

Project: GenSouth

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GenSouth

New voices from the Global South for the
future(s) of multilateralism

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Executive summary

English The multilateral system is facing a moment of profound tension. The legitimacy and effectiveness of multilateral institutions are increasingly questioned. Although the distribution of economic and political power has evolved, representation and decision-making structures within key international organisations have not adapted at the same pace. This disconnect has profound implications. When multilateral institutions fail to adequately reflect the realities, experiences, and priorities of a large portion of the world's population, their capacity to generate legitimate and durable solutions weakens.

In response to this need, foraus organises the GenSouth programme which brings together young professionals and researchers from Global South Think tanks to engage directly with multilateral actors in Geneva, at the heart of international governance.

This Project Brief is the outcome of the second edition of GenSouth, held in February 2026, and outlines four major axes, each accompanied by concrete policy proposals identifying actionable pathways for reform towards 2050:

- **Public systems enabling equitable participation in global governance:** with a focus on financial access and mobility, public systems should be co-designed, governed, and transformed with women and youth from the Global South as decision-makers, knowledge holders, and architects of global futures.
- **Climate justice led by feminist-decolonial popular assemblies:** a Global Popular Assemblies platform should be integrated within UN processes, built through a Global South reform coalition, a multilateral pact on climate justice and UN Charter revision.
- **Peace and security governance as a multiplex security framework:** strengthening regional blocs should be strengthened, thereby maturing minilateral platforms into governance clusters, and formalising UN-regional compacts.

- **A regenerative and multidimensional Global Financial Architecture:** development should be redefined beyond debt-fueled GDP growth, thus democratising international financial institutions, creating fairer credit rating systems, and strengthening regional development banks.

Français Le système multilatéral traverse une période de profondes tensions. La légitimité et l'efficacité des institutions multilatérales sont de plus en plus remises en question. Bien que la répartition du pouvoir économique et politique ait évolué, les structures de représentation et de prise de décision au sein des principales organisations internationales ne se sont pas adaptées au même rythme. Ce décalage a des implications majeures. Lorsque les institutions multilatérales ne reflètent pas adéquatement les réalités, les expériences et les priorités d'une grande partie de la population mondiale, leur capacité à produire des solutions légitimes et durables s'en trouve affaiblie.

En réponse à ce besoin, le foraus organise GenSouth, un programme réunissant de jeunes professionnel·le·s et chercheur·euse·s issus de think tanks du Sud global afin d'échanger directement avec des acteurs multilatéraux à Genève, au cœur de la gouvernance internationale.

Ce Project brief est le résultat de la deuxième édition de GenSouth, tenue en février 2026, et présente quatre axes majeurs, chacun accompagné de propositions politiques concrètes identifiant des pistes de réforme opérationnelles à l'horizon 2050 :

- **Des systèmes publics favorisant une participation équitable à la gouvernance mondiale :** en mettant l'accent sur l'accès aux financements et la mobilité, les systèmes publics doivent être co-conçus, gouvernés et transformés avec les femmes et les jeunes du Sud global en tant que décideur·euse·s, détenteur·rice·s de savoirs et architectes des futurs mondiaux.

- **Une justice climatique portée par des assemblées populaires féministes et décoloniales :** intégration d'une plateforme d'assemblées populaires mondiales aux processus onusiens, construite à travers une coalition de réforme du Sud global, un pacte multilatéral pour la justice climatique et une révision de la Charte des Nations Unies.
- **Une gouvernance de la paix et de la sécurité fondée sur une approche multiplexe :** renforcement des blocs régionaux, évolution des plateformes minilatérales en clusters de gouvernance et formalisation de partenariats entre l'ONU et les organisations régionales.
- **Une architecture financière mondiale régénérative et multidimensionnelle :** redéfinition du développement au-delà d'une croissance du PIB fondée sur la dette, démocratisation des institutions financières internationales, création de systèmes de notation plus équitables et renforcement des banques régionales de développement.

Deutsch Die Legitimität und Wirksamkeit multilateraler Institutionen werden zunehmend infrage gestellt. Obwohl sich die Verteilung wirtschaftlicher und politischer Macht verändert hat, haben sich die Repräsentations- und Entscheidungsstrukturen von internationalen Organisationen nicht im gleichen Tempo angepasst. Diese Diskrepanz hat weitreichende Folgen: Wenn multilaterale Institutionen die Realitäten, Erfahrungen und Prioritäten eines grossen Teils der Weltbevölkerung nicht angemessen widerspiegeln, ist ihre Fähigkeit, legitime und nachhaltige Lösungen zu entwickeln, geschwächt.

Um inklusive Lösungsansätze zu entwickeln organisiert foraus das Programm GenSouth, das junge Expert:innen aus Think Tanks des Globalen Südens zusammenbringt und ihnen den Austausch mit multilateralen Akteuren in Genf ermöglicht.

