

GOVERNANCE OF **COMPLEX GLOBAL SHOCKS**

Preparing the UN multilateral system for the next
complex global shock

SEPTEMBER 2026

About the report

This report is a product of the Global Shield Institute (GSI). It was written by GSI's Global Growth and Development Manager Maria Laura Scapolatempore Starling, Director of Policy and Strategy Rumtin Sepasspour, and Executive Director Jared Brown.

We extend our gratitude to global risk experts for generously dedicating their time and expertise to help ideate and review drafts of this report, particularly Olwen Byrne, Tommi Asikainen, and Zachary Kallenborn.

About Global Shield Institute

Global Shield is an international advocacy organization devoted to reducing all-hazards global catastrophic risk (GCR). We work with governments worldwide to enact policies to better understand, prevent, prepare for, and respond to global catastrophes, regardless of the threat that might produce them.

Global Shield Institute is part of the broader Global Shield enterprise. Our mission is to educate the public and policymakers worldwide about global catastrophic risk. Our unique all-hazards approach helps equip governments with the tools they need to develop and effectively implement policies that reduce global catastrophic risk.

We believe an all-hazards policy approach to addressing GCR can ensure governments are effectively shielding all of us from global catastrophes. At Global Shield, we envision a world in which all governments have acted decisively to reduce and, where possible, eliminate global catastrophic risk.

Acknowledgements

This paper draws on the work of a wide community of institutions and individuals dedicated to understanding, anticipating and reducing the risk of complex global shocks and catastrophic-scale events. While certain global threats do receive dedicated and worthwhile attention, such as climate change, global conflict and insecurity, and nuclear weapons, there is a relatively small community of researchers and practitioners who focus on global risk at large.

We therefore wish to extend a thank you to the various organizations – multilateral institutions, research and academic organizations, think tanks and advocacy groups – that are championing global risk reduction every day. We are especially grateful to the researchers, analysts, and practitioners who have spent years building the evidence base, methodologies and early-warning tools for global risk. There are too many to name, but we would like to draw attention to a select few who have, either directly or indirectly, made papers like this one possible:

- to the [UN Executive Office of the Secretary-General](#), for their efforts in translating the abstract challenge of complex global shocks into concrete institutional proposals and for their launch of the inaugural [UN Global Risk Report](#) in 2025;
- to the [United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction \(UNDRR\)](#) and the teams behind the [Sendai Framework Monitor](#) and the [Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction](#);
- to the [World Economic Forum's Global Risks](#) team for two decades of tracking how experts and leaders perceive the shifting severity and interconnection of global risk;
- to [The Elders](#), for their sustained moral leadership in urging the international community to confront long-term, civilization-scale threats with the urgency they deserve;
- to the [Cascade Institute](#) for its foundational work defining and analyzing polycrisis dynamics;
- to the [Accelerator for Systemic Risk Assessment \(ASRA\)](#) for advancing the study of systemic risk as a distinct field;
- to the [Simon Institute for Longterm Governance](#), for its work on strengthening multilateral capacity to anticipate and govern catastrophic and existential risk;
- to [RAND](#), for decades of rigorous policy analysis on global security, resilience, and crisis preparedness, including recent efforts on global catastrophic risk; and
- to the [United Nations University \(UNU\)](#), for its research bridging academia and the UN system on peace, governance, and emerging global risks.

Inclusion in these acknowledgements does not imply endorsement of this report or its findings.



Table of contents

About the report

About Global Shield Institute

Acknowledgements

1. An increasingly complex and challenging risk landscape	1
2. What are complex global shocks?	4
3. Why do complex global shocks matter?	5
4. The challenge of governing complex global shocks	10
5. The role of the UN for managing complex global shocks?	14
5.1. Existing UN mechanisms for crisis response	14
5.2. Responsibilities of UN bodies and organizations to respond to complex global shocks	15
5.3. Recent UN initiatives for complex global shocks	18
THE UN CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM (CMT) FOR COVID-19, 2020	18
THE GLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE GROUP (GCRG), 2022	18
ACTION 54 OF THE PACT FOR THE FUTURE	19
6. Gaps for governing complex global shocks	21
7. Recommendations	22



Executive Summary

Complex global shocks are events that severely disrupt multiple sectors – food, energy, water, supply chains, telecommunications – for a significant proportion of the global population. They are becoming more likely and more severe. The COVID-19 pandemic and the 2026 Strait of Hormuz disruption demonstrated how a single event can cascade simultaneously through economic, financial, societal, and political systems, falling hardest on the countries and communities least equipped to absorb them.

The United Nations (UN) has the membership, legitimacy, and convening power to coordinate a multilateral response of the scope needed for a complex global shock. Yet the UN system is not currently designed to manage complex shocks that cross borders and create broad sectoral consequences so quickly and comprehensively. The UN and its bodies face gaps in the warning systems, mandates, funding structure, and capacity needed to manage such shocks.

A variety of actors within and around the UN system need to take actions that improve the ability of the UN to coordinate multiple responses to complex global shocks:

- We urge the **Secretary-General and relevant UN entities** to consolidate the operational lessons of recent system-wide responses into pre-agreed coordination arrangements and responses that can be activated quickly when the next complex global shock occurs. We also urge them to develop approaches and procedures for responding to complex global shocks in partnership with the private sector, civil society, and Member States.
- We urge **candidates for Secretary-General** to commit to strengthening the UN system's anticipation of and response to complex global shocks through permanent structural reforms with support from the General Assembly.
- We urge **Member States and the General Assembly** to approach future negotiations on how best to manage complex global shocks in good faith and with a willingness to embrace the ambitious and creative thinking that is necessary to meet the extreme needs of the 21st-century threat landscape.
- We urge **civil society organizations** across social sectors and with broad interests in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals to build support for a stronger, more comprehensive UN response to such shocks.

Another complex global shock is not a matter of if, but when. And when it happens, the world will look to the UN to provide leadership across the complex spectrum of consequences evolving from the crisis. The UN must be ready for that dark day.

1. An increasingly complex and challenging risk landscape

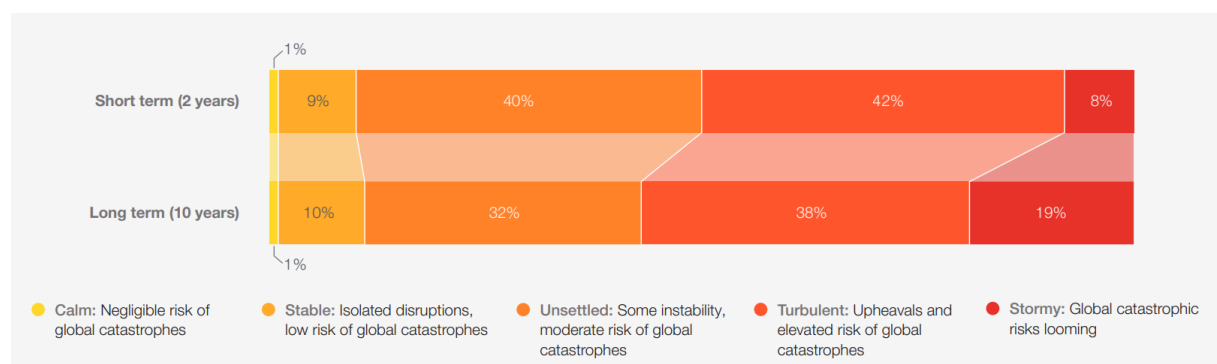
The world is experiencing a period of accelerating and converging global-level risk. The risk emerges from a range of megatrends in global politics, security, society, economy, and the environment. Climate change is intensifying, and compounding hazards are eroding ecological and economic buffers. Technological development and diffusion are deepening reliance on digital systems and economies. The movement of people – from rural to urban areas, from one region to another – shapes economic, environmental and health conditions.

Of course, these trends also create many positives for the world. Access to education, technology, resources, economic opportunities, and welfare services levels the playing field. Over the past two centuries, the world has seen remarkable progress in human rights, health outcomes, poverty reduction, and political freedoms.

However, every so often, the tectonic plates that underpin the global order crash together, creating shocks that pulse like tsunamis around the world. In the span of the past six years, the COVID-19 pandemic reversed years of global poverty reduction, the 2022 war in Ukraine triggered interlinked food and energy crises, and the 2026 Strait of Hormuz disruption affected global supplies critical for energy, fertilizer, and food systems.

