



**INTERACTION  
COUNCIL**

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InterAction Council

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Final Communiqué

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The InterAction Council held its 33rd Annual Plenary Meeting in 2016 in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> March. The Council welcomed three expert reports on critical topics entitled, “New Realities for Global Health Security,” “Bringing Peace and Security to a Divided World: Opportunities and Challenges,” and “The World Economy and the Future of Work.”

The world today is a less secure and less tolerant place than it was only a few years ago. In his *Present State of the World* address to the Council, Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president of Nigeria, noted a variety of layered risks to security and stability: some of them old ones such as the existence of nuclear arms, some of them new ones such as the youth surge.

The cascading risks we face are interrelated and together they create layered challenges for humanity and the planet that are more difficult to resolve. A response can be found in what made humanity survive and thrive in the first place: ingenuity and common solutions based in solidarity. Effective responses require urgent cooperative action among nations, the private sector, and international agencies.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address the way all dimensions of life on this planet shape humanity and the planet. Its 17 goals—including addressing poverty, climate change, access to water, responsible production and consumption, peace and justice, and gender equality—are all interrelated and interdependent. In Wales, sustainable development was brought to a local level through the *Well-Being of Future Generations Act of 2015*, which requires the policy-makers of today to assess all their actions against their effects on the world tomorrow.

### **The risk of nuclear weapons and a nuclear accident**

Over the years, the InterAction Council has sought to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons by advancing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaties (CTBT). The most complete and comprehensive statement was its 2010 *Hiroshima Declaration: A Plea for Zero Nuclear Weapons*. It has been and remains a goal of the InterAction Council to prevent an increase in the number of nuclear states. However, 95 per cent of all nuclear weapons belong to the United States and Russia. Recognizing the real risk of a mistaken launch and tragic accident, the Council calls for a drastic re-examination of the size of nuclear arsenals and why they are kept.

As President Obasanjo noted in his speech, the recent nuclear agreement with Iran is a ray of hope in stopping horizontal nuclear proliferation, but vertical proliferation, expanding the range and destructive ability of these horrendous weapons, continues apace.

## **Recommendations**

1. Reduction of nuclear stockpiles must be the goal of states. Counter-productive programs to modernize nuclear weapons must be abandoned and arms control negotiations must be pursued not only to reduce the level of existing weapons, but also to put in place measures against the production of new ones.
2. The IAEA and other agencies involved in the monitoring and verification of nuclear resources should be better supported through additional financial and human resources so they can adequately complete their missions.
3. The Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty should be adopted and implemented.
4. Nuclear states should consider following the lead of China and remove warheads from missiles to prevent accidental and catastrophic launches. All states should de-alert their nuclear weapons and cease “launch on warning” policies.
5. States should immediately agree to the doctrine of “no first use” as outlined in the InterAction Council’s 2010 *Hiroshima Declaration*.
6. NATO-Russia Council meetings should recommence immediately to foster positive dialogue about nuclear non-proliferation and other issues of geopolitical importance.

## **Lack of universal health systems present a serious risk to humanity**

The health of humanity depends on the overall health of our planet. There are fifty emerging diseases born from the interaction between humans, animals, and nature. The probability of a pandemic outbreak with serious consequences is increased by population increase, change in food and agriculture systems, and evolving land use. The threat from infectious disease is further exacerbated by the overuse of antibiotics, which results in antimicrobial resistance. In the future, our medications may not be able to treat mundane infections that today are still treatable.

Today, the world is reminded of the effects of epidemics with the rapidly spreading Zika virus, currently affecting 26 countries in South and Latin America and declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO). Pandemics can rapidly result in millions of deaths and cause major social, economic, and political disruption. It is estimated that pandemics can cause a loss of up to US\$60 billion per year. Conversely, health systems all over the world could be upgraded to better respond to these crises if states and the international community would agree to spend US\$4.5 billion annually on pandemic preparedness - just one dollar per person.

Preparedness to pandemics also relies on full, universal implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR). The IHR define the rights and obligations of countries to report

certain disease outbreaks and public health events, and establish procedures that the WHO must follow in its work to uphold global public health security. Currently, the IHR have not been fully implemented in many states due to lack of understanding of the IHR or their benefit, or not having the means or capacities to implement them.

The manifold health risks underline the need for a comprehensive approach to health. Global health impacts security, foreign policy, economic, and development challenges. Therefore, it is a global public good that requires collective action. However, health is not necessarily a priority when resources are dispensed. This reluctance to prioritize global health is demonstrated by management gaps: a political gap, a financial gap, and a gap in implementation, response, and accountability. This needs to change by placing global health on the agenda of heads of state and government, and by engaging and strengthening interagency response and cooperation on health issues.

