



**Global  
Challenges  
Foundation**

# **A truly global partnership – helping the UN to do itself out of a job**

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The submission tackles the UN's outdated state-centric nature and its skewed emphasis on development work, which other actors are often better-placed to do. The model proposed brings businesses, NGOs and young people into UN governance structures, taking the ILO as a starting point. Concurrently, the UN would transfer its development-related tasks to these stakeholders, who would bid competitively for contracts. They would be incentivised to do more but also subjected to greater scrutiny as part of this process. As a result, the UN could redirect its limited resources to crucial tasks such as conflict resolution, which cannot be easily performed by others.





# 1. Abstract

It is often said that the UN's founders would not recognize the world in 2017 – a world in which people fear climate change, cyber attacks and extremism [1]; in which too much affluence, too many lives preserved, could be our downfall.

Arguably the most profound transformation has been the creation of an international community far beyond their imagination. Companies now have wider spheres of influence than states. Civil society movements can mobilize millions of supporters. Two decades before social media, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali referred to CNN as the 16th member of the UN Security Council.

Sadly, there remains much that the war-weary generation of 1945 would recognize: from big power tensions to the threat of nuclear war, from corrosive nationalism to mass displacement. And as the setters of the *Global Challenges Prize* recognize, states continue to play an essential role, not least in creating the conditions for others to act.

Efforts to improve global governance must, therefore, tackle old and new challenges, and address emerging and long-standing realities.

## A BLANK SHEET?

The task at hand – designing a more effective governance model that is implementable in the foreseeable future – is as urgent as it is difficult. We do not have the luxury of a blank sheet.

Seeking a fast, wholesale transformation would be risky, threatening the hard-won gains of the past century, as well as those whose lives depend on the UN. It would be unlikely to meet the *Prize* criterion of acceptability without an unwieldy process of consultation, risking poor compromises or, worse, the creation of a two-speed system with only some states subscribing to the new model.

Moreover, many of the constraints on the UN's founders remain in place. The organization reflects *realpolitik* as much as it does principle, tempering universal membership with privileges for the powerful. It is this bargain, however flawed, that has underpinned its achievements and longevity.

It took two world wars to create the UN. Reforming it has proved challenging, even during times of opportunity, such as the immediate post-Cold War period. At present, when principled political leadership is in short supply, reform might even be dangerous – a chance for leaders to dismantle what we have.

At the same time, we need transformational change now, given the scale and immediacy of the challenges we face. We also need a vision for the future, as the UN continues to fade in its impact and legitimacy.

This proposal addresses this dilemma through changes that will make the UN more effective in the short term, while creating the conditions for a more sustainable and equitable system of global governance in the future.

## WHAT SHOULD STAY, WHAT SHOULD GO

First, we must identify the areas that are most ripe for – and in need of – reform, as well as areas that should be supported or left alone:



**The democracy deficit** – despite the rise of other actors, the international system remains stubbornly state-centric, with businesses and NGOs on the sidelines. The mantra that they will lead delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Agreement rings hollow in the absence of their formal inclusion in governance. This is particularly the case for young people. Half the world’s population is under 30 but they are largely excluded from policymaking, even though they will bear the brunt of poor decisions made today.

**The development deficit** – development work accounts for roughly 75% of total UN funding (\$26bn), two-thirds of its staff (50,000), and more than 1,000 offices. This work made sense when the UN was the only actor on the ground. Today, it is rarely necessary or effective. A host of studies have shown that other actors are often more successful, more cost-effective and more in tune with local needs. This work also hampers the UN’s ability to provide its crucial “backstop” functions. [2]

**The “backstop” benefit** – the UN’s role as the world’s “backstop” remains vital. While its peace and security record is patchy at best, other organizations have rarely performed better, nor have they been prepared to act in many situations. The UN’s political work is also not easily replicated. And millions of people rely on its humanitarian assistance, which others are unlikely to match.

