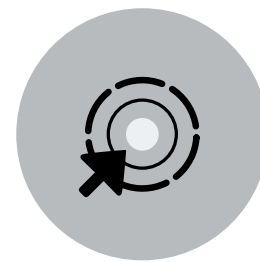


Shift Six | **Anticipatory Action**

Strengthen Governance for
Current and Emerging
Transnational Risks



“Tomorrow’s multilateralism can evolve alongside fast-changing risk landscapes, rising to emerging challenges with a common sense of purpose.”



The breakdown scenario in *Our Common Agenda* describes the multilateral system lagging behind emerging and re-emerging threats, unable to anticipate risks before they escalate, and chronically slow to generate the resources and political action to manage and reduce those risks.¹⁸⁷

We believe this must change – we should position the multilateral system to more nimbly and effectively respond to emerging threats and act quickly and decisively in situations of uncertainty. We believe the future of global governance is not heavy, bureaucratic bodies with endless time horizons and bulky mandates. Rather, it is a connective tissue, linking knowledge of collective risks to the capacities best placed to address them. It will not burden future generations with inflexible institutions, but position resources that can adapt to their needs. Tomorrow’s multilateralism can evolve alongside fast-changing risk landscapes, rising to emerging challenges with a common sense of purpose.

The following recommendations are based upon our assessment of the most critical gaps in global governance today and the urgent need to develop nimble, future-oriented responses that can evolve over time to the accelerating changes we see around the world.

● Recommendation 1. **Climate change, peace, and security.**

Climate change is far more than an environmental challenge; it poses a risk to every aspect of our lives. A growing body of scientific evidence is revealing how accelerated environmental changes are impacting human and collective security, including as a result of extreme heat, drought, flooding, crop failure, water shortages, desertification, disease, food insecurity, famine, forced migration, threats to critical social and physical infrastructure, and unprecedented disruptions.¹⁸⁸ These diverse impacts are disproportionately affecting regions and countries that are the least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation, such as less developed countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and countries with vulnerable areas, many of which are also suffering from conflict, fragility, violence, and other forms of instability. Predictably, it is the poorest and least-able to respond who bear the brunt of these changes.

The multilateral system should not be held hostage to a narrow definition of security limited to national borders and military power. Indeed, we recognize the significant efforts across the three pillars of the United Nations to enhance our collective knowledge of the empirical links between climate change and our collective security. We also acknowledge efforts to upgrade the capacities and instruments available to address and respond to climate-security risks, including through the United Nations Climate Security Mechanism and partnerships amongst UNEP and other international bodies.¹⁸⁹ A bolstered UNEP and UNEA, along the lines proposed in this report, would provide greater capabilities to the United Nations system and Member States to respond to climate-driven security risks.

To further improve the multilateral system’s ability to understand and respond to these risks, the Board proposes that the Summit of the Future:

- ▶ **Declare that the triple planetary crisis poses a grave risk to global stability and security.** The Summit of the Future should be an opportunity to make a leap forward in our collective recognition of the strong relationships between environment change and security, the unevenly distributed nature of these risks, and the critical importance of a United Nations system capable of addressing them.
- ▶ **Bring climate change and security to a wider variety of debates at the General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Economic and Social Council, and Security Council.** While generating consensus on the links between climate change and security has proven challenging in some multilateral forums, the stakes are too high for inaction. The General Assembly should formally take up the issue and support awareness among Member States, while the Security Council should do more to recognize the broad and accelerating risks to international security. Indeed, the Security Council’s incremental approach to these issues, despite a growing body of evidence in conflict-affected regions in particular, should serve as additional impetus for the reforms this Board proposes.
- ▶ **Ensure that climate-driven risks are an explicit feature of United Nations peacebuilding mandates.** A strengthened Peacebuilding Commission, working in concert with UNEP and other relevant bodies, is ideally situated to help consolidate the various sources of data and evidence about the security risks posed by climate change. It is essential that empirical research be rapidly translated into strategies for inclusive mitigation and adaptation. Including climate-driven risks and the promotion of resilience in its updated mandate constitutes an important first step.
- ▶ **Incorporate a gender perspective to climate responses.** Women and girls are often disproportionately affected by environmental harms, resource scarcity, and resulting tensions and conflict.¹⁹⁰ But they also possess vital knowledge, skills, and

