
THE ATLANTIC DIALOGUES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ATLANTIC DIALOGUES
Report
2025
00:15:56
THE ATLANTIC DIALOGUES
December 11-13, 2025
Rabat, Morocco
14th
THE ATLANTIC DIALOGUES

Copyright © 2026 - Policy Center for the New South

UNDER THE HIGH PATRONAGE OF HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI

ATLANTIC DIALOGUES REPORT 2025



Table of Contents

About the Atlantic Dialogues Conference 05

Atlantic Dialogues 2025 Strategic and Core Team 06

Atlantic Dialogues 2025 in Numbers 08

Atlantic Dialogues 2025 Plenaries 09

Foreword 10

Session Summaries 12

About the Atlantic Dialogues Conference

The Atlantic Dialogues conference, launched in 2012, is the Policy Center for the New South's flagship annual and high-level international conference that convenes influential media, civil society, NGO and public and private sector leaders from around the Atlantic Basin for open, candid and informal discussions on cross-regional and cross-sectoral issues to reimagine Atlantic cooperation.

The Atlantic Dialogues conference has been established as a cornerstone for debate and cross-cutting dialogue, addressing topics of regional and global interest and rebalancing the South-North debate. Over the years, the conference has become a meeting point between the four continents of the Atlantic and has sought to suggest a new understanding of Atlantic dynamics – the Wider Atlantic- underscoring the importance of the South Atlantic in the global geopolitical debate, and building bridges between Africa and South America, in dialogue with Europe and North America.

A unique characteristic of The Atlantic Dialogues is intergenerational dialogue, an important value and philosophy at the Policy Center for the New South that also extends to the conference. Through the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program, 40 change-makers from the Atlantic Basin take part in a tailor-made policy, leadership, and networking program three days prior to joining the Atlantic Dialogues conference, bringing in fresh and diverse perspectives needed to tackle today's challenges.

Format

The Atlantic Dialogues is designed to create an environment that is conducive to facilitating concrete discussions that lead to actionable outcomes. Sessions are designed to promote frank, interactive, and informal discussion through a mix of plenary panels, smaller breakout sessions, night owl discussions, and keynote addresses. The conference brings together a network of individuals instilled with a new "mental map" of Atlantic issues, partnerships, and potential. This is achieved through skillfully moderated discussions between the audience and expert discussants.



Atlantic Dialogues 2025

Strategic and Core Team


OF HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI
POLICY CENTER FOR THE NEW SOUTH
THINK • STIMULATE • BRIDGE
14th
TLANTIC
LOGUES
THE ATLANTIC DIALOGUES
THE ATLANTIC DIALOGUES
ANTIC DIALOGUES

Atlantic Dialogues 2025 in Numbers

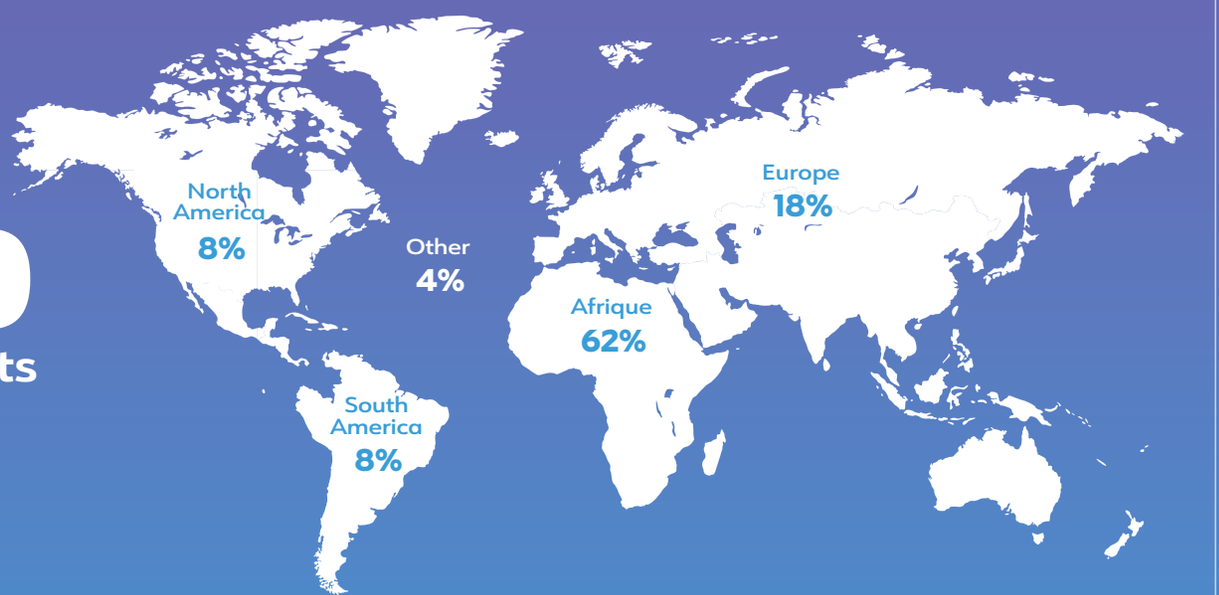
132
Speakers, moderators & chairs

66
Nationalities

79%
Atlantic Participants

41
Emerging Leaders

450
Participants



+300 000 Web Impressions

Plenaries

Launch of the 12th Edition of the Atlantic Currents: An Annual Report on Wider Atlantic Perspectives and Patterns

Plenary I	Can Democracy Deliver in a Post-Trust World?
Plenary II	Unlocking the Next Stage: Rethinking Growth Strategies
Plenary III	Rethinking Strategic Maritime Corridors as Global Commons
Plenary IV	From Trade Wars to War Economies: Are Conflicts Rewiring Global Markets?
Plenary V	Resilient Nation-Building: Local Agency and the Role of Youth
Plenary VI	Africa in a Self-Interested Global Order: Navigating Alone?
Plenary VII	Decarbonisation Futures: One Goal, Many Journeys
Plenary VIII	America First, Negotiation Room for Others?
Plenary IX	North-South Atlantic Partnerships: Managing Expectations and Realities
Plenary X	A Think Tank Conversation: Bridging Regions, Building Futures
Plenary XI	The Weaponization of Everything: From Bytes to Bots to Beliefs
Closing Plenary XII	Wider Atlantic Challenges Viewed by Emerging Leaders

Foreword

At a time when unpredictability has become a defining characteristic of international affairs, meaningful dialogue is both increasingly difficult to sustain and more essential than ever. Geopolitical rivalries, technological transformations, and mounting global fragmentation have challenged many of the assumptions that once underpinned international cooperation. In numerous instances, these developments have eroded confidence in institutions, strained partnerships, and weakened commitment to shared frameworks for collective action. Yet these very transformations have also underscored the importance of forums in which diverse perspectives can engage constructively, ideas can be critically examined, and mutual understanding can be cultivated over time.

Since its inception, the Atlantic Dialogues has sought to provide such a forum. More than a conference, it has evolved into a lasting and expanding community that brings together policymakers, business leaders, scholars, practitioners, and emerging leaders committed to engaging across disciplines, regions, and generations. Through initiatives such as the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program, it continues to promote intergenerational dialogue while enhancing the diversity of perspectives, experiences, and expertise represented within its network. In so doing, it creates opportunities for both established and emerging leaders to contribute meaningfully to global discussions and to address collectively the complex geopolitical, economic, technological, and societal challenges shaping the contemporary world. At its core, the Atlantic Dialogues seeks to foster exchanges that deepen understanding of the complexities and interdependencies that characterize the current international landscape.

This ambition reflects a broader conviction: knowledge is a public good. At the Policy Center for the New South, we believe that think tanks have a vital role to play in generating ideas, informing public debate, and creating spaces where knowledge can circulate, be challenged, and contribute to collective understanding. In this sense, the Atlantic Dialogues is part of a wider effort to strengthen the intellectual foundations of constructive engagement across borders.

Throughout this edition, participants addressed a common question: how can societies preserve cooperation, legitimacy, and opportunity in an era increasingly shaped by disruption? Discussions explored the future of democracy and multilateralism, the transformative impact of artificial intelligence, shifting geopolitical and economic dynamics, and the growing importance of resilience in responding to climate, security, food, water, and development challenges. They also examined development strategies, the evolving role of international financial institutions, the strategic significance of maritime corridors, and the place of Africa and the wider Atlantic space within an increasingly contested global order.

Across these exchanges, a common theme emerged: the need to rebuild trust while strengthening the agency of Africa and the New South in shaping the institutions, partnerships, and narratives of the future.

Morocco provides a setting in which such exchanges can take place openly and constructively. As a crossroads connecting Africa, the Atlantic space, and the New South, it offers an environment conducive to the dialogue and engagement that the Atlantic Dialogues seeks to promote. The diversity of its participants and speakers remains one of the initiative's defining strengths, reflecting a longstanding commitment to inclusivity, openness, and intellectual pluralism.

At the heart of this endeavor lies a simple yet demanding objective: building trust. In an increasingly polarized and fragmented world, trust cannot be imposed or hastened; it is cultivated gradually through sustained interaction, honest exchange, and a willingness to listen. The Atlantic Dialogues continues to invest in this long-term process, recognizing that trust is an indispensable foundation for meaningful cooperation.