**The universality benefit**– the UN’s added value is perhaps most clear in its shaping of the international system, through the development of laws and standards that govern everything from aviation safety to human rights. Its normative role and convening power, its technical expertise and its transformative ideas remain peerless. [3]

**The reform red herring**–while Security Council reform invariably occupies the limelight, proposals are highly unlikely to meet the *Prize’s* criteria of efficacy or acceptability. It is not for lack of ideas that progress remains elusive. No magic reform – structural (eg composition), procedural (eg veto) or conceptual (eg R2P) – can make up for a lack of political will and fiercely guarded privilege.

This proposal adopts an alternative approach: eroding the Council’s importance and remit over time through more effective crisis prevention by a system that encompasses several actors who are more influential than the Council’s members.

## A NEW SHAPE

Two major transformations are proposed to address the two deficits set out above, along with a number of supporting reforms (see next section) that also serve to boost the benefits:

A **four-way governance structure** in all UN funds, programmes and agencies bringing together states, businesses, NGOs and young people. This would take as a model the International Labour Organization (ILO) [4] in terms of decision-making, but use a different method of appointment, with candidates participating in transparent selection processes aimed at raising standards and improving accountability.

A **global capacity-building drive** that sees the UN transfer the bulk of its development-related tasks to non-state stakeholders, who would bid competitively for contracts. This would be a priority for the reconstituted UN agencies, building on existing partnerships and proposals.



## 2. Description of the model

### ***TRANSFORMATION 1: Four-way governance structure***

At present, UN funds, programmes and agencies (“agencies”) are governed by states. This has led to a number of problems, including: severe funding shortfalls, as states have made contributions voluntary in many agencies; inertia on reform, as states protect their interests (national offices, high-level staff positions, etc); and a reluctance to engage other actors meaningfully. The knee-jerk answer to calls for change has been the expansion of the UN’s agenda to incorporate ever more tasks. States rarely decide to close a poorly-performing programme, preferring instead to create a “coordination” or “evaluation” mechanism to promote efficiency.

The result has been a system that is overstretched but unwieldy, underfunded but wasteful. In light of increasing demands on the system, states are belatedly looking to businesses and NGOs to support financing and delivery of programmes. But current structures offer few incentives for them to do more, not least a voice in formal decision-making.

Multi-partner governance models are becoming increasingly common – the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; and the UN Global Compact all have UN, business and civil society representatives on their boards. The most fruitful model, though, is the ILO, which has had a tripartite structure since its inception in 1919. As one of the UN’s specialized agencies, it offers an example of shared governance and decision-making that is more likely to be acceptable to states, and which has demonstrated its ability to deliver positive outcomes.

This proposal recommends a four-way governance structure where the number of members is doubled, with states making up half, and representatives of business, civil society and youth organizations making up the other half (or close to 50%). While increasing the number of actors involved in decision-making often slows down the process, it can also improve the outcome.

Assessments of the ILO by various governments and academics have noted that the interplay between different constituencies has increased “interest accommodation” and provided pathways through stale debates. Greater ownership by local actors and the identification of local issues during negotiations have also helped to speed up implementation once agreement has been reached. This is often a source of delay following purely intergovernmental negotiations. [5]

### **THE STRUCTURE**

While each UN body has distinct arrangements, each specialized agency (e.g. the Food & Agriculture Organization – FAO) tends to have a “general conference” or “assembly” of member states who elect from within their number a “governing body” or “executive committee/board”. UN funds and programmes (e.g. the World Food Programme – WFP) often have only the latter, elected by a supra-body such as a specialized agency or the UN Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC).

To facilitate the inclusion of new stakeholders with the least possible resistance from states, it is proposed that the only changes to governance structures would be:



The widening of the definition of “member” to include a total number of for- and non-profit organizations equal to the number of member states Resultant changes to the voting and other arrangements (e.g. for committee membership), with thresholds and proportions maintained except to reflect the increased number of members

## **APPOINTMENT AND ELECTION OF NON-STATE REPRESENTATIVES (NSRS)**

### **Step 1**

In order to be eligible, for-profit NSRs must be members of the UN Global Compact who are classified as “active” (currently over 10,000 companies and organisations). Non-profit NSRs must be accredited to ECOSOC (currently just over 4,500 non-governmental organisations and other institutions). The requirement to have passed existing processes provides a measure of scrutiny and acceptability to states.