Dieser Projekt Brief ist das Ergebnis der zweiten Ausgabe von GenSouth, die im Februar 2026 stattfand. Er stellt vier zentrale Lösungsansätze vor, die jeweils durch konkrete politische Handlungsempfehlungen ergänzt werden und umsetzbare Reformpfade bis 2050 aufzeigen:

- **Die Reform gesellschaftlicher Aushandlungsprozesse zugunsten einer gerechten Teilhabe an globaler Governance:** Mit Fokus auf finanziellen Zugang und Mobilität öffentliche Prozesse gemeinsam mit Frauen und Jugendlichen aus dem Globalen Süden als Entscheidungs- und Wissensträger:innen sowie Gestalter:innen globaler Zukunftsperspektiven konzipieren, steuern und transformieren.
- **Klimagerechtigkeit durch feministisch-dekoloniale Bürger:innenräte:** Integration von globalen Bürger:innenräten in UN-Prozesse, ermöglicht durch eine Reformkoalition des Globalen Südens, einem multilateralen Pakt für Klimagerechtigkeit sowie einer Überarbeitung der UN-Charta.
- **Friedens- und Sicherheitsgovernance als multiplexer Sicherheitsrahmen:** Stärkung regionaler Bündnisse, Weiterentwicklung minilateraler Plattformen zu Governance-Clustern sowie Formalisierung von regionalen Abkommen der Vereinten Nationen.
- **Eine nachhaltige und multidimensionale globale Finanzarchitektur:** Neudefinition von Wachstum jenseits von BIP, Demokratisierung internationaler Finanzinstitutionen, Schaffung fairer Rating-Systeme und Stärkung regionaler Entwicklungsbanken.

1. Introduction

Author: Adriana Caballero

The multilateral system is facing a moment of profound tension. Institutions and frameworks that once served as the backbone of global cooperation are increasingly challenged by geopolitical fragmentation, growing economic inequality, climate disruption, and the erosion of trust in international governance. While multilateralism remains indispensable for addressing collective challenges that transcend borders, its current structures are struggling to deliver timely, equitable, and effective responses (United Nations, 2025).

At the same time, the legitimacy and effectiveness of multilateral institutions are increasingly questioned. Many of the core institutions that shape global governance today were established in the mid-twentieth century under geopolitical conditions that differ significantly from those of the present day. Although the distribution of economic and political power has evolved, representation and decision-making structures within key international organisations have not adapted at the same pace (Coulibaly & Qureshi, 2025). As a result, perspectives, priorities, and policy experiences from the Global South often remain underrepresented in global policy debates, despite the fact that many of the most pressing global challenges disproportionately affect these regions.

This disconnect has profound implications. When multilateral institutions fail to adequately reflect the realities, experiences, and priorities of a large portion of the world's population, their capacity to generate legitimate and durable solutions weakens. Calls for reform—ranging from restructuring global financial governance to revisiting decision-making processes within international organisations—have therefore become increasingly prominent (UNCTAD, 2024). Yet progress on many of these reforms remains slow, often constrained by political deadlock and entrenched institutional arrangements.

Against this backdrop, creating meaningful spaces for dialogue, collaboration, and policy innovation grounded in Global South perspectives is both timely and necessary. Bridging the gap

between global institutions and emerging policy voices is essential for revitalising multilateralism and ensuring its relevance in addressing contemporary global challenges.

GenSouth: context and methodology

In response to this need and with the support of the Canton of Geneva, the City of Geneva, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the International Geneva Welcome Center and a foundation from Geneva, foraus organises the GenSouth programme which brings together professionals and researchers from Global South Think tanks, aged between 20 and 35, to engage directly with each other and key multilateral actors in Geneva. By fostering exchange, collaboration, and joint reflection, the programme provides a platform to co-develop concrete, policy-oriented solutions. This Project Brief is the outcome of the second edition of GenSouth held in February 2026.

The recommendations proposed in this brief were developed by adopting a cohesive methodological approach using several foresight methodologies. Foresight is an “umbrella term for those innovative strategic planning, policy formulation, and solution design methods that don't predict or forecast the future, but work with alternative futures”, thereby allowing for the formulation and implementation of desired policy pathways, ultimately creating betterment in society, politics, and for individuals (UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, 2018).

During their week-long in-person workshop, the authors of this brief discussed future megatrends, ideated scenario pathways for their chosen topics, formulated desired futures, and reconciled concrete action plans. This methodical approach—called prospective-action research, or “participatory futures”—aims to “facilitate empowerment and transformation through engagement and participation”, thereby allowing participants to engage in questioning the status quo, formulating their own ideas for the futures of a given topic, and ultimately giving each and everyone agency in defining the future (Gidley et al., 2009).

In this Brief, after a short introduction, all authors present their

desired future in the form of a vision statement of their year 2050.

Following this, they work backwards, outlining relevant policy changes in reverse order until the current year 2026. Each chapter closes with the most important policy recommendations.

First, the role of public systems in enabling equitable participation in global governance is explored, with a focus on financial access and mobility. Expanding access to finance and mobility is not only a development priority but also a prerequisite for meaningful participation in global economic and institutional processes.

Second, climate justice is examined as a central dimension of global equity. While climate change is a global phenomenon, its causes and consequences are unevenly distributed. Addressing this imbalance requires systemic approaches that prioritise fairness, accountability, and the protection of global commons.

