



Updating the Rules and Infrastructure for Globalization Meeting Summary

On May 7, 2015, New York University's Center on International Cooperation (CIC) hosted an informal consultation on updating the rules and infrastructure for globalization. The consultation involved senior officials and experts in the fields of diplomacy, security, development and law. The objective of the consultation was to identify priority normative areas of action for the next UN Secretary-General (UNSG), and to take stock of the political feasibility of pursuing multilateral action in those areas. The discussion focused on three key questions: in what areas and why is collective action necessary?; what form should collective action take?; and does the UNSG have a role to play? In preparation for the discussion, CIC conducted an on-line survey of officials, experts and advocates from around the world. The initial findings are included in Annex A.

The consultation was held under the Chatham House Rule.

Key Findings

Among the key points made by participants were that:

- The next UNSG will need both to defend and generate political support for operationalizing existing norms – such as R2P and climate change - and to innovate in key areas where there are significant normative gaps.*
- There are significant gaps in collective action in the areas of illicit globalization and sustainable development, which can and should be filled by the UN. These include illicit financial flows, migration, modern slavery and transnational action on health, development technology and resource scarcity.*
- The UN may not be well placed to deal with other normative gaps. The vested interests and potential resistance of governmental (Western and emerging power) market leaders in new security and cyber technologies potentially mitigates against UN action. Defending existing norms – in rights, peace and security – and exploring the areas identified above, would already constitute a courageous move by the UNSG.*
- Making normative progress raises questions about the leadership skills of the next UNSG. (S)he will need the negotiation skills to create political space for the UN to innovate, and the corporate leadership skills to build a UN team that secures and regulates serious international deals in technically challenging areas.*

Summary of Issues Raised

Multilateral institutions are struggling to keep pace with a world in flux: a multipolar world; a world in which states are becoming weaker vis-à-vis private actors; a world in which economic, demographic and climate change is creating new pressures; and a world where the norms for which the UN stands, and its own relevance/influence, are being called into question.

The discussion was divided into four clusters of collective challenges: 1) *universal human rights and the responsibility to protect (R2P)*; 2) *common peace and security threats and challenges* - the use of drones, cyber security/information privacy, violent extremism, and nuclear proliferation; 3) *illicit globalization* - illicit flows, maritime security, drug control policies, and illicit migration; and 4) *universal sustainable development* - climate change, resource scarcity, pandemics and public health, energy and sustainability.

Cluster 1: R2P and human rights

As a norm, the international community probably cannot currently expect a better formulation of R2P – it is a well-defined norm. Indeed, there might be pushback from the international community against any changes and even potential losses to the norm if re-opened. The more important point is why R2P is not being successfully operationalized in all instances – solutions are needed.

There is general commitment to combating mass atrocities and war crimes, and public attention on these issues. However, trust between international actors on operationalizing the norm is much diminished - there is significant polarization. The Libya intervention, the Iraq invasion, and the lack of action in Syria and Northern Iraq have contributed to the weakening of the norm, as has the perceived uneven enforcement of international justice. The responsibility to protect states' own populations is not always taking hold as a norm on the national level. Libya and Syria being acute recent examples. International intervention is a problem for non-compliant states as well as those who feel that it is their responsibility to intervene. In addition, the issue of protection of civilians from non-state actors has not been touched.

Important measures could be taken to operationalize R2P, all/many of which would require the backing of the UNSG. The UNSG alone cannot advance the R2P norm. The UN should explore practical avenues for invoking R2P and for rebuilding trust and confidence in the norm. The international community could, for example:

- Strengthen steps and condense timeliness between early warning and action;
- Convene civil society to advance R2P operationalization in all societies;
- Clarify 'protection outcomes' of humanitarian interventions. Progress around specific issues may be more likely to be achieved than on the broad agenda;
- Engage on the issue of protection of civilians from non-state violent actors;

- Re-open the issue of compliance mechanisms – what are the ‘bare minimum’ expectations of all parties and how can the UN make compliance more transparent and public?

Cluster 2: Common peace and security threats and challenges - the use of drones, cyber security/information privacy, violent extremism, and nuclear proliferation

Despite challenges to its influence and relevance, the UN is highly likely to survive through global governance reform and growing multi-polarity. The question is whether it enters new areas of peace and security, or remains within its existing scope.

