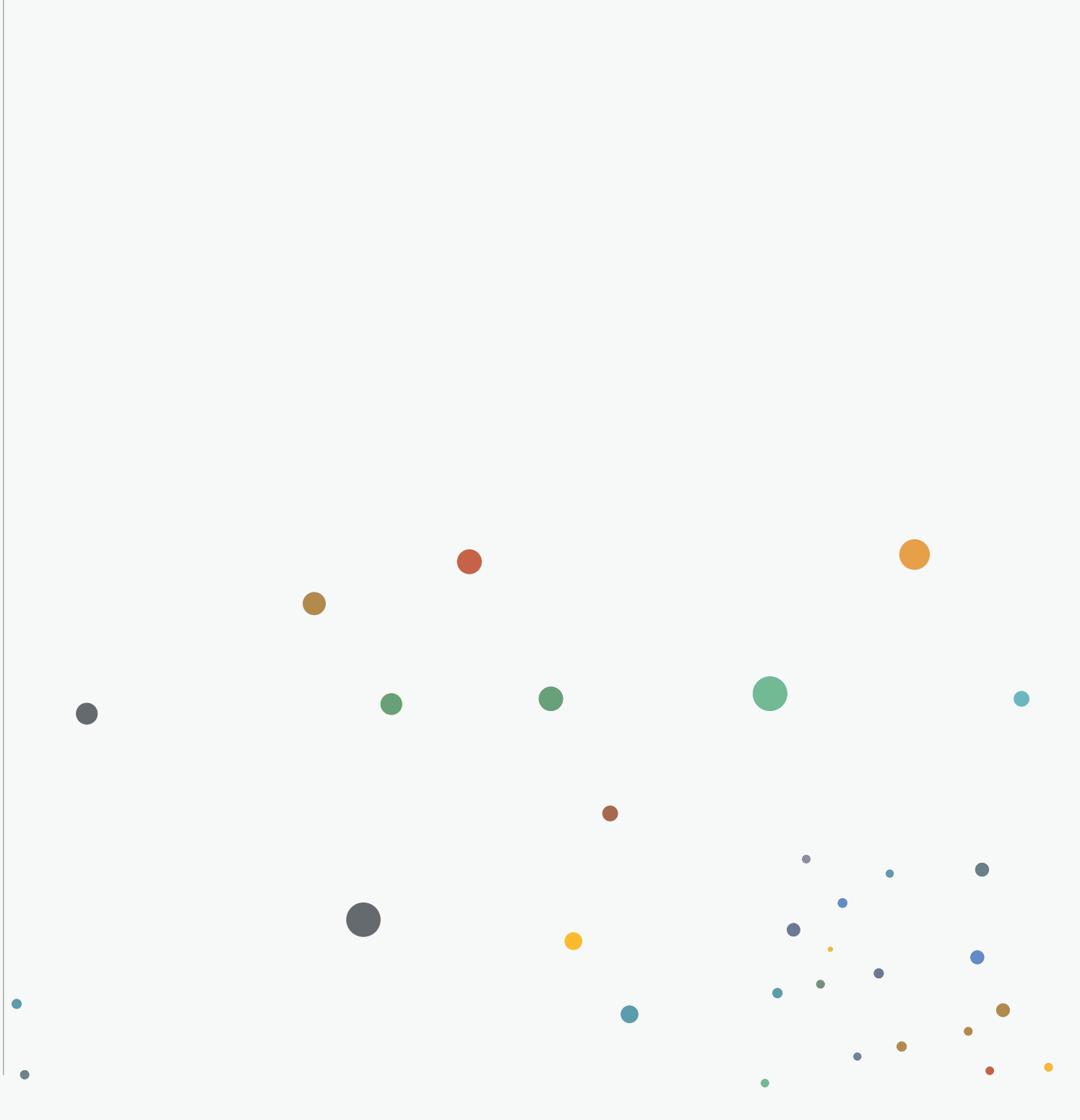


# Shift Five | Peace and Prevention

Empower Equitable,  
Effective Collective Security  
Arrangements



*“We must stop thinking of security in narrow, nationalistic frames and accept that our collective survival depends on greater investment in peace.”*



**The United Nations was established in 1945 to “save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” Today, however, it is failing to realize that core purpose of maintaining international peace and security, even as threats have multiplied and grown. In addition to traditional military threats, we now understand that a wide range of social, political, economic, and environmental factors play an important role in our security.**

The interconnected nature of this risk landscape gives rise to our call for collective security, recognizing that countries and their citizens can only feel safe when all feel safe. Rather than a negative and reactive approach, collective security is a vision of positive peace that can be achieved if peace is treated as a global public good.<sup>159</sup> It may seem paradoxical to call for such a vision at a time of intense geopolitical competition and dramatic rises in military spending, but this moment of heightened risk is precisely the time for a recommitment to mutually assured survival.

