country multi-stakeholder dialogues on adopting The Pact will convene in administrative Global South capital cities, creating platforms for collaboration and meaningful discussions on the proposed Pact.

For the year 2030, there should be continuous advocacy and engagement efforts with UN member states to adopt The Pact. A dedicated task force named the “Global Peace Coalition 2040” or GPC2040, must be established to facilitate and expedite the reform agenda. The task force will consist of member states that have advocated for the UNSC reform, including Indonesia, South Africa, Switzerland, and other nations ([United Nations, 2023](#)). The GPC2040 will actively engage with the P5 to amend the UN Charter, in the interests of adopting The Pact.

2. 2030-2035:

A proposal will be made to rename the UNSC to the “International Peace Consortium” or IPC, inspired by the reform of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs ([UNDESA, 2015](#)). While the core functions of the council will remain unchanged, its composition is expected to evolve. Member states must adopt The Pact in 2035. By adopting The Pact, UN member states commit to implementing solutions that prevent future wars and act timely to maintain global peace and order.

3. 2035-2040:

The IPC will have been established, replacing the former dysfunctional UNSC. The IPC is fully operational with an enlarged council, including previously marginalised states, and a reformed veto power to include additional permanent members.

Key Recommendations

To achieve the establishment of the International Peace Consortium by 2040, a decentralised “P5 approach” (public-private-people-philanthropic partnership) must be pursued, as detailed below:

1. National governments (public). Countries must commit to a structural reform agenda in a unified voice and enhance diplomatic engagement. Such effort must be demonstrated through political will and adopt the Pact of the Global South by 2035. Commitment to structural reform can be strengthened by endorsements from emerging or already formalised multilateral blocs.²

2. Financial institutions and International Chamber of Commerce (private sector). The private sector can offer expertise in management, technology, and innovative financing to improve the efficiency and transparency of the intended reformed UNSC operations.

3. International organisations and development partners (philanthropic). Regional and international organisations³ are ideally suited to facilitate the creation of the “Global Peace Coalition 2040” or GPC2040 task force. Their convening power enables them to unite diverse stakeholders and their legitimacy helps promote global norms and standards.

4. Coalition of civil society groups and NGOs (people). Civil society is people-centric and, in its capacity, should mobilise bottom-up grassroots support rooted in citizen participation, raising awareness and campaign activities, to achieve the UNSC reform agenda. Inputs should best be provided by international and regional structures making use of this avenue, to prevent too strong on national issues and priorities

Such a collaborative P5 approach dedicated to the reform agenda—expanding the membership and limiting the veto—has the potential to make the world a better, just, and peaceful place.

Conclusion

The four visions for the year 2040 presented in this Project Brief depict hopeful and positive futures. The authors introduce concrete steps through action planning to turn these visions into reality. The following four concrete policy recommendations are based on the preceding chapters and are intended to serve as a foundation to rethink multilateralism from a perspective of the Global South.

By 2040, we envision a world built on a stronger multilateral system underpinned by collective responsibility, where the wider international community has a stake in preventing violations of international humanitarian law. This is achieved by all actors being active stakeholders in the multilateral system, coupled with the strengthening of a system of checks and balances through more transparent documentation and greater accountability.

By implementing the framework for sustainable infrastructure, the Global South can move beyond historical dependencies and establish a new path of cooperation: one that is resilient, equitable, and centered on the principles of popular sovereignty and sustainable development, ultimately reshaping the global order to better reflect its interests and aspirations.

Communities in the Global South face systemic injustices in the International Financial Architecture (IFA), limiting access to critical climate finance. To address this, we proposed a just, inclusive, and community-led economic system by 2040. Key reforms include equitable funding allocation, a restructured Bretton Woods system, and a „Community Access Window“ in Multilateral Climate Funds. Additionally, the establishment of decentralized finance bodies like the Decentralized Climate Action Network (DCAN) will enhance accessibility and decision-making at the local level.

The pact of the Global South lays the foundation for the envisioned peace-centered reform of the UNSC by 2040, through a collaborative public-private-people-philanthropic partnership approach.

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Endnotes

¹ Country platforms are country-level mechanisms to convene a variety of stakeholders (NGOs, government, business, MDBs, affected communities, etc) to foster collaboration and channel/synchronize investment and strategies toward the implementation of a country's strategy/strategies.

² The blocs include Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS+), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), among others.

³ Such as the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN).

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