

WORLD LEADERS CONCERNED ABOUT THE BREAKDOWN OF INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMS

(This document to be further developed and upgraded by Global Citizens and founders of the Earth Union.)

The world has changed. Its system of global governance has not kept pace. Across nations and political traditions, world leaders increasingly acknowledge that institutions designed for an earlier era are struggling to address the challenges of the twenty-first century.

UN and Western leaders have variously described its institutions as **“broken,” “breaking down,” “outdated,” “dysfunctional,” “paralysed,” “fraying at the seams,” “not fit for purpose,”** and in need of fundamental reform.



DOCUMENTED STATEMENTS

Speaker / institution	Date	Statement	What was being criticised
Marco Rubio, U.S. Secretary of State	23 Sept., 2026	“There’s unanimity and consensus... that the international system’s broken.” He also said it was unable to solve major conflicts. (Pubt)	Effectiveness of the international system in addressing wars and international disputes.
Emmanuel Macron, President of France	26 Sept. 2018	“We are currently experiencing a deep crisis of the Westphalian liberal world order.” (elysee.fr)	Effectiveness and legitimacy of the contemporary international order.
Emmanuel Macron President of France	26 Sept. 2018	“At a time when our collective system is breaking down, ... we have never needed it so much.” (elysee.fr)	Multilateralism, UN institutions and international law.
Charles Michel, then European Council President	14 Nov. 2024	“Our global system of governance has fallen victim to creeping paralysis.” (Consilium)	Global governance institutions unable to keep pace with changing conditions.
Keir Starmer UK Prime Minister	26 Sept. 2024	Called for “reforming the international system, so that it’s fit for the 21st century.” (GOV.UK)	The international system more generally.
Priti Patel, UK Development Secretary	20 Sept. 2017	“The international system is, frankly, not coping – it is not fit for purpose.” (GOV.UK)	UN/international response to conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and transnational challenges.
Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor	20 Sept. 2022	“We must adapt our rules and institutions to the reality of the 21st century.” They too often reflect the world of “30, 50 or 70 years ago.” (Bundesregierung)	UN and particularly Security Council representation.
Angela Merkel, German Chancellor	23 Jan. 2019	Warned that the international architecture reacts “far too slowly to change” and called for reform reflecting the actual balance of global power. (Bundesregierung)	Post-WWII institutions failing to adapt to emerging powers.
Obama Administration, U.S. National Security Strategy	May 2010	The post-WWII international architecture was “buckling under the weight of new threats.” (whitehouse.gov)	International institutions designed for a different era.
Joe Biden, then U.S. Vice President	3 Oct 2014	“The international order... is literally fraying at the seams right now.” (whitehouse.gov)	Post-WWII international order amid geopolitical and transnational crises.

Theresa May, UK Prime Minister	20 Sept. 2017	Called for “reforming our United Nations and the wider international system” to meet 21st-century challenges. (GOV.UK)	UN and broader rules-based international architecture.
António Guterres, UN Secretary-General	21 Jan. 2026	The UN described Guterres's assessment as saying “the global system was under unprecedented strain” and that international cooperation was fraying. (United Nations)	Wars, geopolitical division, inequality, climate breakdown and weakening international law.
António Guterres UN Secretary-General	15 Apr 2024	“The global financial architecture is broken.” He described it as “outdated, dysfunctional, unjust.” (UN Web TV)	Bretton Woods-era global financial governance.
António Guterres UN Secretary-General	19 Sept. 2024	“We can’t create a future fit for our grandchildren with systems built for our grandparents.” (The United Nations in India)	The wider multilateral architecture and institutions created after WWII.
António Guterres UN Secretary-General	8 Sept. 2023	“The global financial architecture is outdated, dysfunctional, and unfair... And the same can be said about the United Nations Security Council.” (United Nations)	Both international financial institutions and the Security Council.
Chatham House, UK	15 Apr 2021	Report heading: “The multilateral system is outdated. A refit is long overdue.” (Chatham House)	Legitimacy, transparency, representation and effectiveness of global governance.
OECD	22 Dec 2020	Said the COVID crisis revealed the need to “reform, even redesign, the multilateral system.” (OECD)	Global preparedness and governance of cross-border risks.
G20 Leaders	19 Nov. 2024	Called for a “reformed global governance” with renewed institutions reflecting “the... realities of the 21st century.” (Global Affairs Canada)	Representation, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of global institutions.
Partners for Multilateralism summit — EU and partner governments	21 Sept., 2026	Called for “renewing and reforming the multilateral system” so it becomes “effective, representative, inclusive and fit for purpose.” (Consilium)	The contemporary UN-centred multilateral system.