Youth organizations can be either for-profit or non-profit organizations. To qualify, the organization’s objects and purposes must explicitly relate to young people and the organization must commit to fielding only representatives aged 30 or younger.

### **Step 2**

Prospective NSRs must then register their interest on a new online portal, similar in style to the UN-Business Action Hub [6] and the partnership portals of UN bodies like the Refugee Agency (UNHCR). This would require them to accept the UN’s Supplier Code of Conduct and provide a statement outlining their ability to make a meaningful contribution to particular areas of UN work, at the policy or delivery level, or both.

It would also require them to accept assessments of their performance (see below), as well as an agency membership fee should they be elected/appointed (see “Argumentation” section for details).

In addition, a small registration fee, based on a sliding scale similar to the UN Global Compact’s suggested contributions, would be applied to discourage non-serious applicants and to help maintain the portal:

*Less than USD 50 million revenue = USD 250 (suggested minimum)*

*USD 50 million – USD 250 million = USD 2,500 – 5,000*

*USD 250 million – USD 1 billion = USD 5,000 – 10,000*

*USD 1 billion – USD 5 billion = USD 10,000 – 15,000*

*Greater than USD 5 billion = USD 15,000+*

### **Step 3**

The member states of the various agencies would then elect/appoint NSRs from the pool of those registered.

For general conferences, NSRs would be elected in corresponding numbers to member states. So, for example, if an agency has 193 member states, 64 for-profit, 64 non-profit and 64 youth NSRs would be elected. To be elected, NSRs must



secure a two-thirds vote, which is the general UN system threshold applied for the admission of new members.

Each of the five UN regional groups would put forward 20 candidates for each category, to avoid the fielding of “clean slates” and to ensure geographic balance. A group of experts (see below) would also act as a vetting mechanism, flagging up misconduct and potential risks such as pending legal proceedings. Their advice would be non-binding but delivered publicly to encourage states to pay heed.

Membership would be reviewed at a general conference on a five-yearly basis, with NSRs allowed to stand again for one further five-year term. This would provide a long enough framework for NSRs to make a meaningful contribution, allow them to step down if circumstances change, and serve as a formal point at which assessments of their performance are considered.

#### **Step 4**

For governing bodies, the existing appointment and election processes of each UN body would remain in place except for the increased number of representatives.

So, for example, WFP’s Executive Board currently comprises 36 states, 18 elected by ECOSOC and 18 by the FAO Council. Under this new model, it would comprise 72 members, 36 states and 36 NSRs.

18 of them (six for-profit, six non-profit and six youth) would be elected by ECOSOC from candidates registered on the portal. The other 18 (six for-profit, six non-profit and six youth) would be elected from the FAO’s NSR membership, which would be determined using the process for general conferences outlined above.

#### **WORKING METHODS, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS**

For general conferences, the ILO provides a positive model in terms of working methods, with the various constituencies functioning somewhat as political parties do in a national legislature: meeting separately for informal discussions on strategy, holding caucuses and voting separately. This would complement the emphasis on regional coordination practiced by states. The diversity of interests would also allow for the emergence of issue-based coalitions that could help break down the silos that currently impede agencies’ work.

The powers and functions of the general conferences and governing bodies would remain the same, with the exception of one additional task: reviewing which tasks currently undertaken by the UN entity should be transferred to other actors – this is the second proposed transformation.

#### **LIGHTING THE SPARK**

Reforms to UN agency membership do not require amendment of the UN Charter, which is notoriously difficult to achieve. They can be instituted by their members, who would need to be convinced that the proposed changes, which would dilute their decision-making power to some extent, are desirable. Prospective NSRs, meanwhile, also need to be enticed to register.