This commitment to collective security will require a paradigm shift. We must stop thinking of security in narrow, nationalistic frames and accept that our collective survival depends on greater investment in peace. Our global governance arrangements should generate far more financing for peace and human security, leading to a gradual but consistent transition of spending away from militarization.<sup>160</sup> To this end, they should provide forums for collaboration, deconfliction, trust-building, and eventual demilitarization.<sup>161</sup> Our systems should be able to shift focus and resources quickly to new and

emerging risks, positioning us for more effective prevention. Ultimately, we should see prevention as a universal obligation, understanding that every State has a role in prevention and peacebuilding.

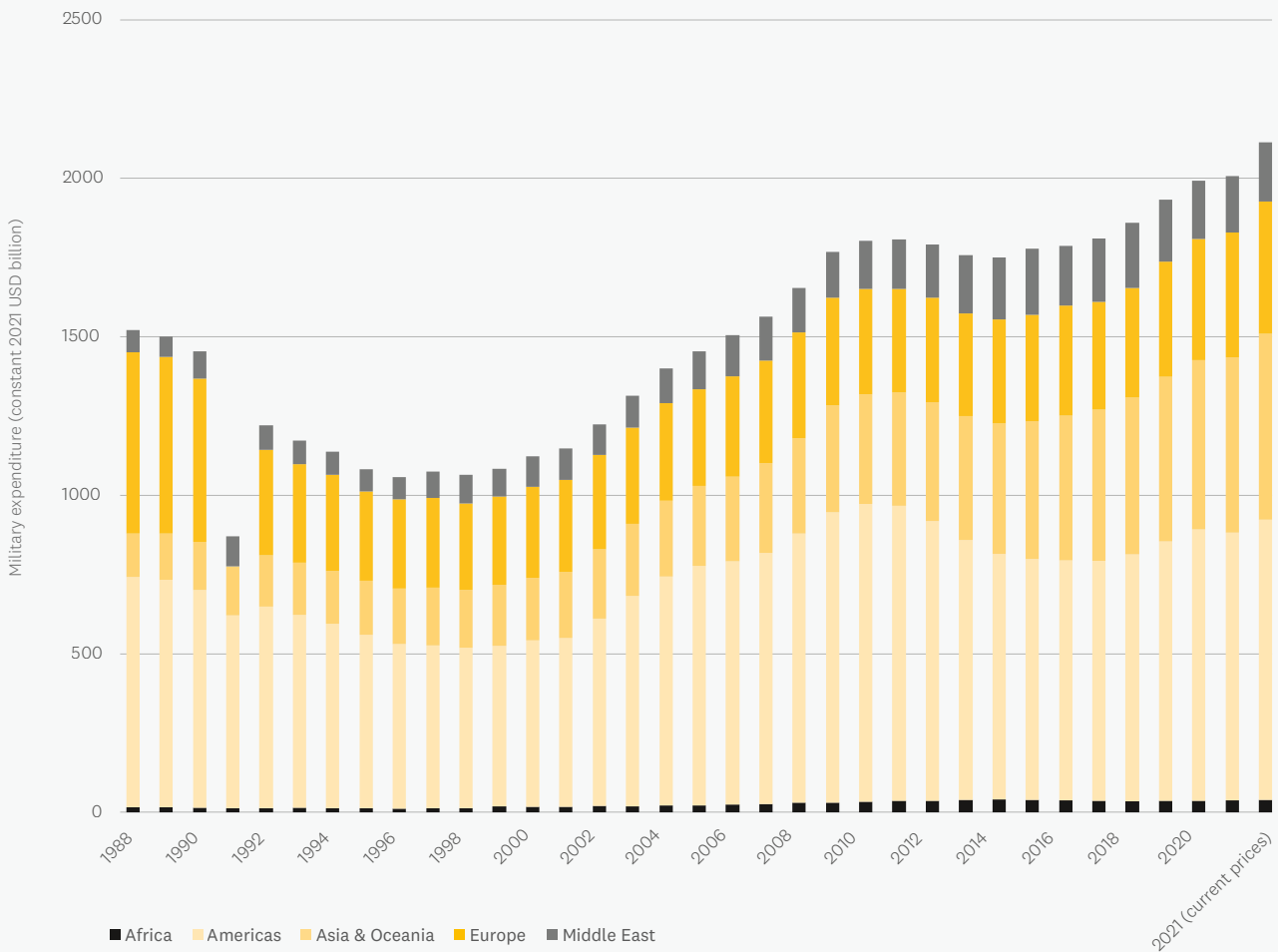
This requires the UN to become a more effective body at the centre of the global security architecture. The steps we propose here aim to harness the existing potential of the UN Charter in a more robust and effective manner, while taking advantage of the Summit of the Future to advance innovative collective global security arrangements.<sup>162</sup>

