



Our Common Agenda  
Policy Brief 2

**Strengthening  
the International  
Response to  
Complex Global  
Shocks – An  
Emergency  
Platform**

MARCH 2023



**United  
Nations**



# Introduction

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## CHAPEAU

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The challenges we face can only be addressed through stronger international cooperation. The Summit of the Future in 2024 is an opportunity to agree on multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow, strengthening global governance for both present and future generations (General Assembly resolution [76/307](#)). In my capacity as Secretary-General, I have been invited to provide inputs to the preparations for the Summit in the form of action-oriented recommendations, building on the proposals contained in my report entitled “Our Common Agenda” ([A/75/982](#)), which was itself a response to the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution [75/1](#)). The present policy brief is one such input. It elaborates on the ideas first proposed in Our Common Agenda, taking into account subsequent guidance from Member States and over one year of intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultations, and rooted in the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments.

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## PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY BRIEF

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The present policy brief aims to elaborate on the proposal on the Emergency Platform to respond to complex global shocks, incorporating feedback received from Member States and other relevant partners. **The Emergency Platform would not be a standing body or entity but a set of protocols that could be activated when needed.** The brief outlines some of the characteristics of global shocks in the twenty-first century and some of the risks we could face in the future. It highlights how such shocks have the potential to undermine progress to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda, as well as human rights and gender equality. It reflects on lessons from the response to recent complex global shocks and sets out proposals to strengthen the international response to a complex, global shock through the convening of an Emergency Platform. Finally, it offers recommendations on how these proposals could be taken forward in the Pact for the Future.

In September 2020, at the height of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the General Assembly adopted resolution [75/1](#), containing a declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. In that declaration, Heads of State and Government stated that: “There is no other global organization with the legitimacy, convening power, and normative impact of the United Nations”, and committed to being prepared and emphasized the need to improve “our preparedness for not only health-related crises but also other challenges and crises”.

In Our Common Agenda, I proposed to Member States that we work together on arrangements to convene and operate an Emergency Platform in the event of complex global crises. I stated that: “The platform would not be a new permanent or standing body or institution. It would be triggered automatically in crises of sufficient scale and magnitude, regardless of the type or nature of the crisis involved. Once activated, it would bring together leaders from Member States, the United Nations system, key country groupings, international financial institutions, regional bodies, civil society, the private sector, subject-specific industries or research bodies, and other experts.” This proposal would allow the convening role of the United Nations to be maximized in the face of crises with global reach and should be “agnostic as to the type of crisis”, as we do not know what type of global shock we may face in the future, although the probability of their occurrence is growing.

During informal General Assembly consultations, Member States viewed the proposal for an Emergency Platform positively and recognized its value in strengthening the international response to complex global crisis situations. They requested greater clarity on such a platform, including the criteria for its activation, funding, membership, terms of reference and scope. Delegations also underlined the importance of aligning with existing mechanisms and the need for avoiding duplications in United Nations processes. I was invited to further develop this proposal for Member States’ consideration as part of the preparations for the proposed Summit of the Future.<sup>1</sup>

# What are complex global shocks?

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Global shocks in the twenty-first century have taken on new and worrying characteristics. They are becoming more complex, their impacts are more global, and the need for international cooperation to respond to them is therefore even more critical. Today, the complexity and acuity of the potential global shocks we face outstrip the existing capacity of the multilateral system to sufficiently manage those risks.

A complex global shock can be broadly understood as an event with severely disruptive consequences for a significant proportion of the global population that leads to secondary impacts across multiple sectors. In the twenty-first century, the world has already experienced at least two complex global shocks: the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) and the global cost of living crisis (2022).

Globalization and our increased interconnectedness have delivered many benefits over the past three decades. But they have also become a potential source of vulnerability. A shock in one country or sector can quickly have knock-on consequences across the world, often in unforeseen ways. In recent crises, we have seen how cascading impacts from one sector can reverberate into other sectors, which can often have adverse implications for international peace and security,

global economic stability and the sustainability of our planet. Separate global shocks can occur simultaneously and interact with one another in both foreseeable and unforeseeable ways. These interactions can cause each separate shock to amplify in scale and severity.

Current global dynamics – such as climate change and rapid biodiversity loss, heightened geopolitical competition and socioeconomic inequalities – could all interact to intensify the impact of a future global shock. Such shocks hit the most vulnerable and marginalized people on the planet the hardest and leave them in a state of chronic susceptibility to future shocks.

Not every crisis or shock should be classified as complex or global. Some emergencies will only require a sector-specific response. Similarly, local, national or regional shocks that do not have global consequences would not necessarily be categorized as global shocks.

# We must be ready to respond to a range of different global shocks in the future

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The types of global shocks the world might experience in the future are uncertain. We are faced with a range of different risks that could result in complex global shocks. Several factors, including climate change, global interconnectedness and rapid technological advances, mean that there is a growing likelihood that complex global shocks will become more frequent in the future, while the multilateral system's tools to respond have not kept up with the risks we face. Some of the global shocks that we may encounter in the future include:

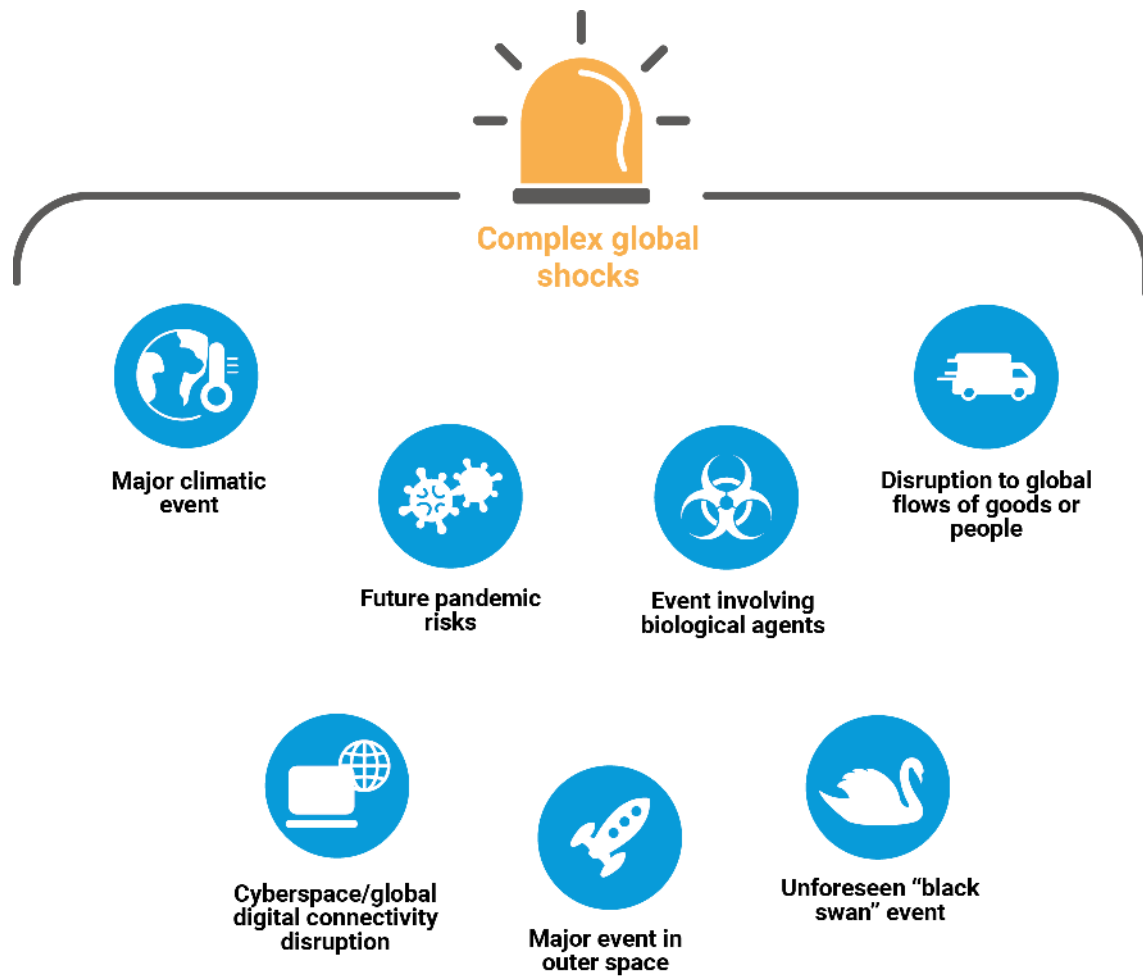
- a) Large-scale climatic or environmental events that cause major socioeconomic disruptions and/or environmental degradation;
- b) Future pandemics with cascading secondary impacts;
- c) High-impact events involving a biological agent (deliberate or accidental);
- d) Events leading to disruptions to global flows of goods, people or finance;

- e) Large-scale destructive and/or disruptive activity in cyberspace or disruptions to global digital connectivity;
- f) A major event in outer space that causes severe disruptions to one or several critical systems on Earth;
- g) Unforeseen risks ("black swan" events).<sup>2</sup>

The range of risks that could potentially lead to future complex global shocks is broad and diverse, and there are several potential future shocks in which the multilateral response architecture is underdeveloped or non-existent.

**FIGURE I**

**POSSIBLE FUTURE COMPLEX GLOBAL SHOCKS**



# Complex global shocks can severely undermine progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

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Complex global shocks hit the poorest and most vulnerable hardest as they lack the capacity and resources to cope. Such events will throw off-track the progress towards almost all the Sustainable Development Goals, with women and girls disproportionately affected. Recent crises have highlighted how shocks can exacerbate risks for women and girls, including gender-based violence. For example, more women than men lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, fewer women and girls across the world have received vaccinations than men and boys, even though most health-care workers are women and have consequently been more exposed to the virus.<sup>3</sup> Complex global shocks – and the response to them – can also have a negative impact on the full spectrum of human rights and reinforce existing infringements on rights, including structural discrimination and inequalities.

Once a complex global shock occurs, a more timely, predictable, and effective international response could potentially mitigate some of the impacts on the Sustainable Development Goals and allow the process of recovery to start sooner. The proposal to agree on protocols to convene an Emergency Platform aims to achieve this.

In parallel to strengthening the international response, the most effective way to reduce the impacts of complex global shocks on vulnerable people is through accelerated action to implement international agreements that reduce risks and build resilience. Progress on 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Climate Agreement are essential.

We also need to better anticipate shocks. At the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, I called for investments to ensure that everyone on the planet had access to early warning systems by 2027.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in Our Common Agenda, I committed to enhancing the capability of the United Nations to better anticipate risks by improving our strategic foresight, pursuing anticipatory action, establishing a “Futures Lab” and issuing a Global Risk Report. Strengthening our response to shocks and building people’s awareness, preparedness and resilience are mutually reinforcing goals.

