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Geneva Global Policy Briefs

International Geneva as a Laboratory of Agile Global Governance

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Executive Summary

► Globalisation and digitalisation transform the world at an unprecedented pace. The increasing importance of cross-border issues for both the private and public sectors calls for a renovated global governance architecture

► International Geneva's ecosystem provides an ideal breeding ground for developing new approaches to multilateral diplomacy, notably through innovative, agile, and multi-stakeholders platforms.

- *The views expressed in this article are the authors' and do not reflect the official position of the Swiss Government.*

General Context: Globalisation and Digitalisation

The world is going through a process of profound change. Global governance – the collective management of the planet – is today at a crossroads. Fundamental trends reshape the foundations of society worldwide. Globalisation, cross-border phenomena, and technological innovation are transforming the way we live and cooperate, and make countries increasingly interdependent. Government policies and international arrangements for collective decision-making need to keep pace with these evolutions. However, public and private institutions still operate in vertical and horizontal silos. Contemporary challenges are interconnected and call for new forms of cooperation and a renovated global governance architecture. As a result, international institutions and their stakeholders discuss and shape new governance models to ensure a smooth transition from the classical international order to a new multipolar and digital world. The international community needs to leverage existing arrangements and resources more efficiently. Switzerland, through its role as member and host State of numerous international organisations, contributes actively to finding new modalities for international cooperation.

Contemporary Cross-Border Challenges and the need for Global Governance

Over the course of the last decades, the increasingly free flow of persons, ideas, and assets generated growth and contributed to development through trade and exchanges. However, economic globalisation also deepened social inequalities and intensified the environmental crisis. In a globalised era, all aspects of human activities gain an international dimension and new types of actors, like giant tech companies or transnational political movements,

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emerge on the international stage. Existing legal and institutional frameworks are increasingly unable to address new business models and global value chains. Today's challenges, from climate change to other major cross-border issues such as global health, require the human society to cooperate within innovative institutional structures and towards new goals. In light of a growing scepticism towards multilateralism, the international community has to forge a new social contract with a view to shaping a common future for humankind.

The digital transformation has a disruptive potential that will affect society in its entirety and will restructure almost all aspects of our social, political, and economic lives. The convergence and progress of technologies is setting the stage for the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is "blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres" (Foreign Affairs, 2016). A broad range of opportunities and risks are associated with this development. Technological innovation may contribute positively to public goods in many areas, such as economic development, waste reduction, or the improvement of health care delivery. Technology can also generate negative effects: increased inequality, environmental disasters, or eroding trust in public institutions, that threaten the future of our economies and democracies. Important questions remain about how digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, will affect individuals, companies, or governments. Technology is nonetheless neutral: its effects will depend on how we design and utilise it, as well as on the surrounding legal, ethical, and political frameworks.

Against this backdrop, human society needs a political quantum leap to remain sustainable. Global governance is more relevant than ever to ensure that the international community maximise benefits and minimise drawbacks of globalisation and new technologies. There is a clear need for an inclusive and participatory dialogue on the societal consequences of the current transformations, which demand a new type of international governance, able to grasp the complexity of the structural changes the world is witnessing. Multilateral diplomacy, a process fostering cooperation between multiple States towards common goals, is reinventing itself in order to cope with the new challenges facing society.

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, adopted unanimously by all Member States of the United Nations (UN) in 2015, represents a paradigm shift for the multilateral system's response to current challenges. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are based on a new approach, that is holistic (all goals are interdependent), universal (all countries are concerned), and multi-stakeholder (all segments of society act together in partnership). The SDGs offer a global reference framework that recognises the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic issues. Their implementation require innovative and efficient mechanisms at local, national, regional, and global levels (see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org).

International Geneva as the laboratory of Future Global Governance

To a large extent, today's architecture of global institutions is based on international relations among States. Given current developments, States have to redefine their roles, operational arrangements and modes of interaction with other political organisations. As guarantors of social cohesion and democratic legitimacy, they will continue to have a major influence on international affairs. However, other important actors, such as the private sector, academia, and civil society, play an increasingly significant role in global governance. Geneva, a unique ecosystem of public and private entities and one of the main international hubs for multilateral normative and standard-setting decision-making, is at the forefront of these developments.

Switzerland has a long tradition of hosting international organisations that started more than 150 years ago with the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Today, hundreds of international institutions with operational or normative mandates are present in Geneva, forming a unique ecosystem and a laboratory for present and future global governance. The concentration in the Geneva area of actors working in similar fields led to the development of a number of thematic clusters, notably in human rights, humanitarian affairs, global health, trade, or environment. International Geneva is one of the main hubs where global policies are discussed, adopted, and assessed. It is a major global governance centre where leaders, experts, and decision-makers meet regularly - and a place where innovative solutions are fostered and implemented.

