The Stanley Foundation’s
Thirty-Second United Nations
of the Next Decade
Conference

Beyond Reform:
The United Nations
in a
New Era

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The current UN reform effort has focused on financing, streamlining, restructuring, improving management, and other matters directly concerning the organization. To date, however, insufficient attention has been given to the changed global context within which the United Nations as well as other international organizations operate. While the reform proposals, if implemented, will improve the effectiveness of the United Nations, it behooves policy makers to reassess the assumptions on which today’s international organizations are based and to compare these assumptions against emerging trends and new realities in global politics, economics, and security. An honest assessment of the new global context will yield insights into how international organizations are faring and how they may best respond to forces that are shaping the start of the next century.

The New Global Context

At its creation, the United Nations was based on a set of assumptions about the political, economic, and security relationships that were expected to shape the post-war era. Then, the international system was dominated by sovereign nation-states, security concerns were paramount, geopolitical alliances were actively sought, and trade and investment flows accounted for a relatively small fraction of nations’ economies. This has changed. First, national sovereignty has been diffused and eroded by the rapid globalization of market economies and the liberalization of the flow of goods, services, capital, people, information, and ideas. The private sector is generating its own set of self-regulating norms, gradually edging many intergovernmental institutions from norm-setters and regulators onto the sidelines. Nation-state sovereignty has been altered as well by the tremendous growth and influence of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and other nonstate actors. Participants variously described such nonstate actors as either siphoning power and control from the state or, alternatively, as rejuvenating, enriching, and challenging the nation-state and breathing new life into democracy.

Second, new emerging threats to peace and security have fundamentally changed the global landscape. There is also a growing sense that for a nation to be secure in a comprehensive sense, it requires, in addition to reasonable defense capabilities, a strong economy and economic equity, a stable population, and sustainable use of its natural resources. Consequently, population growth, environmental degradation, humanitarian crises, continued arms proliferation, intrastate conflicts, growing economic inequality within and among nations, and the political unrest stemming from such pressures combine to undermine nation-states’ stability, peace, and security.

Together, these trends have challenged traditional notions of global governance, prompting questions as to the continued relevance of international organizations and the true purpose of governance. If “governance,” be it national or international, performs a variety of functions such as norm-setting, conflict resolution, monitoring compliance with rules and regulations, adjudication, and enforcement, how well are the United Nations and other international organizations “governing”?

The United Nation in Today’s Global Context

The United Nations is not faring too well in this new global context. The most serious threat to its relevance and effectiveness is the lack of purpose for the organization. Since member states fail to agree on priorities, energy and focus is placed on the reform process almost to the exclusion of what else occurs at the United Nations. While the United Nations has indeed saved lives, resolved conflicts, eradicated diseases, and promoted democracy, its failures, primarily in peacekeeping, have been widely reported and contribute to the perception of a moribund organiza-
tion. It also does not help that the United Nations is perceived as having nothing to do with “common folk” and that there are serious lapses in management. Meanwhile, other international organizations with focused mandates and specialized staff are stepping into the void. They are increasingly seen as more effective and useful than the “bloated,” “inefficient,” and “bureaucratic” United Nations. For example, the World Trade Organization, the Global Environmental Facility, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Postal Union all share a vibrancy and relevance not associated with the United Nations.

Peace and Security
Participants assessed how existing international organizations are responding to new threats to peace and security which include humanitarian crises, continued arms proliferation as well as intrastate conflict accompanied occasionally by genocide. The United Nations, participants agreed, has at best managed, not prevented, intrastate conflict. With its Security Council mired in political controversy, the organization has too often responded late and its peacekeepers, when deployed, have been used to keep a nonexistent peace. Due to the continuing difficulties of relying on the United Nations, the international community may begin turning to regional organizations for conflict prevention. NATO, for example, could assume this role, but it remains to be seen how it will change as its membership expands. Similarly, international organizations have not been able to respond quickly and adequately to humanitarian crises. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is overburdened, individual donor governments and NGOs have been obliged to assume a greater role. Unless these specialized agencies receive greater financial and political support, this trend will continue.

The international community has had successes in the field of arms control with the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, nuclear arms sales, transfers of weapons technology, and fissionable material stockpiles as well as the conventional weapons trade still pose serious security threats. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who collectively engage in 85 percent of the world’s arms trade, have not significantly reduced their arms, and other nations have joined the lucrative arms sales business. Several participants suggested that regional organizations such as the European Union could, again, step into the fray and breathe life into arms control. In the meantime, the IEAE and the United Nations Special Commission, whose staff are highly skilled and professional, continue to play an important role.

Economic Globalization and Democracy
Globalization of the world economy has tremendously impacted the workings of national governments and many international organizations. Increasingly, global capital flows, trade, and other international economic activity are undermining the nation-state’s ability to regulate its own economy. Powerful international business enterprises are developing their own set of norms and practices. At the same time, new international organizations have emerged—e.g., the World Trade Organization with focused mandates and substantial regulatory control over their segments of the world economy. The result is a patchwork of global economic regulation that provides no real coordination and harmonization of policies.

Participants had differing views with respect to the true impact of globalization on different societies. In industrialized countries, people are increasingly plagued by corporate “downsizing,” an eroding social safety net, a growing gap in income distribution, and growing concentration of wealth. In developing countries, people continue to strive for equitable distribution of land, greater control over their natural resources, and freedom from dependency on single commodities. Worldwide, governments are not seen as fulfilling their “social contract,” causing disenchantment with political leaderships and a reexamination of the merits of capitalism.

Most participants agreed that these growing inequalities, many spawned by market deficiencies, require public intervention, but there were sharp
differences regarding the appropriate global economic roles of national governments and international institutions and the optimal amount of regulation. International institutional responses to date have been inadequate or ineffective. Industrialized countries’ bilateral direct assistance have largely failed to create sustainable growth, contributing to “donor fatigue,” and UN development assistance has similarly not lived up to expectations.

Environment
Participants assessed how the international community is responding to today’s environmental challenges and whether better science will aid environmental policymaking. Most agreed that policymakers must become more sensitive to the often negative environmental side effects of economic development. Others cautioned against equating market economies with environmental waste; the challenge is to grow economies in an environmentally responsible way and in accordance with principles of sustainable development.

While some participants believed nations have not done enough to halt deforestation and the production of chemicals that deplete the earth’s ozone layer, others expressed skepticism about the veracity of the science upon which these claims are based. Noting lack of scientific consensus on environmental groups’ claims, participants recognized that decision makers and the public need to look to depoliticized scientific and technical organizations rather than individual (corporate-sponsored) scientists when making environmental assertions.

The effectiveness of UN environmental programs was questioned. While several participants urged that the United Nations do more to protect the environment, others welcomed the appearance of small, specialized environmental organizations that have augmented UN activities. It was agreed that greater cooperation within the environmental community was needed to coordinate their efforts, avoid duplication, and expand to neglected areas.

Rule of Law
Since the end of World War II, many treaties have been concluded regulating a number of nation-state activities. This is good and welcome, but the international rule of law is far from a reality. Although there is international law governing many types of international behavior, there is currently no legal system that is empowered to regulate, monitor, or enforce compliance. This is a global issue that needs greater attention since a functioning international legal system would allow for more predictability in interstate relations, universality of practices, and an orderly functioning of the international system. Ultimately, a functioning international legal system can only lead to greater peace and security.

