UN REINVENTION RESEARCH GROUP



Reinventing the Capacity to Act

Introduction to Reinventing the United Nations

Jordan Ryan

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Foreword

In late October and early November 1956, after British and French vetoes blocked Security Council action during the Suez crisis, the General Assembly met in emergency special session and established the first armed United Nations peacekeeping force. Lester Pearson proposed the force, and Dag Hammarskjöld transformed the proposal into an operational design in a matter of days. It was not an enforcement operation under Chapter VII. Its deployment required the consent of the host government, and its operations rested on impartiality and strict limits on the use of force. The Charter contained no express provision for peacekeeping operations of this kind.

That episode is worth recalling as this collection is published, and not simply because one of the institutions sponsoring it bears Hammarskjöld's name. It illustrates a proposition to which the papers in this collection return from different directions: when the Security Council cannot act, its failure does not exhaust the Organisation's capacity to organise legitimate collective action. Many of the instruments that have become central to the Organisation's work, including peacekeeping, the good offices of the Secretary-General, modern peacebuilding, and cooperation with regional organisations, acquired their modern forms through practice rather than detailed provision in the Charter. They were developed by people who used the authority available to them to meet circumstances the founders had not anticipated.

That history should not be romanticised. Some of those innovations succeeded; others failed; and several produced consequences their architects did not intend. But it establishes a point on which this collection rests. The choice has never simply been between preserving the Organisation unchanged and replacing it with something else.

The two institutions sponsoring this series come from different histories but share a conviction that peace requires more than accommodation to existing power. Hammarskjöld's legacy was one of institutional invention in the service of collective responsibility. Established in his memory, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation carries that legacy forward by advancing dialogue and policy for peace, sustainable development and effective multilateral action. The Toda Peace Institute was founded in honour of Josei Toda, who was arrested by Japan's wartime authorities in 1943. He survived nearly two years of imprisonment and later built a grassroots movement for peace. In 1957, he issued a declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. His commitment to peace rested on respect for the inherent dignity of life. Different as these histories are, both speak to a responsibility to question arrangements that are no longer adequate to protect peace and human dignity.

Seventy years after Suez, the United Nations again confronts circumstances that its existing arrangements are struggling to meet. Security Council paralysis has become recurrent, including in crises in which the interests or conduct of permanent members are directly engaged. Much of the wider UN system depends heavily on earmarked voluntary financing, giving individual contributors considerable influence over priorities, while technological and other transboundary risks are evolving faster than existing international arrangements have been able to address them. Against this background, the UN80 Initiative seeks to improve efficiency, review mandates, and consider structural changes across the system. The present Secretary-General's term ends on 31 December 2026. His successor will inherit an Organisation under exceptional political and financial strain.

The Toda Peace Institute and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation convened this research initiative because we judged that these pressures required more than commentary. Reform of the Organisation's machinery is necessary and is well under way. This collection addresses the political arrangements that determine how the UN can act: how authority is distributed, how legitimacy is established and maintained, who can act when the Security Council cannot, and whether resources support priorities agreed collectively by the membership or those preferred by individual contributors.

The authors of the papers were asked to address these questions and were left free to answer them as they saw fit. They share a practical method of inquiry. Each begins with a function that is failing or under strain and asks what practical institutional response might improve it, who could act, and under what authority. Their proposals differ in ambition and form, but none assumes that Charter amendment or prior agreement among the permanent members must come first. That approach reflects the kind of institutional imagination that produced peacekeeping in 1956.

We publish ahead of United Nations Day, in the year marking seventy years since the Suez crisis and sixty-five years since Hammarskjöld's death near Ndola on 18 September 1961. Anniversaries and timing do not, by themselves, move governments. Our aim is to offer proposals that governments and UN leaders can debate, test, and put into practice.

Our thanks go to the authors of the papers, who worked to a demanding schedule, and to Jordan Ryan, who conceived the initiative, prepared the initial report that informed the collection, and convened the authors' meeting in Uppsala in August 2026. Responsibility for the arguments in each paper rests with its authors. We offer the collection as a contribution to a debate that now demands sustained attention and action.