**FIGURE II**

**IMPACT OF GLOBAL SHOCKS ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: INDICATIVE STATISTICAL EXAMPLES<sup>5</sup>**

	<p>Up to 95 million more people than expected were living in extreme poverty in 2022 owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the war in Ukraine. More than four years of progress against poverty was erased by COVID-19 alone.</p>		<p>The COVID-19 pandemic caused the first rise in between-country income inequality in a generation, with the richest 10 per cent of the world's population owning 76 per cent of international wealth.</p>
	<p>Conflict, COVID-19, climate change and growing inequalities are converging to undermine food security worldwide, with nearly 1 in 3 people lacking regular access to adequate food as of 2021. About 150 million more people faced hunger in 2021 than in 2019.</p>		<p>During the pandemic, many cities faced strained health and transport systems, inadequate water and sanitation services, increased homelessness and other challenges. At the same time, it was estimated that local governments would yield 15-25 per cent lower revenues in 2021.</p>
	<p>22.7 million children missed basic vaccines in 2020, 3.7 million more than in 2019. As of mid-2022, 500 million people had been infected by COVID-19, leading to 15 million deaths in 2020 and 2021.</p>		<p>Despite global shocks, global consumption rates continue to climb, estimated at \$69.47 trillion in 2021, up from \$62.2 trillion in 2020. Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are the root cause of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.</p>
	<p>24 million learners (pre-primary to university level) may never return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic. 147 million children missed over half of in-person instruction in 2020 and 2021.</p>		<p>Energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for 2021 rose by 6 per cent, erasing pandemic-related declines. COVID-19 impacted investment in renewable energy, with clean energy accounting for just 3 per cent of recovery spending through October 2021.</p>
	<p>Globally, one quarter of employed women work in agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors, which are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. COVID-19-related disruptions significantly widened the gender food security gap, from 6 per cent in 2019 to 10 per cent in 2020.</p>		<p>Despite lockdowns, more than 17 million tons of plastic entered the ocean in 2021, causing further pollution. The economic strain from the COVID-19 crisis put small-scale fisheries, which represent 90 per cent of the world's fishers, in distress.</p>
	<p>Natural disasters have a direct impact on clean water access and sanitation, and at an increasing rate, with more frequent droughts and flooding due to climate change. Two billion people live without safely managed drinking water services.</p>		<p>Forests play a significant role in reducing the risk of global shocks associated with natural disasters. However, 10 million hectares of forest are destroyed every year, with deforestation on the rise to compensate for economic losses caused by the pandemic and inflation.</p>
	<p>The pandemic slowed progress towards universal access to clean energy, according to the World Bank. Globally, 733 million people still have no access to electricity, and the number of people lacking clean cooking facilities rose during the pandemic.</p>		<p>A record 100 million people were forcibly displaced as of May 2022. In total, 41 per cent of those estimated to be forcibly displaced in 2021 were children, who are disproportionately affected by global shocks.</p>
	<p>In 2020, the world's output shrank by 4.3 per cent, over three times more than during the global financial crisis of 2009. Global economic recovery was set back by new waves of COVID-19, the Ukraine crisis, rising inflation, supply-chain disruptions and other shocks.</p>		<p>Rising sovereign debt burdens threaten developing countries' pandemic recovery and socioeconomic growth. In low-income countries, the average debt-to-export ratio increased from 3.1 per cent to 8.8 per cent between 2011 and 2020.</p>
	<p>1 in 3 manufacturing jobs were negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Global manufacturing has rebounded from the pandemic, but the least developed countries have been left behind.</p>		



# Learning lessons from recent complex global shocks

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Over the past two decades, following large-scale, global crises, the world has come together, learned lessons and taken concrete steps to strengthen relevant parts of the multilateral system and fill gaps where required. In 2005 following the Indian Ocean Tsunami and in 2010 after the Haiti Earthquake, the global humanitarian system underwent major reforms to improve the coordination of and the response to major crises.<sup>6</sup> In 2008, at the height of the global financial crisis, the Group of 20 was elevated to Heads of State and Government-level in order to better coordinate the international economic response to the crisis. And the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in 2014 led to an agreement to establish the World Health Organization Health Emergencies Programme in 2016.<sup>7</sup>

The two most recent complex global shocks – the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 global cost of living crisis – provide some useful lessons on how we might strengthen the international response to such shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic touched every part of the globe and affected all dimensions of human welfare. Despite the best efforts of the multilateral system, the pandemic showed that national Governments and the global multilateral system were ill-equipped to deal effectively with the scale and complexity of this emergency.<sup>8</sup> The result was a global response to COVID-19 that was insufficiently coordinated and not driven by international solidarity.<sup>9</sup>

The stark inequities in vaccine distribution highlighted profound weaknesses in how we share life-saving commodities in a crisis. Although innovative, global mechanisms such as the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust were rapidly launched<sup>10</sup> to ensure that all countries had access to vaccines and other critical tools, the global distribution of vaccines and other key resources became highly politicized and uneven. Similarly, there was inequity in the global response to the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, as many developing countries were unable to gain access to adequate financing to mitigate the impact on people's livelihoods. In the face of these challenges, the multilateral system was unable to advocate successfully at the highest level to achieve vaccine equity or secure more robust financial support for the most vulnerable countries.

I welcome ongoing efforts through intergovernmental bodies to strengthen the world's preparedness and response to a future pandemic, including the initiative to agree on a "pandemic accord" through the intergovernmental negotiating body established by the World Health Assembly. The experience of COVID-19 also demonstrates the need to establish mechanisms to complement these efforts by strengthening the global response to the secondary impacts of a future pandemic.

Another example of a complex global shock is the global cost of living crisis in 2022, the effects of which are still being felt today. This crisis has

been characterized by vicious cycles with impacts on food, energy and finance, affecting over a billion people in the world.

