The Think7 Quebec Declaration on Global Governance and the Challenges of Complexity and Inclusiveness
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The Think7/Idées7 Summit: Breaking Silos to Foster Innovation

The Think7/Idées7 Summit brought together researchers from academia and think tanks from all the G7 members, plus China, India and South Africa. We met in Quebec City and Baie St-Paul, Canada, on the eve of the 2018 G7 Charlevoix Summit, at the invitation of Laval University’s Institute for Advanced International Studies (Hautes études internationales), in partnership with six other Canadian schools of international affairs and think tanks. We collectively combine affiliations to 23 different university centres and think tanks, although the views expressed in this declaration are our own and do not necessarily reflect the views of those institutions.

The Charlevoix Summit takes place at a time of serious concern about the future of global governance. Efforts to address the critical global problems of our time, from climate change to civil wars, to refugee crises and trade conflicts have indeed stalled and even receded. International negotiations are dragging, treaties are denounced when not being simply violated, international organizations are defunded and arbitral decisions are ignored.

Concomitantly, in all of our societies, a strong scepticism about what global governance can accomplish has set in. Large segments of our electorates have concluded, rightly or not, that the global solutions proposed by their politicians have left them either impoverished or deprived of their sovereignty, or both.

What can be done to remedy this state of affairs? We have focused on innovative ways to concretely address two of the most pressing set of challenges global governance must overcome today: those related to complexity and to inclusiveness. Rather than approaching these challenges abstractly, we decided to look in depth at innovative ways to globally address concrete issues — issues that are complex in the sense that they cannot be efficiently dealt with using the traditional kit of global governance tools. Inspired by the priorities identified by the Canadian presidency for this year’s G7 and the Sustainable Development Goals, we sought solutions to problems that, by their nature, stand at the juncture of five traditional areas: trade, labour, the environment, security and migration. We also considered how each of these issues poses problems of inclusiveness, especially in terms of gender equity, and how the empowerment of marginalized groups should be integrated into all the solutions put forward.

We therefore submit to G7 leaders proposals for action on a wide spectrum of cross cutting issues. But before presenting our recommendations, we want to share our more general conclusions about what this exercise taught us about the challenges of complexity and inclusiveness in global governance.
The G7 and the Challenges of Complexity and Inclusiveness in Global Governance

Complexity and the need for inclusiveness are stressing the fabric of global governance from without and from within. And they are strongly interconnected.

From the outside, the problems in need of global action increasingly require intersectoral approaches to be efficiently addressed. They also all affect populations unequally, contributing to the further disenfranchisement of certain groups.

From within, international institutions have proliferated at the multilateral, regional and bilateral levels, with often overlapping, conflicting mandates. They also have developed along different models, often involving sub-state and non-state stakeholders. This new complexity of global governance has empowered some, but marginalized others.

The G7 is a case in point. It must adapt to address increasingly intricate global issues. Originally conceived as a macroeconomic forum, it has seen its agenda widen to cover issues as diverse as security, development, energy and terrorism. The G7 must also cope with international institutional proliferation, as it coexists with a growing number of other agenda-based summits, including the G20, with different forms of inclusion and exclusion.

G7 leaders are not only, as a group, first-hand witnesses of the challenges that complexity and inclusiveness represent for global governance. They are in a privileged position to address them. As heads of states and governments, they are the only individuals in the G7 who at home, are responsible for all subjects their government’s face and for addressing them in synergic, mutually supportive ways. As a grouping of the leading democracies and free-market economies, sharing the same basic values, they have the agenda-setting capacity to foster innovation at all levels of global governance.

The Need for Pragmatic, Evidence-Based Solutions

There are no silver bullets or one-size-fits-all solutions that will solve the challenges of complexity and inclusiveness. We need a global governance ecosystem that is conducive to synergies and innovation based on evidence and the best available science.

The time has come for G7 members to address global issues and assess global policy initiatives using the same approaches they use for domestic policies and regulations: relying on cost-benefit and impact analyses informed by the best science available. These assessments should carefully consider life cycle, opportunity, missed opportunities and other “hidden” costs. G7 members should collectively take advantage of Big Data analytics to develop joint protocols for sharing reliable data on global issues and policies. G7 governments have already developed government-to-government data-sharing models. Universities can help in extending these data-pooling practices, including to the instruments and practices of global governance itself, in ways consistent with high standards of citizen protection and privacy. We now have databanks on trade and environmental agreements, on regional international organizations and on international tribunals that reach levels of comprehensiveness that would have been unimaginable a few years ago.
The G7 is in a good position to reach multilateral agreements: its past history, small number of participants, convergence in values and similar development levels. Today trust is critical. The ability of the G7 to reach multilateral agreements will not only generate trust within the group but will also put the group in a stronger position when engaging with the wider global community.

Proposals for Action Submitted to G7 Leaders

We recommend that G7 leaders should:

A. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

1. Promote education that fosters adaptation and responsible citizenship by integrating STEM with social sciences, humanities and the arts.
2. Coordinate actions on education and mobility within and outside the G7 to overcome vulnerabilities, particularly in poor countries, and to increase opportunities for youth, girls and marginalized groups such as migrants.
3. Acknowledge and share responsibility for regional challenges and disorder posed by large refugees flows.

