



**INTERACTION  
COUNCIL**

Established in 1983

InterAction Council

**37th Annual Plenary Meeting**

Final Communiqué

**15-17 May 2023**

**Valletta, Malta**

From 15 to 17 May 2023, the InterAction Council met in Valletta, Malta, for its 37th Annual Plenary Meeting to discuss multilateral institutions of governance; corruption and the rule of law; and the war in Ukraine and its ripple effects on energy, food, peace and security.

Two High-Level Expert Group Meetings were convened in preparation for the Plenary Meeting: “Creation of an International Anti-Corruption Court,” which took place digitally on 21 October 2021, chaired by William Weld; and “A new agenda for peace and security” in Valletta, Malta, on 15 May 2023, chaired by Bertie Ahern. The InterAction Council also issued the *Malta Declaration on Multilateral Solutions for a Better Future*, with ten recommendations for rebuilding trust in multilateralism.

Continuing its long tradition of fostering intergenerational dialogue, the InterAction Council invited four One Young World Ambassadors to participate in the Annual Plenary Meeting.

### **Present State of the World**

A weakened commitment to multilateralism by states has resulted in significant global challenges. The system has proven ineffective in handling the global pandemic, climate change crisis, poverty and inequality, and war.

The COVID-19 pandemic was, first, a global health emergency causing millions of deaths, but it also exposed the limitation of the multilateral system in generating cooperation and goodwill among nation states during an emergency. The pandemic demonstrated the return to national interest in times of crisis, with vaccine and personal protective equipment hoarding in Western states occurring without much consideration to the needs of people in developing countries. The COVID-19 pandemic was a practice run for the more serious pandemics to come.

Russia’s unprovoked aggression against Ukraine was in flagrant violation of the core principles of the UN Charter and all civilised norms. Yet other than condemnation of Russia and commitments to arm Ukraine, the multilateral system has been unable to halt Russia’s continued aggression. In addition, despite the horrors witnessed in the aftermath of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Russian President Vladimir Putin has threatened to use nuclear weapons on several occasions since launching the invasion in February 2022.

Russia has the world’s largest nuclear arsenal, with 5,900 weapons, of which around 900 are estimated to be on versions of “prompt,” “special,” “hair trigger” alert. The use of just one weapon would have a devastating impact. In contrast, Ukraine, having the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world in 1991, voluntarily denuclearized in 1994 and joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapon state.

This relinquishment of its arsenal was made in exchange for guaranteed security by the US, UK and Russia as part of the *Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances*, which states, “The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America reaffirmed their commitment to Ukraine, in accordance with the principles of the CSCE Final Act, to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine.”

The decision to give up their nuclear arsenal was viewed as a triumph by disarmament and non-proliferation advocates. However, the failure to assure Ukraine’s safety in exchange for its disarmament sets a dangerous precedent for countries being encouraged to abandon their nuclear ambitions.

Failing to uphold the *Budapest Memorandum* also calls into question the principles of “nuclear umbrellas,” security alliances whereby nuclear states commit to defending their non-nuclear allies. States such as Japan and South Korea are feeling increasingly uneasy about relying on their nuclear allies to act as an effective deterrent to those states threatening to use nuclear weapons in their vicinity.

In addition to nuclear weapons, nuclear power plants in the conflict zones create the risk of an accidental nuclear incident. Recently, fighting near the Zaporizhzhia region has resulted in Russia evacuating several settlements near the Zaporizhzhia power plant, signalling the potential for heavy fighting in the area. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has expressed concern that an escalation of hostilities in the area risks a “severe nuclear accident.” This demonstrates the paradox of nuclear power being a clean energy source but at great risk.

Still, clean energy is a necessity if we are to achieve a green transition. On 1 January 2023, seven European nations reported their highest temperatures for that day in recorded history. The 20+°C January temperatures in Switzerland, France and southern Germany were close to summer-time temperatures. The green transition is just as much about security as it is about climate change, since climate has significant implications for global water and food insecurity. However, the multilateral system has failed to create any meaningful commitment towards reducing emissions. COP 26 and COP 27 demonstrated that our carbon dioxide and other emissions are on the rise. Experts now believe that it is unlikely that the world is going to cut greenhouse emissions by 40% by 2030 as per the Paris Agreement.

It is clear that the multilateral system is failing to live up to its promise. However, abandoning our multilateralism institutions is not an option. Instead, a renewed commitment on multilateralism is needed.