### FIGURE III

#### VICIOUS CYCLES OF THE 2022 COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS



Source: Global Crisis Response Group, Brief No.2, June 2022.<sup>11</sup>

In April 2022, I convened a Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance to pursue effective global responses to these interconnected crises and advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable. I invited six Heads of State and Government to be champions of the Global Crisis Response Group, established a steering group to ensure strategic coordination across the United Nations system and engaged a wider community of partners, including the private sector, civil society and academia.<sup>12</sup> In May 2022, in its resolution [76/264](#), the General Assembly welcomed “the initiative by the Secretary-General to establish a Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, with a Steering Committee chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General”, and took note with appreciation of “the analysis and recommendations contained in the first report of the Group on the three-dimensional crisis”.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 cost of living crisis offer lessons for how the multilateral system could respond more effectively to future complex global shocks. These include the importance of:

- A rapid, predictable and structured international response;
- Maximizing the unique convening role of the United Nations;
- Catalysing political leadership through networks of willing Member States;
- Multisectoral, interdisciplinary coordination across the multilateral system;
- Multi-stakeholder engagement and accountability in the global response;
- Strengthened accountability for delivering against commitments and bringing coherence to the international approach.

# How to strengthen the international response to complex global shocks

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Recent complex global shocks have shown that, at the global level, our existing, conventional crisis response mechanisms are not up to the task of responding coherently and effectively to global shocks that have an impact on multiple sectors simultaneously. We lack the necessary forums at the global level to tackle multidimensional threats with a multidimensional response. Our existing response architecture, while appropriate for specific events, is too fragmented and sectoral to respond effectively to complex global crises. Our global response is too often hampered by the absence of incentives for multilateral entities to contribute to collective results, and accountability mechanisms and mandates that do not encourage collaboration and joined-up efforts. We are often too slow to convene the right actors at the right level, and we lack the means to collaborate and coordinate across sectors and communicate clearly on what needs to be done. In respect to some specific types of shock, our global response mechanisms are weak or underdeveloped.

We must fill these gaps, learn the lessons from recent shocks and take a different approach – a multidisciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach

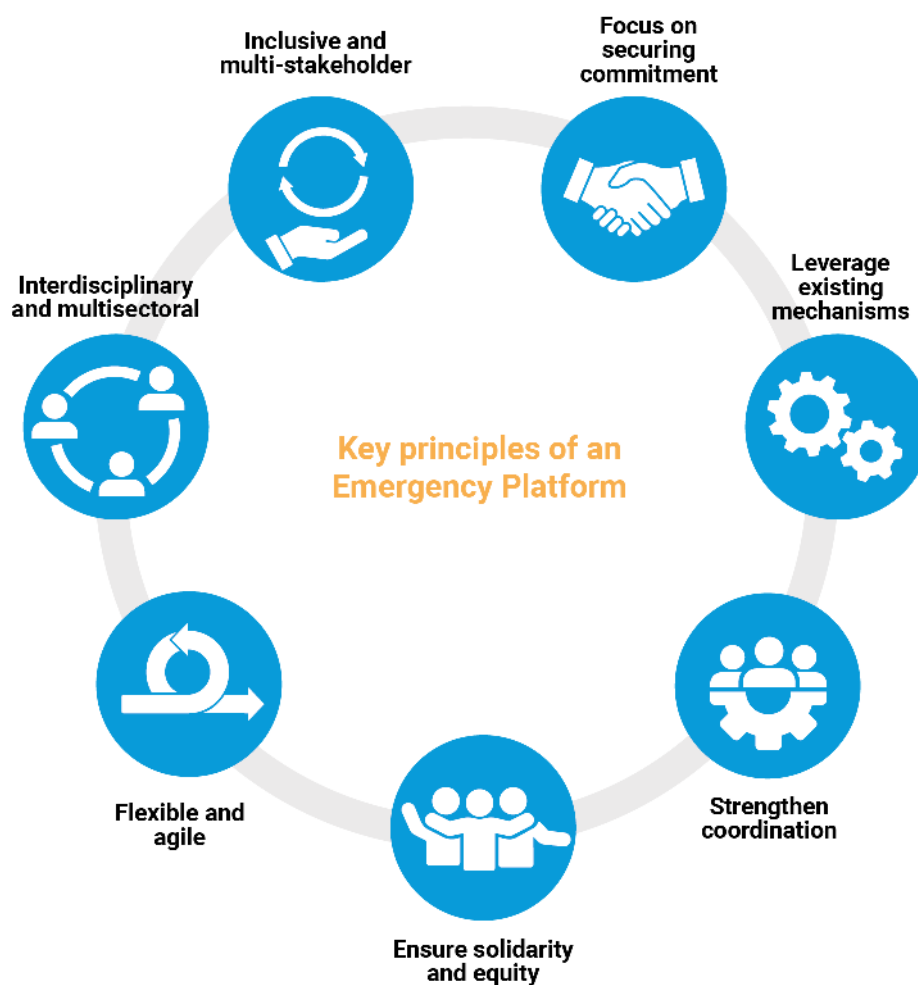
that can enable us to better respond to future, complex global shocks. We need a more formal, predictable and structured approach. When the world faces a complex global shock, we must ensure that all parts of the multilateral system are accountable for contributing to a collective response. No single agency exists to gather stakeholders in the event of complex global shocks. The United Nations is the only organization that can fulfil this role. And we must take the decisions that can enable it to do so.

