

PRIMER 4 - RECLAIMING AND TRANSFORMING MULTILATERALISM: Towards a Peoples' Multilateralism



**We demand
tax justice Now!**

**#Cancel
The Debt**

**Dismantle
Corporate
Capture**

**Feminist
Green
New Deal**

**Reform
the UN**

“Democratic global governance: if it doesn’t challenge power, it isn’t democratic.”

- Barbara Adams, Global Policy Forum¹

Today’s global challenges are enormous. Both within and between countries, race, class, caste, gender identity and sexual orientation inequalities are increasing amidst crises of poverty, food insecurity, climate breakdown and health. And all these challenges need to be addressed urgently and concurrently. There is no doubt that the structural and systemic transformations required to tackle these crises, eliminate inequality and to achieve universal human rights will not be achieved without a multilateral system equipped for that end.

And yet, as discussed in Primer 2, multilateralism is in crisis. After a relatively short-lived win-win hype about globalization, there is now widespread concern among many countries and peoples that their ability to control their economic and social development is circumscribed by a multilateralism increasingly dominated by the interests of transnational capital, populists, nationalists and authoritarian governments, rather than the promised advancements toward human rights, equality and justice. The international multilateral system has struggled to move the agenda for universal, inalienable and indivisible human rights forward, against the global geopolitics and the asymmetrical power relations between states, which many multilateral systems, structures and frameworks have in fact compounded and institutionalised. It is wrought with tensions between its diverse and often competing multilateral frameworks and institutions, and between the pursuit and primacy of economic growth on the one hand and human rights and the protection of the environment on the other. Given these challenges, many governments around the world are increasingly retreating to unilateralism.

A much more effective, coherent, democratic and accountable multilateralism is therefore needed – a peoples’ multilateralism. This primer explores what that could look like based on various existing proposals for alternative structures and reforms that have been put forward by governments, multilateral institutions, civil society organizations and social movements from around the world. Some of these proposals focus on creating coherence between different multilateral frameworks, some aim to transform them, while others seek a rebalancing of the power and dominance of wealthy countries and their colossal multinational corporations. At the core of many of these proposals is the concern for a global economic architecture that will restore the primacy of human rights and work better for the people and the planet.

The proposals outlined in this primer are not exhaustive but are aimed at informing as well as generating further thinking and open debate. Further, we hope to mobilise and support young people in collectively defining a new “peoples’ multilateralism” that is fit for that purpose, equitably redistributes wealth, resources and power, that takes into account historical responsibility, is based on the principles of accountability, international cooperation and solidarity, and that puts human rights, environmental, social and gender justice at its centre.

1. Barbara Adams, “Democratic global governance: if it doesn’t challenge power it isn’t democratic”, Spotlight on Sustainable Development Report, (2019).



What are the proposed alternatives and reforms out there?

Proposal 1: Tax justice – A global UN tax convention to address tax havens, tax avoidance, multinational corporations and illicit financial flows.

One of the major challenges posed on ending inequality, redistributing wealth and resources, and implementing much of the multilateral agenda is the lack of finance. Yet it is a well-known fact that developing countries have lost trillions of dollars through widespread tax avoidance, tax evasion, tax fraud and profit shifting, facilitated by bank secrecy and a web of shell companies registered in tax havens. Though the full magnitude of the amount of wealth that sits in tax havens cannot be fully assessed, a joint study by the Tax Justice Network, Public Services International and the Global Alliance for Tax Justice has estimated that treasuries are losing a total of over \$427 billion in tax revenues each year to international corporate tax abuse and evasion.² Another recent study by ActionAid also found that 20 countries in Asia, Africa and South America are missing \$2.8 billion worth of taxes from the three big global tech companies every year – Microsoft, Alphabet Inc. (parent company of Google) and Facebook – through unfair global tax rules.³

Since 2012, a group of countries known as the “G77 and China” – which consist mostly of developing countries from the Global South – had proposed that the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters be transformed into a global, inclusive norm-setting body for international tax cooperation. This proposal was subsequently pushed by some UN member states along with civil society organizations as one of the outcomes for the 3rd International Financing for Development Conference (also known as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda)⁴ in 2015. The proposal was however rejected by rich countries – mostly the member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), also known as the “rich countries club” – who wanted to keep the decision-making power over global tax governance behind closed doors. The negotiations and outcomes of the 3rd FfD Conference revealed the extent to which rich countries have no intention to democratize global economic governance in one of the most transformative and critical arenas – tax, and their intent on keeping control over issues of global tax governance exclusively in the hands of the G7, the G20, the OECD and the Bretton Woods Institutions which they control. The dominance of rich countries over global tax governance is also problematic given that rich countries exercise jurisdiction over most tax havens, or act as intermediaries for other tax havens. A recent study by Garcia Bernardo et al found that just five countries – the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Singapore and Switzerland— are responsible for funnelling the majority of corporate offshore investment, making these countries in effect, the tax evasion capitals of the world.⁵

