



**INTERACTION  
COUNCIL**

Established in 1983

## **InterAction Council**

**35th Annual Plenary Meeting**

## **Final Communiqué**

**28-30 September 2018  
Beijing, P. R. China**

The InterAction Council convened in Beijing, China, from 28-30 September 2018 for its 35th Annual Plenary Meeting. The Council focused on the great challenges affecting the present state of the world, including global governance, international trade, the rise of artificial intelligence, and climate change, among other topics.

### **Global Governance**

The catastrophic world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century opened the eyes of all nations. Leaders began to see that the greatest future challenges to peace and security would be global, enormous in scale, and transnational. The global community concluded that a multilateral system was needed to avoid the horrors of another war. At the core of that system is the United Nations (UN).

Enshrined within the UN Charter are the principles of the sovereignty of states, the prohibition of the use of force, self-determination of peoples, human rights, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Over time, the multilateral system steadily evolved and now includes many agencies under the UN, regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), several international treaties, international norms, and international courts and mechanisms designed to guard norms and settle disputes. It is by no means a perfect system, but it has contributed substantially to the preservation of global peace, stability, prosperity, and development.

A generation ago, statesmen recognized that no nation could or should expect to go it alone. And as such, the international system favoured partnership over partisanship. This is no longer the case; our international system is now under attack. As the former prime minister of New Zealand, James Bolger, told the Council in his 2018 State of the World address:

“The reality now is that in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century some current leaders seem to have forgotten, wilfully or otherwise, the compelling reasons why their earlier compatriots saw the necessity for a rule based and collaborative international structure and order. “

Mr. Bolger specifically mentioned refugees as an issue that some irresponsible politicians have cynically exploited for parochial and short-term political gain. Blaming unemployment and inequality on refugees and migrants is wrong and it is cruel. Denying that the behaviour of humankind can affect the climate simply delays a desperately needed solution. Violence continues

to be transboundary. Religious conflict continues to divide. Attacking the international system ignores our collective story, and it is a story of chaos, suffering, and destruction.

Recognizing the need for strengthened global governance, Xi Jinping, President of The People's Republic of China, urged the Council to "enhance consensus among all parties and promote the improvement of the global governance system."

### **The Global Economy and the War on Trade**

Our international system was originally based on ideas of multilateral cooperation and the rule of law. The geopolitical landscape, however, has changed substantially since 2016. International institutions, alliances, and other norms that were once considered stable are now under tremendous pressure and are evolving rapidly.

Despite many transnational challenges and disruption, the world economy has steadily expanded since the 2008 global financial crisis. Less people now live in poverty, the world's financial markets are at all-time highs, and nations are connected tightly through trade, sharing in one another's prosperity.

For example, the combined nations of Europe accounts for 60 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The United States and China share a role in preserving global peace and security and are tied very closely through trade. Thirty-eight per cent of China's GDP is driven by trade, and trade with the United States contributes 3.5 per cent to China's GDP. The United States is not as dependant on trade as most of its partners but still 10 per cent of American wealth, on average in recent years, is driven by trade. The burgeoning trade tensions of 2018 will not only affect the China-America relationship but will also impact businesses globally. These negative impacts will only accelerate as global economic growth slows. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), expected growth in the major economies has been downgraded and is expected to plateau at 2.1 per cent in 2019.

For these reasons, in July 2018, the European Union and China held a summit where they declared in a communiqué that:

“Both sides firmly supported the rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading system with the WTO (World Trade Organization) at its core and are committed to complying with existing WTO rules. They are also committed to cooperating on reform of the WTO.”

Unfortunately, those who have benefited the most from economic expansion has been the world’s wealthiest. Since 2008, wealth creation has been concentrated in ever fewer hands. Oxfam published in January 2018 that the world’s eight wealthiest people own the same amount of wealth and assets as the bottom 50 per cent of the global population. It is a terrible statistic, but year after year, we have seen the needs of investors and capital prioritized over the needs of labour and a militant resistance to any suggestion of a global tax on wealth.