There may be three groups of countries: the rule takers, the rule breakers and the rule shapers. The three groups have three potential outlooks on norms and institutions: 1) if it ain't broke, don't fix it; 2) ambitions to reshape global institutions; 3) ambitions to create alternative institutions as competitors.

The UN's existing peace and security norms and institutions are unlikely to be rivaled. But in new areas, such as cyber security, information privacy, drones, or lethal autonomous weapons systems, synthetic biological weapons and 3D printing, the market leaders may not want to be tied down by the UN, either in Western coalitions or among the emerging powers. Domestic politics and commercial interests in these areas also frequently mitigates against the likelihood of much progress by a UNSG. Demand of the UN in this area has not been clearly articulated by member states.

With regards to violent extremism, local actors have easier access than ever to global markets, arms flows and social media and publicity, while globalization has led to high and unmet expectations for lifestyles among people in marginalized sectors of society. Regime change is not a tool for countering violent extremism where it takes route in these contexts. It will take societal and political change. The international community must strengthen the idea that statehood is responsible statehood, and convince young people that responsible statehood is the ideal, not alternative methods of extremist governance (such as those proposed by ISIS).

While it is in the public good to develop norms in all these areas, it should not be assumed that the UN would easily or automatically adopt the role. Were the next UNSG to defend the *existing relevant norms*, it would take significant courage.

Cluster 3: Illicit globalization - illicit flows, migration, maritime security, drug control

The UNSG can lead efforts to shape the discourse on this agenda.

Illicit flows need to be addressed through collective action for regulatory harmonization and transnational enforcement. A coalition of developed and developing country actors has already formed around this issue. The next UNSG could also draw in the private sector.

Generating new norms and a global partnership in this area will require coalition-building with public and private actors far beyond the UN, and careful management of potential spoilers – multiple business and political interests will work against tighter cooperation and enforcement.

The negative discourse in many regions on migration generally, and forced migrants specifically, is a cause for deep humanitarian and human rights concern. There is currently no single home for addressing migration in all its forms at the UN - from economic migration policies, to illegal migration and human trafficking, through to forced displacement and to the rights of migrants and the rights of states. The Refugee Convention does not adequately address the operational aspects of dealing with contemporary forced migration. No UN convention reflects migration in the modern world.

The issue of slavery lacks attention — why does slavery persist and grow when the international community is supposedly unanimously on board with norms banning slavery? The illegal trade in slaves is underpinned by serious and organized crime and human trafficking, efforts to cut corners and costs when accelerating economic development, lack of attention to the rights of domestic staff, the rights of women and children and the rights of migrants and minorities. Many spoilers and criminal actors have vested interests in expanding slavery. Tackling it will require global effort.

Drug control policies need to be better informed by what works and what does not work in reducing addiction, harm and crime. The UNSG can contribute significantly by reducing the stigma around drug use and drug addiction, and by building the case for treating drugs as a public health problem.

Concerns were raised about how and whether the UN can attempt to regulate or reduce the size of informal economies, given that they generate a significant number of jobs in developing countries. (For example, in Guinea-Bissau, the number of jobs generated is 50,000 annually).

Cluster 4: Universal sustainable development - climate change, resource scarcity, pandemics and public health, energy sustainability

Pressure is mounting on the UN to address protracted crisis differently. Since the start of the MDG era, humanitarian costs have risen by at least 400%, 80% of which is absorbed in situations of protracted crisis in Syria, DRC, Somalia and South Sudan. The average displacement is now 17 years. The humanitarian system is struggling to deal with both complex emergencies and protracted conflicts/crises. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and the High Level Panel on humanitarian costs in 2015 create windows of opportunity to agree on means to sustainably reduce humanitarian needs. This has to be backed up by renewing the UN's efforts in conflict prevention and resolution, and by building resilience.

At present, there is too much focus on climate mitigation rather than adaptation. On the issue of technology, it receives positive press, but distributional issues remain and are not adequately addressed; some countries gain access to technology while others are left behind. Achieving technology transfers will likely be difficult as only a handful of countries own the beneficial technologies. Most technologies are in private hands, and that becomes an issue of intellectual property. A larger portion of ODA could be used for climate adaptation and pollution mitigation as spending on these areas enhances sustainability and resilience, which feeds back into the SDGs.