This commitment extends beyond the present. By fostering a culture of learning and encouraging dialogue across generations, the Atlantic Dialogues contributes to the exchange of ideas and the transmission of knowledge and experience to those who will shape the future. Education, openness, and trust are enduring investments that strengthen societies and generate benefits across generations.

The reflections presented in this Atlantic Dialogues 2025 report bear witness to this shared endeavor. They highlight the diversity of perspectives that continues to define the initiative and reaffirm the value of sustained engagement across regions, sectors, and generations. The conversations captured in these pages remind us that, although unpredictability may shape the present, the future remains open to those willing to engage, listen, and help shape it together.

Karim El Aynaoui
Executive President, Policy Center for the New South



Launch of the 12th Edition of the Atlantic Currents

An Annual Report on Wider Atlantic Perspectives and Patterns

Moderator

Speakers

Mohammed Loulichki

Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South - Morocco

Ronak Gopaldas

Director, Signal Risk - South Africa

Gaston Ocampo

Secretary General, Institute for the Promotion of Latin America and the Caribbean - Argentina

Oluwabamise Olanrewaju

Director of the Energy Infrastructure Hub, Nigeria Energy Forum - Nigeria

Pedro Seabra

Deputy Director, Center for International Studies, University Institute of Lisbon - Portugal

Nicholas Vonortas

Professor of Economics and International Affairs, George Washington University - USA

The panel examined the future of the Wider Atlantic moving toward 2050, in a context of geopolitical uncertainty, institutional fragmentation, and shifting global power dynamics. Moderated by Mohamed Loulichki, the discussion focused on how Atlantic cooperation can evolve in response to declining trust in traditional multilateralism, the reconfiguration of trade and technology, and major demographic transformations. Panelists addressed connectivity, youth, infrastructure, energy transition, and governance, emphasizing the Atlantic as an increasingly polycentric space. The exchanges highlighted the need for adaptive, inclusive, and pragmatic cooperation frameworks, capable of addressing shared transboundary challenges.



Mohamed Loulichki framed the discussion by situating the Wider Atlantic within a moment of profound global transition. He highlighted 2025 as a milestone year for Morocco, notably following the UN resolution of October 30, 2025, recognizing the terms of the Moroccan Sahara issue, which he described as the result of sustained and patient diplomatic engagement. Loulichki presented the Atlantic as a space for a renewed partnership model that extends beyond traditional South–South cooperation to include evolving North–South dynamics. In this respect, the Atlantic Currents report enriches the dialogue on the Atlantic by highlighting concrete opportunities and shared responsibilities among the region's diverse actors. This year's edition advances three key conclusions: (1) the Atlantic is becoming polycentric; (2) South–South cooperation is becoming structural, operating as a stable driver of development rather than as an episodic activity; and (3) a common Atlantic vision is emerging, offering a basis to address transboundary challenges and rebuild trust in multilateralism. In this spirit, Loulichki asked the panelists to engage with the same forward-looking question: what is their vision for the Wider Atlantic up to 2050?



Ronak Gopaldas, Director of Signal Risk, characterized the current global moment as a transition marked by anxiety and the erosion of the post-World War II order, arguing that social contracts are being rewritten at domestic, societal, and international levels. To assess trajectories toward 2050, he proposed a framework structured around five key forces, referred to as the "5 Ts". First, "Trust" is in global decline, reflected in perceived double standards in international responses to conflicts, and growing social dissatisfaction, particularly among younger generations. Second, "Trump" was presented as a symbol of deeper geopolitical shifts, signaling the end of American exceptionalism and a move toward interest-driven, realpolitik-oriented foreign policy. Third, "Trade" has become inseparable from national security, reshaping supply chains and creating new strategic opportunities for Africa through infrastructure corridors and logistics networks. Fourth, "Technology" is emerging as the core of future industrialization, raising geopolitical tensions around critical minerals, technological dependency, and resource control. Finally, "Talent" where demographics were highlighted as a decisive factor, with Africa's population growth contrasting sharply with aging societies elsewhere. Gopaldas stressed that managing this demographic divergence will be central to global stability.



Gastón Ocampo, Secretary-General of the Institute for the Promotion of Latin America and the Caribbean, focused on the opportunities created by the ongoing transformation of the international system and the need for proactive engagement by Atlantic regions. He emphasized that youth should be understood as a strategic asset rather than a peripheral social category, noting that young people constitute a large share of the population in both Africa and Latin America. Despite this demographic weight, youth remains underrepresented in policymaking processes. Ocampo argued that young leaders already play significant roles in entrepreneurship and innovation and should therefore be directly integrated into decision-making structures. He highlighted transatlantic youth networks and leadership platforms as concrete examples of how youth can shape cooperation agendas. Beyond demographics, Ocampo stressed the central role of technology and infrastructure in Atlantic integration. While significant investments are being made in digital connectivity, he cautioned that infrastructure alone is insufficient without parallel efforts in skills development and capacity-building. He also emphasized the growing importance of transport, logistics, and supply chains in the context of nearshoring and trade reconfiguration, positioning connectivity as a cornerstone of economic resilience and integration across the Atlantic.



Oluwabamise Olanrewaju, Director of the Energy Infrastructure Hub, Nigeria Energy Forum, articulated a vision of the Atlantic in 2050 as an inclusive, low-carbon space capable of delivering shared prosperity. She emphasized that the transition to carbon neutrality must be approached through regional, not purely national, strategies. Interconnectivity, particularly in energy systems, was identified as essential, with a focus on developing cross-border green-energy corridors and regional energy hubs. Olanrewaju stressed the importance of a just transition, ensuring that rural communities are not left behind and that energy access contributes to poverty reduction and empowerment. She highlighted the need to move beyond infrastructure construction toward green industrialization, arguing that countries rich in critical minerals should prioritize in-country value addition rather than exporting raw materials. Electrification of transport systems was presented as a key enabler of this transition. Olanrewaju concluded by underscoring the necessity of integrated markets, harmonized standards, and innovative financing mechanisms to support sustainable development across environmental, social, and economic dimensions.



Pedro Seabra, Deputy Director of the Center for International Studies of the University Institute of Lisbon, challenged dominant narratives predicting the collapse of multilateralism, arguing instead that the Atlantic will witness its transformation rather than its disappearance by 2050. He proposed that cooperation will increasingly take flexible, adaptive, and issue-based forms, moving away from rigid institutional structures. In the Atlantic context, this evolution is already visible in areas such as digital infrastructure, shipping routes, and energy corridors. Seabra emphasized that connectivity will be central to the region's future, with subsea cables, pipelines, and transport corridors shaping the Atlantic's strategic geography. He noted that governance of these critical infrastructures remains fragmented and largely informal, posing significant risks. While acknowledging current failures in managing these challenges, he pointed to regional infrastructure projects as emerging laboratories for future multilateralism. Seabra stressed that the key challenge lies in ensuring that these flexible arrangements remain inclusive, transparent, and capable of protecting public goods, rather than reinforcing new forms of exclusion.



Nicholas Vonortas, Professor of Economics and International Affairs at George Washington University, examined the implications of shifting US strategic priorities for the Atlantic space, noting that American foreign and security policy is increasingly oriented toward the Pacific. This rebalancing has significant consequences for multilateralism and investment patterns in the Atlantic. He highlighted changes in global investment flows, with emerging economies attracting growing shares, while investment in the US increasingly takes the form of mergers and acquisitions aimed at accessing technology. Vonortas emphasized that economic and technological security has become central to US strategic thinking, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence (AI). Massive public and private investments in AI reflect concerns about competition with China and the desire to maintain technological leadership. He contrasted regulatory approaches across regions, noting divergent strategies in the US, the EU, and China. Vonortas concluded that AI is now a core component of geopolitical competition and future economic power, shaping global alignments and policy priorities.



Key Messages

- Adapt multilateralism, rather than abandon it, by promoting flexible, issue-based cooperation mechanisms that remain inclusive, transparent, and accountable.
- Place connectivity at the center of Atlantic integration, investing in hard and soft infrastructure and developing governance frameworks for critical corridors, cables, and energy networks.
- Make youth a strategic actor, integrating young people directly into policy design, leadership platforms, and long-term cooperation mechanisms.
- Align trade, technology, and industrial policy to strengthen resilience, reduce dependency, and promote regional value chains, particularly in critical minerals and green technologies.
- Advance a just and low-carbon transition, through regional energy hubs, inclusive development strategies, and innovative financing to support sustainable and shared prosperity by 2050.



"2025 is a historic year for Morocco and Moroccans."

Mohamed Loulichki



"The old world is dying; the new one is struggling to get born."

Ronak Gopaldas



Welcoming Remarks

Reaffirming the Foundations of Dialogue

Karim El Aynaoui

Executive President, Policy Center for the New South - Morocco



Karim El Aynaoui, the Executive President of the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS), provided the welcoming remarks. He emphasized the continued relevance of the Atlantic Dialogues in a rapidly shifting global context and reaffirmed the initiative's founding commitment to open, inclusive, and value-driven exchange. He underscored PCNS's role in building an intellectual infrastructure that supports collective reflection and frames knowledge-sharing as a public good across disciplines and communities.