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Introduction

Abstract

The United Nations is expected to address problems that cross borders, but it must do so in a world very different from that of 1945. Power, knowledge and resources are distributed differently, while Security Council paralysis, fragmented authority and the disproportionate influence of a few donors through earmarked funding constrain the Organisation's capacity to act. Management reform alone cannot overcome these constraints. The eight policy briefs introduced here examine how the Organisation can strengthen its legitimacy and recover its capacity to act. They consider how knowledge and professional judgement can inform political decisions and how the UN system can put those decisions into practice. Their recommendations combine fuller use of existing authority with wide-ranging institutional change. The transition to a new Secretary-General offers an opportunity to pursue this agenda for reinvention without waiting for Charter amendment.

1. Why managerial reform is not enough

In 2025, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program recorded sixty-five state-based armed conflicts, the highest number since records began in 1946. Thirteen were classified as wars, with at least 1,000 battle-related deaths during the year. The total included eight conflicts between states, also a record.[1] Humanitarian needs remain immense, while funding to meet them is being cut. Climate change, artificial intelligence, pandemics, and financial instability require cooperation across borders. No government can manage these problems alone. The United Nations provides a universal forum in which states can address shared problems and have a voice in decisions that affect them.

The United Nations must also be able to organise collective action when major powers disagree, authority is dispersed and resources do not follow agreed priorities. Managerial reform alone cannot achieve this. Governments and the Organisation must examine how authority is exercised, how political support is built, and how decisions are financed and implemented.

The UN80 Initiative, launched by Secretary-General António Guterres in March 2025 as the Organisation marked its eightieth anniversary, has focused on reducing costs, reviewing mandates, and considering structural changes, including possible mergers of UN entities. A separate review of peace operations, requested in the Pact for the Future, has also been published.[2] Much of this work is necessary. But a leaner,

[1] Uppsala University, "UCDP: Record Number of Conflicts Between States," press release, 9 June 2026, https://www.uu.se/en/press/press-releases/2026/2026-06-09-ucdp-record-number-of-conflicts-between-states; Shawn Davies, Therése Pettersson and Magnus Öberg, "Organized Violence 1989–2025, and Violent Political Protests," *Journal of Peace Research* 63, no. 4 (2026): 705–723, https://doi.org/10.1093/jopres/xjag046.

[2] United Nations, UN80 Initiative: Progress Report, A/80/732, 26 May 2026, https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/732; United Nations, *Review on the Future of All Forms of United Nations Peace Operations: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/80/798–S/2026/600, 22 July 2026, https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/798, requested in the *Pact for the Future*, A/RES/79/1, 22 September 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/79/1.

more efficient United Nations may still be unable to act. A permanent member of the Security Council can block a decision or itself violate the Charter. Where implementation depends on earmarked voluntary funding, a few donors can determine which agreed priorities receive resources. Greater efficiency cannot remove these political constraints. The central question is how to organise legitimate collective action when agreement among the major powers is absent, insufficient, or comes too late.The Toda Peace Institute report *From Reform to Reinvention*, published in April 2026, distinguished efforts to improve efficiency from changes in authority, political incentives, and financing.[3] The Charter's purposes remain as relevant as they were in 1945. But the institutions established then must operate in a world where power, knowledge, and resources are distributed very differently.

The United Nations has never been a finished political project. Successive generations have adapted the Organisation to meet new challenges. The Charter does not mention peacekeeping. During the Suez crisis in 1956, Britain and France blocked action in the Security Council. Lester Pearson proposed a United Nations emergency force, and Dag Hammarskjöld developed the plan within days under the authority of the General Assembly.[4] The Organisation has also expanded its use of good offices, developed peacebuilding practice, and deepened cooperation with regional organisations. It has drawn on the Charter to meet needs its founders could not fully anticipate. That capacity for invention is needed again.

2. What reinvention means

The immediate purpose of this series is to identify changes that can strengthen the United Nations without waiting for agreement on Charter amendment. Reinvention means reconsidering how the Organisation exercises authority, mobilises resources, and works with partners to fulfil the Charter's purposes. It does not require a new founding conference. Questions of Security Council membership and veto power remain important to the Organisation's longer-term legitimacy, but they need not delay changes that are possible now.