Conclusion
Post-Cold War change and globalization have altered our assumptions about international institutions and global governance. A growing number of economic, environmental, and humanitarian problems transcend national boundaries and require international collective responses, as do the proliferating security threats from intrastate conflict and subnational groups. In this new era, the international community must thoroughly reassess the mission and effectiveness of world institutions and allow them greater latitude to confront global problems flexibly and creatively. International organizations are not merely associations of governments, but part of a world community that must increasingly deal with survival issues of the future. An honest assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of today’s institutions is essential; as was aptly stated by one participant, “It’s hard to move forward if you don’t know where you’re heading.”
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Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Participants attended as individuals rather than as representatives of their governments or organizations.
Welcome to the Stanley Foundation’s Thirty-second United Nations of the Next Decade Conference. We have gathered here to focus our attention on “Beyond Reform: The United Nations in a New Era.”

The United Nations was originally conceived on the basis of perceptions and understandings emerging from the experiences of World War II and the years preceding it. Nation-states were sovereign and in control, security was paramount, geopolitical alliances were critical, and economies were national. The principal architects of peace in that era—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—planned a set of international institutions that they hoped would prevent the recurrence of another world war and would foster a better world for the future. Shaped by the history of the first half of the twentieth century and the fundamental changes they had experienced in their lifetimes, these leaders’ ideas formed the framework for the United Nations’ system.

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of this system, particularly its central organs, was frozen by the Cold War for nearly forty-five years. As the United Nations muddled through its first fifty-plus years, various elements of it were changed modestly, some elements fell into disuse, and a number of new organizations were created. Some of the latter were tied in one way or another to the United Nations and others were independent of it. The result is what we have today, a decentralized set of institutions, built on the nation-state system, in which coordination and harmonization are difficult, and often nearly impossible. Some of these institutions are effective, some are not as useful, but all are rooted in the experiences of World War II and the Cold War.

The United Nations has undergone periodic seasons of reform throughout its history. In recent times, demands for reform have grown more pronounced. Today many voices clamor for change. We hear from those who want a leaner, more fiscally responsible United Nations. Others complain that the United Nations is too focused on international peace and security and should give more attention to problems of economics, development, and human rights, among others. Driven by calls for change and the United Nations’ continuing financial crisis, the UN Secretariat has moved aggressively to reorganize, decentralize administrative decisions, simplify processes, and cut costs.

Measurable reform progress has been made. As we gather here, the intergovernmental working groups on reform commissioned by the UN General Assembly are meeting to bring closure to their efforts. Equally important, the Secretariat and the secretary-general are deeply engaged in formulating major reform proposals to be announced in July. These are necessary and important efforts to improve the United Nations. If successful, they will result in modification of dues assessment scales, changes in Security Council composition, more effective UN budgeting and management, renewal of member state support, and other organizational improvements. Significant as these changes are, they have a limited mandate and will fall short of a fundamental reexamination of the optimal role of global institutions in the world of the future.

What has been lacking in current reform efforts is serious consideration and evaluation of the changed and changing nature of the world and how that affects governance needs. Post-Cold War change
and globalization have produced a radical reordering of how the world works. Yet our perceptions and understandings lag. Global economic, population and migration, drug, poverty, terrorism, human rights, and environmental issues have altered the nature of the global security threat. It is increasingly clear that the survival issues of the future are global in nature and beyond the competence of individual nation-states, even the most powerful. The world has become far more interconnected and interdependent and is much less hierarchical. The power and sovereignty of nation-states are being eroded from both supranational and subnational sources. National boundaries are more and more porous. Transnational enterprises are far more significant players in all economic activity. Mushrooming numbers of actors from civil society and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); new centers of decision making; and new operational functions, relationships, and alignments have taken hold. All of these temper and modify the historical role of the nation-state and help to define the needed characteristics of future global institutions.

We have convened this conference on the premise that the global institutions of the future should be built for the global context of the future. We need to look beyond current UN reform efforts to discern the nature of that world and plan accordingly.

Thinking about the impact of global change is not new. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, many commissions and organizations have set out to define a “new world order.” Most fell back into recasting new problems in old contexts, resulting in similarly old prescriptions. Their efforts often smacked of trying to put “new wine into old wine-skins.” Or, they were done in the abstract, with old agendas being repackaged in post-Cold War terminology. Too often they failed to take recent experiences into account: the globalization of information and communications illustrated by the Internet; a change in the nature of armed conflicts from international to intranational such as Bosnia, Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, Chechnya, and others; the development of the World Trade Organization, NAFTA, and a growing list of other regional trade and economic groups; gaining a better understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of a globalized economy; the rise of new security threats from subnational terrorist groups with weapons of mass destruction; the collapse of ideologies and states; and the reality of post-apartheid South Africa, to name a few.

A notable exception was the Commission on Global Governance. Its report, issued at the time of the United Nations’ fiftieth anniversary, perceptively explored the changes that were under way in the immediate post-Cold War era. This work continues to provide a valuable base for exploring global governance. But, with continuing changes in the global context and the fact that current UN reform work, although necessary and significant, does not appear to include a fundamental reexamination of that context, we need another look, and we need it now.

One of the more profound observations that was made by the commission concerned the issue of national sovereignty. The commission observed that the role of the people in international affairs has increased substantially, and it noted a “shift of focus from states to people.” While nation-states will remain a key element in the future global community, their relative importance has diminished as new challenges have emerged. Nation-states are too big for some things; yet they are too small for others. Nowhere is this challenge to sovereignty more apparent than in world economic issues where there has been tremendous growth and transformation. As the global economy has become more complex, interconnected, and turbulent, nation-states are finding that they have less control over their national economies and that they need to coordinate their economic policies more effectively. The growing numbers of collaborative economic organizations and free trade agreements attest to this.

Our agenda for this conference is an ambitious one. It is matched only by the interest, commitment, and expertise of the participants gathered here. You bring us your experience and insight from a wide variety of fields and organizations. I am delighted that you have been able to join us here in Vitznau.
We will begin our discussions with an exploration of the global context of the future. What have we learned since the end of the Cold War? What trends and developments are defining and shaping the future context? What are the threats and opportunities of the new era? I have shared some of my thinking on a number of these trends and developments in these opening remarks. Yet the extent and radical nature of the changes we are experiencing and can anticipate in the future warrant our thorough attention and evaluation.

Having done this, we will work to define a useful framework for effective global governance and institutions. In what areas will international governance be needed? What functions should be performed by international institutions? What kinds of roles should they have? Consistent with principles of subsidiarity, what matters and functions should be avoided by global institutions and performed by regional intergovernmental organizations, national or local governments, transnational enterprises, NGOs, or others?

This exploration should help us identify what does and does not work and what should be the priorities for international governance. For example, what will be needed to confront terrorism, arms sales, or drug smuggling? What is the best role for various institutions and entities? Should resources be poured into peace and security or into sustainable development? Which should take precedence? Are regional organizations effective arbiters of justice and keepers of the peace?

The United Nations and other existing international organizations may or may not be prepared to take on these challenges. That is why we will next examine the state of our current global institutions. What are their strengths, weaknesses, and comparative advantages? Can they change or be changed sufficiently? Should some be scrapped?

Our intent is not to assess the United Nations and other international organizations on the basis of today’s world, but rather to evaluate them against future trends and realities. We do not want simply to review what the United Nations, or any other organization, has done well and then tinker with its mission. Such a limited and narrow assessment would reflect only the moment and would not prove durable. Instead, much like the original architects of the UN system, we will ask you to extrapolate from the experiences, observations, and knowledge accumulated in the post-Cold War era to evaluate their role in the future global context.