El Aynaoui emphasized that what continues to drive the Policy Center for the New South is its mission to bring people together around shared values such as freedom, openness, and dialogue, while building an intellectual infrastructure capable of supporting collective reflection. He highlighted the PCNS's commitment to transmitting a culture of education, viewing the institution as a custodian of knowledge with a responsibility to pass this legacy on to future generations, both in Morocco and beyond.

He further described the Atlantic Dialogues as a platform for knowledge exchange across disciplines and areas of expertise, conceived as a public good that helps organize ideas and foster a shared intellectual culture. Morocco was presented as an open and reasonable environment where inclusive and constructive debate can take place. The diversity of Senior Fellows, representing around 20nationalities, was highlighted as a deliberate choice reflecting this openness. El Aynaoui stressed that trust and confidence are the most difficult, yet most essential, elements of dialogue, reaffirming the PCNS's long-term commitment to building trust, knowledge, and shared understanding.

El Aynaoui concluded by highlighting education and trust as long-horizon priorities, transmitting a culture of learning to future generations while patiently consolidating the confidence required for meaningful dialogue.



Key Messages

- Dialogue as an enduring foundation: Despite profound global change, the Atlantic Dialogues remain grounded in the belief that open and inclusive dialogue is essential for collective understanding and cooperation.
- Education and knowledge transmission: The PCNS positions itself as a custodian of knowledge, committed to transmitting a culture of education to future generations in Morocco and beyond.
- Openness, diversity, and trust: Morocco's role as an open convening space and the diversity of participants are central to the Dialogues, with trust and confidence identified as long-term objectives requiring sustained commitment.



Townhall (I)

Nik Gowing

Founder & Co-Director,
Thinking the Unthinkable -
United Kingdom

During this highly interactive Townhall session moderated by Nik Gowing, Founder and Co-Director, Thinking the Unthinkable (United Kingdom), participants identified and debated the key strategic themes shaping the current global moment and informing the broader discussions of the Atlantic Dialogues. The exchange reflected a strong sense of urgency, driven by the rapid pace of political, technological, and geopolitical change. Participants emphasized the need to think more directly about the future, to remain attentive to accelerating global dynamics, and to strengthen engagement at the community level as uncertainty and distrust continue to grow.

Political disruption and the rise of autocratic leadership: A central focus of the discussion was the acceleration of global political shifts, including the rise of populist leaders and the broader empowerment of autocratic actors. Participants described the state of the world using terms such as chaos, disruption, and declining democratic norms. References to recent



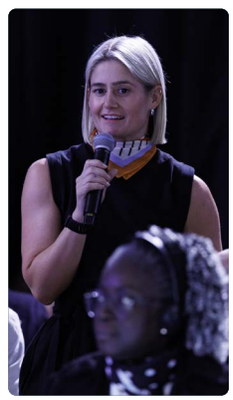
US national security assessments reinforced perceptions of heightened geopolitical instability and a growing erosion of trust in democratic systems, particularly in Europe and the United States. Several interventions raised concerns that this loss of confidence could push societies toward more militarized or authoritarian forms of governance.

Multilateralism, globalization, and transactional politics: The crisis of "multilateralism à la carte" emerged as a recurring theme throughout the discussion. Participants noted that states increasingly adhere to global norms selectively, weakening the foundations of collective action. Some argued that multilateralism has always been asymmetrical, dominated by a small group of powerful states, and that current disruptions merely expose these long-standing imbalances. The discussion also highlighted the rise of transactional approaches to international engagement, characterized by bilateral deals, commercial interests, and reduced reliance on institutional diplomacy, prompting calls to reassess globalization and its underlying principles.

Technology, artificial intelligence, and global inequalities: Technological competition featured prominently, particularly the emerging AI race in Latin America and its implications for the Global South. Participants emphasized that innovation is no longer confined to major powers, yet uneven access to infrastructure and connectivity risks reinforcing existing inequalities. The discussion pointed to the growing influence of private actors in shaping technological and political outcomes, reflecting a broader shift of power away from public institutions.

Youth, hope, and future generations: A major concern raised during the Townhall was the phenomenon of "hope reversal." Participants warned that young people in regions lacking connectivity and infrastructure are increasingly the least hopeful generation, a dangerous trend in an interconnected and rapidly changing world. The discussion underscored the urgent need to recognize and better account for the value of future generations, while acknowledging the difficulty of meaningfully measuring this value in current policy frameworks.

North–South relations and the future of multipolarity: The Townhall concluded with reflections on whether the Global North is prepared to engage the Global South as an equal partner in shaping future global arrangements. Participants linked the future of multilateralism to the success of multipolarity and stressed that addressing shared global challenges will require more balanced, inclusive, and cooperative frameworks that move beyond transactional and asymmetrical relationships.







Key Messages

- Dialogue as a constant: The Atlantic Dialogues reaffirm open and inclusive dialogue as essential, despite global change.
- Knowledge transmission: The PCNS positions itself as a custodian of knowledge, committed to education across generations.
- Openness and trust: Diversity and Morocco's convening role support the Dialogues, with trust built over time.



Plenary I

Can Democracy Deliver in a Post-Trust World?

Moderator

Uduak Amimo

Founder, Uduak Amimo Coaching & Consulting - Kenya

Speakers

Suzi Barbosa

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities, Government of Guinea-Bissau - Guinea Bissau

Jorge Castañeda

Former Foreign Minister, Government of Mexico - Mexico

Paolo Gentiloni

Former Prime Minister, Government of Italy - Italy



This panel examined the contemporary crisis of democracy through perspectives from West Africa, Latin America, and Europe. Drawing on regional experiences of coups, democratic backsliding, polarization, and disinformation, the discussion highlighted a deep erosion of public trust in democratic institutions. Audience responses revealed widespread pessimism about democracy's ability to adapt to 21st-century challenges. Yet, despite frustration and instability, democracy remains widely viewed as the most legitimate system of governance. The core challenge identified was not democracy itself, but its capacity to deliver concrete results, rebuild trust, and adapt to social, economic, and informational realities.

Suzi Barbosa, using Guinea-Bissau and the broader ECOWAS region as a reference point, argued that the recent wave of coups is not accidental but reflects the failure of existing political systems to prevent instability and meet citizens' expectations. While democracy remains the most viable governance model, she stressed that its weakness lies in the mismatch between externally imported models and local realities.



Barbosa highlighted the decisive political role of youth, who represent more than 65 percent of the population and have become increasingly aware of their capacity to influence political outcomes. Social media has emerged as their primary tool for political expression, especially where access to formal institutions is limited. However, this empowerment is increasingly undermined by disinformation, AI-generated content, and widespread distrust in media and expert sources.

She emphasized that rebuilding public trust depends on concrete actions, clearly defined objectives, and transparent policies rather than repeated political promises. According to Barbosa, democratic renewal must be rooted in internal dialogue and nationally grounded solutions that reflect lived realities and popular expectations, rather than externally imposed frameworks.



Jorge Castañeda described a region experiencing significant democratic erosion despite the democratic transitions of the 1980s and 1990s. He pointed to the persistence of authoritarian regimes in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, growing authoritarian tendencies in El Salvador, and increasing pressure on democratic institutions in countries such as Mexico and Brazil.

A key source of public disillusionment, he argued, lies in the widespread expectation that democracy would automatically deliver improved living standards, better healthcare, education, and welfare. When these expectations were not met, frustration fueled support for authoritarian alternatives, particularly in contexts marked by insecurity and crime.

Castañeda nevertheless underlined that democracy still enjoys broad support. Brazil's institutional resistance to an attempted coup illustrated democracy's capacity for self-correction. While international pressure has historically played a crucial role in defending democratic norms, he warned that this factor is weakening. Ultimately, he argued, democracy remains preferable because it allows accountability, transparency, and peaceful change through elections, even if it is messy and imperfect.



Paolo Gentiloni identified three main drivers of democratic erosion. First, the assumed link between democracy and economic prosperity has weakened, generating frustration when democratic systems fail to deliver expected economic outcomes. Second, the rise of identity politics has intensified polarization, nationalism, protectionism, and opposition to migration across Europe and beyond. Third, Gentiloni stressed the disruptive impact of social media and artificial intelligence on the information space. These technologies fragment reality, producing competing "facts" and undermining the possibility of consensus. Quoting Anne Applebaum, he noted that societies now face not only different opinions, but different perceptions of reality itself.

The panel concluded that democracy is not failing because it has lost its normative appeal, but because it is struggling to deliver trust, credibility, and tangible results in an increasingly complex environment. Across regions, democratic erosion is driven by unmet socioeconomic expectations, political polarization, disinformation, and weakened institutional legitimacy. Yet, despite widespread pessimism, democracy remains the preferred system of governance when compared to authoritarian alternatives. Panelists agreed that democratic renewal will depend on concrete action over rhetoric, restored information integrity, inclusive political participation- particularly of youth- and a renewed capacity for democratic institutions to adapt, decide, and respond effectively to citizens lived realities.