## Recommendations

1. At the UN Summit of the Future in 2024, states should adopt the 10 recommendations in the InterAction Council's *Malta Declaration on Multilateral Solutions for a Better Future*.
2. Russia should withdraw its troops from Ukraine in full respect of internationally-recognized borders.
3. The UN Security Council should pass a resolution to deploy a UN/IAEA observer corps around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine, to prevent interference with the proper management and operation of the plant, including any threat of a false-flag or other act of sabotage.
4. Nuclear states should commit to de-alerting nuclear weapons through the installation of physical and operational barriers in order to reduce nuclear risks by removing prompt/hair trigger alert postures.
5. Countries should invest in preparing their societies for a green transition.

## The Future of Europe – The War in Ukraine and its Impact on Energy and Food Security

The war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on energy and food security globally. Member states of the EU were heavily reliant on Russian energy, primarily through supply of natural gas, which accounted for 40 percent of EU's total gas consumption. In countries like Bulgaria, Russian natural gas accounted for 95 percent of total consumption. When Russia attacked Ukraine, the EU was in a compromising position to condemn the state that is the bloc's most important supplier of energy. When sanctions were imposed, Russia responded by curtailing energy exports to the continent, resulting in a panic to fill the gap. Ultimately, the bloc succeeded in replacing a significant portion of Russian gas with alternatives – namely exports from the US – thus avoiding a crisis in time for the winter when energy demands increase.

The crisis accelerated a planned transition away from reliance on Russian energy, as outlined in the European Commission's *REPowerEU Plan* to reach independence from Russian energy sources before 2030 using tactics such as diversifying supplies, reducing demand, and increasing use of green energy.

The war's impact on energy is having a residual impact on the energy-intensive agri-food sector. The rising energy and fertiliser prices are resulting in higher production costs and contributing to food price increases, threatening food security. Ukraine and Russia are some of the most important producers and exporters of foodstuffs in the world, being key producers of

sunflower seed, wheat, rapeseed, barley, vegetable oil, and maize. The two countries account for 12 percent of the world's traded food calories, with Russia and Ukraine being the first and fifth largest wheat exporters, accounting for 20 percent and 10 percent of exports, respectively, according to the OECD. The war is calculated to increase international wheat prices by 34 percent in the 2022-23 marketing year.

Beyond the conflict in Ukraine, there are structural imbalances that for many generations have distorted agriculture markets to the detriment of consumers and the world's poor. Global subsidies in the amount of US\$540 billion are given to agriculture producers every year, according to a 2021 report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). And this figure is tracking to increase to US\$1.8 trillion by 2030. Of the existing subsidies, two-thirds are considered price-distorting and harmful to the environment by incentivizing problematic farming practices. In addition, there is an inequitable distribution of food: According to the FAO State of Agriculture report (2019), around 14 percent of the world's food is lost after it is harvested. A further 17 percent is wasted in retail and by consumers, according to the UN Environment Programme's Food Waste Index Report 2021. This wasted food could feed 1.26 billion hungry people every year.

### **Recommendations**

1. Enhance energy security measures at both regional and global levels by diversifying energy sources and supply routes and investing in alternative and renewable energy to reduce dependence on a single country or region.
2. Facilitate and support diplomatic efforts to ensure that grain transports can continue from Ukraine.
3. Develop and implement policies that prioritise food security, sustainable agriculture, and rural development. Revise current subsidy policies that distort global food trade.

### **Peace in Europe – The Role of Diplomacy**

The horrors witnessed during the second world war, and the mantra of “never again,” led to the creation of the multilateral system over 75 years ago. The system was principled on the concepts of the sovereignty of states, international law, human rights, development, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Today, the institutions built on the system of multilateralism are failing, with governments and the larger public losing confidence in these institutions' abilities to preserve peace and increase economic prosperity.

The war in Ukraine has exposed the perpetual legitimization crisis of the Security Council's role as the primary arbiter on peace and security. Its limited permanent membership and their substantial veto powers have been called into question at a time when one of its permanent members is waging a war of aggression against another sovereign state. Reforming the Security Council is necessary either by restricting the use of veto, expanding the permanent membership, or by implementing both reforms. In addition, permanent members of the Security Council should lead by example with every action. As the international community has entrusted them with this important task, they should base their decisions on the common good, rather than their own geopolitical interests.

Substantial Security Council reform is likely to take time. In the meantime, and in parallel, the General Assembly should make use of existing mechanisms that allow it to take a more prominent role in global peace and security. For example, the *Uniting for Peace* resolution from 1950 allows the General Assembly to take action on peace and security when the Security Council is incapacitated. The General Assembly could also request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the usage of the veto by permanent members of the Security Council.