Third, the evolving landscape of peace and security governance is examined. The structure of the United Nations Security Council reflects outdated geopolitical realities, raising concerns about its legitimacy and effectiveness. Addressing institutional deadlocks and representation gaps will be critical to maintaining the credibility of multilateral conflict management systems.

The last chapter analyses the need to reform the global financial architecture. Existing financial systems—shaped by the 1944 Bretton Woods framework—continue to impose structural constraints on developing economies through debt burdens, unequal borrowing conditions, and limited representation. Reform is essential to support sustainable development and strengthen fiscal autonomy in the Global South.

Taken together, these four thematic areas illustrate the breadth of challenges currently facing the multilateral system and highlight the importance of integrating Global South perspectives into ongoing reform debates. The recommendations presented in this Project Brief aim not only to contribute to policy discussions but also to offer practical pathways for strengthening international cooperation in an increasingly complex global environment.

2. Four visions for 2050

2.1 Vision 1: Toward a multilateralism of reciprocity and rights

Authors: Busisiwe Nandipha Nxumalo, Fatima Zohra

Introduction

Public systems, financial infrastructure, mobility, social protection, and governance structures have never been neutral (Scott, 1998; Ferguson, 1990). They are historically produced through colonial extraction, racialised hierarchies, and gendered exclusions that continue to determine who is allowed to move, possess, invest, trade, and belong. For women and youth from the Global South, these systems remain sites of structural denial rather than collective care (Fraser, 2017; Bhattacharya & Vogel, 2017). Financial access is gated through colonial risk assessments and capital flows that privilege the Global North, while mobility regimes criminalise movement from the South, rendering young people, women, and displaced populations immobile, precarious, or invisible within global governance frameworks.

This chapter centers public systems through multilateralism by focusing on two interlinked and enabling infrastructures: financial access for women and youth from the Global South, and mobility for youth across borders. These systems are not isolated policy domains; they function as structural gatekeepers to all other rights. Without access to capital, women and youth are excluded from trade, investment, and economic agency. Without mobility, access to education, work, care, safety, and political participation remains structurally constrained. As such, financial access and mobility are deep political challenges.

Their contemporary configuration is rooted in histories of colonial dispossession, postcolonial debt dependency, border militarisation, and the ongoing extraction of labour and resources without reciprocal freedom or investment (Rodney, 1972; Mkandawire, 2005; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Mbembe, 2019). Today, overlapping crises—economic instability, climate displacement, shrinking civic space, and the normalisation of restrictive border regimes—have intensified these inequalities, making reform not only urgent but unavoidable.

Why this, why now, and why us? As African women researchers working transnationally and collaboratively, our positionality is methodological. We are informed by lived proximity to the systems we critique and by feminist, decolonial, and intersectional analyses (—> see *Vision 2*). We write from within the Global South, as political actors demanding a reconfiguration of multilateralism itself. One that recognises mobility and financial access as rights, public goods, and necessary conditions for dignity, agency, and collective futures.

Vision for 2050

Our vision advances a counter-model of multilateralism, one that moves beyond charity, aid conditionality, and extractive cooperation toward shared political responsibility and redistributive justice. We envision public systems co-designed, governed, and transformed with women and youth from the Global South as decision-makers, knowledge holders, and architects of global futures. In this vision, multilateralism is not a mechanism to manage inequality, but a collective infrastructure to dismantle it.

Details of the vision

When Global South women and youth co-design public systems, fundamental shifts occur. Priorities change from risk management to collective care, from border control to mobility justice, from financial exclusion to democratic access to capital. Policy design becomes grounded in lived realities rather than abstract indicators. Accountability flows not only upward to institutions, but outward to communities historically excluded from governance. This reorientation challenges dominant economic and political logics that treat Global South populations as labour reserves, aid recipients, or security threats, and instead affirms them as rights-bearing political subjects.

We envision collaboration between the Global South and the Global North that is honest about asymmetries of power and responsibility. Such collaboration requires acknowledgment of historical and ongoing extractivism, unequal mobility regimes, and financial architectures that benefit the North while constraining the South. Partnership, in this context, becomes commitment to redistribution, reparative policies, and shared governance over global public goods.

Mobility sits at the center of this vision. We frame mobility as a fundamental right, a public good, and a necessary condition for access to education, work, care, safety, and knowledge production (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013; International Labour Organization, 2018; Mezzadra, 2011; United Nations Development Programme, 2020.) For youth in particular, mobility enables political participation, economic survival, and collective imagination. A multilateral system that restricts movement while extracting value is unsustainable. A just multilateral future must ensure that those who sustain the world are also free to move within it.

Action Planning

By designing the framework from this future horizon, the action plan identifies three critical layers of intervention:

1. Structural conditions: the foundational shifts required to sustain a rights-based global system
2. Institutional reforms: the policy and governance mechanisms necessary to enable these conditions

3. Immediate political actions: the strategic catalysts required to initiate systemic change

This backward design ensures rigorous coherence between vision, strategy, and implementation. Furthermore, it maintains an analytical focus on navigating power asymmetries, assessing political feasibility, and preempting institutional resistance. The long-term objective centers on a multilateral system wherein mobility and financial access are institutionalised as fundamental rights and public goods, co-governed by women and youth from the Global South.