The issues of planetary boundaries and sustainable consumption limits were raised. Could the UN work more on resource scarcity and food security, and advancing access to technology?

The world faces a wide range of global development risks, from climate change, to natural disasters to global health and pandemics, to economic shocks and to conflict. It was proposed that the UN could advance risk-informed sustainable development norms, policies and planning to prepare all countries for recurring natural and man-made risks, and to help all societies to build in resilience and risk planning across all national priorities.

The 85 richest people on the planet have the same wealth as the poorest 50 percent (3.5 billion people), yet wealth inequalities did not appear to be as politically contested as might have been the case historically. The UNSG potentially could not be the voice of the lower socio-economic classes. The demand for this role was not clear.

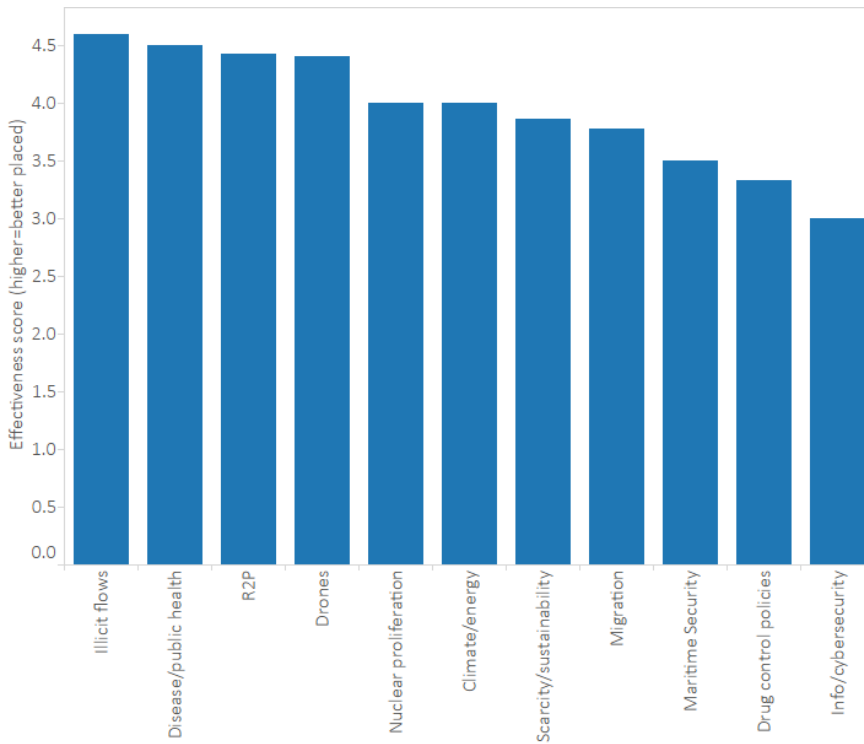
There is an important push for the private sector to participate fully in financing for development and to engage with SDG implementation. Throughout the discussions, the need for the UNSG to convene and build bridges to the private sector was emphasized, on the normative and operational levels.

Final remarks

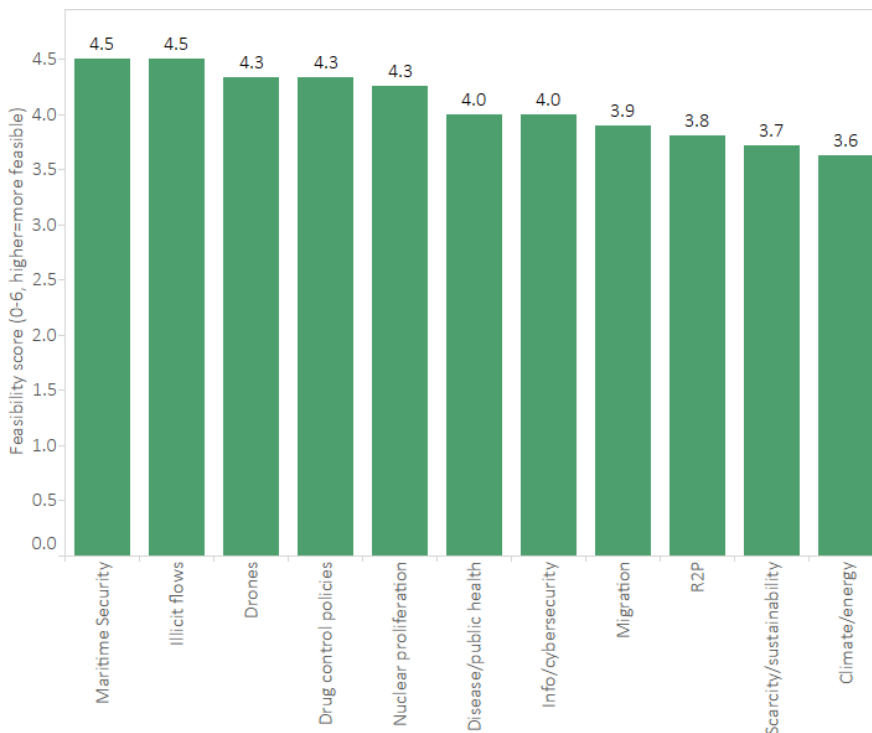
Leadership at the UN is about creating space—it is not necessarily star-power that makes one's voice heard. The consultation concluded that the UNSG's skills and capacities will be pivotal in whether or not a UNSG is able to advance a contemporary and relevant normative agenda.

