

GP Follow-Up Paper

**Lunch Discussion
at the EFC Annual Conference 2019**

**"Global Responsibility and the Need for International
Collaboration"**

*Summary of the results prepared and published
by Global Perspectives Initiative (GPI)
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About the Lunch Discussion

On 22nd May 2019, Global Perspectives Initiative hosted a lunch discussion as part of the 30th annual European Foundation Centre Conference in Paris. 26 participants, among them Europe's most influential foundations, the OECD, the IRC and the UN Foundation, discussed how global challenges can be tackled through developing inclusive solutions. The focus laid on how foundations and NGOs can strengthen their impact in times of populism, conflict and violence. Participants debated on potential ways to support and reform existing multilateral institutions which are currently weakened posing a major challenge to foundations and all agents of civil society.

About the Global Perspectives Initiative

The Global Perspectives Initiative supports the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to make the world a fairer and safer place by 2030. GPI brings together stakeholders from politics, business, media, and society, discusses various approaches to sustainable global development, and motivates people to act. As a non-profit and neutral platform, the initiative gives rise to new ideas, raises awareness about the opportunities and challenges around the concept of a global society and thereby shapes the public discourse in Germany.

About the European Foundation Centre (EFC) and the annual EFC Conference

The EFC is a leading platform for institutional philanthropy. It focusses on Europe while closely involving the global philanthropic landscape. As the voice of institutional philanthropy in Europe, EFC communicates the value of organized philanthropy to society and its stakeholders to help nurture an environment in which it can flourish. The EFC looks back on more than 25 years of experience and comprises over 250 member organizations.

The EFC's annual conference gives members the chance to meet with over 650 professionals and representatives from philanthropy, corporates, (I)NGOs, EU and multilateral institutions, think tanks and the media. Participants share, learn and explore together new ideas and approaches to tackling the urgent challenges of our times, forging connections that last well beyond the conference.

Thank you to our partners and supporters

We would like to thank our keynote speakers Elizabeth Cousens, Deputy Chief Executive Officer at the UN Foundation, and Elinor Raikes, Regional Vice President for Europe and North Africa International Rescue Committee, for their valuable and inspirational input. Also, GPI would like to express its gratitude towards the European Foundation Centre for supporting us in organizing this discussion on the occasion of the renowned EFC Annual Conference.

The following paragraphs summarize debating points, discussion outcomes and proposed ideas for action. For further information on the event, please visit globalperspectives.org and our social media channels.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Introduction and background

The credibility of multilateralism and its effectiveness are on the wane. In order to reinforce its role and function, an extensive dialogue among civil society on multilateralism must be led. The distinguished EFC Annual Conference posed the ideal occasion for GPI to continue this dialogue.

In the light of the global challenges, the need for international collaboration is increasingly growing. At the same time, multilateralism and its institutions have come under pressure and face enormous criticism given their institutional inertia and bureaucratic structures impeding quick decision making and sustained, joined action.

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As a consequence of these developments, civil society is called upon to help reforming the existing multilateral institutions, enhancing their contribution and organizational impact and entering strategic partnerships.

Civil society is considered a critical partner.

Against this background, GPI invited two renowned representatives from civil society who fulfil these tasks in two very different, yet equally efficient ways. While Elizabeth Cousens (United Nations Foundation) has been working in direct cooperation with the United Nations, Elinor Raikes (International Rescue Committee - IRC) shared her experiences with issue- and solution oriented partnerships ranging from foundations to governments and the UN. From the inputs of our two speakers, valuable learnings can be drawn from as the following initial paragraphs show.

Elizabeth Cousens (UN Foundation) and Elinor Raikes (IRC) share their views and experiences.

We must understand the undisputable successes of multilateralism

The multilateral system stands for a whole infrastructure of collaborative action, a constellation of values, institutions and practice. In the past 75 years, it has been functioning like an operating system for global politics and can look back at a decent track record: the eradication of smallpox, a slowly recovering ozone layer, historic gains like the reduction of global poverty and other. The multilateral system set rules and standards for global safety, international shipping, achieved nuclear stability and a significant drop in deaths from political conflict. These are just some of the numerous examples of successful multilateral collaboration.

Multilateralism has brought 75 years of peace and tackled incredible challenges.

Coming out of World War II, those achievements were not self-evident. They all required a bedrock of institutionalized global cooperation that is now at risk: The alarming number and increasing complexity of conflicts around the globe are staggering. Examples include the conflict in Yemen, the world's largest humanitarian crisis; the war in Syria that is now in its ninth year; but also the situation in Libya that has escalated dramatically in the last weeks. Many political commentators believe that the multilateral order, led by the UN Security Council as the guardian of international peace and security, is too often proving to have become ineffective in ending conflicts and fulfilling humanitarian needs. Understanding the roots of this criticism is equally important for changing processes. As the world has turned into a globalized, truly more diverse entity, the existing multilateral approaches are not sufficient and prove to be non-conform in a world in transition.

Yet, in a world in transition, the traditional multilateral order is criticized.

Civil Society has proven to be a key partner in multilateral negotiations with the UN

Numerous multilateral innovations have already clearly demonstrated that new approaches, involving various stakeholders from civil society, NGOs, science and others, can have a significant impact. Peacekeeping, for example, was not actively envisioned in the UN Charter and now poses one of the core tasks of the UN. Most significantly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the most inclusive UN negotiations in history. The [My World Survey 2030](#) had reached over 400.000 people in the UN countries, disclosing some powerful common nominators across national borders that were essential for the SDG negotiations. And yet, there are more success stories to witness as part of the collaboration power between representatives from civil society, namely the Paris Climate Agreement and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran Deal.

