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Future of International Cooperation Report 2026

Redefining Global Trust



Global Governance
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September 2026

Future of International Cooperation *Report 2026*

Redefining Global Trust

By offering proposals for innovating global and regional governance to renew global trust, this report gives concerned citizens and governments tools to counter disinformation, injustice, and other obstacles to achieving a more peaceful and prosperous future for all.

At a time of geopolitical upheaval, shifting alignments, and growing uncertainty around the future of global and regional institutions, trust remains the essential foundation that enables cooperation between states, societies, and other stakeholders. New kinds of leadership, reinvigorated institutions, and renewed respect for international norms, policies, and laws are needed to reverse the ongoing breakdown of trust within and between countries, which is undermining efforts to build a more secure and just world — or “just security.” This fourth edition of the *Future of International Cooperation Report* (FIC’26) critically examines growing trust deficits across the spheres of global and regional politics (including diplomacy and mediation), economics (including business and technology), and security and justice (including protecting people and preventing violent extremism) — even in cases where national interests overlap and the benefits of coordinated action are clear. With a fresh reconceptualization of trust in this second quarter of the 21st century and the attendant multiplier effect of social capital investments, FIC’26 charts a positive reform and accountability agenda to leverage the confluence of a new United Nations Secretary-General (from January 1, 2027) with World Social Summit and Summit of the Future follow-through, alongside initial steps toward a Post-2030 Development Agenda in the lead-up to the September 2027 SDG Summit in New York.

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Foreword

At a time of rapid geopolitical change and systemic uncertainty, trust — the foundation of international cooperation — is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Confidence in institutions, commitments, shared norms, and the global order can no longer be assumed, as shifting power dynamics, technological disruption, and the spread of dis- and misinformation reshape how trust is designed, demonstrated, and sustained across societies and borders. Yet this moment is not defined by fragmentation and an erosion of trust alone. Across countries, regions, and other diverse forms of social organization, there are growing calls from citizens and many of their leaders for greater accountability, inclusion, and effectiveness. ***Trust is not disappearing — it is being actively redefined.***

In preparation for this year's Doha Forum on December 5 and 6, the ***Future of International Cooperation Report 2026*** aims to better inform forum participants, policy-makers, and concerned citizens by addressing the role of global and regional cooperation in reconceptualizing and renewing trust between governments, civil society, and the business community. It does so by identifying major spheres of human and national life, namely, the political, economic, security, and justice domains.

Under the theme “**Redefining Global Trust**,” the report offers a unique analytical perspective and new principles, giving special attention to how regional instability is reverberating across global systems, impacting energy markets, trade flows, supply chains, and economic stability. In doing so, the report aspires to help participants of the Doha Forum 2026 apply core principles of transparency, integrity, accountability, and effectiveness to the most pressing issues facing our planet. Indeed, both the forum and this report series’ focus on “diplomacy, dialogue, and diversity” matter, especially if the international community is to achieve genuine progress in a concerted effort to restore and reinvigorate trust worldwide.

We wish to express our appreciation to the authors of this report, which reflects the latest intellectual collaboration between the Doha Forum, the Stimson Center, and the Global Institute for Strategic Research (based at the Qatar Foundation's Hamad Bin Khalifa University). It comes at a critical time as the world begins to consider a “Post-2030 Development Agenda,” drawing ideas and momentum from the recent World Social Summit in Doha, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Sevilla, and Summit of the Future in New York. This year's report reminds the reader about the importance of global trust built around a shared purpose, such as the SDGs and their successors, anticipated in 2030. We hope it will also inform a rich and open exchange at the upcoming Doha Forum and other international dialogues dedicated to promoting a more just, secure, and trustworthy future for all.

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List of Abbreviations

AI.....	Artificial Intelligence
ASEAN.....	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
COP	Conference of the Parties (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change)
CT/PVE.....	Countering Terrorism/Preventing Violent Extremism
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FfD4.....	Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
FIC	<i>Future of International Cooperation Report</i> (2023, 2024, 2025, 2026)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGIR.....	<i>Global Governance Innovation Report</i> (2023, 2024, 2025, 2026)
HNWI	High-Net-Worth Individuals
IMF.....	International Monetary Fund
ICC.....	International Criminal Court
ICJ.....	International Court of Justice
IDB.....	Inter-American Development Bank
ITU.....	International Telecommunication Union
MENA.....	Middle East and North Africa
OAS	Organization of American States
ODA.....	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OSCE.....	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SOTF	Summit of the Future
TPB.....	Terrorism Prevention Branch (UN)
UN.....	United Nations
UNCTAD.....	United Nations Trade and Development (formerly “Conference”)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOCT	United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
WPS.....	Women, Peace and Security
WSS.....	World Social Summit
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

Executive Summary

“Without facts, you can’t have truth. Without truth, you can’t have trust. Without trust, we have no shared reality, no democracy, and it becomes impossible to deal with our world’s existential problems.”

— Maria Ressa, Nobel Peace Laureate and Journalist¹

Under the banner of “Diplomacy, Dialogue, and Diversity,” the Doha Forum has promoted for more than two decades a spirited and open interchange of ideas to innovate and improve international policy-making that drives action-oriented networks. Through this *Future of International Cooperation Report 2026* (FIC’26), the Doha Forum, Stimson Center, and Global Institute for Strategic Research explore ways to advance justice and security together (or “just security”), while charting a path toward a Post-2030 Development Agenda in the lead-up to next year’s (September 2027) SDG Summit in New York. It pursues these goals, in part, by leveraging the confluence of a new UN Secretary-General (from January 1, 2027) and follow-through efforts from the World Social Summit (November 2025, Doha), Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (June-July 2025, Sevilla), and Summit of the Future (September 2024, New York). For these global diplomatic gatherings to achieve their full potential, robust networks of governments, civil society, religious leaders, the media, the business community, and international organizations — both globally and regionally — are necessary for success. Their progress largely depends on building and sustaining high levels of trust among these critical actors, aligned around shared policy goals.

With a thematic focus on “**Redefining Global Trust**,” this year’s report gives special attention to how global and regional governance can best restore and expand trust in global and regional politics (including diplomacy and mediation), economics (including business and technology), and security and justice (including protecting people and preventing violent extremism). Societies function best when there is trust among their members, which is slowly earned over time. Like any social arrangement, **trust is the glue that keeps cooperative relationships together and reliable, whether within a country, a region, or globally**. But both mistrust and distrust at the global level have impacts at all levels of governance, eroding a sense of community, impeding the sharing of accurate information, lowering respect for international law, and undermining belief in the value of global public goods.

Clear, foundational principles are essential for countering trust deficits through effective global and regional governance. Applied to efforts to reform political and diplomatic institutions, fill economic and technological gaps, and advance security and justice in global governance, these principles include **transparency, legitimacy, effectiveness, and integrity**. Within the domain of regional governance, where the report also examines institutional, legal, policy, operational, and normative innovations, four closely related principles are emphasized: **cooperation, collaboration, accountability, and reciprocity**.

With the goal of redefining and reinvigorating trust through more effective, networked, and inclusive global and regional governance, the report’s chief recommendations include:

Redefining Global Trust

Establishing a Multilateral Information Integrity Council

International cooperation is under growing strain as the information environment deteriorates through the spread of technology-facilitated dis- and misinformation, undermining public trust and collective efforts to address global challenges such as health, the environment, and cybersecurity. Despite growing recognition of these risks, the UN and other international fora have yet to establish a dedicated institution or platform to advance information integrity. Building on the recently agreed Global Digital Compact at the Summit of the Future, the UN should establish a Multilateral Information Integrity Council as a system-wide scientific and coordinating body composed of technical experts to assess information environment degradation, develop shared standards and recommendations, and coordinate international responses to threats to information integrity. The Council would provide a unified multilateral framework for advancing information integrity across the UN Secretariat, UNESCO, UNDP, ITU, World Bank, and other relevant bodies.

Building a Global AI Hub and Shared Computing Infrastructure

Ensuring that artificial intelligence contributes to inclusive development, underpinned by strong bonds of trust, requires closing widening disparities in access to — and reducing the growing costs of — the computing power, digital infrastructure, data, and technical expertise needed to develop and deploy large-scale AI systems. Countries with greater financial and technological resources are better positioned to benefit from the AI transformation, while developing countries face persistent constraints on AI readiness. A Global AI Hub could translate AI and broader technology related international commitments (e.g., from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Global Digital Compact) into shared computing infrastructure and technical resources accessible to developing countries, alongside mechanisms for improved knowledge-sharing, research collaboration, and capacity-building. This would help to ensure that access to advanced AI capabilities is not determined primarily by national income and that technological transformation contributes to more broad-based, socioeconomic development worldwide.

Streamlining and Reforming UN Counter-Terrorism Efforts

The UN's approach to countering terrorism (CT) and preventing violent extremism (PVE) has become imbalanced, as emphasis on security operations to combat terrorism sometimes overshadows safeguards for human rights and the rule of law, weakening UN legitimacy and creating opportunities for governments to misuse counter-extremism measures to suppress political opposition and restrict fundamental freedoms. Reforms to strengthen the UN's approach could include consolidating overlapping counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism functions, clarifying mandates and institutional responsibilities, strengthening coordination across UN entities and with regional organizations, establishing common human rights and rule-of-law safeguards for CT/PVE programming, and developing stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not enable the suppression of political opposition or fundamental freedoms. These steps would improve the trust and legitimacy of UN CT/PVE efforts, while strengthening Member States' capacity to address terrorism in accordance with international law.

Redefining Regional Trust

Building an Inter-Regional Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy Network

Regional conflict management mechanisms often engage only after political crises have escalated into violence, constitutional breakdown, or widespread instability, missing an opportunity to prevent conflict and restore basic levels of trust before tensions deepen. An Inter-Regional Early Warning and Preventive

Diplomacy Network would institutionalize continuous monitoring, early dialogue among stakeholders, and timely engagement before the initial outbreak or recurrence of deadly conflict. Coordinated with UN preventive diplomacy efforts, the network's individual hubs (embedded within existing regional organizations) would strengthen regional ownership, while advancing shared global peace and security goals. Employing distinct political and cultural sensitivities, their primary function would be to monitor early warning indicators of political erosion, including constitutional crises and growing social unrest, and, where needed, activate preventive diplomacy measures to avert a crisis.

Expanding and Deepening Regional and Inter-Regional Trade Agreements

Despite continued global trade growth, geopolitical tensions, protectionism, surging energy costs, and shifting supply chains are creating unpredictable market access and volatile investment flows globally that disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Meanwhile, fragmented regional trade rules, customs procedures, and compliance requirements further constrain their ability to benefit from economic integration. Stronger regional and inter-regional trade cooperation can sustain economic collaboration, expand ecological interdependence, and rebuild trust by improving trade and investment conditions through technical assistance, investment facilitation, environmental protection regulations, and capacity-building, while enabling regional economic communities, businesses, and other stakeholders to adapt production networks to unpredictable global supply chain dynamics.

Embedding Enforcement Mechanisms into Regional Security Arrangements to Improve Trust

Ensuring compliance remains a critical challenge to the credibility and effectiveness of regional security arrangements, which often lack binding legal obligations, trustworthy enforcement mechanisms, and effective dispute-resolution procedures. To design better security arrangements that meet the needs of a region's countries and cities, clearer compliance and accountability mechanisms are needed that strengthen regional trust, deterrence, and collective commitments, including by establishing independent monitoring bodies, requiring transparent reporting on regional security agreement implementation, and creating predictable procedures for dispute resolution and corrective action.

From the Summit of the Future to the Post-2030 Development Agenda: Restoring Trust in a Fractured World

The report concludes by exploring the multiple, potential “win-win” implementation linkages between the **Political Declaration** adopted at the World Social Summit (2025), the **Sevilla Commitment** of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (2025), and the **Pact for the Future** endorsed at the Summit of the Future (2024). Progress in redefining trust, in all its dimensions, depends on the respective success of the follow-throughs to each of these global diplomatic gatherings, in identifying and pursuing the rooted and varied connections between them.

Several of the innovations for restoring and expanding trust through global and regional governance introduced in this report offer novel entry points for deepening the multiple, mutually reinforcing action agendas of these recent successive summits, which are now poised to shape an ambitious new generation of development goals (for the period 2030 until 2045 and the UN's centenary) in the run-up to next year's (September 2027) SDG Summit in New York. **Reducing distrust, injustice, lawlessness, and the too casual abrogation of accepted norms and customs requires political and moral courage, alongside a robust vision of just security, as central to the Post-2030 Development Agenda** — not only from national governments and international organizations, but from their partners across civil society and in the business community.

I. Introduction: Global Trust Unpacked, Trends, and Concepts

“In a world undergoing profound change, trust can no longer be taken for granted or sustained by past assumptions alone. It must be redefined for contemporary realities — deliberately built, continuously earned, and actively reinforced through inclusive dialogue, credible institutions, and cooperation that delivers tangible outcomes.”

— Mubarak Ajlan Al-Kuwari, Executive Director, Doha Forum²

This year’s Doha Forum (December 5-6, 2026) takes place in the wake of the 2024 Summit of the Future in New York, the 2025 Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Sevilla, and the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha. The forum presents an opportunity to explore the need for new or reinvigorated tools — catalyzed by these global convenings — to improve trust and cooperation, as United Nations (UN) Member States install a new Secretary-General of the organization from January 1, 2027. High on his or her agenda will be the perennial search for solutions to long-festering conflicts and inequalities, in part by charting a “Post-2030 Development Agenda” in the run-up to the September 2027 Sustainable Development Goals Summit. Through bold and imaginative leadership across governments, the business community, and civil society too, the follow-through action plans to these UN summits are poised to represent a turning point for renewing and expanding global trust and cooperation.

Through the *Future of International Cooperation Report 2026* (FIC’26), the Doha Forum, Stimson Center, and Global Institute for Strategic Research present a primer for Doha Forum participants, international policy-makers, journalists, and concerned citizens on the theme of “Redefining Global Trust.” Despite the momentum and new thinking generated by recent global diplomatic gatherings, the sustained fragmentation and weakening of how global and regional organizations operate and deliver on their mandated responsibilities are compounded by eroding trust within and between states, societies, and other stakeholders. Without immediate action and the emergence of new and renewed norms, policies, laws, institutions, and kinds of leadership, the international community and its multilateral bodies will remain mired in crises of confidence, credibility, and legitimacy — *all dependent on the restoration of fundamental bonds of trust in order to rebound.*

This report aids the Doha Forum 2026 in critically examining trust deficits in politics, mediation, business, technology, and safeguarding people’s security and rights to understand how each of these is impacting multilateral cooperation. Before turning to these themes in the following sections, FIC’26 first unpacks the concept of trust and its practical applications around the world, followed by a brief overview of key global and regional macrorends, as well as important ideas and terminology employed throughout the report.

Unpacking Trust

Chapter I, Article 2 of the UN Charter establishes principles that the organization and Member States agree to uphold; fulfilling all Charter obligations in good faith underpins global trust, reinforcing expectations that all Member States will honor their obligations to one another and the United Nations.³ Declining trust in multilateral institutions (fueled, in particular, by political instability, poor public sector performance, and the attendant undermining of citizen trust in their national political institutions), such as the UN, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), and international courts, has contributed to the fragmenting of international cooperation, with consequences for peace, human rights, and economic development.⁴ Ultimately, this erosion reflects a broader crisis of confidence in global institutions as fair, authoritative, and unifying bodies capable of addressing shared challenges, threats, and opportunities.

Recent trends indicate a broad deterioration in trust toward governance institutions at multiple levels. Across Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, 44% of respondents report low or no trust in their national governments due to unmet commitments and declining quality of life. Many place greater confidence in local institutions, such as the police, local governments, and civil services.⁵

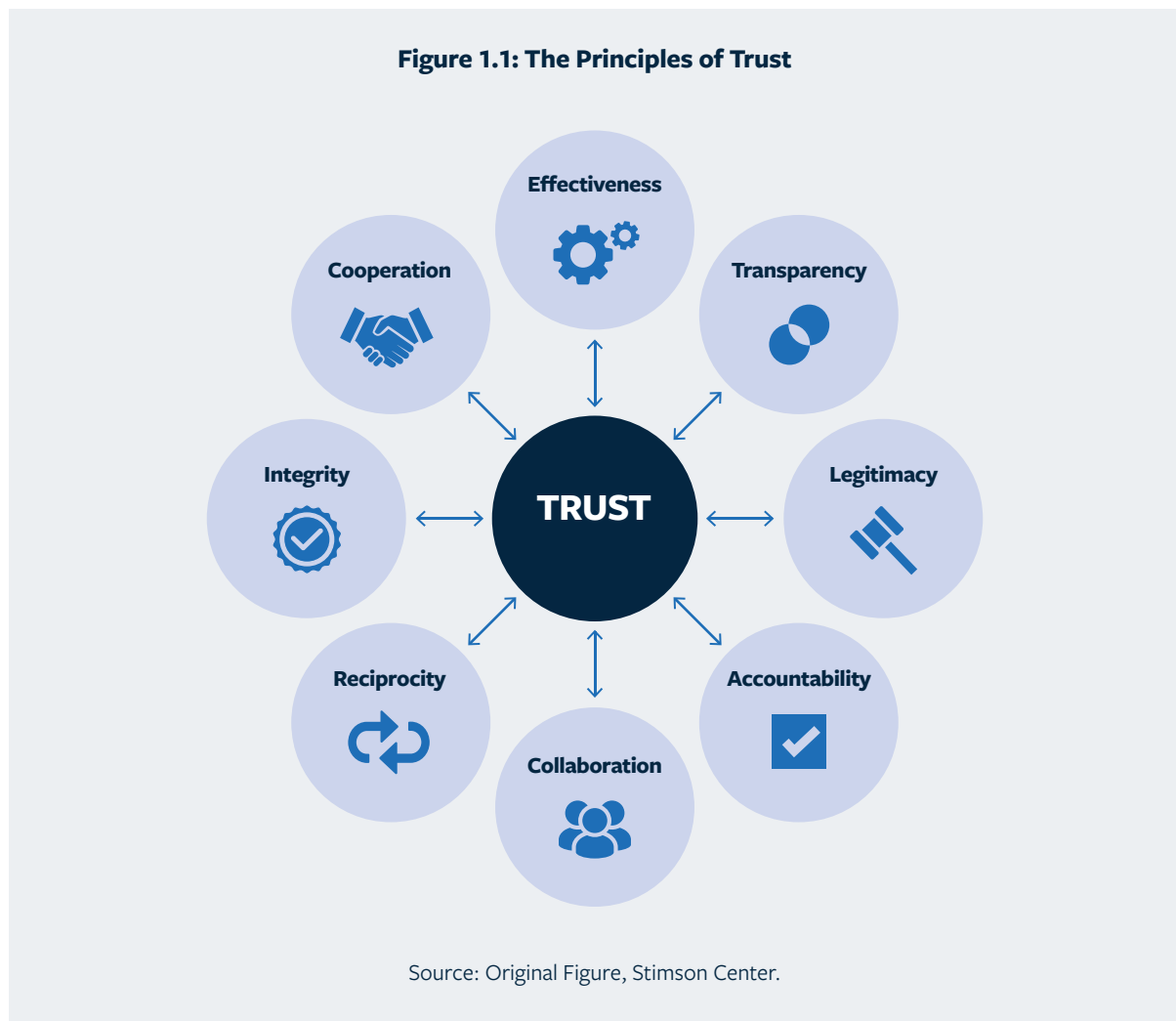
Trust is declining globally as well: data shows that confidence in the UN fell in 23 of 27 countries between 2021 and 2024, driven in part by perceptions that the UN is failing to meet global needs, advance development, and counter democratic backsliding.⁶ The Edelman Trust Barometer found that levels of trust in the UN between 2022 and 2025 among 13 Global North states surveyed were at best neutral (11 states), whereas surveys in nine of 15 Global South countries expressed relatively high trust in the UN, suggesting that confidence in the UN remains more resilient in the Global South.⁷ In FIC'26, both perceptions of and real-world efforts to enhance trust and cooperation are considered vis-à-vis global and regional governing bodies across the spheres of politics, economics, social development, security, and justice:

Political trust: refers to a citizen's trust in local, regional, and global political leaders or governing systems, including trust among state actors to cooperate through mediation and diplomacy to end conflict.⁸ Political trust requires engaging with diverse stakeholders and maintaining credibility through transparency in decision-making and the successful implementation of policies. Global trust is threatened when power is inequitably shared, representation lacking or skewed, and accountability deficient.