Access to health services in conflict situations is currently at higher risk than before and must be addressed as a matter of urgency. There has been an increasing amount of attacks on medical facilities in armed conflicts – a grave violation of international humanitarian law. Further, the application of counter-terrorism legislation to conflict situations criminalizes providing health services and medication to groups such as Isis/Daesh. In addition to respecting the right to health in conflict situations, health should be part of peace building.

The SDGs provide a framework for a comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach to health: good health and well-being is one of the SDGs, but all SDGs are related to health in one way or another. The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission report on planetary health called for such a wider concept of safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch.

## **Recommendations**

1. States must define investing in preparedness for global health emergencies as an issue of national and global security.
2. States must build stronger national health systems, infrastructure, and processes built to a common standard set and regularly assessed, as envisaged by the IHR.
3. As a matter of urgency, states and international organizations should prioritize the development of new diagnostics for Zika virus infection to facilitate surveillance and control measures, and especially the management of pregnancy.
4. States, international organizations and the private sector should intensify research and development efforts for Zika virus vaccines and therapeutics in the medium term.
5. Recognize the impact of conflicts, failed states and displacement on global health and recommend the WHO to revisit its “Health as a Bridge to Peace” initiative.

6. All states must fully respect international humanitarian law and refrain from targeting hospitals and schools – and perpetrators must be held accountable. Technical means to help protect health facilities should be developed.
7. Public health has to be seen in the larger context of planetary health. Only through full implementation at the national level of the UN's *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* can public and planetary health be assured.
8. Engage with communities to consider adopting similar national, regional, and local approaches as the *Well-Being of Future Generations Act* in Wales.

### **Risks to International Peace and Security in the Middle East**

The global community is hopeful that the Iran nuclear proliferation accords will remain in place. At the same time, the provisions of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – including financial and technical resources – need to be effectively implemented if Iran is to respect its provisions and the sanctions remain removed.

However, it is unlikely that the Iran nuclear proliferation accords will change the dynamics of the region in the short term. The accords will reduce tensions and welcome Iran into the community of nations, but existing constraints upon Iran remain.

A humanitarian crisis is unfolding before the world's eyes as more than 20 per cent of Syria's total population has fled their homes for neighbouring countries, which, among other things, do not have enough water to ensure the health and safety of these refugees. It is an incredible thought that a problem such as water access could exist in the 21st century. The refugees are fleeing a very violent conflict. There will be no political solution until there is a total cessation of violence in Syria.

Unfortunately, Isis/Daesh driven terrorism has affected regions all over the world. The Paris and San Bernardino (United States) attacks in 2015 demonstrate that the problem is not contained to the Middle East. Isis/Daesh are lying to their recruits; they are not protecting Islam or traditionally Islamic lands. Rather, they are contributing to Islamophobia.

Many religious and political leaders are similarly exploiting religious divides for their own purposes. The InterAction Council's *Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities* calls on political leaders to not use inflammatory speech as part of a populist strategy to achieve isolated political gains. Such tactics only exacerbate conflict. It is something that has to stop.

## **Recommendations**

1. Massive infrastructure investment and support are required for Jordan and its neighbouring countries, which have been disproportionately bearing the burdens associated with the Syrian refugee crisis.
2. States should resettle and give international protection to those fleeing violence by Isis/Daesh and ensure the sufficient funding of the United Nations Refugee Agency, and, in particular, the Syria Regional Refugee Response.
3. The international community should continue to monitor implementation of the JCPOA and ensure that sanction relief is also implemented.
4. Radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations should be combated through comprehensive programs that include such elements as education and employment.
5. An unconditional, time-limited, and comprehensive ceasefire to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria should immediately be negotiated and implemented.
6. The United Nations Security Council is urged to refer the situations in Syria and Iraq to the International Criminal Court, in order to hold accountable those responsible for international crimes and ensure justice, truth, and reparations for victims.
7. Should the United Nations Security Council fail to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC, states are urged to apply universal jurisdiction to ensure justice for these crimes.
8. All states should ratify and implement the Arms Trade Treaty and take urgent steps to curb future arms proliferation in Iraq and Syria.

## **The risk of youth unemployment**

Worldwide, over 40 per cent of capable youth are either unemployed or living in poverty while working for very low wages, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO's 2015 *Global Employment Trends for Youth* report called for immediate action in creating decent jobs. The ILO Youth Employment Programme provides assistance to countries in developing coherent and coordinated interventions on youth employment.