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### ● Recommendation 1. **Commit to our collective security.**

**The Summit of the Future should adopt a definition of collective security** that includes not only traditional threats contained in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter but also a broader range of risks, including from the triple planetary crisis, transnational organized crime, and deepening socioeconomic inequalities. Such a definition should acknowledge the risks associated with technological advancement, including artificial intelligence and cyberweaponry. And it should be clear that collective security is unachievable without addressing the specific security risks facing women and girls worldwide, and impossible without more meaningful inclusion of women in our prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

## World military expenditure has passed USD 2 trillion



Adapted from data provided by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Accessible at: [www.sipri.org](http://www.sipri.org).

A commitment to collective security would have the important effect of universalizing an agenda of prevention and catalysing positive investment in peace alongside more traditional defensive responses. Rather than focus exclusively on conflict-affected, fragile States, collective security understands that all States must play a role in contributing to prevention and peacebuilding. Indeed, a universal paradigm of prevention and peace could be translated into global commitments on prevention. The following recommendations all follow from this definition of collective security and are designed to position the multilateral system to better anticipate, prevent, and respond to threats to our collective security.

### ● Recommendation 2. **Reform the UN Security Council and strengthen the Peacebuilding Commission.**

Today's UN Security Council is the highest profile example of failure in the multilateral system. Dominated by a small number of States and hampered by geopolitical polarization, it has proven itself unable to respond to major risks to international peace and security. Without meaningful reform, the Security Council risks irrelevance.

We call for a renewed effort to reform the UN Security Council. **The Summit of the Future is an opportunity to reaffirm our common commitment to the UN Charter and announce a Charter Review conference focused on Security Council reform.**<sup>163</sup> We urge all Member States to commit to the following principles to guide the reform process:

- ▶ **Equity:** The Security Council should be expanded to reflect equitably those regions that are chronically underrepresented, including those with large and growing youth populations, and to ensure that voices from conflict-affected regions are more meaningfully included in the Council's decision-making.
- ▶ **Legitimacy:** The Security Council's decisions should not be controlled by a single veto-wielding State; ways must be found to democratize its actions. A key aspect of legitimacy is effective, unified action – reform should aim to build that unity.
- ▶ **Modernization:** The Security Council must be able to adapt to emerging trends, including by finding creative ways to reflect new geopolitical landscapes, incorporate emerging topics on its agenda, and bring a wide range of voices into its deliberations.<sup>164</sup>

While the Board is not proposing a specific composition for the Security Council, it is of the view that **the principles of equity and legitimacy can only fully be met by the expansion of the membership of the Security Council and reform of its decision-making procedures.** Expansion should focus on increasing representation from underrepresented regions. Options for allocating seats to regions rather than specific countries, and for extending the tenure of non-permanent seats, should also be explored.

Permanent membership in the Security Council carries an enormous responsibility to all peoples and countries everywhere. That responsibility is flouted when permanent members paralyse the core work of the Security Council. A future-oriented process to reform the Security Council should focus on placing greater limits on the

use of the veto and explore other approaches to prevent States from blocking actions favoured by a decisive majority of members.

We strongly support recent efforts to hold Security Council members more accountable to justify their use of the veto to the General Assembly,<sup>165</sup> and propose that a clearer sense of who will act when the Security Council fails is needed. **If the Security Council cannot or will not act in the face of threats to international security, then the matter should immediately be placed before the General Assembly for action.**<sup>166</sup> Efforts to empower the General Assembly to take more frequent and robust responses to security threats should be strengthened. And while Article 53 of the UN Charter places limitations on the ability of regional organizations to undertake peace enforcement without Security Council authorization, greater efforts should be made to empower the regional level to take a lead role in conflict prevention in line with the principle of subsidiarity. Improving the prevention mandates of and resourcing for regional bodies to strengthen the implementation of subsidiarity is the core intention of the global/regional framework proposed below.