Building on the ideas in Our Common Agenda and learning lessons from these recent crises, **I propose that the General Assembly provide the Secretary-General and the United Nations system with a standing authority to convene and operationalize automatically an Emergency Platform in the event of a future complex global shock of sufficient scale, severity and reach.**

# How an Emergency Platform would work

**FIGURE IV**

KEY PRINCIPLES OF AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM



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## KEY PRINCIPLES

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To respond to the breadth of potential future global shocks, an Emergency Platform will need to adhere to the following principles:

- > **FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY.** We need a flexible response mechanism that is agnostic to the type of risk we may face and that can be adapted to the specificity of the shock that arises. For this reason, the Emergency Platform would not be a standing body or entity but a set of protocols that can be activated when required.
- > **SOLIDARITY AND EQUITY.** Learning from experiences of past complex global shocks, an Emergency Platform must actively promote and drive an international response that places the principles of equity and solidarity<sup>13</sup> at the centre of its work. In line with the promise of 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind, an Emergency Platform must ensure that those most vulnerable to a complex, global shock, and those with least capacity to cope with its impacts, receive the necessary support from those with the means to do so. In addition, an Emergency Platform must aim to ensure that those affected by a crisis are given a voice in the response, and that the most vulnerable and marginalized in a society receive the protection they need.
- > **STRENGTHENED COORDINATION.** Building on Chapter IX of the Charter of the United Nations, all multilateral participants in an Emergency Platform – including international financial institutions, United Nations specialized agencies and the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations – should cooperate with and report to the Secretary-General when undertaking activities that contribute to a whole-of-system response to a complex global shock, with the aim of strengthening multilateral coordination, while recognizing that multilateral entities that participate in an Emergency Platform remain fully accountable to their respective governing bodies for delivering on their specific mandates.
- > **INTERDISCIPLINARY AND MULTISECTORAL.** Any response to a complex global shock must be able to integrate all relevant expertise and bring together different sectoral approaches and strategies.
- > **INCLUSIVE AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER.** An Emergency Platform would be inclusive and allow for the participation of all relevant actors with an ability to contribute meaningfully to the global response. This should include relevant actors from all parts of the world, including the private sector, civil society, subject-matter experts, academics and others. The Secretary-General would be responsible for identifying such relevant actors and for overseeing their contribution to the response.

> **ABILITY TO SECURE COMMITMENTS AND HOLD ACTORS TO ACCOUNT.** Any response mechanism must ensure that participating actors make clear commitments that directly and immediately support the global response to a complex shock. This may, for example, include a commitment of financial or technical resources, a commitment to advocate with key actors and/or a commitment to a significant policy shift that would have a meaningful impact on the response. Participants would need to accept accountability for delivering on these commitments.

> **LEVERAGE EXISTING OPERATIONAL AND COORDINATION RESPONSE MECHANISMS.** An Emergency Platform would seek to leverage existing sectoral emergency response mechanisms to deliver collective outcomes and would not displace them in any way. An Emergency Platform's activities would focus on high-level convening and advocacy and avoid duplicating the operational and technical response of those agencies with the relevant technical expertise mandated by Member States to lead and coordinate in specific areas.

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## DECISION TO CONVENE AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM

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The Secretary-General would decide when to convene an Emergency Platform in response to a complex global shock. In advance of the decision, the Secretary-General would consult with:

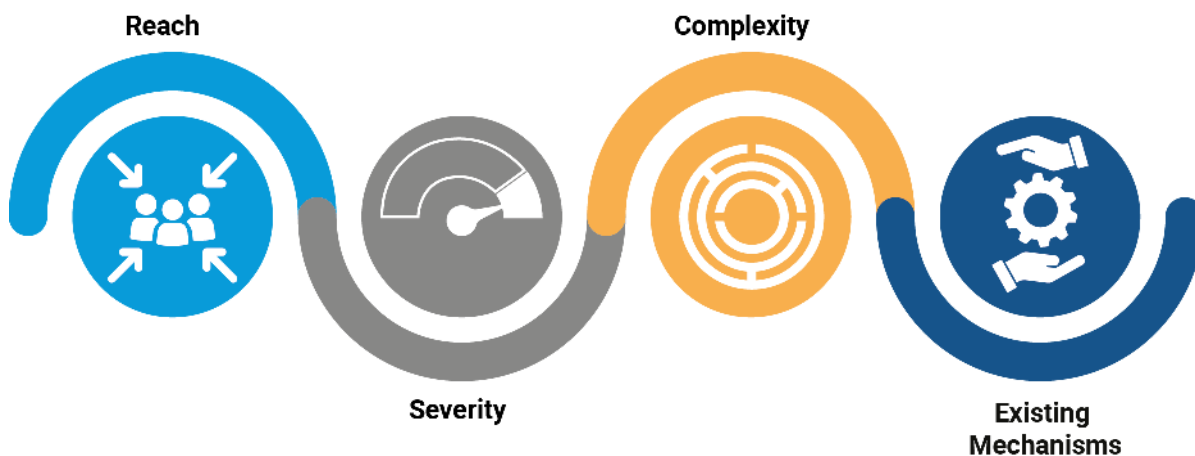
- > The President of the General Assembly;
- > The President of the Security Council (as appropriate);
- > Relevant national authorities and/or regional organizations;
- > Relevant United Nations entities, specialized agencies, international financial institutions and other multilateral institutions and agencies that have been mandated by Member States to respond to sector-specific crises.

The factors that would be considered as part of the decision to convene an Emergency Platform could include:

- a) **Severity of a crisis.** This would include consideration of the acuity of the primary and secondary impacts of a crisis, including metrics such as the number of people adversely affected, the impact on global economic indicators and/or the scale of environmental damage;
  - b) **Reach of a crisis.** This would include the number of people, countries or regions affected by the primary and/or secondary impacts of the crisis;
  - c) **Complexity of a crisis.** This would include consideration of whether the crisis is a multidimensional, multisectoral and interconnected crisis that requires cooperation across pillars and sectors
- in national Governments, the United Nations system and/or other parts of the multilateral system, and the involvement of specific organizations or country groupings, local governments, international financial institutions, the private sector and/or civil society;
- d) **Existing coordination and operational response mechanisms.** This would include consideration of whether there could be an adequate response to a shock through an existing sector-specific mechanism and whether the convening of an Emergency Platform could provide additional political and advocacy support to existing coordination and operational response mechanisms.