The OECD Employment Outlook of 2015 provides an in-depth review of recent labour market trends and short-term prospects in OECD countries. The OECD Action Plan for Youth sets out a comprehensive range of measures that OECD Member countries have committed to take to tackle the current situation of high youth unemployment and underemployment.

Around the world, labour markets are undergoing changes that make many people feel insecure about their futures, as there is less of a sense that family incomes will be guaranteed and that skill sets will remain relevant. Work no longer equals wealth. We are in a period of time in which the world economy is evolving through massive structural change driven by demographics and technology changes. To meet these challenges will require political leadership of a higher order in vision and political will.

### **Recommendations**

1. The InterAction Council enthusiastically supports the UN's Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and calls on all states, businesses, and civil society to support the initiative since youth employment is a crisis that must be addressed immediately.
2. Global institutions and states must reconsider how capital is allocated to necessary infrastructure projects in the developing world.
3. Given the impact of technological change on employment, states must provide the displaced with re-training, a social safety net, and recognition that the process of creative destruction sometimes harms the innocent.
4. Universities should regularly engage policy-makers and businesses to ensure that students are developing the skills they need to be employable. Universities should remain connected to the private sector and make engagement with companies an essential part of a university education.

## **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

### **InterAction Council Members**

1. The Rt. Hon. Jean **Chrétien**, Co-Chairman (former Prime Minister), Canada
2. H.E. Mr. Olusegun **Obasanjo**, Co-Chairman (former President), Nigeria
3. H.E. Mr. Bertie **Ahern** (former Prime Minister), Ireland
4. H.E. Tun Abdullah Ahmad **Badawi** (former Prime Minister), Malaysia
5. The Rt. Hon. James **Bolger** (former Prime Minister), New Zealand
6. H.E. Dr. Gro Harlem **Brundtland** (former Prime Minister), Norway
7. H.E. Dr. Abdel Salam **Majali** (former Prime Minister), Jordan
8. H.E. Mr. Péter **Medgyessy** (former Prime Minister), Hungary
9. The Rt. Hon. Sir James **Mitchell** (former Prime Minister), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
10. H.E. Mr. Benjamin **Mkapa** (former President), Tanzania
11. H.E. Mr. Andrés **Pastrana** (former President), Colombia
12. H.E. Mr. Konstantinos **Simitis** (former Prime Minister), Greece
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15. H.E. Mr. Viktor **Yushchenko** (former President), Ukraine
16. H.E. Dr. Viktor **Zubkov** (former Prime Minister), Russia

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17. Mr. Franco **Frattini**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (Italy)
18. H.E. Mr. Sadiq **Al-Mahdi** (former Prime Minister), Sudan
19. Dr. Ismail **Serageldin**, Co-Chair, Nizami Ganjavi International Center
20. H.E. Mr. Petar **Stoyanov** (former President), Bulgaria
21. H.E. Mr. Boris **Tadić** (former President), Serbia

### **Secretary-General**

22. Dr. Thomas **Axworthy**, Distinguished Senior Fellow, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto (Canada)

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23. Mr. Bill F. **Weld**, former Governor of Massachusetts (U.S.A.)

### **Special Guests**

24. Prof. Robert **Austin**, Associate Professor, Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto (Canada)
25. Dr. Arne Olav **Brundtland**, Researcher and Specialist in Security Policies and “Nordic Balance” (Norway)
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30. Prof. Aira **Kalela**, Senior Advisor, Office of President Halonen (Finland)
31. Lt. Gen. Louis **Lillywhite**, Senior Research Fellow, Chatham House Centre for Global Health Security (U.K.)
32. Dr. Sawsan Abdul Salam **Majali**, Secretary General, Jordanian Higher Population Council (Jordan)
33. Dr. John Wyn **Owen**, Senior Global Health Advisor, InterAction Council; Chair, Health Protection Committee, Wales; Treasurer, Learned Society of Wales (U.K.)
34. Prof. The Hon. John **Polanyi**, Faculty Member and Nobel Laureate, Department of Chemistry, University of Toronto; Founding Chairman, Canadian Pugwash Group (Canada)
35. Mr. Bob **Sandford**, IAC Senior Water Advisor; EPCOR Chair of the Canadian Partnership Initiative in support of the United Nations Water for Life Decade (Canada)
36. Mrs. Androulla **Vassiliou**, former European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth (Cyprus)
37. Dr. Moneef **Zou’bi**, Director General, Islamic World Academy of Sciences (Jordan)

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