Geneva offers a neutral space where all stakeholders – researchers and practitioners, from the private and public sectors – exchange and cross-fertilise ideas with a view to taking collective action. Together, they shape new approaches to international cooperation.

The SDG Lab is an interesting example of International Geneva's contribution to new mechanisms for global governance through innovative platforms. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative of the United Nations Office at Geneva that contributes to the implementation of the SDGs by supporting Geneva-based actors in further leveraging expertise and knowledge into policy, practice and action. Although national actors are responsible for the implementation of the SDGs at country-level, international cooperation will be crucial to reach the goals.

The SDG Lab works with a diverse ecosystem of actors focused on delivering the Agenda 2030. It creates a space for interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration while consistently testing assumptions about what is necessary to achieve the SDGs. This model strengthens the individual efforts of governments and organisations by amplifying their voices and by providing a platform to experiment and form new partnerships. It supports the collective knowledge and expertise within Geneva, making it increasingly relevant and actionable for the implementation of SDGs at national and local levels (see www.sdglab.ch).

Existing Models as a source of inspiration

Technical innovation has always been a driver of international cooperation; new challenges caused by technical and social changes generated the need for cross-border and cross-sectoral collaboration. The history and institutional models of some of the first international organisations established in Switzerland illustrate how technical innovation and international cooperation reinforce each other mutually.

By the middle of the 19th century, new inventions – the telegraph and radio – transformed communications and society. The impact of those new tools on society and the international implications of their use, called for countries to coordinate their national policies and for the industry to adopt technical standards. In 1865, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) was created in order to ensure the smooth global operation of the various telecommunication technologies invented over the years. Today, this organisation is responsible for coordinating and negotiating all technical issues related to telecommunications among its 193 member states and close to 800 public and private institutions (see www.itu.int). Because of the highly technical nature of the issues at stake, the ITU was since its inception a public-private partnership between States and the industry; they both needed a forum to coordinate their policies and take collective action.

The industrial revolution also created the need for international protection of intellectual property and harmonisation of working conditions. At the end of the 19th century, States signed a set of conventions leading to the creation of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), which manages the international system of patents, trademarks, and copyrights. This system enables people to earn financial benefit from their inventions and innovations. The international intellectual property system strikes the right balance between the interests of creators and the broader public interest to foster an environment in which innovation can

flourish. As the global economy is shifting towards a shared economy based on intellectual property rights, the different functions performed by WIPO are more relevant than ever. For instance, WIPO provides arbitration mechanisms for private actors, such as the Uniform Dispute Resolution Policy – a conflict resolution procedure related to the registration of website domain names (see www.wipo.int).

The 19th century industrial revolution also changed the business models of private companies and the working conditions of individuals. After the First World War, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was established as part of the Treaty of Versailles, which recognised the importance of social justice in securing peace, against a backdrop of labour exploitation in the industrialising countries of that era (see Article II of the Declaration of Philadelphia). There was also increasing understanding of the world's economic interdependence and the need for cooperation to harmonize working conditions in national economies competing for global markets (see www.ilo.org).

The ILO was the first international organisation to recognise formally the role of non-governmental stakeholders through a model of tripartite representation from governments, employers' associations and labour unions, a sort of "multistakeholderism" before the concept existed. Within the ILO, workers and employers have an equal voice with governments. Each Member State is represented by a delegation composed of two government representatives, an employer representative, and a worker representative. They all have individual and equal voting rights. The employer and worker delegates are usually designated in agreement with the representative national organisations of employers and workers. In 2019, the ILO will celebrate its centenary anniversary, which will provide an opportunity to highlight the remarkable successes achieved by the tripartite organisation in the course of the last century. Today, as we discuss the future of work in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the ILO and its unique institutional governance model are more relevant than ever.

Public-Private Partnerships in the Global Health Sector

At the beginning of the 21st century, new types of public-partnerships emerged in the field of global health because of substantial donations from philanthropists. These partnerships, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) or the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), aim to leverage each partners' expertise and resources to deliver aid in the field, in terms of vaccines, therapy, or preventive measures. They coordinate global donors funding and

national implementing mechanisms with agile and multi-stakeholder organisational setups.

The Global Fund's mission is to raise, manage and invest funds to support aid programmes run by local specialists to respond to three of the deadliest communicable diseases: AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. This multi-stakeholder partnership is based on country coordinating mechanisms, which bring together stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector to coordinate the development of projects and to exercise oversight of aid implementation (see www.theglobalfund.org).