Over the next decade, the risk of a global shock is only increasing. [The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2026](#) finds the world in an “age of competition,” marked by geopolitical fragmentation and confrontation, with half of leaders and experts surveyed expecting the next two years to be “turbulent” or “stormy”. This share rises to 57% over a 10-year horizon, with nearly a fifth anticipating global catastrophic risks.

Figure 1 – Short-term (2 years) and long-term (10 years) global outlook, “Which of the following best characterizes your outlook for the world over the following time periods?”

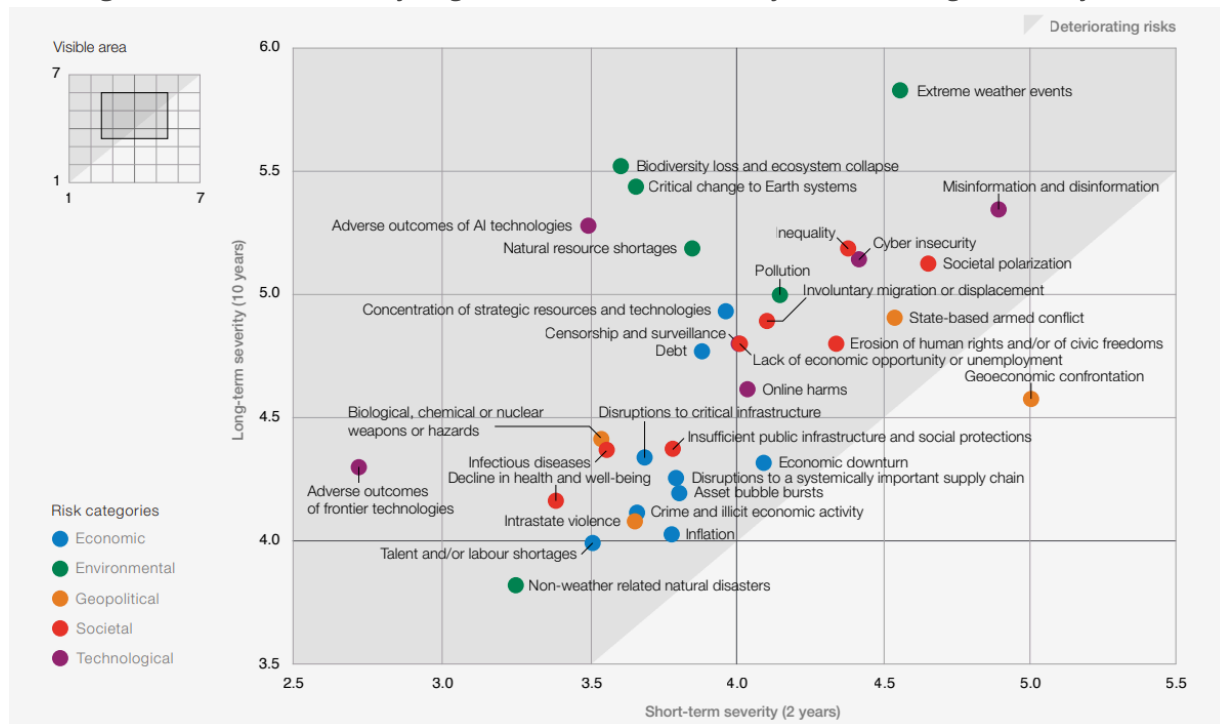


Source: World Economic Forum Global Risks Perception Survey 2025-2026

In the near term, the top concerns are geoeconomic confrontation, state-based armed conflict, extreme weather events, societal polarization, and misinformation and disinformation. The report stresses that these threats are not independent, but interact in dangerous feedback loops. Looking out over the next decade, environmental risks like extreme weather, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, and critical changes to Earth systems are ranked as the three most severe long-term threats. And the perceived risk from artificial

intelligence (AI) shows the largest jump of any category, climbing from thirtieth in the near-term rankings to fifth over the long term.

Figure 2 – Relative severity of global risks, short term (2 years) and long term (10 years).

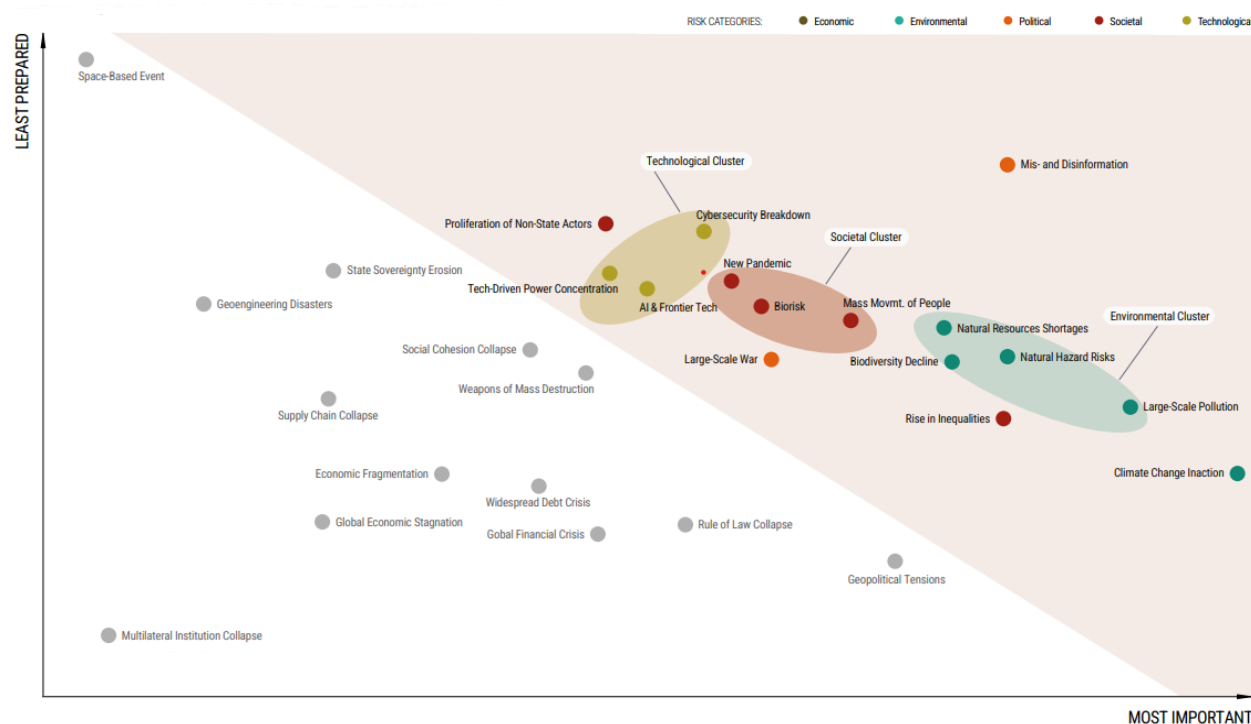


Source: World Economic Forum Global Risks Perception Survey 2025-2026

In a similar [assessment](#) carried out in 2023 by the UN's Office for Disaster Risk Reduction the International Science Council (ISC), the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk and the Simon Institute for Longterm Governance, researchers assessed 302 listed hazards to identify ten geological, biological, technological, and societal hazards that have the potential to escalate globally. The top ten were identified as volcanic aerosols capable of triggering global cooling and food system collapse, deadly pandemics, antimicrobial resistance, harmful algal blooms, nuclear weapons use and resulting nuclear winter, radiation agents, critical infrastructure disruption, hazards related to the Internet of Things, international armed conflict, and environmental degradation stemming from conflict. The researchers further identified climate change and AI as the two most influential cross-cutting forces capable of creating, amplifying, or accelerating these hazards.

The UN also conducts its own survey to identify the greatest global threats. The inaugural [UN Global Risk Report](#), released in 2025 and based on 2024 survey data of over 1,100 stakeholders from 136 countries, presented an overview of the perceptions of risk worldwide and the readiness of multilateral institutions to manage these threats. The report identified 11 risks that were both the most important and for which multilateral institutions were least prepared: Cybersecurity Breakdown; New Pandemic; Natural Resource Shortages; Mis- and Disinformation; Negative Outcomes of AI and Frontier Technologies; Biorisks; Biodiversity Decline; Technology-Driven Power Concentration; Mass Movement of People; Natural Hazard Risks; and Large-Scale Pollution.

Figure 3 – Map of Global Vulnerabilities



Source: UN Global Risk Report (2025).

Some of these – such as cybersecurity breakdown, pandemic and natural resource shortages – constitute shocks in their own right. Others, such as AI, frontier technologies, and mis- and disinformation, could contribute to a global shock by exacerbating its impact or hampering response efforts. The report shows that the global risk environment is precarious, with a diverse and overlapping set of economic, environmental, political, societal and technological global threats.