Socioeconomic trust: refers to the trust reciprocated among individuals, countries, and their societies and economies to effectively and fairly resource the needs of people and protect the environment.⁹ Conversely, tariffs, overconsumption, pollution, intellectual property rights, and growing debt burdens are sometimes employed to manipulate economic systems, which can sow socioeconomic distrust.¹⁰ This weaponization of economic tools perpetuates worldwide injustice and inequities. Sustained levels of uneven development and inequality precipitate a loss of socioeconomic trust in institutions, resulting in the erosion of democracies.¹¹

Trust in security and justice: refers to trust in the international system to respond effectively to violence, lawlessness and criminality, conflict, and crises. Trust in security pertains to the sustained commitment among actors, including states and non-state groups, not to harm one another.¹² Trust in the justice system refers to the expectation that legal issues will be resolved fairly, and criminals apprehended and tried to the full extent of the law, indicating a strong functioning democracy.¹³

To prevent the collapse of trust in relation to politics, society, the economy, security, and the justice system, at least eight fundamental principles must be adhered to fully (figure 1.1). These principles (each elaborated in sections two and three of this report) — integrity, transparency, legitimacy, effectiveness, reciprocity, collaboration, accountability, and cooperation — will help to rebuild trust and further strengthen the reach of global and regional governance, by restoring confidence in multilateral institutions, fostering the creation of shared solutions, and engaging in renewed, “win-win” relationships between actors.



Trust, as defined in this report, is the belief that actors will reliably uphold shared values and principles. When institutional trust erodes, citizens lose confidence in governing bodies, weakening social compacts and cohesion. Social compacts are negotiated based on the social capital in each community (at all levels of governance); this capital is built on trust and sustained through ties across social groups.¹⁴ When these ties erode, social cohesion weakens, making trust harder to rebuild.

Rebuilding trust requires strengthening cooperation among people and institutions, while addressing inequalities and governance failures that have accompanied globalization.¹⁵ Because trust must be earned, rebuilding it requires sustained goodwill between actors — since not all connections are trustworthy, and

not all actors recognize and appreciate diverse local perspectives, as well as the need for shared norms, equitable investment, and more responsive and accountable institutions.¹⁶ Together, these measures can strengthen social cohesion, rebuild confidence in multilateral institutions, and reinforce the trust needed for sustained international cooperation.

The next UN Secretary-General has an opportunity to lead this effort by bringing greater transparency to decision-making and organizational processes, amplifying the voices of historically marginalized countries, strengthening the UN's role as a legitimate convening and coordinating institution, and ensuring that commitments translate into measurable results.¹⁷ Success will depend on broad-based coalition-building (including innovative cross-regional coalitions), inclusive decision-making, and a credible implementation agenda that delivers tangible outcomes for nations and their citizens, demonstrating that the UN can drive the systematic change needed to address shared global challenges, threats, and opportunities.¹⁸

Global Backdrop

Underpinning the *Future of International Cooperation Report 2026* is the recognition of four defining global currents: peace and security, socioeconomic development, the environment, and technology. Their convergence is reflected in their alignment with the SDGs and the priorities of the Pact for the Future — yet progress on both agendas remains under strain.¹⁹ Fiscal constraints across the UN system, declining foreign aid, widening sovereign debt burdens, and geopolitical fragmentation have weakened the capacity of multilateral institutions to respond effectively. At the same time, protracted and emerging conflicts, climate-related shocks, and rapid technological change are placing unprecedented demands on international cooperation.

The interdependence of these four currents is particularly evident in the relationship between socioeconomic development and peace and security. Mounting global debt pressures and declining foreign aid constrain the ability of countries and the international community to effectively prevent and respond to the increasing number of conflicts through peacekeeping and peacebuilding, early warning systems, resilient institutions, and investment in social protection. This decline increases the risk that economic fragility and social inequality will contribute to instability. Responding effectively to today's interconnected challenges requires stronger global and regional institutions that are adequately financed, politically supported, and trusted to deliver timely solutions.

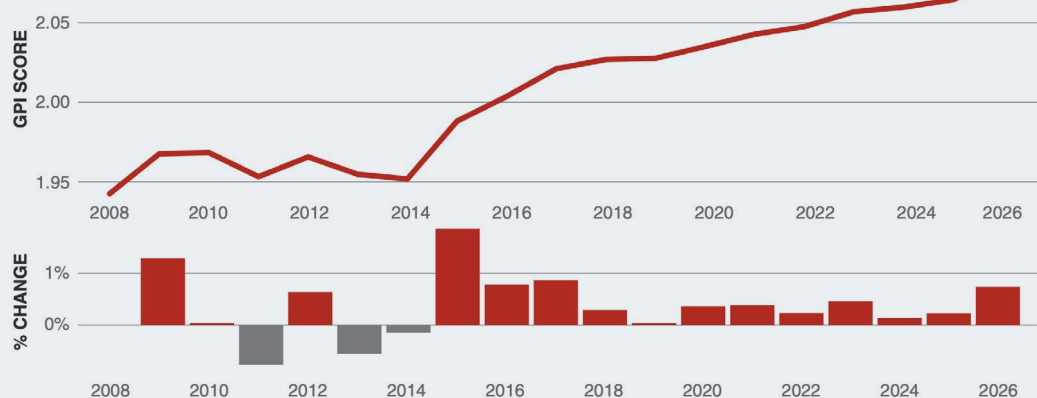
PEACE AND SECURITY

Global peace and security in 2025 and the first half of 2026 deteriorated further, with global peacefulness falling for a 12th consecutive year to its lowest recorded level (figure 1.2).²⁰ The Uppsala Conflict Data Program recorded 65 state-based armed conflicts and nearly 245,000 fatalities from organized violence, with the deadliest in Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan, where one-sided violence rose five-fold, the highest level since the 1994 Rwandan genocide.²¹ Conflicts fought between states have doubled to eight, the most in nearly eight decades.²² Military spending hit a record \$2.9 trillion in 2025, up 2.9% from 2024, and 41% over the past decade, lifting the global military burden to 2.5% of GDP (driven partly by a 14% surge in European spending alone).²³ Nuclear-armed states further spent a record \$118.8 billion on their nuclear

arsenals in 2025, a 19% jump from 2024.²⁴ Meanwhile, the number of forcibly displaced people stood at 117.8 million people at the end of 2025,²⁵ a reduction of 5.4 million people from the year before; however, most returns have been to unstable areas, often under adverse conditions.²⁶

In connection with these trends, multilateral institutions are facing declining trust and signs of growing political friction (as detailed in sections two and three of this report). The UN Security Council adopted 44 resolutions in 2025, the fewest since 1991, with four vetoes issued and only 61% unanimous decisions adopted.²⁷ While the UN affirms that maintaining peace and preventing or ending wars remain core mandates, there has been a 60% reduction in deployed peacekeeping troops since a peak in 2015, with no new peacekeeping operations since 2014 — and budget cuts exceeding \$650 million for 2026/27.²⁸ This decline is compounded by the UN's liquidity crisis, with many Member States consistently falling behind on their contributions to the organization. As of August 26, 2026, only 130 Member States paid their regular budget assessments in full, and only 57 had paid all peacekeeping assessments due by April 30, 2026, leaving \$3.5 billion outstanding.²⁹ Record-setting levels of conflict since 1946, including resurgent interstate war, vastly increased military and nuclear spending, and an undervaluing of the United Nations' conflict management toolkit, are sidelining the global collective security architecture.

Figure 1.2: Global Peace Index Score and Year-on-Year Percentage Change, 2008-2026



Source: IEP, *Global Peace Index 2026: Identifying and measuring the factors that drive peace*, 52.

SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RECOVERY

Global socioeconomic conditions in 2025 and the first half of 2026 remained stable but increasingly uneven.³⁰ Global economic output continued to expand, yet per capita income gains were imbalanced, progress in human development slowed, and countries facing high structural vulnerability remained disproportionately exposed to debt, climate shocks, and conflict.³¹ Global inflation is projected to rise to 4% in 2026, as higher energy and food prices increase the cost of living, placing continued pressure on

purchasing power and slowing improvements in living standards.³² With global public debt projected to hit 100% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2029, governments face growing pressure to balance debt payments with investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and climate adaptation.³³ Moreover, Official Development Assistance (ODA) declined by 23.1% in 2025, representing the largest annual reduction in development aid on record.³⁴ Meanwhile, advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping labor markets, as generative AI job vacancies increased ninefold between 2021 and 2024; additionally persistent digital skills gaps threaten to widen inequality and constrain workforce preparedness.³⁵

Global and regional governance responses have increasingly focused on restoring fiscal sustainability, mobilizing development finance, and supporting structural economic transformation, including through technology transfers and capacity-building.³⁶ The IMF and World Bank continued to employ their joint Debt Sustainability Framework to guide lending and policy advice. Simultaneously, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) reaffirmed commitments to reform the international financial architecture, expand concessional finance, and strengthen domestic resource mobilization in support of the SDGs.³⁷ Meanwhile, the African Union (AU) advanced implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area to deepen regional integration and industrialization, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continued developing regional digital economy frameworks to promote innovation and productivity.³⁸ Despite these efforts, constrained fiscal space, declining development assistance, and weakening global multilateral cooperation continue to limit the scale and effectiveness of these important regional responses.³⁹

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental threats continued to worsen over the past year and a half, as climate change intensified the frequency and severity of extreme weather events and the gap between adaptation needs and available financing further widened. Developing countries require an estimated \$310 to \$387 billion annually by 2035 for climate adaptation, yet international public adaptation finance covers only 7-8% of projected needs, leaving a financing gap 12-14 times larger than current flows.⁴⁰ Global temperatures remained at or near record highs, making 2025 the warmest year recorded and extending unprecedented levels observed since 2023.⁴¹ Extreme weather, including floods, droughts, wildfires, tropical cyclones, and prolonged heatwaves, caused approximately \$224 billion in global economic losses, including \$108 billion in insured losses, while increasingly straining critical infrastructure and disaster risk management systems.⁴² Climate extremes also exacerbated food insecurity in 2025, with analysis finding that a 1°C increase above long-term average temperatures was associated with acute food insecurity for an additional 70 million people across 45 vulnerable countries.⁴³ Biodiversity loss and pollution also continued to threaten economic resilience, while growing plastic and municipal waste placed additional pressure on environmental systems.⁴⁴

Global and regional governance responses increasingly prioritize climate adaptation, disaster resilience, and financing for vulnerable countries, although implementation continues to lag behind political commitments. COP30 in Belém reinforced an implementation-focused model of climate governance, seeking to accelerate delivery of existing commitments while strengthening the legitimacy of the multilateral climate regime.⁴⁵ Multilateral development banks expanded climate finance to a record \$163 billion in 2025, including \$103 billion for low- and middle-income countries, with adaptation finance increasing 31% to \$35 billion.⁴⁶ International cooperation also advanced on biodiversity and pollution, with the COP16 UN Biodiversity Conference strengthening financing and monitoring arrangements under the Kunming-Montreal Global

Biodiversity Framework.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, negotiations continued toward a legally binding global plastics treaty despite persistent divisions.⁴⁸ Regional organizations similarly strengthened cooperation on disaster preparedness and climate resilience through the AU's Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Action System, the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism and rescEU, and ASEAN's disaster management initiatives.⁴⁹

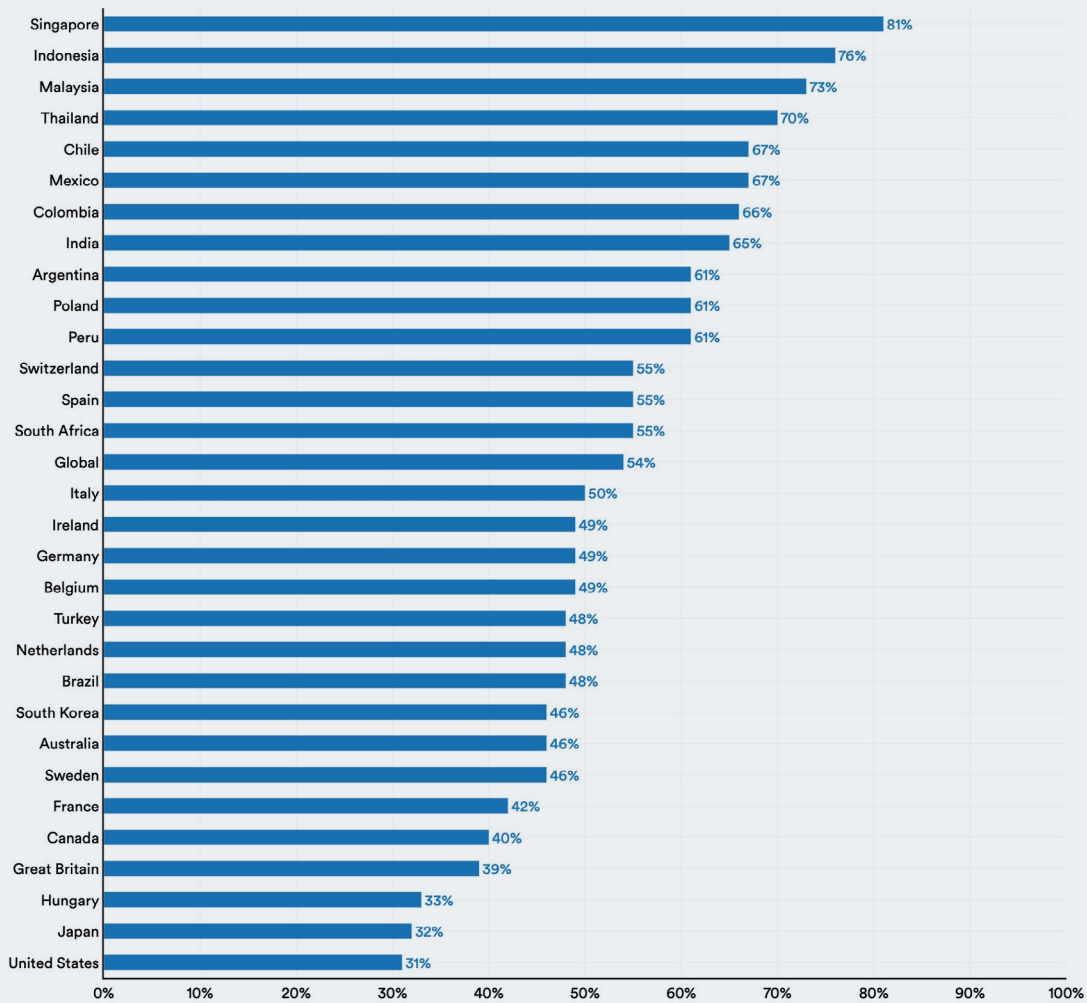
TECHNOLOGY

Technological change continues to accelerate rapidly, yet its related capital investments, infrastructure, and governance remain unevenly distributed. Artificial intelligence (AI) is projected to become a \$4.8 trillion market by 2033, but its development is highly concentrated: Just 100 firms, mostly in the U.S. and China, account for 40% of global corporate research and development, and 118 countries, mostly in the Global South, remain absent from major AI governance forums.⁵⁰ The private sector produced over 90% of notable AI models in 2025, and the compute governments designate as national infrastructure are largely built by private firms.⁵¹ Calls for national and regional AI sovereignty are growing, yet fewer than a third of developing countries have a national AI strategy, leaving much of the Global South without the infrastructure or skills to compete.⁵² Warfare is also being reshaped by new technologies: Inexpensive, off-the-shelf drones are becoming more prevalent, while states and their contractors are using capital-intensive, AI-enabled targeting and autonomous systems that narrow the human role in decisions to use lethal force, raising new questions of accountability under international law.⁵³ According to Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) analysis, the number of non-state actors deploying drones in attacks rose from 10 in 2020 to 469 across 17 countries in 2025.⁵⁴

In August 2025, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 79/325, establishing an Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and a Global Dialogue on AI Governance, with the latter aiming to act as a global platform to bring Global South and less-developed countries, long excluded from G7 and OECD-led processes, into global AI governance decision-making.⁵⁵ Additionally, the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has called for inclusive digital governance frameworks built on shared compute infrastructure and greater public disclosure.⁵⁶ At UNCTAD16, in October 2025, ministers discussed how digital tools can improve public services, strengthen governance, and unlock new industries in developing countries, from AI-enabled health diagnostics to precision agriculture, provided they receive the infrastructure, data governance, and skills to deploy them.⁵⁷ Regional efforts, from Latam-GPT, a model built for Latin America's languages, to the EU's OpenEuroLLM, an open multilingual model for the bloc's 24 official languages, and the AU's designation of AI as a "strategic priority," signal attempts to build greater regional capacity.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, public trust in government regulation of artificial intelligence varies widely between countries (figure 1.3).⁵⁹

Calls for national and regional AI sovereignty are growing, yet fewer than a third of developing countries have a national AI strategy, leaving much of the Global South without the infrastructure or skills to compete.

Figure 1.3: Trust in Government Regulation of AI by Country (% of Total), 2025



Source: Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, *The AI Index 2026 Annual Report*, 380.

Key Concepts in this Report

TRUST

Operating as both a noun and a verb, trust represents, at its core, a belief in the reliability of another actor — and the perceived truth of that someone or something. Earned over time through a process of confidence-building (with trust often viewed as an outcome), trust has significant consequences for institutions, the economy, and interpersonal relations. Institutional trust is normally manifested through the belief that the institution will competently uphold a set of shared values and principles reflected in how national governments, local governing bodies, and multilateral institutions operate. High levels of institutional trust are typically associated with a well-functioning economy and democracy, where most

citizens engage government through peaceful and constructive civic action and a kind of social compact is observed between citizens and the governing authorities. Building confidence in the public sector through transparency is a critical component of trust; if citizens feel deceived by their governing bodies, they will no longer trust or view public institutions as legitimate.⁶⁰ Trust in governing bodies is also vital for peace and security and law-abiding behavior, as the more trustworthy an institution is perceived to be, the more likely that citizens and citizens' groups will support and observe its norms and regulations.⁶¹

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is the value accrued based on establishing trust within a community and one's willingness to abide by the norms of that community and reciprocate.⁶² There are two core components of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding signifies strong ties within a family or among friends; bridging signifies ties across social groups, which are needed for multilateral cooperation.⁶³ When gained together, social capital and trust facilitate the shared values that are needed to create social cohesion and to inspire civic participation.⁶⁴

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Global governance refers to the steering of institutions and resources to provide for global public goods and tackle global challenges effectively. Such steering requires not only power, but also trust in said institutions legitimacy and authority. Here, an emerging consensus becomes visible that for global governance to be legitimate and authoritative in contemporary terms, it needs to be conducted in an evidence-based, inclusive, representative, networked, equitable, and future-oriented way that will build trust where it has been lost. Global governance innovation typically involves reform initiatives to advance global institutional, legal, policy, normative, and operational change and to enable greater trust.⁶⁵

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Regional governance refers to the institutions, mechanisms, and processes through which countries and other actors within a specific geographic region cooperate to address transboundary challenges, manage resources, strengthen bonds of trust, and pursue common goals — often in such areas as economic development, security, human rights, environmental protection, and public health.⁶⁶ It typically involves formal organizations (e.g., the African Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, European Union, and Organization of American States), as well as less formal arrangements (e.g., cross-border initiatives, policy dialogues, and regional forums). Regional governance can operate at various levels, including supranational, intergovernmental, or multistakeholder, and it often complements and bridges global and national governance efforts.

REGIONS

Regions are layered political constructs shaped by factors such as geography, culture, economic networks, and history. They function as social and political spaces in which norms, policies, and disputes are determined.⁶⁷ The definition of a region is inherently political and can impact environmental, economic, and social issues within the defined territory of a region.⁶⁸ Composed of, and led by, economically and politically independent states, regional institutions influence trust, transparency, shared norms, and the willingness of actors to cooperate across the region.⁶⁹

ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Anticipatory governance (cooperation on matters of prevention) refers to addressing pertinent societal issues before the point of crisis.⁷⁰ Policy-makers and governmental leaders can implement anticipatory governance through strategic planning based on patterns and trends, which are used to reduce and eliminate serious, problematic issues before they arise, rather than implementing a reactionary approach to governance.⁷¹

FAIRNESS

Fairness is the impartial and just treatment of people, decisions, and processes, ensuring that rights are respected, burdens and benefits are distributed equitably, and rules are applied consistently without bias or favoritism.⁷²

JUSTICE

Held dear in all cultures and traditions, conceptions of justice also vary between them. The concept includes procedural and retributive justice — the formal institutions and processes of the judiciary (civil and criminal) that encompass courts, judges, records, prosecutors, defense counsel, jails, and prisons — but fair and effective adjudication is only a piece of the picture.⁷³ Another element is the informal dispute settlement and justice mechanisms found in most traditional societies, which may sometimes be more resilient than formal systems (e.g., during protracted deadly conflicts) and may enjoy more local trust (especially when employing restorative justice techniques that focus on rehabilitating offenders through reconciliation with victims and the wider community).⁷⁴ A third, core component is distributive justice: how society allocates and manages its resources.⁷⁵ In some conflict-affected states, the national allocation of monetary wealth — and land, and influence — may have been a principal cause of war.

MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Misinformation refers to the unintentional dissemination of false information.⁷⁶ Disinformation refers to information that is intentionally inaccurate or misleading with the explicit intent to harm.⁷⁷ When disinformation is weaponized in politics and media, it inhibits trust in institutions and their proposed areas of endeavor.

MISTRUST AND DISTRUST

Mistrust refers to doubt about another individual's trustworthiness, whereas distrust refers to the understanding that another individual is untrustworthy.⁷⁸ More deliberate and intentional, distrust often works to sow a deep lack of trust in a local population, for instance vis-à-vis institutions and other approaches designed to promote effective global governance and cooperation.

MULTILATERAL TRUST

Multilateral trust refers to the trust and confidence citizens have, worldwide, in international governing bodies, including at global and regional levels, to act based on shared values and interests during both times of crisis and peace.⁷⁹

II. Redefining Global Trust: Challenges & Opportunities for Global Governance

“Whether it is to overcome current difficulties, or to create a better future, it is essential that we discard prejudice, bridge differences, and work as one to tackle the trust deficit.”

— Li Qiang, Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China⁸⁰

Societies function best when there is trust among their members, which is slowly earned over time and yet can be easily (and quickly) squandered. Like any social arrangement, trust is the glue that keeps cooperative relationships together and reliable, whether within a country, a region, or globally, and should be built around a shared set of goals. Yet, when mis- and distrust at the global level have impacts at all levels of governance, they erode a sense of community, impede the dissemination of accurate information, lower respect for international law, and undermine belief in the value of global public goods.

Both mistrust and distrust can take many forms, for instance, citizens feeling insecure from either suspicion or clear proof that powerful states are defying consensus-based decisions of the UN General Assembly and Security Council or rulings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC). Or their unease may flow from perceived and real growing socioeconomic gaps within and between states, punctuated by a dearth of resources regardless of the pledges made to address these gaps.

Many citizens also face heightened anxiety from within both sending and receiving states for the tens of millions of displaced persons annually — whether caused by violent conflicts, human rights violations, extreme poverty, or, increasingly, climate change and other environmental catastrophes. Despite the commitment of most Member States and international civil servants to upholding the high ideals of the United Nations Charter, Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, and other foundational documents of the global multilateral system, global institutions (led by their Member States) have often struggled in recent years to effectively meet these aspirations and associated international policy goals. They are not falling short because of a lack of mandates, resolutions, and agreements. They are struggling against political and epistemic conditions in crisis: *issues which can only be solved by the building of trust.*

In addition to these and related challenges to redefining and restoring trust globally, this section of the *Future of International Cooperation Report 2026* explores innovations in global governance to meet current and future transnational challenges, risks, and opportunities. Drawing upon four mutually reinforcing principles for building greater trust in global governance, this section introduces six policy and institutional reforms

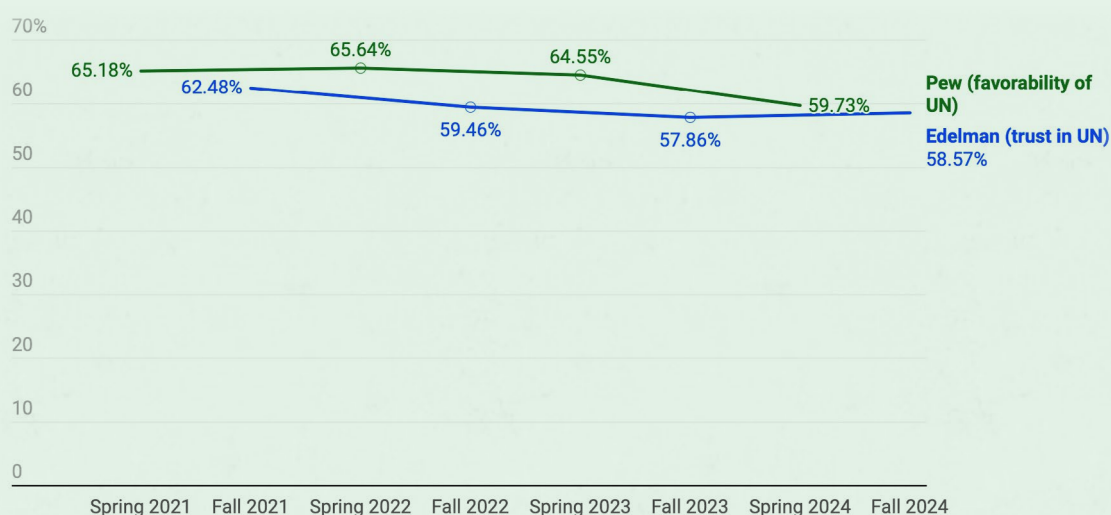
across the political and diplomatic, socioeconomic and technological, and security and judicial dimensions of trust. Later, in section four, this report further relates these ideas to the follow-through of last year’s World Social Summit in Doha and Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Sevilla, as well as the September 2024 Summit of the Future in New York, while feeding into the preparations for the September 2027 SDG Summit in New York, as it begins to chart an emerging Post-2030 Development Agenda.

Major Challenges, Risks, and Opportunities

Global governance faces a steady erosion of trust from citizens. From the world witnessing the highest number of active conflicts since 1946 (and associated lack of consensus toward a disarmament agenda),⁸¹ mixed commitments by Member States, especially from the most powerful, to uphold the United Nations (UN) Charter, to the failure of peacekeeping missions to protect civilians, and the systemic defunding of international organizations, a credibility crisis has intensified in recent years. Data from public perception surveys involving dozens of countries further reflect a downward trend in trust in the UN (figure 2.1; see also section one of FIC’26).⁸²

Despite operational challenges and the persistent lack of commitment by some Member States, international institutions continue to work to facilitate cooperation on peace and security, development, human rights, and other transnational challenges. Support for international cooperation remains strong, as reflected in the broad endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), yet confidence in institutions’ ability to deliver is declining amid geopolitical divisions and contracting development and humanitarian resources.⁸³

Figure 2.1: Public Perceptions of the UN, 2021-2024



Source: Trithart and Romier, “Is Public Trust in the UN Falling? A Look at Global Survey Data.”

POLITICAL TRUST IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The changing information environment worldwide poses a challenge to trust. Disinformation, algorithmic polarization, and increasingly sophisticated AI-generated content not only produce false and prejudicial portrayals, but they also make it more difficult for citizens to distinguish reliable information from manipulation. When institutions fail to be transparent and accessible, they fail to meaningfully recognize and engage those they aim to serve. Equally counterproductive is how this creates space for misinformation and competing narratives to shape public perceptions and to shoulder aside what can and should be a valuable global public good. Consequently, trust in governments, media, and international institutions declines in societies, reinforcing an information environment in which extremist narratives and conspiracy theories can spread easily and rapidly.⁸⁴

At the same time, international institutions themselves need to overcome a communication gap. Global agreements and governance processes are often inaccessible and poorly understood outside diplomatic and policy communities, due to formal and technical language.⁸⁵ Major initiatives on digital governance and AI that serve the global community's interest may struggle to reach informed citizens, let alone the broader public. Greater investment in media, including multilingual public communication and partnerships with civil society and local actors, can strengthen societal resilience against manipulation, while improving the accessibility of global institutions.⁸⁶

Ultimately, the erosion of this information environment is not merely a communications problem: it is a political trust problem at all levels of governance. Political trust creates the conditions for peace, socioeconomic cooperation, and environmental governance to function; when the process of communication breaks down, the substantive outcomes that depend on it — including conflict resolution, equitable trade rules, aiding vulnerable groups, and climate commitments — break down with it.⁸⁷ A great many people in a great many countries are deeply knowledgeable and engaged with various local, national, and international political issues in the headlines — but completely unaware of (and indifferent to) what's going on in the United Nations' orbit.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRUST IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

When people perceive economic systems as unfair or institutions incapable of addressing extreme socioeconomic disparities, trust in governments, businesses, and multilateral institutions can deteriorate.⁸⁸ Wealth concentration, uneven development, crushing debt burdens, and unequal access to emerging technologies only underscore how the benefits of globalization and technological progress are distributed unequally. For many developing countries, declining official development assistance (ODA) — including most donor countries failing to meet the UN's long-standing 0.7% of gross national income target for foreign assistance annually — and constrained fiscal space further limit the ability of their governments to provide essential services and pursue long-term development priorities.⁸⁹

These pressures have consequences beyond economic policy. Inequality, exclusion, and lack of representation can deepen political polarization and strengthen the narrative that international cooperation only benefits elites by creating profits and protections for capital, while failing to respond to people's lived experiences.⁹⁰

Renewing socioeconomic trust requires international cooperation to demonstrate how shared prosperity remains a credible objective. Rapid shifts in domestic economic policy can generate severe cross-border

effects, eroding public trust and underscoring the need for predictable international rules and effective regulatory cooperation between states on all continents. Reforms to global financial and economic governance, greater participation by developing countries and historically underrepresented groups in economic decision-making, and policies that broaden access to technological and economic opportunities can help to reconnect global cooperation with tangible improvements in people's lives.⁹¹ Strengthening implementation will be particularly important as the international community considers the future of development beyond the 2030 Agenda and implementation of its SDGs (see section four).⁹²

SECURITY-JUDICIAL TRUST IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The perennial pursuit of an intertwined vision of justice and security for all, or “just security,” continues to face a myriad of obstacles to sustained progress.⁹³ For instance, the international community's uneven response to civilian protection, including in cases of climate displacement, can fuel mistrust in both global multilateral institutions and the Member States that support them. While climate change is rarely a direct cause of conflict, it amplifies security risks by exacerbating displacement, underlying vulnerabilities, and existing grievances, while exposing gaps in international protection frameworks.⁹⁴ The absence of adaptive protections for climate-displaced populations increases instability and deepens mistrust between developed and developing countries.⁹⁵

Moreover, trust in global governance depends on the ability of international institutions to respond effectively and fairly to security threats and war crimes. Alongside broader efforts to stem breaches in international law, including in response to international criminal acts, the UN's approach to preventing violent extremism (PVE) has become a test of trust for global institutions. As terrorism has evolved into a decentralized and transnational phenomenon, effective prevention requires addressing the root causes of radicalization while upholding the rule of law.⁹⁶ When human rights are not protected in practice, the effectiveness and legitimacy of the UN's security efforts are undermined. A more coordinated, rights-based approach is essential to rebuilding trust in the UN's ability to address violent extremism. Community engagement, human rights protection, local partnerships, and international cooperation are also vital for rebuilding confidence in implementing successful PVE strategies, as detailed below.

Across political, socioeconomic, and security-judicial spheres, rebuilding trust ultimately requires institutions to align commitments with action and to demonstrate that international cooperation can still deliver meaningful results for UN Member States and their citizens.

Revisiting Core Principles

Globally, people are losing faith in public institutions to act in the public's best interest, fulfill promises, and ensure progress. The reasons include political gridlock, poor leadership, declining resources for international cooperation, and rising conflict and xenophobia. Here, we discuss four core principles for restoring trust globally: *transparency, legitimacy, effectiveness, and integrity*; these principles are reinforced by four cross-cutting imperatives: responsive delivery, principled authority, capacity, and open accountability (illustrated in figure 2.2). These principles can redefine and restore trust globally, building foundations for greater cooperation in global governance. Complementary principles — *cooperation, collaboration, accountability, and reciprocity* — are the focus of section three; though framed regionally, their application is equally critical for building trust at the global level.

Restoring trust in global governance requires that national governments, as well as individuals, see global institutions as capable of solving systemic problems that no single country can solve acting alone, including resolving violent conflicts, alleviating all forms of inequality, and reducing widespread mis- and disinformation. Demonstrating progress in these areas will prove the value of institutions and allow individuals to, in turn, trust in them once again. To achieve sustainable change, norm-building and binding obligations must be established to ensure a lasting foundation of trust.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency refers to openness and clarity, and it relies on accessible information for individuals to impart and use through open communication.⁹⁷ It underpins democratic procedures, allowing individuals to form their own opinions on how and what decisions are made and to participate meaningfully in matters of global governance.⁹⁸ When incorporated in institutional practices, transparency clarifies perceptions, provides a rationale for action, and can explain why policy decisions are made.⁹⁹

Transparency becomes increasingly significant as misinformation and disinformation catalyze the decay of trust.¹⁰⁰ To combat this, institutions can implement transparency as a normative cornerstone of governance, by developing systems for clear, inclusive, and accessible sharing of information about governance-related processes.¹⁰¹ Access to comprehensible information about these processes, in turn, fosters trust and builds resilience as it strengthens relationships and engenders confidence in governing institutions.¹⁰² Such transparency allows constituents to observe and understand the actions of policy-makers.¹⁰³ Moreover, access to information can improve accountability and civic engagement in governance, by giving individuals the tools to understand the laws and policies (including at the global level) that they are supposed to trust.

There are downsides to transparency that require careful balancing, such as security risks, the financial costs of implementing transparency measures, due process, privacy concerns, and the risk of creating openings for disinformation. Despite these potential downsides, transparency addresses a range of issues that can bolster more effective and trustworthy global governance.

LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy — the belief an institution is appropriately exercising the power and authority it possesses (or have been bestowed to the institution by its members) — is critical for trust.¹⁰⁴ For global governance, legitimacy relates to the international political order's quality for acting in accordance with the broad support of its members.¹⁰⁵ Legitimacy, then, requires global institutions to be representative, consensual, and fair in order to be trustworthy. To have these characteristics, institutions must have respect for rights, be inclusive, and maintain checks on authority.

Moreover, governments, by their very participation, bestow legitimacy on global institutions; Member States must, therefore, continue to support an institution's leadership to allow them to be effective. To foster greater legitimacy, global institutions must also enable meaningful participation by intentionally engaging vulnerable stakeholders, including Member States with limited influence and frequently marginalized groups (such as women and youth).¹⁰⁶

Global institutions can be perceived as legitimate if they have meaningful accountability procedures, which aid in adjusting power asymmetries, addressing instances of unfairness, and responding to a lack of balanced representation. For example, reforming the structure and decision-making processes of global institutions (such as expanding the composition of the UN Security Council to better reflect modern geopolitical realities and curbing the misuse of its veto) can strengthen performance by increasing these institutions' perceived legitimacy and, in turn, levels of compliance with their decisions.¹⁰⁷

EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness — the capacity of international institutions to devise and implement policies — demonstrates that institutions work and that they are capable, relevant, and trustworthy.¹⁰⁸ A reputation for effectiveness derives from achievement and from people knowing “that resources are used to protect, support, and advance” well-being.¹⁰⁹ To convey effectiveness, binding obligations to deliver on actionable plans and achieve meaningful solutions must be a core component of any institutions' public-facing behavior.

Contemporary skepticism stems from global institutions' inability to address large-scale challenges, such as climate emergencies and recurring violent conflicts. To become more effective in addressing complex policy issues, international organizations must increase policy output, enhance mechanisms to facilitate compliance, and openly and thoroughly assess the impact of policies.¹¹⁰ Such effectiveness must further be communicated transparently to the public, allowing a population to understand the significance and actions of institutional efforts. Trust levels in an institution correlate to the “perceived capacity” to address the complex realities of the world today and an institution's delivery of those solutions.¹¹¹ In short, effective institutions can more readily attract investment and resource commitments, as they are trusted to generate sustainable solutions.¹¹²

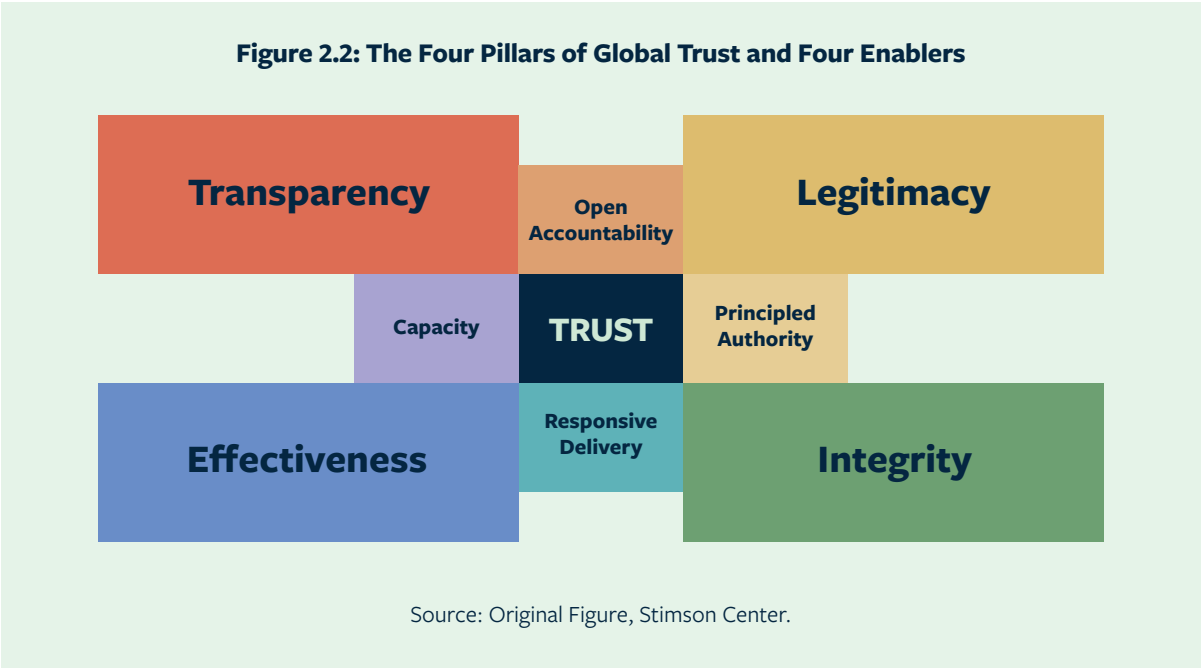
INTEGRITY

Integrity is multidimensional: It is often defined as consistency between beliefs, decisions, and actions, and continued adherence to values and principles. Some of the values often mentioned in this regard are honesty, openness, accountability, and trustworthiness.¹¹³ With respect to governance, integrity manifests itself during decision-making, follow-through, and vigorous monitoring and evaluation, succeeded, where necessary, by course corrections. In other words, integrity is visible through actions consistent with moral values and norms, including honesty, openness, and accountability.

Building integrity into global institutions can combat corruption, promote peace and stability, and enhance cooperation.¹¹⁴ Corruption, for example, poses a significant threat to trust as it perpetuates inequality, undermines elections, and hampers economic development; however, adhering to accepted norms and moral values that uphold integrity can reduce corruption and restore trust in governance.¹¹⁵ Emphasizing integrity in international systems is often associated with standing-up competent oversight functions, strengthening judicial systems, and codifying standards of conduct.¹¹⁶

Transparency, legitimacy, effectiveness, and integrity, when implemented in global governance, form core foundations of trust. These principles strengthen one another through four cross-cutting imperatives that enable the full realization of these four major principles, namely: responsive delivery, principled authority, capacity, and open accountability. For example, effectiveness and legitimacy grow from the ability to respond

to challenges and deliver resolutions in a timely fashion. The capacity of institutions and their principled leaders to produce positive outcomes in response to relevant challenges, or to be held accountable for inaction or lack of principles, confers a level of authority bestowed on an institution worthy of global trust.



Way Forward: Global Governance Responses for Renewing Trust

Improvements in global governance for redefining and restoring trust across multiple dimensions worldwide typically take the form of institutional, legal, policy, normative, and operational changes intended to promote greater cooperation in the international system. Drawing upon the four principles and four cross-cutting imperatives above, and given the current challenges, risks, and opportunities facing the world, six global governance innovations are introduced below. Each set of recommendations — two each for the political and diplomatic, socioeconomic and technological, and security and judicial dimensions of trust — focuses on reforms aimed at developing new or enhanced intergovernmental bodies, instruments, and capacities for improving conditions for redefining, restoring, and bolstering global trust.

