



## Resolution 2581 (2025)<sup>1</sup>

Provisional version

# The need for a renewed rules-based international order

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In 1945, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, world leaders decided to create the United Nations, to ensure respect for international law, to maintain international peace and security and to promote social progress and better standards of life. Since then, the United Nations has been the cornerstone of the multilateral system of global governance, which has been enriched by a number of other international organisations and informal fora with specialised mandates and varying geographical coverage.
2. Founded in 1949 as a peace project, the Council of Europe has made an outstanding contribution to strengthening rules-based multilateralism by promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law and contributing to creating a single European legal space, through the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), whose interpretation by the European Court of Human Rights has made it a “living instrument” and a “constitutional instrument of European public order”, and more than 200 other conventions.
3. Almost eight decades later, the international context has profoundly changed. The effectiveness of the rules-based international order is being increasingly challenged by a shift towards multipolarity, with groups of countries coalescing around diverging approaches and visions as regards values, systems of governance and the international order itself. This process is accompanied by the rapid rise of authoritarianism, nationalism, isolationism, unilateralism and pure power politics.
4. The world is currently facing the highest number of conflicts since the end of the Second World War, and the United Nations Security Council is struggling to fulfil its primary responsibility of ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security due to the irreconcilable positions and interests of its permanent members.
5. The Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine marked the most brutal violation of the rules-based international order in recent history, with the Russian Federation trying to change the territorial borders of a neighbouring sovereign State, using violence against civilians as an instrument of war and threatening the use of nuclear weapons. Such acts constitute a flagrant breach of the United Nations Charter and underscore the urgent need for comprehensive accountability mechanisms and an immediate cessation of hostilities.
6. The Assembly reaffirms that no acquisition of territory by the threat or use of force shall be recognised as lawful, and calls upon all States to refrain from any action that might be interpreted as legitimising the seizure or annexation of territory in violation of international law.
7. Furthermore, the international community has proved incapable of stopping the escalation of violence in the Middle East, which began with an appalling terrorist attack by Hamas and other militia groups against Israel on 7 October 2023 and has escalated into a major regional conflict, resulting in more than 40 000 deaths and a humanitarian crisis of apocalyptic proportions in Gaza.
8. In addition, the result of the 2024 presidential election in the United States raises significant concerns about the direction of the United States foreign policy and the impact it might have on the multilateral system.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2025 (3rd sitting) (see [Doc. 16087](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Ms Dora Bakoyannis). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2025 (3rd sitting). See also [Recommendation 2288 \(2025\)](#).



9. This context of global instability and insecurity is all the more worrying as, in addition to the maintenance of international peace, the world is facing a number of other distinct and interrelated challenges that can only be addressed through concerted action, ranging from climate change and environmental degradation to mass migration, growing inequalities, global health risks, food and energy crises, terrorism and violent extremism, the rise of artificial intelligence and its impact on all aspects of society, and the exploration of space.

10. In order to counter the threats to the European way of life, protect democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and preserve Europe's position in the world, Council of Europe member States should strive for an open rules-based international order of realism, rather than an ever-shrinking club of "like-minded" countries, while ensuring that any State engaging in acts of aggression or grave breaches of international law is held accountable and does not benefit from unmerited diplomatic or economic privileges.

11. The Parliamentary Assembly firmly believes that a renewed commitment to international law and to the reform of the multilateral system of global governance is necessary to address these challenges effectively. The ability to resist the destabilising forces that seek to replace international law with the rule of force, and the capacity to renew and reinvigorate the rules-based international order, will determine the resilience not only of democracies, but of the world as a whole.

12. In light of these considerations, the Assembly welcomes the adoption on 22 September 2024 by the United Nations General Assembly of Resolution A/RES/79/1 "The Pact for the Future", which demonstrates the commitment of the international community to reform the rules-based international order in order to meet the grave challenges we face. The Assembly therefore urges all States to implement the 56 actions contained in the Pact for the Future, and in particular to:

12.1. ensure the strictest respect for international law, including the United Nations Charter, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as well as the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly;

12.2. uphold the mandate of the International Court of Justice and comply with its decisions;

12.3. refrain from the threat or use of force, or acts of aggression; respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity, within internationally recognised borders, of all States;

12.4. commit to reforming the multilateral system and its institutions through an inclusive approach, to ensure:

12.4.1. a reform of the United Nations Security Council, enlarging its membership to increase its representativeness and giving a stronger role to under-represented and unrepresented regions, such as Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific; revising its working methods; and reconsidering the use and scope of the veto power by permanent members, to avoid any abuse;

12.4.2. revitalising the work of the United Nations General Assembly, which should be entrusted with stronger powers in matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security, especially when the United Nations Security Council fails to reach a common position, including in cases where a permanent member exercises its veto power to shield itself from accountability;

12.4.3. a reform of the international financial and economic institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to grant developing countries with stronger representation and voting powers in their decision-making bodies, as well as easier access to financing and credit, and to identify sustainable ways to restructure their debt;

12.5. significantly strengthen actions aimed at addressing the global challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, as well as the global governance of artificial intelligence.

13. The Assembly further urges all States to promptly accede to the International Criminal Court for those countries that have not yet done so, and to co-operate fully with the International Criminal Court and comply with its orders for those countries that have already acceded, in particular with a view to ensuring accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

14. The Assembly recalls that, at their Fourth Summit in Reykjavik in 2023, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe reiterated their commitment to strengthening "the role of the Council of Europe in the evolving European multilateral architecture and in global governance by enhancing its external dimension, through its liaison offices and through a new engagement based on its core values with democracies in the world and its southern neighbourhood".

15. In line with the Reykjavik Declaration, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:
  - 15.1. engage in a dialogue with countries from the Global South and make use of all available institutional and diplomatic channels to ensure the largest participation possible in the enlarged partial agreements of the Council of Europe;
  - 15.2. support a greater role for the Council of Europe as a partner of the United Nations in strengthening rules-based multilateralism and for matters related to democratic security, maintenance of peace, and the protection of democracy, human rights and rule of law, including through the recognition of the Council of Europe as a regional organisation within the meaning of article 52, Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter;
  - 15.3. strengthen the strategic partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Union, as well as the Council of Europe's co-operation with other multilateral organisations, in Europe and beyond.
16. The Assembly pays tribute to the extraordinary achievements of the European Court of Human Rights through its case law, including its important contribution to international law as one of the foundations of multilateralism. With a view to fostering an harmonious interpretation and development of international law, it invites the Court to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral relations and dialogue with the International Court of Justice, the different United Nations human rights mechanisms, as well as with regional human rights courts such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights.
17. Furthermore, with a view to strengthening Europe's leadership internationally, the Assembly urges the Council of Europe member States which are also members of the European Union to:
  - 17.1. pursue more vigorously the political and economic integration of the European Union, using the relevant Council of Europe standards and instruments on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;
  - 17.2. adopt concrete measures to follow up the European Union's Strategic Compass for Security and Defence adopted in 2022 and the Council Conclusions on EU Security and Defence adopted in 2024, in order to ensure that the European Union can successfully defend its physical borders, its citizens, its security, and its founding values against both military and hybrid threats, by reducing its dependence on non-European allies and strengthening Europe's capacity to respond decisively to any aggression against its member States or partner countries;
  - 17.3. accelerate the European Union enlargement process while focusing on defusing tensions and disputes, countering interference by malign third actors, strengthening Europe's democratic security, and speaking with one voice internationally.
18. The Assembly welcomes the European Union's reaffirmed determination to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights as enshrined in Article 6(2) of the Treaty on the European Union and its commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights, including the effective and timely execution of its judgments as laid down in the European Union's priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2025-2026.
19. Being convinced of the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and the need for a greater involvement of parliaments in the conduct of international relations and in support of multilateralism, the Assembly welcomes Action 55 of the Pact for the Future, in which world leaders "recognize the importance of the United Nations engagement with national parliaments and relevant stakeholders, while preserving the intergovernmental character of the Organization". Consequently, the Assembly resolves to:
  - 19.1. continue its regular contacts with the United Nations institutions and agencies, promoting the involvement of national parliamentarians in the work of the United Nations and the implementation of its mission;
  - 19.2. enhance its dialogue and co-operation with national parliaments, especially of those countries under direct threat or experiencing aggression, in particular in areas such as foreign relations, democratic security, confidence building and conflict prevention;
  - 19.3. continue to act as an inclusive and representative platform for parliamentary dialogue, reaching out beyond Council of Europe membership;
  - 19.4. strengthen dialogue with other international parliamentary assemblies, such as the European Parliament, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly, as well as the Inter-Parliamentary Union;

19.5. review and, where necessary, enhance the effectiveness of its co-operation agreements with other international parliamentary assemblies or organisations.