capabilities for effective environmental protection and conflict mitigation. Including environmental changes as a more explicit aspect of the mandates of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, as well as the work of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the protection of human rights defenders, would help to link gender and environmental concerns more systematically in multilateralism.

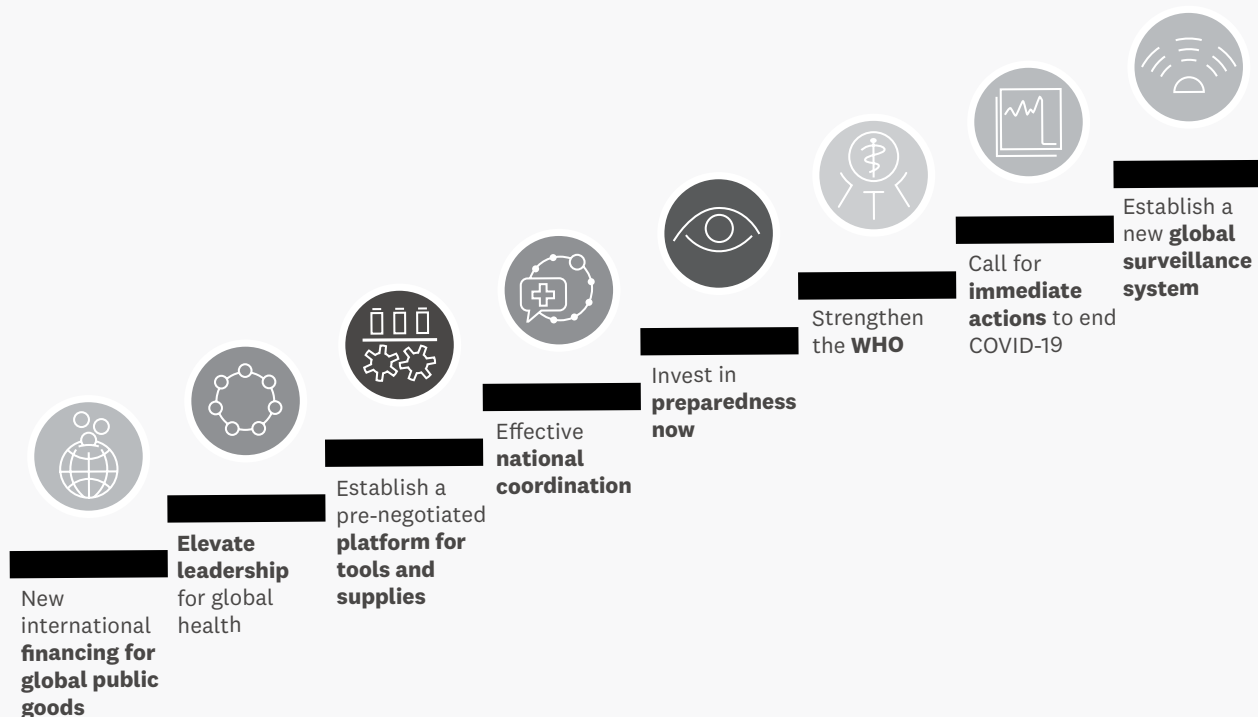
● **Recommendation 2.
Governance of biological and health risks.**

The COVID-19 pandemic made abundantly clear that health security is fundamental to global stability. Yet deep geopolitical rifts, siloed information and response institutions, and highly unequal capacities globally have hampered an effective global health architecture. Efforts to enhance the governance of global health systems are ongoing – including through a potential future pandemic treaty, revised international health regulations, and a strengthened WHO. Similar efforts are aimed at improving the governance of the risks posed by biological weapons. Nonetheless, critical gaps persist in our ability to assess the global health landscape, prepare for potentially lethal manifestations of biological threats, and act in the face of fast-moving health risks.