RETHINKING GLOBAL POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY TO RESTORE TRUST

Any discussion of renewing global trust must begin with a foundational question: *What are global multilateral institutions for?* The answer is not abstract. Article 1 of the UN Charter is unambiguous: The organization’s primary purpose is “to maintain international peace and security, and to that end, to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace.”¹¹⁷ The Charter’s architects understood trust in multilateral institutions is inseparable from their capacity to act before crises become catastrophes, including by employing the diplomatic tools for the peaceful settlement of disputes found within this foundational document’s Chapter VI.¹¹⁸

Despite efforts by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to make conflict prevention a defining issue of his tenure, the logic of prevention has been progressively hollowed out over the past decade (alongside failed efforts to renew a consensus on disarmament globally), as the world witnesses the highest number of active conflicts since 1946.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, the multilateral system remains better resourced for post-conflict response than for early warning, early action, or the maintenance of the structural conditions that sustain peace and cooperation. Likewise, peacekeeping and other practical measures to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict are not failing due to a lack of mandates; they are falling short because the political and epistemic conditions which make them credible — shared facts, functional dialogue, and institutions that states and societies actually trust and tangibly support — are themselves in crisis.¹²⁰ Restoring the UN’s preventive capacity requires addressing those conditions directly. The two reform initiatives below are introduced in this spirit.

Building a Multilateral Information Integrity Council

The UN has identified the problem of a degraded information environment, but it has not yet built the institution(s) or platform to govern this dynamic global policy space. What exists is a fragmented landscape of issue-specific initiatives and non-binding principles: In May 2020, the UN Department for Global Communications and the social mobilization group known as “Purpose” launched the initiative “Verified” to fight the spread of dangerous dis- and misinformation (starting with the COVID-19 pandemic and expanding to climate change and global health);¹²¹ the Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change addresses disinformation within the domain of climate action (with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, overseeing a related fund);¹²² and the new UN Global Mechanism on Information and Communications Technology Security, formally launched in March 2026, covers cybersecurity, but fails to include information integrity as a cross-cutting governance concern.¹²³ Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and World Bank have worked in this space for years, absent an effective coordinating mechanism that spans the breadth and depth of the global multilateral system.

This report recommends the establishment of a Multilateral Information Integrity Council (MIIC), constituted primarily as an international scientific body, with system-wide authority to evaluate, report on, and recommend international responses to information environment degradation as a threat to international peace and security and wider forms of global cooperation. At its core, the Council would operate as a coordinating and standard-setting body, designed to both consolidate (into a more unified and coherent global multilateral framework) and amplify the ongoing digital governance-related programming of the UN Secretariat (including its new Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies), UNESCO, UNDP, ITU (including its annual World Summit on the Information Society), and the World Bank.

To enhance the MIIC’s credibility and trust-building functions in the Global South (alongside the Global North), regional multilateral organizations, including the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Arab League, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), would participate as full constitutive partners in the Council. Importantly, these regional bodies would ensure that the Council’s mandate is anchored in regional realities, in part by learning from and leveraging existing regional digital governance and media regulatory frameworks.

The MIIC could function around two operational pillars: *first*, promoting the “right to information sovereignty,” and *second*, the provision and tracking of technical advice with respect to information integrity

benchmarks. On the former, the Council would anchor the recognition of information sovereignty within international law, extending existing conceptions of national sovereignty norms and the international principle of self-determination to the information and digital domain. In short, states have the right to participate meaningfully in the global information environment on terms not structurally determined by platform monopolies and communications infrastructure they did not build nor control.

As long as that global information environment is structurally dominated by a limited set of powerful private and state-based actors from a handful of countries, smaller and under-resourced states cannot exercise meaningful information sovereignty, as manifested acutely in the U.S.-Israel war with Iran. The MIIC is positioned to contribute to normative development, aimed at making information sovereignty over time a widely accepted and enforceable right within international law.

The Council would further develop and monitor cross-cutting information integrity benchmarks, treating the state of national and regional information environments as a structural variable in the UN's assessment of conditions for international peace and security and effective multilateral cooperation more generally speaking. Where information environments are systematically degraded, whether by state-sponsored disinformation, private platform monopoly effects, or the deliberate suppression of Global South-oriented information production, the MIIC's monitoring framework would flag this as a governance risk requiring a deliberative and carefully tailored multilateral response. This effort would further operationalize the Pact for the Future and Global Digital Compact's existing commitments on information integrity across the global multilateral system, rather than leaving them siloed within individual domains.¹²⁴

Establishing a Standing Multilateral Dialogue for Global Trust Renewal

The Standing Multilateral Dialogue for Global Trust Renewal would operate as a permanent, multistakeholder platform to facilitate Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues for preventing the outbreak of violent conflict. This would involve articulating and then working to implement fundamental principles and practices for renewing trust worldwide. Moreover, it could focus on both immediate “hair-trigger,” but also longer-term underlying root causes of violent conflict, including, for instance, the structural legacies of colonialism and the governance challenges around critical minerals.

The Peacebuilding Support Office and Mediation Support Unit (both housed within the UN's Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs) and the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence Group would provide technical secretariat support to its activities. Moreover, this new platform would leverage the mediation and analytical capabilities of myriad regional and sub-regional organizations, including the AU's Aswan Forum, the GCC, ASEAN-IPR, Economic Community of West African States, the League of Arab States, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (some of which are elaborated in this report's section three). The Standing Multilateral Dialogue will also aim to operationalize preventive approaches and multistakeholder networks built over years through the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace & Security (YPS) agendas.¹²⁵

The geopolitical fractures driving the global trust deficit underscored in this report are narrated by some scholars through the lens of civilizational conflict: Samuel Huntington's “The Clash of Civilizations” thesis refashioned for the present multipolar moment (though the related yet different narrative of geopolitical competition and spheres of interest has also come on strong in recent years).¹²⁶ That framing must be resisted. As the UN

High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations has stated plainly: “There is no clash of civilizations. There is a clash of interests and a clash of ignorance.”¹²⁷ The Standing Multilateral Dialogue for Global Trust proposed is an informal, yet dynamic, institutional response to enhancing shared understanding and epistemic agreement, built on the UN’s own commitment, affirmed in General Assembly Resolution A/RES/78/286, that dialogue across civilizations is not a diplomatic nicety but a structural condition for global peace.¹²⁸

Regretfully, what was never built through the Alliance of Civilizations was a standing dialogue infrastructure that fully utilizes the United Nations’ diplomatic toolkit for the peaceful settlement of disputes outlined in the Charter’s Chapter VI, namely negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, and regional arrangements.¹²⁹ At the same time, employing these tools through formal diplomatic channels alone often proves insufficient. To be sure, the UN’s Mediation Support Unit, High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, and Peacebuilding Commission do critical work; however, they mainly engage parties through only official avenues after a conflict has already escalated and restructured the conditions on the ground in a manner that is unfavorable to compromise and the search for common ground.

Meanwhile, the work of actual trust-building to improve conditions for durable and just peace often happens elsewhere. It can happen between scholars who keep talking when their governments will not. It can happen through civil society networks that carry weight and are deemed credible precisely because they sit outside official structures. It happens in the backchannel conversations, academic exchanges, and standing dialogue platforms that allow ideas to be tested and cooperative possibilities to survive inevitable geopolitical crises.

REDUCING GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISPARITIES FOR GREATER TRUST

Beyond global politics and diplomacy, steps are urgently needed to build global trust by lessening global economic and technological disparities. The reforms proposed below address fundamental implementation gaps by developing delivery systems for when consensus is achieved by countries. At the same time, when the shared commitments of UN Member States are not measurable or properly enforced, public confidence in global governance systems erodes.

Finalizing the UN Tax Convention

Public trust in international cooperation requires evidence that global institutions can address the inequitable concentration of wealth, while enabling governments to finance sustainable development. Rising debt servicing costs, conditionality in international aid, constrained domestic resource mobilization, and declining international grant-making have reduced fiscal space for capacity-building investments. Additionally, billionaire wealth surpassed \$9 trillion for the first time in 2025, and the design of most national tax systems lets billionaires hold assets primarily in stock (so gains go untaxed unless shares are sold).¹³⁰

Inequity runs deeper than headline wealth figures. Gabriel Zucman’s G20 blueprint found that billionaires currently pay an effective tax rate nearly only 0.3% of their wealth.¹³¹ Fairer taxation is central to building state capacity, reducing dependence on external borrowing, and enabling governments to deliver on national development priorities. In support of this effort, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation’s roadmap calls for three sessions a year from 2025-2027, after which the Convention is anticipated for adoption during the UN General Assembly’s 82nd session.¹³²

Article 6 of the current draft Convention commits states to jointly detect and deter high-net-worth individual (HNWI) tax avoidance, while leaving the full design of domestic tax systems to UN Member States (see table 2.1, including details on the Convention’s draft Protocols).¹³³ Making Article 6 binding would represent a transformational shift through the Convention. This lets states adopt tools already tested domestically, including wealth tax add-ons that attach to existing law rather than requiring a new standalone tax, cooperative compliance units that trade faster rulings for full HNWI disclosure, and coordination with agencies that maintain wealth data to reduce duplication.¹³⁴ Instituting non-mandatory arbitration, similar to mediation and conciliation, paired with a universal consultative mechanism for countries that lack existing tax treaties, would advance negotiations on Protocol 2 without forcing a one-size-fits-all approach on countries.¹³⁵

Table 2.1: Summary of the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation

Workstream	Summary of Articles	Progress and Gaps
Workstream I: Framework Convention	- Creates the overarching framework for international tax cooperation through objectives, principles, and future protocols. - Creates a flexible governance structure with, e.g., a Conference of the Parties (COP), subsidiary bodies, capacity-building, and financial support.	The Co-Leads’ draft reflects only text that has reached general consensus so far, with live article-by-article negotiations expected soon. Some gaps identified are the need for binding language in Articles 5 and 6, expansion of sustainable development provisions, inclusion of transparency tools, consideration of minimum tax rates, and clarification of implementation timelines (Article 14).
Workstream II: Taxation of Cross-Border Services (Protocol 1)	- Harmonizes international rules for taxing income from cross-border services. - Builds upon and adapts the UN and OECD Model Tax Conventions through a multilateral instrument. - Seeks to modernize taxing rights for more service-based and digital economies.	Still at an early drafting stage, primarily focused on technical provisions. A key outstanding concern is the asymmetry in reservations: Protocol 1 allows virtually no reservations, whereas Protocol 2 permits reservations across most provisions. Greater consistency and clarity on reservations will be needed before finalization.
Workstream III: Dispute Prevention and Resolution (Protocol 2)	- Establishes multilateral mechanisms, including a new body, for preventing and resolving international tax disputes. - Explores initiatives for cooperation between tax authorities through, for instance, Mutual Agreement Procedures, Advance Pricing Agreements, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration.	One major outstanding question is whether a mandatory minimum package of dispute resolution mechanisms is required or whether all such mechanisms will remain. Stakeholders also highlighted the need to clarify the relationship between this protocol and the Framework Convention’s Article 9, including whether arbitration is only triggered if a competent authority requests it (meaning any single state can stall a case indefinitely).

Source: Original Table, Stimson Center. Data Sources: UNDESA,

[“Intergovernmental Negotiations for UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation.”](#)

Moreover, the Stiglitz-led G20 Extraordinary Committee on Global Inequality, in 2025, recommended a standing International Panel on Inequality modeled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).¹³⁶ This could, in effect, afford the UN Tax Convention a useful monitoring body through which to assess progress and recommend, where necessary, corrective actions.

Building a Global AI Hub and Shared Computing Infrastructure

A government's Artificial Intelligence (AI) readiness tracks closely with income level, pointing toward a potential global divide in the capacity to build, govern, and deploy large-scale AI systems.¹³⁷ Tackling unevenly distributed AI capacity, building off the efforts of the International Telecommunication Union's AI for Good Lab, can address the socioeconomic divides caused by AI and leverage AI to support delivery of the SDGs.

This initiative of the ITU forms part of the implementation agenda of the UN AI for Good Impact Initiative, and it also builds on the ITU's Sandbox program, which already runs pilots in 10 countries across three continents (working with the African Telecommunications Union as a regional partner).¹³⁸ This recommendation extends the Lab's third pillar into a standing technical knowledge-sharing hub, one built to withstand disruption in the commercial cloud market. Operationalizing this hub through shared infrastructure gives the principles of effectiveness and integrity, presented above, concrete form in AI governance.

Two mechanisms would give this hub durability. *First*, governments should establish public infrastructure programs supporting AI adoption by small- and medium-sized enterprises through shared data center access, countering the concentration dynamics that currently favor large, well-capitalized firms. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warns the gains from unfettered AI adoption will continue to accrue disproportionately to firms that already control compute.¹³⁹ Moreover, in 2024, the UN's High-Level Advisory Body on AI similarly called for global public infrastructure that treats compute and data access as a shared resource rather than a byproduct of private markets.¹⁴⁰

Second, market instability in the cloud sector can be opportune. Recent analysis has noted that during and after a potential AI market correction, neoclouds and data center special purpose vehicles could face insolvency, making their physical assets available for acquisition at steep discounts, including through court-ordered auctions.¹⁴¹ Governments could acquire these assets to establish a public option for cloud computing, sometimes called a "public cloud." The U.S. National Science Foundation's pilot of a National AI Research Resource offers one existing model for operationalizing this idea, since it already blends commercial and publicly supported computing resources for AI research and could be scaled as a template for other countries and regions.¹⁴² Together, these measures would position the AI for Good Lab, alongside UNCTAD, the IMF, national science agencies, and regional partners like the African Telecommunications Union, as coordinated actors building a shared digital infrastructure hub that supports technical capacity-building that no single country can build alone.

A government's Artificial Intelligence (AI) readiness tracks closely with income level, pointing toward a potential global divide in the capacity to build, govern, and deploy large-scale AI systems.

PROMOTING GLOBAL SECURITY AND JUSTICE TO REDUCE MISTRUST

Global security and justice are increasingly under threat from transnational challenges beyond conventional warfare. Climate change has become a major driver of displacement and instability, as it compounds humanitarian crises and strains peaceful relations between communities.¹⁴³ At the same time, violent extremism threatens international peace while undermining human rights and development efforts.¹⁴⁴ Existing legal frameworks have not evolved at the same pace as these issues, leading to a decline in global trust in international institutions. This section advances two reform initiatives to reinforce the legitimacy of global institutions as providers of collective security and justice worldwide.

Establishing an International Framework for Climate Displaced Migrants

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol remain the cornerstone of refugee protection; however, they were not designed to address climate change as an emerging driver of forced migration and insecurity.¹⁴⁵ Climate displacement is the movement of people related to the impacts of climate change that can be temporary or permanent, and it may be linked to sudden or slow-onset disasters.¹⁴⁶ Climate change has displaced approximately 250 million people since 2016, and that number is expected to increase rapidly as global temperatures continue to rise under current emissions trajectories, with irreversible changes, such as rising sea levels and ecosystem loss, forcing more from their homes.¹⁴⁷ This crisis has exposed the limitations of international refugee law, leaving millions without adequate protection and vulnerable to human rights abuses and economic insecurity.

Global trust in international institutions depends on their capacity to adapt frameworks to evolving issues. While the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees emphasized the international community's commitment to increased cooperation on these challenges, it only addressed climate change and environmental impacts on refugees in a cursory manner, acknowledging that climate change can compound existing drivers of migration without establishing protections for those displaced.¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration provided clearer suggestions for protections and solutions, but its non-binding nature leaves no consequences for non-compliance.¹⁴⁹ As a result, the international community lacks a comprehensive framework to protect climate-displaced migrants. Although COP30 in November 2025 provided an opportunity to advance stronger commitments, the lack of agreement on how to address climate-displaced populations demonstrates the continued need for future negotiations, including at COP31, to establish effective protections.¹⁵⁰ Recent developments in international law, such as the 2025 ICJ advisory opinion on climate change, have further reinforced the need for a stronger global response to address climate impacts (see box 2.1).

With the ICJ's acknowledgment of the severity of the climate crisis, there is an opportunity for the UN to strengthen both international justice and collective security by addressing climate-related displacement. The current gap has significant consequences for individuals who do not meet the current legal definition of a refugee, limiting access to basic rights and services, including housing, healthcare, education, employment, and pathways to legal status.¹⁵¹ The UN could propose a new kind of compact that would establish an internationally recognized category of climate-displaced persons and develop formulas for financing, resettlement, and emergency relocation support.¹⁵²

To ensure equitable responsibility-sharing, high-emitting countries could either accept a greater share of climate-displaced persons or provide financial support for resettlement in countries with the highest number of displaced persons, due to climate, through an international fund. Restoring trust in global climate cooperation will require the highest emitting nations to acknowledge and address their disproportionate responsibility for climate change through commitment to this framework. A binding agreement that emphasizes burden-sharing would establish a predictable system for resettlement, while also reducing the strain on climate-vulnerable countries.¹⁵³

Box 2.1: A Landmark ICJ Advisory Opinion on Climate Change

In July 2025, the ICJ issued an advisory opinion that unanimously confirmed that States and large polluters must scale up their efforts to address climate change under international law. This advisory opinion is one of only 30 issued by the ICJ since its establishment in 1946 (and one of five issued since 2019), demonstrating the increasing importance of climate change as a matter of global justice and security. The advisory opinion will allow policy-makers to advocate to governments and international institutions that there is a greater and ever-growing international responsibility to implement ambitious plans to avert the worst of the crisis, while simultaneously protecting the human rights of those impacted by climate change.

Source: Original Box, Stimson Center. Data sources: ClientEarth, [“What Is the Vanuatu ICJ Initiative?”](#); and ICJ, [“List of All Cases.”](#)

Streamlining and Reforming UN Counter-Terrorism Efforts

The UN was created to address threats to international peace and security, a mission that has expanded in recent decades to include countering terrorism (CT) and preventing violent extremism (PVE) as global security and justice challenges. Today, the UN’s CT/PVE architecture is spread across several entities; the decentralized nature is an inefficient use of critical resources, weakening CT/PVE efforts and leading to a loss of trust in multilateral institutions due to their ineffectiveness.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, the UN, in implementing its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, often disproportionately emphasizes its Pillar II, prioritizing preventing and combatting terrorism over reducing human rights violations.¹⁵⁵ Risks in implementing this strategy also emerge for the UN when Member States commit human rights violations under the guise of preventing violent extremism.¹⁵⁶ In response, a better coordinated system with less bureaucratic redundancy and clearer oversight would demonstrate that the UN can respond to contemporary challenges without compromising its values.

Strengthened accountability mechanisms are particularly critical to prevent CT/PVE activities from unintentionally expanding state authority or deepening public grievances that contribute to radicalization in the first place.¹⁵⁷ However, consolidation of any part of the UN CT/PVE architecture must first preserve the specialized expertise of each function to ensure, for example, that those UN system entities with an institutional background on human rights, gender, criminal justice, and the rule of law remain focal points for this work.¹⁵⁸ For example, merging the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and Terrorism

Prevention Branch (TPB) would represent a significant step toward a more coherent CT/PVE system and reflect the UN's commitment to reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies.¹⁵⁹ At the same time, any such merger must ensure that the TPB's technical knowledge continues to inform these operations, while eliminating unnecessary institutional fragmentation. To counter any potential human rights abuses, the revamped UNOCT must also increase roles for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Women, and the United Nations Development Programme, whose independent mandates are essential for integrating human rights and gender perspectives throughout CT/PVE programming.¹⁶⁰

Additionally, more rigorous implementation of human rights impact assessments and independent oversight of the UN's approach to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism are necessary to advance a "Do No Harm" approach.¹⁶¹ Rebalancing budgets to fund Pillars I and V of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as much as the other pillars, can also help to reduce the misuse of CT/PVE operations that stem from extrabudgetary donor influence.¹⁶² Through greater institutional efficiency and stronger safeguards, the UN can ensure that CT/PVE efforts address the root causes of violent extremism, while safeguarding local communities.

Navigating Potential Bottlenecks and Spoilers

Noncompliance with multilateral institutional norms established around global trust, weakening relationships between states, declining political support for international aid in donor countries, the emergence of AI-related deception, institutional failures in protecting states and their citizens from violent conflict, displacement, and human rights violations, and the adverse impacts of climate change are among the chief risks to global trust and governance today. Compounding these political, diplomatic, socioeconomic, technological, security, and justice-related hurdles are the following additional hurdles to restoring and sustaining global trust:

- i) stakeholders across the international sphere perceive decision-making structures as insufficiently representative of today's multipolar world.¹⁶³
- ii) the framing of a new UN Tax Convention leaves little room for ongoing conversations with diverse stakeholders, disproportionately uplifting the voices of elite (well-resourced) actors.
- iii) programs to inform about emerging innovations, such as AI, lack adequate coordination, details, or effective implementation to help fill severe gaps in both access to technology and digital literacy for policy-makers and tech users worldwide.
- iv) no multilateral institution is fully equipped to overcome modern security concerns, legal frameworks are outdated, and protective international treaties are inconsistently upheld.
- v) modern-day trust is predicated on the efficacy of program and policy outcomes, so global trust is understandably lost after a succession of policy implementation failures in a particular area of global governance, especially when negative human impacts are observed.