These reports, among other global risk assessments conducted by other think tanks, multilateral organizations, insurance companies and geopolitical risk analysts, all point to a similar conclusion: **that global risk is intensifying, becoming more interconnected, and driving a greater potential for disruptions, crises and shocks.**

2. What are complex global shocks?

What makes this risk landscape different from any time in human history is its *global* and *complex nature*. As the global risk reports in the previous section show, the variety and scale of the global threats are growing, and they are intersecting in ways that exacerbate risk and complicate response.

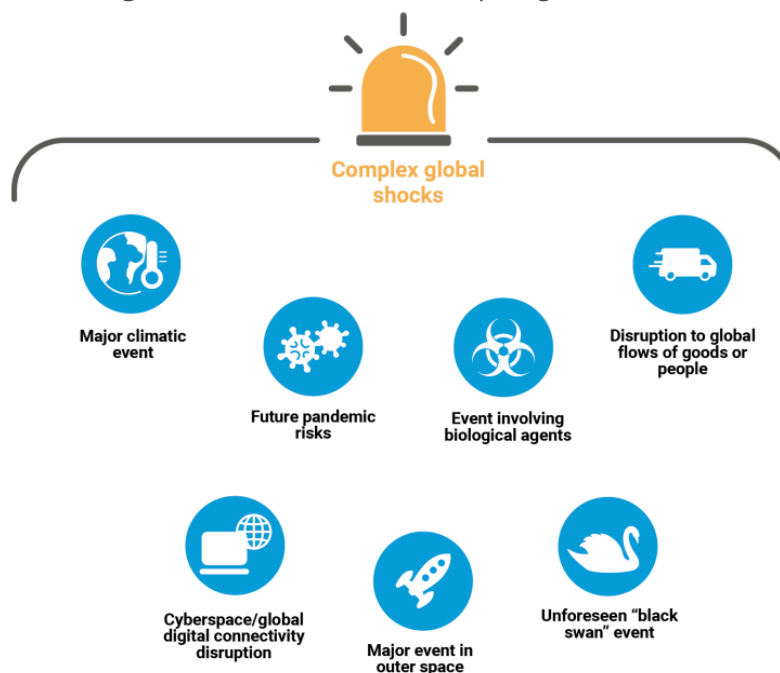
Ultimately, this risk landscape increases the likelihood, severity and uncertainty of shocks. Few corners of the world can avoid their ramifications. They can cross borders and overwhelm economic and societal sectors simultaneously. And they defy typical response measures by nation states.

The UN has increasingly recognized the importance of these shocks. [Our Common Agenda](#), the Secretary-General's 2021 package of recommendations to reinvigorate the UN, proposed an anticipatory role for the UN for “complex global crises”. The problem set was most recently defined in the 2024 [Pact for the Future](#), demonstrating the need for a UN approach to dealing with them:

Complex global shocks are events that have severely disruptive and adverse consequences for a significant proportion of countries and the global population, and that lead to impacts across multiple sectors, requiring a multidimensional and whole-of-government, whole-of-society response.

Future complex global shocks could come from environmental, biological, economic, or health domains. The most recent examples include the Global Financial Crisis of 2007–2009, the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 Russia-Ukraine, and the 2026 Strait of Hormuz disruption.

Figure 4 – Possible future complex global shocks



Source: [Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 2](#) (2023).

3. Why do complex global shocks matter?

Complex global shocks are a topic relevant to all countries, all sectors, and all efforts to improve peace, security, health and wellbeing around the world. They might emanate from parts of the world or types of threats outside one's immediate interests. But they ripple into everyone's lives.

There are three characteristics of complex global shocks that make them particularly important and deserving of their own dedicated attention from local, national and international policy institutions.

First, they are **systemic** and **cascading**. Drawing on the [definition](#) of the Accelerator for Systemic Risk Assessment (ASRA), this means that a problem arising in one part of society or nature can trigger widespread, interconnected effects across other sectors of society. Rather than a single, contained harm to one actor or community, systemic risk can cascade across multiple sectors and geographies at once. This makes shocks severe, abrupt, and long-lasting. They are difficult to forecast or recover from, and their impacts are particularly grave.

Second, they are **overwhelming**. They affect a significant proportion of the global population simultaneously, with varying effects across regions. This matters from a national perspective because a shock unfolding everywhere at once cannot be resolved by looking only inward, not even by the most well-resourced countries. The inputs that countries rely on, from trade and travel to supply chains and financial markets, are being disrupted at the same time everywhere, while countries are also actively competing for the same scarce resources. This does not mean the effects are distributed equally globally, but that effects reach globally in many vectors.

Third, they are **compounding** and **overlapping**. In this modern age of continual or frequent crises, sometimes [called](#) the “polycrisis,” shocks produce harms greater than the sum of those the crises would produce in isolation. They feed back into and amplify each other, creating a compounding effect that no single crisis would produce alone. Each response to a shock drains political, social and economic capital, leaving less for the next. And the usual tools available for policymakers might not be sufficient.

As a result, complex global shocks set back progress in economic equality and development, human rights, health and wellbeing, and global peace and security. They hit every single Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), just as the SDGs are already behind target. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026 [found](#) that – out of the 139 targets with sufficient trend data – only 15% of SDG targets are on track and 21% are making moderate progress, while 49% show only marginal or no progress. Most concerningly, 15% of targets have regressed below their 2015 baseline levels, a setback that the UN attributes to violent conflicts reaching their highest levels in decades, the lasting effects of COVID-19, and intensifying climate disruption. Because these shocks fall hardest on the poorest and least resilient countries, they also widen the very inequalities the Goals are meant to close. UNDRR also [concluded](#) that, without far greater investment in resilience to systemic risk, the SDGs cannot be met.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the clearest recent example of how a complex global shock sets back the SDGs. The pandemic [wiped out](#) more than four years of poverty reduction progress. It pushed millions back into extreme poverty and hunger. For economic policy makers and business leaders all around the world, it exposed fragilities in international supply chains and forced reactions in monetary, fiscal, and industrial policy. For those concerned with social welfare and protection, COVID-19 was felt most by disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and countries with fewer resources and weaker institutions. For political leaders, measures to restrict movement and mandate vaccines have had powerful counter-reactions from political groupings. The COVID-19 pandemic even had [complex effects](#) in Antarctica. **In short, a health crisis emerging from East Asia required policy imagination and urgent action not just from health professionals, but from economic, social, and national security policymakers all around the world.**

Each of the SDGs are vulnerable to complex global shocks in its own way. The table below illustrates these impacts.

Figure 5 – Example effects of complex global shocks on the SDGs and indicative examples

SDG GOAL	EXAMPLE EFFECTS ON SDG PROGRESS FROM COMPLEX GLOBAL SHOCKS	EXAMPLE OR RELEVANT STATISTICS BASED ON RECENT SHOCKS
1 NO POVERTY 	Income and livelihood disruption push households below poverty lines; fiscal contractions reduce social protection coverage.	During COVID-19, the extreme poverty rate rose from 8.4% to 9.5% between 2019 and 2020 – the first rise in over 20 years. In Ukraine alone, largely due to the ongoing war, over 8 million people have been pushed into poverty. By 2026, 1 in 10 people worldwide still live in extreme poverty. Growth forecasts, even before the recent Middle East conflict, already projected roughly 9% of the world still in extreme poverty by 2030.
2 ZERO HUNGER 	Supply chain disruption and price spikes destabilize food systems; conflict restricts grain and fertilizer trade.	During COVID-19, nearly one person in three worldwide could not access adequate food in 2020, an increase of some 320 million in a single year. Acute food insecurity peaked at 345 million people across 82 countries in 2022, partly as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war. By 2024, food prices had eased back toward pre-pandemic levels, but the 2026 disruption of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has triggered interconnected shocks across energy, fertilizer and agrifood systems, with urea prices jumping in April 2026. The Food and Agriculture Organization has warned specifically about the food-security consequences.
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	Increased casualties or health needs overwhelm health systems; conflict and displacement disrupt medical supply chains.	14.9 million excess deaths were associated with COVID-19 in 2020-2021. Global life expectancy fell 1.8 years, back to the 2012 level; healthy life expectancy fell 1.5 years. According to the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB), the risk of a new pandemic even more devastating than previous public health emergencies is rising. Investment and measures to address this threat have not kept pace with rising pandemic risk. Some aspects of preparedness have improved, but efforts are being offset by geopolitical fragmentation, ecological disruption, global travel, and reducing development assistance. A major digital infrastructure incident could be catastrophic for the health sector. For example, the CrowdStrike outage forced hospitals across multiple countries to cancel non-urgent surgeries, procedures and appointments.