The contemporaneous challenges of the global community go beyond peace and security, but the current system is ill-equipped to respond to risks and threats posed by for example climate change, pollution, pandemics, modern technologies and transnational crime. On the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, Member States renewed their commitment to multilateralism and launched a process to seek global solutions to global challenges. Out of this process, the Secretary-General launched *Our Common Agenda* in 2021 and the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism published its report *Breakthrough for People and Planet: Effective and Inclusive Global Governance for Today and the Future* in April 2023. Both reports contain recommendations for improving global governance. The Peacemaking Reflection Group composed of former ambassadors and former United Nations senior staff has proposed measures to enhance the governance on peace and security.

Where the UN failed in anticipating and responding to Russia's aggressive war on Ukraine, other global entities chipped in. The European Union and several states imposed substantial sanctions on Russian-owned public and private assets. The International Criminal Court launched an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russia. In accordance with the international legal order, individuals who are responsible for atrocity crimes and the war of aggression in Ukraine must be held responsible either by the International Criminal Court or by other judicial arrangements. These may include national proceedings under the principle of complementarity, proceedings in third states based on

universal jurisdiction or the establishment of a special international tribunal for the crime of aggression.

This responsibility should also expand to a financial responsibility over the damage caused by the war. In this respect, the sanctions regime should be developed to allow frozen Russian assets to be used for the reconstruction of Ukraine and for supporting the victims of the war by financial reparations. More than 1,200 Russian individuals, 120 entities, and 19 banks have been sanctioned for approximately US\$1.14 trillion.

Diplomatic efforts to cease the violence and find a solution should be sought. France, China, and Turkey have already made efforts to broker peace. In this respect, the IAC welcomes these suggestions while it recognizes the unlawfulness of the war waged by Russia against Ukraine.

### **Recommendations**

1. Countries should prioritise multilateral approaches serving the international community over unilateral actions serving geopolitical interests.
2. Revise the UN Charter to be better equipped to respond to modern threats and reform the UN Security Council to better reflect the membership of the United Nations.
3. The UN General Assembly should request the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on the veto powers of the permanent members of the Security Council.
4. The UN General Assembly should adopt the *Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities* as a complement to the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* to encourage ethical and responsible civic participation, governance, commerce, and leadership.
5. States and international institutions such as the International Criminal Court shall take all necessary steps to ensure that there is no impunity for violations committed in Ukraine, including for the crime of aggression.
6. States shall develop legislation allowing frozen Russian assets to be used for the reconstruction of Ukraine and for reparations to victims of atrocity crimes.

## **The Rule of Law and Corruption**

The current global landscape presents significant challenges to the rule of law. To a certain extent, we live in an age of impunity. Rising authoritarianism, political polarisation, and disregard for international norms and institutions undermine the principles of the rule of law. Corruption, unequal access to justice, and insufficient legal frameworks erode its effectiveness.

The rule of law provides a societal architecture which ensures fairness, justice, and stability. It sets clear guidelines for individuals, organisations, and governments, fostering accountability, upholding human rights, and preventing abuses of power. The rule of law promotes a predictable and transparent legal system, which is essential for economic growth, investment, and trade.

In order to strengthen the rule of law, there is a need for renewed commitment and collective action at both national and international levels. International relations should be based on transparency, responsibility, and predictability. This entails fostering a culture of respect for the rule of law and international treaty obligations. International cooperation and collaboration among nations are essential to combat transnational challenges such as corruption, organized crime, and terrorism, which pose significant threats to the rule of law.

Corruption undermines the rule of law and exacerbates many global challenges: it impacts peace and security, development, and access to basic needs such as energy, food, water, healthcare, and education. It compromises good governance and gives rise to mistrust in governments, authorities, politicians, and the judiciary. It is also incredibly expensive, the failure of the international system to address corruption, fraud and money laundering is costing the global economy at least US\$3.6 trillion every year.

Addressing corruption and bribery is one of the key elements of goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) linking the reduction of corruption with building and maintaining peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

Grand corruption, the abuse of public power for private gain by a state's leader is a particular challenge. In recent years, international legal scholars and anti-corruption experts have advocated for the creation of an International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC) to curb grand corruption through international judicial proceedings. With international jurisdiction based on the principle of complementarity, the court would step in when a country is unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute grand corruption. Building on lessons learned from other international judicial bodies and harnessing modern technology the IACC would only be convened *ad hoc* for specific cases. Effective prosecutions will require unhindered



investigations as well as access to evidence and data often protected either by financial legislation or corrupt authorities. These issues should be addressed to promote an efficient IACC.