Apart from UN member states, many civil society organizations such as the Global Alliance for Tax Justice have also been at the forefront of the movement campaigning for greater transparency, democratic oversight, and redistribution of wealth in national and global tax systems. Tax abuse and tax avoidance also needs to be considered under the extraterritorial obligations of states⁶ not to hamper the enjoyment of human rights in other states by denying financing through abusive tax laws, rules and allowing companies and wealthy individuals to abuse tax systems.⁷ The equitable and transparent taxing of income, wealth and trade is indispensable to finance the fulfilment by states of their international human rights obligations. Without the democratization of the global tax governance system, we will not be able to reverse growing inequality and asymmetrical power relations between states – particularly between developing and developed countries, between former colonies and former colonizing states.

2. See the study by Tax Justice Network, Public Services International and the Global Alliance for Tax Justice on “The State of Tax Justice 2020: Tax Justice in the time of COVID-19”, (2020)
3. See article by Action Aid, “\$2.8bn ‘tax gap’ exposed by ActionAid research reveals tip of the iceberg of ‘Big Tech’s big tax bill’ in the global south”, (2020).
4. International Conference On Financing For Development 2015: Addis Ababa, E. (2015) *Addis Ababa action agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development: Addis Ababa action agenda: the final text of the outcome document adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 13-16 July and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/313 of 27 July*. [New York: United Nations] [Pdf] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2019352355/>.
5. See study by Javier Garcia-Bernardo, Jan Fichtner, Frank W. Takes & Eelke M. Heemskerck, on “Uncovering Offshore Financial Centers: Conduits and Sinks in the Global Corporate Ownership Network”, (2017).
6. For an explanation on Extra-Territorial Obligations see <https://www.gi-escr.org/eto> and <https://www.cesr.org/extra-territorial-obligations-human-rights-beyond-borders>
7. See statement by Civil Society FfD Group (including Women’s Working Group on FfD) at the Meeting of Finance Ministers at the UN, (2020).



Proposal 2: #CancelTheDebt – Demanding A New Framework for a Just Debt Cancellation and Workout Mechanism

Even prior to the coronavirus pandemic, global debt was reaching new peaks across all countries regardless of their development and income levels. Middle-income countries are experiencing debt levels not seen since the ‘lost decade of development’ of the 1980s. The UN Secretary General had called on world leaders to do more to stop soaring deficits particularly in the context of the Covid-19 induced economic crisis⁸. Research shows that those countries who spend more than 12% of their budgets in debt servicing are invariably forced to cut their spending on public services. Several countries spend more in debt servicing than on education and health combined.⁹ Many of these debts are illegitimate, are colonial legacies, were lent irresponsibly and unfairly to finance harmful projects and policies such as fossil fuel industries, were driven by predatory lending with onerous and unjust terms, while often failing to comply with legal requirements and human rights principles.¹⁰ Many of these debts are also in contrast with the historical, social, climate debt owed by rich and developed countries to the Global South as a result of centuries of colonization, plunder and exploitation.

Against this deteriorating, unjust and unsustainable debt outlook, there are mounting challenges to the weaknesses of the existing disorderly, opaque, and inequitable mechanisms to address sovereign debt crises, particularly at the level of multilateral financial institutions such as the IMF.

In 2014, the G77 and China secured a UN General Assembly (GA) resolution committing UN to work towards creating a multilateral legal framework for a debt workout mechanism that would ensure a systematic and timely approach to orderly, fair, transparent, and sustainable sovereign debt crisis resolution¹¹. Numerous civil societies and other agencies – such as the United Nations Conference for Trade & Development (UNCTAD) have continued to put forward valuable contributions to the discussion on how to design such a solution. Then and now, all these efforts have been hampered by a lack of cooperation from the G7 governments and others.

There has since been further declaration of support for the mechanism such as those from the European Parliament¹² and the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly¹³ in 2018, despite continued reluctance from the IMF, the G7, the G20, the OECD and other guardians of the current international financial architecture against such a mechanism.