SDGs, Paris Climate Agreement, Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) were all results of successful collaboration with civil society.

Modernizing the United Nations and its role is essential

It was furthermore highlighted that reforming the UN system's structures is crucial to avoid its further erosion. Improvements would be imperative in order to keep up the values and commitment to cooperative action at a global level that the UN has been representing for 75 years.

A reform of the United Nations in order to adapt to the current developments is not optional.

UN Secretary General António Guterres and his leadership reaffirmed their commitment to modernize the UN in all respects and to adapt its structures to a new era of multilateral collaboration. The team envisions the UN as a platform for stimulating collective action that multiple stakeholders might take in order to tackle today's global challenges.

New ways of multilateral collaboration: the IRC as one best practice example

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) works with governments and other actors to tackle the conditions that fuel impunity. This includes advocating for the rights of displaced people, lobbying for improved protection for civilians and aid workers, and engaging the public on attitudes and perceptions around displacement and migration.

IRC shows how issues-related approaches can be handled efficiently.

Through work like this and across all of its programming, the IRC partners with governments, international institutions like UN agencies, the private sector, and civil society. All of these actors have different strengths, roles and capacities and help the IRC to fulfil their mission.

25 percent of the IRC's funding comes from the private sector and civil society, including foundations. Foundations can use their experience and expertise of investing in social outcomes to advise governments and intergovernmental funders. They are funding new approaches and ideation to inform and impact the program delivery. In 2015, for example, foundations were among the fastest and earliest supporters of the IRC's emergency work to support the enormous influx of refugees to Greece and the Balkans.

Foundations were among the fastest and earliest supporters of IRC's emergency work.

Building on the said, the following discussion disclosed further key aspects of successful multilateral cooperation:

Multilateral collaboration must embrace the new complexity of the challenges

David Miliband, President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), summarized that we would live in an 'Age of Impunity' in which the laws of war and humanitarian principles have become optional and war crimes, committed by governments and non-state actors, go unpunished. While there has never been a 'Golden Age' of international humanitarian law, we may observe the indiscriminate use of chemical weapons, shelling of hospitals and schools and besieging of communities – mostly in the absence of independent investigations and legal or political accountability.

Clearly, a 75-year old system also needs to change. It requires to reflect the global diversity and complexity, it must become more inclusive and it needs to modernize its methods along with a revived agenda. The system needs to furthermore open to new forms of multilateral action.

The multilateral system as such requires an overhaul – not just single institutions.

Foundations pose a central hub for combined efforts and knowledge sharing

Foundations are a powerful element in international civil society, linking governments, businesses, institutional funders, policy and research actors, and organizations of every shape and size, from large NGOs like the IRC to local grassroots initiatives. The way they are structured allows them to respond to issues more timely, agile and creatively. Foundations' positively disruptive manner puts them in a unique position. They not only gather various entities, but additionally enable knowledge transfer on experiences and best practice between the constituents, both vertically and horizontally.

The power, speed and impact of foundations cannot be excelled.

Foundations can also be important partners in working with NGOs and governments to shape the policy environment that affects the lives of refugees and displaced populations. Moreover, they can help to promote wider agendas around best practice in service delivery and accountability.

Gavi or the Global Fund provide evidence on the undisputable capability of foundations.

This multi-stakeholder approach has led to new institutional platforms like the Vaccine Alliance Gavi or the Global Fund. Both turned out to be decisive elements in stabilizing the global health system and disclosed various important lessons to learn from for the tasks to come.

Philanthropy remains elementary for multilateral successes

Soon after the determination of the SDGs, there has also been an aggressive backlash against civil society participation in UN processes, and clamping down on smaller countries in negotiations.

Philanthropy can be a leader in this fight, the audience concluded, whether it would be through its financial investments or voice or both. Many of the multilateral successes of the last generation involved sustained, catalytic and prescient investments from philanthropists. Numerous of the innovations we know and refer to today were initially shaped and facilitated by philanthropic institutions. And this engagement is needed today more than ever.

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Conclusion

Participants of the lunch discussion concluded that when reimagining the multilateral system and its suitability for global action, *relevance* and *urgency* are the two matters to consider in the first place. The SDGs provide a great exemplary structure we can use to effectively combat many of the major current and upcoming challenges. The increased issue-oriented collaboration with other non-state actors for greater clout is essential in this regard.

Future traits of multilateralism must reflect relevance and urgency.

However, security concerns and related issues continue to play a decisive role in global governance: As long as countries have nuclear weapons and military power at their disposal, top-down cooperation must not be neglected while working on the softer side of the development arena. Working with politically influential member states thus remains as crucial for foundations' work as the bottom-up approach of inclusive multilateral approaches like the SDGs.

Top-down and bottom-up work must equally be considered.

Moreover, foundations provide the 'soft power' that is needed today more than ever. They bring together various relevant stakeholders to amplify the power of impact and allow for the crucial knowledge sharing needed. Participants and GPI strongly believe that exchanging data, best practices, and ideas for innovations and reforms remain important drivers to further develop the system. The dialogue has to be continued intensely in order to find common solutions for the pressing challenges multilateralism is facing.

The 'soft power' of foundations is needed to balance all efforts.

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