The starting point is the problem to be addressed. Which decisions require a forum in which all states are represented? What can regional organisations or coalitions undertake? Who has the necessary knowledge and resources? Reinvention asks how the UN, regional organisations and coalitions can work together and who is accountable for the results. That means asking who benefits from the present arrangements, who would oppose reform, and which states could organise support for change. The General Assembly, the Secretary-General, and the governing bodies of the wider UN system have authority they could exercise more effectively. Reconsidering their roles does not require a larger or more centralised United Nations. It requires clarity about what the Organisation must do itself and how it can enable others to act.

[3] Jordan Ryan, *From Reform to Reinvention: Reimagining the United Nations for the 21st Century*, Toda Peace Institute Report no. 293 (Tokyo: Toda Peace Institute, April 2026), 3, https://toda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/tr-293_From-reform-to-reinvention.pdf.

[4] United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 998 (ES-I), 4 November 1956, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/998(ES-I); Resolution 1000 (ES-I), 5 November 1956, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1000(ES-I); and Resolution 1001 (ES-I), 7 November 1956, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1001(ES-I). These resolutions were adopted at the first emergency special session, convened under the "Uniting for Peace" procedure established by General Assembly Resolution 377 A (V), 3 November 1950, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/377(V). The procedure enables the Assembly to consider a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression when disagreement among permanent members prevents the Security Council from exercising its primary responsibility. It does not confer the Council's binding enforcement powers on the Assembly. UNEF's deployment depended on Egypt's consent.

3. A crisis of organised collective action

Multilateral cooperation increasingly takes place through institutions with different memberships and purposes. Governments also coordinate policy through smaller forums: the G7 brings together seven advanced economies, the G20 includes major advanced and emerging economies, and BRICS brings together countries including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Regional organisations take on responsibilities for peace, security, and economic development. States form coalitions around particular problems, while technology companies possess capabilities that many governments lack. These actors do not necessarily work together. Powerful states can choose the forums that best serve their interests, while smaller states have fewer opportunities to shape decisions. It is often unclear who can hold those exercising authority to account.

The United Nations cannot and should not direct all these actors. Its authority rests on near-universal membership, the Charter, international law, and eight decades of practice. The UN's responsibility to uphold peace, human rights, and international law remains essential, even when doing so conflicts with the interests of powerful states. Agreement on shared values may be elusive, but the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international law more broadly provide principles and commitments on which the Organisation can act. These should guide its work and provide the standard by which it is judged.

The Security Council shows how difficult it can be to act on those commitments. Permanent members can veto substantive decisions. The Charter requires parties to a dispute to abstain from voting on certain decisions concerning peaceful settlement, but does not prevent a permanent member from blocking enforcement action against itself or a close ally.[5] The bargain of 1945 kept the great powers inside the system, but left no dependable remedy when one of them commits aggression. Powerful states can also bypass UN bodies and create arrangements that exclude other states or weaken accountability.

4. The policy brief series

This series forms part of a joint initiative of the Toda Peace Institute and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. The series was developed through a policy research group, with online discussions, exchanges among the authors, and an in-person workshop in Uppsala on 27–28 August 2026, where drafts of seven papers were discussed; an eighth paper was added after the workshop. A separately published report records the main arguments, differences and questions that emerged from those discussions.[6] The eight policy briefs examine legitimacy, aggression, collective security, authority when consensus is absent, artificial intelligence, prevention, financing, and the relationships between the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, and the international civil service. They consider how the United Nations can make fuller use of existing authority and change arrangements that impede action. Their recommendations address both the responsibilities of member states and the Organisation's capacity to fulfil the Charter's purposes.

The series focuses primarily on peace and security, alongside institutional questions that affect the wider UN system. It does not offer a comprehensive treatment of development, humanitarian action, or human rights. These remain essential to the Organisation's purposes and to any wider agenda for reinvention.

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[5] *Charter of the United Nations*, art. 27(3), https://legal.un.org/repertory/art27.shtml. The abstention requirement applies to decisions under Chapter VI and Article 52(3); it does not extend to Chapter VII enforcement decisions.

[6] Jordan Ryan, *Reinventing the United Nations: Report on the Uppsala Workshop, 27–28 August 2026*, Summary Report no. 325 (Tokyo: Toda Peace Institute, 26 September 2026), especially 11, https://toda.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/tr-325_Reinventing-the-United-Nations.pdf.