SDG GOAL	EXAMPLE EFFECTS ON SDG PROGRESS FROM COMPLEX GLOBAL SHOCKS	EXAMPLE OR RELEVANT STATISTICS BASED ON RECENT SHOCKS
4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	School closures and displacement interrupt learning; economic shocks reduce household investment in education.	According to the 2026 SDG Report , as of 2025, more than 1 in 5 primary schools worldwide still lack electricity, safe water or basic sanitation, and 273 million children and young people remain out of school. During COVID-19, education systems were fully closed for an average of 141 days between February 2020 and February 2022. More than 1.6 billion learners were directly impacted in more than 190 countries.
5 GENDER EQUALITY 	Women and girls face heightened risks of gender-based violence, reduced economic participation, and increased unpaid care burdens.	According to the 2026 SDG Report , nearly 1 in 3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Progress on decision-making parity is slowing, and protection systems strain further whenever crises like Gaza or Sudan divert resources and disrupt services. During COVID-19, up to 10 million more girls were placed at risk of child marriage over the following decade, reports of violence against women doubled, and tripled in some places, while unpaid domestic and care work pushed women out of the labor force. 90% of the 5.6 million refugees who fled Ukraine are women and children, facing elevated exposure to gender-based violence and exploitation.
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	Infrastructure damage reduces water availability and strains sanitation systems; financial contractions limit future investment.	In 2024, 2.1 billion people still lacked safely managed drinking water, 3.4 billion lacked safely managed sanitation, and 1.7 billion lacked basic hygiene services. Shocks to critical water infrastructure can disrupt access to water in advanced economies. For example, the Iberian blackout in 2025 disrupted water supply in some regions alongside telecommunications and rail.
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	Energy price shocks disproportionately affect import-dependent economies; infrastructure disruption reduces access to electricity.	The 2026 SDG report explicitly flags the 2026 Strait of Hormuz disruption, which affected global oil output and prices in Q1 2026, as a cross-cutting risk to energy goals. In Ukraine, strikes on energy infrastructure during the 2025-2026 winter left millions without reliable heating, water or electricity amid sub-zero temperatures. The 2022 edition of Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report , nearly 90 million people in Asia and Africa who had gained electricity access could no longer afford their basic energy needs. The 2025 Iberian blackout was the first known European blackout driven by excess voltage rather than a supply shortfall. It left between 47 and 60 million people without electricity across Spain and Portugal, with knock-on effects in Andorra and parts of southwest France.
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	Recessions lower employment; supply chain collapse exposes export-dependent economies.	The COVID-19 pandemic caused the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs to be lost in 2020. Around half the global workforce (1.6 billion informal workers) were in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed. The 2026 SDG Report shows that global per-capita growth forecasts have already been downgraded because of the 2026 Strait of Hormuz disruption

SDG GOAL	EXAMPLE EFFECTS ON SDG PROGRESS FROM COMPLEX GLOBAL SHOCKS	EXAMPLE OR RELEVANT STATISTICS BASED ON RECENT SHOCKS
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	Surging demand overloads critical infrastructure and disrupts supply chains; emergency response absorbs investment meant for resilience.	The CrowdStrike outage crashed approximately 8.5 million Windows devices, disproportionately affecting those running critical services. More than 4% of global flights were canceled or delayed over the 72 hours following the outage.
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	Existing inequalities widen between and within countries; lower-income countries lose proportionally more and recover more slowly.	As of 2025, debt distress affects more than half of the 68 low-income countries eligible for the International Monetary Fund's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust , more than twice the 2015 figure. COVID-19 is estimated to have increased the global Gini index by 0.7 points and global extreme poverty by 90 million people compared to counterfactuals without the pandemic. According to the 2026 SDG Report , refugee numbers have more than doubled since 2015, as conflict has intensified globally.
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	Emergency response absorbs financing for sustainable infrastructure; sudden, unplanned population shifts strain urban systems.	The 2025 Iberian blackout caused rail services, road traffic signals, telecommunications, and card and Automated Teller Machine (ATM) payment systems to fail simultaneously across the peninsula, affecting between 47 and 60 million people.
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 	Concentrated, just-in-time production fragility is exposed; price spikes and scarcity drive hoarding and waste.	According to the 2026 SDG Report , global fossil fuel subsidies fell 10.2% in 2024 to US\$921 billion, while food loss (13.3% of production) and waste (1.05 billion tonnes a year, 19% of available food) remain essentially unchanged since 2015, together responsible for up to 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The Strait of Hormuz shock triggered the largest coordinated buffer drawdown on record – International Energy Agency (IEA) members committed to a 400 million barrel stock release as a stopgap measure. The Iberian blackout led to perishable stock losses – Spain's meat industry alone estimated losses of up to €190 million (~US\$ 220 million) as refrigeration failed.
13 CLIMATE ACTION 	Energy security concerns delay mitigation commitments; emergency spending crowds out climate investment.	According to the 2026 SDG Report , the 11-year stretch from 2015 to 2025 was the hottest on record. 2025 still ranked as the second or third warmest year on record at around 1.43°C above pre-industrial levels, despite the temporary cooling effect of La Niña. Disaster-related mortality fell over the past decade, but the number of people affected more than doubled, to an average of 123 million a year.
14 LIFE BELOW WATER 	Food insecurity intensifies overfishing; competing priorities divert finance from ocean conservation.	About 35% of global fish stocks are fished at unsustainable levels. Warm-water reefs are vital to up to a billion people and almost a million species and are currently experiencing unprecedented mortality under repeated mass bleaching events. Crossing the AMOC or Subpolar Gyre tipping point would cause marine ecosystem shifts and decreased agricultural yields.

SDG GOAL	EXAMPLE EFFECTS ON SDG PROGRESS FROM COMPLEX GLOBAL SHOCKS	EXAMPLE OR RELEVANT STATISTICS BASED ON RECENT SHOCKS
15 LIFE ON LAND 	Conservation finance contracts; displacement and food and fuel insecurity accelerate deforestation.	The Amazon faces large-scale forest degradation and regime shifts from interacting climate and land-use feedbacks. These changes risk transforming forested areas into altered ecosystems, weakening global climate regulation, altering regional climate and accelerating biodiversity loss. The war in Ukraine has driven land degradation, mine contamination and cropland abandonment at scale, alongside the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam and its irrigation system.
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 	Institutional failure under strain erodes public trust in multilateral systems; contested crisis response destabilizes governance.	In 2025, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) , violent conflicts have reached their highest levels in decades. As of the end of 2025, an estimated 117.8 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, including 41.6 million refugees. During the CrowdStrike outage, 911 emergency call centers, police departments, public transit and multiple government agencies including the US Department of Homeland Security suffered outages.
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	Financial flows to developing countries contract; geopolitical tension reduces multilateral cooperation.	According to the 2026 SDG Report , official development assistance fell 23.1% in 2025 to US\$174.3 billion – the largest annual drop on record, wiping out a decade of gains and returning aid to roughly 2015 levels – even as global military spending hit a record US\$2.9 trillion in 2025, its eleventh consecutive year of growth. During COVID-19 global Foreign Direct Investment flows fell 40% in 2020, and about 42% of countries postponed censuses scheduled for 2020 or 2021 by at least a year.

4. The challenge of governing complex global shocks

In this globalized and interconnected world, complex global shocks are inevitable. But knowing that such shocks will occur does little to make them manageable. Therefore, governments and policymakers must build institutions and capabilities that manage the challenges of complex global shocks in the 21st century. There are three key challenges.

First, the timing and origination of the shock are difficult to forecast. By definition, they arise from an array of drivers that interconnect and bypass existing national and international processes. It is not to suggest that a shock of this kind was unknowable or unpredictable. For example, a global pandemic, even one driven by a respiratory coronavirus, was a concern among health security professionals for many years, particularly after the outbreaks of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). But the specific timing and origin of the COVID-19 pandemic were not predicted.