Our next step will be to determine what is needed to build effective global organizations for the twenty-first century. Will multiple limited-function organizations be more effective than fewer multipurpose organizations? To what extent should organization structure be centralized or decentralized? What should be the organization, membership, and political base of future organizations? How should they be financed? Assuming that we will continue to have numerous comparatively autonomous institutions, how can the relationships between them be handled most effectively? What kinds of mechanisms should be developed? To what extent do we need changes in existing organizations and to what extent are new organizations needed? What are the political possibilities of making the needed changes?

Having labored to develop our thinking on what kind of “United Nations” will be needed for the twenty-first century, we will work to develop concrete recommendations for actions that will move us in this direction.

The timing for our discussions is excellent. The United Nations is in the process of reevaluating its role and function. Various nations, including my own, are struggling to define their appropriate future world role and how that relates to global institutions. The United Nations has a new and imaginative secretary-general who understands the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and has begun to implement reforms to make it more effective and efficient. All this is a cause for hope.

At the same time, the urgency is great. International organizations such as the United Nations can and do make a significant difference in people’s lives,
but it is hazardous for us to expect them to continue to “muddle through” in a rapidly changing global context. A world which has become increasingly interconnected and interdependent needs effective global institutions that can promote peace and security, humanitarian aid, sustainable development, and social and economic progress. It needs institutions that can transcend the growing limitations of nation-states.

In the past decade, we have seen the end of the Cold War, the decline of an ideology, the dissolution of empires, a move toward democracy, a rise of market economies, and increasing sensitivity toward humanitarian concerns. Yet the world has not become a safer or better place for many of its citizens. We still face some of the same problems faced by the participants at the Yalta Conference in 1945, but we also face some new, very different and difficult ones. We urgently need to understand how the world has changed and what trends and developments define the global governance needs for the future.

As the Commission on Global Governance so perceptively stated in its study, “Removed from the sway of empires and a world of victors and vanquished, released of the constraints of the cold war that so cramped the potential of an evolving global system throughout the post-war era, seized of the risks of unsustainable human impacts on nature, mindful of the global implications of human deprivation—the world has no real option but to rise to the challenge of change, in an enlightened and constructive fashion.”

I look forward to our deliberations with both optimism and urgency. I hope that we will be able to rise to this challenge of change, developing our understanding of the global context of the future, defining a useful framework for effective global governance, and conceiving concrete recommendations toward building effective global institutions for the twenty-first century. In so doing, we will go beyond “…saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war…” toward creating a world which is more secure, peaceful, free, and just for all humankind.
Introduction

The United Nations is currently in the midst of a major reform effort that has focused on financing of the organization, streamlining and restructuring the system, improving personnel management, and various other matters. To date, however, insufficient attention has been given to the changed global context within which the United Nations—indeed, all transnational organizations—operate. While recent reform proposals, if implemented, will undoubtedly help the organization and improve its effectiveness, it behooves policymakers to focus on the larger global assumptions on which the United Nations and other international organizations are based, and to compare these assumptions against changes, emerging trends, and new realities in the realms of politics, economics, and security. A thorough assessment of the new global context will yield essential insights into global governance and what is needed to prepare international organizations to respond to forces that are shaping the start of the next century.

With this in mind, the Stanley Foundation convened its thirty-second annual conference on the United Nations of the Next Decade in Vitznau, Switzerland, bringing together a diverse group of participants, each having many years of concrete experience, observation, and substantial knowledge accumulated in the post-Cold War era. Conference objectives were ambitious. Participants were asked to identify fundamental global economic, political, and security trends; consider how these trends define the current global reality; reevaluate global governance and the role of international organizations in the context of these new realities; identify strengths and weaknesses of the current international system; and assess the implications for the United Nations.

The New Global Context: An Overview

When originally conceived, the United Nations reflected certain perceptions of the world emerging from the experience of the Second World War and assumptions about the political, economic, and security relationships that were expected to shape the post-war era. At the time, the international system was based on sovereign nation-states, security concerns were paramount, geopolitical alliances were actively sought, and trade and investment flows accounted for a smaller fraction of nations’ economies than they do today. This, however, has all changed. The post-Cold War era has brought fundamental global changes which have eroded and undermined the competency and effectiveness of international institutions.

Changing Assumptions

Participants identified two phenomena that are radically changing—and increasingly defining—the global context of today and the future: the diffusion and erosion of national sovereignty and the emergence of supranational and subnational threats to international peace and security and, indeed, human survival. Together, these developments are reconfiguring the international system and posing new challenges for global governance. The nation-state is seeing its power and sovereignty altered by the rapid globalization of market economies which brings a liberalization of the flow of goods, services, capital, people, information, and ideas. The market economy is now generating energies of its own that are beyond the reach or control of international institutions, forcing the latter to change. With little externally imposed regulation, the market/enterprise sector is beginning to generate its own set of self-regulating norms, gradually edging many intergovernmental institutions from norm-setters and regulators into sideline observers. Economic globalization has left national governments behind. (Ironically, one participant observed, “Globalization has had an impact on every facet of life except politics.”)
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newly emerging threats (such as international terrorism, international crime syndicates, and the international drug trade) to peace and security. A new concept of “national security” is emerging. State-to-state threats to territorial integrity are less of a concern. As the world becomes more complex, dynamic, and interconnected, problems that were traditionally within the purview of national governments now easily spill over into the international arena. There is a growing sense that for a nation to be secure in a comprehensive sense, it needs a strong economy, a stable population, sustainable use of its natural resources, and economic equity in addition to reasonable military defense capabilities. As such, expanding world population (to nearly double in fifty years), environmental degradation, humanitarian crises, continued arms proliferation, intrastate conflict, growing economic inequality within and among nations, and the political unrest stemming from such pressures combine to undermine a nation-state’s sense of stability, peace, and security. They are the new threats to national security, many of which cannot be solely resolved by the use of military force.

Together, diminished sovereignty stemming from globalization and the new nature of security threats have fundamentally changed the environment within which nation-states and international organizations operate. In this new global context, what is the role of governance? What is the relevance of the United Nations and other international institutions? Any system of governance, be it national or international in scope, comprises a set of functions including norm-setting, conflict resolution, regulation, monitoring of compliance, adjudication, and enforcement. Norm-setting, either prescriptively via lawmaking or de facto through the evolution of commonly accepted practices, is governance at its most fundamental level. The regulation function establishes “rules of the road” to be followed by all in order to curb excesses and make life simpler and more predictable. The monitoring of compliance involves adjudication to interpret and apply the norms, regulations, and procedures and to resolve differences juridically, rather than by use of force. Finally, enforcement, where it is necessary to ensure

Traditional notions of sovereignty have also been altered by the tremendous growth and influence of nonstate actors, such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society. Some participants viewed the activities of nonstate actors as essentially eroding national sovereignty, siphoning power and control from states, converting the states into more porous entities that are less able to exercise control and to interact consistently with the world. Others had a more nuanced view, asserting that the nation-state is merely evolving in response to greater participation in public affairs by nonstate actors. Instead of a “threat,” nonstate actors may be better viewed as a rejuvenating force that enriches and challenges the nation-state and breathes new life into the meaning of democracy. Through the process of reducing its size and altering its role, one participant claimed, the state will itself be renewed and strengthened.

Along with diminished national sovereignty, the global landscape has been fundamentally altered by

Rapporteurs Mary Theisen and Corbin Stone.

