

CONTEXT NOTE

Global Alliances for Sustainability

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This webinar is part of a research on the re-orientation of multilateralism. How the deterioration in the multilateral scenario - trust, negotiations and institutions - and changed conditions of globalization are altering the regulatory and policy scenario of the global economy. We focus on three sectors for which regulation and agreement is paramount: trade, digital economy and sustainability. The object of our reflection is what are the directions and possible basis upon which to re-direct multilateral politics.

Our work is based on a set of premises. Firstly, that the political framework of multilateralism is frail and more than ever necessary. Problems stem from: institutional mandates which are weak, the fact that the coalition of power which has shaped this framework is no longer representative of global reality, and the changed direction of economic development and growth factors upon which the Bretton Woods economic assumptions were based. Furthermore, the economic operational assumption that there is a positive relationship between global investments and regulation - efficiency and resilience - which moved the globalization of the 90's is no longer tenable, and finally and no less relevant, the capacity of the system to accommodate change within the existing paradigm is low.

The flaws of the system are not new. Failures are a result of a long process of transformation, notably of the shifts in the geography of power and the

advent of a post hegemonic world which led to fragmentation of interests and perceptions of possible collective regulations for world problems. The consecutive crisis of the 21 century - 2008 financial crisis, US-China conflict and covid-19 - gave a fast forward to these political processes. The various crisis made evident the fault lines of the system but at the same time highlighted the importance of an efficient multilateral policy environment for a world where global public goods and dreads have major importance.

At present, all participants agree on the need for reforms but the options on the table are sparse and fragmented. The idea circulating of a two tier process for multilateral reform with one core group of selected democracies or like-minded countries which could share regulations leaving unlike-minded countries outside of this circle, reduced to sharing low level functionalities of the multilateral system, is a very poor second to the system which operated in the past. It does not address such central issues as the possibility of devising a new understanding for balancing interest and rules, a tenant central for multilateral politics. Secondly, it fails to ensure the capacity of the system to accommodate global diversity, a trait which will endure in the international system which is more plural than ever in the past, and in this context create understandings which can lead to shared norms and international institutional mandates which are binding and include widely acceptable instances of conflict resolution.

The case for Sustainability

In contrast to trade and digital regulation multilateral, solutions for sustainability and more precisely a global alliance around sustainable goals seems to have a set of advantages. Notwithstanding many disappointments and failures in climate negotiations, the grounds for arriving at multilateral agreements for sustainability stands out.

Firstly, climate change and sustainable development are the most inclusive ongoing global concern. Discussions do not exclude China or are fragmented by ideological or geopolitical divides. Although the US has, for now, withdrawn from negotiations, the sustainability cause is shared by large portions of the US civil society which have instituted binding regulatory practices at state and some at the federal level. The cause of sustainability is not shaped or depends on hegemonic positions or center-periphery political considerations and differences amongst players are not mainly derived from economic power positions.

Moreover, sustainable policies have built a policy track record and are science and evidence-based policies. They have been incorporated as technological, industrial and financial national policy objectives by most countries and there is a global competition for technological solutions for the non-fossil energy transition. Industry and finance are becoming principal stakeholders in the movement towards a sustainable green economy and the traditional party system has incorporated the platform in electoral competition.

It is in this context that we believe that the cause for sustainability can have important lessons for the reorientation and reorganization of multilateral politics, and its institutional framework, and a set of issues gain special relevance:

1 How to address the difficulties of an international cooperation system that has repeated failures and constantly experiences lack of trust? Is it possible to move beyond the mandatory procedures to face new stakeholders' ambition and accelerate the transformation?

2 There is a global debate about a recovery based on a new green deal - some also add digital and inclusive. How can Latin American countries - in particular Brazil - get engaged in this debate? How distant are Brazil and LAC from building/achieving a (new) Green Deal and what should the public and private sectors be providing in order to enable it?

3 The mission-oriented approach to innovation galvanized hearts and minds in many places around the world. Furthermore, there is an ongoing international debate about the global commons - polar regions, global oceans, outer space, atmosphere and internet. Should a mission-oriented approach be adopted to face the global commons agenda and can it be employed to promote the sustainable development of the Amazon region?

4 The Global South is an appeal, an angle, a framework and a condition that demand deeper elaboration. Does talking the green economy from a Green Global South perspective make sense? Can these countries pursue a trajectory distinct from the one charted by the North? Should the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) Climate Initiative be seen as a driver to push forward the proposal of a Green Global South?

International Politics Reorientation of Multilateralism

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