All but one of the world’s eight wealthiest live in the United States or the EU, furthering the gap between northern and southern nations. Unfair and exploitative trade deals have resulted in less revenue for developing countries. Less resources force poorer countries to cut back ever further on their investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare. This in turn leads to more migration as people seek better lives or simply to survive. Progressive trade, a concept promoted by Canada, combines globalization and free trade with equitable and sustainable principles such as rules on the environment and fair labour conditions. It is an example for all wealthy nations.

The world may have not learned its lesson from 2008 when global total debt was US\$140 trillion. Since then, global debt has grown to US\$250 trillion, increasing the risk of another debt-driven financial collapse. Nations, companies, and households are borrowing more because of an expansionist culture of growth and consumption. This is driven by financial markets, which force companies to push products and services as they sprint desperately to meet quarterly performance targets. This short-term thinking is also reflected in the way nations compete. Today, a singular focus on GDP growth favours transactions and consumption above many other important aspects of human endeavour. GDP is an inadequate measure. GDP ignores the richness of culture, just and civil society, our shared humanity, and also man’s creativity and productivity. Critically, GDP ignores ecology and the environment. Pursuit of GDP growth has created a vicious cycle that is ruining the planet.

## **Recommendations:**

- Abandon GDP as a measure of a nation's productivity because GDP is limited in its focus on transactions and consumption. GDP totally ignores other, and perhaps more critical, factors that are indicative of a successful society. The outcomes of human activity would be better measured against the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or other metrics to capture humanity's progress.
- Support reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as suggested in the proposals of the European Union, Canada, and other states that will be discussed in a meeting of trade ministers to be held in Ottawa, Canada, in October 2018.
- Reduce levels of debt worldwide, as it is unrealistic to continue to borrow from future generations without restraint. Continued use of debt accelerates irresponsible consumption and excessive debt places us all at risk.
- Prioritize the role of multilateral solutions and institutions to create collective benefits. Bilateral negotiations lead to limited outcomes while collective action builds trust among nations and creates an opportunity for unified response during global crises.
- African nations should no longer be pressured by the West to trade development assistance in exchange for access to Western markets. Protectionist policies are unfair to lesser developed countries, but more so when the West insists upon including LDCs in value and supply chains without reciprocity.
- Campaign to ensure cultural understanding and education. Populist politicians manipulate through a number of methods including electronic media which cannot be contained adequately. Educated citizens will resist this propaganda.

## **Climate Change, Plastics, and the Health of the Planet**

Without question, human economic activity has changed the climate. Tropical storms are more severe than ever, and frightening storm surges are now impacting flood plains ever further northward. Every year, new high temperature records are set which have had dangerous impacts; 70 per cent of the world's fresh water supply is held in permanent snow and ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica. This supply is melting. In our oceans, the results of hyper-production sit in a horrific man-made creation now known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. The fact that we live with and accept a 1.5 million square kilometre floating patch of plastic waste is unacceptable. It is predicted that by 2050, plastics in the ocean will outweigh fish. States like Kenya are leading the way with a ban on plastic bags while others like the United Kingdom have pledged to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042.

China's leadership and engagement in preserving the health of the planet was witnessed in its unwavering support for the Paris Agreement on Climate, the most comprehensive multilateral agreement on protecting the environment. The Agreement without China would have failed. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has featured China's leadership in preserving the environment, in addition to ensuring peace and security and lifting millions of people out of poverty through trade. Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan, in a meeting with IAC leaders, confirmed that "China will follow the path of peaceful development and promote the building of a community for a shared future for humanity." The InterAction Council Co-chairs, the Honourable Bertie Ahern and His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, agreed with the Vice President that combatting climate change was crucial for the shared future of the planet.

Macro-level policies on the environment will have an impact on individuals. There is a strong connection between protecting the environment and offering universal healthcare. There is no à la carte option: the bare minimum should include global policies on the environment with a focus on how outcomes will affect individual health.

Digital health systems are presently fragmented due to a period of explosive innovation causing a proliferation of platforms and applications. This challenges health care providers seeking to create a single view of the patient as personal data lies separated in silos. A single portable medical identity offers a single view of the patient, making sense of various and disparate data. Data collection is also increasingly important to planetary health where researchers are now able to apply algorithms and derive insights from a variety of data sets including Google search results. For example, such analysis of Google search makes it possible to predict the presence of Ebola in a population or the spread of influenza.