GAVI aims to increase access to immunisation in developing countries by pooling the poorest countries' demand for vaccines, with a view to securing long-term funding and to structuring vaccine markets. It combines the technical expertise of the development community with the market knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry. GAVI facilitates collaboration through a lean organisation model that maximise each partner's expertise and existing networks, including the World Health Organisation's scientific expertise, UNICEF's procurement system and the financial know-how of the World Bank (see www.gavi.org).

The oversight mechanisms put in place by the Global Fund and GAVI ensure that the allocation of funds is effective and accountable. They include representatives of all sectors involved: multilateral and bilateral development agencies, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, the private sector and beneficiaries. Processes are open and transparent and conducted in accordance with agreed-upon rules and procedures to ensure smooth and efficient partnerships. "Whenever there are inherent imbalances of power between the different partners – as is often the case between governments and civil society – such processes and tools are critical to establish and maintain an environment in which all partners can express themselves freely and negotiate any differences fairly and transparently. (…) Good governance ultimately engenders certainty and trust, both of which support the effective and efficient use of resources" (see Global Fund's Country Coordination Mechanism available at www.theglobalfund.org).

Instead of duplicating the services provided by the various actors operating in the field of health and vaccines, GAVI and the Global Fund rely on country-based systems and work with implementing partners with extensive field presence to deliver their programmes. It is mutually beneficial for developing countries, which benefit from more affordable health services; for donors, who pool their resources to have greater impact; and for the industry, through the consolidation of a larger and

more viable market in the developing world.

These operational public-private partnerships represent an inspiring model. Innovative platforms and coordinating mechanisms such as GAVI or the Global Fund contribute to generating new synergies among all relevant stakeholders at local and international levels with a view to meeting common global goals. Future global governance mechanisms should build on existing networks and institutions.

The Future of Global Governance: Multi-Stakeholder Digital Cooperation

International Geneva is a centre of excellence in numerous thematic clusters, like global health, human security, environment or trade; there are also less known and emerging clusters, such as internet governance. More than half of digital policy issues are addressed by organisations based in Geneva, including the ITU, the WIPO, or the World Trade Organisation.

In 2003, the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in Geneva and Tunis, created the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue convened annually by the UN. The secretariat of the IGF is based in Geneva. As a platform for discussions, the IGF brings various people and stakeholder groups to the table as equals to exchange information and share good practices relating to digital technologies. While the IGF may not have decision-making mandates, it facilitates common understanding and knowledge exchange on digital issues (see www.intgovforum.org).

WSIS acknowledged the importance of multi-stakeholderism and enshrined it in an outcome document adopted by consensus. According to the report of the Working Group on Internet Governance, internet governance is defined as "the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the internet. (…) This working definition reinforces the concept of inclusiveness in the mechanisms of internet governance and acknowledges that with respect to specific issues each group will have different interests, roles and participation, which in some cases will overlap" (see Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance, 2005).

The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, one of the outcome documents of WSIS, established the role of each key stakeholder in internet governance, taking into account their normative functions, their legal competencies, and the principle of subsidiarity.

Governments have the sovereign right of policy-making in internet-related public policy issues and multilateral organisations facilitate their coordination. The private sector promotes the technical and economic development of the internet. International institutions (i.e. non-governmental or multi-stakeholder) promote the development of internet-related technical standards and relevant policies and civil society acts at the community level. The academic and technical communities contribute with the above stakeholders to the evolution, functioning, and development of the internet (see Tunis Agenda for the information Society, 2005).

Digitalisation is transforming all aspects of human life. Over the years, "the internet evolved from a research and academic facility into a global facility available to the public" (Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance, 2005). Today, close to half of the world population uses internet on a daily basis. As a result, the world relies increasingly on digital tools and internet services. Current developments in internet technologies will deepen this trend. Thus, some scholars describe the internet as a global public good (Gurstein, 2012) and its infrastructure as a human made global common (Spar, 1999). Internationally agreed principles should regulate cyberspace, similarly to other global commons such as the high seas, the atmosphere, the Antarctica, and the outer space.

Humankind would benefit greatly from the effective provision of internet access to all and from the development of mechanisms to ensure the utilization of digital tools in the global public interest. The UN Secretary-General, aware of the need to adopt common principles in order to reap the benefits of the digital revolution, convened recently the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation. The Panel has the mandate to advance proposals in order to strengthen cooperation in the digital space and to raise awareness about the transformative impact of digital technologies across society. The secretariat of the Panel is based in Geneva and New York. Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard is a member of the Panel, which currently holds open public consultations around the world and online. The Panel is expected to put forward recommendations to the UN Secretary-General by spring 2019 (see www.digitalcooperation.org).