B. DIGITAL AND DATA SECURITY

4. Develop a strategy for public data security and integrity, including for securing our electoral systems, CBRN non-proliferation, and government-to-government data record sharing.
5. Adopt guidelines for cybersecurity that will strengthen cyber forensics and develop synergies with tech companies to enhance attribution of cybercrime.
6. Work with private sector leaders to enhance cooperation with non-G7 countries to relaunch trust-building measures in data integrity that underpins confidence and citizen participation in a global data commons.
7. Support universities to increase research and teaching on cyber and data security to educate a wider portion of our population on cyber and data hygiene.

C. PROGRESSIVE TRADE AGENDA

8. Include in all trade agreements a requirement to conduct periodic assessments of their social, environmental, gender and human rights impacts on all affected countries, to help design new trade agreements and revise existing ones. These assessments will rely on the best science available and new data.
9. Assess the impact of rapid technological changes on trade, the environment and society, with the view of empowering excluded groups. The G7 should establish a working group to this purpose.

10. Elaborate and expand on the positive developments in recent major free trade agreements concluded by G7 members with a view to creating a new momentum to reinvigorate the multilateral trading system.

11. Mainstream meaningful gender chapters in all trade agreements.

D. SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

12. Commit to the recent strategy of the International Maritime Organization on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and further support decarbonizing the shipping sector.

13. Reinforce resilient, sustainable coastal infrastructure and environment to reduce waste in the oceans including plastics.

14. Support the increased involvement of multilateral development banks in funding quality infrastructure projects, especially ones that promote a sustainable environment.

15. Phase out fossil fuel subsidies by 2025, including by ending immediately those that create unfair import competition.

E. FAIR TAX SYSTEMS

16. Consider the value of a global minimum corporate tax rate to address the problem of unfair tax competition.

17. Help identify and take opportunities for sustainable growth through global tax cooperation.
List of participants

Professor Abdoulaye Anne  
Centre de recherche et d’intervention sur la réussite scolaire  
Faculté des sciences de l’éducation, Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Professor Louis Bélanger  
Director, Institut québécois des hautes études internationales (HEI) Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Dr. Matthieu Boussichas  
Program Officer, Fondation pour les études et recherche en développement international (FERDI), Clermont-Ferrand, France

Mrs. Caterina Carta  
Titulaire de la Chaire de recherche du Canada en diplomatie publique Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Mr. Régis Coursin  
Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre d’études et de recherches internationales (CERIUM) Université de Montréal, Montréal, Canada

Professor Peter Dietsch  
Professor, Département de Philosophie, Université de Montréal  
Director of the Ethics and Economics Research Axis at the Centre de Recherche en Éthique (CRE)  
Affilié au Centre d’études et de recherches internationales de l’Université de Montréal (CÉRIUM), Montréal, Canada

Professor Hugo Dobson  
Director, School of East Asian Studies University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

Mrs. Judit Fabian  
Postdoctoral associate, International Policy & Trade Research Division  
The School of Public Policy, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada

Professor Marie-Hélène Gagnon  
Département de finance, assurance et immobilier  
Faculté des sciences de l’administration, Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Professor Nathalie Gravel  
Centre d’études interaméricaines  
Département de géographie, Université Laval, Québec, Canada
Mr. Kevin Kalomeni
PhD, Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Professor John Kirton
Director and founder of the G8 Research Group co-founder of the G20 Research Group Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Mrs. Madeline Koch
Executive director of the G8 and G20 Research Group
Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Professor Patrick Legros
Centre européen de recherches avancées en économie et statistiques (ECARES) Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

Professor Raffaele Marchetti
Department of Political Science and the School of Government
Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali (LUISS) Guido Carli, Rome, Italy

Mrs. Sithembile Mbete
Lecturer and associate fellow, Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation (GovInn) University of Pretoria, South Africa

Professor Jean-Frédéric Morin
Chaire de recherche du Canada en économie politique internationale Département de science politique, Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Mrs. Claire Peacock
PhD, Oxford University, United Kingdom

Professor Miriam Prys-Hansen
Academic Director, PhD Programm
German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg, Germany

Professor Nicholas Redman
Publishing director, publisher of the Adelphi book and Strategic Survey series International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, United Kingdom

Professor Simone Romano
Senior Fellow, Instituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, Italy

Professor Marie-Laure Salles-Djelic
Dean, School of Management and Innovation, Sciences Po Paris, Paris, France
**Professor Christopher Sands**  
Director, Centre for Canadian Studies, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, United States

**Professor Miranda Schreurs**  
Chairholder, Chair in Climate and Environmental Policy, Bavarian School of Public Policy, Technical University of Munich, Munich, Germany

**Mr. Aaron Shull**  
Management Director and General Counsel  
Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Canada

**Professor Arthur Silve**  
Département de science économique, Université Laval, Québec, Canada

**Professor Élisabeth Vallet**  
Scientific director, Chaire Raoul-Dandurand en études stratégiques et diplomatiques, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Montréal, Canada

**Professor Yorizumi Watanabe**  
Faculty of Policy Management, Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University, Tokyo, Japan

**Professor Jan Wouters**  
Director, Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, President Institute for International Law, KU Leuven, Belgium

**Professor Jiejin Zhu**  
School of International Relations & Public Affairs  
Fudan University, Shanghai, China