

# THE MULTILATERALISM WE NEED

Statement of the EnergyPact Foundation, Vienna.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has crippled the world with sanitary, economic and social devastations, is a cruel but much needed and, if I may say, timely reminder on how dependent we are...on our interdependence !

In other words, without fully embracing the consequences of our structural interdependence, which implies a robust and deeply cooperative multilateral system, we will vulnerably depend on extraordinary circumstances for every aspect of our lives, instead of building the collective resilience that can protect us against global existential perils such as pandemics, climate change, cyberattacks, terrorism, systemic crises and emerging threats.

More than ever, the theme of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations must resonate in every human conscience with a sense of urgency and of vital imperative :

***“The Future We Want, the UN We Need:  
Reaffirming Our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism.”***

The EnergyPact Foundation has always advocated for strengthening dialogue and facilitating pragmatic convergences on key global governance issues between actors that have different and even antagonist views and goals but acknowledge that it is in their strategic interest to build mutually beneficial collective platforms for transformational action.

No one questions that multilateralism is in crisis today. But there is consensus that the speed of change in our world, the growing complexity of governance, the emergence of mega threats and the need to secure sustainable growth in a stabilised international arena rather than arena requires a rethinking and a re-energisation of our global institutional architecture.

The good news is that human creativity is unlimited and this applies of course to politics and diplomacy.

The first two decades of the XXIst century bear extraordinary potentials for the rejuvenation of the international order, and by “order” I don’t mean domination and power strategies, by “order” I mean direction, the organising principles that can maintain the global compass firmly oriented towards the Common Good.

First and foremost, we have witnessed the rise of Non-State-Actors, NGO’s, philanthropy, networks, that complement the role of the traditional State, are engines of mobilisation, and put multilateral diplomacy under a positive pressure.

A great example of this new reality was the negotiation of the Paris Climate Agreement, where Non-State-Actors played a major role, and the subsequent institutionalisation of the civil society-based Climate Action track in the UN climate negotiations and conferences.

The new multilateralism fit for the XXIst century will be a hybrid multilateralism with State and Non-State-Actors working hand in hand to advance our global agenda and make our globalised society a more humane world, and our planet a dignified habitat instead of a devastated ecosystem.

The very concept of sovereignty is evolving, with, for example, French President Emmanuel Macron promoting an agenda for a “European sovereignty”. The narrow definition of sovereignty in our classical political thinking is very much challenged by our ever expanding interdependence and by the growing intensity of global issues such as climate-related disasters or systemic financial crises and transnational security risks.

The regionalisation of international relations gives a lot of perspectives for the spread of experiences of shared sovereignty, following the successful example of the European Union, and that may lead to the recognition that in world affairs today even sovereignty must be addressed with a collective dimension, because in front of global challenges, a narrowly-defined and defended sovereignty is more a weakness than a force.

This erosion of the traditional sovereignty is even more evident in the cyberspace now that all human activities are immersed in the digital sphere. A major field of expansion and of progress for the XXIst century diplomacy would be the creation of a digital multilateralism, as we succeeded in fostering the well-established climate multilateralism.

Ultimately, we need to take fully into account the realities of our multipolar world. Inter-connected, interdependent and multiple, without hegemonic dominations as in the past. This is to say that multilateralism is not the continuation as such of the post World War II order, but, building on the values that supported it, it is a reinvention of international co-operation and co-development with a sense of universal empowerment, shared responsibility and tangible solidarity. Our increasingly diverse world needs a multipolar multilateralism.

Our perils are opportunities of innovation and progress. Let's transform our challenges into creative energy.

We must and we can reinvent the multilateralism we need.

Roger Bertozzi  
Vice-President  
EnergyPact Foundation