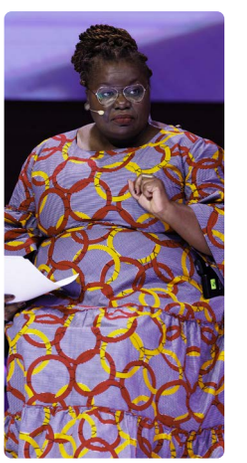














Key Messages

- Democracy's legitimacy endures, trust does not: Across regions, democracy remains the preferred system, but public trust in institutions is sharply eroding amid coups, backsliding, and polarization.
- Performance crisis at the core: The central challenge is democracy's capacity to deliver tangible socioeconomic outcomes and security; unmet expectations are fueling openness to authoritarian alternatives.
- Information disorder and youth politics: Disinformation, social media, and AI are fragmenting shared reality and weakening media credibility, even as youth, often a demographic majority, are becoming decisive political actors whose inclusion is critical to democratic renewal.



"The best way for governments to build public trust is through actions, not promises. We have heard too many empty promises, and with social media, young people now can make the difference."

Suzi Barbosa



Conversation I

Navigating the Future of Learning and Work: Policy & Practice

Moderator

Uduak Amimo

Founder, Uduak Amimo Coaching & Consulting - Kenya

Speakers

Jacques Attali

President, Attali Associates - France

Younes Sekkouri

Minister of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills, Government of Morocco - Morocco

This conversation examined whether education systems are capable of preparing children for a world profoundly reshaped by artificial intelligence, rapid technological change, and rising inequalities. The discussion highlighted a central tension: schools continue to reproduce models inherited from the past, while future challenges require fundamentally renewed skills, institutions, and policy choices. The overarching argument was that education can no longer be addressed through incremental adjustments but instead requires a redefinition of the very purpose of learning and the conditions under which it is delivered.



Jacques Attali offered a critical assessment of the current educational model, arguing that it remains excessively focused on transmitting knowledge from the past rather than fostering the capacity to think, understand, and create within a digitally driven environment. In his view, the greatest risk facing younger generations is not limited to unemployment but extends to growing cognitive dependence on artificial intelligence tools, which may reduce learning effort and weaken intellectual autonomy. From this perspective, mastery of science and mathematics becomes a strategic issue of sovereignty: without a sufficient pool of engineers and scientific talent, the country risks remaining a consumer of technology rather than becoming a producer and controller of it. He also emphasized the social dimension of education, calling for reduced segregation and stronger social mixing as conditions for genuine mobility, while explicitly integrating perseverance and the management of failure into educational learning.



"If it's well taught, science is for everybody, and a nation which does not have enough engineers will be a slave in the world of tomorrow."

Jacques Attali



Younes Sekkouri complemented this analysis with a more implementation-oriented perspective, stressing that the core challenge lies not only in defining the skills that should be taught, but in building the institutional capacity to deliver systemic transformation at scale. He argued for moving beyond a closed and isolated organization of schooling, particularly in vocational training and higher education, in order to narrow the gap between academic content and labor market realities. He highlighted the role of the private sector as a partner in educational design, not in a logic of delegation, but as a source of information regarding emerging needs, technologies, and professional trajectories. The objective is to develop more responsive educational systems capable of integrating innovation and preparing young people with transferable skills suited to an unstable productive environment.

Minister Sekkouri also stressed that education policy operates under strong time constraints: delayed decisions and fragmented political cycles generate cumulative costs borne by an entire generation. He called for moving beyond superficial consensus toward a logic of democratic compromise capable of overcoming ideological deadlock and stabilizing a long-term reform trajectory. In this sense, education can no longer remain a field of prolonged political confrontation. Transformation requires clear choices, institutional alignment, and rapid coordination between public and private actors in order to prevent technological change from further deepening inequalities in skills and opportunities.

Overall, the discussion converged on the idea that educational reform cannot be conceived as a marginal adaptation of the existing system. It requires a simultaneous rethinking of the objectives of schooling, curricular content, particularly in science and technology, the mechanisms of social mobility, and the governance capacities needed for rapid and coordinated implementation. The broader challenge is to preserve intellectual and technological autonomy in a context where artificial intelligence may both enhance and replace human capabilities, and where every form of institutional inertia increases the risk of educational decline.



"We need to put aside ideology. We need to put aside our frictions and oppositions when we discuss major reforms in education, so that the whole nation can move in one single direction and we don't lose time."



Conversation II

Morocco's Commitment to the Atlantic

Moderator

Khadija Ihsane

Journalist & Anchorwoman, Medi 1 TV - Morocco

Speakers

Youssef Amrani

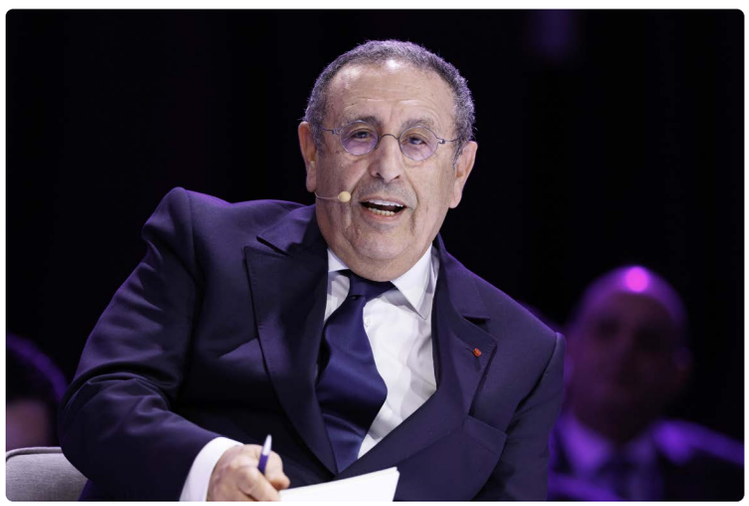
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United States - Morocco

Paulo Portas

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Portugal - Portugal

This panel explored Morocco's strategic role in Africa and the Atlantic, emphasizing regional stability, integration, and diplomacy. Discussions highlighted recent geopolitical shifts, including the UN's recognition of Morocco's autonomy initiative and its reintegration into the African Union. Speakers underscored challenges such as limited EU–Africa engagement, regional security threats, and infrastructure gaps, while emphasizing Africa's demographic and economic potential.

The conversation stressed the importance of equal partnerships, multilevel cooperation, and innovation as drivers for sustainable growth, stability, and regional influence in an increasingly interconnected Atlantic world.



Ambassador. Youssef Amrani highlighted stability as the foundation for progress and framed the Atlantic Initiative as a "game changer," linking infrastructure, soft power, and human connections. He stressed the need for Maghreb cohesion to enable continental integration and pointed out that multidimensional cooperation: trade, security, and intelligence-sharing, is critical to address terrorism, migration, and economic connectivity. Morocco's geographic and strategic position between Africa and Europe enables it to drive convergent policies and regional projects aligned with the vision of King Mohammed VI.



"The most important thing is the last resolution of the UN on the Sahara. Not only does it bring stability, but it is also in conformity with the international norms, and it helps to move forward to the settlement of the question."

› **Youssef Amrani**



Paulo Portas emphasized persistent, consistent diplomacy as a key factor in Morocco's recent successes. He noted Africa's demographic advantage and economic potential, calling for equal partnerships built on mutual respect. Portas urged Europe and global partners to modernize their approach, focusing on innovation, renewable energy, and digitalization, while avoiding condescending or fragmented strategies. Strong, forward-looking partnerships can unlock Africa's growth, reinforce stability, and enhance Morocco's regional influence. Consequently, recognizing Morocco's autonomy initiative can play a crucial role in supporting regional stability, while strengthening infrastructure and soft power will help ensure long-term influence. Building equal, multidimensional partnerships with African nations is essential, and modernizing European African cooperation, through innovation, renewable energy, and digitalization can drive shared progress. Ultimately, prioritizing regional cohesion and fostering multilateral security collaboration will be key to sustainable development and stability across the continent.

Key Messages

- Morocco's strategic positioning: Morocco was framed as a stability anchor and a connector between Africa and the Atlantic space.
- Integration through cohesion and security: Maghreb cohesion, infrastructure, and multidimensional cooperation were presented as essential for integration and risk management.
- Equal partnerships and innovation: Renewed EU–Africa cooperation based on mutual respect, innovation, renewables, and digitalization was highlighted as key to shared progress.



Plenary II

Unlocking the Next Stage: Rethinking Growth Strategies

Moderator

Khadija Ihsane

Journalist & Anchorwoman, Medi 1 TV - Morocco

Speakers

Masood Ahmed

President Emeritus, Center for Global Development - United Kingdom

Lana Bleik

Fellow & Deputy Director, Stimson Center - USA

Carlos Lopes

Honorary Professor, Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town - Guinea Bissau

Arkebe Oqubay Metiku

British Academy Global Professor, SOAS University of London - Ethiopia



The plenary on "Unlocking the Next Stage: Rethinking Growth Strategies" argued that traditional growth models are reaching their limits in a world shaped by technological disruption, geopolitical fragmentation, and environmental urgency. Competitiveness can no longer be reduced to productivity and exports alone. Societies increasingly judge economic performance by distributional outcomes, climate constraints impose new costs and regulations, and political shocks can override market logic. The core message was that the next stage of development requires growth strategies that integrate resilience, inclusion, innovation, and stronger governance.