Time Period	Key Actions
2042-2050	Mobility as a public good - Establish publicly funded multilateral mobility mechanisms supporting education, work, care, and protection pathways for youth, including displaced populations. - Decouple mobility governance from securitisation and border militarisation, anchoring it instead in rights, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. Political purpose: reframe mobility as a right and public good; enable access to knowledge, labour, care, and survival; support dignified futures for Global South youth.
2034-2042	Structural reform of financial systems - Develop a Global South-led framework for African and intra-Global South resource trade that prioritises value retention, feminist labour protections, and reinvestment into public systems. - Establish public financial instruments (gender and youth-focused investment funds) to enable access to capital for trade, entrepreneurship, and collective economic initiatives without predatory conditionalities. Political purpose: redistribute economic power; challenge colonial financial architectures; enable women and youth to invest, trade, and build collective wealth.
2026-2034	People-centered governance & knowledge production - Establish public hearings led by women and youth from the Global South at national, regional, and multilateral levels, with binding mandates and transparent follow-up mechanisms. - Create safe public spaces to address taboos around mobility, finance, debt, and displacement. Political purpose: shift policy design from extractive consultation to shared governance; recognise lived experience as legitimate policy knowledge.

Policy Recommendations

1. Institutionalise binding co-governance by establishing women and youth-led councils within the United Nations, African Union, and G20

These bodies must move beyond consultation to “binding co-decision” recognising Global South feminist knowledge as enforceable expertise.

2. Reconstruct financial architectures through publicly governed investment facilities

This requires prioritising non-austerity, concessional finance for care economies and green transitions, while recalibrating debt restructuring to favour social protection over creditor repayment (—> see Vision 4).

3. Establish mobility justice by decoupling migration from securitisation

Multilateral compacts should provide climate pathways, education visas, and protected labour corridors.

4. Embed accountability and reparative responsibility through a Global South-led observatory

This ensures Global North partners commit to reparative financing that acknowledges historical extraction and asymmetrical mobility privileges. Finally, reallocate resources by redirecting budgets from border militarisation toward rights-based mobility and care.

Our recommendations serve as a bridge between the present reality of systemic exclusion and a future defined by dignity. The urgency of this shift is underscored by compounding crises that disproportionately impact those currently sidelined by global governance. Ultimately, this framework moves beyond managing inequality toward actively dismantling it, fostering a world where Global South populations are no longer viewed as labour reserves or security threats, but as the essential architects of a shared global future.

2.2. Vision 2: Global climate justice led by feminist-decolonial popular assemblies

Authors: Nadine Abd El Razek, Jimmy Berlianto, Nycolas Candido

Introduction

The Earth's climate continues to deteriorate rapidly, fueled by the relentless intensification of industrial production and extractivist practices. Looking back, overdeveloped nations (Kohr, 1978) have circumvented their uneven share of historical responsibility vis-à-vis impending ecosystemic collapse, failing to follow through with commitments cemented in international accords; opting instead for insufficient domestic changes while underdeveloped states are disproportionately affected, despite contributing minimally to historical global emissions (King & Harrington; Hickel, 2020). Rather than effecting necessary profound change, the powerful's climate agenda has been simmered to individualised responsibility, allowing overdeveloped states and multinational corporations to offset their share of the responsibility, placing the burden of a crumbling ecosystem on the global poor (Anjum & Aziz, 2026).

We have reached a critical turning point. The current status quo is being shaken and redefined primarily through a US-led rupture in global norms, the rise of fascist and right-wing movements, disruption to food production and traditional energy sources, as well as an increased dependence on tech-based solutions, led by the AI revolution, which threatens to deepen extractivist practices (Crawford, 2021; Varoufakis, 2023). However, decades of futile initiatives have also catalysed an exhaustion with failed, consensus-based decision-making. In its place, we see an increased recognition of grassroots advocacy and a demand for solutions that serve the public good rather than private accumulation (Purvis et al, 2025; IISD, 2025, CLIMA Fund, n.d).

Considering the urgency of the climate disaster and the imminent threat of ecosystemic collapse, this chapter seeks to plan for an

alternative, just future, recognising that climate justice is inextricably tied to global social justice. To achieve this, we must move beyond current extractive models towards a radically equitable systemic restructuring, rooted in decolonial and feminist principles (—> see Vision 1)—one that empowers historically marginalised yet disproportionately affected populations, prioritising grassroots sovereignty and the de-commodification of the global commons.

Vision for 2050

By 2050, global climate justice is led by feminist-decolonial popular assemblies.

Popular assemblies are horizontal, deliberative bodies where constituents, often selected by lottery or from marginalised groups, address their community's quality of life. Civil society has been firmly advocating for these forums to drive international cooperation for social justice and climate action (Folly et al., 2024). This institutional redesign can rebuild multilateralism's legitimacy by transnationalising communities' needs, shifting power from state-based consensus to grassroots governance of public goods.

Details of the vision

Challenging the overdeveloped footprint, such a governance shift is evident in the climate regime. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) already features non-governmental participation platforms known as "constituencies" (UNFCCC, n.d.). The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) held the first of Global Citizens Assemblies, and COP30, branded the "People's COP" (Sheldrick, 2025), progressed through initiatives based on representative, actions-oriented exchange, such as the Just

Transition Mechanism (CAN-Rac, 2025).