**FIGURE V**

**FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION TO CONVENE AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM**





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## HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES OF AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM

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The overarching objectives of an Emergency Platform would be as follows:

- a) **High-level political leadership.** Leverage the unique legitimacy and convening power of the United Nations in a timely and predictable way; identify and bring together actors expeditiously at the appropriate level to respond to complex global shocks that require multisectoral, multi-stakeholder action; build on the role of the Secretary-General's good offices to facilitate dialogue between key actors; and/or overcome any obstacles or bottlenecks to an effective response;
- b) **Ensure equity and solidarity in the international response.** Focus international response efforts on ensuring that the most vulnerable and those with the least capacity to cope with complex global shocks receive the support and assistance they require, in line with the promise of 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind;
- c) **Coherent multilateral response.** Ensure that the multilateral system can agree upon, advocate and implement a coherent and joined-up response to a complex global shock, and bring to bear the expertise, resources and capacities of the entire multilateral system, drawing on the principle of strengthened coordination described above;
- d) **Inclusive and networked multilateralism.** Provide a multi-stakeholder forum that can bring together all relevant actors that can contribute to the response – including but not limited to networks of willing Member States, the United Nations system, international financial institutions, regional bodies and relevant private sector, civil society, academic and non-governmental actors – while recognizing the primary role of intergovernmental organs in decision-making;
- e) **Advocacy and strategic communications.** Share timely, accurate data, analysis and policy recommendations to support global advocacy and build an international political consensus on the way forward;
- f) **Secure commitments and hold key actors to account for supporting the global response.** Ensure that all participating actors make commitments that can contribute meaningfully to the response and that they are held to account for delivery on those commitments.

**FIGURE VI**

**OBJECTIVES OF AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM**



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## **TIME FRAME OF AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM**

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An Emergency Platform should initially be convened for a finite period to respond to a specific shock. At the end of that period, the Secretary-General could extend the work of an Emergency Platform if required, but it would not become a standing body or entity.

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## **RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENTS, UNITED NATIONS ORGANS AND EXISTING COORDINATION BODIES**

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In line with the Charter of the United Nations, the decision to convene an Emergency Platform in response to a crisis would fully respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of individual States. The work of an Emergency Platform would be based on the principle that each State has primary responsibility for responding to the needs of persons affected by a crisis within its territory.

The Emergency Platform would not duplicate the mandated role of the principal and subsidiary organs of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and Security Council. The Emergency Platform as a mechanism would be convened in support of the principal organs, ensuring all principal organs had access to the relevant data and analysis. The Emergency Platform, once convened, would be a tool for the United Nations system to implement decisions taken by relevant organs.

Similarly, once an Emergency Platform is convened, it would not duplicate the mandated coordination or leadership role of United Nations entities and bodies. The Emergency Platform should provide high-level political support and advocacy for the day-to-day operational and coordination activities carried out by mandated entities.

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## **SECRETARIAT SUPPORT TO AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM**

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Once a decision has been taken to convene and operationalize an Emergency Platform, multilateral entities with technical expertise relevant to the nature of the complex global shock would be requested to provide staff secondments to support the work of the Emergency Platform. A roster of staff with relevant technical expertise across different types of shocks would be prepared in advance, with corresponding memorandums of understanding agreed, to ensure that staff resources can be made available immediately and automatically. Seconded staff would constitute a task team responsible for operationalizing the Emergency Platform and would provide all necessary forms of support for the duration of an Emergency Platform. This would include developing a clear and transparent response strategy and ensuring that the Emergency Platform had access to data, analysis and policy recommendations to support advocacy.

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## RESOURCING OF AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM

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Upon activation of an Emergency Platform, initial operating costs would be met from existing resources. Thereafter, United Nations entities and other relevant actors would be asked to provide support for the day-to-day running of the Emergency Platform, including through the secondment of technical experts. In addition, there could be a requirement to mobilize financial resources for specific response activities, subject to relevant factors including the type of shock, the appropriateness of existing sector-specific financing tools and the scale of the crisis.

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## PROTOCOLS FOR AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM

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If the General Assembly provides a mandate for the Secretary-General and United Nations system to convene and operationalize an Emergency Platform, detailed internal protocols would need to be developed by the United Nations system to agree on specific steps that cover a range of scenarios.