5. What the policy briefs contribute

Linda Darkwa begins with legitimacy. Even if the Security Council's gridlock eased tomorrow, questions about its representativeness and exercise of authority would remain. She distinguishes four dimensions of legitimacy. Constitutional legitimacy concerns the basis for holding exceptional authority and the responsibility to justify its use. Democratic legitimacy requires meaningful representation and influence. Procedural legitimacy concerns whose knowledge informs decisions and how those decisions are explained. Performance legitimacy goes beyond outcomes, many of which lie outside the Council's control, to consider the consequences of decisions and inaction, and whether the Council learns from experience. Without waiting for agreement on membership and veto reform, she proposes a Periodic Legitimacy Review within the Council's annual reporting process to the General Assembly. This would make its exercise of authority more open to scrutiny and require follow-up on earlier findings.

Mark Simonoff addresses the failure to respond to aggression. He proposes a standing body, established by the General Assembly or, failing that, by a coalition of states, to investigate aggression, preserve evidence, and prepare case files for future prosecution. It would recommend economic sanctions and the exclusion of aggressor states from UN leadership positions. His proposal rests on the principle Robert H. Jackson stated at Nuremberg: the law against aggression must apply to every nation, including those that sit in judgement.[7]

Eugene Chen considers how the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, regional bodies, and coalitions of willing states could reinforce collective security when the Security Council does not act, without replacing it or claiming its enforcement powers. He draws attention to measures within the Secretary-General's authority and proposes that the General Assembly authorise responses that could include specialised capacities attached to resident coordinators' offices or larger missions. The Peacebuilding Commission could recommend Assembly support for national prevention and peacebuilding strategies at the request of the government concerned. UN responses would be adapted to each context and governed by the three core principles of UN peacekeeping: consent, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defence or defence of the mandate.

Georgios Kostakos places the UN's convening authority at the centre of his proposals. He would establish a regular dialogue, through the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, with the G7, G20, BRICS and regional organisations. The state groupings would be treated as caucuses of UN member states, reporting on their activities for review of their consistency with the Charter while retaining their autonomy. Regular engagement between these groupings and the Secretary-General would make conflict prevention a standing item on their agenda. He also proposes a Global Resilience Townhall, convened as an emergency special session of the High-level Political Forum under arrangements authorised by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. It would bring governments and non-state actors together when urgent threats require a coordinated response. Political recommendations could be adopted by a three-quarters majority of participating states present and voting, with non-state participants contributing to discussions but not voting. This would avoid a consensus requirement without altering the voting rules of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. Climate change and artificial intelligence are possible early subjects. The Townhall would give political impetus to action and monitor implementation, supporting specialised bodies rather than duplicating their work.

[7] Robert H. Jackson, opening statement for the prosecution, International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 21 November 1945, in *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. 2 (Nuremberg, 1947), 153, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/11-21-45.asp.

Renata Dwan examines a different constraint on collective action. In artificial intelligence (AI), much of the computing capacity, data, and expertise lie with a few private companies, while governments disagree on how AI should be governed. She traces the evolution of global governance initiatives at the United Nations and how recent AI initiatives build on these foundations. AI also challenges those approaches in a fast-moving competitive environment where many governments lack the technical knowledge and tools to design effective governance frameworks. She proposes mobilising cross-regional political groupings and establishing a structured channel for private-sector engagement to advance practical action on AI standards, risk management, and access. The UN can provide independent scientific evidence to build shared understanding of governance priorities, while its Global Dialogue on AI Governance can facilitate exchange and networks for action. In her account, the UN would help states and other actors organise cooperation, with much of the action taking place elsewhere.

Sigrid Gruener and Henrik Hammargren examine why repeated commitments to prevention have not produced a coherent approach across the United Nations. They distinguish prevention as an objective, a capability, and a system function, identifying the last as the missing element. They propose linking nationally-led prevention strategies with the work of UN country teams under Resident Coordinator leadership, regional organisations, and the Peacebuilding Commission. Flexible financing and deployable expertise would support these efforts. Prevention requires political engagement across the system and cannot simply be added to the responsibilities of its development organisations. Successful prevention may avert a conflict altogether, or reduce its severity and duration. In either case, its results are harder to see and attribute than the consequences of violence.