Masood Ahmed highlighted how economic development has become more complex because people care not only about how much income is produced, but also how it is shared. Rising inequality weakens the effectiveness of classic growth playbooks, as headline expansion can coincide with social frustration and declining cohesion. Higher economic activity can no longer be pursued without accounting for carbon emissions and environmental constraints. Countries must reduce emissions per unit of output, which complicates industrial strategies and investment decisions. Moreover, there is a growing disconnect between growth, the creation of firms, and job creation. Some economies generate many businesses, yet produce few quality jobs, raising questions about whether growth remains inclusive.

Masood Ahmed also stressed that artificial intelligence is a major driver of this new complexity. It is reshaping production, services, and government functions, making policy design and implementation more demanding. The predictable "industrial ladder" of the past is fading in an era of rapid innovation and renewed protectionism. As a result, governments need smarter public–private partnerships and more modern industrial policies that are strategic, targeted, and adaptable. In addition, geopolitics now act as an economic constraint: rivalry between the United States and China shapes global trade patterns in ways that can suddenly harm even efficient exporters, since political decisions can disrupt markets. With the weakening of multilateral rules and of institutions such as the World Trade Organization, governments and companies must integrate geopolitical risk into strategic planning, rather than relying on assumptions of stable global trade.



Lana Bleik shifted attention to youth inclusion as a decisive pillar of development. The growing technology- and artificial-intelligence-driven gap could exclude millions of young people from emerging opportunities. Without urgent action, many risk unemployment, inactivity, and poverty because they lack the skills needed for the new labor market. Growth strategies focusing only on GDP increases are insufficient in the context of moderate growth prospects and persistent inflation. Development must also strengthen resilience, social protection, and institutional capacity. Digital transformation can raise productivity in sectors such as artificial intelligence, financial technology, e-commerce, and renewable energy, but without inclusive access and sound governance, these gains may deepen inequality. North Africa illustrates this tension: innovation ecosystems are developing while youth unemployment remains high, underscoring the need to put skills, learning systems, and inclusive institutions at the center of economic strategy. While some developing countries are embedding coding and artificial intelligence in education, many poorer African countries are constrained by weak infrastructure, including limited electricity and internet access.



Carlos Lopes challenged overly pessimistic narratives that treat Africa as a homogeneous bloc. When African economies are disaggregated, performance differences become clear, and many countries appear among the strongest growth performers of 2025. However, high growth could coexist with weak governance or instability, which illustrates the limits of GDP as a measure of real progress. Output can rise even while environmental destruction undermines long-term welfare. This highlights a need for human-development approaches centered on capabilities such as education, health, longevity, income, and life opportunities. Moreover, the global economic game is being redefined by carbon regulation, security concerns, and unilateral measures, such as the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism that reshapes trade and value chains. Artificial intelligence further disrupts notions of value and intellectual property by extracting data, making many existing regulatory frameworks outdated.



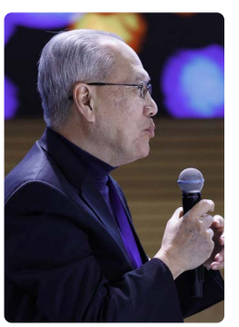


Arkebe Oqubay Metiku placed these debates in a long-term structural perspective. Technology remains a powerful engine of productivity over decades, while Africa's demographic trajectory – young and expanding – contrasts with aging advanced economies and China, creating both employment pressures and potential advantages. Sustainability is becoming central to future growth, increasingly driven by the Global South through green technologies and new industries. Advanced economies hold the historical responsibility for most emissions, while Africa's contribution is tiny, weakening arguments that Africa should not use fossil resources during development. Africa must be aware that extractive dependence yields few jobs and weak spillovers; oil-rich economies can underperform because extraction limits diversification. Africa's strategic challenge is to industrialize while accelerating investment in clean energy such as solar and hydropower, which can support competitiveness and reduce foreign-exchange pressures.

Overall, the "Unlocking the Next Stage: Rethinking Growth Strategies" plenary concluded that successful growth strategies must manage complexity by investing in human capital, adopting adaptive industrial policy, and ensuring technological change and the green transition are inclusive and geopolitically aware.









Key Messages

- Development is no longer about growth alone, but about how income, opportunity, and environmental costs are distributed, making GDP an insufficient measure of real progress.
- Human capital – especially youth inclusion, digital skills, and institutional capacity – has become the central determinant of competitiveness in an AI-driven and geopolitically fragmented world.
- Africa's demographic and green-energy potential offer a major productivity opportunity, but only if development strategies shift toward human development, strategic industrial policy, and an early transition to sustainable growth models.
- Geopolitics and carbon regulation now shape competitiveness as much as productivity: trade can be disrupted by political decisions, and market access will increasingly depend on meeting climate standards.
- Build "resilience-by-design" into development policy by diversifying partners and supply chains, institutionalizing geopolitical risk analysis, and aligning industrial policy with measurable emissions-intensity reduction through clean-energy scale-up and credible carbon-accounting/standards compliance.



"Economic development has become more complex because societies now care about how income is shared not just how much income is generated."

Masood Ahmed



"Youth inclusion is essential for future development, yet a growing technological and AI-driven gap threatens to exclude millions of young people from new economic opportunities."

Lana Bleik



"High growth rates in some countries coexist with weak governance or instability, which illustrates the limitations of GDP as a measure of real progress and well-being."

Carlos Lopes



"Demography is a major game changer: Africa's rapidly expanding and youthful population contrasts sharply with the aging societies of advanced economies and China, creating divergent labor-market pressures and new opportunities for global productivity."

Arkebe Oqubay Metiku



Plenary III

Rethinking Strategic Maritime Corridors as Global Commons

Moderator

Richard Lui

Anchor & Journalist, NBC News/MSNBC - USA

Speakers

Abla Abdel Latif

Executive Director and Director of Research, Egyptian Center for Economic Studies - Egypt

Ahmed Reda Chami

Ambassador, Head of Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the European Union - Morocco

David Lidington

Chair, Royal United Services Institute - United Kingdom

Erika Mouynes

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Panama - Panama



The session framed maritime corridors not as a niche transport issue, but as a foundational layer of the world economy; simultaneously a trade backbone, a security theatre, and a fragile infrastructure system. The discussion converged on a simple point: corridors are increasingly "global in function" but "national in jurisdiction," and that mismatch is now amplified by three forces: geopolitical contestation, transnational criminal capability, and the interdependence between maritime routes and undersea digital networks. The result is that disruptions are no longer marginal shocks; they can cascade across supply chains, coastal livelihoods, and even national payment systems.



Abla Abdellatif anchored the debate in the structural centrality of chokepoints, using the Suez Canal as the emblematic connector between the Atlantic economic system and Asia that concentrates a large share of population and global trade. She recalled that canal governance rests on the 1888 Constantinople Agreement, which seeks to guarantee global access under Egyptian sovereignty. Her core critique was political economy: current policy responses focus on managing symptoms – temporary security fixes, routing adjustments, incremental protections – while the underlying drivers of instability remain unaddressed. Without tackling the "source" of insecurity through durable regional political settlements, the international system risks locking itself into costly, inefficient, and ultimately fragile workarounds.



Ahmed Reda Chami treated maritime corridors as "sea highways" through which the overwhelming majority of global trade circulates and argued that corridor stress is now multidimensional. Security threats range from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Guinea and great-power tensions in the South China Sea; climate risks are becoming physically binding (with the Panama Canal cited as vulnerable to climate-related constraints); while ecosystems and coastal communities face cumulative damage from pollution and uneven benefit-sharing. His main analytical contribution was to identify two binding gaps. First, a governance gap: corridors are still governed through outdated legal architectures that produce fragmented jurisdiction even when vessels follow a single continuous route, creating practical enforcement and coordination failures. Second, a technology gap: existing systems can track ships, but cannot reliably predict congestion, storms, or emerging security threats. The implication is that competitiveness now depends not only on ports and logistics capacity, but on predictive governance tools – he singled out digital twins as critical infrastructure for corridor management. He linked this to Morocco's Tangier-Med experience as proof that strategic port investment can materially improve national competitiveness, while also stressing that corridors should increasingly be treated as global goods, without negating sovereignty.



Erika Mouynes shifted the lens from state-to-state rivalry to non-state capability, arguing that maritime corridors are systematically exploited by those involved in narcotrafficking, smuggling, and illegal fishing. Her point was blunt: criminal organizations cooperate across borders with an efficiency that often exceeds that of states, turning fragmented governance into an advantage for illicit actors. She emphasized the economic scale of losses – illegal fishing in West Africa alone was cited as costing around $11 billion annually – while warning that human trafficking and sabotage of critical infrastructure are rising threats. Her prescription was equally direct: corridor security requires supranational cooperation and shared intelligence, and governments should reframe maritime security in economic terms, because the magnitude of losses is large enough to justify sustained cooperation, even where political trust is limited.