The main incentive for states is burden-sharing in terms of financing, risk, delivery and accountability. If one agency were able to reach full funding, reduce its



workload and improve its effectiveness – and the perception of its member states – this would certainly encourage others to follow suit.

For NSRs the main incentive is a meaningful role in decision-making that affects their operating context. Businesses stand to gain contracts to deliver handed-over UN tasks, while NGOs stand to gain funding to deliver the work they were set up to do.

To start the process, a mass mobilization campaign involving business, civil society and youth organisations will be necessary, to build up support among UN member states. Given that the proposals are grounded in precedents and existing examples, do not require additional state funding, and leave states in the driving seat on paper, it should be possible to attract support.

### ***TRANSFORMATION 2: global capacity-building drive***

This transformation involves the UN transferring tasks that can be performed by other actors, thereby:

- Building local and national capacity, ownership, engagement and accountability
- Formalizing what is already the reality on the ground in many situations
- Empowering developing countries, further eroding the notion of “donors” and “recipients”
- Providing businesses and NGOs with contracts, and helping to coordinate and upscale their efforts
- Addressing the unsustainable growth in the UN’s workload, and the incompatibility on the ground of various functions it is expected to perform – political, humanitarian, development and human rights
- Enabling the UN to focus on tasks that cannot be easily taken on by others, such as forging political solutions to crises and dealing with complex emergencies

Some of these tasks, particularly on the development side, will be easy and quick to transfer, as they are already contracted out by the UN. Others will require a process of knowledge sharing and capacity-building, as well as support in the form of funding and staff.

Proposals to scale back the UN’s non-emergency work have been steadily gaining traction. The Secretary-General’s report to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit featured a commitment to be “as local as possible, as international as necessary”, which would see the UN providing greater support to local actors and not seeking to replace or duplicate their efforts. This, in turn, would enable the UN to better respond when local and national capacities are not sufficient, and additional expertise, resources and capacity are required.

The leading role of non-state stakeholders in financing and delivering the SDGs and Paris Agreement has not only been embraced. It has been recognized as the only means by which they can be realized. However, stakeholder involvement has been piecemeal and limited, with vast differences between UN agencies.



The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is one example of good practice. It works with thousands of partners, including private sector companies, investors, academic institutions and civil society groups, whose support includes everything from funding (nearly 30% of UNICEF’s budget) to in-kind services such as aid distribution, evaluation and research. Partners gain expertise, experience and exposure. With strict guidelines on procurement and a strong focus on the UN Principles of Partnership, these collaborations have also served to strengthen accountability and transparency on both sides.

This proposal seeks to formalize and expand the current practice of partnership.

### **THE PROCESS**

The first stage will involve UN agencies identifying which of their current tasks can be transferred. The participation of NSRs in agency decision-making, and the prospect of UN funding, staff and expertise being shared and/or transferred to national and local actors, should serve to encourage and incentivize states.

**However, there is nothing to say that this process could not occur in the absence of Transformation 1.**

The second stage will be drawing up tenders for these tasks, which would be similar to current procurement processes. The tenders would be posted on a UN-wide portal, which would combine the various different portals currently in use. Ideally, it would be the same portal used for registering stakeholders.

The third stage will involve a competitive tender process open to those who have registered as stakeholders. This would provide a baseline of requirements, as well as a commitment to accept and facilitate performance assessments, including through dedicating a proportion of project funding to evaluation. While the procurement structures will differ for the various UN agencies, the expertise of non-tendering NSRs should be leveraged.

The fourth stage will involve planning meetings with UN and successful suppliers to determine a timeframe and process for task handover that minimizes disruption and risk to beneficiaries. This will also involve discussion of the supplier’s funding and staffing needs. Consultations with beneficiaries and local communities will form an essential part of this process, allowing for a measure of civic acceptance of tender outcomes and encouraging good behavior from suppliers.

The fifth stage will involve delivery, with the aim of the UN providing support until it is no longer needed. This process may involve ongoing funding for the task, or support to create alternative sources of funding. It may also involve the transfer of staff to the supplier. Concurrently, feedback and assessment processes will begin (see below and “Argumentation” section).