The rapporteurs prepared this report following the conference. It contains their interpretation of the proceedings and is not merely a descriptive, chronological account. Participants neither reviewed nor approved the report. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all recommendations, observations, and conclusions.
There is also a perception problem. The United Nations can be an effective organization. It has saved lives, resolved conflicts, nurtured democracy, promoted environmental development, and eradicated diseases. However, it has its spectacular failures, often widely reported, contributing to the perception of a moribund organization out of touch with today’s world. Because the United Nations is perceived as having nothing to do with “common folk,” one participant recommended that the United Nations institute a people’s assembly that parallels the General Assembly. The image exists in too many Americans’ minds of well-heeled diplomats lecturing the United States to pay money, or worse, an organization designed to “tax poor people in rich countries to pay rich people in poor countries.” The parking problem in New York City, rightly or wrongly, is perceived as demonstrative of an arrogance toward US laws. The United States leads on reforming the organization, and few other countries present a credible challenge to the positions the US government has taken. According to one participant, Europeans are concerned with integration, and Asians have their own problems. The leadership, therefore, has fallen to the United States, whose politics is currently dominated by xenophobia or antagonism when it comes to the United Nations, and whose president has openly admitted that the United States is “the world’s biggest deadbeat” on payment of UN dues.

Participants also discussed serious lapses in UN management. The organization has not consistently done well in adapting to the changing world of globalization, high technology, and modern telecommunications. It also has difficulty managing (and choosing) human resources. So often in UN reform debate, reformers have called for greater professionalism among the United Nations’ international civil service. The more serious problem, in the opinion of some participants, is that UN staff is not always well suited to the changed needs of the United Nations. Many, employed by the United Nations for years, were hired to fill needs that no longer exist; they have failed to grow sufficiently and develop new capabilities. Further, hiring opportunities do not always bring in those who have the best skills, and
skilled, competent candidates are too often sacrificed to accommodate the dictates of even geographical representation.

**Peace and Security**

Participants identified the trends and developments in the peace and security field which demand governance, focusing specifically on intrastate conflict, humanitarian crises, arms proliferation, and emerging threats to global security. They also discussed the ability of existing international organizations to meet the governance needs and the changes needed to improve their effectiveness.

**Intrastate Conflict**

Most participants cited intrastate conflict as the most pressing threat to international peace and security. While not new by any means, intrastate tensions were held in check by the dynamics of the Cold War. At the same time, tensions described by one participant as “identity conflicts” which are at the root of these conflicts were stoked by the Cold War. However, the mere existence of separate identities among tribal or other ethnic communities does not necessarily lead to conflict. Instead, individuals who possess or seek positions of power often manipulate these differences for their own political purposes. This pitting of ethnic, religious, and social groups against one another creates conflict within states and successfully masks the real roots of insecurity, such as widening social and economic cleavages, failed public policies, expanding and migrating populations, resource depletion, and environmental degradation. In fact, many participants noted, poverty and widening economic inequality in the developing world may be the most serious source of instability and, if the gap between rich and poor nations widens, this instability could become a primary source of intrastate conflict.

Many participants cautioned against overlooking forced migration as a significant cause, and effect, of intrastate conflicts. Massive transboundary refugee flows not only fuel these conflicts but are reconfiguring social and economic relations within receiving countries throughout the North and South. In the 1970s there were 2.5 million international refugees; today there are more than 26 million. Large-scale displacement of persons and genocide, particularly in Africa, were also identified as critical problems arising from intrastate conflicts.

Participants emphasized that the international community is ill-prepared to deal with intrastate conflict and is more inclined to manage conflicts than to prevent them. There is no established permanent mechanism of preventive diplomacy which identifies where crises may occur. For example, the conflict in former Zaire could have been prevented, according to some participants, had there been an institution which addressed the combined threats of mass migration, genocide, and poverty. Several participants hypothesized that if established organizations do not develop the appropriate methodology and garner enough support and resources, ad hoc organizations will form to resolve acute emergencies and crises. Another idea was that the G-7 could expand its mandate to include security issues.

In the meantime, the UN Security Council, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are organizations currently responding to intrastate conflict with varying degrees of effectiveness. The Security Council’s ability to respond quickly is undermined by its own problems. Participants criticized the council as an anachronistic World War II institution that is unrepresentative of the current geopolitical balance—the five nations which have veto power are no longer the only major powers. Some participants claimed that the United Nations will never be an effective institution if it does not expand Security Council membership to include such powers as Germany,
Japan, India, and Brazil. Other participants recommended restricting the veto of the permanent members to Chapter 7 items only. Several participants were also critical of UN peacekeeping operations, which experienced, according to one participant, a “premature celebration and renaissance” in 1989. As UN peacekeeping operations have increased, so too have the problems, such as in Somalia. The root of these problems can be traced to the fact that peacekeeping was designed to separate combatants by mutual agreement, not to make peace in conflicts where a cease-fire has yet to be negotiated. Without changing how operations are financed, operated, organized, and mandated, they will rarely be applied to prevent conflicts from erupting or spreading.

Many participants viewed NATO as an organization with the potential to ensure stability and prevent conflicts from starting. Most participants regarded NATO as a great force for stability, but many questioned what expansion in membership would do to the organization: Would NATO become a peacemaker, peacekeeper, or merely a slimmed, militarized version of OSCE? While some suggested that NATO out-of-area operations may increase, others argued that a broadened mandate would not ensure a rapid response to intrastate conflict or humanitarian crises. They claimed that an expanded NATO will be even more dependent upon the United States. In any event, most participants agreed that NATO expansion, either in numbers or mandate, deserves a more thorough review.

One participant emphasized that the regionally oriented OSCE has the most promise to prevent conflicts. However, the OSCE, once touted as “Europe’s UN,” has not lived up to expectations. It was ultimately gutted by the United States, according to one participant. Several other participants agreed but added that with reform and support from the United States and key European members, the OSCE could become the continent’s best mechanism for conflict prevention.

Beyond Europe, participants were interested in the role other regional organizations may play in managing intrastate conflict. They looked favorably on the increasing activity of regional organizations in resolving conflict, claiming they can do more than the United Nations in many cases. For instance, regional organizations are better prepared to act quickly with less debate and fewer resources. Still, a few participants—comparing the prolonged involvement of the ongoing West African force in Liberia with other UN operations in Africa—warned that there have not been enough test cases to be confident of the effectiveness of regional organizations in these situations.

Humanitarian Crises
The scope and number of humanitarian crises are increasing due to intrastate conflict, population growth, environmental degradation, natural disasters, famine, and disease. Several participants expressed the greatest concern about the effect of intrastate warfare in generating humanitarian crises. Warfare in places from Cambodia to Angola has been responsible for “over 90 percent of civilian casualties,” and civilian areas will continue to be targeted in the future, preventing farmers from growing crops and economies from developing. In particular, land mines have made it very difficult for safe passage in some areas and have killed many and left a legacy of people maimed and permanently disabled.

Participants also emphasized that population growth in the developing world exacerbates humanitarian crises. For example, an outbreak of the Ebola virus in Kenya in the twenty-first century will be much more difficult to contain, simply due to the sheer number of people (an estimated 90 million) potentially involved. Other participants expressed concern that deforestation, global warming, natural disasters, and more lethal terrorist attacks may cause greater destruction and trigger more mass migrations in the future.
1997 United Nations of the Next Decade participants
Beyond Reform. The world has changed dramatically and has left international organizations ill-prepared to respond to new challenges. But the need for institutions is as great as ever.
Whether caused by environmental degradation, congestion, or war, humanitarian crises will multiply in the next century, demanding that the international community respond. Currently, intergovernmental organizations are slow to respond to humanitarian emergencies, often preferring to wait until after the crisis has involved more than a single state. While many participants singled out the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the office of the Special Representative for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) for high praise, they recognized that both are overburdened. Both IDP and UNHCR need more resources and support. But humanitarian crises often develop within a state, and nations are reluctant to support the expansion of humanitarian operations for fear of interfering to some degree with national sovereignty. Citing more pragmatic reasons, another participant explained that the willingness to intervene is also low when markets are not disturbed by a significant humanitarian crisis.