David Lidington connected maritime security to the digital economy by focusing on submarine cables as a critical and under-protected layer of global infrastructure. He argued that, with the majority of internet traffic transmitted through undersea cables, corridors are now targeted, not only for trade disruption, but also for digital and financial paralysis. He highlighted both intentional risks – such as hostile-state mapping and sabotage – and unintentional risks, including landslides that recently disrupted payment systems across roughly 16 countries in West and Central Africa. A striking operational bottleneck is repairing capacity: only a small number of specialized vessels globally can lay and repair cables, which turns localized damage into prolonged systemic disruption. His policy focus was pragmatic: cooperative multilateralism among coastal states, shared security standards for landing stations, and investments to expand repair capacity. He also suggested exploring regulatory levers against sanction-evasion practices (e.g., "shadow fleets"), including possible involvement of Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-type mechanisms. His bottom line was that extended cable disruption could generate economic and social damage on a scale comparable to COVID-19, precisely because connectivity and payments have become core economic utilities.

Overall, the session's logic was that maritime corridors are now "compound infrastructures": trade arteries, security environments, ecological zones, and digital backbones overlap in the same spaces. When governance remains nationally fragmented and technologically reactive, while adversaries and criminal networks operate transnationally and predictively, systemic vulnerability becomes the default. The policy challenge is, therefore, not only to harden routes, but to modernize the rules, build shared operational capacity, and treat resilience as a public-good investment with measurable spillovers.

Key messages and recommendations

- Maritime corridors should be treated as strategic global goods whose reliability underpins trade, digital connectivity, and financial stability; the governance architecture has not kept pace with their global function while remaining constrained by national jurisdictions.
- Corridor insecurity is no longer a "single-issue" problem: geopolitical rivalry, organized crime, climate constraints, and environmental degradation interact, meaning that policy solutions limited to ad hoc security responses will remain inefficient and structurally fragile.
- Modern corridor governance must close two gaps simultaneously: update legal frameworks to reduce jurisdictional fragmentation along continuous routes and invest in predictive capabilities (including digital-twin systems) that shift management from tracking to anticipation of congestion, storms, and emerging threats.
- Reframe maritime security as an economic policy priority by quantifying losses from illegal fishing, trafficking, smuggling, and sabotage; this economic framing can justify supranational intelligence-sharing and enforcement cooperation even in low-trust regional contexts.
- Treat submarine cables as critical infrastructure within corridor security strategies by adopting shared standards for landing stations, expanding global repair capacity, and building cooperative mechanisms among coastal states to prevent localized damage from cascading into multi-country payment and connectivity failures.





"Apart from sovereignty considerations, maritime corridors should be treated as global goods."

"In Morocco, Tangier-Med, the largest port in Africa and one of the top five ports in the world, has demonstrated that we can boost national competitiveness through cutting-edge port infrastructure investments."

Ahmed Reda Chami



"Disruptions of sub-internet cable networks could cause economic and social damage comparable to COVID-19."

David Lidington



Conversation III

Latin America Amid Global Shifts

Moderator

Speakers

Derla Cardoso

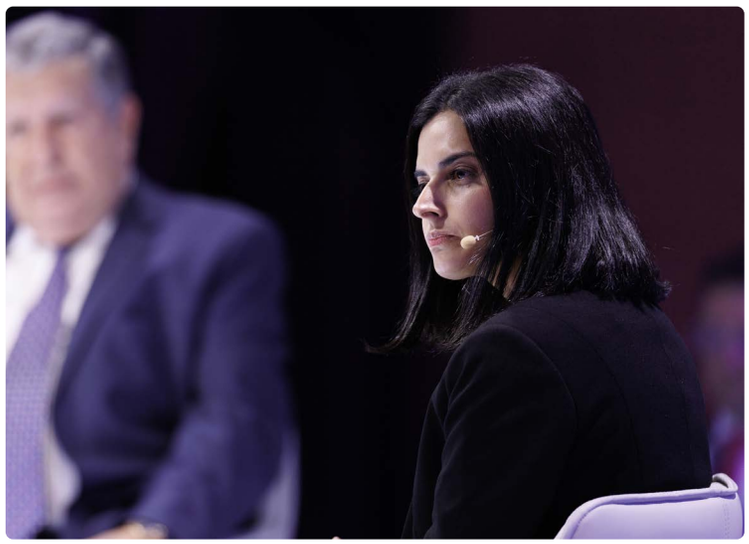
Head of International, CNN Brazil - Brazil

Federico Ramón Puerta

Former President, Republic of Argentina - Argentina

Jamil Mahuad

Former President, Republic of Ecuador - Ecuador





This panel examined Latin America's strategic position in a rapidly transforming global order marked by geopolitical recomposition, demographic shifts, climate change, and technological disruption. Moving beyond the traditional left–right political divide, speakers emphasized that the region's central challenge is institutional and democratic in nature. Against a backdrop of declining US attention, China's expanding influence, and persistent internal vulnerabilities such as corruption and narcotrafficking, the discussion focused on the need for stronger regional coordination, collective negotiation mechanisms, and long-term strategic thinking. Latin America's structural assets: peace, resources, and demographic stability, were highlighted as underleveraged sources of influence.

Democracy, Institutions, and the Imperative of Collective Action

Ramon Puerta stressed that Latin America's challenges should not be interpreted through an ideological lens opposing right and left, but rather as a fundamental choice between democracy and authoritarian drift. Political alternation, he argued, is healthy only when it rests on strong political parties and resilient institutions. Corruption and narcotrafficking are not merely political phenomena but systemic pathologies that permeate the state, the private sector, and the media ecosystem. Their containment, therefore, requires institutional reconstruction rather than short-term political responses.

Puerta emphasized that Latin America is fully embedded in global dynamics and cannot remain insulated from transformative forces such as artificial intelligence. Rather than deepening North–South asymmetries, AI should be leveraged to support the Global South, provided regional actors overcome persistent coordination deficits. The region's main weakness, he argued, lies not in the absence of potential, but in the lack of harmonization and collective strategy.

On external relations, Puerta rejected narratives framing China as an inherent problem. The real issue, he maintained, is fragmentation. Acting individually, Latin American states weaken their negotiating power; acting collectively, they can rebalance asymmetries. In this regard, MERCOSUR remains a critical instrument for regional unity and collective bargaining, particularly for smaller economies.

Puerta also highlighted the strategic value of Latin America's structural peace. As the only continent to have resolved its major conflicts through negotiation, and one where the three major religions coexist without large-scale violence, the region enjoys a rare stability that can be mobilized to attract investment and long-term partnerships. To fully capitalize on this advantage, Latin America must move beyond confrontation logics, explore underdeveloped sectors such as nuclear energy, and integrate AI into its development strategies.





Structural Transformations and the Limits of Outdated Frameworks

Jamil Mahuad framed the discussion within a broader analysis of structural global change. Climate change, he argued, directly reshapes geography and, by extension, geopolitics. As environmental transformations alter maritime routes and resource distribution, the strategic relevance of states and regions will inevitably shift. These dynamics intersect with profound demographic imbalances: 60 percent of the world's population now lives in Asia and 20 percent in Africa, leaving only 20 percent for the rest of the world. By the end of the century, Africa is expected to become the most populous continent, while China could lose up to half of its population.

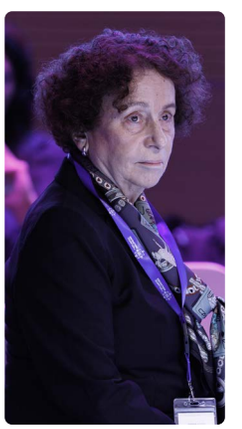
Within this evolving landscape, Mahuad described Latin America as suffering from strategic marginalization. Since the attacks of 11 September 2001, the region has gradually fallen out of US strategic priorities, creating space for China's growing presence. He illustrated this reconfiguration through an "imaginary line" dividing Latin America between a northern zone more closely linked to the United States and a southern zone increasingly integrated with China.

Mahuad emphasized that voters across the region often vote against incumbents rather than for coherent long-term projects, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction and weak institutional trust. In a global economy where production and consumption are geographically distant, Latin America must fundamentally reassess for whom it produces and to whom it sells, given that the two main consumption hubs remain the United States and China.

On artificial intelligence, Mahuad underlined the depth of the cognitive shift underway. Future AI systems will increasingly interact with one another in machine-native languages, transforming productivity, governance, and power structures. Latin America, he argued, holds considerable strategic assets such as abundant natural resources, a significant share of global freshwater reserves, and strong potential for green energy, but must realistically assess the financial costs of ecological transition.

Finally, Mahuad identified narcotrafficking as one of the region's most destabilizing forces. As a transnational phenomenon infiltrating states and societies, it cannot be addressed through isolated national policies. Only enhanced regional and international cooperation, grounded in institutional strengthening, can contain its effects. Without African development, he warned, demographic pressures would generate unsustainable migration flows toward Europe, making renewed North–South cooperation unavoidable.











Key Messages

- Strengthen political parties, institutions, and the rule of law as prerequisites for sustainable development.
- Reinforce regional integration and collective negotiation mechanisms, particularly through MERCOSUR.
- Intensify regional and international cooperation to combat narcotrafficking and institutional decay.
- Develop stronger strategic links with Africa and the Global South to enhance collective bargaining power.



"L'Amérique latine est le seul continent en paix dans le monde."