Efforts toward re-establishing and renewing trust in multilateral institutions are, arguably, in every state's and most non-state actors' interest. Alongside examining the state of global trust vis-a-vis governing institutions at the global level, it is important to consider the state of trust in governing institutions operating regionally and sub-regionally to garner a more holistic perspective and understanding, as presented in the next section.

III. Redefining Regional Trust: Challenges & Opportunities for Regional Governance

“Regional organisations build trust. They prevent escalation. They create mechanisms for dialogue and crisis management sensitive to the needs of local cultures and communities.”

— António Guterres, Ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations¹⁶⁴

As global multilateral institutions become increasingly constrained by strategic competition and struggle to respond to transnational crises, regional organizations are playing an increasingly important role in addressing governance gaps and restoring trust.¹⁶⁵ Their geographic proximity, deeper understanding of regional contexts, and more agile decision-making enable them to advance cooperation across a broad range of issues, including trade, digital governance, conflict prevention, democracy, migration, and climate action.

Global institutions have traditionally deferred or delegated to regional organizations, reflecting a principle of complementarity where regional arrangements serve as the first level of response on local challenges, while global institutions fill gaps where regional responses are absent or insufficient, as recognized in Chapter VIII of the United Nations (UN) Charter on Regional Arrangements.¹⁶⁶ Regional organizations cannot replace global multilateral institutions, but they can supplement them by adapting international norms to regional realities. Regional bodies, such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), Arab League, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Organization of American States (OAS), together with regional courts, development banks, and security arrangements, have increasingly contributed to promoting cooperation, resilience, and trust through both established mechanisms and innovative initiatives.

This section of the *Future of International Cooperation Report 2026* identifies the challenges and recent advances in regional governance. It culminates in six recommendations to enhance trust by addressing contemporary issues caused by a complex geopolitical environment shaped by intensifying Great Power competition, the expansion of the BRICS, constrained access to resources, vulnerability to climate change, struggles for regional hegemony, and the broader transition toward a more multipolar international order. These dynamics have prompted many regions to pursue greater strategic autonomy, while avoiding becoming arenas for Great Power rivalry.¹⁶⁷

Across Southeast Asia, ASEAN continues to balance relations among competing powers with the goal of preserving regional neutrality, while African and Latin American countries have emphasized diversified partnerships, regional agency, and flexible cooperation over exclusive geopolitical alignment.¹⁶⁸ This section examines how different regional governance configurations are redefining trust across political and

diplomatic, socioeconomic and technological, and security and justice dimensions through emerging and innovative approaches. Rather than providing a comprehensive account of all existing or “major” regions, it focuses selectively on regional and sub-regional configurations as illustrative examples of cooperation and trust-building.

Major Challenges, Risks, and Opportunities

Trust strengthens cooperation by facilitating collaboration among states and making collective action more effective; failure to cooperate may signal weak mutual trust and integration.¹⁶⁹ In 2025, regional cooperation was perceived more positively than global cooperation, though motivations may differ: Global North countries may see regionalism as a way to distance themselves from Global South challenges, while Global South countries may view it as a means of strengthening regional autonomy and limiting external influence.¹⁷⁰ Trust in regional institutions is both mixed and fragile: 57% of respondents in Africa believe the AU adequately reflects their countries’ needs and interests, 43% of Europeans report a positive image of the EU, 23% of Southeast Asians place trust in ASEAN, and 79% of Latin Americans support their country’s integration with other Latin American countries.¹⁷¹

Although regional governance organizations differ in their values, capacities, and historical legacies, they face common challenges, including fragmentation, economic disparities, institutional constraints, geopolitical competition, and distrust driven by economic instability, protectionism, and emerging technologies such as AI.¹⁷² Intra- and inter-regional conflict, increasing military spending, and limited resources further constrain coordination and responses to conflicts and humanitarian crises while balancing sovereignty with human rights.¹⁷³ As global multilateralism weakens, and transnational threats — from pandemics and cyberattacks to terrorism and climate disasters — intensify, regional institutions remain important platforms for dialogue and collective action, with their proximity enabling more tailored and timely responses.¹⁷⁴ Organizations such as ASEAN, the AU, the European Union (EU), and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) continue to advance cooperation in security, trade, health, and climate action (see table 3.1).¹⁷⁵

Table 3.1: Examples of Regional Cooperation

Region / Regional Organization	Initiative	Sector	Objective
AU	2021 African Medicines Agency	Health	Harmonize pharmaceutical regulation to improve access to medical products across the continent.
Africa	2025 Accra Compact	Health	Strengthen Africa’s regional health sovereignty.
EU	Clean Industrial Deal	Environment; Energy security	Enhance EU competitiveness and decarbonization.

EU	2025 White Paper for European Defence and the ReArm Europe Plan Readiness 2030	Security	Provide financing to boost defense capabilities.
ASEAN	2025 ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026-2030	Economic integration	Advance regional trade and market integration.
ASEAN	2022 Lao PDR–Thailand–Malaysia–Singapore Power Integrational Project	Energy	Promote cross-border power integration among Lao PDR, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.
Southwest Asia and North Africa	2026 Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Egypt, and Pakistan (The Quad)	Security	Address regional security concerns.
Latin America	2024 (IDB) Alliance for Security, Justice, and Development	Justice & Security	Improve regional security, justice, and development governance.
Eastern Caribbean	2026 OECS Regional Insulin Procurement Initiative	Health	Improve access to essential medicines and health technologies in the Eastern Caribbean.

Source: Original Table, Stimson Center. Data Sources: World Economic Forum, *The Global Cooperation Barometer 2026*, 9, 19, 22; European Commission, *Clean Industrial Deal — A plan for EU competitiveness and decarbonisation*; Council of the EU, European Defence Readiness - Latest explainer; ASEAN, *ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025*; Alhasan, “A new Middle Eastern quadrilateral is taking shape”; IDB, “Alliance for Security, Justice, and Development”; and Pan-American Health Organization, “PAHO/WHO and OECS to convene regional workshop to strengthen access to medicines and health technologies in the Eastern Caribbean.”

POLITICAL TRUST IN REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Balancing shared regional identity with national interests is increasingly strained by internal governance weaknesses and external interference, hindering regional organizations’ ability to prevent and resolve conflict. In Africa, expanding Russian and Chinese influence, overlapping memberships, democratic backsliding, and political disputes have reinforced resistance to deepened regional cooperation and eroded trust. These dynamics have constrained regional mediation, including between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda (where the U.S. was left to lead negotiations), and contributed to the 2023 creation of the Alliance of Sahel States, following Economic Community of West African States’ (ECOWAS) suspension of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger (due, specifically, to military coups in each country).¹⁷⁶

Rising populism and far-right movements have deepened divisions and eroded trust in EU institutions; however, growing U.S. disengagement and a more transactional American foreign policy could spur deeper EU integration from Europe and renewed enlargement.¹⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the AU continues to demonstrate regional cooperation in global governance, advancing its UN Security Council reform proposal during the 2025 Intergovernmental Negotiations, despite ongoing disagreement over new permanent seats.¹⁷⁸

Political divisions weaken the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as divergent foreign policy and security priorities, particularly between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), drive competing partnerships with external powers, including the U.S., Israel, and Türkiye.¹⁷⁹ Regional conflicts and regime insecurity have further encouraged “liquid alliances” with non-state actors, undermining Arab League and GCC cohesion and effectiveness.¹⁸⁰ The trajectory of the war against Iran could reshape the future of regional security cooperation.

Latin America’s longstanding commitment to peace, reinforced by the 2014 Zone of Peace Agreement, provides a foundation for cooperation.¹⁸¹ However, the OAS and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) remain constrained by corruption, political instability, and external interference.¹⁸²

In Southeast and Northeast Asia, political integration remains limited by divergent interests and historical tensions. ASEAN faces pressure from China’s influence, territorial claims, and Mekong water disputes.¹⁸³ Broader East Asia lacks a substantive political institution capable of addressing shared threats, including territorial disputes, North Korea’s unpredictability, climate change, and economic shocks, with the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat limited to only three countries, namely China, Japan, and South Korea.¹⁸⁴

SOCIOECONOMIC TRUST IN REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Regional economic trust and integration is undermined by tariffs, export controls, and supply chain localization, tools of economic coercion that have deepened vulnerabilities and inequalities.¹⁸⁵ U.S. and Chinese foreign direct investment increasingly favors geopolitically aligned countries, leaving many developing economies behind.¹⁸⁶ In response, agile inter- and intra-regional coalitions are rebuilding trust through initiatives such as the 2025 Future of Investment and Trade Partnership, the 2026 EU-Singapore Digital Trade Agreement, and the forthcoming ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement.¹⁸⁷

Uneven implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and its Free Movement of Persons Protocol, ratified by only four countries, limits integration.¹⁸⁸ However, initiatives such as the African Medicines Agency and the Accra Compact on health sovereignty demonstrate potential for advancing regional economic cooperation and improving access to essential services.¹⁸⁹

In Asia, ASEAN advances economic integration through initiatives like the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026-2030 and the Lao PDR–Thailand–Malaysia Power Integration Project.¹⁹⁰ South Asian integration remains constrained by India-Pakistan tensions, trade disruptions, protectionism, and historical grievances.¹⁹¹ China’s Belt and Road Initiative and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank have further enhanced regional integration, with Southeast Asian states largely viewing both as beneficial to economic and regime security.¹⁹²

Europe’s deep economic integration (resting on the ability of businesses and workers to operate across national borders) faces geopolitical pressures from strained relations with the U.S., technological competition, and supply chain dependencies. Despite challenges, EU Member States demonstrate regional trust and integration through cooperation on technological sovereignty with investments in semiconductor production, AI governance, and green industrial competitiveness.¹⁹³

Within the GCC, divergent national priorities and uneven diversification hinder economic integration. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) longstanding role in regional cooperation has weakened amid Gulf states' differing exposure to the Strait of Hormuz's closure due to the U.S.-Israel war with Iran, culminating in the UAE's withdrawal in April.¹⁹⁴ The UAE's recent suspension of economic ties with Iran amid regional escalation signals a breakdown of trust.¹⁹⁵ External powers, particularly China, could potentially deepen fragmentation through expanded bilateral ties with individual GCC countries.¹⁹⁶

Latin America's inequality and institutional weaknesses constrain economic cooperation, while major economies' bilateral ties with the U.S. and China deepen mistrust and fragmentation.¹⁹⁷ The Mercado Común del Sur's (MERCOSUR)-EU trade agreement, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States' insulin affordability model, and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) programs on regional development signal progress, but uncertainty over U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade pact renewal persists after the U.S. declined to renew the agreement beyond its 2036 expiration (combined with a renewed tariff war, in mid-2026, between the U.S. and Canada).¹⁹⁸

SECURITY-JUDICIAL TRUST IN REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

In Africa, the AU's security effectiveness is limited by funding shortfalls and rivalries among sub-regional blocs, impeding coordinated responses to protracted crises and undermining trust.¹⁹⁹ The expanding roles and reach of violent extremist organizations has further deteriorated regional security.²⁰⁰

In Asia, intensifying U.S.-China competition has pushed states to diversify security partnerships. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has emerged as a counterweight to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other security organizations in Eurasia.²⁰¹ ASEAN's non-interference approach limits collective responses to South China Sea disputes and the Myanmar and Rohingya crises, encouraging bilateral conflict management arrangements.²⁰² At the same time, Japan's anti-piracy efforts (ReCAAP) in Southeast Asia demonstrate how capacity-building, information-sharing, and legal cooperation strengthen regional security and can rebuild trust.²⁰³

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and shifting NATO-U.S. relations are reshaping European security.²⁰⁴ The EU's Strategic Compass and White Paper on European Defense Readiness 2030 seek stronger defense coordination and industrial capacity within Europe, while European NATO members increase spending to reduce reliance on U.S. support.²⁰⁵ The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) remains a key mechanism for regional border management and security cooperation.²⁰⁶

Gulf states are pursuing greater strategic autonomy as U.S. engagement declines and China, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom expand their influence.²⁰⁷ GCC members are diversifying security partnerships and defense capabilities, exemplified by the Saudi Arabia-Pakistan-Türkiye "Mecca Joint Defence Agreement."²⁰⁸ The conflict with Iran has further reduced confidence in U.S. reliability and encouraged more cautious Gulf responses.²⁰⁹

Latin America's security cooperation faces growing threats from sophisticated transnational criminal networks. While regional arrangements and organizations face limitations in managing interstate conflict, MERCOSUR, the Brazil-led defense initiatives, and the 2024 Inter-American Development Bank Alliance for Security, Justice, and Development signal renewed regional efforts against crime, trafficking, illicit financial flows, and insecurity.²¹⁰ U.S. border restrictions and mass deportations, however, risk undermining regional trust and cooperation on migration, organized crime, and drug trafficking.²¹¹

Revisiting Core Principles

Regional arrangements, including regional development banks, free trade agreements, human rights courts, security agreements, and formal governing organizations, play a critical role in fostering governance and safeguarding trust among states within a particular region.²¹² While their mandates, approaches, and priorities differ, four core principles shape the ways regional arrangements work to strengthen trust within their respective geographic spaces: *cooperation*, *collaboration*, *accountability*, and *reciprocity* (figure 3.1). These principles complement those applied in section two at the global level, namely *transparency*, *legitimacy*, *effectiveness*, and *integrity*. Regional perspectives ground regional arrangements within local contexts, knowledge, and needs, offering approaches that complement and challenge global understandings of how trust can be built, maintained, and strengthened.

Figure 3.1: Principles of Trust in Regional Governance



Source: Original Figure, Stimson Center.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is essential to building trust in regional governance by ensuring that institutions, partners, and decision-makers are responsible for commitments and outcomes. As regional mechanisms become more complex, embedding accountability into governance processes helps ensure that decisions are transparent, agreements are implemented, and actors face consequences for failures or misconduct.²¹³ For example, the European Investment Bank's citizen-driven accountability tool allows communities to submit complaints

about projects and policies, including concerns related to consultations with locals, environmental impacts, and displacement. By publicly reporting these concerns and enabling corrective action, the mechanism reinforces institutional responsibility and public trust.²¹⁴

Regional accountability frameworks establish shared expectations and clarify the responsibilities of participating actors.²¹⁵ Accountability can be difficult to enforce in global institutions due to unequal power dynamics, competing political interests, and sovereignty. Regional settings often provide more collaborative structures, while still influenced by political interests, where members have greater incentives to uphold shared commitments. Positive accountability strengthens this process by emphasizing mutual responsibility, learning, and corrective action rather than punishment alone; it is most effective when accountability is mutually enforced among participating actors, rather than imposed top-down by those with greater power to determine who is held accountable. This creates a culture of mutual responsibility, where actors trust that others are contributing fairly to collective goals.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration enables trust in regional governance by co-creating spaces for dialogue, problem-solving, and locally informed decision-making for a common purpose. Complex regional challenges require collaboration among actors who understand shared contexts and can develop solutions that reflect regional priorities. Regional institutions often provide more opportunities for meaningful engagement, where geographic proximity, established relationships, and shared experiences strengthen confidence in achieving acceptable collective outcomes. By involving diverse stakeholders and encouraging information-sharing, regional collaboration helps build ownership and trust in governance processes.²¹⁶

Regional collaboration can also address challenges created by both limited influence and contextual understanding in global decision-making structures. When actors have a greater role in shaping collaborative solutions, they are more likely to trust and support their implementation. For example, the Pacific Heads of Education Systems Framework promotes collaboration among education actors. Supported by the Pacific Islands Forum, the Framework brings together governments and stakeholders to develop solutions to education challenges facing the region, while promoting equal access to education.²¹⁷ Building on this collaborative approach, the region has also incorporated the principle of harmony into its 2050 strategy, establishing a long-term and trust-based approach to regional cooperation.²¹⁸

COOPERATION

Cooperation is essential to building trust regionally, and trust is essential to cooperation within regional governance, as, over time, both create conditions that enable actors to overcome differences and pursue shared solutions to common challenges.²¹⁹ Cooperation refers to distinct actors working alongside one another toward a shared goal through coordination and information-sharing, whereas collaboration implies a deeper level of joint engagement in which actors collectively develop, coordinate, and implement solutions to achieve a common objective. As a foundation of regional collaboration, cooperation depends on mutual commitment, compromise, and recognition of shared interests. Regional cooperation can lead to deeper integration over time.

Unlike many global arrangements, regional fora provide platforms for more effective cooperation by bringing together actors with shared geographic contexts, priorities, and challenges. Their regional focus can reduce barriers to access and consensus-building; enable more responsive decision-making; and strengthen the ability to address issues through locally informed approaches.²²⁰ For example, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, an intergovernmental forum that discusses Asia-wide cooperation, demonstrates how sports diplomacy can strengthen engagement and cooperation among Asian partners.²²¹ By pooling expertise and coordinating responses, regional organizations can develop more effective and resilient solutions to interconnected challenges.²²² These forms of cooperation, in turn, depend on trust, as actors must have confidence that partners will honor their commitments, contribute equitably, and act in pursuit of shared objectives.

RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity refers to mutual exchange or return of a favor, reflecting the practice of giving and taking in ways that ensure all actors benefit fairly.²²³ This mutual exchange is essential to building trust because actors are more likely to engage in collective action when they believe commitments, resources, and outcomes are shared fairly. Without reciprocity, regional partnerships can become unbalanced, weakening confidence in agreements and limiting cooperation.²²⁴

While reciprocity is often challenged in global governance by unequal power dynamics, financial disparities, and differences in influence, regional institutions can provide stronger foundations for mutual responsibility through closer relationships, shared experiences, and greater understanding of each actor's contributions.²²⁵ For instance, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a free trade agreement among 15 Asia-Pacific countries, strengthens economic integration through reciprocal commitments among its members. Japan and Indonesia made commitments to reduce or eliminate tariffs on goods from RCEP members, while ASEAN Member States made corresponding commitments to improve market access for Japanese and Indonesian goods, demonstrating how reciprocal concessions allow states to exchange tangible benefits.²²⁶

Together, the four principles of *accountability, collaboration, cooperation, and reciprocity* provide a foundation for strengthening trust in regional governance. These principles demonstrate the potential to renew trust between states, as well as between state-based and non-state actors, through effective regional governance of shared issues. While these principles are also central to global governance, they may foster greater trust and play out in more pronounced ways at the regional level, where institutions and actors' close proximity and shared historical and cultural ties create greater opportunities for sustained dialogue and overall interaction.

Way Forward: Regional Governance Responses for Renewing Trust

Drawing upon the four principles outlined above, six governance innovations are proposed below that aim to renew trust, strengthen regional institutions, and enhance collective action capacities by reinforcing regional *accountability, collaboration, cooperation, and reciprocity*. Each set of recommendations, fitting into the categories of political and diplomatic, socioeconomic and technological, and security and justice dimensions of trust, aim to spur on institutional reform by deepening existing agreements and creating new capacities for regional trust.

These recommendations are not intended as a universal blueprint for regional governance, nor do they assume that the same institutional approaches can be applied across regions with different contexts. Rather, they identify ways in which governance at the regional level can contribute to rebuilding trust within distinct regions while, in turn, strengthening the broader international system of governance.

RETHINKING REGIONAL POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY TO RESTORE TRUST

Regional governance has become an increasingly important pillar of international cooperation through which neighboring states can address shared political challenges and support peaceful dispute resolution. Regional organizations' geographic cohesion and Member States' local knowledge and established relationships position them to complement the work of the United Nations in promoting political stability and preventing conflict.

Strengthening regional efforts that support mediation and conflict resolution — such as the AU's Panel of the Wise and Continental Early Warning System, ECOWAS' mediation and early warning systems, the OAS' electoral observation missions and democratic governance mechanisms, ASEAN's preventive diplomacy initiatives, and the GCC's mediation efforts — can be critical antidotes to democratic backsliding, constitutional crises, and growing political polarization.²²⁷ While the UN remains central to cross-regional peace and security, its institutional architecture faces growing constraints in an increasingly fragmented and multipolar world, reinforcing the need for stronger regional leadership.