However, the challenge remains in making these procedural trends permanent. Within the UNFCCC itself, meaningful social participation is still dependent on the political preferences of each COP presidency (Park, 2015). This lack of sustained transformation expands reliance on the status quo, exacerbating exhaustion with traditional multilateralism, while failing to combat the right wing, tech-led climate collapse with truly systemic alternatives.

It is time to turn popular assemblies into the leading and long-standing force of climate action. Climate multilateralism should not just include community forums, but be built in their image. This means recognising that state sovereignty, particularly for underdeveloped states, can support community sovereignty, rather than expanding domestic interests above them.

To be a just redesign, this new multilateralism cannot abide by the current geopolitical order; it must counter individualism and extractivism with resource protection and collective ownership: principles that underpin a feminist-decolonial perspective on climate (FEMNET-UNDP, 2025). This means that assemblies’ configuration must include the mutual-learning of these principles, and that, for each topic, the most-affected communities must constitute the majority and take effective leadership.

Action Planning

Time Period	Key Actions
2045-2050	Formal Institutionalisation Leveraging this legitimacy, states institutionalise participatory climate multilateralism. A revised UN Charter recognises popular assemblies as a deliberative pillar, while governments embed their outcomes into national policy cycles. This completes the transition from informal coordination to formalised, participatory global climate governance.
2040-2045	Platform Operationalisation The Commission on Global Climate Justice operationalises the pact, designing participatory governance mechanisms, accountability frameworks, and alignment with justice principles. Simultaneously, states invoke a renewed ‘Uniting for Peace’ resolution (Tomuschat, 1950) to reframe climate risks as systemic threats and address Security Council paralysis (—> see Vision 3). This expands General Assembly authority and strengthens legitimacy for deepening structural reform in the next phase.
2035-2040	Institutional Design Following Commission recommendations and General Assembly mandates, a Global Popular Assemblies Platform is established. Integrated with UN processes, it convenes diverse stakeholders to deliberate on planetary risks. Its functioning builds institutional experience and legitimacy, directly enabling formal recognition of participatory mechanisms in global governance.
2030-2035	Agenda Consolidation Climate-vulnerable and reform-oriented states deepen coordination within the G77 and China. They convene a Multilateral Pact on Climate Justice, translating earlier ideas into concrete proposals and generating political momentum. This enables a joint proposal for a UN General Assembly-mandated Commission, establishing a formal institutional pathway for subsequent reforms. A UN Charter Review process anchored in climate change as an existential risk and climate justice as a necessary form of global justice are also further amplified, following the growing formalisation of the conversations.
2026-2030	Coalition Formation Global South coordination intensifies amid dissatisfaction with existing multilateral systems. Through forums like the G77 Fourth Summit and COP31, states initiate discussions on equitable climate governance, supported by transnational advocacy. These debates consolidate an initial reform coalition and produce a preliminary agenda on participatory governance, accountability, and alternative metrics that form the basis for coordinated diplomacy. These pressures also strengthen the push for a UN charter review process, as advocated by civil society coalitions like the Article 109 Coalition.

Policy Recommendations

1. Co-Create a renewed multilateral Pact on climate transition, peace, and justice, centering Popular Assemblies as a core deliberative pillar

A coalition led by the Alliance of Small Island States and the G77 should initiate a UN General Assembly-mandated process to negotiate a Renewed Multilateral Pact on Climate Transition, Peace, and Justice. This process should establish a Multilateral Pact Commission (by 2030) tasked with co-designing standards for Global Popular Assemblies, ensuring representation of frontline communities and pathways for their formal engagement with UNFCCC processes. The Pact should progressively institutionalise the Global Popular Assemblies as agenda-setting and accountability mechanisms, advancing a shift toward participatory and community-led multilateralism.

2. Formalise Global Popular Assemblies as a core UNFCCC deliberation mechanism

Building on the legacy of COP26 (Mellier & Wilson, 2023), the COP31 Presidency Action Agenda should integrate and formalise Global Popular Assemblies as the primary deliberative body to set the priorities for the work to be done by Belém Decision participatory mechanisms, such as the Just Transitions Mechanism. This novel global governance infrastructure ensures that participatory tools are directed by grassroots mandates claiming space, rather than imposed top-down administrative agendas.

3. Establish Popular Assemblies as the primary agenda-setting platform for UNFCCC Constituencies

UNFCCC constituencies—such as Women and Gender and Environmental NGOs—should adopt Global Popular Assemblies as a core platform for developing shared positions in the lead-up to COPs. By convening and integrating assembly outcomes into their advocacy, constituencies can strengthen the legitimacy of their demands, reduce internal fragmentation, and contribute to the gradual institutionalisation of participatory mechanisms within global climate governance, such as through the future COP meetings and a G77 Renewed Multilateralism Pact.

