

From: Gavin Oldham, OBE

To: António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations

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Dear Mr. Guterres,

National elections will feature strongly in 2024, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States, and domestic politics will see publication of a wide range of domestic manifestos.

However, the world urgently needs a global manifesto to cope with the triad of global challenges: conflict, climate change and the need for participation for all in order to tackle wealth inequality. I am therefore setting out an outline summary for such a global manifesto, with a number of suggestions for raising the role and democratic legitimacy of the United Nations in ways that prioritise peace, harmony, freedom and a fair standard of living for people across the world, from all walks of life.

After checking through government departmental responsibilities here in the United Kingdom, there appear to be only two areas – ‘Levelling-up’ (Housing and Communities) and Transport – which are unaffected by these proposals, due to their solely domestic perspectives.

A transition to global governance is urgently required to cope with the inadequacy of national controls, particularly in these three challenge areas. They all require a long-term dimension **unavailable from short-term national electoral cycles** or which, in the case of dictatorial autocracies, is not always welcome. We need to **increase democratic legitimacy for United Nations authority**, thereby providing long-term review, oversight and an approval process for national decision-taking.

This democratic legitimacy can be achieved over the years ahead by countries choosing to have their UN representatives elected, not appointed, and to do so on a cycle which can be varied and continuous throughout different countries. In other words, it would not encourage a global party system to develop based on coterminous elections, but it would allow nations to establish their own democratic cycles for choosing their representatives. The gradually increasing proportion of elected representatives would soon establish respect and authority, in contrast with officials appointed by national governments.

Here are some policies which could then be introduced to tackle those three key challenge areas:

Conflict and international tension

This particularly calls for global solutions to tackle areas which involve national departments of defence, justice and foreign affairs. The global solutions would be based on a new generosity in terms of acceptance of different styles of national governance, cultures and religions (in which the global media could also play a central role). This is particularly because we would be looking for a new respect for others, no matter how different they are. The approach would need to embrace concepts such as restorative justice, where South Africa provided us with such an important lead and working example in their transition from apartheid.

The United Nations therefore needs to establish an international police force (IPF) and to grow the global role of UN peace-keeping. The IPF would not only link closely with its national counterparts, but it would also be called into action when issues such as the recent Hamas atrocities occur. Nations would pledge not to take military action while the IPF brought such

criminals to justice within the context of international law, thereby holding back from applying the kind of unbridled revenge that we have seen in the Middle East over the past three months.

Meanwhile, the UN's improved capacity to respond to global events would also significantly help with reaction to **cope with disasters** such as the Turkish earthquake a year ago.

Climate change and the Environment

The COP 28 summit narrowly escaped being a full-scale exercise in green-washing, but **we still have a long way to go** to achieve the objective of limiting global temperature rise above pre-industrial levels to anywhere near that 1.5° limit. This challenge area involves both energy and health as well as the environment, and it needs to address steps necessary for mitigation in addition to tackling global warming itself. This means, for example, that those areas which can be protected against sea-level rise, such as countries surrounding the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Baltic, would see **barrier plans put in place for their coastal protection**.

International agreement on renewable energy investment and pricing also needs urgent attention in order to ensure that the benefits and motivation for conversion flow through to households and are not simply swallowed up by private equity and giant corporations.

Migration is a major consequence of both international conflict and climate change. The principle of respect for others, however different they may be, needs to encourage not only a new acceptance of migration but also a willingness to help in tackling the difficult conditions for the countries they are leaving.

Meanwhile, the significant steps forward in tackling malaria and the development of genetic medicines will help to address many of the health implications of climate change. However, the huge increase in loneliness and mental health, which frequently accompanies those whose families are split by migration, also needs recognition and action from a global perspective.

This whole challenge area of climate change, the environment and health are already seeing much focus from global co-operation, but there is no doubt that long-term review from democratic global governance would greatly help move them forwards.

The need for participation for all

Wealth inequality and the denial of opportunity for young people to achieve their potential affects many areas of government: including economic control (treasury), business and trade, work and pensions, education, international development and public services such as health and social care.

It's too large an area in which to do justice in this summary, but there are some principles which I would like to set down. Here are some of those key principles, which are also discussed in more detail in the **Share Alliance website**, which describes research underway at Cambridge University seeking to find a more egalitarian approach to capitalism:

- Disintermediation: people from all walks of life and all geographical regions should be provided the opportunity to control their own lives to the extent that they wish, without being subject to excess management from either national government or financial/other business corporations;
- Ownership and responsibility: there should be recognition that all are entitled to share participation in ownership, particularly in those areas where they have meaningful involvement as customers or users, and that a **shared sense of responsibility** will derive from that participation;

- The human life cycle: people from all walks of life should be encouraged to be entrepreneurial and to achieve their potential in adult life, and the fact that **material assets are left behind after death should be taken as the opportunity to re-balance** for the benefit of new, disadvantaged generations.

Some of the policy implications which would arise from these principles are:

- The need to reduce the extent to which we **discount the future, placing much greater focus on both young people and the environment**;
- The need to **democratise the ownership** of, rather than over-regulate, tech giants and generative artificial intelligence, rather than allowing employment to be replaced by subservient welfare systems such as universal basic income;
- Creating the environment for international inter-generational rebalancing through the provision of starter capital accounts and **incentivised learning**, funded by both national government hypothecation of inheritance taxes and philanthropic contributions;
- Encouraging **entrepreneurship among younger generations**;
- Encouraging a **reduction in the reliance on state monopolies**, for example in the field of health provision, and establishing the principle that wealthy older folk should pay for what they use rather than passing the cost on to younger generations;
- Restraining the **stranglehold of debt** on both national governments and business, and introducing global standards for financial regulation.

These are just a few of the issues which could significantly reduce the polarisation of wealth across the world, and where the long-term focus from an empowered United Nations could do much to raise prospects for billions of people.

All of these, however, rely on leadership – and that's a challenge too.

It seems difficult to foster the emergence of people who are not only both professional and inspiring, but also who are prepared to put long-term strategy in front of short-term opportunism; and, beyond the professional and in the inspiring, there needs also to be a further calling: a recognition of the value of servant leadership, and how that relies on respect for others, however different they may be.

I therefore hope that, in the wake of what has been a fairly devastating series of experiences over the past year, we can encourage such people to come forward and lead the world, and not just their own nations.

Please do let me know if you or your colleagues would be interested to pursue any of these ideas further.

With best wishes

Gavin Oldham OBE