Several participants raised concerns about the absence of formal institutional intervention in humanitarian crises, pointing out that this left intervention to ad hoc and regionally oriented replacements. Ultimately, many were convinced that regional organizations and individual governments will be forced to initiate their own operations to confront crises. The Italian-led multilateral operation in Albania was cited as an example.

While regional organizations are becoming more involved, so too are NGOs, including a growing number based in the South. NGOs can be very effective and influential due in large part to their willingness to get involved early and remain, even if the situation dangerously deteriorates. For example, NGOs do not wait for markets to react or nations to come calling. Several participants welcomed the increase in NGO activity, seeing it as a way to fill the gaps exposed by nations unwilling or unable to intervene. A few participants were less enthusiastic, pointing out that some NGOs are irresponsible and ineffective and some are too closely identified with certain states.

Arms Control and Disarmament
Several participants lamented the fact that arms control and disarmament has been placed on the “back burner.” Although the nuclear arms race may have effectively ended between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the international community continues to face serious security threats from the thousands of nuclear weapons and large stocks of fissionable materials that still exist. Few nuclear nations currently feel compelled to make further cuts in nuclear arsenals, particularly, as one participant noted, while other nations still strive to acquire them. Conversely, nonnuclear nations complain that the larger powers have failed to carry through on weapons reductions. Even though the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has been extended and the Chemical Weapons Treaty was recently ratified, several participants viewed them as insufficient. These same participants also postulated that the sale and manufacture of technology used to make weapons of mass destruction will continue as long as nuclear states fail to disarm significantly and that there will continue to be a desire among some states and non-state actors to get materials and technology necessary for the manufacture of such weapons. For example, citing recent events in the former Soviet Union, several participants expressed concern about terrorists and members of organized crime as well as nonsignatories to nonproliferation treaty regimes seeking these weapons.

According to some, however, the threat posed by nonsignatories, rogue states, and terrorists is “overblown.” These participants were more concerned about the conventional arms trade, since conventional weapons are more readily available and desirable. In addition, quite a few nations are
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experiencing difficult transitions to a market economy and arms sales are very lucrative. Several emerging economic and military powers, such as Brazil and China, are entering the arms market and manufacturing ever more technologically advanced weaponry for export. A few participants were more concerned with these new sellers than the traditional ones, such as the United States and France.

As more nations produce arms for export, the international community continues to struggle to develop support for arms control and disarmament. According to one participant, the organizing framework for arms control has changed. Yet the pre-1989 institutions are still stuck in a Cold War mentality. At the same time, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, responsible for some 85 percent of the arms trade, show little incentive to reduce their export of conventional arms.

Several participants were more interested in discussing efforts by regional organizations to reduce the flow of arms and nuclear technology. They suggested that regional organizations have a great potential to jump-start the arms control process. For example, one participant commented favorably on the European Union’s efforts to implement a code of conduct on arms transfers by governments. However, many participants were more enthusiastic about the activity of narrowly focused organizations, such as the IAEA, which rely on highly technical, professional staff. They believed these organizations are the wave of the future, demonstrating to the United Nations as a whole the need and utility of hiring people with necessary technical skills.

A few participants were less enthusiastic about IAEA. They suggested that the UN Special Commission in Iraq was created because IAEA was insufficient. However, the use of highly skilled, professional staff in Iraq to monitor and enforce UN Security Council resolutions was praised by these participants. Still, some complained about the cost and, despite the operation’s widely applauded success, asked whether this was an appropriate model that could be funded and reproduced to remedy in the “Achilles heel” of arms control—enforcement and monitoring. Despite concerns about the cost of the operation, most participants remained supportive of smaller, focused, professional, and depoliticized agencies to deal with weapons production and the arms trade.

In response to arms proliferation, NGOs have become more involved. They have grown in number and effectiveness, increased public awareness, and influenced governments on such arms control issues as the production and sale of land mines. A few participants saw great potential in NGOs promoting further public awareness about arms control and disarmament.

Genocide: A Special Case
Several participants emphasized genocide as a major concern. Whether in the former Yugoslavia or the Great Lakes region of Africa, the international community’s tepid response to genocide was lamented by all participants. By failing to act forcefully enough, the international community is sending the wrong message to those who seek power through genocide. In the absence of the political will to intervene, communities that have suffered genocide have sought redress through other more violent means, and few criminals have been brought to justice. As intrastate conflicts continue to flare up and nations and international organizations fail to respond, acts of genocide will most likely increase.

Nations and organizations are not collectively and effectively attacking or responding to genocide. They often do not feel compelled to do more than just make public pronouncements and hollow threats. One participant regretted that there is no effective mechanism or methodology whose sole purpose is to stop genocide or punish offenders. Some complained that an international code or rule of law may exist, but it is ineffective. Still others
were more concerned about prevention than punishment. They noted sadly that morality does not seem to compel early intervention, perhaps in part because there is less strategic value to areas of the world where genocide is taking place.

One participant asserted that if international organizations cannot respond effectively to genocide, then it is moot to discuss the effectiveness and value of international organizations. On this point, there was strong consensus.

**Economic Globalization and Democracy**

Globalization of the world economy, facilitated greatly by far-reaching advances in telecommunications technology and transportation, is having a radical and fundamental impact on the workings of national governments and traditional international organizations. Participants discussed the impact of globalization on national and international regulatory regimes and explored the connections between globalization, growing economic inequalities, and the impact on governance.

**Regulating the Global Economy**

The growing strength and influence of transnational business enterprises—not just from the United States, Japan, and Western Europe but also from developing countries such as China and Brazil—have effectively overtaken the ability of the nation-state to regulate its own economy. In essence, global capital, trade, and other economic activity are developing their own set of common practices and bypassing government channels, including norm-building and regulation by previously established intergovernmental institutions. At the same time, while the increasing international economic activity is comparatively free of regulation, there has been an emergence of some international organizations whose regulatory mandate is more narrowly focused and whose work is more technical and practical. Several longstanding UN agencies, such as the International Labor Organization, continue to work on norms and standardization of practices in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The WTO, whose regulatory mandate is narrowly focused and whose work is technical and practical, is an example of a new intergovernmental institution established to deal with the changing and more globalized circumstances. Global professional and business associations are increasingly developing generally accepted practices and norms that are being followed worldwide to provide consistency in terminology, financial practices, and operations.

Participants had differing views with respect to the benefits of globalization. While some emphasized the benefits, others focused on the negative repercussions. Similarly, there were sharp differences regarding the appropriate roles of national governments and international institutions in the global economy and the optimal amount of regulation. Some participants pressed for significant change and stronger regulation; others argued that current difficulties were transitional and that, overall, the global economy was working quite well. No one advocated a “laissez faire,” anarchic, and unregulated global economy; all recognized the need for a reasonable degree of stability, predictability, and fairness. The goal of positive and sustainable economic results with openness and equity in access to their benefits received broad support. There was interest in exploring ways in which more predictability and stability could be achieved, as well as what should be the role of international institutions in policy development and coordination and in creating a more comprehensive body of international law dealing with the economy.