4. Advance a UN Charter Review Process anchored in existential risks and global justice

The E10, the ACT Group, and like-minded UN member state coalitions committed to a truly representative Security Council should formally table a proposal to initiate a UN Charter Review Conference under Article 109, firmly anchored in the lived demands of populations facing existential risks (from climate collapse to systemic injustice), rather than allowing negotiations to be captured by the interests of the overdeveloped. This means proactively engaging with civil society coalitions such as Article 109 Coalition, and institutionalising mechanisms for direct input from affected communities through Global Popular Assemblies.

2.3. Vision 3: Global security and the emergence of a true multipolar order

Authors: Asif Ali, Layla Ali, Siposihle Bungane, Chanranuth Neth

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was established to maintain international peace and security. To avoid the failures of the League of Nations and secure great-power participation, five states were granted permanent membership and veto authority under the UN Charter (United Nations, 1945). While this structure reflected post-war power realities, it has become increasingly misaligned with contemporary global dynamics.

Despite profound shifts in the global distribution of power, the UNSC remains constrained by structural limitations, particularly Article 108 of the Charter, which requires the consent of all permanent members (P5) for institutional reform (United Nations, 1945). This

has contributed to persistent paralysis and a growing perception of selective adherence to international law.

As the international system becomes more decentralised with the Global South gaining influence, the world is increasingly moving toward a multipolar distribution of state power, alongside the emergence of a “multiplex world” characterised by overlapping governance structures and diverse state and non-state actors (Acharya, 2017). The Council’s inability to respond effectively to crises has brought its legitimacy further into question.

In response, states are increasingly turning toward complementary governance mechanisms, including regional organisations, minilateral coalitions, and legal pathways such as bringing cases before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (International Court of Justice, 2024).

Against this backdrop, this chapter argues that global peace and security should depend less on UNSC reform and more on the emergence of a polycentric architecture in which actors operate alongside the United Nations within an increasingly multiplex system.

Vision for 2050

The year is 2050 and a multipolar order has fully emerged. Global security is no longer dictated by a single global hegemon, but rather, power is inadvertently diffused across economically and demographically weighty regions. The market share, population size, and technological capability of these regional powers make them the agenda setters, having a decisive role in international peace and security.

Details of the vision

The structure of global governance remains; it is deliberately redesigned with new patterns and new realities. The UNSC continues to exist in similar patterns, the powers are consolidated in P5, making the Global South merely a spectator. Moreover, Article 108 of the UN Charter ties any institutional reform to the consent of those same powers, rendering meaningful change unlikely. Consequently, many states now turn toward regional alliances and minilateral forums, eroding the Council’s earlier relevance.

Similarly, regional blocs such as the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) now serve as pillars of stability in the international system. Ranging from managing security challenges within their own regions to voicing their concerns unanimously on international forums, these blocs are reasserting their strength to cope with new realities.

Also, platforms like BRICS and ASEAN, emergent during 2026–30, have now matured into plausible task-oriented governance structures, and are also paving the way for new minilateral settings. These flexible coalitions assemble around climate shocks, cyber threats, conflict management, and financial instability; membership varies by issues, not ideology. Moreover, these compact groupings complement, rather than supplant, formal institutions like the UN. In matters of legal ambiguity between states, adjudication increasingly shifts to the ICJ and the International Criminal Court (ICC), which step in to interpret and apply international law and address disputes where political bodies fail to act.

Action Planning

Time Period	Key Actions
2045-2050	Consolidation of a Multiplex Security Framework - Formalise UN-regional security compacts under Chapter VIII - Institutionalise General Assembly emergency override mechanisms - Legal institutions expand: expand reliance on ICJ and ICC for dispute resolution - Multiplex system: power is spread across multiple centers, not dominated by a few major powers
2040-2045	Maturation of Minilateral Governance - Minilateral groups expand: transform minilateral platforms into issue-specific governance clusters (cyber, climate, maritime) - Establish UN recognition frameworks for minilateral coalitions - Rapid response cooperation: develop cross-regional rapid deployment mechanisms (peacekeeping pools, intelligence sharing)
2035-2040	Expansion of Regional Autonomy and Crisis Response Capacity - Regional organisations become real security actors, not just a discussion platform - Regional peacekeeping forces: regions build their own military or crisis-response capabilities - Act first, inform later: in urgent crises, regional groups can respond without waiting for UN approval - Regional courts: disputes are handled closer to home rather than relying solely on global institutions - Independent funding: regions fund their own security efforts
2030-2035	Emergence of International Collective Pacts and Reform in International Security Narratives - Proliferation of collective regional and cross-regional security pacts, often led by middle powers Expansion of minilateral experiments as flexible alternatives to traditional alliances - Countries (especially middle powers) start working together instead of acting alone to push UN reform - Strengthening regional organisations: groups like the EU, AU, and ASEAN are given more resources and roles so they can handle regional crises - Minilateral experiments: small, flexible coalitions (e.g. maritime security groups) are tested as quicker alternatives to large institutions

2026-2030	Fragmentation within the Multilateral Order - The world is marked by overlapping conflicts and fragmented responses, with states acting both unilaterally and through ad hoc coalitions - Erosion of trust in the UN system, particularly due to repeated Security Council deadlock and perceived inefficiency in crisis response - States increasingly adopt “act alone or in small groups” approaches, prioritising national security over multilateral coordination - Middle powers assert greater autonomy, pursuing independent diplomatic and security initiatives outside traditional alliances
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Policy Recommendations

1. Foster regional and cross-regional coalitions to address impending security issues

By empowering middle powers and regional actors to play a more substantive and catalytic role in addressing security challenges, this approach not only invokes agency at the regional level, but also allows for a managed transition towards a polylateral security order. Pursuant to Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter (United Nations, 1945) and The Pact for The Future (United Nations, 2024), states are encouraged to develop regional security arrangements to mitigate perpetually evolving security crises.