### **SUPPORTING REFORMS**

#### **THE NEW STAKEHOLDER PORTAL**

In addition to supporting the above transformations, the new portal for registering stakeholders would serve three important functions:

Combining similar existing portals, thus increasing efficiency and reducing cost and administration  
Combining existing codes of conduct and voluntary principles, thus raising the bar for stakeholders  
Formalizing stakeholder engagement with





the UN, thus increasing transparency and, through the acceptance of expert and public scrutiny (a requirement for registration), strengthening accountability.

The portal would initially be funded by a new UN Global Compact fee, and maintained through stakeholder registration fees as detailed above.

### **MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR NSRS**

As per the registration requirement, NSRs would agree to pay membership dues if elected to UN agencies. These would be based on their ability to pay, using a scale of assessment similar to that used for member states. This would see the wealthiest NSRs pay the most, and the poorest NSRs pay only a token amount, in order to maintain the principle of contribution.

Instituting dues would significantly boost the unrestricted income of UN agencies, many of which rely entirely on voluntary contributions that are often earmarked. This, in turn, would enable better planning and allow for swifter mobilization during emergencies. At present, several agencies have severe funding shortfalls (the Refugee Agency is missing two-thirds of its budget), and UN appeals are only partially met, particularly for situations that are not receiving media attention.

If 10 companies with a revenue of \$5bn gave 0.01% as an annual membership due, \$500 million would be raised – a larger amount than all but one country (the United States) have pledged to the Refugee Agency for the budget year 2017.

A useful consultation exercise to establish the details of the formula used to assess membership dues could be based on the World Health Organization's successful practice of Negotiated Pledges, which involved a series of dialogues between that organisation and its partners, through which consensus over funding commitments was reached. The initiative led to increased voluntary contributions of core funding and a significant improvement in funding predictability.

### **EXPERT MONITORING SYSTEM**

Involving NSRs requires processes to be put in place to increase transparency and accountability. The registration system (above) is one such measure. Public feedback (below) is another. But expert input will also be required.

Experts should provide vetting during NSR election processes. Through regular assessments, and the ability to investigate allegations of misconduct, they should also help inform procurement decisions.

The Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council provide a model that is ripe for expansion. Described by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan as the “jewel in the crown”, Special Procedures consist of experts (sometimes called “Special Rapporteurs”) and working groups that are mandated to scrutinize human rights issues related to particular themes (such as modern slavery and violence against women) and particular countries.

What distinguishes them is their independence from the UN system, and their freedom to investigate any matter that falls within their mandate. Some can also receive complaints and petitions from the public.



At present Special Procedures receive little support from the UN and no remuneration. Using money from the UN Global Compact fee, this system could be expanded and reinforced so that it can better deliver its current tasks, and develop the capacity to monitor stakeholders who have accepted scrutiny as a condition of registering with the UN.

This measure should be acceptable to states as no changes to Special Procedure mandates would be required, nor additional funding from states. The mandates would also continue to be set up and reviewed by the member states of the Human Rights Council.

### **PUBLIC FEEDBACK AND SCRUTINY**

The two transformations outlined above are aimed at addressing the democratic deficit in global governance. However, it is important to distinguish between civil society and the public, and to ensure that people are able to participate directly in decisions and work that affects them, and not only through representatives. It is also vital to ensure that those affected are consulted during the process of task handover from the UN to stakeholders.

Public input should be sought at all stages – through consultations in advance, ongoing feedback and monitoring, and assessments. This input should become an integral part of planning and evaluation, and should shape outcomes if it is to be meaningful.

To support the above transformations, this must include the ability to: provide feedback on NSRs and suppliers; to flag good and bad practice and performance, and to encourage good behavior through “naming and shaming” and “naming and praising”. To meet the requirement of meaningful participation, this feedback will be made publicly available alongside expert assessments, and states will be required to take this into account when selecting NSRs and suppliers.