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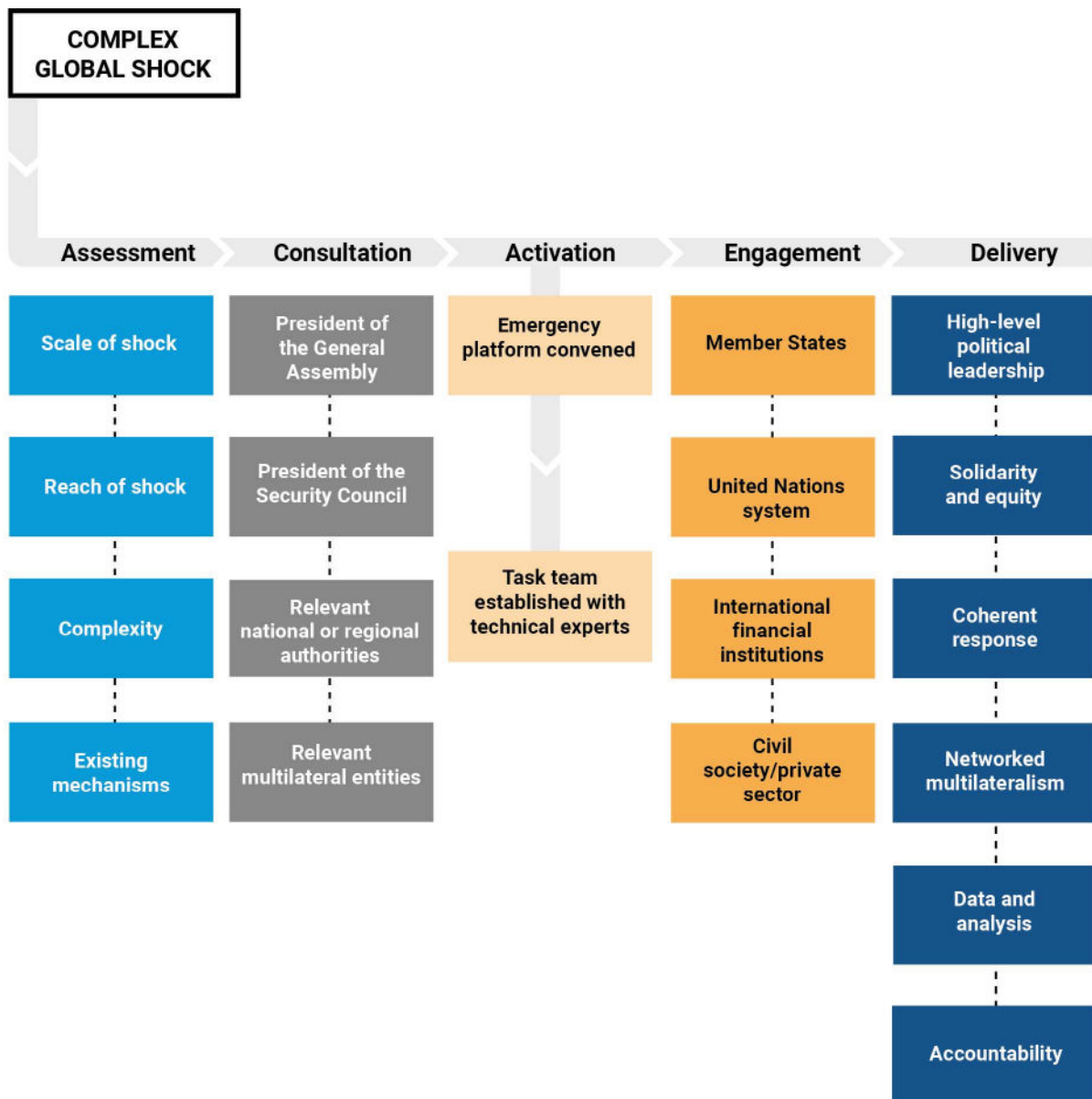
## REPORTING TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Upon convening and operationalizing an Emergency Platform, the Secretary-General would provide regular reporting to the General Assembly on the activities of the Emergency Platform.

**FIGURE VII**

**EMERGENCY PLATFORM PROCESS FLOW AND RESPONSE**



# Recommendations for Member States

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I invite Member States to consider my proposal for an Emergency Platform to help strengthen the international response to complex global shocks. In that regard, Member States may wish to draw on the following elements for inclusion in the Pact for the Future during its preparatory processes:

- a) Recall the commitments made in the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution [75/1](#)), to improve preparedness not only for health-related crises but also for other challenges and crises;
- b) Note that the world is increasingly facing complex, multidimensional global shocks that have an impact on multiple sectors and countries simultaneously, and further note that future global shocks are likely to become more frequent, more complex and have wider and more disruptive impacts because of several factors, including increased global interconnectedness, technological advances and climate change;
- c) Recognize that a strengthened international response to complex global shocks would contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well human rights obligations and gender goals;
- d) Note the importance of learning lessons from the international response to recent complex global shocks;
- e) Recall General Assembly resolution [76/264](#), in which the Assembly welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to convene a Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance;
- f) Recognize that the variety of risks that could lead to complex global shocks in the future requires a strengthened international response, as well as efforts to reduce risks and prevent shocks;
- g) Recognize that a strengthened international response to complex global shocks must be flexible in order to respond to different types of global shocks, promote equity and solidarity, ensure coherence of the multilateral system, be multisectoral and interdisciplinary and allow for the participation of relevant multi-stakeholder actors, and must align with existing coordination and response mechanisms;
- h) Decide that the Secretary-General has a standing authority to automatically convene and operationalize an Emergency Platform in the event of complex global shocks of significant scale, severity and reach;
- i) Decide that the Emergency Platform would not be a standing body or institution but a set of protocols that could be activated in the event of a complex global crisis;
- j) Decide that the Secretary-General will convene the Emergency Platform in response to a complex global shock in consultation with the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council, if appropriate, the relevant national authorities and regional organizations and the relevant United

Nations entities, specialized agencies, international financial institutions and other multilateral institutions that are mandated to respond in the event of sector-specific crises;

- k) Decide that, in the event of a complex global shock, the Secretary-General is requested to convene an Emergency Platform with the objective of:
  - i) Providing high-level political leadership by convening relevant actors to respond to complex global shocks;
  - ii) Ensuring an international response on the basis of solidarity and equity;
  - iii) Leading the multilateral system's response to a complex global shock to ensure a coherent and coordinated response;
  - iv) Leading a multi-stakeholder forum that can bring together all relevant actors that can contribute to the response;
  - v) Leading high-level advocacy and strategic communications in response to the complex global shock, including by ensuring timely, accurate data, analysis and policy recommendations;
  - vi) Securing clear commitments from key actors to support directly and immediately the global response to a complex shock;
  - vii) Ensuring accountability for the delivery on commitments and pledges from all participating actors.
- l) Recall Chapter IX of the Charter of the United Nations, and request that all multilateral participants in an Emergency Platform – including international financial institutions, United Nations specialized agencies and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes – should cooperate with and report to the Secretary-General when undertaking ac-

tivities that contribute to a whole-of-system response to a complex global shock, with the aim of strengthening multilateral coordination, while recognizing that multilateral entities that participate in an Emergency Platform remain fully accountable to their respective governing bodies for delivering on their individual mandates;

