



INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON MULTILATERALISM  
Strengthening Cooperation for Global Security

- Concept Note and Workplan -

*New York, September 2014*

## 1. Objective

The International Peace Institute (IPI) proposes to launch an **Independent Commission on Multilateralism** (ICM). The Commission will have an ambitious agenda. Using the body of knowledge and information already available as its starting point (including the IPI Blue Paper series), the members of the Commission will meet periodically, over a two-year period, to **consider policy proposals for enhancing cooperation for global security across the United Nations system and to support their implementation.**

These proposals will consider the appropriate decision-making mechanisms to enhance the Organization's work and policies as well as how to improve the structures (i.e., organizational architecture) and processes (i.e., policy implementation) of the **United Nations system**, and for the UN's interactions with **external actors in the multilateral arena, such as regional and sub-regional organizations.** The deliberations of the Commission will also serve as an opportunity for a forward-looking discussion of global challenges and their implications for change and adaptation throughout the multilateral system.

## 2. Rationale

The world faces a **complex set of inter-connected challenges**: from threats to security from non-state actors to cyber attacks; from forced displacement and natural disasters on a massive scale, to climate change and growing inequality. Multi-lateral institutions are struggling to adapt to the breadth and pace of change, while the legal order on which the international system is based is eroding. As a result, the current multi-lateral system, in particular the United Nations, would appear to be **losing some of its relevance.** It needs to be re-shaped in order **to strengthen resilience and cope more effectively with risk.**

At the same time, there is a growing realization that the inter-connected and diverse set of challenges that we face requires **effective multi-lateralism**: no state can face these challenges alone.

Because of the increasingly interconnected nature of threats and challenges, a **more integrated approach** to security is vital. Furthermore, because of a growing number of actors in the international arena – including new global groupings (like the G20), as well as regional and sub-regional organizations – the system requires greater coherence. The role of civil society and the private sector as well as non-state actors must also be taken into account.

Since the focus is wider than the UN, and since reform of the current system could benefit from the **fresh perspective** of external experts, the Commission should be **independent.** Nevertheless, in order to benefit from the experience of stakeholders in the system, and to increase the likelihood of the Commission's recommendations being implemented, it is vital to involve active and former representatives of Member States.

In short, there is an urgent need to independently review the current multi-lateral system, and to make it **fit for purpose**. That is the rationale for establishing an Independent Commission on Multilateralism.

### 3. Scope

The focus of the Commission will be to **strengthen cooperation in the area of global security**. A tentative list of issue areas, **to be further developed and organized at the time of the first Ministerial-level Board meeting**, includes:

1. New Threats, Challenges and Opportunities for the Multilateral System
2. Armed Conflict within and between states (the changing nature of violence and conflict management tools including early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, mediation, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding)
3. Terrorism and Organized Crime
4. Weapons of Mass Destruction and Non-Proliferation
5. Cyber-security
6. Disarmament
7. Fragile States and Fragile Cities
8. Security & Development (Sustainable Development Goals, Resource Scarcity, Environmental Sustainability, and Climate Change)
9. Security & Public Health and the Biosphere
10. Security & Justice, Human Rights, and the International Legal System
11. Security & Humanitarian Affairs (including disaster risk reduction)
12. Security & Forced Displacement
13. Security for Women and Girls
14. Social Inclusion, Political Participation and Good Governance
15. The Relationship between the UN, Regional Organizations, Civil Society and the Private Sector, Civil Society and NGOs
16. Communication Strategy for the UN multilateral system

The primary focus of the Commission will be to enhance the capability and effectiveness of the United Nations system to respond to future global and regional security challenges in an evolving global context. It will also take into account the work of other inter-governmental organizations, particularly regional organizations. Given the interdependencies among institutions and challenges, the Commission will work on all areas to ensure the overall coherence of the final report, something that has often been missing from previous inter-governmental reform efforts.

#### 4. Structure of the Commission

Under the overall leadership of the Chair and the Co-Chairs, supported by IPI as Secretariat, the work of the Commission will be a multi-level, two-year effort to build politically, financially, and substantively sound strategies and proposals for the strengthening of the multilateral system, within and beyond the United Nations.

The Commission will be composed of:

- 1) A Eminent Advisory Council;
- 2) a Ministerial-level Board;
- 3) an Ambassadorial-Level Board;
- 4) a Working Group;
- 5) a small Secretariat.