Climate change will place strain on both related and unrelated institutions. As weather events and diseases accelerate and spread because of climate change, people all over the world will seek safety. Many will flee their homes; they will be transformed into migrants.

### **Recommendations**

- Urge governments to end the use of single-use plastic items.
- Plan all future InterAction Council meetings to avoid generating any plastic waste. It will be encouraging for others to see the Council leading by example.

- Call on States to implement the InterAction Council's Dublin Charter for One Health, which calls for integration of health and environmental planning.
- Cease the use of coal and embrace renewable energy.

### **There are 68.5 million displaced people without homes or countries**

Presently, there are 68.5 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to prosecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. This is the largest number of displaced people since the Second World War. This number includes refugees, stateless people and internally displaced people. Another 26 million people are displaced each year due to natural disasters and weather-related events. Climate change will only increase forced migration.

The challenges migrants face includes a lack of documentation, lack of legal status or confusion of migrant status, inhospitable host countries, and limited opportunities for employment. Presently, there is a lack of solidarity in refugee protection witnessed as states in the northern hemisphere are increasingly allocating resources to border control. States in the southern hemisphere and the less wealthy states are left to respond and shelter refugees and migrants with the limited resources that they have. Meanwhile, the United States announced it will reduce the number of refugees allowed into the country to 30,000 for 2019. Wealthy nations must do more.

In 2015 the Syrian war substantially increased the number of people forced into migration. European Union countries received over 1.2 million asylum applicants in 2015. This sudden yet expected increase prompted states to restrict their asylum legislation and caused the European Commission to propose an amended Common European Asylum System, featuring a more restrictive approach. Many politicians in wealthier nations are cynically exploiting fear within domestic populations who feel ever powerless and far removed from economic opportunity.

Solutions must consider that lesser developed countries, such as some African nations, do not consistently provide identity cards nor is there a persistent and pervasive technology infrastructure. Refugees and other displaced peoples may no longer have access to critical documents, such as birth certificates, that existing systems require.

Cultural understanding is key to a successful and functioning multilateral system. Culture is a driving force for economic and political change. Currently, there is an understanding deficit in how the US and the rest of the world views China. Currently, there is a lack of understanding over

what it means to be a refugee. Until those misunderstandings are corrected, we should expect conflict.

### **Recommendations**

- Design identity systems that are persistent, privacy protecting, and decentralized where the data are owned by the citizens themselves, not governments or corporations. A digital passport should be created to aid refugees who are deprived of paper identification because of war and strife.
- Urge wealthier nations to support migrants living in camps around the world and to admit a greater percentage of the global refugee population. To that end, in partnership with the World Refugee Council, the InterAction Council will organize an experts group on refugees and migration in 2019.
- Develop education programs to counter propaganda and to encourage empathy so that citizens are less inclined to succumb to xenophobia and propaganda.

### **Artificial Intelligence, The Coming Wave: Opportunities and Problems**

In the last year, the concerns over the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Computer Vision, and Machine Learning have waned. Previously, many had expected a profound and lasting impact on unemployment. As artificial intelligence solutions are implemented, there have been no examples of significant unemployment as result of these technologies.

Fears of self-driving vehicles have been replaced by the welcoming of AI technologies into the financial services infrastructure, offering benefits such as instant fraud detection. As 5G networks are rolled out in 2019 and 2020, the ability to capture data will increase geometrically from its current staggering pace of 2.5 quintillion bytes of data per day. 5G will not only enable safe self-driving cars, it will impact, for example, how patients are treated in hospitals, predict where police resources are deployed, and recommend how public policy is created.

Artificial Intelligence can provide a policy maker with a series of tools that can diagnose, prescribe, and optimize based on the data available and the problem at hand. However, the implementation and development of this technology needs the leadership and guidance of ethical leaders. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has twenty years of experience in developing international instruments and frameworks related to ethics in science. UNESCO offers a unique universal forum in which an ethical AI framework could be developed and promulgated.



We cannot forget: not everyone has equal access to technology. The digital divide is real. In order to participate in the economy of the future, citizens must receive proper education and training. Technical education is not presently distributed equally. If education remains concentrated, the digital divide will only increase.