- m) Agree that, once activated, an Emergency Platform should be convened for a finite period determined by the type of shock and that, at the end of that period, the Secretary-General may extend the Emergency Platform for such time as necessary;
- n) Request that, once an Emergency Platform has been convened, the Secretary-General provides regular reporting to the General Assembly on its activities;
- o) Emphasize that the decision to convene an Emergency Platform in response to a complex global shock and the work of an Emergency Platform must fully respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States;
- p) Further emphasize that the decision to convene an Emergency Platform would support and complement the response of other United Nations principal organs mandated to respond to crises, and that the convening of an Emergency Platform would not affect the mandated role of any intergovernmental body;
- q) Emphasize that the decision to convene an Emergency Platform would provide high-level political leadership and advocacy in response to a complex global shock in support of other United Nations entities mandated to coordinate the response of sector-specific crises.

# Conclusion

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We are living in a period of great uncertainty, yet we know that the risks we face are growing and becoming more complex. Enhanced international cooperation is the only way we can adequately respond to these shocks, and the United Nations is the only organization with the reach and legitimacy to convene at the highest level and galvanize global action.

We must keep strengthening the multilateral system so that it is fit to face the challenges of

tomorrow. My proposal to agree to protocols to convene and operate an Emergency Platform is a concrete step towards that goal. I urge Member States to seize the opportunity at the Summit of the Future to come together and agree on ways to strengthen our response to complex global shocks.



# Annex

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## CONSULTATIONS WITH MEMBER STATES AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

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The ideas in the present policy brief draw on the proposal for an Emergency Platform outlined in the report entitled “Our Common Agenda” ([A/75/982](#)), which benefited from extensive consultations with Member States, the United Nations system, thought leaders, young people and civil society actors from all around the world. The policy brief responds, in particular, to the rich and

detailed reflections of Member States and other stakeholders on Our Common Agenda over the course of 25 General Assembly discussions. This was captured in particular in the thematic consultations of February and March 2022, organized by the President of the General Assembly, with a specific request for more detailed information on the proposals. In addition, in advance of the publication of the present policy brief, the proposals were discussed with Member States through meetings with regional groups and in separate consultations with civil society partners.

# Endnotes

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- 1 President of the General Assembly, “‘Our Common Agenda’: Summary of the Thematic Consultations” (May 2022), available at <http://www.un.org/pga/76/wp-content/uploads/sites/101/2022/05/Final-OCA-summary-.pdf>.
- 2 See Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York, Random House, 2007).
- 3 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023* (Geneva, 2022), pp. 17 and 39.
- 4 See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/11/1130277>.
- 5 Sources include: United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 (New York, 2022); Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Ensuring SDG progress amid recurrent crises”, *Policy Brief* 137 (2022); World Bank, “Final consumption expenditure (current US\$)” available from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.CON.TOTL.CD>; J. Rentschler, M. Salhab and B. Arga Jafino, “Flood risk already affects 1.81 billion people. Climate change and unplanned urbanization could worsen exposure”, World Bank Blogs, 28 June 2022; Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Forests at the heart of a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”, *Policy Brief* 80 (2020); World Bank, “COVID-19 Slows Progress Toward Universal Energy Access” (Washington, D.C., 2022); United Nations “COVID-19 in an Urban World” (policy brief, 2020); International Energy Agency, “Despite some increases in clean energy investment, world is in midst of ‘uneven and unsustainable economic recovery’ – with emissions set for 2nd largest rebound in history”, 28 October 2021.
- 6 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “IASC Transformative Agenda”, available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-transformative-agenda>.
- 7 Pan American Health Organization, “World Health Assembly approves new Health Emergencies Program”, 25 May 2016, available at [www3.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12098](http://www3.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12098).
- 8 World Health Organization Executive Board, “Strengthening WHO preparedness for and response to health emergencies: Strengthening the global architecture for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience”, 5 January 2023.
- 9 “United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19” (2021 update), available at [www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/12/un-comprehensive-response-covid-19-2021.pdf](http://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/12/un-comprehensive-response-covid-19-2021.pdf).
- 10 See World Health Organization, “The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator”, available at [www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator](http://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator); Gavi, “COVAX”, available at [www.gavi.org/covax-facility](http://www.gavi.org/covax-facility); and African Union, “African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT) announces 108,000 doses of vaccines arriving in Mauritius as part of the first monthly shipment of Johnson & Johnson vaccines”, 7 August 2021, available at <https://africacdc.org/news-item/african-vaccine-acquisition-trust-avat-announces-108000-doses-of-vaccines-arriving-in-mauritius-as-part-of-the-first-monthly-shipment-of-johnson-johnson-vaccines/>.
- 11 United Nations Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, “Global impact of the war in Ukraine: Billions of people face the greatest cost-of-living crisis in a generation”, *Policy Brief* 2 (2022), p. 8.
- 12 For example, the food workstream engaged with a diverse network including commodity traders, the International Grain Council, multi-national businesses, the International Chamber of Commerce, producer organizations, processor organizations and trade union groups.
- 13 As defined in General Assembly resolution 57/213, which states that: “Solidarity, as a fundamental value, by virtue of which global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes costs and burdens fairly, in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice, and ensures that those who suffer or benefit the least receive help from those who benefit the most.”