The question of who pays, and on what terms, runs through these proposals. Frederik Matthys and Peter Linnér show how earmarked voluntary contributions allow donors to direct UN system spending, sometimes away from collectively agreed priorities. Donors also have legitimate concerns about effectiveness, which the United Nations must address. The authors propose a sequenced approach: nearer-term measures within existing authority would build the foundations for a more ambitious model combining a capitalised endowment with assessed contributions based on gross national income. The nearer-term measures include a reserve facility and charges reflecting the additional administrative costs of tightly earmarked funding. Greater financial autonomy would require stronger accountability for resources and results. Member states would also have to accept changes in how they exercise financial influence. Sound accounting alone cannot secure that political choice.

Their focus is the financing architecture of the UN system. The paper does not attempt a comprehensive assessment of how the UN stewards its resources or what its institutional configuration should be. These questions remain essential to the wider debate. So does the contraction of available funding: changing who controls resources will not by itself remedy a shortfall in the resources needed to carry out agreed responsibilities.

Henrik Hammargren and Jemina Holmberg close the series by returning to institutions already at the centre of the Charter: the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, and the international civil service. They describe their relationship as the UN's "universal centre." The Assembly provides universal political representation; the Secretary-General exercises political judgement and connects decisions to institutional action; and the civil service supplies independent analysis and professional capability. The authors distinguish the UN from the wider UN system, which also includes funds, programmes, specialised agencies, and related organisations with their own mandates and governing arrangements. Neither the Assembly nor the Secretary-General has general executive authority over that system. Their proposal is to strengthen the connections through which analysis informs political decisions, decisions are matched with mandates and resources, and implementation informs subsequent choices. Existing Charter institutions should be used more deliberately before new political machinery is created.

6. Connecting the proposals

The papers approach a common difficulty from different directions. Political authority, knowledge, resources, and the ability to implement decisions often lie in different places. Hammargren and Holmberg examine how the UN's central institutions can connect these capacities while respecting the distinct mandates of the wider system. The other contributions address prevention, financing, accountability, and cooperation beyond the Security Council. They differ in their institutional choices and political assumptions. Debate should examine those choices and assumptions rather than treat the papers as a single programme.

Several proposals place considerable weight on the General Assembly, where every member state has a voice and none has a veto. Universal membership gives the Assembly a distinctive representative basis, but the legitimacy of particular decisions also depends on how they are reached and whose interests they take into account. Nor does universal membership ensure timely decisions or implementation. Bloc politics can impede action there too.

Reports and assessments can be considered without influencing decisions. Decisions, in turn, can be adopted without the resources or follow-through needed to implement them. In several areas, the Organisation already has much of the information, machinery, and authority it needs. What is often missing is a dependable process for acting on findings, assigning responsibility, and learning from implementation. Political obstruction remains a central constraint, but it does not explain every failure. Better use of existing authority is a practical starting point, even where more ambitious change is needed.

A new mechanism must explain why it would succeed where existing arrangements have failed. Most of the proposals in this series cannot compel action. They seek to influence behaviour through published criteria, requirements to explain decisions, reputational costs, conditions on participation, and financial incentives. Simonoff's standing body could recommend sanctions but could not impose them; its findings could increase pressure for a response to aggression. Linnér and Matthys propose charges reflecting the additional administrative costs of tightly earmarked funding. The test in each case is whether the proposed incentives would be strong enough to change behaviour.

These arguments suggest a United Nations better able to organise collective action and work with others to carry it out. Connecting prevention capacities would help identify threats early and inform the Secretary-General's diplomacy, including the use of Article 99 to bring threats to international peace and security to the Council's attention. If the Council fails to act, the General Assembly can exercise its own authority, and states can cooperate through lawful arrangements. Where the necessary expertise and resources lie outside government, the Organisation can help establish the terms on which states, firms and experts work together. The Secretary-General and member states will need to judge when the UN should lead, when it should support others and how those involved will remain accountable.