2. Establish and institutionalise minilateralism as a complementary mode of governance

Given the current failures of multilateralism as a values-based system at the international level, states should establish Minilateral relations grounded on shared interests, which would enable cooperation between states with antithetical worldviews and allow them to address critical areas such as conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping, as well as develop confidence-building measures, early warning systems, and robust crisis management mechanisms to enhance global peace and security.

3. States should expand their reliance on the ICC and ICJ to address international disputes and uphold the rule of law

Due to the UNSCs’ failure to hold states that undermine International law accountable, thus weakening the system, individual member states are encouraged to use alternative institutions,

including the ICJ and the ICC to seek justice and defend human rights.

4. Preserve the legitimacy-conferring role of the United Nations through structural renewal

Notwithstanding the current limitations of the UNSC, states are urged to continue to advocate for the transformation of the UNSC (P5) to allow for greater representation, equality and legitimacy. By radically adapting its internal structures and processes to reflect the current international architecture, the UNSC can maintain its role as the central coordinating and legitimising UN body responsible for peace and security.

2.4. Vision 4: Towards a multidimensional understanding of development in the Global Financial Architecture

Authors: Camila Abbondanzieri, Syed Arslan Ali, Jessica Correa, Néstor Genis, Cidney Wekesi,

Introduction

The modern Global Financial Architecture (GFA), established at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank/International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, proved effective for immediate recovery in Europe in contrast to dealing with the financial and development needs of the Global South (Burns, T. et al., 2024). From 1945 to 2025, its evolution has entrenched a “world of debt”, leaving many developing countries to choose between debt repayment and essential services—such as health or education—amid \$102 trillion in global public debt (UNCTAD, 2025).

The system operates through institutions and practices that grant “first mover” privileges to advanced economies, enabling them to set the “rules of the game” grounded in market liberalism and creditor dominance, with limited decision-making power to Global South countries (AFRODAD, 2025). Developing nations are further penalised by biased credit ratings and borrowing costs often six to twelve times higher than those of developed countries, entrenching economic marginalisation. This fiscal conundrum effectively reverses development assistance, with debt repayments flowing from the Global South back to wealthy creditors (AFRODAD, 2025). This situation is worsened by fragmented finance streams in development, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and climate finance, forcing debtor nations to navigate multiple creditors with varying interest rates and conditionalities.

Consequently, the prevailing development paradigm is tied to this GFA, where the measurement of progress is solely determined by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) without accounting for the environmental destruction and multidimensional wellbeing. Without fundamental restructuring, the broken financial system will continue to stifle developing nations’ sovereign ability to develop (UN India, 2024). These propositions, once central to the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1970s, must be reimagined in light of excessive financialisation, frontier technology financing, and rising inequalities.

This chapter therefore argues for transforming the GFA toward more equitable and just financial governance.

Vision for 2050

In the year 2050 the GFA will no longer equate development with debt-fueled GDP expansion. Instead, it has aligned finance with a multidimensional understanding of development integrating economic equality, ecological sustainability, and social wellbeing into the core logic of global governance.

Details of the vision

This vision responds to systemic imbalances that became impossible to ignore in the 21st century. A \$4.3 trillion annual financing gap forces countries into a trade-off between servicing debt and achieving the SDGs (United Nations, 2025). Climate vulnerabilities were disproportionately concentrated in the Global South, while financial stability premiums accumulated in advanced economies. These asymmetries exposed the limits of a growth model detached from planetary boundaries and social equity.

The reformed GFA encompasses debt sustainability frameworks that assess repayment capacity alongside development potential and environmental thresholds. Financial flows would support productive diversification, climate adaptation, and long-term social investment. Ownership and governance of natural resources shift decisively toward domestic value creation, reducing extractive dependency patterns and unlocking endogenous growth potential.

Measurement systems reflect this paradigm shift. Revised Systems of National Accounts integrate natural capital, inequality, and wellbeing indicators into macroeconomic assessment, reshaping fiscal rules and investment priorities.

Regional development banks operate as central pillars of this architecture, scaling innovative financing models, mobilising innovative capital as blended finance and co-financing mechanisms, and strengthening horizontal cooperation across the Global South.

In the year 2050, development finance will enable autonomy, resilience, and sustainable development, not dependency.