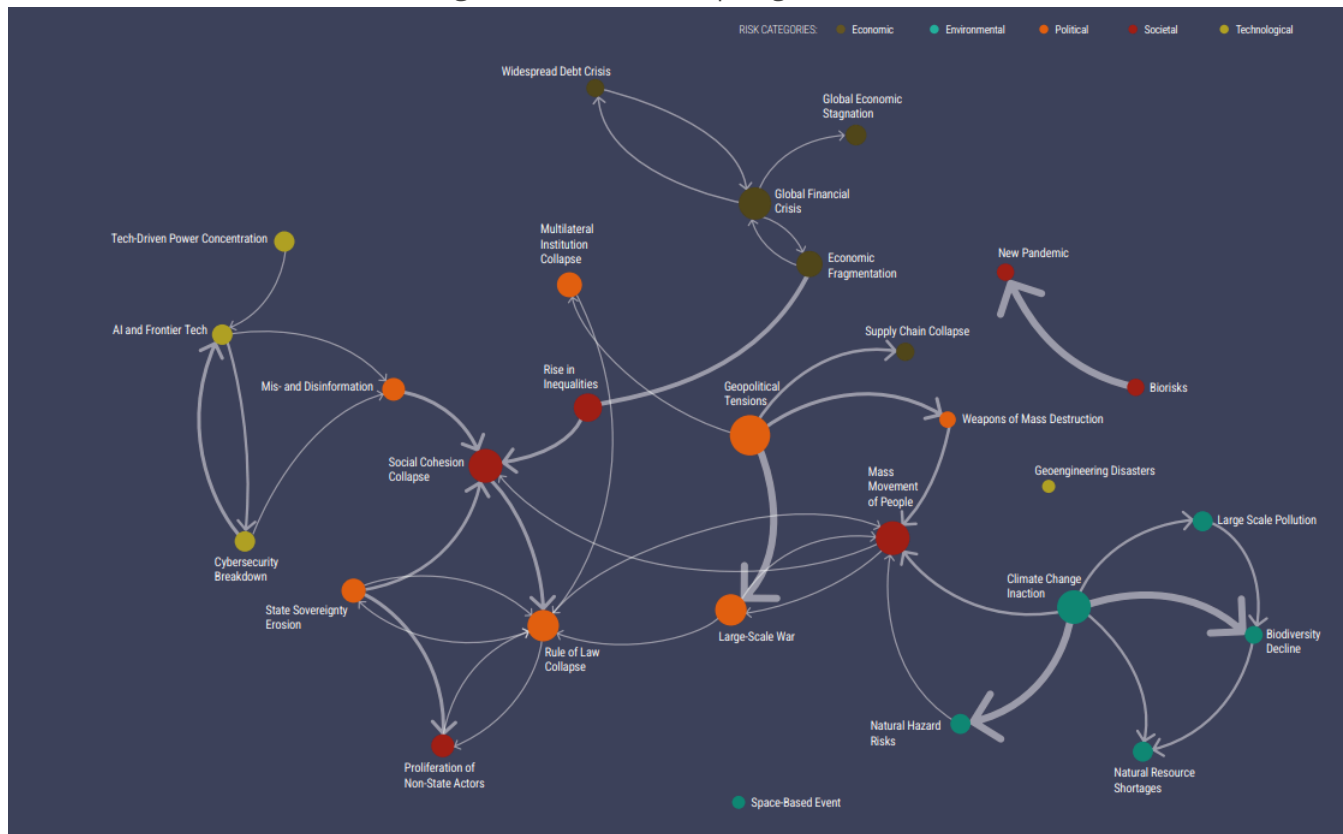
For complex global shocks, the precise timing and immediate causal origin are almost impossible to forecast, making it difficult for experts or concerned groups to effectively warn about impending shocks. Shocks can originate or propagate through precisely the countries least equipped to detect them. However, even if warning signs are available and heeded, there might be little time or capacity for national and international institutions to prepare themselves.

Second, complex global shocks have cross-cutting impacts across a wide range of societal functions. They do not stay within their original domain of consequence. The recent conflicts in Europe and the Middle East are not only security crises involving militaries; they have rippled into agricultural, energy, and technological supply chains around the world. Looking at the COVID-19 example again, a wide range of multilateral agencies were called upon and at various stages. The [UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19](#) was issued in June 2020, updated in September of the same year and again in December 2021 as an overview of agencies' responses, without overarching coordination or authority to redirect resources or command action across agency boundaries.

As a result, the institutional silos, particularly at the multilateral level, can be too rigid to coordinate a response across the multiple streams of societal consequences. Even well-intentioned multilateral agencies are bound by donor-earmarked funding, mandate-specific governing boards, and separate staffing capacities. In 2023, 81% of the UN's resources for development and humanitarian activities were [earmarked](#). According to the 2022 [Funding Compact](#), the current high levels of earmarking, particularly to specific projects, "limits the UN development system's ability to respond strategically to national priorities, offer integrated policy solutions, build resilience and reduce risk, and respond to development crises with agility and speed." This problem has only been exacerbated in recent years since the funding pool itself has shrunk sharply, pushing what remains toward even tighter earmarking. By 2025, funding totals were [roughly](#) 40% below 2022 [levels](#). As a result, in his opening remarks at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Humanitarian Affairs Segment in June 2026, the UN's own Emergency Relief Coordinator [warned](#) that a system he has long called "overstretched, underfunded and under attack" now faces a starker question – not how it will respond, but

whether it can respond at the scale and speed people need, in environments more complex, more constrained and more dangerous than ever before.

Figure 6 – Network map of global risks



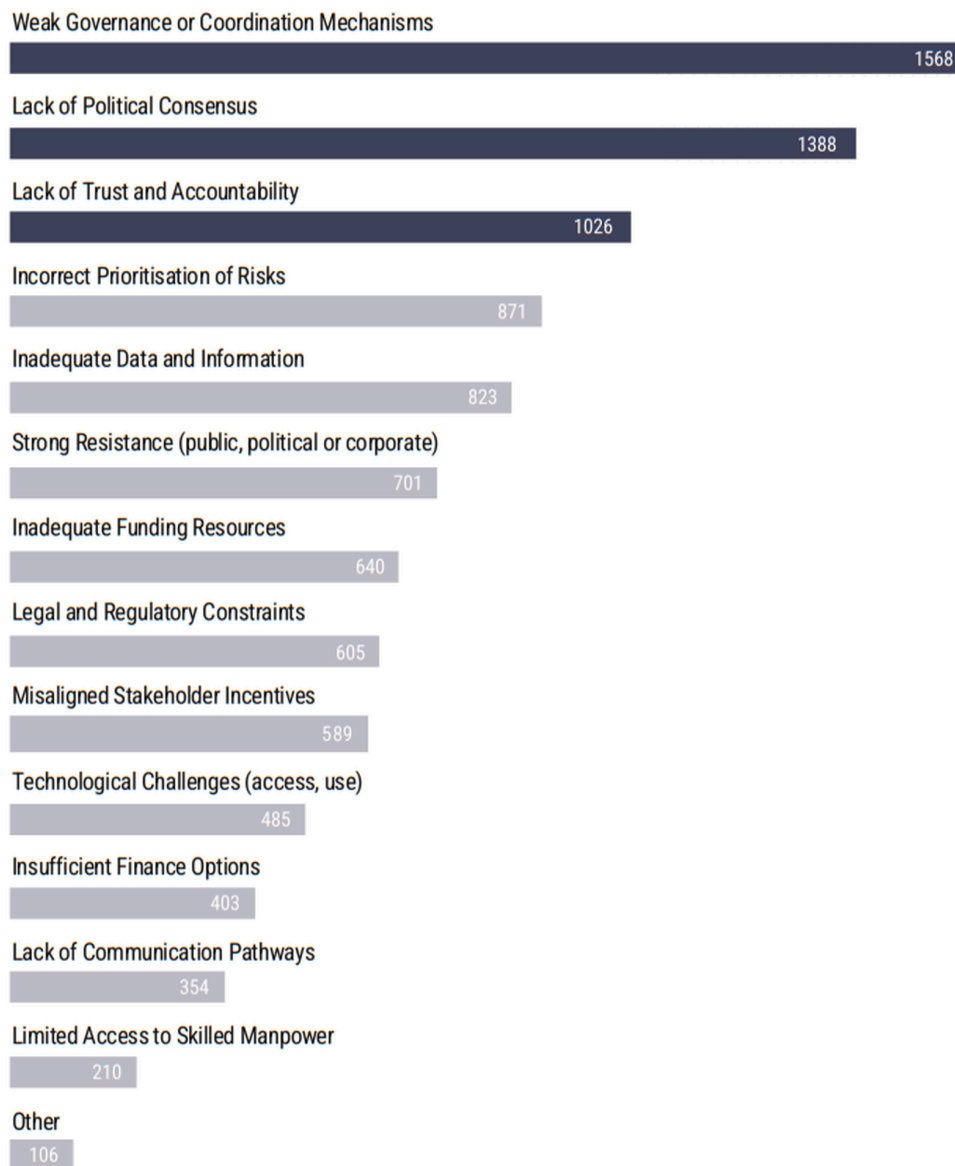
Source: UN Global Risk Report (2025).