Regional organizations are often better positioned to facilitate dialogue and preventive or remedial diplomacy. Recent mediation efforts — including the GCC's facilitation on the restoration of diplomatic relations following the Gulf rift and ASEAN's facilitation of dialogue following the Cambodia-Thailand border tensions — demonstrate both the growing demand for regional leadership and the need to strengthen institutional capacities for managing future crises.²²⁸

Building an Inter-Regional Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy Network

A key weakness of conflict prevention efforts is that regional organizations often engage only after political crises have escalated into violence, constitutional breakdown, or widespread instability.²²⁹ Rather than reactive regional mediation responses, establishing a permanent Inter-Regional Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy Network would institutionalize continuous monitoring, early dialogue among stakeholders, and timely engagement before tensions deepen. Coordinated with UN preventive diplomacy efforts, the network's individual hubs would strengthen regional ownership, while advancing shared international peace and security goals (see table 3.2).²³⁰ Building on the AU and ECOWAS' established early warning and preventive diplomacy mechanisms, this recommendation expands comparable capacities in regional and sub-regional organizations worldwide.²³¹

Regional organizations' geographic cohesion and Member States' local knowledge and established relationships position them to complement the work of the United Nations in promoting political stability and preventing conflict.

Table 3.2: How Early Warning Hubs Would Complement Existing Regional Capacities

Regional Organization	Existing Capacity	Main Strength	Gap(s) addressed
African Union (AU)	CEWS, Peace and Security Council, and Panel of the Wise	Continental warning and peace architecture	Stronger connection between warning, early dialogue, and consistent response
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	ECOWARN, Country monitors, and national response structures	Operational regional-to-national information flow	Wider institutional learning and cross-regional exchange
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)	Early warning, mediation support, and election observation	Integrated conflict-cycle approach	Adaptation and exchange of methods outside the OSCE region
Organization of American States (OAS)	Permanent electoral observation and technical cooperation	Professionalized electoral monitoring	Broader linkage to standing preventive diplomacy
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	ASEAN-IPR, and preventive-diplomacy research and dialogue	Regional dialogue and knowledge exchange	More permanent operational warning and response capacity
Caribbean Community (CARICOM)	Election observation and regional diplomatic engagement	Small-state regional legitimacy and peer engagement	Standing analytical and mediation capacity

Source: Original Table, Stimson Center. Data sources: LeadAfrik, “[African Union Institutions](#)”; ECOWAS, “[Creation \(History\)](#)”; OSCE, “[About Us](#)”; OAS, “[What We Do](#)”; ASEAN, “[ASEAN Aims](#)”; and CARICOM, “[Who We Are](#).”

These hubs of a wider global network could be embedded within existing regional organizations, including the AU, OAS, ASEAN, EU, and CELAC, through small dedicated units that strengthen existing political affairs or peace and security departments. This method would allow for the strengthening of current capacities without creating new bureaucracies.²³² Employing distinct political and cultural sensitivities, the primary function of these units would be to monitor early warning indicators of political erosion, including electoral disputes, constitutional crises, attacks on judicial independence, political violence, disinformation campaigns, growing social unrest, and the assessment of environmental threats, such as food insecurity and climate-sparked conflict.²³³

When the hubs identify emerging risks, they would activate preventive diplomacy measures before conflicts escalate, including deploying mediation teams, facilitating dialogue, coordinating technical electoral assistance, and supporting local civil society organizations engaged in conflict prevention. These hubs would shift regional responses from reactive intervention by prioritizing early engagement, at a time when governments and other parties to a conflict remain willing to negotiate and open to some kind of compromise.²³⁴

Regional organizations are often better positioned than international institutions to detect and address emerging political tensions, due to their close proximity and established relationships with Member States, though their preventive capacities remain unevenly institutionalized. ECOWAS' response to The Gambia's 2016 electoral crisis demonstrates the value of early regional diplomacy, combining high-level mediation delegations (led by the presidents of Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone), political pressure, and a credible enforcement mechanism, supported by the AU and UN, to facilitate a peaceful transfer of power following a disputed election.²³⁵ Similarly, the OAS's electoral observation missions in Mexico highlight the importance of sustained monitoring and institutional engagement in identifying democratic risks.²³⁶ At the same time, such mechanisms remain largely observational and would benefit from stronger links between early warning systems and preventive diplomacy to enable timely political action.

Institutionalizing a Permanent UN Platform for Cross-Regional Governance Learning

Although regional organizations increasingly face governance challenges — including democratic backsliding, electoral disputes, unconstitutional transfers of power, organized crime, and foreign interference — they often respond in isolation, with limited mechanisms for cross-regional coordination and institutional learning.²³⁷ While the UN maintains partnerships with organizations, such as the AU, EU, OAS, ASEAN, CARICOM, and the League of Arab States, these efforts remain largely consultative and episodic, limiting the exchange of successful governance practices and innovations between regions.²³⁸

Rather than creating a new global institution, the UN should institutionalize existing partnerships with regional organizations by establishing a permanent regional governance coordination and learning platform within the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA). Building on the UN Charter's Chapter VIII focus on partnerships, the platform would enable a continuous exchange among regional organizations on democratic resilience, preventive diplomacy, mediation, election integrity, constitutional governance, and institutional reform, while facilitating rapid consultations during political crises and helping regions adapt successful approaches to their own unique contexts.

Operating through existing Chapter VIII: Regional Arrangements would preserve regional ownership, while enabling the UN to serve as a convener, facilitator, and source of technical expertise.²³⁹ This approach recognizes that regional organizations are often best positioned to address local political dynamics, while ensuring their efforts remain connected to broader international peace and security objectives.

Existing partnerships show that regional organizations can learn from one another when structured opportunities for cooperation exist. Since 2010, UN-convened meetings among organizations, such as the AU, EU, OAS, ASEAN, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), ECOWAS, and the League of Arab States, have facilitated exchanges on mediation, conflict prevention, and preventive diplomacy.²⁴⁰ Similarly, the Contadora process (1983-1987) demonstrated how regional and global actors (Mexico, the OAS, and UN) coordinated diplomatic initiatives to address Central American conflicts in the 1980s through mediation and regional dialogue.²⁴¹ The process helped to create the diplomatic foundations for the Esquipulas Peace Process, illustrating how cooperation among regional and international institutions can strengthen conflict prevention and political trust. Institutionalizing a permanent coordination and learning platform would build on these relationships by systematically sharing governance innovations and preventive approaches, reducing duplication, strengthening regional networks, and fostering a more adaptive system of international cooperation.

REDUCING REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISPARITIES FOR GREATER TRUST

Trust in regional economic governance is strained by geopolitical fragmentation, trade disruptions, technological competition, and widening economic disparities. While global foreign direct investment in 2026 has grown in strategic sectors, including semiconductors, energy-transition technologies, services, and critical minerals, investment decisions are increasingly shaped by national security priorities and strategic industrial policies.²⁴²

AI underscores this emerging tension, as unequal access to data, computing capacity, and AI models lead to deepening digital divides and inequality, particularly affecting developing economies.²⁴³ These disparities risk widening economic asymmetries and weakening confidence in global economic cooperation. As traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA) declines, regional organizations are becoming increasingly important platforms for mobilizing cooperation and addressing challenges requiring regionally grounded solutions.²⁴⁴ The African Union's permanent membership in the G20 reflects this shift, strengthening the Global South's voice in global economic decision-making.²⁴⁵

Expanding and Deepening Regional and Inter-Regional Trade Agreements

Global trade growth, geopolitical tensions, protectionism, and shifting supply chains are creating unpredictable market access and volatile investment flows, disproportionately affecting the poorest and most vulnerable countries.²⁴⁶ The Sevilla Commitment, adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (2025), recognizes that these challenges, alongside shrinking fiscal space in developing economies, require regional and inter-regional integration through expanded trade agreements.²⁴⁷ Such efforts can strengthen existing cooperation, increase regional investment, expand ecological interdependence, and rebuild trust. The UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) *World Investment Report 2026* similarly highlights the value of regional policy coordination and integrated markets.²⁴⁸

Regional organizations are well positioned to deepen regional trade integration by harmonizing rules of origin, promoting mutual recognition, streamlining customs, and reducing compliance costs.²⁴⁹ Implementation should be supported by home-country measures, structured dialogue, and stronger investment promotion. Regional organizations can complement global trade efforts through region-specific technical assistance that aligns trade commitments with national priorities, coordinates investment and industrial policies with regional environmental frameworks, and strengthens institutional capacity, particularly for economic activities with cross-border environmental implications (for instance, in the areas of energy production, water management, and critical-mineral development).²⁵⁰

Existing agreements demonstrate the value of these mechanisms. ASEAN's Free Trade Area shows how regional cooperation on rules of origin, trade facilitation, and customs procedures can expand market access, reduce trade barriers, and accommodate diverse economies.²⁵¹ Similarly, the African Continental Free Trade Area advances regional integration by creating a single market, progressively eliminating import taxes on 90% of products, supporting micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises, and improving confidence in regional economic governance.²⁵²

Yet regional trade, production, and investment remain constrained by geopolitical fragmentation and protectionism. Stronger cooperation among regional organizations, the World Trade Organization (WTO), UNCTAD, and international financial institutions can improve policy coordination, build capacity, and mobilize investment. Inter-regional partnerships, including ASEAN-EU regulatory and trade cooperation, demonstrate how regional organizations can align standards and expand market access across blocs while promoting policy coherence.²⁵³

Strengthening Existing Regional AI Governance Frameworks through Interoperability

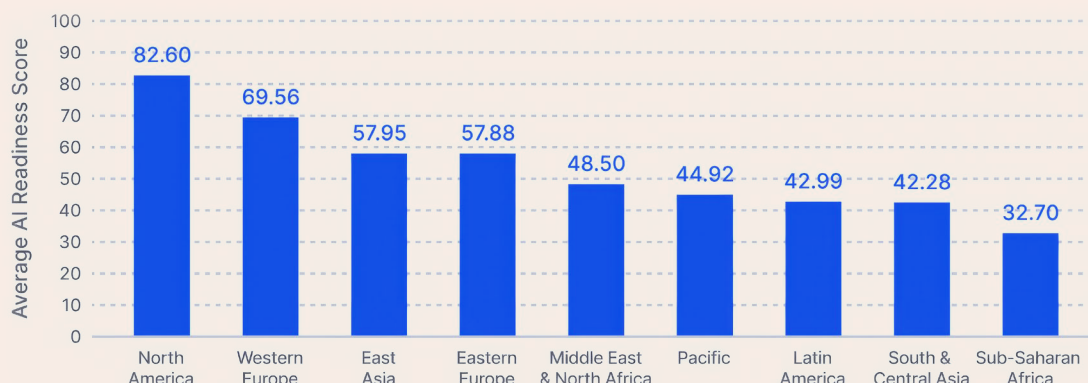
The United Nations Global Dialogue on AI Governance has elevated AI on the global agenda by advancing shared principles for safe, inclusive, and trustworthy AI, while recognizing that no country or region can govern AI alone.²⁵⁴ The *Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI* calls for coordinated governance, interoperable standards, and measurable oversight.²⁵⁵ However, translating these principles into interoperable regional frameworks, where AI laws and safety standards align across national borders, remains challenging due to uneven institutional capacity and regulatory fragmentation.²⁵⁶

Regional organizations can help to bridge this gap by aligning approaches to data governance and cross-border flows, cybersecurity, digital infrastructure, AI safety, and reliability, while, simultaneously, respecting Member States' sovereignty and development priorities. Greater interoperability can reduce regulatory fragmentation, strengthen cross-border digital markets and trade, and mitigate AI-related systemic risks, particularly for vulnerable populations.²⁵⁷

Trustworthy AI governance should be grounded in accountability, data justice and equity, human oversight, and respect for national priorities and technical capacities.²⁵⁸ Without these safeguards, AI adoption, particularly in developing countries, could undermine trust in digital systems, weaken investment confidence, and deepen AI-induced economic inequality.²⁵⁹ Interoperable frameworks can instead support responsible innovation, capture AI-driven productivity gains, strengthen digital integration, and establish common ethical standards. They can also facilitate cooperation on environmental risks, including preventing AI-related electronic waste caused by servers and data centers being disproportionately transferred to countries with weaker environmental protections.

Achieving the UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance's vision of shared AI benefits among all countries requires addressing fragmented regulation and unequal access to AI infrastructure, skills, and data.²⁶⁰ Across the Global South, disparities in compute and funding capacity to build AI models, underrepresentation in the data that trains AI, and limited legal and institutional frameworks to govern and negotiate the value of data amplify existing inequalities and environmental pressures.²⁶¹ Regional AI readiness gaps also remain significant (see figure 3.2): In Latin America, more than half of Member States lack high-performance infrastructure for AI deployment, while Africa faces low access to advanced computing, weak data governance, skills shortages, and inadequate digital infrastructure.²⁶²

Trustworthy AI governance should be grounded in accountability, data justice and equity, human oversight, and respect for national priorities and technical capacities.

Figure 3.2: Global AI Readiness Score

Source: Index.dev, *AI Readiness Index 2026: Global, Regional, and Country Statistics*.

Latin America has responded through initiatives such as the eLAC Digital Agenda and the Latin American Artificial Intelligence Index, which support regional collaboration on connectivity, cybersecurity, and data governance, while identifying AI readiness gaps and disparities among countries in AI adoption.²⁶³ To build trust in the regional digital economy, Latin American organizations should build on the OAS Inter-American Framework on Data Governance and AI and the Inter-American Development Bank's AI governance frameworks to strengthen interoperability, responsible adoption, and trusted digital markets. Regional organizations should facilitate technical exchanges, AI audits, regulatory sandboxes, and capacity-building initiatives that strengthen implementation, while promoting innovation and equity.²⁶⁴

Scaling regional capacity-building, digital partnerships, and interoperable governance can help developing countries advance digital sovereignty and capture AI's economic benefits. Ultimately, rebuilding trust in the digital economy requires interoperable AI governance that enables inclusive innovation, distributes AI-driven gains more equitably, and strengthens resilient digital economies.

PROMOTING REGIONAL SECURITY AND JUSTICE TO REDUCE MISTRUST

Trust is essential to effective security cooperation but difficult to sustain in an international system without a central authority to enforce agreements.²⁶⁵ As confidence in global multilateral institutions to address security challenges declines, states are increasingly turning to bilateral, regional, and plurilateral frameworks.²⁶⁶ Regional organizations and arrangements, including the EU, NATO, and GCC, have established distinct security frameworks with differing mandates. They are often better positioned to respond to regional security dynamics, build consensus among neighboring states, and tailor cooperation to local political, economic, and social contexts.²⁶⁷

While regional cooperation does not necessarily reflect deeper trust and may remain driven by strategic interests, regional frameworks can facilitate collective action and provide more practical mechanisms for addressing shared security challenges. Strengthening these arrangements can, therefore, complement global institutions and help to overcome the complexity of implementing security cooperation at the global level.

Incorporating Just Security into Regional Security Mechanisms to Promote Stability and Trust

Security increasingly extends beyond state sovereignty to encompass safety, well-being, and human security. Because sustainable security depends on effective governance, transparency, and accountability, addressing insecurity and declining public trust requires treating security and governance as interconnected.²⁶⁸ A “just security” approach provides a framework for doing so by advancing security and justice together, ensuring that neither is pursued at the expense of the other (see box 3.1).²⁶⁹

Regional institutions demonstrate how this approach can work in practice.²⁷⁰ For example, in Europe, the OSCE’s comprehensive security framework integrates politico-military, economic-environmental, and human rights, linking conflict prevention and early warning with human rights monitoring and arms-control verification.²⁷¹ Similarly, the EU combines security cooperation through the Common Security and Defence Policy, with membership conditioned on democracy, rule of law, and human rights standards.²⁷² Together, these models illustrate how regional institutions can integrate security, justice, and trust-building within a common governance framework.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is a critical context for developing such an approach. Ongoing conflict, relatively limited regional institutions, and reluctance among key actors to sustain dialogue have produced largely fragmented and reactive crisis responses. A more inclusive regional security architecture could strengthen conflict prevention, improve crisis management, and support long-term stability by addressing both immediate threats and underlying drivers of insecurity, including causes fueled by historical injustice.²⁷³

Public confidence in state institutions further underscores the need for this shift in the Middle East and North Africa. For example, while security institutions and judiciaries generally command greater trust by citizens in the MENA region, executive and legislative institutions lag behind, highlighting the need to strengthen transparency, accountability, and responsiveness alongside security-sector governance.²⁷⁴ For the Gulf and wider Middle East, unilateral strategies and external security guarantees are increasingly insufficient.²⁷⁵ The region requires more cooperative, inclusive, and regionally driven security arrangements that address both emerging threats and low levels of trust in governments.

Although the League of Arab States, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation support regional diplomacy and security cooperation, their approaches remain largely focused on sovereignty, regime stability, and national security. An integration of a just security framework could broaden this focus by placing human well-being, justice, and trust at the center of regional governance, while addressing the political, social, economic, and humanitarian drivers of insecurity.²⁷⁶

Because sustainable security depends on effective governance, transparency, and accountability, addressing insecurity and declining public trust requires treating security and governance as interconnected.

Box 3.1: Just Security Responses to the War in Ukraine

The European response to the war initiated by Russia against Ukraine, in February 2022, illustrates an attempt at combining regional security with concerns for justice. Since March 2025, a coalition of the willing, co-led by the U.K., France, Germany, and Ukraine, has brought together 35 partner countries to coordinate long-term political and military support for Ukraine. In September 2025, participating states endorsed a multinational force for Ukraine, a reassurance force designed to deploy at the request of the Ukrainian government and following a credible cessation of hostilities, across its land, maritime, and air domains to deter new aggression and contribute to long-term stability.

By late July 2026, however, negotiations toward a comprehensive ceasefire had produced only limited and temporary humanitarian pauses. Discussions involving the United States, Ukraine, and Russia had produced no formal roadmap for such a ceasefire, as Ukraine accelerated a long-range drone campaign to bring the war home to its adversary's military-related industries and broader economy.

Meanwhile, European institutions are strengthening accountability mechanisms in support of Ukraine. In January 2026, the EU and the Council of Europe launched and financed an Advance Team responsible for establishing the legal, institutional, and operational foundations of a new Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. In May 2026, the EU and 36 participating states adopted the Enlarged Partial Agreement governing the Tribunal's Management Committee, an important step toward making it operational.

This Tribunal will address a significant international accountability gap, as the International Criminal Court (ICC) cannot prosecute Russian leaders for the crime of aggression (note: Russia is not a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC). By establishing a dedicated justice mechanism for Ukraine, European states seek to demonstrate that long-term regional security also requires institutional legitimacy and the consistent enforcement of international law. The Ukrainian case provides a valuable model of just security applied to a regional context, highlighting both the opportunities and the institutional challenges for its operationalization during a protracted, devastating conflict.

Source: Original Box, Stimson Center. Data sources: Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, *Resolution CM/Res(2026)5 Establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine*; Council of the EU, "Robust Security Guarantees for a Solid and Lasting Peace in Ukraine"; Durch, Larik, and Ponzio, "Just Security and Global Governance: From UN75 to the Pact for the Future, and on to UN100"; European External Action Service, "The EU Participated in the Adoption of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine"; Karlsrud and Reykers, *Coalition of the Willing for Ukraine: A Multinational Force in the Making*; and Reuters, "Kremlin Says Too Early to Comment on Reported US-Ukraine Air Ceasefire Talks."

Embedding Accountability Mechanisms into Regional Security Arrangements to Strengthen Trust

Regional security arrangements often lack binding legal obligations, credible compliance mechanisms, and effective dispute resolution, as governments prioritize political flexibility and limits on the costs of potential non-compliance.²⁷⁷ This can weaken deterrence when incentives to defect outweigh the costs of violating commitments. Regional organizations should, therefore, embed trustworthy enforcement mechanisms into the design of security arrangements to facilitate, when warranted, corrective action and improved dispute resolution.