While a process to reform the Security Council would help to address long-standing problems of representation and legitimacy, it should be accompanied by several steps to strengthen the UN's ability to respond to a broader range of non-military threats to our collective security. To that end, **we propose that the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) be provided with an expanded mandate to address a broader range of risks and resourced with greater investigative and decision-making powers.** Specifically, an upgrade of the PBC should include more formal links with international financial institutions, helping to align global financial flows with actions addressing the root causes of violent conflict.<sup>167</sup> It should be mandated to identify and address a wider range of gender-related security issues including, for example, the relationship between violent misogyny and violent extremism.<sup>168</sup> Its mandate should include the growing impacts of climate change and environmental changes on security risks (described in Shift Six, below).



Photo by Gregorio Cunha/UNMISS. “Collective security is impossible without the more meaningful inclusion of women in our prevention and peacebuilding efforts.”

An empowered peacebuilding body could also strengthen regional prevention by supporting the creation of “regional resilience councils” or other regionally based bodies tasked with prevention and peacebuilding work.<sup>169</sup> Such a body could support a new generation of peacebuilding operations that would aim to more effectively address the root causes of violent conflict. **This expansion and strengthening of the UN’s peacebuilding mandate could lead to the transformation of the PBC into a Peacebuilding Council.**<sup>170</sup>

**Recommendation 3.**  
**Establish a collective security framework between the United Nations and major regional bodies.**

A commitment to collective security should lead to a renewed investment in subsidiarity, based on a deeper relationship between the UN and

major regional bodies aimed at addressing the cross-cutting risks to human security. In this context, **the Summit of the Future should commit to an international conference to agree on a set of global/regional security arrangements based on three pillars of cooperation: (1) security (including fundamental freedoms, confidence-building measures, and military transparency), (2) economy/sustainable development (including scientific and environmental cooperation, anti-corruption, and financial sector risks), and (3) humanitarian cooperation (food/water security and basic protections).** This approach draws from the Helsinki process that created the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe almost 50 years ago, but would be updated to reflect the far-broader range of risks to regional and global stability today.<sup>171</sup> It would align with recent Security Council discussions on the need for a more strategic relationship with regional bodies, allowing Member States and regional organizations to reinvigorate and broaden their relationships.<sup>172</sup>

Importantly, such a global/regional framework would provide a more strategic basis for large-scale investments, incentivizing the international community to resource “peace responsive” approaches with long-term impacts, rather than ad hoc financing to address specific crises.<sup>173</sup> It would enable strategic alignment across the main areas of cooperation region-by-region, but founded on a recognition that security cannot be siloed away from development, human rights, and basic protections. In regions with particularly weak regional prevention structures, for example, support could be tailored to avoid ineffective use of resources and/or to bolster specific capacities needed for better prevention. And it could include provisions to protect the rights and capabilities of women and girls where risks are identified. This more strategic relationship would be the basis for more meaningful involvement of regional financial bodies, private sector actors, and civil society in multilateral prevention. As such, **this framework would directly align with the New Agenda for Peace, which prioritizes “investing in regional prevention”, and could enable regional bodies to access the UN’s prevention resources more effectively.**<sup>174</sup>

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● **Recommendation 4.  
Increase transparency on peace and security.**

Across all recommendations in this report, we propose that global governance be based on a shared understanding of risks, building more transparency and trust worldwide. Shared data on peace should be considered a global public good, given that common, scientifically vetted information on the risks to peace is fundamental to our collective security. Just as climate change needs an international forum of scientists to track the risks of increasing global temperatures, our global security architecture needs a global forum to understand the costs of conflict and the pathways to peace.