"Il s'agit d'analyser le coût financier de la transition verte."

Jamil Mahuad



"L'Amérique latine a beaucoup à offrir dans le sens de la paix et de l'investissement dans le Sud."

Ramon Puerta



Plenary IV

From Trade Wars to War Economies: Are Conflicts Rewiring Global Markets?

Moderator

Gallagher Fenwick

Reporter and Former Managing Editor, France 24 - France

Speakers

Javier Colomina

Special Representative for the Southern Neighbourhood, NATO - Spain

Frank Hanson

Air Vice Marshal, Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute - Ghana

Jonathan Miller

Senior Fellow, Macdonald-Laurier Institute - Canada

John Sawers

Executive Chairman, Newbridge Advisory - United Kingdom



The discussion portrayed the current international environment as an unusually dense configuration of risks: geopolitical rivalry, war-driven shocks, technological competition, and energy constraints are no longer parallel tracks but mutually reinforcing dynamics. The shared premise was that the old separation between security policy and economic policy has collapsed. States increasingly treat supply chains, energy systems, industrial capacity, and technology infrastructure as strategic assets, because the same vulnerabilities that weaken competitiveness can now be exploited as instruments of coercion.



Javier Colomina framed the decade ahead as structurally unstable, with interconnectivity accelerating the transmission of shocks across regions and sectors. The war in Ukraine was presented as the defining rupture, reshaping global security dynamics while triggering cascading effects on food security, energy markets, and economic stability. A central point followed: security, energy, and the economy have become fully intertwined, as modern conflict, technological competition, and hybrid threats now directly affect production systems, trade, and social resilience. Artificial intelligence was used as an illustration of this interdependence, with a stark metric meant to capture the new constraint: a medium-sized AI data center can consume in one day the same amount of electricity as a city of 100,000 people. This reframes energy availability and grid resilience as strategic bottlenecks for technological development. Against that background, reducing strategic dependencies – Europe's former reliance on Russian energy being the obvious case – was described as unavoidable, even when it imposes short-term economic costs and politically difficult choices. The security response was portrayed as increasingly comprehensive: NATO's "360-degree" approach treats Russia, China, Iran, cyberattacks, hybrid warfare, and critical infrastructure disruption as simultaneous vectors, while rising defense spending extends beyond military capabilities to production capacity, defense industry, and supply resilience. Partnerships with the Southern Neighborhood were presented as a practical extension of this agenda – maritime security, border management, energy security, and protection of critical infrastructure and supply chains – where Morocco was positioned as an active partner. The geopolitical environment was characterized as more transactional, with the United States still depicted as the central actor capable of shifting outcomes in Ukraine and the Middle East, while no comparable Chinese crisis-resolution plan was seen as available.



Frank Hanson stated that China's rise relative to established powers is structurally reshaping regional balances and intensifying competition across political, economic, and security domains. The key caution was that rivalry does not eliminate the need for pragmatic cooperation, but it changes its logic: cooperation becomes more strategic and selective, and the task is to balance competition and engagement without drifting into either naïve optimism or automatic confrontation. Regional initiatives were presented as stabilizers, when they channel contestation into development rather than

escalation, with Morocco's initiative for the Sahel cited as an illustration of cooperation framed around development needs. A concrete development-security linkage anchored this argument: for fragile and landlocked regions such as the Sahel, infrastructure and connectivity to continental and maritime systems directly shape trade opportunities, economic inclusion, and stability. The blue economy was presented as a lever for inclusive development capable of connecting coastal capacities to continental needs and reinforcing regional value chains. Sectoral strategy was also framed as requiring intertemporal discipline: in areas such as aquaculture, limiting short-term consumption can be necessary to sustain and scale industrial capacity, supporting long-term food security and economic sustainability.



Jonathan Miller argued that economy, trade, and national security have long been treated as separate policy domains, yet the present strategic context shows they are now fundamentally intertwined. Economic instruments – tariffs, trade restrictions, industrial policy, and financial tools – were framed as routine weapons in geopolitical competition rather than exceptional measures. A warning followed against an overly US-centric lens that risks underestimating the agency of Atlantic and allied countries, which still retain room for strategic autonomy if they coordinate and diversify partnerships. Canada was used as an illustration of exposure: high dependence on the US market makes it particularly vulnerable to economic pressure during trade tensions. Maintaining a workable relationship with Washington was presented as existential for countries such as Canada and Mexico, but necessity was not equated with passivity; overdependence was framed as a strategic error, not a realistic adaptation. Diversifying partnerships was therefore positioned as a resilience strategy, with the additional caveat that resilience is not achieved by replacing one vulnerability with another. Geography was also reasserted: despite global interconnection, regional realities still matter, and the Atlantic requires strategic discussions comparable in seriousness to those centered on the Pacific, particularly because rivalries familiar in the Indo-Pacific could re-emerge in the Atlantic space.



John Sawers argued that the US political center has become a major disruptor of the global system, reshaping international relations around a hard conception of economic and national security and an increasingly explicit spheres-of-influence logic. Transactional bargaining was described as a defining feature, grounded in identifying and exploiting other countries' economic, political, or institutional weaknesses. Technology was positioned as central to future power, but AI was treated less as an abstract race and more as a material infrastructure system: large-scale capability depends on costly data centers, massive energy demand, and secure access to the inputs and computing capacity needed to sustain them. This produces a new dependency category beyond raw materials and energy – dependence on AI infrastructure, compute power, and the supply chains that support them. China was framed as another major protectionist actor whose influence is structural rather than episodic, reinforced by large and persistent trade surpluses that deepen global reliance on Chinese production networks. At the same time, internal constraints – especially the difficulty of shifting from an export-led model to domestic-consumption-led growth – were noted as shaping China's trajectory. The strategic conclusion was blunt: in a system dominated by great powers, competition increasingly revolves around exploiting vulnerabilities, making dependency management the central policy task for other actors.



Key Messages

- Economic security has become inseparable from national security: supply chains, energy systems, and industrial capacity are now arenas of geopolitical competition, not neutral efficiency mechanisms.
- War-driven shocks and technological competition are propagating through interdependence, turning localized crises into global disruptions in food, energy, and economic stability.
- Artificial intelligence is not only a technological race but an infrastructure-and-energy race: the scale of data-center electricity demand makes energy availability and grid resilience binding constraints on strategic capability.
- Strategic competition around China's rise is structurally intensifying, but regional stability requires balancing rivalry with pragmatic cooperation and development-oriented initiatives.
- Build resilience-by-design through dependency management: diversify partners without substituting one vulnerability for another, invest in energy security and critical infrastructure protection (including digital and AI-related infrastructure), and align industrial policy with strategic supply resilience rather than short-term cost minimization.



"The world is going through such an unstable and uncertain era with a great level of interconnectivity with the different challenges the world is facing. The war in Ukraine is impacting food and energy security, with major consequences on all countries."

Javier Colomina



"The rise of China against established traditional big powers will inevitably increase conflicts and heightened competitions on different levels."

Frank Hanson



Plenary V

Resilient Nation-Building: Local Agency and the Role of Youth

Moderator

Gallagher Fenwick

Reporter and Former Managing Editor, France 24 - France

Speakers

Eniola Mafe

Global Advocacy and Partnerships Director, Bridges to Prosperity - Nigeria

Ana Palacio

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Spain - Spain

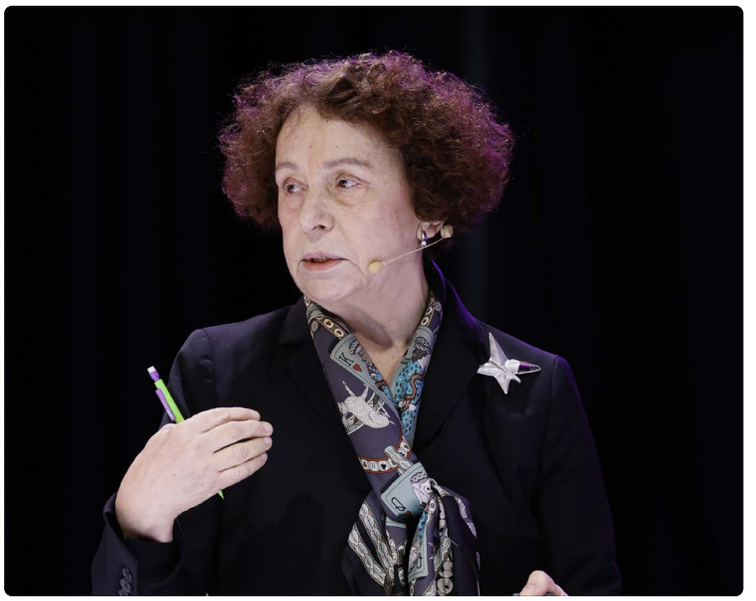


This plenary examined the role of youth and local agency in strengthening resilient nation-building amid global uncertainty and structural transformation. Moderated by Gallagher Fenwick, Reporter and Former Managing Editor, France 24, the discussion focused on how young people contribute to social cohesion, inclusive development, and adaptive governance across different contexts, particularly in Africa and Europe. Speakers explored the conditions that enable youth leadership to flourish, including access to opportunity, infrastructure, and meaningful participation in policymaking. The panel also reflected on how intergenerational cooperation, diaspora engagement, and regional approaches can reinforce resilience and support forward-looking national development strategies.