Annex A

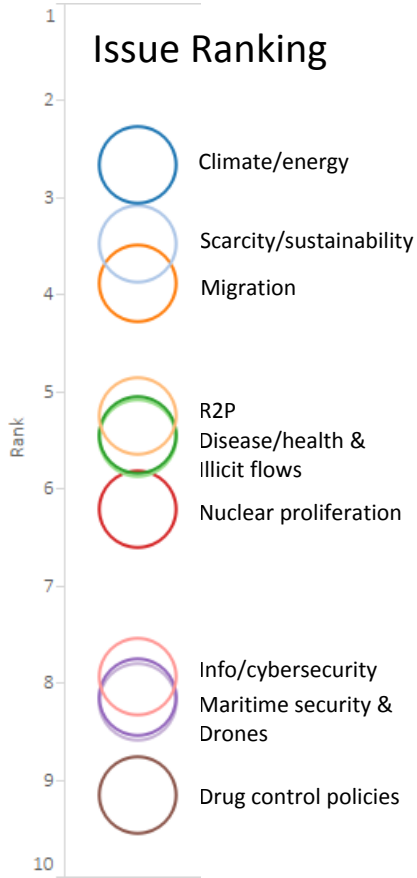
Updating the Rules and Infrastructure for Globalization: Summary of Responses to CIC On-line Survey April-May 2015



Best issue for
the UN to
address



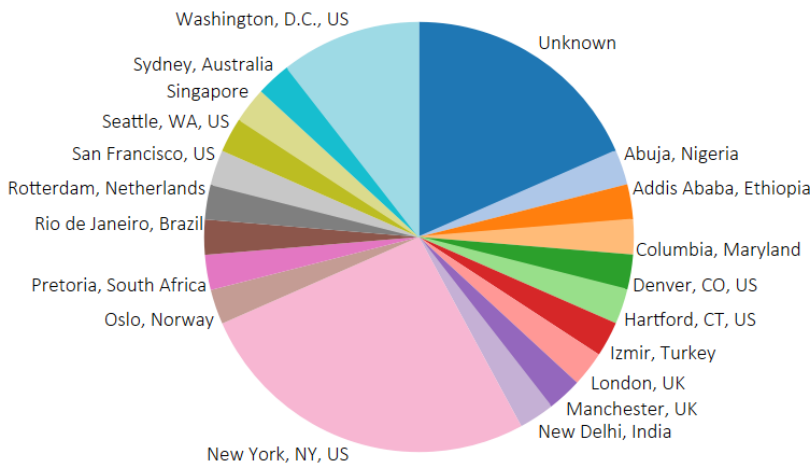
Feasibility of
progress by
issue



Best placed actors by issue

Issue	Best Placed Organization / Actor
Climate / energy	Think tanks
Scarcity / sustainability	CSOs
Migration	Regional organizations
R2P	UN/UN agencies
Disease / public health	CSOs, IFIs, and UN/UN agencies
Illicit flows	Regional organizations
Nuclear proliferation	United States
Info privacy / cybersecurity	CSOs
Maritime security	United States
Drones	Regional organizations and UN/UN agencies
Drug control policies	Think tanks

Respondents' Locations



Respondents' Affiliations