### **Recommendations**

1. The international community should take the necessary steps to establish an International Anti-Corruption Court with adequate funds and resources.
2. Applauding Canada, Ecuador, Moldova, the Netherlands, and Nigeria for their commitments to work towards the establishment of the IACC, the IAC urges other nations to join.
3. States should commit to a rules-based world order by ratifying key treaties such as the Rome Statute of the ICC and by respecting their treaty obligations.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### InterAction Council Members

1. The Hon. Bertie **Ahern**, Co-chairman, former Prime Minister of Ireland
2. H.E. Mr. Olusegun **Obasanjo**, Co-chairman, former President of Nigeria
3. The Rt. Hon. Jean **Chrétien**, Honorary Chairman, former Prime Minister of Canada
4. The Rt. Hon. James **Bolger**, Executive Committee, former Prime Minister of New Zealand
5. H.E. Dr. Lawrence **Gonzi**, Organizing Chairman, former Prime Minister of Malta
6. H.E. Mr. Luis Alberto **Lacalle**, former President of Uruguay
7. H.E. Dr. Péter **Medgyessy**, former Prime Minister of Hungary
8. H.E. Mr. Jorge **Quiroga**, former President of Bolivia
9. H.E. Mr. Petar **Stoyanov**, former President of Bulgaria
10. H.E. Dr. Danilo **Türk**, former President of Slovenia
11. H.E. Dr. Vaira **Vīķe-Freiberga**, former President of Latvia
12. H.E. Mr. Victor **Yushchenko**, former President of Ukraine

### Associate Members

13. H.E. Mr. Prithviraj **Chavan**, 17<sup>th</sup> Chief Minister of Maharashtra (India)
14. The Rt. Hon. the Baroness Margaret **Jay** of Paddington, former Leader of the House of Lords (UK)
15. H.E. Prof. Dr. Vesna **Pusić**, MP, Former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and First Deputy Prime Minister (Croatia)
16. H.E. Mr. William F. **Weld**, former Governor of Massachusetts (USA)

### Secretary-General

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

### Keynote Speakers

18. H.E. Dr. Roberta **Metsola**, President of the European Parliament (Malta)
19. H.E. Dr. George **Vella**, President of Malta (Malta)

## Special Guests

20. Prof. Michael **Adler**, Professor of Genitourinary Medicine/Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Royal Free and University College Medical School (UK)
21. Prof. Simone **Borg**, Malta's Ambassador for Climate Action; Chair, National Climate Action Board (Malta)
22. H.E. Ambassador (ret.) Hans **Corell**, Former Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Legal Counsel of the United Nations (Sweden)
23. Ms. Rut **Einarsdottir**, Chair, Icelandic Human Rights Centre; One Young World Ambassador (Iceland)
24. H.E. Amb. Gabriel **Ferrero y de Loma-Osorio**, Chair, Committee on World Food Security; Ambassador at Large for Global Food Security (Spain) *via video*
25. Mr. Nicholas **Fogg**, Writer, Journalist, and Lecturer (UK)
26. Mr. Ibrahim **Jalal**, Non-resident Scholar, Middle East Institute (MEI), One Young World Ambassador (Yemen)
27. Dr. Rebecca E. **Johnson**, Director, Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy (UK)
28. Mr. Mats **Karlsson**, Vice President, World Bank, 1999-2002 (Sweden)
29. Ms. Anya **Lazarova**, Area Security Manager in multinational IT company; One Young World Ambassador (Bulgaria)
30. Dr. Kerstin **Leitner**, former UN Resident Coordinator for China; former Assistant Director-General, WHO Geneva (Germany)
31. Prof. Dr. Mykhailo **Minakov**, Senior Advisor, Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Ukraine)
32. Dr. Joanna **Nurse**, Strategic Advisor, InterAction Council; Director for the Platform for Planet Place and People (P4PPP), Commonwealth Centre for Digital Health; Chair, International Working Group, Existential Risks for Humanity (ER4H), World Academy of Art and Science (UK)
33. H.E. Amb. Francis Martin **O'Donnell**, Former SMOM Ambassador and UN Resident Coordinator (Ireland)
34. Dr. Zachary **Paikin**, Nonresident Research Fellow, Institute for Peace & Diplomacy; Researcher, Centre for European Policy Studies (Canada)
35. Mr. Jannis **Poestges**, One Young World Ambassador (Germany)
36. Hon. Allan **Rock**, Professor Emeritus and former Professor of Law, University of Ottawa (Canada)
37. Mrs. Kateryna **Yushchenko**, Founder, Intermarium Strategy, Consulting and Capital (Ukraine)
38. Dr. Moneef **Zou'bi**, Science Advisor, InterAction Council; former Director General, Islamic World Academy of Sciences (Jordan)