



UN80

Initiative Dialogues

Building our Future Together



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As part of the UN80, the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Chile, the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Institute of International Studies of the University of Chile—with the support of the Embassadors of Costa Rica and Morocco in Chile—organized two dialogues on challenges and opportunities for the UN reform.

The dialogues generated strategic and multisectoral reflections on the pillars of the UN, with the aim of strengthening the contributions of both Chile and other countries and organizations participating in the activity to the global discussion on the future of the multilateral system that will be part of the debates of the UN General Assembly next September.

The dialogues were divided into two main themes and held under the Chatham House Rule:

1. Peace, Security, and Humanitarian Action (Thursday, August 21)
2. Sustainable Development and Human Rights (Tuesday, August 26)

In both sessions, a dynamic discussion took place involving government, academia, civil society, the private sector, the diplomatic community, and the UN system in Chile, as well as former foreign ministers and former representatives of Chile to the UN.

MAIN ISSUES ADDRESSED

I. The United Nations is facing multiple crisis

The UN system is undergoing a crisis in three main dimensions: financing, legitimacy, and effectiveness. A lack of resources limits its functioning, while its limited ability to respond to conflicts—such as Gaza, Ukraine, or Sudan/South Sudan—reinforces the perception of ineffectiveness. Added to this is a growing questioning and critics of the multilateral system and a clear disconnection from citizens, who perceive the UN as distant and unable to impact on daily life.

The meeting raised that the UN legitimacy crisis should be seen in light with a wider global narrative discrediting democratic institutions and the rule of law, which is eroding the trust of citizens at national and international levels.

On one hand, this deterioration in trust and the critical narratives is associated with the inability to address longstanding structural issues. On the other hand, it is argued that this crisis reflects—paraphrasing U.S. philosopher Susan Neiman—a loss of the sense of shame among individuals and actors who no longer believe in international institutions. A few years ago, public statements against human rights would have been unthinkable and met with public rejection by some leaders; today, however, such claims are increasingly normalized and even deemed acceptable in certain contexts, given the perception of inaction and weakened legitimacy of the system.

Considering this scenario, participants emphasized the urgent need to modernize multilateralism and reset the

value of the UN's principles. Proposals included strengthening the connection between national and international conversations, expanding civil society participation, and educating citizens on the concrete benefits of multilateralism, with a focus on intergenerational justice. Participants also noted the need to rethink incentive mechanisms to foster cooperation without undermining the UN's essential values. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda were identified as an unavoidable roadmap to guide reform, though their pressing timeframe requires urgent and coordinated action. Finally, emphasis was placed on multidimensional, multi-stakeholder work to promote reform through constructive dialogue.

II. Importance of the UN System for Small Countries

Speakers agreed on the importance of multilateralism for small states, recalling that they joined the system at its founding in search of protection and with a deep commitment to its values and principles. In this sense, the current crisis has particularly significant consequences for those states that trusted the system to safeguard them through common rules. This prompted reflection on the role that regional organizations can play. Some participants argued that Latin America has yet to fully grasp its place in the international arena or strengthen its role as a continent committed to peacebuilding.



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III. New Actors and Innovation

Given the legitimacy crisis and the disconnection and lack of knowledge among citizens about the UN's work, a key challenge is to bring in new actors, energize discussions, and increase the visibility of the system's efforts. The inclusion of these actors is particularly relevant, as civil society perceives that it is often arriving too late to debate and decision-making processes.

IV. Human Rights and the Environment

Several participants noted the current lack of consensus around certain multilateral issues, in sharp contrast with the level of agreement reached that allowed adopting the 2030 Agenda a decade ago. The current polarized context brings differences more prominently, creating challenges in negotiating common definitions. This is particularly evident on human rights and climate change discussions as well as the right to development,

Civil society stressed that human rights are a sensitive topic of debate on social media, where disinformation plays a major role. The discussion therefore focused on how to raise awareness through constructive dialogues. In this regard, participants emphasized the need for consistency between international commitments and national practices, pointing specifically to Chile's environmental challenges.

It was suggested that UN headquarters in New York and Geneva coordinate more closely on human rights to strengthen this pillar, incorporating political components into the discussion. Latin America's capacities to promote such dialogues were also highlighted, with Chile, Mexico, and Costa Rica cited as positive examples.

V. Emergence of New Technologies

Participants discussed digital transformation and its consequences. On one hand, disinformation and fake news were identified as challenges for human rights, peace and security debates, and democracy, given the use of digital tools in global delegitimization campaigns. On the other hand, artificial intelligence was presented as a potential tool to contribute to reform processes, strengthen interdisciplinary work, and amplify the narrative of multilateralism.

VI. Development and Financing

Reference was made to the economic and social pillar and to the functions of ECOSOC. It was noted that in addition of the Peace and Security mandates, the social mandate in the UN Charter was, and still is, core to the work of the UN system (particularly specialized agencies).

In economic matters, it was acknowledged that the UN's mandate is limited as is often overshadowed by the influence of other forums and institutions (e.g., Bretton Woods institutions). Participants highlighted the recent Seville Conference as a starting point for future discussions on the financing for development with some global consensus on the need to continue providing ODA while enhancing financing from private sector to address the sustainable development agenda or the use of innovative financing mechanisms. The COP30 at the end of 2025 was seen as an opportunity to enhance public-private partnerships using the NDCs as a vehicle as well as raising the voice and the leadership of the LAC countries. The current NDCs for Chile were cited as an interesting opportunity to enhance businesses while embracing sustainability. Within this framework, the key question raised was how to reconcile sustainable development with economic growth, while raising public awareness of its impacts. One proposed approach was to define minimum acceptable standards.



Attendees of the first dialogue of the UN80 initiative Building the Future Together, focused on peace, security, and humanitarian action.



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VII. Possible Scenarios and Future Prospects

Two possible scenarios were raised: (1) that no reform will take place due to a lack of consensus on fundamental issues and/or that it will be limited to administrative or budgetary aspects only, or (2) that changes will take place, raising questions about how small and medium-sized countries would act and what role they might play.

It was observed that Latin America has struggled to present unified positions on key issues reducing its influence—such as Venezuela or Ukraine—raising doubts about its ability to integrate and adopt joint stances. As a result, participants proposed forming ad hoc coalitions to influence discussions, starting with reflections on what should be defended and preserved.

The challenge, they argued, is to achieve agreements amidst divergence, recognizing that some cases strain principles and that it is necessary to build trust and synergies without falling into fragmentation. Participants also underscored the importance of recalling the UN system's past achievements without becoming trapped in them, recognizing that the model that delivered those successes is not the one required for the XXI century. Finally, concerns were expressed on the UN80 happening in the last year of Secretary-General Gutierrez. The complexities of the international



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scenario and the pathways of reform create a particularly challenging context for a new Secretary General and his/her ability to steer change. The meetings had a final call for action from different areas of society in relation to the UN that the XXI century requires not restricting the conversation to Member States, but also actively including Universities, Youth, Civil society and private sector.