

META UN presents:

The State of Multilateralism

The multilateral systems that (re)emerged after the Second World War, and which evolved in a functionally divided yet interlocked global governance matrix to tackle everything from peace and conflict resolution, human rights and global health, via biodiversity, climate change and trade to the standardisation and collection of data in an endless array of fields, is apparently in crisis.

This is both the result of longstanding developments and systemic imbalances, and due to new, disruptive tensions in the international system. This means that the United Nations, along with several other longstanding international organizations, is under unprecedented pressure, with deep-seated conflicts among its member states, increasing budget constraints, and a receding investment in the procedures, policies and rules of multilateral cooperation and global governance among key actors. For the United Nations as such, the problem seems to be moving from disagreement with policy priorities within the organization, to disengagement with the UN as an organization.

This is emphatically not true, however, if we take a global contemporary and historically more nuanced view of what the UN was and where it stands now. The UN has always been an arena for cross-ideological and political contestations *and* cooperation and never solely an ‘instrument’ for a purely western or liberal “rules-based order”. Measuring the UN against such a yardstick would therefore miss the point. In a global perspective, the UN has been an arena to leverage the influence of what some term “the Global South”. Despite deep disappointments and the institutional imbalance of the UN (particularly prevalent in the UN Security Council), therefore, many member states - spanning the east, west, north and south - are urgently concerned with institutional reforms and organizational strengthening. Moreover, the decentered, diverse and deeply institutionalized nature of the UN’s multilateralism developed over the last century (including the League of Nations) increases its resilience in times of crisis.

This new series of *Roundtables*, entitled ***The State of Multilateralism***, seeks to bring together the deep desire in academia, in civil society and within the UN itself, to seize this moment to create a dialogue that is deeper than before. There is a need to mobilize the vast repositories of critical knowledge that are available among scholars, to listen to the experiences and institutional know-how of officials from international organizations, and to engage with civil society and other stakeholders in a global manner to (a) understand the historical roots and trajectories of multilateralism; (b) take stock of the current challenges *and* opportunities of multilateralism; and (c) to boldly and creatively discuss future avenues of multilateral collaboration.

With this in mind, the first *The State of Multilateralism* roundtable organized by META-UN and partners, entitled “Multilateralism: A global view”, seeks to start this necessary conversation by placing the United Nations within the broader infrastructure of multilateralisms – temporally, geographically and functionally.

META UN presents:

The State of Multilateralism
“Multilateralism: A global view”

Palais des Nations, UN Geneva Library and Archives, 27 January 2026

11:45-13:00 – Lunch

Introductory Remarks:

Charlotte Lindberg Warakaulle (Director of Library and Archives, UN Geneva)

Roundtable – Session 1: The state of multilateralism (13:15-15:00)

Chair: Marine Pierre (University of Copenhagen)

Alanna O'Malley (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

The Global South and the UN: a long historical gaze

Jussi Hanhimäki (Graduate Institute)

The eclipse of American multilateralism? A historical perspective

Steen Rynning (University of Southern Denmark / DIAS)

Whither NATO? NATO's many faces and the current situation

Lynda Chinenye Iroulo (Georgetown University)

The African Union – regionally and globally

15:00-15:50 – Coffee and Cake

Roundtable – Session 2: The future of multilateralism (16:00-17:45)

Chair: Morten Rasmussen (University of Copenhagen)

Corinne Momal-Vanian (Executive Director, Kofi Annan Foundation)

What is the United Nations now? Scenarios ahead

Anna Ayuso Pozo (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

Latin American Perspectives on Multipolar Multilateralism

Marlene Wind (University of Copenhagen)

The EU – what kind of geopolitical actor has it been and what is it becoming?

Toni Sandell (Finnish OSCE Chairpersonship 2025)

Dialogue for what? The state and possible futures of the OSCE

18:30-20:00 – Drinks reception

This event is organized by [META-UN](#) in partnership with [CHIOS](#), [HUM:Global](#), [INNER LEAGUE](#) (ERC Consolidator Project)