To be truly inclusive, this feedback needs to be gathered in different ways, using different means. The various tools already in use by UN agencies provide options. Examples include UNICEF’S U Report (a real-time social messaging tool) and WFP’s Mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping tool, which gathers data through phone surveys. The costs would be built into the tender process, with consultation a requirement.

### **UN GLOBAL COMPACT MEMBERSHIP FEE**

At present, there are over 12,000 members of which 10,000 are rated as active. They include more than 8,000 companies and 4,000 other organizations. There is no fee for membership although a small voluntary contribution is suggested based on revenue.

It is proposed that a small fee be levied on members, based on a scale of assessment, to support:

- The initial setting up of the stakeholder registration portal
- The expansion in the Special Procedures system
- The UN’s “backstop” functions, in particular the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Secretary-General’s mediation infrastructure, which should serve to enhance the stable environment that business requires



- Civil society participation in UN activities, to increase representation of the poorest and most vulnerable

According to the Global Compact Secretariat, about 40% of FTSE 500 companies are members. In 2015, the FTSE 500 had a value of \$32,387bn. [7] If one assumes that none of the FTSE 100 are members, which is not the case, thus reducing the value by \$16,245bn, and then applies a fee of 0.01% to the remaining 40%, the resulting revenue would be \$64.5bn, more than the entire cost of the UN system annually.

This is not intended to suggest that this amount would be raised, although it is certainly a financing model that should be seriously considered. Rather this estimated example illustrates the possibilities of a Global Compact fee.

### **UN OFFICES FOCUSED ON CORE FUNCTIONS**

Reducing UN activity in the development sphere will enable it to focus on the political, human rights and peace and security work that cannot easily be replicated or transferred to others. These activities should become the focus of UN offices around the world. The head of these offices would be delinked from the development system and answerable to the UN Secretary-General. They would be tasked with ensuring that all UN activity in their territory meets broader UN objectives and supports task handover and stakeholder coordination.

This builds on several reform proposals produced in the wake of UN failures to protect civilians on the ground. In 2009 in Sri Lanka, UN actors were found to have prioritized humanitarian access (although this never materialized) over raising human rights concerns. Similar charges are now being leveled against the UN office in Myanmar.

### **TRANSPARENT AND INCLUSIVE APPOINTMENT PROCESSES**

Finally, no amount of reforms can make up for poor leadership. At present, the appointment processes for UN agency heads and other senior managers vary greatly in quality. To support the above transformations, and to increase performance and accountability more generally, consistent appointment processes should be instituted. These should be grounded in best practice from across the UN system, and reflect the recommendations of the UN's Joint Inspection Unit, which have been endorsed by states. [8]

At a minimum, appointment processes should include: a job description with clear criteria, a timeline and description of the recruitment process, a shortlist of candidates (which must include women), an interview process that enables all stakeholders to engage with candidates, and a final selection process that involves all stakeholders. Due regard should be given to geographic diversity without constraints that limit posts to particular regions, as is currently often the case. A single term of office should also be seriously considered to improve performance and accountability.



### 3. Motivation

Both transformations seek to address the democratic deficit in global governance, in terms of decision-making and delivery. At present, the participation of other stakeholders – businesses, investors, foundations, NGOs, academic institutions, the media and public – is generally limited and tokenistic. This is unsustainable for a number of reasons:

- The UN is overstretched and underfunded at a time when needs are rapidly increasing. Its unique political, humanitarian, human rights and peace and security work is suffering as resources are diverted to its underperforming development work
- There is a risk that stakeholders filling the vacuum do so in a manner that is, at best, ad hoc and uncoordinated, and at worst, opaque and unaccountable
- Continued exclusion of stakeholders is a security risk. It can lead to unrest and violence on the one hand, and poor behavior from states on the other, as they seek to maintain control

Conversely, where engagement has been successful, the international community has been able to make headway on some of the most tricky issues – the Montreal Protocol that led to the phasing out of CFCs, is one example; the Ottawa Convention banning landmines is another.