The legal basis of regional agreements should be strengthened by converting political declarations and memoranda into ratified protocols with mandatory dispute-resolution clauses. Models, such as bilateral investment treaties and the WTO dispute-settlement system (albeit the latter needs urgent revitalization), demonstrate how binding mechanisms can increase the credibility of international commitments.²⁷⁸

Regional organizations should also establish independent, adequately resourced technical secretariats capable of coordinating analysis, early warning, and response to security challenges. ECOWAS' Observation and Monitoring Centre and the AU's Continental Early Warning System illustrate the value of dedicated technical expertise, stable funding, and institutional continuity.²⁷⁹ In Latin America, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, through reciprocal inspections of nuclear facilities, helped transform a longstanding potential nuclear rivalry into regional cooperative security.²⁸⁰

Credible accountability measures, embedded within regional security arrangements, would complement these institutional arrangements. A graduated framework could include diplomatic censure, suspension of institutional voting rights, targeted sanctions, arms transfer suspension, and, as a last resort, a standing peacekeeping force, activated by a qualified majority. The ECOWAS 1999 Mechanism demonstrated the value of such arrangements during the 2016-17 Gambia crisis, when the credible threat of regional military intervention contributed to long-serving President Yahya Jammeh's peaceful departure after he initially refused to accept the election result.²⁸¹

Confidence-building in non-security matters should also precede negotiations on more contentious security issues. Cooperation in lower-risk areas, such as health, trade, and safe passage, can build institutional habits and greater trust between the parties to a dispute before addressing harder security challenges.²⁸² While these mechanisms cannot prevent deliberate offensive military violations, they increase transparency, establish a common factual basis for identifying unusual military activities, and support diplomatic responses.²⁸³ Together, these and other measures can make regional security commitments more credible, improve compliance, and strengthen trust by increasing both the costs of defection and the benefits of sustained cooperation.

Together, these and other measures can make regional security commitments more credible, improve compliance, and strengthen trust by increasing both the costs of defection and the benefits of sustained cooperation.

Navigating Potential Bottlenecks and Spoilers

As confidence in global multilateralism wanes, regional organizations are increasingly positioned to offer more localized responses to conflict, inequality, and transnational threats. Yet their ability to do so remains constrained by limited financial and technical capacities, dependence on external funding, and Member States' willingness to uphold collective decisions.²⁸⁴ The African Union's difficulties in responding to conflicts in Sudan and Somalia illustrate this gap between regional mandates and the capacity to act on them sufficiently.²⁸⁵ More broadly, regional institutions can struggle to exercise authority when individual governments obstruct collective action or invoke sovereignty to challenge decisions and findings. In Latin America, for example, governments have recast the conclusions of OAS and EU election observation missions as politically motivated, invoking sovereignty to dismiss them.²⁸⁶ Within the EU, Hungary's December 2025 veto blocked the adoption of annual enlargement conclusions, forcing the Danish presidency to reissue the text as a statement backed by the other 26 Member States and prompting renewed proposals for qualified-majority voting.²⁸⁷

The proliferation of regional and minilateral arrangements risks fragmentation, conflicting obligations, and competing standards, particularly in areas such as AI governance and climate policy where regional action cannot substitute for effective global frameworks.²⁸⁸ Their voluntary nature may further encourage forum-shopping and duplicative mandates, while the limits of regional reach can make it difficult to address problems that cross regional borders.²⁸⁹ Climate policy illustrated this challenge: The EU can cap emissions within the bloc, but firms can move production to countries without a carbon price and continue selling to Europe, relocating emissions rather than reducing them. The EU's response — charging importers for the carbon embedded in their goods — extends its reach beyond the bloc, but only to emissions embodied in products that cross its borders, underscoring the limits of regional solutions to inherently global problems.²⁹⁰

As global multilateral commitment weakens, regional institutions offer distinctive opportunities to rebuild confidence in collective action.²⁹¹ Their bounded membership, shared political identities, and common exposure to physical risks can enable forms of representation, cooperation, and risk-pooling that global institutions may struggle to reproduce.²⁹² Yet their advantages also depend on predictable financing, meaningful political support, and institutional capacity. As negotiations on the Post-2030 Development Agenda begin in 2027 — a topic to which we now turn, regional organizations will face an important opportunity to demonstrate their added value, while helping to renew confidence in both regional and global governance.²⁹³

As global multilateral commitment weakens, regional institutions offer distinctive opportunities to rebuild confidence in collective action.

IV. From the Summit of the Future to the Post-2030 Development Agenda: Restoring Trust in a Fractured World

“The future of peacebuilding is not only about agreements on paper, but about everyday steps people take towards one another. If we can build trust and pass it on to future generations, peace in the region will become irreversible.”

— Arzu Abdullayeva, Peace Activist²⁹⁴

In response to the growing sense of urgency around the need to make the multilateral system more responsive and effective, the September 2024 Summit of the Future (SOTF) galvanized attention worldwide on rebuilding trust and gaps in global governance; reaffirming the UN Charter, 2030 Agenda, and other existing commitments; and renewing the multilateral system to prepare for over-the-horizon challenges and opportunities.²⁹⁵ Taking forward many of the SOTF’s agreed commitments (including Actions 4 and 47-52 on financing for development and international financial architecture reform), last year’s (July 2025) Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) sought to catalyze investments at scale for sustainable development; along similar lines and level of ambition, the subsequent (November 2025) World Social Summit (WSS) worked to eradicate poverty, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, and promote social integration.²⁹⁶ All three are also poised to advance the final-stretch of efforts in delivering on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while teeing-up ambitious successor goals anticipated in 2030.

This final section of the *Future of International Cooperation Report 2026* (FIC’26) explores the multiple potential “win-win” implementation linkages coming, simultaneously, out of the recent Summit of the Future, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and the World Social Summit, and how they are shaping preparations for the September 2027 SDG Summit and a “Post-2030 Development Agenda.” Progress in both redefining and restoring global trust, in all its dimensions, depends on the respective success of each of these global diplomatic gatherings and their follow-through, in identifying and pursuing the deep and varied connections between them. The report further examines concrete entry points for the SOTF, FfD4, and WSS reform and accountability agendas through several “global and regional governance trust-building” interventions (as introduced in sections two and three of this report, respectively). With an eye to the start of the tenure of a new United Nations Secretary-General (from January 1, 2027), FIC’26 concludes with some final reflections on seizing the moment, drawing inspiration from the international cooperation principles of diplomacy, dialogue, and diversity.

Major UN Frameworks & Leadership for Restoring Trust

The erosion of trust in global institutions reflects a growing disconnect between international commitments and lived realities. Despite this, the current moment presents a significant opportunity for renewal: The convergence of multiple major UN intergovernmental processes, including SOTF, FfD4, and WSS follow-through, alongside preparations for the 2027 SDG Summit and talks toward a Post-2030 Development Agenda, provide a pathway for rebuilding trust in multilateral cooperation.²⁹⁷ In this regard, figure 4.1 below offers some guidance for governments (top row, including representatives from international organizations) to consider — these next twelve months and beyond — alongside suggestions for civil society (bottom row, including representatives from religious organizations, the media, and business community) to leverage Summit of the Future, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and World Social Summit implementation to inform and maximize ambition for the next round of (likely) 15-year global development goals.

The Summit of the Future (September 2024) marked an important effort to modernize multilateral governance through the adoption of the Pact for the Future and its accompanying Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.²⁹⁸ Organized around five distinct chapters, the Pact speaks to efforts underway to redefine and restore trust in the global multilateral system by, for instance, identifying new ways to fill critical financing for development gaps, as well as strengthening the peacemaking and wider peacebuilding toolkit for more effective conflict management. Successful implementation will counter narratives that development partners continue to make “empty promises” in failing to come close to meeting the goal (established in the 1970s by the UN General Assembly) of wealthy countries donating 0.7% of national income as Official Development Assistance (ODA), as well as help to reverse the world body’s perceived poor performance lately in the “4 P’s” of prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-war peacebuilding.

The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and World Social Summit provide further opportunities to rebuild trust, extending, in concrete ways, beyond the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (adopted by UN Member States in 2015). FfD4 addressed inequality — a central driver of declining trust for many — directly within the international economic system, though it arguably did less to confront inequality within states. Many developing countries remain constrained by debt burdens, limited fiscal space, and inadequate access to financing, inhibiting their ability to fulfill long-standing commitments to sustainable development and climate resilience.²⁹⁹ The Sevilla Commitment, adopted at FfD4, enshrined actionable steps to: i) catalyze investment in sustainable development; ii) address the debt and development crisis; and iii) make global economic governance more equitable and inclusive.³⁰⁰

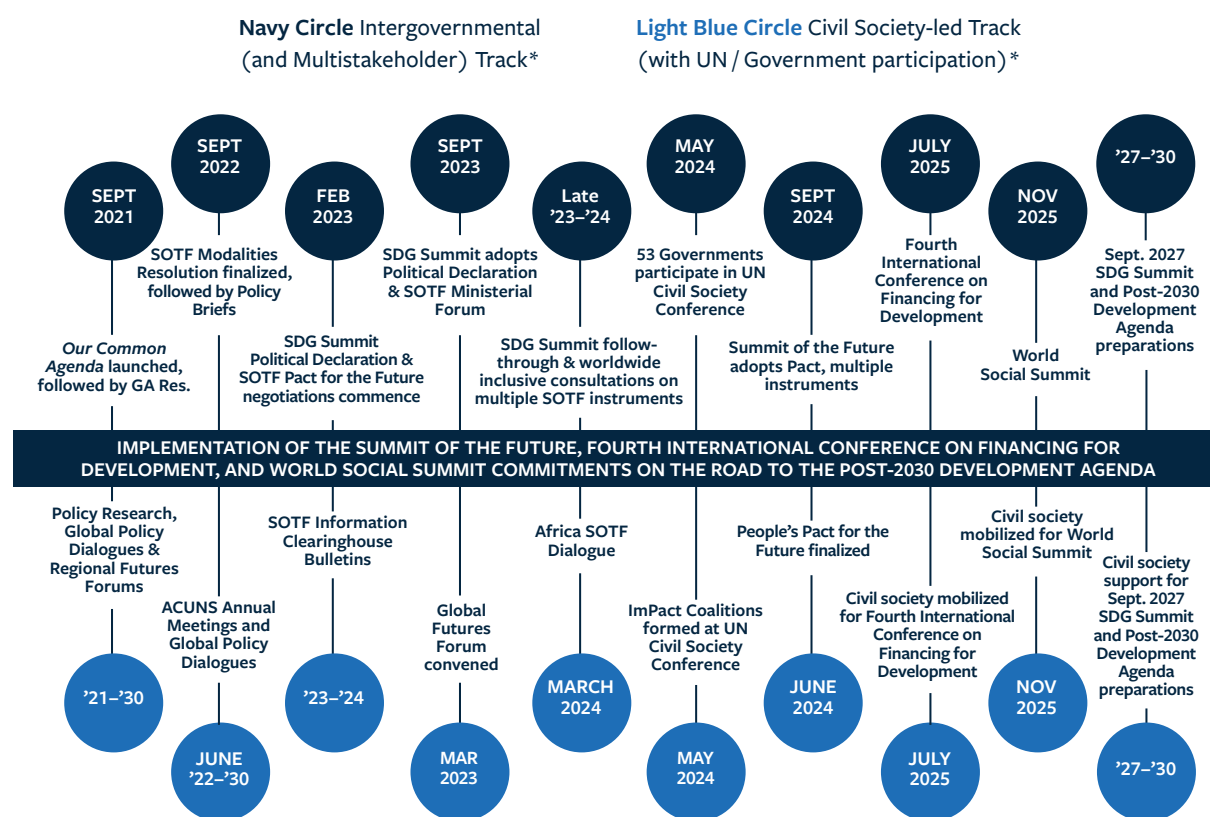
Moreover, the WSS provided renewed attention to the social foundations of sustainable development, focusing on: i) inclusive growth; ii) social protection; iii) youth empowerment; and iv) equitable access to opportunities anchored in the multilateral system.³⁰¹ Going forward, restoring trust requires that this combined action agenda of UN Member States instills confidence in international decision-making, by translating these forward-leaning set of commitments into tangible benefits that meaningfully improve the everyday lives of citizens, especially vulnerable groups.

Together, the SOTF, FfD4, and WSS provide practical strategies, operational tools, and financing guidance for garnering political support for a Post-2030 Development Agenda that keeps pace with rapidly shifting geopolitical, economic, social, technological, justice, and even security trends. These ambitious, generational reform programs are also building momentum for having the next round of global development goals contribute

squarely to the redefining and renewal of trust across (and even within) borders. Despite the move away from global cooperation in some countries and regions, many global and regional institutions are demonstrating resilience and a penchant for modernization through SOTF, FfD4, and WSS follow-through, helping to build high-level political confidence and galvanize broad-based support for sustained multilateral action.

With only 15% of SDG targets currently on track, 21% showing moderate progress, nearly half advancing only marginally or not at all, and 15% regressing below their 2015 baseline, the 2027 SDG Summit should serve as a platform for honest reflection on the structural barriers to implementation.³⁰² Identifying core lessons (e.g., about understanding, and ways to better respond to, governance, financing, and other kinds of implementation gaps) would directly inform the development of the Post-2030 Development Agenda, by embedding trust, accountability, and pathways toward effective implementation at the center of revamped global development strategies. A successful post-2030 framework must recognize that effective governance and public trust are not simply outcomes of development; they are essential conditions for achieving long-term, sustainable development that promotes human flourishing.³⁰³

Figure 4.1: Summit of the Future, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and World Social Summit Follow-through & Roadmap to the Post-2030 Development Agenda



* Only select recommended activities listed. Source: Original Figure, Stimson Center.

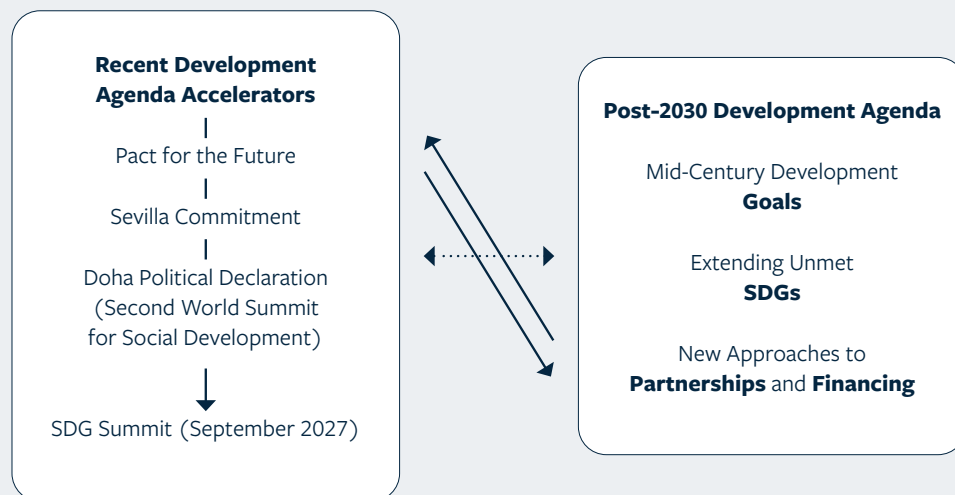
In providing both leadership and an attractive vision that countries and their citizens can rally around, the next UN Secretary-General (from January 2027) is poised to leverage SOTF, FfD4, and WSS follow-through as accelerators for many of the Sustainable Development Goals while, simultaneously, laying the groundwork

for a far-reaching Post-2030 Development Agenda. More specifically, a carefully-designed “twinning approach” could ensure that the next round of nationally-owned global development goals (perhaps named “Mid-Century Development Goals”³⁰⁴) reinforce — if not fully integrate with — an equally urgent and necessary follow-through agenda to the Summit of the Future, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and World Social Summit. Specifically, this might entail:

- i) reflecting on the false dichotomies and mixed messaging that arose between the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit and 2024 Summit of the Future, to prevent their re-emergence.
- ii) setting-up the new ambitious global development goals for success, by equipping the multilateral governance system with commensurate institutional innovations, mandates, staffing, operational tools, and resources (i.e., the “unfinished business” coming out of the September 2028 high-level review of the Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact, and Declaration on Future Generations), for the United Nations system to best partner with and support leadership by regional, national, and sub-national development actors.
- iii) establishing a joint monitoring and coordination mechanism to evaluate progress, take corrective actions, and encourage continuous “win-win” strategies in implementing these closely intertwined major global policy frameworks.

As detailed in FIC’26, this report provides a robust vision of just security and other knowledge building blocks for the next Secretary-General and his or her team to overcome potential barriers to progress, while realizing the full potential of these four (SOTF, FfD4, WSS, and Post-2030 Development Agenda) mutually reinforcing global frameworks and their follow-through. Harnessing the ideas, networks, and unique capabilities of a diverse coalition of champion governments, international civil servants, and partners in civil society and the private sector hold immense promise for renewing global trust and driving forward together these inextricably linked programs for global change (figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: How Recent Development Accelerators Will Inform the Post-2030 Development Agenda



Source: Original Figure, Stimson Center.

Global and Regional Trust-Building in Action

The period leading up to the September 2027 SDG Summit offers a critical window for initially preparing a highly impactful Post-2030 Development Agenda. As further elaborated below, the SOTF, FfD4, and WSS reform and accountability agendas (figure 4.3), combined with several additional “global and regional governance trust-building” interventions (as introduced in sections two and three of this report, respectively, and in line with the agreed SOTF, FfD4, and WSS outcomes), provide the building blocks for this comprehensive agenda.³⁰⁵

Specifically, the Pact for the Future establishes a broad framework for accelerating SDG implementation and UN reform through, for instance: i) reforming the international financial architecture (emphasized also in FfD4); ii) revamping the Security Council to increase representation, address historical injustices, and improve efficiency; and iii) moving beyond measuring progress of nations through GDP alone.³⁰⁶ FfD4 strengthens the framework on global financing for development and renews commitments to development progress,³⁰⁷ while the WSS reinforces poverty eradication, decent work, social inclusion, and reinvigorated social contract goals.³⁰⁸ Together, these intergovernmental processes provide an opportunity to connect governance reform, development finance, and social investment as a coherent, integrated approach for the next generation of global development priorities.

The priority now should be to translate these commitments into measures that can be tracked closely and inform actionable policy choices for 2030. Preparations should identify lessons from SDG implementation over the past decade, clarify persistent structural gaps, and assess how financing, social protection, inequality, climate resilience, technology, and global, regional, national, and sub-national institutional capacities can be integrated into a post-2030 framework. In this regard, the 2027 SDG Summit should be approached as the point at which the goals and lessons emerging from the Pact, WSS, and FfD4 are synthesized into a forward-looking global development architecture. The overarching objective should be a Post-2030 agenda that is more implementable, adequately financed, socially inclusive, aligned with the Pact for the Future’s global governance innovations (and “unfinished business” post-September 2028, as noted above), and responsive to emerging global challenges, while preserving the universal and transformative principles of the SDGs.

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The overarching objective should be a Post-2030 agenda that is more implementable, adequately financed, socially inclusive, aligned with the Pact for the Future’s global governance innovations (and “unfinished business” post-September 2028, as noted above), and responsive to emerging global challenges, while preserving the universal and transformative principles of the SDGs.

Figure 4.3: From SDGs to the Pact for the Future, FfD4, and World Social Summit — What’s “The Through-Line?”



Source: Original Figure, Stimson Center. Data Sources: UN, [Pact for the Future](#); UN, [Political Declaration of the World Social Summit](#); UN, [Outcome Document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development](#); and UN, [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Section two of this report considers six global governance innovations (three underscored below) as pathways to restoring trust in global cooperation across its political and diplomatic, socioeconomic and technological, and security and justice dimensions. Global governance faces a crisis of confidence, driven by institutions that have struggled to adapt to a rapidly changing world, deepening geopolitical fragmentation, persistent inequalities, and a growing gap between international commitments and tangible outcomes. The proposed innovations seek to bolster existing frameworks by establishing dedicated bodies within them to more effectively address challenges such as information-sharing, AI capacity, and strengthening counter-terrorism efforts.

Establishing a Multilateral Information Integrity Council. International cooperation is under growing strain as the information environment deteriorates through the spread of technology facilitated dis- and misinformation, undermining public trust and collective efforts to address global challenges, such as health, the environment, and cybersecurity. Despite growing recognition of these risks, the UN and other international fora have yet to establish a dedicated institution or platform to advance information integrity. The Global Digital Compact (GDC) provides a strong foundation for such an initiative, with Objective 3 calling for an inclusive, open, safe, and secure digital space that respects, protects, and promotes human rights, while explicitly supporting international cooperation to address dis- and misinformation, as well as hate speech.³⁰⁹ The GDC's commitments on information integrity further call for strengthened international cooperation to promote access to information and provide a clear basis for establishing a permanent multilateral mechanism dedicated to information integrity.³¹⁰ Such a mechanism would also advance SDG Targets 16.10, 16.6, and 16.7, which respectively call for public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms, effective and accountable institutions, and inclusive and participatory decision-making, as well as SDG Target 17.16 on strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships.³¹¹

The UN should establish a Multilateral Information Integrity Council as a system-wide scientific and coordinating body composed of technical experts to assess information environment degradation, develop shared standards and recommendations, and coordinate international responses to threats to information integrity. The Council could build on and strengthen existing work across the UN system — including the UN Secretariat, UNESCO, UNDP, ITU, and the World Bank — by providing a unified multilateral framework for advancing information integrity and supporting global cooperation and trust in information.