Unfortunately, eroding trust amongst States has led to a decline in the use of existing transparency mechanisms, including at the

regional level.<sup>175</sup> In addition to driving mistrust among States, lack of common information and analysis around security risks hampers more strategic partnerships between the UN and regional organizations. Poor information-sharing globally has meant that misinformation and disinformation campaigns are able to gain greater traction, while the rights of human rights defenders and journalists are more easily trampled. And in an era where information security and cyberweapons are a massive and rapidly growing feature of our risk landscape, more should be done to strengthen and expand forums to build a common understanding of the security risks of technologies.<sup>176</sup>

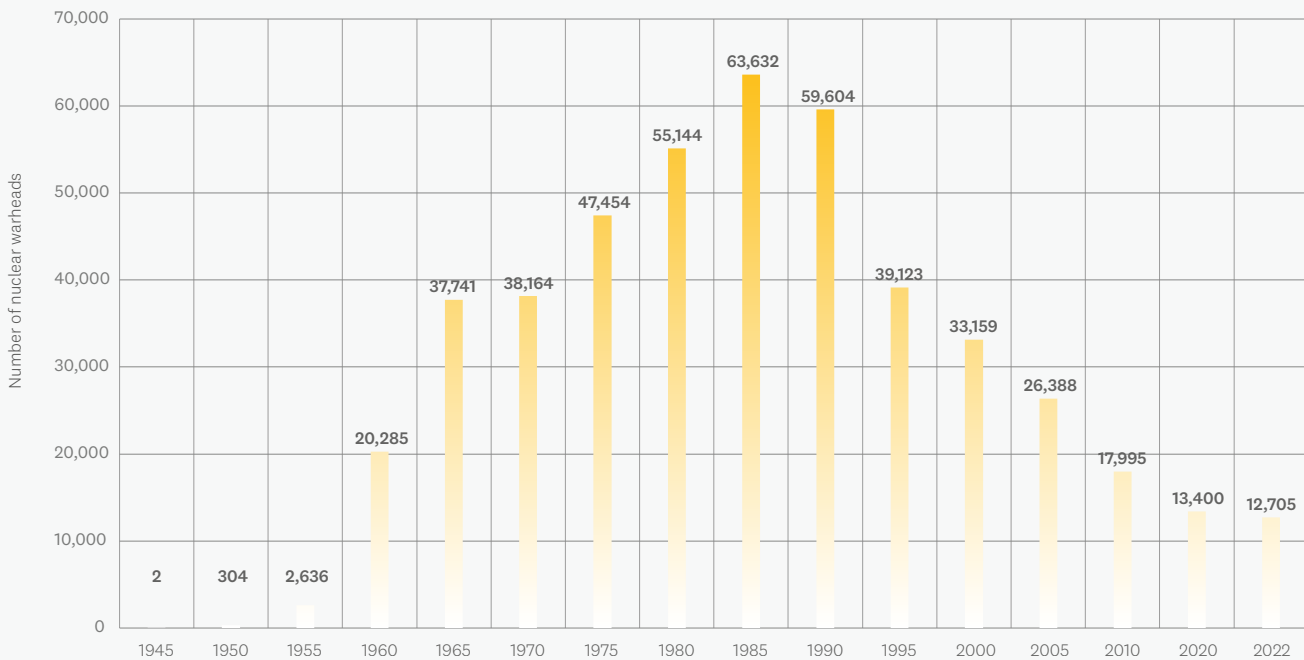
This could be accomplished in part by establishing a **Multi-Stakeholder Security Transparency Platform** to bring existing arms control bodies and registries together with a range of scientists and security experts to generate high-quality information, counter disinformation, increase knowledge of global arms flows and technological risks, and gradually build towards greater confidence and trust. Such a platform could be linked to regional transparency initiatives to jointly analyse security trends, share information, build capacities for regional prevention, and propose confidence-building measures.<sup>177</sup> Importantly, such a platform would not stand on its own but be a connective node bringing together and bolstering existing bodies of information and analysis.

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● **Recommendation 5.  
Strengthen and accelerate denuclearization.**

Nuclear weapons are a threat to all of humanity and pose the most immediate existential risk to life on this planet. Today, we are closer to the use of nuclear weapons than at any time over the past 50 years. This is unacceptable and unnecessary. There is no way to eliminate this risk without the full eradication of all nuclear weapons everywhere, a step that is in the interests of all people and all States, including those with nuclear weapons. The ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts must be to live up to the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

## Number of nuclear warheads worldwide from 1945 to 2022



Adapted from data provided by Statista Research Department.

**We call for a date for total denuclearization, with clear intermediate time-bound benchmarks and agreed verification processes.**

Eliminating nuclear weapons by 2045 would mean an end to a nuclear century. While such a step may seem unrealistic in today’s fractured geopolitical climate, dialogue must start on collective and sustainable security arrangements for a world free of nuclear weapons. There is no better place to articulate such commitments to our collective survival than at the Summit of the Future.

