

September, 2020

Open letter:

To Heads of Government, United Nations Member States

A Time for Renewal: Calling for a Strengthened Multilateral System

Excellencies,

As former ministers of government and United Nations officials, we are deeply concerned that the institutional framework of global governance, with the United Nations at its core, must do more to provide the guidance, leadership and decisions required to ensure human safety, security and sustainable development in our interdependent world.

From climate change to human rights, gender and racial equality, and from sustainable development to international peace and security – the international community should honor its commitments to the UN's founding Charter, Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement. There is a crying need for a stronger, more accountable, inclusive multilateral system that encompasses renewed intergovernmental initiatives with the full participation of civil society and key stakeholders.

COVID-19 has underscored humanity's shared vulnerability, with disproportionate impacts on women and girls. The devastating consequences of the pandemic are felt first and foremost in the loss of human lives, but also in economic costs and deepening social inequality.

Recovery from the COVID19 pandemic and institutional retooling go hand in hand. They both call for national leadership and effective global cooperation.

Yet even before the beginning of the pandemic, multilateralism was under threat and weakened by withdrawals from important treaties and forums, budget cuts and the failure to uphold international law.

As the international community commemorates the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, this is a time not only to celebrate past achievements, but also to take stock of the need for reforms that strengthen the Organization. We therefore call on world leaders, meeting virtually this September 21:

- (a) To recognize the need to support the indispensable role of the United Nations, while at the same time strengthen and reform the legal and institutional machinery of the UN system; and
- (b) To call for a dedicated intergovernmental process to pursue this goal in the follow-up to the UN75 Political Declaration.

There is an urgent need for an explicit recognition by global leaders that we are at a turning point and must act decisively to defend and rejuvenate multilateralism.

As we address a weakened global order, this is not a time for governments to remain idle, but rather to scale up their commitments and actions for a world that is fairer, more inclusive and sustainable. Let future generations look back on 2020 as the year when humanity, its leaders and decision makers recognized the need for a shared future of dignity, hope and prosperity for all. And let us use this 75th anniversary of the United Nations as an opportunity to inspire and speed up the actions so urgently needed to honor the principles and vision enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Sincerely,

1. Maria Elena Agüero, Secretary General of the Club de Madrid
2. Celso Amorim, former Foreign Minister, Brazil
3. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister of The Netherlands (2002-2010)

4. Ban Ki-moon, Eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations, Deputy Chair of The Elders and member of WLA-Club de Madrid
5. Joyce Banda, President of Malawi (2012-2014)
6. Carol Bellamy, former Executive Director of UNICEF
7. Valdis Birkavs, former Prime Minister of Latvia (1993-1994)
8. Irina Bokova, former Director-General of UNESCO
9. Maria Eugenia Brizuela de Avila, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, El Salvador
10. Gordon Brown, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (2007-2010)
11. John Bruton, Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland (1994-1997)
12. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of Switzerland (2007 and 2011)
13. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of Brazil (1995-2003)
14. Aníbal Cavaco Silva, former Prime Minister (1985-1995) and President (2006-2016) of Portugal
15. Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand (1999-2008)
16. Isabel de St. Malo, former Vice-President of Panama
17. Jan Eliasson, former Foreign Minister of Sweden, President of the UN General Assembly, and UN Deputy Secretary-General
18. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, President of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of National Defence, Ecuador,
19. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Lithuania (2009-2019)
20. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland (2000-2012)
21. Seung-Soo Han, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea (2008-2009)
22. Ameerah Haq, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Field Support
23. Noeleen Heyser, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
24. Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders
25. Ivo Josipovic, President of Croatia (2010-2015)
26. Yoriko Kawaguchi, former Minister of the Environment, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan
27. Rima Khalaf, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
28. Horst Köhler, President of Germany (2004-2010)
29. Aleksander Kwaśniewski, President of Poland (1995-2005)
30. Ricardo Lagos, President of Chile (2000-2006)
31. Zlatko Lagumdžija, Prime Minister of Bosnia & Herzegovina (2001-2002)

32. Susana Malcorra, former Foreign Minister, Argentina
33. Juan E. Méndez, former Special Advisor to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide, former Special Rapporteur on Torture
34. Carlos Mesa, President of Bolivia (2003-2005)
35. James Michel, President of Seychelles (2004-2016)
36. Federica Mogherini, former High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and former Vice-President of the European Commission
37. Roza Otunbayeva, President of Kyrgyzstan (2010-2011)
38. Andres Pastrana, President of Colombia (1998-2002)
39. Navi Pillay, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
40. Oscar Ribas Reig, Prime Minister of Andorra (1982-1984, 1990-1994)
41. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
42. Petre Roman, Prime Minister of Romania (1989-1991)
43. Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia (2007 - 2010)
44. Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Colombia, 2016 Nobel Peace Laureate
45. Jenny Shipley, Prime Minister of New Zealand (1997-1999)
46. Danilo Türk, President of Slovenia (2007-2012)
47. Margot Wallström, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sweden, former UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict