

Multilateralism that Delivers

Annual Policy Dialogue convened by
 World Leadership Alliance – Club the Madrid (WLA-CdM) and Bertelsmann Stiftung
 Berlin, 28, 29, 30 October 2020

CONCEPT NOTE

<p>Description:</p>	<p>As the UN prepares to mark its 75th anniversary through a broad, global conversation on the role of global cooperation in building the future we want, the World Leadership Alliance – Club de Madrid (WLA-CdM) in partnership with the Bertelsmann Stiftung will convene the Policy Dialogue on Multilateralism that Delivers, bringing together the unique perspective of democratic former Heads of State and Government and the expert views of policy thinkers, governments, academia, civil society and the private sector on the future of multilateralism.</p> <p>The entire world has common challenges and threats that demand a global, collective and coordinated response. As we can see with the scale, speed, and risk of the global COVID-19 pandemic, all actors must address the spread in real-time, across borders and around the entire globe simultaneously, with efficient responses to face the impacts on global public health but also economically, financially and socially.</p> <p>The COVID-19 have put in evidence the imperative to build communities in which all individuals have a sense of shared responsibility, and the importance of a multilateral system capable of addressing global challenges, and that will require a leadership approach based on values of solidarity, equity and cooperation, transcending a sole focus on national interests.</p> <p>Organized in consultation with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN75 Initiative this Policy Dialogue will garner support and contribute to the objectives of the Alliance for Multilateralism as well as the UN75’s reflections on necessary reforms and renewed commitment to a reinvigorated multilateral system, considering today’s challenges and risks at the global level.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate, promote and support the adoption and implementation of ideas that may prove efficient in fostering a reinvigorated multilateralism. • To serve as a multistakeholder platform to put forward inclusive proposals for the renewal of the multilateral system and global cooperation mechanisms, adding to the recommendations formulated by other actors who will take part in the global conversation steered by the UN as part of its 75th anniversary celebration. • To serve as an aggregator of other recent talks on multilateralism and a stock-taking exercise to reflect, from different regional perspectives, on the next steps in the UN75 process, promoting an inclusive multilateral system that leaves no one behind.

<p>Activities:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of background policy papers by four Working Groups, each one gathering 8-10 partner organizations and experts, on the overarching theme of multilateralism and three different sub-themes related to the future of multilateralism: digitalization, social justice and inclusion, and sustainability. • Four-day policy dialogue in a virtual format gathering some 35 democratic former Heads of State and Government, 15 global experts, 10 representatives of international organizations and over 100 participants from government institutions, academia, civil society and the private sector, in a combination of plenary sessions and participatory Action Labs; • Production of a policy report containing recommendations for a reinvigorated multilateral system.
<p>Expected results:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Output: Policy recommendations on the renewal and strengthening of the multilateral system and the global cooperation mechanisms presented to senior UN officials and Member States, including through the Alliance for Multilateralism and other international fora. ▪ Outcome: Enhanced ability among senior UN officials and Member States to identify, design and implement pertinent reforms for the renewal of the multilateral system and the global cooperation mechanisms to improve the international order ▪ Impact: Adoption of pertinent reforms towards the renewal of the multilateral system and the global cooperation mechanisms
<p>Timescale:</p>	<p>January – December 2020</p>
<p>About WLA-CdM</p>	<p>World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid (WLA-CdM) is the largest assembly of political leaders working to strengthen democratic values, good governance and the well-being of citizens across the globe. As a non-profit, non-partisan, international organisation, its network is composed of more than 100 democratic former Presidents and Prime Ministers from over 70 countries, together with a global body of advisors and expert practitioners, who offer their voices and agency on a <i>pro bono</i> basis, to today's political, civil society leaders and policymakers. WLA-CdM responds to a growing demand for trusted advice in addressing the challenges involved in achieving democracy that delivers, building bridges, and promoting dialogue for the design of better policies for all. This alliance, providing the vast experience, access and convening power of its Members, represents an independent effort towards respect of rule of law, sustainable development, inclusion and peace, not bound by the interest or pressures of institutions and governments.</p>

1. Context

Since the foundation of the UN nearly 75 years ago, the existence of a strong, inclusive and rules-based multilateral system has been widely acknowledged and used as a key instrument for the global community to articulate common responses to common challenges. Yet, the last few years have seen a weakening of multilateral efforts on many fronts. While Agenda 2030 provides a globally-endorsed framework for sustainable development, an increasing number of political actors and citizens from countries large and small, in all regions, are calling for national-grown approaches rather than globally- or regionally -agreed solutions to a widening range of policy issues. Trust in the traditional institutions of multilateral cooperation is running low and alternative approaches to global issues, from opaque bilateral negotiations to non-governmental approaches to international cooperation, have been gaining popularity.

As the UN approaches its 75th anniversary, the awareness that multilateralism is flagging is only matched by a sense of urgency for collective action around global issues. The recent COVID-19 pandemic as the most important threat the entire world has to face have put in evidence the imperative to build communities in which all individuals have a sense of shared responsibility, and the importance of a multilateral system capable of addressing global challenges, and that will require a leadership approach based on values of solidarity, equity and cooperation, transcending a sole focus on national interests.

Cognizant that a renewal of the multilateral system is necessary, and determined to lead this process with an inclusive listen-and-learn approach, the UN launched of a global conversation – called [UN75](#) – inviting people, institutions, experts and private actors the world over to express their views on priorities for our shared future and necessary reforms for global cooperation.

The global public health crisis has demonstrated that threats respect no borders and have multiple impacts: economically, financially, and socially. However, in some cases, rather than cooperate to defeat a shared threat, nations have taken unilateral steps to address the pandemic.

Facing this situation and existing previous challenges such as climate change, peace and security, and digital revolution, imply having a global and coordinated response so the renewal and strengthening of multilateralism and global cooperation mechanisms are more necessary than ever.

At the same time, other global leaders have built broad coalitions in support of multilateralism. At the 74th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2019, Germany and France, with the support of some 30 other countries, announced the launch of the **Alliance for Multilateralism**, a network of Foreign Ministers committed to promoting a law-based international order. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also echoes that commitment in her *Political Guidelines for the New European Commission 2019-2024*: “Multilateralism is in Europe’s DNA. It is our guiding principle in the world. My Commission will keep on championing this approach and ensure that we uphold and update the rules-based global order” (p. 17).

In that panorama, the onus is on the supporters of multilateralism to reflect on the experience of the last 75 years to formulate proposals for a renewed multilateral system and global cooperation mechanism, fit for purpose at a time when global dynamics are changing and trust in traditional institutions is flagging. As a relentless supporter of the rules-based international order, convener of the Alliance for Multilateralism, home country of the President of the

European Commission and rotating President of the European Council in the second half of 2020, **Germany** is bound to be a global hub for these reflections and a leading voice in that global conversation.

The **World Leadership Alliance – Club de Madrid (WLA-CdM)**, the world’s largest assembly of democratic former Heads of State and Government, with over 110 Members from over 70 countries, has a unique perspective on the future of multilateralism. With a sum total of over 600 years of collective experience at the helm of their countries’ national and foreign policy, from the 1960s to recent years, and a proven ability to navigate the challenges of global cooperation and manage situations of national and global crises, this group of seasoned politicians and diplomats have an unmatched capacity to act as political sounding boards and help zero-in on pertinent adjustments that could be made to the multilateral system to rekindle trust in its ability to deliver satisfactory responses to global issues.

The **Bertelsmann Stiftung**, a leading German foundation that has made “participating in a globalized world” its motto, is in a privileged position to provide food for thought on the future of multilateralism. Building on over 40 years of policy analysis, over 380 staff with a recognized capacity to identify and study global trends, and an extensive global network of academic and civil society partners around the world, this German, European and global organization is the ideal partner to join forces with WLA-CdM to articulate, debate and put forward policy proposals for a transformed and reinvigorated multilateral system.

2. Objective

WLA-CdM and the Bertelsmann Stiftung will convene a **Policy Dialogue on Multilateralism that Delivers**, in a virtual format on 28-30 October 2020, with the aim to propose solutions and recommendations to reinvigorate multilateral collaboration and collective responses to common global problems, discussing the state of multilateralism, its challenges, and salient global issues such as the global health crisis produced by the COVID-19.

Besides, the policy discussion will serve as an aggregator of other recent discussions on multilateralism and a stock-taking exercise to reflect, from different regional perspectives, on the next steps in the UN75 process. Conclusions from this dialogue will then feed into the work of the Alliance for Multilateralism as well as the UN’s reflections on necessary reforms of the multilateral system to address global challenges, thanks to early strategic engagement with the leaders of these processes.

3. Activities / Methodology

To convene this **Policy Dialogue on Multilateralism that Delivers**, WLA-CdM and Bertelsmann Stiftung will proceed in three phases.

In the **preparation phase (January to September 2020)**, WLA-CdM and partners will thoroughly scan the global landscape around the future of multilateralism and identify a handful of specific issues (digitalization, social justice and inclusion, and sustainability) around which further dialogue is expected to be needed upon conclusion of the UN75 process in September 2020. For each of these issues, a small number (8-10) of leading policy thinkers will be identified and invited to participate in a Working Group, under the coordination of WLA-CdM and partners organizations. The leaders of this Working Groups will be the [Boston Global Forum](#) and the [World Economic Forum](#) (Digitalization), the [Friedrich Ebert Stiftung](#) (Social Justice and Inclusion) and the [German Environment Agency](#) (Sustainability).

In addition, there will be a Working Group focused on the overarching theme of multilateralism and linked to the first Policy Dialogue plenary session. This Working Group will be led by the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Between May and September 2020, the Working Groups will be tasked with preparing policy issues papers to define the scope of the dialogue, identify unresolved questions around the workings of multilateralism and three different sub-themes related to the future of multilateralism: digitalization, social justice and inclusion, and sustainability, and advance preliminary policy recommendations.

The Working Groups will have preparatory meetings to move forward with the preparation of the policy paper. Likewise, before October, each Working Group will hold a webinar in order to make visible findings and concrete recommendations of the themes addressed.

The Policy Dialogue will also include a cross-cutting theme on global health security to analyze the role of multilateral organizations in addressing global crises. In this regard, each Working Group will analyze the role of the multilateral system in addressing the COVID-19 crisis from the perspective of its theme.

Then, in the **implementation phase (October 2020)**, Working Groups members will be invited to join some 35 democratic former Heads of State and Government (Members of WLA-CdM), Bertelsmann Stiftung experts and other representatives from government and intergovernmental institutions, academia, think tanks, civil society and the private sector for 4-day of policy discussions around the issues analysed by the Working Groups. This will be done through a combination of **plenary discussions** and break-out sessions, including **Action Labs** in which all participants will be asked to provide feedback, comments and further input on the preliminary policy recommendations put forward by the Working Groups.

In the virtual format, the Actions Labs will last two days and will take place one week before the plenaries sessions (October 20). The breakout sessions will be carried out in three virtual rooms and will have a smaller group of participants. The plenaries sessions will be held on three days (28-30 October) including Working Groups Members.

In selecting Working Group members and participants in the Policy Dialogue, WLA-CdM and Bertelsmann will ensure that a **diversity of perspectives** are presented, including from groups whose voices are seldom heard in high-level policy conversations. Particular attention will be paid to ensure **geographic and gender balance** among speakers and participants. WLA-CdM's partnerships with organizations who work to empower young leaders from various regions of the world, including the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Kofi Annan Foundation, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation and Mercy Corps, will also ensure that the **younger generation of leaders** have a seat at the table. Former Heads of State and Government, while invited to speak, will most importantly intervene to steer the conversation, invite discussion aspects of the issue at hand that may have failed to be raised by others, and extract conclusions from the general debate.

Finally, in the **conclusion phase (November-December 2020)**, the main ideas expressed at the policy dialogue will be captured in a **report** containing specific and actionable **policy recommendations and solutions**.

To make sure that the conclusions of the policy discussions aptly feed into the Alliance for Multilateralism's work and the UN's ongoing reflections on the future of the multilateral system, WLA-CdM and Bertlesmann Stiftung will present them to senior UN officials, German MFA officials, UN Member States and other relevant actors in the global community throughout 2020-2021. This will be done through direct bilateral outreach as well as participation in relevant national, regional and global fora.

5. Expected Results

The main output of this project will be the **final report** containing policy recommendations for the renewal of the multilateral system and global cooperation mechanisms, which will be produced and presented to senior UN officials, German MFA officials and UN Member States and disseminated within the broader global community.

The early engagement of the UN Under-Secretary General and Special Adviser on Preparations for the 75th UN Anniversary in support of this project, and his assurances that the resulting conclusions will bring valuable input into the UN's reflections on the future of global cooperation, allow us to assert that the project, through the distribution of its final report among senior UN officials and Member States, as well as the direct participation of UN representatives in the policy discussions, will **enhance the ability of senior UN officials and Member States to identify, design and implement pertinent reforms towards the renewal of the multilateral system and global cooperation mechanisms**, complementing their own foresight with the experience-based critical judgement of former Heads of State and Government.

Ultimately, it is our hope that our policy recommendations, coupled with the personal counsel that WLA-CdM Members may offer when transmitting them to senior UN officials and other leaders, will help ensure that, over the course of the next few years, pertinent **reforms** are adopted that will renew the multilateral system and make it fit for purpose in the current global landscape.