As the current debt crisis threatens to worsen for many countries due to the economic devastation wrought by Covid-19, the lack of a multilateral debt workout mechanism will become harder to ignore. Though both the IMF and the G20 governments have offered debt suspension initiatives in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, questions regarding the effectiveness of these debt suspension remains¹⁴. It is also important to note that none of these initiatives are debt cancellations, they are merely suspensions, with many debt payments still due to be paid in the coming years.

Civil society organizations have been strengthening the call for both debt cancellation and a fair, transparent, binding, and multilateral framework for debt crisis resolution (see box 1). Recent global campaigns for debt cancellations and debt justice saw the support of more than 500 organizations and movements from around the world, including ActionAid.¹⁵ Political will can be re-built, and thus why many civil societies and social movements are pushing to get this issue firmly back on the policy agenda.

8. Guterres Urges Decisive Action to Stave off Debt Crises in the Developing World. Africa Renewal 29 March 2021 <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/guterres-urges-%E2%80%99decisive-action%E2%80%99-stave-debt-crisis-developing-world> and UN Chief Urges Debt Relief Extension for Middle Income Countries, UN News March 2021 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/06/1094202>
9. See for example: <https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/publications/Who%20cares%20for%20the%20future%20key%20messages.pdf>
10. See for example: www.debtgwa.net
11. Debt restructuring, culture funds and human rights OHCHR Online Briefing <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Development/IEDebt/Pages/DebtRestructuringCultureFundsandHumanRights.aspx>
12. See the [European Parliament resolution on enhancing developing countries' debt sustainability](#), (2018).
13. See the [resolution of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly on Restructuring sovereign debt](#), (2018).
14. Eurodad 2021 Shadow Report on the Limitations of the of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative https://www.eurodad.org/g20_dssi_shadow_report
15. See the [Global Week of Action for Debt Cancellation](#) website that also includes a counter of the total amount of debt that is being repaid by 68 of the world's poorest countries to rich countries and banks since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.



Box 1: 10 Key civil society principles for a multilateral sovereign debt workout mechanism

1. Creation of a body independent from creditors and debtors
2. Process may be initiated by borrower and the institution of automatic stay will apply
3. Initiation of the process should trigger a stay on creditor litigation and enforcement
4. Comprehensive treatment of a country's debt stock in a single process
5. Inclusive participation of all stakeholders
6. Independent assessment of debt sustainability and the validity of individual claims
7. Focused on debt sustainability that puts needs of population before debt service
8. Respect for international human rights law and the realisation of international development commitments
9. Transparency: negotiations and their outcomes must be made public
10. Enforceability

Source: Eurodad, "We can work it out. 10 civil society principles for sovereign debt resolution," (2019).¹⁶

Proposal 3: Legally Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises – the Battle Against Corporate Power and Impunity

In the last several decades, transnational corporations (TNCs) have emerged as the most powerful non-state actor or entity operating nationally and globally. Many TNCs have become even more powerful and wealthy than the governments of the countries they are operating in.¹⁷ Likewise TNC operations have become more complex, spread across borders, across value-chains, across sub-entities and sub-contractors and passing from one hand to another. Increasingly, corporations are also being presented by governments and multilateral institutions as indispensable partners for the implementation of multilateral agenda such as through Public-Private Partnerships and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (read more in Primers 1 and 2).

The pervasive power of TNCs is unprecedented and mostly carries adverse implications for political, democratic and accountable decision-making and governance, whether nationally or globally. Throughout the last four decades, TNC operations have had destructive and irreversible ecological impacts on countries and peoples all over the world¹⁸. Often, states who have the obligation of preventing and addressing human rights violations resulting from corporate practices under international human rights law, are either unable or unwilling to hold them accountable or are complicit and acting in the interests of the corporations themselves. As more multinational corporations emerge and operate across complex global value chains, the harder it becomes to prevent human rights violations and demand accountability across such complex chains. The only such global framework currently in place – the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights¹⁹ is deemed to have failed in addressing corporate violations of human rights and damage to environments.²⁰

16. Eurodad, (2019). We can work it out: 10 civil society principles for sovereign debt resolution. https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/eurodad/pages/523/attachments/original/1590689165/We_can_work_it_out.pdf?1590689165

17. See the 2018 study by Global Justice Now that show how 69 of the richest 100 entities on the planet are corporations, not governments.

18. See the cases submitted to the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal in Sessions on European TNCs in Latin America (2006-2010) and on TNCs in mining and land grabs in the Southern Africa region (2016-2018). See also, AWID and the Solidarity Center joint report that outlines the ways in which large national and transnational corporations are impacting the lives of women and oppressed peoples and offers insights into their strategies of resistance.