Action Planning

Time Period	Key Actions
2045-2050	Beyond growth: reclaiming prosperity for people, planet, and the future By 2050, a comprehensive evaluation should assess developmental and debt-related impacts, ensuring long-term effectiveness and sustainability. The international financial architecture should no longer define development through debt-driven GDP growth alone. This evaluation should be led by a coalition of international institutions including regional development banks, independent research institutions, and civil society organisations, in order to ensure technical rigour, transparency, and political legitimacy.
2035-2045	From pilot to planet: weaving global standards for sovereign and sustainable futures The framework should be piloted in approximately 50 countries across income levels to test feasibility, comparability, and institutional adaptability. Lessons learned will inform adjustments before scaling toward global adoption, aiming for 80% implementation by 2045. The pilot phase should be coordinated by a pooled funding mechanism supported by both the public and private sector, philanthropic foundations, and multilateral development banks, as part of their commitments to development effectiveness and accountability. A complementary resource management framework should strengthen sustainable and sovereign resource governance in the Global South.
2030-2035	South rising: rewriting the rules of development from the margins to the center Coalitions such as BRICS+ and the G77 should lead early implementation through development finance, ensuring the framework reflects historically marginalised priorities, reduces over-indebtedness, and addresses fragmented natural resource governance (—> see Vision 3). In parallel, the process should promote the gradual convergence toward shared international norms and standards on transparency, accountability, and sustainability, while allowing flexibility for context-specific application.
2026-2030	Creating political and technical space for wellbeing frameworks at International Financial Institutions The first phase should focus on fostering structured global and regional actions on redefining development measurement. These actions should critically assess the limitations of GDP and examine existing alternatives, including the UN’s Valuing What Counts initiative (Chief Executives Board for Coordination, 2022). Beyond conceptual reframing, stakeholders like the World Bank, the IMF, and regional development banks must address the political and institutional barriers that have prevented Beyond GDP proposals from advancing within the GFA. During this period, institutions, norms, and operational practices within the GFA should also be reviewed to assess their role in enabling or constraining paradigm change.

Policy Recommendations

1. Operationalise “Beyond GDP” via debt-to-wellbeing swaps

Replace traditional debt servicing with conditional debt cancellation linked to measurable social development and environmental sustainability, utilising multidimensional frameworks like the UN’s Valuing What Counts. **Key Actors:** IMF, World Bank, and sovereign creditors (e.g., Paris Club).

2. Democratise Bretton Woods institutions

Reform advanced economies’ “first mover” privileges by guaranteeing equitable voting and decision-making power for the Global South. Equitable representation (e.g., Green Climate Fund) and veto-free structures (e.g., New Development Bank, NDB) must serve as blueprints for IMF/World Bank reform. **Key Actors:** IMF, World Bank, UN General Assembly, Inter-American Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, and African Development Bank.

3. Establish Global South credit rating agencies

Counter biased risk assessments that inflate developing nations’ borrowing costs by creating independent, regionally-focused agencies. This breaks advanced economies’ monopoly and provides fairer, multidimensional sovereign risk evaluations. **Key Actors:** BRICS+, G77, and Global South capital markets.

4. Empower Regional Development Banks (RDBs)

RDBs must consolidate fragmented funds to offer highly concessional terms and tailored Environmental, Social and Governance standards. The May 2025 Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI)-Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF)-Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) Exposure Exchange Agreements (USD 1.15 billion) exemplify how RDBs can innovatively optimise balance sheets and expand lending capacity. **Key Actors:** NDB, CABEI, CAF, and CDB.

5. Finance green transformation & resource sovereignty

Establish highly concessional pathways explicitly for green industrialisation. This ensures the Global South undergoes a structural economic transformation—not just an energy transition—anchored in sustainable, sovereign natural resource governance. **Key Actors:** UN Environment Programme, International Solar Alliance, Multilateral Development Banks, Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, and Southern Funds Alliance.

3. Conclusion

The four visions for the year 2050 presented in this Project Brief depict alternate futures. The authors outline concrete steps to turn these visions into reality. The following four policy recommendations are based on the preceding chapters and are intended to serve as a foundation to rethink multilateralism:

By 2050, Busisiwe Nandipha Nxumalo and Fatima Zohra envision a multilateral system in which mobility and financial access are recognised as fundamental rights and public goods, co-governed by women and youth from the Global South. The road there runs through binding co-governance mechanisms, reconstruction of financial architectures toward redistribution, and mobility justice—decoupling migration from securitisation and anchoring it in rights and shared responsibility.

Nadine Abd El Razek, Jimmy Berlianto, and Nycolas Candido propose a Global Popular Assemblies Platform integrated with UN processes built through a Global South reform coalition, a Multilateral Pact on Climate Justice and UN Charter revision to institutionalise participatory and accountable climate multilateralism by 2050.

Asif Ali, Layla Ali, Siposihle Bungane, and Chanranuth Neth conceptualise by 2050 a multiplex security framework with distributed power, regional organisations as security actors, and minilateral coalitions recognised by the UN—achieved by strengthening the AU, EU, and ASEAN, maturing minilateral platforms into governance clusters, and formalising UN-regional compacts.

Finally, Camila Abbondanzieri, Syed Arslan Ali, Jessica Correa, Néstor Genis, and Cidney Wekesi envision a Global Financial Architecture aligned with multidimensional development beyond debt-fueled GDP growth by 2050. This is achieved through global dialogue on redefining development measurement, Global South-led implementation via BRICS+ and the G77, and an evaluation ensuring finance enables autonomy and resilience rather than dependency.

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