Building a Global AI Hub and Shared Computing Infrastructure. Ensuring that artificial intelligence contributes to inclusive development, underpinned by strong bonds of trust, requires closing widening disparities in access to — and reducing the growing costs of — the computing power, digital infrastructure, data, and technical expertise needed to develop and deploy large-scale AI systems. Countries with greater financial and technological resources are better positioned to benefit from the AI transformation, while developing countries face persistent constraints on AI readiness. The Global Digital Compact addresses these gaps by promoting digital inclusion, resilient infrastructure, inclusive AI governance, and greater developing-country participation in emerging technologies (Objectives 1, 4, and 5).³¹² These commitments are reinforced by SDG Targets 9.5, 9.a, and 9.c on technological capacity, resilient infrastructure, and affordable ICT access, as well as Targets 17.6 and 17.8 on international cooperation in science, technology, innovation, and enabling technologies.³¹³ The Sevilla Commitment similarly calls for greater investment in technological and digital infrastructure in developing countries and stronger capacity to benefit from technological transformation,³¹⁴ while the Doha Political Declaration emphasizes inclusive digital transformation and closing digital divides for social development.³¹⁵

A Global AI Hub could translate these commitments into shared computing infrastructure and technical resources accessible to developing countries, alongside mechanisms for improved knowledge-sharing, research collaboration, and capacity-building. This would help to ensure that access to advanced AI capabilities is not determined primarily by national income and that technological transformation contributes to more broad-based, socioeconomic development worldwide.

Streamlining and Reforming UN Counter-Terrorism Efforts. The UN’s approach to countering terrorism (CT) and preventing violent extremism (PVE) has become imbalanced, as emphasis on security operations to combat terrorism sometimes overshadows safeguards for human rights and the rule of law, weakening UN legitimacy and creating opportunities for governments to misuse counter-extremism measures to suppress political opposition and restrict fundamental freedoms. The Pact for the Future calls for enhanced coordination of UN counter-terrorism efforts and cooperation with relevant regional and subregional organizations, while reaffirming that efforts to prevent and combat terrorism must comply with international law (Action 23).³¹⁶ This approach is consistent with SDG Targets 16.1, 16.4, and 16.a, which call for reducing violence, combating illicit financial and arms flows and organized crime, and strengthening national capacity to prevent violence and combat terrorism.³¹⁷

Reforms to strengthen the UN’s approach could include consolidating overlapping countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism functions, clarifying mandates and institutional responsibilities, strengthening coordination across UN entities and with regional organizations, establishing common human rights and rule-of-law safeguards for CT/PVE programming, and developing stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not enable the suppression of political opposition or fundamental freedoms. These steps would improve the trust and legitimacy of UN CT/PVE efforts, while strengthening Member States’ capacity to address terrorism in accordance with international law.

REGNL TRUST

REDEFINING REGIONAL TRUST: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

As trust in global multilateral institutions and cooperation continues to weaken in some regions, there is a growing need to renew confidence in regional governance as a vehicle for collective action. Section three of this report examines opportunities to strengthen regional trust by making governance more responsive, inclusive, and capable of delivering material results. It highlights six entry points, including the three emphasized below, to reinforce regional cooperation across the political, diplomatic, socioeconomic, technological, security, and justice dimensions of trust.

Building an Inter-Regional Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy Network. Regional conflict management mechanisms often engage only after political crises have escalated into violence, constitutional breakdown, or widespread instability, missing an opportunity to prevent conflict and restore basic levels of trust before tensions deepen. The Pact for the Future provides a basis for strengthening this preventive capacity, calling for the UN to enhance its support for mediation and preventive diplomacy through the Secretary-General’s good offices (Action 16),³¹⁸ while encouraging regular high-level engagement between the Secretary-General and regional organizations on peace operations, peacebuilding, and conflict management, specifically mentioning that “an inter-regional network could institutionalize information-sharing and preventive coordination” (Action 21).³¹⁹

The Declaration on Future Generations (Actions 24–27) similarly calls for leveraging science, data, statistics, and strategic foresight to support anticipatory risk analysis and long-term planning; strengthening forward-looking impact assessments; and building institutional capacity to anticipate and prepare for future shocks, while reducing their disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations.³²⁰ These commitments are reinforced by SDG Targets 16.1, 16.6, and 16.7, which emphasize reducing violence, strengthening effective and accountable institutions, and promoting inclusive decision-making, as well as SDG Target 17.16 on strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships.³²¹ In response and by employing distinct political and cultural sensitivities, a proposed Inter-Regional Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy Network could institutionalize continuous monitoring and shared risk assessments, information exchange, and sustained dialogue among regional organizations and the United Nations.

Expanding and Deepening Regional and Inter-Regional Trade Agreements. Despite continued global trade growth, geopolitical tensions, protectionism, surging energy costs, and shifting supply chains are creating unpredictable market access and volatile investment flows globally that disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Meanwhile, fragmented regional trade rules, customs procedures, and compliance requirements further constrain their ability to benefit from economic integration. The Sevilla Commitment (para. 44) emphasizes strengthening developing countries' trade capacities and their integration into regional and global value chains through trade-related physical and digital infrastructure, logistics networks, and regional trade corridors.³²² Expanding and deepening regional and inter-regional trade agreements can help to translate these commitments into practice by harmonizing trade rules, simplifying customs procedures, reducing compliance costs, and improving connectivity, while supporting developing countries' exports and access to regional and global markets.

Such efforts would advance SDG Targets 17.10, 17.11, and 17.12 by promoting an open, rules-based, and equitable trading system, increasing developing-country exports, and securing duty-free and quota-free market access for least developed countries.³²³ Consistent with the Doha Political Declaration, deeper regional economic integration should ultimately promote inclusive economic transformation, productive employment, and international cooperation that enables developing countries to participate more fully in sustainable economic development.³²⁴ Stronger regional and inter-regional trade cooperation can sustain economic collaboration, expand ecological interdependence, and rebuild trust by improving trade and investment conditions through technical assistance, investment facilitation, environmental protection regulations, and capacity-building. Doing so will also further enable regional economic communities, businesses, and other stakeholders to adapt production networks to unpredictable global supply chain dynamics.

Embedding Enforcement Mechanisms into Regional Security Arrangements to Improve Trust. Ensuring compliance remains a critical challenge to the credibility and effectiveness of regional security arrangements, which often lack binding legal obligations, trustworthy enforcement mechanisms, and effective dispute-resolution procedures. The Pact for the Future calls for stronger collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations on peace operations, peacebuilding, and conflicts (Action 21), where accountability within these arrangements ensures greater adherence to these arrangements.³²⁵ Action 16 further emphasizes the peaceful settlement of disputes and the strengthening of diplomacy, mediation, and conflict-prevention mechanisms.³²⁶

In the same spirit as the Pact, regional security arrangements should incorporate clearer compliance and accountability mechanisms to bolster trust, deterrence, and the credibility of collective commitments.

Specifically, this could include establishing independent monitoring bodies, requiring transparent reporting on regional security agreement implementation, and creating predictable procedures for dispute resolution and corrective action. Such measures would advance SDG Targets 16.3, 16.6, and 16.7 by ensuring strengthened rule of law, effective and accountable institutions, and inclusive decision-making, while Target 16.a underscores the importance of enhancing institutions through international cooperation to prevent violence and address security threats.³²⁷

The Way Forward for Global Trust: Diplomacy, Dialogue, and Diversity

Under the banner of “Diplomacy, Dialogue, and Diversity,” the Doha Forum promotes a spirited and open exchange of ideas to innovate and improve international policy-making through action-oriented networks. Informed by this *Future of International Cooperation 2026* report on restoring trust in a fractured world, this year’s Doha Forum (December 5-6, 2026) on “Redefining Global Trust” will take place at a consequential moment for the international system. The United Nations is advancing both the Pact for the Future and UN80 Initiative, while confronting severe financial constraints, persistent geopolitical divisions, and growing demands for more effective and representative global governance. At the same time, the selection of the next United Nations Secretary-General — who will commence from January 2027 — presents an opportunity for renewed leadership as the organization enters a new chapter. Against this backdrop, the principles of diplomacy, dialogue, and diversity can help to guide efforts to rebuild confidence in international cooperation and strengthen coalitions of state-based and non-state actors.

As illustrated in FIC’26, the challenge, in 2026, is increasingly one of implementation and follow-through. The Pact for the Future has established a broad agenda for strengthening multilateral cooperation, while UN80 has placed renewed emphasis on making the UN system more efficient, coherent, and capable of achieving results. If successfully delivered, both reform packages can expand the levels of trust and legitimacy necessary for keeping cooperative relationships together and reliable globally, but also by engendering important positive spillover effects regionally and within a country.

More than ever, dynamic and responsive global and regional institutions are needed to keep pace with dozens of concurrent deadly conflicts, geopolitical competition, environmental degradation, persistent pockets of extreme poverty, a perceived erosion of human rights globally, and accelerated technological change. Ultimately, by renewing their credibility and momentum, the Pact and UN80 (alongside Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and World Social Summit follow-through) are poised to establish the foundations for nations and their citizens to chart an ambitious Post-2030 Development Agenda, as integral to a revived belief in the value of global public goods and multilateral cooperation.

To be sure, effective global leadership, which enjoys the full confidence of citizens and allows for their substantive contributions, is essential to progress. Equally important is a renewed commitment to international cooperation grounded in *diplomacy* across political divides, meaningful *dialogue* among governments and the societies they serve, and *diversity* in the voices and perspectives shaping global and regional governance decisions. Together, these principles can help to redefine and restore trust in multilateral cooperation, strengthening vital capacities to respond to the complex challenges of an increasingly fractured yet still interdependent world.

Annex: List of Relevant Resources

Reports and Books

- ▶ [Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance](#) (June 2015)
- ▶ [Just Security in an Undergoverned World](#) (Oxford University Press, 2018)
- ▶ [An Innovation Agenda for UN75: The Albright-Gambari Commission Report and the Road to 2020](#) (June 2019)
- ▶ [Reimagining Governance in a Multipolar World](#) (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, September 2019)
- ▶ [UN 2.0: Ten Innovations for Global Governance — 75 Years beyond San Francisco](#) (June 2020)
- ▶ [Coping with New and Old Crises: Global and Regional Cooperation in an Age of Epidemic Uncertainty](#) (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, December 2020)
- ▶ [Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration's Promise: An Expert Series' Synthesis of Major Insights and Recommendations](#) (June 2021)
- ▶ [Beyond UN75: A Roadmap for Inclusive, Networked & Effective Global Governance](#) (June 2021)
- ▶ [Building Back Together and Greener: Twenty Initiatives for a Just, Healthy and Sustainable Global Recovery](#) (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, September 2021)
- ▶ [Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for the Future](#) (June 2022)
- ▶ [Rethinking Global Cooperation: Three New Frameworks for Collective Action in an Age of Uncertainty](#) (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, September 2022)
- ▶ [Global Governance Survey 2023: Finding Consensus in a Divided World](#) (June 2023)
- ▶ [Global Governance Innovation Report 2023: Redefining Approaches to Peace, Security & Humanitarian Action](#) (June 2023)
- ▶ [Future of International Cooperation Report 2023: Building Shared Futures: Innovating Governance for Global and Regional Problem Solving](#) (co-published with Doha Forum and the Global Institute for Strategic Research, September 2023)
- ▶ [2023 Report of the Climate Governance Commission: Governing Our Planetary Emergency](#) (Climate Governance Commission, November 2023)
- ▶ [Global Governance Innovation Report 2024: Advancing Human Security through a New Global Economic Governance Architecture](#) (June 2024)
- ▶ [Future of International Cooperation Report 2024: The Innovation Imperative: Tech-Governance, Development & Security at a Crossroads](#) (co-published with Doha Forum and the Global Institute for Strategic Research, September 2024)
- ▶ [Global Governance Innovation Report 2025: Advancing the Pact for the Future and Environmental Governance](#) (June 2025)
- ▶ [Future of International Cooperation Report 2025: Justice in Action: Beyond Promises to Progress](#) (co-published with Doha Forum and the Global Institute for Strategic Research, September 2025)
- ▶ [Global Governance Innovation Report 2026: Advancing the Pact for the Future and a New Peace & Security Architecture](#) (June 2026)

Latest Action Plans from the Global Policy Dialogues Series:

- ▶ [Roadmap for the Future We Want & UN We Need: A Vision 20/20 for UN75 & Beyond](#) (UN75 Global Governance Forum, September 2020)
- ▶ [Global Policy Dialogue on the Africa We Want and the UN We Need](#) (Abuja, Nigeria: Savannah Center for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development, February 2024)
- ▶ [Global Policy Dialogue on Advancing Human Security through a New Global Economic Governance Architecture](#) (Tokyo, Japan, as part of the 2024 ACUNS Annual Meeting)
- ▶ [Global Policy Dialogue on the Triple Planetary Crisis and Future of Environmental Governance at the ACUNS Annual Meeting](#) (Nairobi, Kenya, as part of the 2025 ACUNS Annual Meeting)
- ▶ [Justice in Action: Greater MENA Perspectives on Global & Regional Governance Innovation](#) (Doha, Qatar, December 2025)
- ▶ [Global Policy Dialogue on In Defense of Multilateralism through the Pact](#) (Lisbon, Portugal, as part of the 2026 ACUNS Annual Meeting)

Global Governance Innovation Network Latest Policy Briefs:

- ▶ [Negotiation Process-Design Is Key for Article 109 UN Charter Review](#) (June 2026)
- ▶ [Two-Tier Climate Multilateralism: The Legacy of COP30](#) (May 2026)
- ▶ [Priorities for Africa: Artificial Intelligence Governance at the Global and National Level](#) (April 2026)
- ▶ [Policy Brief on Climate Finance: Review of the current global landscape in financing mechanisms for climate change](#) (August 2025)
- ▶ [Options for Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms in Global Environmental Governance](#) (May 2025)
- ▶ [Governing AI for the Future of Humanity: Connecting the Declaration on Future Generations with the Global Digital Compact](#) (March 2025)
- ▶ [Complex Global Shocks, Emergency Platforms, and United Nations Reform](#) (September 2024)
- ▶ [Biennial UN-G20+ Summit: Bridging the Global Economy Governance Gap](#) (August 2024)
- ▶ [From Commitments to Results: Strengthening the G20's Role in Promoting Global Climate Action](#) (July 2024)
- ▶ [Revising the United Nations Charter](#) (April 2024)
- ▶ [The Our Common Agenda as Inspiration for International Organizations](#) (April 2024)
- ▶ [Enhancing Preventative Measure for Money Laundering and Corruption](#) (April 2024)
- ▶ [Bolstering Arms Control in a Contested Geopolitical Environment](#) (November 2022)
- ▶ [Responsibility Chains — Building Global Governance for Forest Risk Commodity Chains](#) (August 2022)

Endnotes

Executive Summary

- ¹ Ressa, “Nobel Lecture given by Nobel Peace Prize laureate 2021 Maria Ressa, Oslo.”

Introduction: Global Trust Unpacked, Trends, and Concepts

- ² Doha Forum, “Doha Forum Announces 2026 Theme: ‘Redefining Global Trust’.”
- ³ UN, *United Nations Charter*, Art. 2.
- ⁴ Cannon and McAuliffe, “What’s in store for the future of multilateralism?”
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IV. From the Summit of the Future to the Post-2030 Development Agenda: Restoring Trust in a Fractured World

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Future of International Cooperation Report 2026

Redefining Global Trust

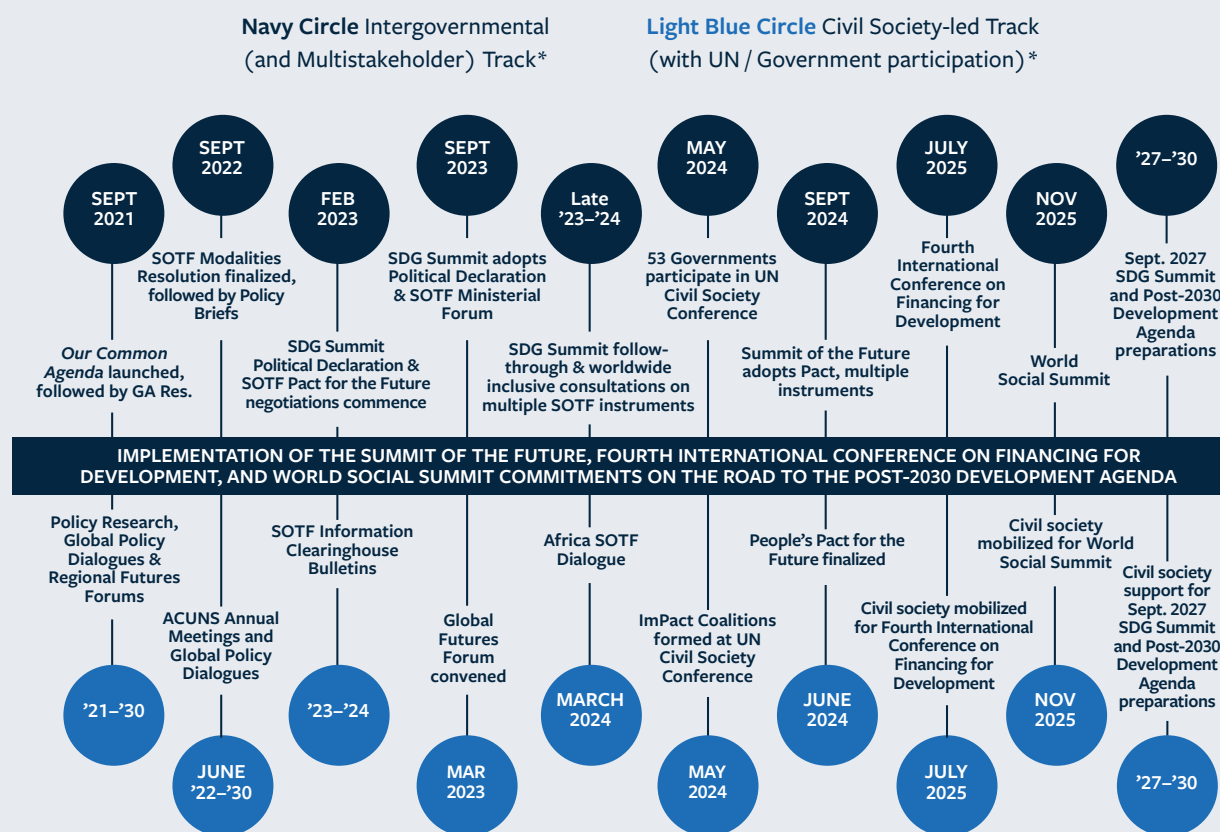
“... both the forum and this report’s focus on ‘diplomacy, dialogue, and diversity’ matter ... to achieve genuine progress in a concerted effort to restore and reinvigorate trust worldwide.”

— Foreword to FIC’26

Mubarak Al-Kuwari,
Rachel Stohl, and
Mohamed Ali Chih

At a time of geopolitical upheaval, shifting alignments, and growing uncertainty around the future of global and regional institutions, trust remains the essential foundation that enables cooperation between states, societies, and other stakeholders. New kinds of leadership, reinvigorated institutions, and renewed respect for international norms, policies, and laws are needed to reverse the ongoing breakdown of trust within and between countries, which is undermining efforts to build a more secure and just world — or “just security.” This fourth edition of the *Future of International Cooperation Report* (FIC’26) critically examines growing trust deficits across the spheres of global and regional politics (including diplomacy and mediation), economics (including business and technology), and security and justice (including protecting people and preventing violent extremism) — even in cases where national interests overlap and the benefits of coordinated action are clear. With a fresh reconceptualization of trust in this second quarter of the 21st century and the attendant multiplier effect of social capital investments, FIC’26 charts a positive reform and accountability agenda to leverage the confluence of a new United Nations Secretary-General (from January 1, 2027) with World Social Summit and Summit of the Future follow-through, alongside initial steps toward a Post-2030 Development Agenda in the lead-up to the September 2027 SDG Summit in New York.

Figure 4.1: Summit of the Future, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and World Social Summit Follow-through & Roadmap to the Post-2030 Development Agenda



* Only select recommended activities listed. Source: Original Figure, Stimson Center.

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