Sharing responsibility in this way carries risks. Unless it is clear who answers for decisions, implementation, and results, it could deepen the fragmentation these papers seek to address. An independent international civil service is essential. Article 100 of the Charter requires the Secretary-General and staff neither to seek nor receive instructions from governments or other authorities outside the Organisation and requires member states to respect the exclusively international character of their responsibilities.[8] Officials must uphold the Charter and agreed mandates with integrity, impartiality, and professional judgement. Member states must respect that independence; officials must remain accountable for the quality of their advice, their conduct, and their performance.

[8] *Charter of the United Nations*, art. 100, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text; Dag Hammarskjöld, "The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact," lecture delivered at Oxford University, 30 May 1961, https://www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/the-international-civil-servant-in-law-and-in-fact/.

7. Testing the proposals and building support

The practical value of these proposals will depend on scrutiny by member states, UN officials and those who work with the Organisation or are affected by its decisions. That scrutiny should test their legal basis, political assumptions, and prospects for implementation.

The proposals must be credible beyond New York and Western policy circles. Reinvention is a contested term. The Chinese government's June 2026 white paper on global governance calls for upholding the UN-centred international system and the Charter's purposes and principles "instead of reinventing the wheel."[9] Yet it also advocates reforming and improving existing institutions and presents China's Global Governance Initiative as a contribution to that effort. The Charter commitments invoked in this series apply equally to China, the United States, and other powers. There is no single Global South or Global North position on these questions. Members of the Group of 77 and China have varied interests and institutional traditions, as do states within the Global North. Some proposals may encounter strong resistance within these groupings. Debate in Beijing, New Delhi, Brasília, Addis Ababa, Washington, London, and the capitals of smaller states could reveal opportunities for cooperation as well as assumptions that need reconsideration and obstacles to implementation.

Support for the proposals will have to be built issue by issue, in capitals as well as New York. Middle powers and smaller states have reasons to defend a system based on rules, but their interests differ. Relations with major powers shape their choices alongside their commitment to multilateral institutions. The permanent members of the Security Council remain potential partners. Several proposals would strengthen cooperation when the Council is unwilling or unable to act. These proposals should be considered on their merits, without making practical steps conditional on agreement about the Council's future composition.

The next Secretary-General will have an opportunity to advance this agenda. The office cannot substitute for member states, but the Charter provides more political space than is generally used. The new Secretary-General should be prepared to use it, and governments should defend the office when its independent judgement comes under pressure. Good offices, fact-finding, support for peaceful settlement of disputes, and the authority under Article 99 offer ways to engage governments and mobilise cooperation.[10] The question is what the United Nations under new leadership should be capable of doing, and what governments are prepared to support.

Research institutions, civil society organisations, and former officials are preparing proposals for the new Secretary-General. The UN Advocacy Community's forthcoming Blue Book, coordinated by Steve Glovinsky and Francis M. O'Donnell, focuses on practical actions the next Secretary-General could take in the first 100 days, alongside longer-term priorities. Cepei's work under Philipp Schönrock examines the leadership and political challenges of the first 100 and 1,000 days of the term.[11] These initiatives form part of a wider effort to prepare for the transition. This series addresses structural questions that will outlast the opening months of the new administration. Those involved should learn from one another and draw on the experience and judgement of national delegations to the UN and UN staff. Together, their work should help the new leadership and member states decide where to begin.

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[9] State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals and Actions*, white paper, 17 June 2026, preface, https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zgyw/202606/P020260617424631558092.pdf.

[10] *Charter of the United Nations*, arts. 98–99, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text; United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on Fact-Finding by the United Nations in the Field of the Maintenance of International Peace and Security*, Resolution 46/59, 9 December 1991. For the declaration and the Secretary-General's fact-finding practice, see https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/ga_46-59/ga_46-59.html.

[11] Cepei, *The Next UN Secretary-General: Leadership, Politics, and the First 100 and 1000 Days* (Bogotá: Cepei, 14 May 2026), https://cepei.org/en/documents/the-next-un-secretary-general-leadership-politics-and-the-first-100-and-1000-days/.

8. An opening for action

These policy briefs give member states and the next Secretary-General practical proposals to consider. Governments need not agree on the future shape of the United Nations before making better use of the authority they already have. They can begin by deciding which proposals to pursue and committing the political support and resources needed to put them into practice.

Speaking in Uppsala, former UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson urged participants to put the problem at the centre and work on it together, without spending too much time calculating the odds. That is the spirit in which this series is offered.

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