

GLOBAL RESILIENCE COUNCIL

# Adapting for an uncertain future

THE 21st century has ushered in an era marked by unprecedented challenges, from the existential threat of climate change and the destabilising effects of economic inequality to the proliferation of cyber threats and the recurring spectres of pandemics and geopolitical tensions.

These intricate crises have laid bare the frailties in our interconnected world, underscoring the imperative for cohesive and robust strategies. As we navigate this complex landscape, it becomes increasingly clear that international responses must be recalibrated to address these urgent needs more effectively.

Resilience isn't merely about bouncing back; it's a vital quality that enables societies to evolve stronger in global crises such as climate change, economic instability, and pandemics. It's intrinsically linked to societal fragility, a dynamic condition influenced by governance, political stability, and social cohesion.

Building resilience is a long-term commitment that requires a layered approach to surviving challenges and fundamentally transforming systems for future preparedness.

A significant issue stems from how international solutions are structured: isolated clusters with minimal interconnectivity. Even more concerning is the fact that the UN Security Council, the sole UN body with the authority to issue binding decisions to member states, is poorly equipped to address some of humanity's gravest threats – particularly those that don't necessitate military intervention.

For instance, it could provide a unique platform to discuss vexing issues such as how to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots; how to end poverty, a matter that has eluded the world for time immemorial. This incongruity casts doubt on the



BUYELWA SONJICA

Chairperson of the Inclusive Society Institute's Advisory Council

efficacy of international governance systems and underscores the need for more holistic and flexible frameworks capable of addressing long-term, multifaceted challenges.

In addition, the limitations of existing global structures are symptomatic of a more significant issue: the inability of existing international institutions to adapt to a rapidly changing global environment.

The focus on state-centric issues and military interventions often overlooks the root causes of fragility, such as economic inequality, social injustice, and environmental degradation, which require multi-sectoral and long-term strategies.

Consequently, the rise of new international groups like BRICS underscores a critical point: when nations feel underrepresented or believe that existing institutions are failing, they seek alternative platforms to achieve their objectives. BRICS aims to amplify voices from the Global South in international forums and reform critical international financial institutions, making them more representative and responsive to the challenges confronting developing economies.

Far from being a mere contest for influence with Western economies,

these developments reveal that developing countries perceive the current phase of globalisation as inherently risky. This strategy is intrinsically tied to the concept of resilience, both at local and international levels. By seeking to minimise economic vulnerabilities and create more robust financial systems, these nations are taking proactive steps to build resilience outside existing institutions.

This is a clear example of how resilience is not just a local issue but a global imperative, requiring co-ordinated efforts and diversified strategies to navigate the complexities of today's world.

While the UN Security Council plays a crucial role in global politics, the international community must create institutions that further concentrate on the underlying structural conditions contributing to societal fragility stemming from deeper issues within communities and nations.

The Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability has been championing the establishment of a Global Resilience Council (GRC) under the auspices of the UN.

This proposed entity is designed to unify various agencies, stakeholders, and sectors under a single framework. Its mission is to facilitate long-term planning, acknowledging that resilience-building is a multifaceted, enduring, and cross-sectoral endeavour.

It seeks to shift the focus from predominantly militarised solutions to fragility, concentrating instead on the structural and long-term conditions that enable fragile nations to build resilience.

A sort of security council for non-military issues, albeit a more democratic and representative structure.

This initiative represents a significant step towards adopting a more systematic approach to addressing fra-

gility, reducing the reliance on security approaches and focusing on addressing common human security challenges.

Building resilience is a long-term commitment that requires a layered approach to surviving challenges and fundamentally transforming systems for future preparedness

It aims to enhance co-ordination among multi-sectoral strategies and bolster the international community's capacity to comprehend the interconnectedness of co-ordinated efforts for building resilient societies.

Rather than viewing resilience through the narrow lenses of development, economics, or military strategy alone, the Council encourages us to see it as part of intricate systems that demand equally complex solutions.

It could serve as a nexus for diverse local, national, regional, and international actors. The Council could facilitate more effective national planning, support articulating a coherent societal vision for the future, and advocate for global strategies that transcend traditional, simplistic, and linear paradigms.

Established organisations like the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the African Development Bank have already laid the groundwork. Their strategies and insights offer valuable lessons for the proposed Global Resilience Council.

Existing approaches focus on critical areas such as legitimate politics,

security, and economic foundations, stressing the importance of nationally-led assessments and coherent planning. Their comprehensive tools could significantly inform the Council's agenda.

A decade ago, the African Development Bank's High-Level Panel on Resilience offered a multi-faceted strategy that remains relevant today. It highlighted the need for regional frameworks to tackle transnational challenges like climate change and called for inclusive governance to build trust between states and citizens.

These recommendations align closely with the Global Resilience Council's objectives and offer a blueprint for moving beyond short-term solutions.

Incorporating these insights can make the GRC more practical and grounded in reality. The international community needs to move beyond rhetoric and effectively assist in fostering the inherent resilience within communities, advocating for a multi-layered approach that co-ordinates community, state, and regional efforts.

The GRC presents an innovative approach to some of the most pressing challenges of our time. However, its success will depend on clearly defining its mandate and securing political will. As we contemplate the future of global governance, let's remember that resilience is not just about weathering storms; it's about transforming our systems to be better prepared for the challenges ahead. The Council could be a significant step in that direction.

In a world where challenges are increasingly transnational, the GRC could serve as the vehicle for a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future, but it will require careful planning and collective will to make it effective.