More recently, the Paris Agreement offers a potential model for the future. The languishing process to produce a traditional one-size fits all treaty was replaced by a more flexible and inclusive arrangement through discussions involving a wide range of stakeholders. The response from within and outside America to President Trump's decision to withdraw from the agreement demonstrates the extent to which the agreement has been embraced by local and national actors. At the same time, the UN provided the forum for the agreement, and gave it the stamp of global approval and legitimacy.

The proposals above seek to formalize, and in doing so, enhance cooperation and coordination between states and other stakeholders, through processes that encourage better behavior, more transparency and greater accountability.

In crafting these proposals, the following principles have been applied:

- Harnessing prevailing global trends and political realities to create a more effective and inclusive UN in the short- to medium-term, and a more sustainable and equitable system of global governance in the future
- Ensuring there are incentives for all parties: states (burden- and cost-sharing, and increased national capacity), businesses (formalized participation in decision-making and delivery, access to contracts), and NGOs (formalized participation in decision-making and delivery, funding support)
- Formalizing and enhancing, through coordination and up-scaling, the informal roles currently played by non-state actors, thereby also increasing scrutiny of their activities



- Encouraging participation by instituting rules and conditions that are voluntary as the pursuit of participation is itself voluntary
- Taking existing structures, rules and processes as starting points, to increase ease and speed of acceptance and implementation
- Seeking accountability through transparency, better leadership and public participation

The proposals also seek to meet the *Global Challenges Prize* criteria:

### **CORE VALUES**

In order to be guided by the good of all humankind and by respect for the equal value of all human rights, a governance model must reflect humankind. The quadripartite structure enables people and organizations to sit alongside states in terms of decision-making and delivery. Not beholden to short-term election cycles, these actors will have more scope to act in the long-term collective interest.

The transfer of UN functions back to national and local actors will increase the need for, and incentive to, respect human rights. The creation of transparency and accountability processes, meanwhile, will enhance scrutiny of organizations that have too often remained in the shadows.

### **Decision-Making Capacity**

The experience of the ILO has shown that while the participation of multiple stakeholders can make certain processes slower, these are productive and not crippling delays, focusing on the interplay between international decisions and national actions – often the sticking point for inaction – and ensuring broad acceptance of outcomes. This interplay should also raise the quality of decision, with states prioritizing a nationally-determined agenda, businesses able to provide a longer-term risk perspective, and NGOs seeking the realization of principles. The requirement to take expert and public input into account should further improve the quality, buy-in and implementation of decisions.

### **Effectiveness**

The two transformations seek to mitigate two major risks – the democratic and delivery deficits in global governance – whilst improving necessary and well-functioning parts of the current system. The democratization of governance structures is both an end in itself and a means to increase effective handling of global challenges and risks.

Involving stakeholders in decision-making and delivery will lead to better outcomes and support implementation through closer alignment of international, national and local actions and priorities. By reducing inequalities between countries through capacity-building; by increasing the accountability of non-state actors; and by empowering the public and young people, the system also serves to address some of the factors that cause instability.

Meanwhile, the UN system retains its core of expertise and capacity. With additional funding to strengthen these functions, its performance in the areas of peace and security, human rights and humanitarian assistance should improve.



### **Resources and Financing**

Currently over 8,000 businesses and 4,000 NGOs are engaged with the UN through the Global Compact and ECOSOC accreditation. In addition, thousands of other individuals and institutions work with its funds, programmes and agencies. And millions of people worldwide are affected by its work. There is no shortage of candidates for the quadripartite system and the supporting mechanisms.

Equally, there is no shortage of money, as the estimate provided above for the UN Global Compact fee shows. Such a fee could support many of the UN's core functions and, if seriously pursued, the system itself.

The case could be made for a “fully-costed” approach to corporate social responsibility on ethical, practical and business grounds. It is hard to argue against support for an organisation credited by many with 72 years of relative global stability that has enabled many businesses to flourish. The business case for ethical trading is also becoming more and more pronounced, exemplified by the Global Compact 100 index outperforming the FTSE All World index in recent years.

