



Nexus<sup>25</sup> Memo

**Nexus<sup>25</sup> Roundtable Discussion: International Response to Complex Crises**

Washington D.C. Event – Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>

This roundtable discussion hosted at the United Nations Foundation was part of the **Nexus<sup>25</sup>** project and brought together senior representatives from governments, international organizations, civil society, and think tanks for a discussion on international and multilateral responses to complex crises of insecurity, climate change, and migration. The discussion followed the project's launch event on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. The event took place on the sidelines of the World Bank-International Monetary Fund Spring Meetings and against the backdrop of overlapping regional and global crises with far-reaching consequences for the world's most vulnerable. In addition to the cascading effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the accelerating climate crisis, the invasion of Ukraine this year has triggered a humanitarian emergency and a global food crisis. This is in addition to regions long struggling with the nexus of insecurity, migration, and climate harms, including the Sahel and South Asia, regional focus areas for the **Nexus<sup>25</sup>** project.

International organizations are developing new capacities and approaches in attempt to better respond to complex crises, including through systems approaches that connect climate with insecurity and migration and developing approaches that are adapted to local needs. Yet, events this year have only made nexus challenges more acute, food prices have increased by 34 percent since last year and are at the highest levels since the Food and Agriculture Organization began recording them and research shows that for each percentage point increase in food prices, 10 million people are thrown into extreme poverty.

Across the discussion, participants reflected on **a number of themes:**

- **The need to respond to current crises:** The scale of the current crisis and cascading threats to food security requires urgent action, and exacerbate existing food insecurity in already fragile environments. Participants reflected on and welcomed Germany's recent proposal to create a Global Alliance on Food Security that would include governments but also civil society, academic actors and others to respond to urgent global food security needs as well as support longer term resilience.
- **The challenge of balancing urgent needs with structural change:** Participants reflected on the difficulty of responding to increasingly connected and protracted crises, and the urgent needs they generate, while pursuing structural changes to be better placed to respond in the future. This is all the more so given the need to connect across often siloed capacities and in the context where many actors still approach nexus challenges sequentially. Some participants also saw the need for a renewed conversation on prevention, building on the 2018 United Nations-World Bank study Pathways for Peace.
- **The gap between promises and delivery:** At the same time as institutions struggle to manage urgent and longer-term priorities, participants reflected on the gap between policies and promises and actual delivery, noting that the space between has eroded confidence in the ability of the multilateral system to deliver, particularly in these complex environments. Participants



also reflected on the risks of actors prioritizing one policy goal at the expense of a more holistic approach to nexus challenges, and emphasized the need to think about what ‘security’ means in the context of migration and climate change.

- **The opportunity for a new conversation on partnership and financing:** Even against these challenges, participants saw an opportunity in new approaches to partnership, especially with subnational actors and the private sector, and on financing, particularly in thinking creatively in catalyzing and deploying blended finance.
- **The need to learn from a decade of nexus approaches:** Participants were candid in reflections that although the humanitarian and development communities have been attempting to generate new responses to nexus challenges for some time, it wasn’t clear what has been learned. Participants emphasized the need to critically assess where policy objectives are at odds or in contradiction and in need of resolution.

This discussion took place against the backdrop of warnings by the United Nations, World Bank, and others that the world is on a precipice and needs urgent and coordinated action to respond to the global food crisis. This is in addition to record high levels of displacement and the IPCC’s latest report showing the dramatic narrowing of the window to avert catastrophic climate change. The question on the mind of all participants in this roundtable was ‘what happens after the speeches’ and how can multilateral actors demonstrate resolve not only in the face of the current crisis, but also in developing stronger nexus responses going forward.

Participants: **Niels Annen**, *German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development*, **Elizabeth Cousens**, *United Nations Foundation*, **Tegan Blaine**, *United States Institute of Peace*, **Gillian Caldwell**, *USAID*, **Dario Cristiani**, *Italian Institute of International Affairs/German Marshall Fund*, **Elizabeth Ferris**, *Georgetown University and Brookings Institution*, **Helga Flores**, *Bayer AG*, **Lily Han**, *Rockefeller Foundation*, **Maria Kozloski**, *Rockefeller Foundation*, **Thin Lei Win**, *Independent Journalist and Nexus25*, **Ulrika Mod  er**, *United Nations Development Program*, **Kayly Ober**, *Refugees International*, **Stefano Pettinato**, *United Nations Development Program*, **Jordi Renart**, *World Food Programme*, **Megan Roberts**, *United Nations Foundation*, **Stanlake Samkange**, *World Food Programme*, **Landry Sign  **, *Brookings Institution*, **Erin Sikorsky**, *The Center for Climate and Security*, **Holger Tillmann**, *German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development*, **Evelin Toth**, *United Nations Foundation*, **Caitlin Welsh**, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, **Michael Werz**, *Center for American Progress*, **Alan Yu**, *Center for American Progress*.



**Nexus<sup>25</sup>** is a project by IAI (Istituto Affari Internazionali) in collaboration with the United Nations Foundation and is funded by Stiftung Mercator. The project aims to provide impulses for a sustainable multilateralism and to contribute to the renewal of multilateral structures. Based on two case studies of complex crisis scenarios, namely, the Sahel and wider Mediterranean and South Asia, and with a particular thematic focus on the nexus between climate, migration, governance and sustainable security, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the nature – and thus collective action needs – of complex crises. In particular, the project seeks to find out: Where exactly is the need for collective action in complex crises? How can networked multilateralism be conceived to address these challenges in collaboration with different actors (governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector)? How can isolated approaches to policy development and implementation be overcome to provide appropriate responses to multidimensional and interconnected challenges? In reflecting on these broader questions, the project will pay particular attention to the ways in which a renewed transatlantic partnership can strengthen overall multilateral governance of complex crises.

In order to achieve these results, a series of research and policy papers on the complex crisis scenarios will be produced throughout the course of the project. The publications will feed into and be enriched by several rounds of discussions among institutional and non-institutional stakeholders from the relevant policy and research communities spanning the areas of security and foreign policy, diplomacy, sustainable development, climate, and migration. Through dissemination activities and public events, the project also aims to reach out to a wider range of stakeholders.