- 1) The **Eminent Advisory Council** will be comprised of former government and international organization officials, who have long-standing and distinguished careers in multilateral diplomacy. The Advisory Council will meet once a year, and ad-hoc as needed, to provide advice and to serve as a sounding board for the Commission.
- 2) In order to secure high-level support of, and integration with, policy makers in capitals, the Commission will convene a **Ministerial-level Board** every six months. Each Minister will **be a member in his or her personal capacity**.
- 3) To engage the diplomats accredited to the United Nations, the Commission will convene an **Ambassadorial-level Board** every six months. Each Ambassador, who will be a member in his or her personal capacity, will be asked to nominate a point-person to follow the work of the Commission, as member of the Working Group. In order to accurately reflect the global scope of the UN's work, meetings will be held in major centers like Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna as well as New York.
- 4) The **Working Group** will carry out the bulk of the work of the Commission, with the primary task of analyzing the challenges and developing strategies and proposals to reform the multilateral system. The membership will include expert-level participants from governments, as well as a small group of practitioners and academics. **Sub-Working Groups** will be convened as needed to zoom-in specific issues. The goal of the working groups will be to go beyond merely pointing out problems and inefficiencies, but rather to identify politically, as well as budgetary, feasible strategies for making short- and long-term tangible improvements throughout the international system. As a result a **comprehensive set of strategies and proposals** will be presented to the Ministerial-level Board at the end of the process for final review.

- 5) The **Secretariat** of the Commission will be organized and administered by the International Peace Institute (IPI). IPI will coordinate the initiative and will facilitate the discussions of the Boards and Council and the Working Group. Under the direction of a Secretary General and its close cooperation with the Chair and Co-Chairs, IPI will take the lead on drafting the final report of the Ministerial-level Board and will ensure a constant flow of information among the Commission's members and the various components of the Commission. IPI will be responsible for the organization of related meetings and roundtables.

Overview of Commission Components	
<b>Eminent Advisory Council</b>	High-ranking former government and international organization officials
	Meetings will take place once a year, and additionally as needed
<b>Board of Ministers</b>	Current Foreign, Defense, and/or International Cooperation Ministers.
	Meetings will take place twice a year
<b>Board of Ambassadors</b>	UN-based member states' Ambassadors
	Meetings will take place twice a year
<b>Working Groups</b>	Includes Member States representatives, academics, and policy experts
	Meetings will take place every 3 months (4 times a year)
<b>Sub-Working Groups</b>	Includes members of the Working Groups + sectoral experts as needed
	Meetings will take place as needed between the Working Group meetings
<b>Secretariat</b>	Administered by IPI: Director of the Project and support staff

Sub-working Groups will meet on an as-needed basis, feeding into the broader working group process and report preparation.

## 5. Methodology

The Commission will pursue a **sectoral approach** and will analyze problems and seek solutions from the inside out. Having identified a specific problem or issue, the Commission will first analyze how the **UN system and its funds, agencies, and programs** are addressing it and how effectively. The scope of the analysis will also be broadened to look at the UN's partnerships and coordination with **external actors, such as regional and sub-regional organizations, private sector, and civil society organizations.**

In order to capitalize on the interdependencies and connections among institutions and challenges, something that has often been missing from previous inter-governmental reform efforts, the

Commission will compare and analyze each issue area as a whole to ensure the **overall coherence of the final proposals**. The meetings of the Ministerial-level Board will allow considering the connections among challenges and elaborating integrated and realistic strategies and policies for change and adaptation.

**Background papers and presentations** by leading experts from diverse regions of the world will be commissioned to inspire outside-the-box thinking, provide analysis of the issues, and foster debate in the Working Group. **Representatives** of the UN, regional, sub-regional, and other multilateral organizations will be invited to participate to the meetings as needed. The IPI Secretariat will prepare **summary papers** with strategies and policy recommendations for consideration by the Ministerial-level Board. The Commission will produce a **final report** (drafted by IPI), whose content will be based on the discussions in the Working Group, but not necessarily reflect all views that were expressed during the two years of meetings.

Working Groups will be convened once a month throughout 2015, to look at the 16 topics identified above. The final paper will be published in mid-2016.

- **Background papers** and presentations distributed to members of the Working Group.
- Members of the Working Group prepare feedback on the background paper, to be shared and discussed amongst participants.
- A meeting of the Working Group is held at the Greentree Estate in Manhasset, NY to discuss the topic in-depth and to generate analysis and policy-recommendations.
- The IPI Secretariat finalizes a “**working paper**,” based on the discussions of the Working Group at Greentree. The working paper is shared with a larger community of interested participants, including members of the UN Missions and the wider NGO and academic communities, in order to solicit feedback and recommendations.
- Based on these discussions, the IPI Secretariat will prepare **summary papers** with strategies and policy recommendations for consideration by the Ambassadorial- and Ministerial-level Board, as well as the Eminent Advisory Council.
- The Commission will produce a **final report** (drafted by IPI), whose content will be based on the discussions in the Working Group and the Boards and Council.