The introduction of NSR membership dues will also go a long way to address the funding shortfall in UN funds, programmes and agencies. This funding would enable planning, including the work needed to institute the task transfer process. This process would see staff migrate along with functions, providing recipient countries and communities with capacity and expertise, as well as funding and, in due course, control.

### **Trust and Insight**

Transparency is a key feature of the proposed system, as it supports accountability and public buy-in and participation. This includes expert and public scrutiny of decision-making, delivery, appointments and membership, and the publication of information on the stakeholder registration portal. The requirement for feedback to be taken into account should further serve to enhance trust and a perception of meaningful participation by those affected by decisions and programmes.

With stakeholders involved both in policy-making and operational activities, these two processes will be more closely aligned and in tune with what is needed on the ground. When information is transparent and public, companies and NGOs, which rely on “clients”, demonstrate a propensity towards taking on board feedback.

At a macro level, the creation of cross-sector cross-border partnerships should serve, over time, to improve relations between the various partners, and reposition interdependence as something positive.

### **Flexibility**

This model significantly increases flexibility, moving UN agencies away from delivering tasks simply because that is what they were set up to do, moving NGOs away from projects that reflect competition for funding rather than needs, and moving businesses away from narrow profit-focused activities that do not apply their capabilities creatively. The very nature of partnerships that are responsive to public feedback is flexible. The model also enables the UN to build up resources in its areas of core competence, allowing it anticipate and respond to issues in a much more fluid and effective manner.



### **Protection against the Abuse of Power**

The transfer of power to the national and local level is at the core of this proposal. The functions retained by the UN are already governed by checks and balances which, although imperfect, remain largely acceptable to the majority of states.

The biggest risk, therefore, in this new model is the favoring of particular stakeholders and the exclusion of others. A number of processes have been designed to mitigate this risk:

- The creation of a set of minimum standards, including respect for diversity, that stakeholders who seek agency membership or contracts must fulfill
- A high threshold (two-thirds) for NSR membership and a vetting process
- Expert and public assessments of performance and conduct, which must be taken into account
- The integration of public participation at all stages of implementation, including a requirement to consult with all groups of stakeholders
- Transparent decision-making processes and the publication of expert and public assessments to promote naming and shaming/praising
- Transparent and merit-based processes for the appointment of senior staff

### **Accountability**

The new model seeks to increase peer and public accountability through an inclusive decision-making process, merit-based and competitive contracts, transparency of decision-making, and public participation at all stages. The system will serve to give people a framework for holding businesses and NGOs accountable, as well as increasing avenues for state accountability, particularly important for people who are not able to participate fully in national decision-making processes.

### **Conclusion**

There is a shortcut to improving global governance: political will. It is the UN's member states that call the shots, setting the organization's priorities and budget. If they chose to, they could look beyond narrow national interests and give the UN the authority and resources it needs to serve the long-term interests of the world.

This is a big "if", so insurmountable that typical solutions to this challenge focus on the UN's structures, not its members' policies, notably enlargement of the Security Council. It is debatable whether this would have the desired effect. While more representation might add to its legitimacy – an important consideration – a larger membership may not make the Council more effective or progressive, if the voting records of regional powers, the likely candidates for new seats, are a guide.

In any case, this debate remains academic. Member states cannot agree on what a new Council should look like. Even if they could, changing the Council's composition requires amendment of the UN Charter, which in turn needs the backing of its five permanent members. They are in no rush to do so.

In this proposal, the absence of political will, epitomised by the Security Council, is overcome by putting in place reforms that require no Charter amendment, no additional financing by states. Instead they require simply an opening, for new stakeholders to contribute in a more meaningful, coordinated and transparent way. Any state that is serious about improving the UN's effectiveness, increasing national capacity and doing more with less, should support them.



The nub, of course, is that over time, the reforms suggested would serve to level further the playing field between states and other actors. As UN agencies devolve tasks and eventually close, only a narrow core of activities would be carried out by the organization. With more and more actors working – successfully – on prevention, saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war would no longer be up to the powers of a bygone era.

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