19. United Nations. (2011). *Guiding principles on business and human rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" framework*.

20. See for example: <https://www.corporatebenchmark.org/sites/default/files/documents/CHRBKeyFindings2018.pdf>



A proposal for a legally Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises was first put forward by a resolution²¹ tabled by Ecuador with the support of South Africa at the July 2014 Session of the Human Rights Council. The first negotiation for the Treaty began in 2015. The Treaty is an attempt to secure accountability from multinational corporations, and rein in the excessive power that trade and investment regimes grant to multinational corporations, including at the expense of human rights and the environment. However, like other multilateral initiatives intended to challenge and shift corporate power, the negotiation of the Treaty has been faced with strong opposition from developed countries and multinational corporations. Some of the developed countries, such as the European Union and the majority of its member states²², the UK, the US, Canada and Japan have continually threatened to withdraw, not engaged in, or questioned the legitimacy of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group (OEIGWG) wherein the Treaty is currently being negotiated even as there is growing support from members of parliaments and local authorities from around the world.²³

Global campaign alliances have continued defending the negotiation process, as well as shaping and advocating for the Treaty. The Global Campaign to Reclaim Peoples Sovereignty, Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity (Global Campaign), together with the Treaty Alliance have been campaigning to ensure governments actively engage in the Treaty process; likewise recognizing the importance of ensuring feminist perspectives and analysis, several feminist organizations, activists and allies have created the Feminists for a Binding Treaty (F4BT) collective to mobilize women's movements and integrate feminist demands into the process.²⁴

The treaty process will continue to face challenges. Sustained political will and active participation from governments will be crucial in challenging corporate power and establishing a new international legal regime that gives primacy to human rights over corporate profit. And organised movements – determined and global – will be a key factor in shifting the balance of forces and moving governments forward in the creation of the Treaty.

Box 2: Basic elements of #CorporateImpunity

The Legally Binding Treaty can look specifically at how businesses operate to make sure they are in line with our human rights. It will work in three key ways:

- 1.
2. **The duty of governments:** it will reinforce governments' obligation to uphold the rights of their citizens and protect them from corporate abuses. This includes implementing laws on things like working conditions and making sure the minimum wage is enough to live a dignified life.
3. **The responsibility of businesses and transnational corporations:** it will make sure corporations take action to ensure that they respect human rights and are not causing harm to individuals, communities, or the environments they operate in.
4. **Routes to justice:** it will give power to the people and communities affected by human rights abuses to launch legal cases against corporations and access justice and compensation.

Source: Feminists for Binding Treaty/WomanKind.²⁵

21. Human Rights Council. (2014). *Resolution on the Elaboration of an international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights*. A/HRC/RES/26/9

22. See report by Amis de la Terre France, CETIM, Observatoire des multinationales, OMAL and the Transnational Institute (TNI), "The EU and the Corporate Impunity Nexus. Building the UN Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights", (2018).

23. See the ongoing campaign by the Global Interparliamentary Network and Local Authorities in support of the UN Binding Treaty.

24. See article by Alejandra Scampini and Fernanda Hopenhaym, "Corporate abuse is a feminist issue", (2019). See also Action Aid, "10 steps towards a UN binding treaty with a feminist perspective", (2019).

25. See for example: <https://www.womankind.org.uk/putting-women-before-profits/>



It is important to recognize that the Binding Treaty alone will not be sufficient in putting an end to corporate impunity, and corporate capture of states and multilateral spaces. This proposal must be viewed together with the other proposals mentioned in previous primers on transforming the multilateral system, as well others not mentioned, such as challenging the current trade and investment agreements framework (see Primer 2) and dismantling Investor-State Dispute Settlements (ISDS)²⁶.

Proposal 4: UN Reform Proposals

Calls to reform the UN are not new. The UN itself has undergone several reforms since its founding 75 years ago. The crisis of multilateralism combined with the intensified needs for international cooperation have further illustrated the need for reform within the UN.²⁷ Since stepping into the office, the current UN Secretary-General António Guterres has put forward a range of proposals for reforming the UN, based on three pillars: development, peace and security, and management.