Third, forecasting, preventing, preparing for, and responding to shocks is ultimately the responsibility of national governments. Whether a shock is economic, security-related, environmental, or infrastructural in origin, the primary responsibility lies within national borders, and any international effort must therefore respect sovereignty. Because actions taken by and within nation states can cause shocks, there is often little that other individual countries can do to prevent them in the first place. And when a shock does occur, countries differ widely in their capacity and means to manage different types of events.

In a global crisis, states whose capacities do not match the shock at hand are ill-equipped to respond. This magnifies the harm to their societies, and potentially perpetuates the crisis beyond their borders. For example, the [resurgence](#) of New World screwworm (NWS) since 2023 spread rapidly north through Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, and on into Mexico partly because affected countries lacked the sterile-fly production capacity to contain it at its source. On 3 June 2026, sixty years after eradication in, USDA [confirmed](#) the first U.S. animal case. As of August 2026, Central American countries and Mexico have reported more than 209,400 NWS cases in animals and more than 2,500 cases in people. Containing the outbreak has since required the US, Mexico, Panama, and international bodies like the [Food](#)

[and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) and [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) to jointly fund and rebuild sterile-fly barriers that individual states could not have sustained alone.

Figure 7 – Barriers inhibiting better global risk management

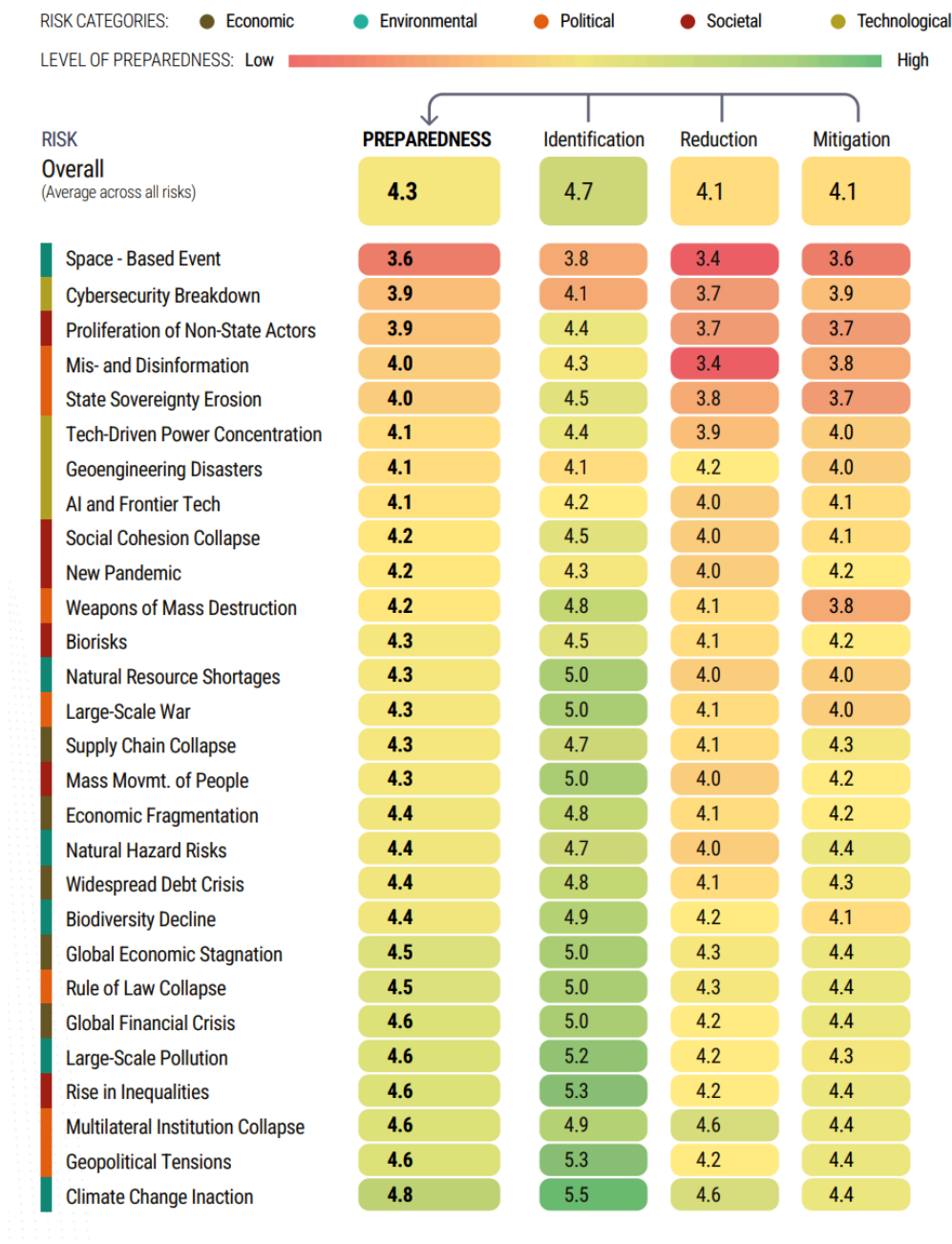


Source: UN Global Risk Report (2025). [Note: Bars represent the frequency of mentions, aggregated for all 28 risks.]

The unevenness in needs across the global landscape is itself a layer of complexity in crisis management. During many complex global shocks, the effectiveness of a possible collective action might be defined as much by the weakest link of global governance as by its strongest. Ultimately, multilateral coordination is

needed before, during, and after a global crisis, but nation states will resist efforts that might be perceived as intrusive.

Figure 8 – Perceived preparedness of multilateral institutions



Source: UN Global Risk Report (2025).

5. The role of the UN for managing complex global shocks?

The UN was founded in the aftermath of one of the most severe complex global shocks in all of human history in World War II. A commitment to peace and security – in other words, the avoidance of one form of complex global shock – is embedded in the founding documents of the UN.

Article 1(1) of the UN Charter [commits](#) the organization “to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace.” States can coordinate bilaterally and regional bodies act within their memberships. But the UN combines universal membership, the legitimacy of an agreed Charter, and standing operational presence in nearly every country to be capable of connecting governments, international bureaucracies, and global expert communities.

As a result, the UN and its various institutions have been central in many of the crises around the world since its founding. These crisis response responsibilities and functions are already part of the UN’s DNA – but also show the gaps that the UN faces when dealing with shocks that are global and complex in nature.

5.1. Existing UN mechanisms for crisis response

The UN has well-established crisis response mechanisms for some specific types of crises, emergencies and incidents. These have been established under dedicated treaties, multilateral agreements or UN General Assembly (GA) resolutions, and, in some cases, have dedicated institutional structures and resourcing.

The most prominent is the system that underpins the response to humanitarian emergencies. Under [GA Resolution 46/182](#), the UN coordinates its humanitarian relief through a single senior official, the [Emergency Relief Coordinator \(ERC\)](#), and a single inter-agency structure, the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\)](#). The ERC’s role includes coordinating across UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations, appointing and managing Humanitarian Coordinators, releasing funds from the [Central Emergency Response Fund \(CERF\)](#), and briefing the Security Council. The mandate under 46/182 was built on the former UN Disaster Relief Coordinator’s office to include “other emergencies”. But the recent caseload has been dominated by conflict-driven crises, such as in Sudan, Gaza, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, run through the same ERC and IASC machinery. In March 2025, the UN kicked off “[Humanitarian Reset](#)”, an effort to reshape how the humanitarian system prioritises, coordinates and delivers assistance.

The response to health emergencies sits under the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#). The WHO’s Director-General, advised by an Emergency Committee, leads the international response to health emergencies. Its responsibilities include declaring Public Health Emergencies of International Concern, releasing funds from the [Contingency Fund for Emergencies](#), and coordinating operational surge through the [WHO Health Emergencies Programme](#) and the [Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network \(GOARN\)](#).

There is also a dedicated response mechanism for refugee emergencies. The [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#), mandated by the [UNHCR Statute](#) and the [1951 Refugee Convention](#), leads and coordinates the international response, such as appointing Refugee Coordinators, activating internal emergency protocols, convening host governments and operational partners under country and [regional Refugee Response Plans](#), and reporting to the General Assembly through its Executive Committee.