In this context, we recommend two steps to enhance the global health architecture and prepare us for future health risks.

- ▶ **A global pandemics threats council.¹⁹¹** Reflecting the global and cross-cutting nature of pandemics, such a body should be established at the head-of-state level, with a mandate to engage with United Nations bodies, regional institutions, international financial institutions, and other relevant actors. Rather than act as a formal governing authority, such a council should be seen as an enabling node in a network, a diplomatic

Steps Needed to Strengthen Protection Against Future Pandemics



Adapted from The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, 'COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic' (2021).

facilitator and forum for exchange of information and policy options across the international system, drawing on existing health capacities and helping to link with other arenas.

- › **An independent global health monitoring body.** As a complement to the pandemic agreement currently being negotiated, an independent expert monitoring body should be established. Such a body could be modelled on the IPCC and would replace the Global Pandemic Monitoring Board now hosted by WHO and the World Bank. Acting as a clearinghouse for a wide variety of sources of information and expertise, the independent body would offer a transparent, publicly accessible forum for assessing the implementation of commitments to prevent pandemic risks.¹⁹²

Biological risks can emerge in several ways, including through the development and weaponization of new technologies. As the capacities to develop biological weapons accelerate and proliferate, the multilateral

system should build more dynamic and inclusive ways to identify risks and respond to them quickly.¹⁹³ This requires strengthening of existing frameworks to address biological weapons and a scientifically driven approach to governing emerging bio-risks. Some of the most important steps that should be taken here include:

- › **Global agreement on bio-risk management standards:** The Summit of the Future is an opportunity to recognize, consolidate, and globally agree on a common process to identify, assess, control, and monitor the risks associated with hazardous biological materials.¹⁹⁴ The foundation for this was already laid in October 2020, when a group of States submitted scientifically rigorous and widely accepted industry standards to assist States Parties to implement their obligations as set out under the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).¹⁹⁵ Clear adoption of these standards, by Member States and major industrial actors, would create a common basis for addressing some of the most dangerous risks on this planet.



Photo: World Bank/Henitsoa Rafalia. "The COVID-19 pandemic made abundantly clear that health security is fundamental to global stability."

► **A common scientific/technological advisory process for biological weapons:**

The rapid pace of biological weapons technologies requires a dynamic and scientifically rigorous review on a constant basis. The recent Ninth Review Conference of the BWC agreed to develop a scientific and technological advisory mechanism that could serve this function in an inclusive manner.¹⁹⁶ Provided such a process functions to break down silos and create a more holistic view of the risks of biological weapons, it would bring the BWC into line with many other multilateral science-diplomacy instruments and could play an important role in managing the risks and benefits inherent in the life sciences.

● **Recommendation 3.
Safe, effective management
of emerging technologies.**

Emerging technologies are already impacting all aspects of our lives, offering us transformative benefits but also risking greater inequalities, accelerated security threats, and deep ruptures to our societies. In this context, the unregulated growth of transformative artificial intelligence (AI) poses massive – even existential – risks. And while there has been a proliferation of national and regional AI governance initiatives around the world, these suffer from problems of (1) fragmentation across different regions, with serious differences between standards and approaches; (2) lack of meaningful involvement of low- and middle-income countries and societies, potentially leading to greater gaps in technological advancement; (3) slow development, leaving the international system

far behind the private sector; (4) the dual-use nature and possible misuse of these technologies in the military domain by States and non-State actors; and (5) continuing silos where key issues such as the SDGs and climate action are often addressed without meaningful reference to the peace and security implications of emerging technologies.