Reducing the divide provides a path toward decent work for both men and women. It will reduce poverty and increase the tax base, providing governments with the needed resources to respond to global and local challenges. Steady income, for workers and their families, allows citizens to participate in the political process, make choices, control their destinies, and direct their future. Access to income allows citizens to safeguard their own human rights.

Around the world, women are consistently underpaid and under-represented within government, the workplace, and other political institutions. Some regions and countries have done a great deal to ensure that women are properly represented in the economy. But globally, women continue to earn 70 per cent of what men earn.

Labour force participation rate globally is 50 per cent for women compared to 77 per cent for men. Average pay for women is US\$12,000 compared to US\$21,000 for men. If women participated equally in the economy, their participation would add US\$28 trillion which is 26 per cent of annual global GDP.

**Recommendations:**

- Governments should seek to limit the monopolistic power of high technology companies and should explore antitrust regulations to limit their powers, as well as encourage the portability of data and oppose data centralization within a handful of high-technology oligopolies.
- Encourage governments and multilateral institutions to address the digital divide. Technology education and exposure is not equally prioritized worldwide.
- Engage UNESCO in the discussion on “an enlightened ethical debate” to define an ethical framework that would apply to all AI developments and applications. The InterAction Council’s Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities should be updated to examine the ethical considerations posed by emerging technologies.
- Ensure the interests of consumers and citizens are protected as AI solutions are rolled out worldwide. These solutions require access to data which is often given willingly by

consumers, so it is imperative that consumers receive clear benefits in exchange for their participation.

- Continue to work towards gender equality and empowerment for women and girls, while promoting sustainable and inclusive growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

### **The Situation in the Korean Peninsula**

In 2018, the world began to anticipate peace on the Korean Peninsula, which previously had been unimaginable. North and South have technically been at war since 1950, but this year, peace became possible as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) ceased its testing of nuclear weapons and sought engagement with the Republic of Korea and the United States. Kim Jong Un, Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, and President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea are to be praised for entering into positive dialogues on the future of the Korean Peninsula. The decline of tension on the Korean Peninsula and the process of dialogue are one of the few good news stories in recent months.

As tensions decline, it is appropriate to reward the DPRK with increased access to the regional and global economy. China shares a significant role in realizing development and achieving a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. The international community highly appreciates China's efforts for peace and welcomes her further constructive contributions.

### **Recommendations**

- Strongly support the efforts of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to engage concerned parties, applaud recent initiatives and constructive measures by the concerned parties to work for denuclearization and lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, and encourage the concerned parties to enhance communication and collaboration in a pursuit of an early and proper resolution for the Peninsula issue through dialogue and peaceful action.
- Support a process that will result in the signing of a formal peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula, ending 65+ years of conflict.
- As part of the positive process leading to the denuclearization on the Peninsula, encourage economic cooperation among the concerned parties, including the North and South, encourage investment in shared infrastructure, and develop critical new infrastructure in the North.

### **Facing the challenges together**

Multilateral institutions have served the world well and can continue to do so. We must face the challenges of our new century with the optimism contained in Mr. Bolger's 2018 speech on the State of the World:

“My point is simple, that while there is much from the past that needs to be remedied and we must continue and complete that effort, we must likewise set out in clear lights why today's gloom is misplaced.”

# LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

## InterAction Council Members

1. The Hon. Bertie **Ahern**, Co-Chairman (former Prime Minister), Ireland
2. H.E. Mr. Olusegun **Obasanjo**, Co-Chairman (former President), Nigeria
3. The Rt. Hon. Jean **Chrétien**, Honorary Co-Chairman (former Prime Minister), Canada
4. H.E. Dr. Oscar **Arias** (former President), Costa Rica
5. The Rt. Hon. James **Bolger** (former Prime Minister), New Zealand
6. H.E. Dr. Lawrence **Gonzi** (former Prime Minister), Malta
7. H.E. Mr. Kabiné **Komara** (former Prime Minister), Guinea
8. H.E. Mr. Bronisław **Komorowski** (former President), Poland
9. H.E. Mr. Luis Alberto **Lacalle** (former President), Uruguay
10. H.E. Dr. **Lee Hong Koo** (former Prime Minister), Korea
11. H.E. Mr. Péter **Medgyessy** (former Prime Minister), Hungary
12. The Rt. Hon. Sir James **Mitchell** (former Prime Minister), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
13. H.E. Mr. Benjamin **Mkapa** (former President), Tanzania
14. H.E. Mr. Andrés **Pastrana** (former President), Colombia
15. H.E. Mr. Jorge **Quiroga** (former President), Bolivia
16. The Rt. Hon. Mr. **Tung** Chee Hwa (former Chief Executive), Hong Kong Administration
17. H.E. Dr. Danilo **Türk** (former President), Slovenia
18. H.E. Dr. George **Vassiliou** (former President), Cyprus