While the international marketplace is comparatively unregulated, there seems to be a growing awareness of the importance of macroeconomic order, stability, and predictability. Indeed, one participant asked, “to what other end are the Davos economic summits?” Participants generally agreed that managing something as vast, varied, and unruly as the global economy is impossible; monitoring and adjusting are more feasible.
In this vein, participants discussed the effectiveness of Group of Seven (G-7) summit meetings in attempting to impose a modicum of coordination of the global economy. They generally agreed that the G-7, composed of the United States, Germany, Japan, Italy, France, Canada, and Britain, has not lived up to the purpose for which it was created, i.e., international coordination of macroeconomic policies. The group was originally conceived by former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and former French Prime Minister Giscard D’Estaing as an “anti-institution institution” freed of the constraints of cumbersome, bureaucratic, international economic organizations. But its annual meetings have taken on a life of their own and are increasingly conducted in a way that diminishes this “anti-institutional” element. They have become routinized. Lately the finance ministers attend only at the beginning of the meetings and the voices of central bankers are all but lost. Leaders do talk, but after the meetings the high level of maneuvering and posturing thwarts community-building among industrialized countries, turning the summits into little more than a series of “nonaggression pacts.”

To some, this is not a problem of the G-7 per se since it is unrealistic to expect any group of sovereign states to adopt fundamental macroeconomic policies to please the international community. What best illustrated this limitation, in the opinion of one participant, was the 1992 Munich G-7 summit (the “apogee” of G-7 summits), where members assigned growth rates for another, with disastrous results for Germany. This meeting clearly demonstrates that close macroeconomic coordination is an idea whose time has not come. Instead, the most countries can hope for through G-7 summity is consultation and cooperation. G-7 meetings are best when objectives are modest: getting to know one another, building collegiality, and talking policy.

Participants also noted the convergence of central bankers’ economic policies worldwide and discussed the extent to which central bankers are and should be accountable to political constituencies. In the United States, central bankers are largely autonomous, although they are accountable to the political system to some degree since they are appointed. Elsewhere, central bankers are generally more inclined to accommodate national economic policies. Many participants agreed that central bank independence from the political system is desirable. One reminded the group that central bankers’ independence is intended to “save us from ourselves,” and cited former Chairman Paul Volcker’s raising of the interest rates during his tenure to lower inflation. Although the decision caused serious problems in the short run, the long-term benefits became apparent. An added benefit of independence, at least within the United States, is that the administration and Congress often appreciate having someone they can blame when the economy sours.

Some participants were skeptical of the likelihood of progress in these areas, citing nation-states’ traditional reluctance to surrender policymaking to international entities. Acknowledging the skepticism, others argued that relinquishing some sovereignty to an international economic coordination and regulatory institution should not be a stumbling block. Although sovereignty may be viewed as something that is given up, nations do get something in return. In Western Europe, for example, nations are relinquishing some sovereignty to the European Union, but in return they arguably improve their economic situation and enhance their power and influence within a larger regional structure. This secures more opportunity and latitude for them to influence Europe’s economic and political development.

Modest increases in regulation of the global economy are ongoing and evolving. National governments—which retain the authority, albeit increasingly circumscribed, to regulate and tax business and environmental matters within their borders—are awakening to the need for, and the difficulties of, establishing effective regulatory regimes. What has emerged is an evolving patchwork of global eco-

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1 Participants occasionally referred to the G-7 as the “G-8” or “G-9” or simply “G-7-8-9” in recognition of the unofficial candidacies of Russia and China. For purposes of this report, the group will be referred to as the “G-7.”
nomic regulation that provides no real coordination and harmonization of policies. Is this evolutionary process sufficient, or is a more fundamental examination needed?

**Poverty, Inequality, and Democracy**

Participants had a wide-ranging discussion of the linkages among economic development, poverty, inequality, and democracy within both industrialized and developing countries. While a few contended that global economic inequality has not widened appreciably, most participants acknowledged that globalization of the world economy has caused significant readjustments in businesses and in national economies and that there has been a concurrent widening of the economic gap between haves and have-nots, both within and between countries, often to the detriment of nations’ democratic processes. As business enterprises change their operations and as countries reexamine social policies to be competitive in the global economy, the adjustments are often painful, imposing real hardships. In many industrialized countries, they noted, people are increasingly facing loss of jobs due to corporate downsizing, an erosion of the social safety net, a growing gap in income distribution, and a growing concentration of wealth.

Wealth concentration and growing impoverishment within and among both industrialized and developing countries may have far-reaching social and political consequences. These developments have caused significant levels of anxiety and led to a perception among some national electorates that governments are not caring for their people. In essence, one participant noted, governments are not seen as fulfilling their social contract. Instead, they appear to be getting out of the business of governing, turning over the care of populations to profit-driven private enterprises. This has caused widespread disenchantment with political leadership and governmental institutions and an abandonment of the political process. In the industrialized world, one participant stated, “people are not voting for parties or individual candidates, but against something.” According to one participant, growing economic inequalities have also spawned a reexamination of the merits of capitalism. Previously, during the peak of the Cold War tyranny, “capitalism had to look good” as it was the only alternative to communism. Communism has since been discredited, leaving the market as the only remaining organizing principle for an economy. In the words of one participant, capitalism is being exposed for what it is—a global economic system that “has no soul.” What people seek from their leaders and their government is greater compassion. What they want from their economic systems are job security and meaningful work. The vast electorate is still relatively passive; however, unless political leaders address the growing divisions between rich and poor, there will be disruptive social and political repercussions. One participant observed, these are “prerevolutionary times.”

Many participants argued that the great inequalities accompanying globalization of the economy require public intervention to compensate for market deficiencies and excesses. What have been the international institutional responses to date, and how effectively have institutions answered the tremendous challenges of economic development and rectifying income inequality? Should the international community be expected to help solve national economic problems, or is that best left to individual governments?

For many years, both developing country governments and the international community have had available a significant number of international assistance agencies designed to help poorer nations develop economically through a combination of technical assistance, grants, and loans. According to many participants, industrialized countries’ bilateral direct assistance has largely failed to create sustainable, endogenous growth, contributing to
"donor fatigue" among industrial states. Participants agreed that aid organizations are in dire need of reassessment. However, since overseas assistance has been motivated historically by geopolitical security concerns (e.g., would the Marshall Plan have happened had there not been the perceived threat of the USSR?), it should be expected that the amount of this type of assistance will continue to ebb as Cold War security concerns evaporate.

Participants opinions differed with respect to the value of UN activities in economic development. A few saw the United Nations’ contribution as minimal at best and recommended that the United Nations cease its involvement. They stated that UN development agencies such as UNCTAD and UNDP and the United Nations’ development coordinating body, ECOSOC, have not lived up to the purpose for which they were created. Moreover, policy debates on development within the United Nations have not been productive. For example, one participant believed policy debates on the “New International Economic Order” in the 1970s were misguided, and now the United Nations seems to be advocating limiting consumption. They argued that reliance on the free market has produced the most lasting economic development.

**The United Nations and the Global Economy**

Many participants readily acknowledged that extensive changes to the United Nations’ economic structures were long overdue, particularly since the UN role in direct assistance is decreasing relative to that of foreign direct investment (except for sub-Saharan Africa which has not been considered by the private sector to be a good place to invest). Participants agreed that for the United Nations to regain credibility, it must thoroughly review its development efforts and rationalize its activities. More important, the member states should develop a concrete, well-defined economic development mission for the United Nations. Perhaps, the United Nations’ current blanket mandate to aid all developing countries is too broad and overly ambitious, contributing to shirking of member state responsibility. Member states might decide to deal with the development needs of only the least developed countries.