To address these shortcomings, and in alignment with the work of the Global Digital Compact, the Summit of the Future should commit to:

- › **Agreeing on a timeline for the development of a global architecture for AI design, development, and use based on common standards and approaches.** This could be taken forward by a series of dialogues between governments, the private sector, and civil society under the aegis of the United Nations and, specifically, the proposed Global Commission on Just and Sustainable Digitalization. The proposed Secretary-General’s Scientific Advisory Board could engage with this process and report regularly on the evolving nature of AI technologies, feeding into the Global Commission’s knowledge function (its fourth competency).¹⁹⁷ The objective will be to generate a set of definitions and standards for identifying and mitigating global AI risks. It would be important to ground the process in existing AI standards¹⁹⁸ while developing additional standards that strengthen practices of safety and responsibility among AI practitioners.¹⁹⁹ This activity should take into account the pioneering global normative frameworks recently adopted on the ethics of AI.²⁰⁰ It could also be linked to a fund that would incentivize research and preparedness on the existential risks that can arise from ungoverned AI evolutions.
- › **Accelerating and formalizing regulations on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).** International Humanitarian Law applies to LAWS, and there has been significant progress in achieving broad consensus on the need to maintain human control of these systems.²⁰¹ However, formal regulation has proven difficult to achieve. This is in part because the current forum — the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons — has been deadlocked. To re-energize this process,

the Summit of the Future could set a deadline for achieving draft regulations on LAWS within the current forum, after which the issue would be taken up within the General Assembly.²⁰²

- › Meanwhile, it is crucial to maintain human responsibility over decisions to resort to use of force, most importantly strategic and nuclear weapons. Member States should consider a **global ban on non-human controlled nuclear weapons platform launches**, building on existing commitments of some Member States, and the Secretary-General’s recent calls for action on AI-driven weapons systems.²⁰³

● Recommendation 4. **Combat transnational organized crime.**

Transnational organized crime (TOC) and related corruption are among the most pernicious and widespread factors undermining stability and security worldwide. They are not new, but criminal networks adapt to new opportunities in our changing world, posing a constantly shifting risk to global stability. Criminal networks are quick to seize opportunities created by conflict, instability, underdevelopment, and inequality.²⁰⁴ They take advantage of new digital technologies, weak regulation, offshore havens, fragile States, free trade zones, and regions rich in natural resources.²⁰⁵ As TOC has expanded, so too have links to the “upperworld” (for example, politicians, legal and financial experts, and transportation companies), making responses increasingly difficult and dangerous, especially for actors on the front line. The negative impacts from TOC – from extreme levels of violence and small arms proliferation to natural resource extraction – inhibit progress on the SDGs, reduce State capacities to govern and transition to a green economy, drive inequality, and are directly related to the spread of violent conflict.

Unfortunately, today's global governance system does not capture the full range of impacts of TOC and, as a result, has not generated a coherent or effective response. Lacking an overarching global strategy to bring together the many sources of information and array of actors working on TOC, our responses have been largely national, reactive, and disjointed.

To address this shortcoming, **we propose that the Summit of the Future agree on a global strategy on transnational organized crime,**

laying out the key areas for collaboration, strategic priorities, and common benchmarks for the multilateral system, and providing inspiration and direction for collaborative responses across a wide range of sectors and regions.²⁰⁶ Such a strategy should identify how TOC inhibits progress on the SDGs, undermines good governance, contributes to environmental degradation, and presents risks to human security. It should include specific approaches for increasing transparency around beneficial ownership, environmental crimes, and small arms/light weapons flows. And it should help to advance the multilateral system's ability to understand and respond to the risks posed by cybercrime and illicit uses of digital space. Given the broad impacts of TOC and the need for independent sources of information, implementation of the strategy will require coordination across existing multilateral institutions, drawing especially on the existing capacities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and meaningful inclusion of a range of other actors, including regional bodies, civil society, and the private sector.