Civil society organisations and certain member state blocs like the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) and the G77 and China have articulated much bolder proposals²⁸. Some are based on concerns and core principles such as participation and democratic multilateralism, some are broad systemic proposals, while others are looking at specific aspects of the UN's operations, such as the UN treaty bodies, reporting procedures and the need for adequate funding and support.²⁹

Many civil society organizations have questioned the growing trend of “multi-stakeholderism” and how the use of “stakeholders” is replacing public sector representatives and rights holders as the primary “subjects” of multilateralism and the UN (Primers 1 and 2). These have been accompanied by calls to take governance back from viewing people as shareholders to rights holders.³⁰

Beyond the UN, civil society organizations have raised the question of accountability by multilateral stakeholders outside the UN governing framework, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).³¹ While the IMF wields disproportionate power over global economic governance, it is not a neutral arbiter, does not have democratic decision-making processes, and is stuck to a deeply dogmatic approach rooted in narrow, neoliberal anti-human rights ideology. Amidst the coronavirus pandemic and the exacerbation of multiple intersecting crises, civil society organizations have renewed several proposals on restoring economic decision-making power to the UN – which while is not a body without flaws and weaknesses – is certainly viewed as more democratic than the World Bank and IMF.

One such proposal is the initial call by civil society organizations for an International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit to be held under the auspices of the UN (see Box 2). This proposal includes a number of other key proposals – including on debt and tax or trade and technology intended to remedy the democratic deficit and structural issues within the current global economic governance architecture. Some parts of these proposals have received support from certain governments. At a virtual convention of Finance Ministers and high-level financial and economic policymakers in September 2020, the African Union, Senegal, Nigeria and The Gambia had asserted that certain countries will need complete debt cancellation, while the government of Jamaica had proposed a UN Summit on economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic – which could serve as a potential venue for discussion, debate and consensus building on global economic issues through universal participation.³²

26. See for example: <http://s2bnetwork.org/sign-the-pen-letter-to-governments-on-isds-and-covid-19/>

27. Read more on some of the crisis and criticism facing the UN system in Primer 2 Mapping of the Multilateral Systems.

28. See for example: https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/RP98_Developing-Country-Coalitions-in-Multilateral-Negotiations-Addressing-Key-Issues-and-Priorities-of-the-Global-South-Agenda_EN-2.pdf and http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/88037/1/Freeman-Global%20South%20at%20the%20UN_Accepted.pdf

29. See the civil society organizations proposals “Towards a strengthened UN treaty body system - Civil Society Proposals”, (2019).

30. See article by Barbara Adams, “Chapter 3.7 - Re-inventing multilateral solidarity: rhetoric, reaction or realignment of power?”, Spotlight on Sustainable Development, (2020).

31. See article by Kate Donald, Grazielle David and Mahinour El-Badrawi, “SDG 10 – The IMF’s role in economic governance: conducive to reducing inequalities within and among countries?”, Spotlight on Sustainable Development Report, (2019). See also Primer 2 Mapping the Multilateral Systems.

32. See article on “Ministers meet to tackle COVID-induced debt & liquidity crisis”, Third World Network Info Service on UN Sustainable Development



Box 3: International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit

The **International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit** under the auspices of the UN is a call by the Civil Society Working Group on Financing for Development (CSO FfD Group) which also includes the Women's Working Group on FfD in 2020. It brings together the major existing UN reform proposals to remedy the democratic deficit and structural issues in global economic governance. Proposals are drawn from previous work by the Intergovernmental Tax Body, the Debt Workout Mechanism, the review of current trade and investment regimes, reassessment of Overseas Development Aid (ODA), and transforming the global financial regulatory system, Public-Private Partnerships, and some emerging issues such as the need for a global technology assessment mechanism at the UN. Central to this proposal is the primacy of human rights and the democratization of global governance, by taking back the mandates that have traditionally been the domain of institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO moving them to the UN where developing countries are at least at the table with equal voice and vote.

Source: Time for a UN Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit: Towards a New Global Economic Architecture that works for the People and Planet. Civil Society Working Group on Financing for Development (CSO on FfD).³³

Proposal 5: Green New Deal(s)

There have been a number of “Green New Deal” proposals nationally and globally by political parties, think tanks, UN agencies, feminist and social movements, to name a few. Some of the proposals are focused more on domestic policy changes, while some are addressing larger multilateral issues and systems.

For instance, in early 2019, the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) detailed a five-point plan to rebalance development and guide a new form of multilateralism, dubbed the Geneva Principles for A Green New Deal³⁴. The principles were developed after convening several meetings between policymakers, experts and civil society organizations from across the globe. While this plan outlined strong and important points for renewing multilateralism, particularly in addressing the systemic and structural imbalances within our global economic governance system, it missed the mark in addressing gender issues, particularly in re-valuing and re-centring care work as both part of the just transitions and any new economic system.