It was emphasized that no new UN organization is needed. Instead, smaller specialized agencies with more limited mandates may be superior to the present constellation of economic development agencies, coordinating bodies, and research institutes. One participant suggested that the UN organizations working on food aid, population, children’s welfare, and economic development should get together soon and develop a plan to rationalize their operations and improve regional and country coordination with the many NGOs now working in the development field. Another participant recommended that the United Nations explore the desirability of an economic security council parallel to the Security Council.

Most participants agreed that the globalized market economy is here to stay and, while no nation can look exclusively or even primarily to the international arena to solve domestic problems of economic growth and income inequality, international institutions do have a necessary and important role to play. They help foster norms and practices that yield sustainability, benefit humankind for the long term, and promote regulation to limit market excesses. The immediate task of the international community, therefore, is to reassess the institutional framework in light of massive economic globalization.

**Environment**

Participants discussed the health and fragility of the global environment extensively, paying particular attention to population growth, the effects of economic development, ozone depletion, and deforestation, and to how the United Nations, the GEF, and smaller, specialized organizations are responding to these issues. They also discussed the role of
science in environmental advocacy and whether better science will aid environmental policymaking.

Many participants were deeply concerned about the relationships between population growth and the environment, especially in Africa. As populations grow, food, land, and water resources become stressed. Some participants posited that future wars may be fought over use of water and arable land. In addition, continued population growth in urban areas will inevitably contribute to greater congestion and pollution, further burdening the environment. Participants explored the nexus between development and the environment. Most agreed that policymakers must become more sensitive to the fact that economic development often has, as a by-product, environmental degradation. One participant cited demand for cars in heavily congested Mexico City as an example. Over a recent fifteen-year period, the demand remained constant due to stagnation in the Mexican economy. What would have been the environmental effect on the city had growth rates been healthy and the demand for cars doubled? This policy conundrum has been largely ignored. To some participants, examples like these show there may be an inherent contradiction between ecological concerns and development. Others disagreed, cautioning that policymakers are not helped by certain environmental groups’ claims that there is a clear correlation between economic growth and environmental degradation. Claims that market economies be equated with environmental waste, autocracy, and inefficiency only muddle the debate. A choice between economic growth and environmental preservation is no real choice. The challenge is to grow economies in an environmentally responsible way in accordance with the principle of sustainable development.

Other participants voiced concern about ozone depletion, global warming, and deforestation. Several believed that nations had not done enough to halt the production of harmful chemicals which deplete the ozone and cause other environmental problems. Others were more concerned about the destruction of rainforests that, according to them, is contributing to a rise in global temperatures which again puts pressure on local communities and national governments. A few participants expressed skepticism about scientific claims of rainforest destruction and ozone depletion, noting that not all scientists agree on the effects of our actions. They suggested that consensus among scientists on these and other environmental issues does not exist. Quite a few others objected to this characterization, emphasizing that some scientists are not impartially driven by science but are, in fact, paid by companies who manufacture items which harm the environment. As a result, they claim, these scientists are biased in their opinions. Participants recognized the need for “unpolluted science” and urged that decision makers and the public look to broadly based scientific and technical organizations rather than individual scientists to provide fora where a responsible voice of science is articulated.

The participants discussed the adequacy of the international community’s response to environmental problems. Most doubted whether the current international institutional structure is prepared to deal with the concerns of both the environment and the developing world. Some believed UN environmental programs are ineffective due to bureaucratic inefficiency. Others suggested that the international community does not consider environmental protection a priority. For several, the rising costs of environmental cleanup and monitoring was the defining reason for inaction. Whatever the reason, most participants expressed concern about the United Nations’ environmental programs. With the “life support system of the planet” under siege, several
participants urged that the United Nations should be doing more to protect the environment. They suggested the United Nations become more involved in establishing minimum standards, e.g., the protection of wildlife.

In the absence of an active and effective United Nations, smaller, specifically focused public and private organizations have formed, augmenting UN activity, and most participants welcomed this. These organizations were seen as better able to initiate action and inform the public about environmental issues. Other participants were less positive about the increased involvement and activity of these organizations, claiming that they are not able to cultivate the necessary support or resources and they dilute the effectiveness of organizations like the United Nations. As one participant added, these organizations specialize in one particular function, such as public education or monitoring, but neglect a needed enforcement function. In Africa, for example, seventy tons of ivory were confiscated by various national governments. In response, organizations could not stop the killing of elephants or help governments do so. Greater cooperation among the groups would help the environmental community coordinate efforts, avoid duplication, and perform functions which are largely ignored.

Several participants applauded the role of smaller, more-focused organizations, citing the effectiveness of the GEF. The GEF is unique. Originally established as a pilot program of the World Bank in 1991, it has evolved into the only international fund for global environmental protection where priorities are set by the participating nations themselves. It is a funding mechanism that helps to implement Agenda 21. (The World Bank, UNDP, and the United Nations Environment Programme do the real work.) GEF is an innovative international institution that relies on an unusual double majority voting mechanism. The thirty-two-member governing council is composed of both developing and developed countries. Each nation has two types of votes: one country gets one vote, and the other vote is weighted on the level of monetary contribution. In contrast, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development requires unanimity in decision making; the European Union operates by majority vote; the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have weighted majority voting; and the UN General Assembly operates by simple majority vote. The GEF voting procedure provides a balance of power between the donors and the recipients. To take action, GEF’s governing council requires a double majority, a majority of both of the two types of votes. Since this is difficult to obtain, parties prefer to rely on consensus decision making. The threat of having to work with the double majority and the tendency, therefore, to bypass it, was seen as very effective and was supported by many participants. Because of these innovations, many participants viewed the GEF as a possible model for future institutions.

International Rule of Law

Since the end of the Second World War, many important treaties have been concluded to regulate a number of nation-states’ activities that have global consequences, from limiting chloroflorocarbon emissions into the atmosphere to nuclear disarmament and the reduction of chemical weapon stockpiles. This is all good and welcome, but as one participant noted, international rule of law is far from a reality. Although there is law governing many types of international behavior, there is currently no legal system that is empowered to regulate, monitor, or enforce compliance with international law (i.e., trial and appellate courts, administrative tribunals, magistrates, police, and prisons). With a few limited exceptions, there is no application of international law to individuals. This is a global issue that needs greater attention since a functioning international legal system would allow for more predictability in interstate relations, universality of practices, and an orderly functioning of the international system. Ultimately, a functioning international legal system can only lead to greater peace and security, but until...
the apparatus of a legal system is in place, “rule” of law will be in name only.

In recent years the United Nations has contributed significantly to the development of international law, particularly criminal law through the work of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, created respectively in 1993 and 1994. Both tribunals are charged with the daunting task of prosecuting war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the Bosnian conflict of 1992-95. These are the first such war crimes prosecutions since the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials fifty years ago in the wake of World War II. From the start, the effectiveness of both courts has suffered under the weight of political and financial problems. However, they are legally dynamic institutions that have already contributed tremendously to the international rule of law by generating new laws and procedures in international prosecutions of war criminals. A permanent international criminal court is currently being negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations and, if one is established, the experience and knowledge gleaned from the temporary tribunals will be invaluable.