## IMAGE OF THE DAY



A FARMER transports apples along a road in Metula near Israel's border with Lebanon, in northern Israel, this week. | Reuters

## QUICK READ

### CENSUS

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa has vowed that the government will implement evidence-driven policies to drive economic growth and create jobs as South Africa's population has increased by 10.3 million since 2011.

This comes as Statistics South Africa released the results of its Census 2022, showing that the population of South Africa increased from 51.7m in 2011 to more than 62m in 2022; a growth rate of 1.8% in the intercensal period.

This is the largest percentage change in population size since 1996. | IOL

### IEC

THE Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) has announced that it will use next weekend to embark on a major re-registration process for thousands of KwaZulu-Natal voters affected by the demarcation process.

The commission says the demarcation process, which was undertaken early this year, affected 774 voting districts, and after it was completed, 32 more voting districts were created.

KwaZulu-Natal will now have 4 973 voting districts, up from 4 941. | IOL

## Daily News

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Editor Ayanda Mdluli  
 Newsdesk 031 308 2199  
 Advertising 031 308 2004  
 KZN.classifieds@inl.co.za  
 Subscriptions 0800 204 711  
 Deliveries 031 308 2022  
 0800 220 770  
 Mail: 18 Osborne, Greyville Durban 4001  
 E-mail: kznsubs@inl.co.za  
 Web: iol.co.za/Daily News  
 Facebook: facebook.com/Daily News SA  
 Twitter: @DailynewsSA  
 Instagram: @dailynews\_sa



GROUP OMBUD

Aneez Salie

aneez.salie@inl.co.za

Complaints can be sent to:

Office of The Group Ombud (Arbitration)

complaints@inl.co.za

Legal matters

legal@inl.co.za

Subscription Complaints and non delivery

subscribers@inl.co.za

https://www.independentmediaombud.co.za/

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## OPEN LETTER

# It's time to take emergency action, Mr President

NOBUNTU HLAZO-WEBSTER

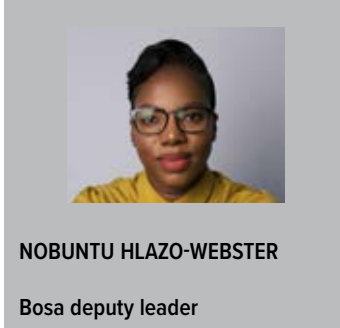
DEAR President Ramaphosa  
 I write to you as a concerned citizen on your 2 065th day as president of the republic.

Today, millions of South Africans are living in suffering and struggle under your government. Many are trapped in poverty and joblessness, without hope for a better future. Not only is the economy in free fall, propelled by an energy catastrophe, but households also face a cost-of-living crisis not seen for a decade and more.

There is a debt trap that is gripping households of all income brackets. The South African Reserve Bank's latest quarterly bulletin revealed that the average South African household spends about two-thirds of their disposable income on servicing debt.

Debt to feed hungry mouths, buy school uniforms for their children and pay for transport to work and school.

The trend is clear: debt is increasing as net wealth declines. Add to this inflation increases, which impacts



NOBUNTU HLAZO-WEBSTER

Bosa deputy leader

bond repayments and rental contracts. The cost of the basic food basket is R5 155.77 according to the Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity Group.

Middle- and upper-income families are straddled with additional expenses that include private schooling, private security and private medical aid, which are all on the rise.

Lower-income households face the proportionality challenge, as most spend an average of 70% of their income on food and transport. This while more than half of South Africa lives below the upper poverty line.

The ramifications will intensify in the coming months due to rolling blackouts.

Additional costs are incurred by businesses to run generators. As it pertains to food, for example, the increased cost of doing business spans from production, all the way along the supply chain and to supermarket shelves. The costs are passed on to consumers.

Finally, the cost of transport has rocketed over the past 100 days. Just last week, petrol prices increased by R1.08 and R1.14 a litre, and diesel by between R1.94 and R1.97 a litre. This is on top of last month's increase of R1.71 for petrol and R2.84 for diesel.

Something has to give, Mr President. Citizens need a respite from the level of pressure from all sides.

I wish to raise with you several interventions Build One South Africa (Bosa) is advocating for your government to pursue. They are not long-term solutions but rather, short-term relief mechanisms to aid struggling households in this trying economic time.

First, cut the numerous transport

taxes, called fuel levies, that make up a third of the total cost of a litre of petrol. This has a direct impact on lowering citizens' transport costs and the cost of food.

South Africans are at a breaking point, and you have the power and ability to implement short term interventions to assist our people

Second, expand the list of zero-rated food items that are untaxed. With VAT likely to increase, this is a vital intervention for poor households that spend a disproportionate amount of income on food.

Third, freeze the 31.4% electricity price increase scheduled for the medium term. Again, this is an out-of-touch and unaffordable increase for squeezed households.

We are acutely aware of the government's financial position.

The finance minister has all but said that the state coffers are running dry.

The source of this is well known by all: the rank mismanagement of public funds buttressed by the pernicious acts of corruption operating at all levels of the government.

Therefore, to make funds available to finance the relief measures, your government will need to at least consider: Selling all government shares in private companies, valued at billions of rand.

Downsizing the Cabinet to 10 super-ministries, and cutting VIP protection, travel and catering costs and other perks enjoyed by mayors, premiers, MECs and the Cabinet.

Recouping, through legal action, all the money stolen through corruption.

I do hope you give the relief measures the due consideration they deserve. South Africans are at a breaking point, and you have the power and ability to implement short-term interventions to assist our people.

Your move, Mr President.