## Associate Members

19. H.E. Mr. Prithviraj **Chavan**, 17<sup>th</sup> Chief Minister of Maharashtra (India)
20. The Hon. Christy **Clark**, former Premier of British Columbia (Canada)
21. H.E. Mr. William F. **Weld**, former Governor of Massachusetts (US)

## Secretary-General

22. Dr. Thomas **Axworthy**, Chair of Public Policy, Massey College, University of Toronto (Canada)

## Special Guests

23. H.E. Mr. Gian Franco **Terenzi**, former Captain Regent (Head of State) of San Marino
24. Mrs. Kateryna **Yushchenko**, Chair, Ukraine 3000 International Foundation (Ukraine)
25. Ms. Muriel **Clauson**, CEO and Founder, Oppticity; Doctoral Candidate and research fellow, University of Georgia and Emory University (US)
26. Mr. Zakary **Dychtwald**, Founder, Young China Group; Author, *Young China: How the Restless Generation Will Change Their Country and the World* (US)
27. Dr. Kai **Fang**, Deputy Director of Environmental & Energy Policy Center, Zhejiang University (P.R. China)
28. Dr. Gauden **Galea**, WHO Representative in the People's Republic of China
29. Ms. Holly **Kaufman**, President, Environment & Enterprise Strategies; Advisor, Center for Carbon Removal (US)
30. Dr. Peng **Gong**, Professor and Chair, Department of Earth System Science; Dean, School of Science, Tsinghua University (P.R. China)
31. Ms. Dakota **Gruener**, Executive Director, ID2020 (US)
32. Mr. David **Harmon**, Vice President, Global Public Affairs, Huawei Technologies (Ireland)

33. Mr. Guowen **Lu**, President, Zhejiang University Alumni Association of North America (P.R. China)
34. H.E. Dr. Sawsan **Majali**, Senator, Jordanian Senate (Jordan)
35. H.E. Amb. John **McCallum**, Ambassador of Canada to the People's Republic of China (Canada)
36. Dr. Joanna **Nurse**, Strategic Advisor, InterAction Council; former Head of Health and Education, the Commonwealth (UK)
37. H.E. Amb. Eoin **O'Leary**, Ambassador of Ireland to the People's Republic of China (Ireland)
38. Dr. Tina J. **Park**, Co-founder & Executive Director, Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto (Canada)
39. Mr. Alexander **Rafael**, Co-founder and Director, Climb Credit (US)
40. Mr. Robert **Sandford**, Senior Advisor on Water Issues, InterAction Council; EPCOR Chair for Water and Climate Security at the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (Canada)
41. Mr. Guy L. **Smith**, Senior Counselor, The Hawthorn Group, Global Public Affairs & Advocacy; Principal Member, Votary Niccolò LLC, Special Situations Counsel (US)
42. Mr. Henry Danjing **Wen**, Senior Advisor on Business, InterAction Council; CEO, Foundation of World Leadership (P.R. China)
43. Dr. Chao **Wu**, Research Professor in School of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University (P.R. China)
44. Dr. Weiwen **Zhang**, Professor and Vice Dean, School of Public Affairs; Founding Director, Center for New Urbanization, Zhejiang University (P.R. China)
45. Mr. **Zhu** Haibin, President, WS Mall (P.R. China)
46. Dr. Moneef **Zou'bi**, Science Advisor, InterAction Council; Director General, Islamic World Academy of Sciences (Jordan)

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