While remaining committed to eliminating nuclear weapons, our global governance arrangements must be strengthened to prevent any likelihood of nuclear weapons use. Any use of nuclear weapons would have global consequences; as such, the effective veto wielded by a few States over nuclear disarmament should be ended. While pressing for this, we must make all efforts to reduce the acute nuclear weapons risks facing us today. **The Summit of the Future should include a clear reaffirmation of the global norm against the use of nuclear weapons and a commitment**

**to “no first use” of nuclear weapons by all nuclear States, combined with full and independent verification processes.**

Such a declaration would be strengthened by a UN Security Council and/or General Assembly commitment to take action in case of any threat or use of nuclear weapons. The commitment could build on the well-developed concept of “nuclear responsibilities” and establish a clear set of agreed commitments to prevent the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>178</sup> However, we should be clear: acting responsibly should not be seen as a rationale for maintaining a nuclear arsenal. The only fully responsible act is to eliminate nuclear weapons.<sup>179</sup>

Moreover, addressing nuclear weapons should not be treated as a distinct issue from the full range of security risks worldwide. While nuclear weapons are unique in their destructive power, their exclusive and isolated governance regime has allowed major powers to take advantage of a narrative of nuclear exceptionalism.

Indeed, while we recognize that nuclear weapons are an existential threat for everyone, there are many parts of the world where the threat of small arms proliferation is the foremost concern, while conventional weapons continue to pose enormous risks to much of the planet.<sup>180</sup> The resources spent on maintaining our massive global nuclear arsenal could be far better spent on our collective well-being. Part of our commitment to collective security should include an assessment of how spending on nuclear weapons draws resources away from other crucial issues, including climate change, global inequities, gender inequality, and human insecurity. Taking nuclear weapons out of their governance silo will help us all realize the collective and unnecessary risk that they pose to the world.

The global governance arrangements around nuclear weapons are complex and contentious. Short-term fixes to the challenges of multilateral nuclear weapons agreements are extremely unlikely. However, we here identify some steps that could build a common understanding of the risks of nuclear weapons, better connectivity across siloed institutions, and a more effective approach to decision-making within existing bodies.

➤ **Establish a Global Commission on Military Nuclear Risks.** We recognize the important and effective work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which demonstrates that a coherent, evidence-based approach to nuclear issues can deliver results. An independent, scientifically driven approach should be applied to the security risks posed by nuclear weapons, to help unlock the diplomatic stagnation we see today.<sup>181</sup> While there is a wide range of actors tracking nuclear weapons risks, the multilateral system lacks an independent body acting as a common resource for all. **The Summit of the Future should mandate a global commission on the risks associated with military use of nuclear weapons, composed of globally recognized scientists and civil society actors nominated by Member States.**<sup>182</sup> The commission could identify the most likely pathways to nuclear use and the most pressing risk scenarios, and offer recommendations to nuclear States.<sup>183</sup>

➤ **Revitalize the Conference on Disarmament by adopting qualified majority voting.** Since 1978, the UN Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors have been the primary forum for negotiation of multilateral agreements around strategic weaponry. And while it ostensibly covers the elimination of nuclear weapons and steps to prevent nuclear war, it has overseen little progress over the past 25 years. Despite repeated calls for its revitalization, the Conference remains mired in its own procedures, relying on consensus for its decisions.<sup>184</sup> An objection by a single country can prevent progress to protect all of humanity, while the agenda remains out of sync with today's priorities. As part of a broader effort at revitalization, the Conference of Disarmament could move towards a system of qualified majority voting for decision-making, thereby preventing a small number of States from blocking progress to reduce global catastrophic and existential risks. This system would also make the Conference more inclusive and equitable and give all actors a greater stake in governance.

➤ **Ensure coherent support to disarmament.** The disarmament agenda is fragmented across different bodies with distinct mandates and capacities, reflecting a patchwork of norms and treaty obligations.<sup>185</sup> These bodies are largely disconnected from the important efforts of civil society groups to advocate for and monitor nuclear disarmament, including those that focus on gender-specific impacts.<sup>186</sup> The UN should invest in a capacity to connect and support the various forums, processes, and actors associated with nuclear disarmament, thus helping to generate more sustained, inclusive, and effective engagement.