Other mechanisms also exist for responses to major incidents. The [Incident and Emergency Centre](#) under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the global focal point for nuclear and radiological emergencies. A small [Joint Environment Unit](#) – a collaboration of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – handles environmental emergencies, such as chemical spills and industrial accidents. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has emergency assistance powers under [Article X](#) of the Chemical Weapons Convention, but in practice its function is investigation and assistance-on-request rather than coordinating a response system.

There is also an internal UN Secretariat mechanism called the [Crisis Management Team \(CMT\)](#), which helps coordinate the system's own response when a crisis cuts across multiple entities. It is convened under the Secretary-General's Crisis Management Policy, which is an internal executive instrument. When activated, the Secretary-General designates a lead entity for the crisis, and the Crisis Management Team – chaired by that lead, with the other relevant entities at the table – coordinates operational decisions. The CMT does not lead a multilateral response and it confers no authority over agencies, but rather aligns responding agencies. Its only global activation to date was for COVID-19, with the WHO as lead.

Below the system-wide arrangements sits internal crisis machinery that some operational agencies maintain for their own operations. This includes the UNDP's [Standard Operating Procedure for Crisis Response and Recovery](#), UNICEF's [Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure](#), WFP's [Emergency Response Activation Protocol](#), WHO's [Emergency Response Framework](#), UNHCR's [Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response](#).

All these mechanisms show that the UN has real emergency response capability. However, they also show the specific scopes in which they operate. The response for a complex global shock, which is not contained to a specific country or specific sector, would reveal gaps or overlaps in mandates.

5.2. Responsibilities of UN bodies and organizations to respond to complex global shocks

Beyond these specific response mechanisms, many UN and UN-related bodies are not expressly focused on crisis or emergency response. Since the UN's founding, countries have increasingly looked to the UN for coordinating multilateral solutions to global challenges. So new multilateral institutions have developed, grown and adapted. Each of these bodies have its own mandate and institutional architecture, set up often with a core purpose that is separate from or unrelated to global crises or shocks. However, a complex global shock is so all-encompassing that they could trigger roles or actions from these organizations.

Figure 9 identifies example responsibilities or actions that different bodies of the UN could take during a shock. This figure is not meant to be exhaustive, but its scope highlights the fundamental need for additional

clarity on how the UN system can provide cohesive governance over so many moving parts during a complex global shock.

Figure 9 – Table showing examples of responsibilities or actions of the UN and related organizations during a complex global shock.

ORGANIZATION	EXAMPLE RESPONSIBILITIES OR ACTIONS DURING A SHOCK
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)	Maintains the International Monitoring System that detects nuclear detonations; the same data supports tsunami warning and radionuclide tracking.
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)	Reviews humanitarian and development response; links the Secretariat to the specialized agencies.
Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG)	Political leadership; runs the UN Operations and Crisis Centre for situational awareness.
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	Monitors food production, crop and livestock disease, and famine risk; co-leads the food security cluster with WFP.
Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)	Highest-level humanitarian coordination forum; convenes executive heads of 19 UN and non-UN organizations to set priorities and mobilize resources in crises.
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)	Coordinates international response to nuclear and radiological emergencies through its Incident and Emergency Centre;
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)	Manages airspace closures and coordinates safe air operations during a crisis
International Labour Organization (ILO)	Tracks labor-market impacts of a shock; guides employment and social-protection responses.
International Maritime Organization (IMO)	Keeps shipping moving safely during crises; coordinates maritime measures such as crew changes and port access.
International Monetary Fund (IMF)	Provides emergency financing to countries in crisis (e.g., the Rapid Financing Instrument) and macroeconomic policy support.
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Tracks displacement through its Displacement Tracking Matrix; co-leads camp coordination and management in disaster settings.
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	Supports emergency telecommunications and restoration of connectivity after disasters.
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	Coordinates the humanitarian response, mobilizes aid, shares information, and advocates for crisis-affected communities.
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)	Investigates alleged chemical weapons use; can provide assistance and protection to states attacked or threatened with chemical weapons.
Regional economic commissions	Regional data and coordination across neighboring countries, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) , United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) , United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) , United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) , United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	Tracks broken supply chains, shipping costs, food and fuel prices, and debt pressure on poorer countries.
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)	Analyzes the socioeconomic impacts of a shock and supports policy responses with data and forecasting.

UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS)	Manages security for UN personnel and operations; determines whether the UN can stay and deliver
UN Development Coordination Office (DCO)	Runs the Resident Coordinator system, which leads the UN's work inside each country.
UN Development Programme (UNDP)	Carries the long tail after responders leave; leads the Global Cluster for Early Recovery (GCER) to bridge immediate humanitarian aid and long-term sustainable development.
UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	Coordinates education continuity during crises, as with the COVID-19 Global Education Coalition; protects cultural heritage in emergencies; through its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, coordinates tsunami warning systems.
UN Environment Programme (UNEP)	Responds to industrial and environmental disasters, with OCHA.
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Leads protection and shelter for refugees and other forcibly displaced people; coordinates refugee responses under its own mandate, outside the IASC cluster system.
UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)	Monitors the human rights impacts of emergency measures and documents violations during crises.
UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)	Supports urban crisis response and housing, land and property issues in recovery.
UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)	Administers the Secretary-General's Mechanism for investigating alleged use of chemical and biological weapons
UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)	Reduces risk before disasters and tracks progress through the Sendai Framework Monitor.
UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)	Maintains United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER)
UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS)	Provides infrastructure, procurement and project management services.
UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)	Monitors criminal exploitation of crises, such as for trafficking, fraud and illicit markets.
UN System Chief Executives Board (CEB)	The only standing table where all executive heads sit together; aligns system-wide policy.
UN Women	Provides gender analysis of shock impacts; advocates gender-responsive response and recovery.
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Works to protect the rights of children, especially the most disadvantaged and those hardest to reach; leads the water, sanitation and hygiene, and nutrition responses.
United Nations General Assembly	Established the humanitarian coordination architecture (Resolution 46/182); can mandate and fund new mechanisms
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Maintains sexual and reproductive health services and protection from gender-based violence in emergencies.
United Nations Security Council	Can determine that a shock constitutes a threat to international peace and security, unlocking binding Chapter VII measures.
World Bank	Provides large-scale crisis and reconstruction financing, including through dedicated crisis-response windows.
World Food Programme (WFP)	Delivers food assistance at scale; runs the system's logistics backbone, including the UN

	Humanitarian Air Service, and leads the logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters.
World Health Organization (WHO)	Directs and coordinates international response to health emergencies; the Director-General determines whether an event constitutes a public health emergency of international concern under the International Health Regulations (2005).
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)	Provides authoritative data on weather, climate and water; underpins global early warning systems.
World Trade Organization (WTO)	Monitors trade-restrictive measures during crises, such as export bans on food and medical goods.

5.3. Recent UN initiatives for complex global shocks

The UN has no standing mechanism for complex shocks that cut across its mandates and agencies. In some cases, shocks that fit none of them directly have been met by building something new after the shock had already begun. Three recent approaches have continued to push the UN system in exploring different avenues for responding to complex global shocks.

THE UN CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM (CMT) FOR COVID-19, 2020

On 4 February 2020, the WHO Director-General briefed the Secretary-General and [requested](#) that he activate the UN crisis management policy – the highest level of crisis alert in the UN system, and its first activation for a public health event – in order to establish a CMT, which [held](#) its first meeting on 11 February 2020. WHO chaired the CMT to coordinate UN strategies, policy decisions and plans, and joint action to scale up country-level operations across public health, human rights, socioeconomic issues, and travel and trade.

During its 74th session, the United Nations General Assembly adopted key resolutions on a comprehensive and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic: in April 2020, global solidarity to fight COVID-19, and [international cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19](#); later, in September 2020, both a [comprehensive and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and a [united response against global health threats: combating COVID-19](#). UN system entities continued to work together to support countries in their efforts to respond to the pandemic and its impacts, under the leadership of the WHO.

As summarized in the “[United Nations Comprehensive Response To COVID-19](#)” from June 2020 and its two subsequent versions from [September 2020](#) and an [update](#) in 2021, this architecture set out a series of mutually reinforcing instruments: [WHO’s Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#), the [COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) coordinated by OCHA, the Secretary-General’s dedicated [COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund](#), and the [UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response](#).

THE GLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE GROUP (GCRG), 2022

Another approach deployed by the UN system was the [Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance \(GCRG\)](#), established in March 2022 as a response to the complex effects of the war in Ukraine. The GCRG's role was to "help decision-makers to mobilize solutions and develop strategies to help countries address the interlinked crisis with food, energy and finance."