In the long run, one participant noted, what is needed to effectuate the international rule of law is the existence of an “international community” in the true sense of the expression. The rule of law is predicated on the existence of a society that shares a common cultural respect for and acceptance of orderliness. What is any community but a group of individuals that share common values such as a shared willingness to protect the weak, to respect individual human rights, to respond to danger and disaster, and to comply with and support the rule of law?

General Recommendations
Throughout the discussions, participants made a variety of proposals on a variety of subjects, which are summarized below. It is important to note that not all participants agreed with these proposals.

International Institutions
• Create smaller, more focused international institutions as they are more effective than institutions with broad mandates
• Encourage informal participation in international institutions of players who are traditionally disenfranchised from intergovernmental process
• Encourage more NGOs in the South
• Consider modeling governance of future organizations on the GEF double majority system
• Promote development of regional organizations
• Employ a civil service that is genuinely skilled in the particular tasks for which they are needed
• Reassess all international organizations in light of massive economic globalization

Peace and Security
• Create a permanent mechanism of preventive diplomacy
• Expand G-7 discussion to include security issues
• Review NATO expansion and its relation to broader global security institutions
• Explore a broader role for regional organizations in managing intrastate conflict
• Provide more financial and human resources to internally displaced persons and refugees
• Create highly specialized, professional (depoliticized) agencies to deal with weapons of mass destruction

Economic Development
• Address the growing serious inequalities between rich and poor
• Maintain UN involvement in economic development programs but conduct comprehensive assessment and overhaul
• Focus UN development activities on the least developed countries, trimming its current mandate
• Explore the creation of an economic security council

Environment
• Enhance UN involvement in international environmental norm-setting
• Encourage coordination among environmental groups and NGOs
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In this new era, the international community must thoroughly reassess the mission and effectiveness of world institutions. Trends like fundamental technological advances in communications and transportation, radical restructuring of various states, vigorous participation in public affairs by nonstate actors, and greater democratic openness are forcing change within international organizations such as the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, NATO, and others. They now need greater latitude to confront global problems with greater flexibility and creativity. The UN agenda, for example, may be far too ambitious. We need to ask whether it can address in a meaningful way all the issues currently on its plate. It may well be that the organization would best serve its purpose if its activities were more circumscribed, limited to a more specific set of issues that it can handle in a more focused, efficient, and effective manner. To remain in touch, international institutions need to bring into fold other players who are traditionally disenfranchised from the process. The thinking should focus not only on the kind of national or global institutions we want, but the type of society we want?

The United Nations and other international and regional organizations are not merely associations of governments, but part of a world community that must increasingly deal with the global survival issues of the future. Globalization is here to stay, and the peoples of the world are demanding better performance by national governments and intergovernmental organizations. The time is now for the nations and peoples of the world to honestly assess the relevance and effectiveness of global institutions so that they may be tailored for the needs and circumstances of the new century. This task is essential because, as aptly stated by one conference participant, “It’s hard to move forward if you don’t know where you’re heading.”

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- Promote greater involvement of environmental groups in stemming population growth
- Establish an international organization of professional scientists to provide environmental groups and policymakers with hard scientific data free of bias

Trade, Finance, and Investment
- Impose a new regulatory regime on international, private financial transactions
- Restore G-7 summit meetings to their original purpose, i.e., macroeconomics consultation and cooperation

International Rule of Law
- Work toward creation of an international legal system, including courts, tribunals, as well as police and prisons to enhance effectiveness of international law

Conclusion
Post-Cold War change and globalization have altered our assumptions about international institutions and global governance. A growing number of economic, environmental, and humanitarian problems transcend national boundaries and require international collective responses, as do the proliferating security threats from intrastate conflict and subnational terrorist groups. With all the world changes, international institutions and order are still needed, perhaps more than ever in the chaotic post-Cold War environment.

With all the world changes, international institutions and order are still needed, perhaps more than ever....
Park Hotel Vitznau, Vitznau, Switzerland
Beyond Reform

The tranquil settings on Lake Lucerne provided opportunities for informal exchanges and developing acquaintances.
The Vitznau discussions were energetic and thought-provoking. We intended to look beyond the current UN reform effort to explore what kind of United Nations and other global institutions are needed for the new era of the twenty-first century. The participants succeeded in doing this.

Shortly following our conference, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued his recommendations for renewing the United Nations. These are serious and creative proposals for managerial reform of the United Nations. They merit full consideration and early implementation. If adopted, they will go far toward improving the United Nations’ effectiveness and responsiveness.

Yet, as the secretary-general’s report itself points out, “Reform is, after all, a continuing process, not a single event.” Without detracting at all from his recommendations and the deliberations of the working groups of the General Assembly, our Vitznau objective was to help carry the process forward, to examine the more fundamental and radical changes needed for good governance of our changed and changing world. The first essential is a better understanding of the nature of the world of today and the future and how much things have changed since the United Nations was conceived in the waning days of World War II.

We must reorient and expand our thinking on the nature of threats to international peace and security. Too many of us are still stuck in paradigms of the past. Today, more than ever, there can be no secure peace without freedom and justice. Threats to peace and security are closely linked to issues like poverty, environmental degradation, population, migration, ethnicity, religion, economic opportunity, and basic human rights. As never before, maintenance of peace and security requires creative actions in these areas to minimize sources of conflict. With growing globalization and interdependence, prevention of conflict will pay greater dividends than efforts to contain or suppress conflict that has already erupted.

We must understand that the world has changed the way it makes and implements decisions. The old hierarchical system of nation-states and intergovernmental bodies is much less “in charge” today. Their former unambiguous authority has become diffused and complemented by a varied spectrum of nonstate entities, including the globalized market economy with its myriad of business enterprises and a heterogeneous civil society with uncounted NGOs and other formal and informal citizen groups.

Consequently, effective governance, whether global or local, must be far less hierarchical and far more integrative of numerous disparate entities and groups, each with its own sphere or regime of influence and activity. Indeed, they are a part of governance and must be accorded a meaningful role, not just an advisory voice. Governance is much more a matter of facilitating and interacting to encourage appropriate actions by each of the involved bodies and groups. It is much more a matter of integrating related needs and programs and articulating and encouraging adherence to shared values. In this new world, centralized command and control managerial systems do not work nearly as well in the long run as those that are participative and democratic.

The magnitude, complexity, and interrelatedness of issues mean that grand design solutions to global problems are not likely to work. Further, large systems—and certainly the globalized world is one—have great inertia. Change is slow and gradual. Consequently, modest solutions and actions dealing with specific problems or aspects of them are most likely to succeed. Conference participants
confirmed this with their enthusiasm for narrowly focused institutions that do a few things well. It is also reinforced by current business trends that emphasize paying attention to the core business rather than trying to do everything.

Another essential characteristic of good governance is that it takes the long view, resisting the human tendency to think only short term—to seek immediate gratification. One example: Despite the Rio conference, attention to environmental issues is languishing. Those with short-term goals tend to position environmental protection as being in conflict with economic development. Yet our long-term interest, and that of generations yet to come, demands sustainable development, not an either/or choice. Good governance should, as participants noted, “save us from ourselves” when we are inclined to see and consider only the immediate.

Finally, now is clearly the time for strengthening and expanding international law. The rule of law is the only durable way to provide stability, predictability, and consistency in human interaction. In our globalized world, democratically achieved rule of law, proven so effective within nation-states, must be extended internationally. In this, there is a broad, although not always recognized, common interest. The rule of law provides stability to governments, is good for business, facilitates a flourishing civil society, and lends dignity to human beings.
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