The digital world is a decentralized network of networks, which calls for a decentralized global governance. It requires new approaches to regulation, such as for example a sort of "Talanoa Dialogue", introduced by the Fijian presidency of the latest Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, based on the Pacific concept of storytelling that leads to community building and consensus making.

"Talanoa is a traditional word used in Fiji and across the Pacific to reflect a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue. The purpose of Talanoa is to share stories, build empathy and to make wise decisions for the collective good. The process of Talanoa involves the sharing of ideas, skills and experience through storytelling. During the process, participants build trust and advance knowledge through empathy and understanding. Blaming others and making critical observations are inconsistent with building mutual trust and respect, and therefore inconsistent with the Talanoa concept. Talanoa fosters stability and inclusiveness in dialogue, by creating a safe space that embraces mutual respect for a platform for decision making for a greater good" (see www.unfccc.int/topics/2018-talanoa-dialogue-platform).

Another inspiration could come from concepts such as Ubuntu (a Bantu term meaning "I am because we are", often used in a more philosophical sense to mean the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity) or l'Arbre à palabres (talking tree where people gather to discuss important matters and settle conflicts). Such concepts could foster inclusiveness and ownership of the global governance processes by all relevant stakeholders.

Geneva Platforms

In the search for agile modes of global governance, cooperation platforms represent an innovative service provided by Switzerland as a host country to the international community in Geneva. The idea of supporting platforms stems from the fact that the distinctive characteristic of International Geneva is the presence of a critical mass of international actors working in similar fields. Platforms offer a neutral space for collective brainstorming and exchanges outside of formal settings, where stakeholders explore and test new ideas, share good practices, or discuss emerging issues. There are currently around twelve thematic platforms of various sizes, covering issues ranging from disarmament to environment.

Each platform is community-driven and tailor-made to specific needs. Platforms bring together all stakeholders with an inclusive approach and build communities, clusters of experts, and networks within Geneva, while bridging the gap with other centres of global governance and the field. Platforms also act as knowledge hubs, providing trainings, conducting research and disseminating information. In terms of organisational structure, small units embedded in think tanks, academic institutions, or international organisations operate platforms. In some cases, they provide support to intergovernmental processes, for instance the Geneva Water Hub (hosted by the University of Geneva) served as the secretariat of the Global High-

Level Panel on Water and Peace (see www.genevawaterhub.org). These partnerships based on actual needs have a "start-up spirit" with the aim to seize new opportunities. Geneva platforms have an agile mode of governance and lean management that could be replicated on a global scale.

A good illustration is the Geneva Internet Platform (GIP), the main interface for digital Geneva. Given the key role played by institutions based in Switzerland in global digital policies and the fragmented landscape of internet governance, Switzerland supported the establishment of the GIP in order to generate new synergies and exploit the full potential of Geneva. The GIP provides a neutral and inclusive space for digital policy debates, recognised by the majority of global actors as a platform where different views can be voiced. The GIP's activities include a physical platform in Geneva, the GIP Digital Watch observatory, and a dialogue and innovation lab.

The GIP serves permanent missions based in Geneva with tailored briefings and works to strengthen the participation of small and developing countries in Geneva-based digital policy processes. The GIP also supports the digital policy initiatives of Geneva-based institutions, which includes tailored individual consultations, and online meetings to maximise resource use. The GIP facilitates research for an evidence-based, multidisciplinary digital policy approach beyond existing policy silos, and provides tools and methodologies that can be used in other policy spaces in International Geneva and worldwide (see www.giplatform.org).

Cooperation platforms will not replace formal institutional arrangements, but offer alternative ways to conduct policy debates and to move forward important international discussions. Geneva platforms foster flexible cooperation networks with a decentralized and solution-oriented approach.

Conclusion

Globalisation and digitalisation transform the world at an unprecedented pace. The increasing importance of cross-border issues for both the private and public sectors calls for a renovated global governance architecture. The ecosystem of International Geneva provides an ideal breeding ground for developing new models and approaches, notably through innovative, agile, and multi-stakeholders platforms, such as the SDG Lab or the Geneva Internet Platform. Geneva platforms test and explore new forms of international cooperation, which can find inspiration in existing normative institutions, like ITU or ILO. New kinds of operational public-private partnerships, like GAVI or the Global Fund, are also changing the way aid is coordinated and delivered in the field. They provide interesting examples of innovative institutional mechanisms. In the light of the many global challenges facing humankind today, international cooperation and collective decision-making are more important than ever before. Thriving at the forefront of these developments, International Geneva is truly the laboratory of global governance.

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