The GCRG's structure had the Secretary-General as the chair of the Group to provide high-level political leadership and coordination together with champion Heads of State/Government. The Deputy Secretary-General led the Steering Committee with 32 members – including representatives from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Energy Agency (IEA), and Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) – organized into three workstreams on Food, Energy, and Finance. Head of State/Government Champions were designated to advocate for a global consensus on response measures. The GCRG [produced](#) three policy briefs and supported the development of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which enabled commercial food exports from Ukrainian ports.

ACTION 54 OF THE PACT FOR THE FUTURE

In September 2021, [Our Common Agenda](#), a package of recommendations from the Secretary-General to reinvigorate the UN, was released. Among its [proposals](#) was the concept of an Emergency Platform. The Secretary-General's 2023 [policy brief](#) on the topic further developed core principles for the future of governing complex global shocks.

The concept moved through successive draft revisions of the [Pact for the Future](#), and some of the original framing of the Emergency Platform was removed from the final text following negotiations. In the final adopted Pact, [Action 54](#) (see Box 1) requested the Secretary-General "consider approaches to strengthen the United Nations system response to complex global shocks." The outcome of Action 54 is therefore a mandate for new approaches to be developed for future consideration and action by the UN system to build a "more coherent, cooperative, coordinated and multidimensional international response to complex global shocks."

BOX 1. ACTION 54. WE WILL STRENGTHEN THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO COMPLEX GLOBAL SHOCKS.

We recognize the need for a more coherent, cooperative, coordinated and multidimensional international response to complex global shocks and the central role of the United Nations in this regard. Complex global shocks are events that have severely disruptive and adverse consequences for a significant proportion of countries and the global population, and that lead to impacts across multiple sectors, requiring a multidimensional and whole-of-government, whole-of-society response. Complex global shocks have a disproportionate impact on the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world and usually have disastrous consequences for sustainable development and prosperity. An armed conflict does not by itself constitute a complex global shock, but conflict could, in some cases, lead to impacts across multiple sectors. The principles of national ownership and consent, equity, solidarity and cooperation will guide our future responses to complex global shocks, with full respect for international law, including the Charter and its purposes and principles, and existing mandates for United Nations intergovernmental bodies and processes, United Nations system entities and specialized agencies. We will uphold the Secretary-General's role to, inter alia, convene Member States, promote the coordination of the whole multilateral system and engage with relevant stakeholders in response to crises. We request the Secretary-General to:

(a) Consider approaches to strengthen the United Nations system response to complex global shocks, within existing authorities and in consultation with Member States, that supports, complements and does not duplicate the response of the United Nations principal organs, relevant United Nations entities, United Nations coordination entities and mechanisms, and specialized agencies mandated to respond to emergencies, and with full respect for the mandated coordination role of the United Nations in response to humanitarian emergencies.

Two completed milestones have been reported publicly. First, in mid-2025, the EOSG established an internal team to lead implementation. Second, it produced a short paper mapping existing mechanisms, defining key concepts, and setting out a Member State engagement strategy. As of August 2026, the next planned step is for the EOSG to “consult with Member States” on ways to strengthen the United Nations System’s approach to complex global shocks.

6. Gaps for governing complex global shocks

Complex global shocks do not sit neatly within the bureaucratic structures of UN bodies or mandates discussed in the prior section. The current framework lacks effective overarching coordination across multiple agencies. The specific mandates of UN entities – such as for OCHA, FAO, WHO, UNDRR and UNCTAD – can produce parallel operations without a unified command structure when shocks are cross-sectoral. The challenges facing the UN for complex global shocks can be organized in four structural gaps:

Figure 10 – Summary analysis of structural gaps, the flaws of multilateral institutions, and their perceived impact on complex global shocks preparedness and response

Structural Gap	Structural flaw	Impacts
The Warning Gap	Intelligence, data, expert information, and early warning systems are siloed, unevenly distributed, and often unable to assess systemic effects. Each entity may monitor their own domain of consequence well, but no entity is responsible for integrating signals across domains into a picture of the whole shock.	Because risk monitoring is fragmented by sector (e.g., WHO tracks health, FAO tracks agriculture, UNCTAD tracks trade), each agency can warn of hazards within its domain, but none can warn of how a shock will cascade across domains. In a pandemic, health surveillance may raise the first alarm, but the coming disruptions to food systems, trade, and education may remain invisible until they arrive. Cascading risk propagates through these institutional blind spots before a unified alarm is ever raised.
The Mandate Gap	UN agencies are simultaneously bounded and overlapping, each oriented toward certain types of hazards or consequences (such as OCHA toward humanitarian emergencies, UNDRR toward the scope of the Sendai Framework, WHO toward public health) while adjacent responsibilities are shared, contested, or duplicated across entities.	When a different complex shock hits, consequences can fall either into institutional voids or into contested overlaps where several agencies hold partial claims. But none holds overall responsibility. No single agency has the legal mandate or comprehensive toolkit to govern or mitigate it. Existing mandates, governance, membership and institutional structures may limit the ability to utilize or adapt existing capabilities for a coordinated response.
The Financial Incentive Gap	The UN operates through a fragmented financial structure: the Regular Budget, the Peacekeeping Budget, and the assessed budgets of specialized agencies, and, alongside these, voluntary contributions. The voluntary contributions – especially earmarked ones – have grown substantially. By 2023, voluntary earmarked contributions accounted for roughly 81% of total UN development and humanitarian assistance.	The financial architecture forces UN entities to compete for capital to cover their own institutional overhead. The system structurally rewards agencies for defending and expanding their individual silos, fracturing the unified command structure required to manage a complex shock.
The Capacity Gap	Complex shocks cross borders, but primary responsibility for anticipating and responding to them rests with national governments. Any international response must respect country sovereignty.	The multilateral system's ability to tailor the support it provides to meet the unique needs of sovereign states is critical. Additionally, the composition of decision-making also shapes the response itself. Where coordination mechanisms lack inclusive representation, the range of responses considered, and their reach to specific groups, narrows accordingly.

Sources: Analysis made by the authors using the references on this paper.

7. Recommendations

The UN must establish mechanisms and processes that enable it to more quickly and more effectively mount a coordinated response to complex global shocks. Different stakeholders, inside and outside the UN system, must take more proactive measures to turn this into a reality.

TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND RELEVANT UN ENTITIES

#1 Apply lessons learned to the next shock

We urge the Secretary-General and relevant UN entities to consolidate the operational lessons of recent system-wide responses, such as the Global Crisis Response Group, into pre-agreed coordination arrangements and responses that can be activated quickly when the next complex global shock occurs. Establishing this readiness in advance would spare the UN from having to build coordination mechanisms during a crisis and would not require the creation of new standing authorities or altering existing mandates.

#2 Include stakeholders in designing mechanisms for managing complex global shocks

We urge the Secretary-General and relevant UN entities to include the private sector, civil society, and Member States in the development of new approaches and procedures for responding to complex global shocks. The very nature of complex global shocks requires the expertise and input of all relevant parties in order to design governance mechanisms that will have legitimacy and capacity for the next crisis.

TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

#3 Commit to reform

We urge candidates for Secretary-General to commit to strengthening the UN system's anticipation of and response to complex global shocks through permanent structural reforms with support from the General Assembly. The perceived role of the UN in global affairs has diminished over the past few decades because, in part, the UN has not been seen as effectively managing complex global shocks. Whether or not the fault or perception is fair, the incoming Secretary-General can help put the UN on the right track for future complex global shocks through serious reforms.

TO UN MEMBER STATES

#4 Support for a fair evaluation of ambitious and creative solutions

We urge Member States and the General Assembly to approach future negotiations on how best to manage complex global shocks in good faith. Managing complex global shocks requires a willingness to embrace ambitious and creative thinking to meet the extreme needs of the 21st-century threat landscape. Reasonable parties will disagree on the specific solutions to better manage complex global shocks at the multilateral level. However, all Member States should recognize that the current multilateral mechanisms for governing complex global shocks have been insufficient and that new and ambitious approaches are needed.

TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

#5 Prioritize better management of complex global shocks in respective engagements

We urge civil society organizations across social sectors to build support for a stronger, more comprehensive UN response to such shocks. We ask you to familiarize yourself with the concept and how the policy issue has developed in the UN system, and to raise the world's vulnerability to such shocks in your engagements with Member States and with relevant UN bodies. Each civil society group will have its own public interests and missions, but the poor management of complex global shocks affects all areas of common interest.



Complex Global Shocks

Complex Global Shocks

A civil society campaign working to strengthen the UN's approaches to complex global shocks, before the next one arrives.

Press & media

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