33. See for example: Civil Society Financing for Development (FfD) Group (includes the Women's Working Group on FfD), Time for a UN Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit: Towards a New Global Economic Architecture that works for the People and Planet. Civil Society Working Group on Financing for Development (CSO on FfD), (2020).

34. See report by Richard Kozul-Wright and Kevin Gallagher, “A New Multilateralism for Shared Prosperity: Geneva Principles for a Green New Deal,” UNCTAD, (2019).



Box 4: Five principles for a new multilateralism

1. Global rules should be calibrated towards the overarching goals of social and economic stability, shared prosperity and environmental sustainability, and be protected against capture by the most powerful players.
2. States should share common but differentiated responsibilities in a multilateral system built to advance global public goods and protect the global commons.
3. The right of states to policy space to pursue national development strategies should be enshrined in global rules.
4. Global regulations should be designed both to strengthen a dynamic international division of labour and to prevent destructive unilateral economic actions that prevent other nations from realizing common goals.
5. Global public institutions must be accountable to their full membership, open to a diversity of viewpoints, cognisant of new voices, and have balanced dispute resolution systems.

Source: A New Multilateralism for Shared Prosperity: Geneva Principles for a Green New Deal. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

During the 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25), feminist movements and allies came together to launch a Feminist Green New Deal (FGND), a set of collective feminist demands to help advance the Green New Deal, in the US and around the world.³⁵ Consisting of 10 key principles, the Feminist Green New Deal calls for advancing reproductive justice, the creation of regenerative economies centred on feminist analysis and the understanding of the care economy, a shift from exploitative and unsustainable production patterns and a rejection of false solutions to the climate crisis.

The Feminist Green New Deal led to the creation of a global coalition consisting of individuals and organizations working towards justice at all of the intersections that the climate crisis touches—migrant justice, racial justice, economic justice, labour justice, reproductive justice, and gender justice. While the deal is predominantly focused on the USA's climate policies, actions and inactions, it recognizes the global implications of these and calls for a recommitment to multilateralism and a democratic rule of law to build a policy architecture that can stabilize the planet and secure a just transition to post-exploitative economies. While the idea for the deal was partially sparked by the proposal and discourse that emerged in the United States as a result of the US resolution for a Green New Deal, it built on the existing work that indigenous peoples, frontline leaders, activists, and feminists had advanced in their fight for justice, such as the proposals for a Feminist Fossil Fuel Free Future, Just and Equitable Transitions and the ongoing advocacy, campaigns and discussions for #FeministWantSystemChange³⁶.

35. See press release, "At COP25, Women's Rights and Climate Activists Advocate a Feminist Green New Deal", (2019).

36. See also the Women's Major Group "From the Pandemic to 2030: Feminists Want System Change" series, (2020).



Conclusion

This primer and the others in this series have so far explored the current state of multilateralism, its importance to people and the planet, and the challenges that need to be urgently transformed so as to prioritise the advancement of human rights – particularly the rights of young people, all women and girls, LGBTIQ+ people, the protection of the environment and just and equitable development for all. Most of the inspiring proposals above continue to be advocated, led and driven by civil society and social movements from around the world. Many of these networks, alliances and movements are continuously growing and being strengthened by the participation and voices of youth, women, LGBTIQ+, indigenous people and many more diverse social movements.

Throughout history, major crises have been shown to bring about massive political, economic and social changes – sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. The current crisis facing multilateralism therefore also presents an opportunity to carry out large scale systemic and structural changes and transformation in our world. And as with many of the most pressing and urgent issues of our time – whether it would be climate crisis, the crisis of inequality and the coronavirus pandemic – such systemic and structural transformations and changes can only happen through international cooperation and solidarity.

Young people who make up the majority of the world's population and who will inherit this world are best positioned to re-envision and re-imagine the world they want to live in. The challenges facing multilateralism are enormous, but debates around how to tackle these and transform multilateralism are also flourishing. And civil society in all its diversity, especially youth and women from the Global South, need to be part of framing and leading these debates and conversations.

The above proposals might not transform multilateralism immediately and completely into the way we want it to be, but they are proposals that are beginnings, with important elements that can contribute to this aim. They are actionable when there is political will and can inspire innovative thinking and ideas. Many are primarily the duties of different levels of government and multilateral institutions but can be propelled into reality by campaigning and mobilization of youth, women, civil societies and social movements around the world.



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