Eniola Mafe, Global Advocacy and Partnerships Director, Bridges to Prosperity, Nigeria, emphasized that meaningful development in Africa must account for the continent's rural reality, noting that around 60 percent of the population lives outside major urban centers. Ignoring rural areas, she argued, creates frustration and erodes trust, particularly among young people growing up in spaces with limited infrastructure. Drawing on demographic and infrastructure maps, she highlighted a disconnect between where young populations live and where investments are concentrated. This gap helps explain a growing sense of hopelessness among youth, many of whom have never experienced the link between hard work and prosperity. Mafe stressed that inclusive nation-building requires civic engagement and codesigning policies with young people, reinforcing the idea that people do not destroy what they have helped to build. She also highlighted diaspora engagement as a strategic asset, noting that countries able to mobilize diaspora knowledge and skills are gaining a clear advantage.









Ana Palacio, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Spain, reflected on the erosion of the social contract in Europe, arguing that resilience today must be understood as the capacity of societies to adapt under pressure. She identified the lack of prosperity and opportunity as one of the most pressing challenges facing young people globally, shaping how they view their future and their role in society. Turning to Africa, Palacio noted that youth are often the most likely to migrate because of their adaptability, reinforcing the idea that resilience is fundamentally about adaptation. She stressed that providing opportunities for young people does not happen automatically, but requires deliberate investment, qualifications, and intergenerational exchange. Citing the example of OCP, she illustrated how entrusting qualified young people with responsibility at the right time can yield long-term success. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of regional approaches to building resilience in Africa.







Key Messages

- Youth inclusion and civic engagement are essential for resilient nation-building, particularly in rural and underserved regions.
- The lack of prosperity and opportunity is a major driver, shaping youth perceptions and migration dynamics.
- Engaging qualified youth and diaspora communities strengthens national capacity and competitiveness.
- Regional and intergenerational approaches are critical to building long-term resilience in Africa.



"When we think about Africa's future, we must remember that 60 percent of the population is rural. You cannot design development strategies that ignore them. Civic engagement is not optional – it is essential."

""Young people today see the world differently. Many have never experienced the dividend of hard work turning into real prosperity."

"More African countries are engaging their diaspora. Those who do it well are winning, because they attract knowledge, experience, and innovation."

Eniola Mafe



"The social contract in Europe is broken. The real challenge now is to rebuild resilience – the capacity of our societies to adapt when negative forces threaten cohesion."

"In Africa, resilience must be built through regional approaches."

Ana Palacio



Conversation IV

Securing Water and Food for a Sustainable Africa

Moderator

Nik Gowing

Founder & Co-Director, Thinking the Unthinkable - United Kingdom

Speakers

Ibrahim Mayaki

Special Envoy for Food System, African Union - Niger

Mamadou Tangara

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of The Gambia - Gambia



The conversation explored the view that Africa's development and stability will increasingly be determined by whether it can protect water and food systems under simultaneous climate and demographic stress. With rainfall patterns shifting, droughts and floods intensifying, and land degradation eroding productive capacity, water and food security are no longer only sectoral concerns, but also strategic constraints on growth, livelihoods, and social cohesion. The discussion stressed that technical solutions will not be sufficient if governance remains fragmented and cooperation weak. The core message was that resilience requires integrated approaches that combine transboundary governance, preventive diplomacy, science-based planning, and community-centered adaptation.

Ibrahim Mayaki emphasized that Africa's water challenge is structurally shaped by geography: most major basins are transboundary, while decision-making remains dominated by national interests. Therefore, effective management depends on regional frameworks capable of coordinating allocation, investment, and risk management across borders. He highlighted three binding constraints: (1) the lack of reliable and shared data, (2) insufficient technical mechanisms for joint exploitation and planning, and (3) governance fragmentation that prevents coherent action. Mayaki also challenged simplistic narratives about Africa's resource endowment, noting that repeated claims about abundant arable land



ignore the reality of accelerating land degradation. Consequently, there is a need for a conceptual shift in policy design: water should be treated as the backbone of entire food systems, not merely an input into agriculture, because it conditions production, processing, storage, and distribution. With population pressures rising and ecosystems under stress, governance reform must accelerate and be paired with strategic use of science and innovation, while scaling regional initiatives that demonstrate cooperation is feasible when institutional fragmentation is reduced.





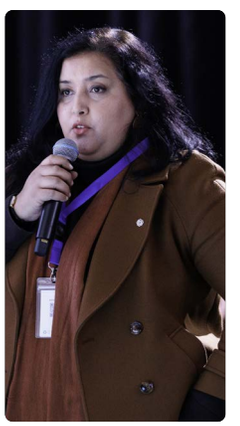
Mamadou Tangara shifted attention to the political economy of water insecurity and the role of preventive diplomacy in keeping resource stress from translating into conflict. Drawing from West African experiences, he argued that shared geography creates shared exposure: shocks in one area quickly spill across borders through livelihoods, food markets, and migration. He highlighted fisheries as a concrete example of how climate stress, coupled with external pressures and overexploitation, can reduce local incomes and weaken community resilience. As livelihoods deteriorate, youth face mounting pressures that can fuel irregular migration or increase vulnerability to extremist recruitment. Tangara stressed that peace and stability are not peripheral conditions but core prerequisites for effective water and food strategies, because policy implementation collapses in contexts of insecurity. He emphasized the need to build institutional capacity, strengthen public awareness, and reinforce regional organizations that can coordinate across borders consistently rather than episodically. Existing cooperation mechanisms should be scaled and systematized to reduce the risk that scarcity becomes a catalyst for instability.

Overall, the conversation concluded that securing water and food for a sustainable Africa requires governance systems that match the transboundary nature of the challenge, and political strategies that prevent resource stress from becoming a driver of conflict. It reaffirmed that resilience is built through coordination and institutions as much as through infrastructure and technology. The discussion pointed to three priorities: (1) strengthening transboundary governance and regulatory frameworks, (2) investing in data and monitoring as the basis for collective action, and (3) treating water as a central pillar of integrated food systems, with community-centered adaptation and preventive diplomacy embedded by design.











Key messages

- Water and food security are now strategic constraints on Africa's development and stability, not sectoral issues, because climate stress and demographic pressure are intensifying simultaneously.
- Transboundary river basins make national-level decision-making structurally insufficient; resilient outcomes require regional frameworks that can coordinate allocation, investment, and risk management beyond narrow national interests.
- Data is not a technical add-on but a governance foundation: build shared monitoring systems, interoperable data sets, and joint analytical capacity to enable credible planning, early warning, and accountability across countries.
- Reframe water policy around integrated food systems rather than agriculture alone, linking water management to processing, storage, distribution, and ecosystem protection to reduce losses and strengthen resilience along value chains.
- Embed preventive diplomacy and community-centered adaptation into water strategies by strengthening regional institutions, investing in capacity-building and public awareness, and proactively addressing livelihood erosion in stress points such as fisheries to mitigate migration and conflict risks.



"We keep repeating that Africa holds 60 percent of the world's arable land, but this is an illusion. Ongoing land degradation means we do not know whether this figure is still valid, which is why climate adaptation must be approached with extreme caution and the right policy choices."

Ibrahim Mayaki



"We know that we are inextricably linked by our geography, and what affects one directly affects all of us."

Mamadou Tangara



Plenary VI

Africa in a Self-Interested Global Order: Navigating Alone?

Moderator

John Yearwood

Editorial Director, Diversity & Culture, Politico - USA

Speakers

Nathalie Delapalme

CEO, Mo Ibrahim Foundation - France

Mmusi Maimane

President, Build One South Africa - South Africa

Peter Pham

Distinguished Fellow, Atlantic Council - USA

Andrés Rozental

President, Rozental & Associates - Mexico



Africa is navigating an increasingly fragmented global order shaped by conflict, climate change, pandemics, and shifting power dynamics. The central challenge lies in balancing greater autonomy with the need for partnerships, as strategic navigation, rather than isolation, has become essential. Interest-based cooperation, Africa's strategic agency, and the limits of existing global governance frameworks are increasingly salient, alongside the growing importance of flexible coalitions. Africa's demographic and economic weight further underscore the need for a clearer articulation of interests in a world that remains deeply interconnected.



Nathalie Delapalme opened the discussion by emphasizing that the international system is entering a prolonged phase of uncertainty, marked by overlapping crises that expose the weaknesses of existing governance frameworks. In this context, she framed "navigation" as a concrete mode of action, requiring adaptability and continuous adjustment rather than reliance on stable global norms. Cooperation, she argued, remains possible, but only if it is grounded in clearly defined and mutually understood interests.

Focusing on climate change, Delapalme highlighted deep global asymmetries in climate governance. While mitigation has largely dominated international discussions, development priorities in less industrialized regions have often been sidelined. In Africa, where nearly 600 million people still lack access to electricity, energy access remains a fundamental condition for health, education, and economic development. She stressed that Africa's voice – representing a continent both highly exposed to climate impacts and rich in renewable energy potential – must be better integrated into global debates, with adaptation receiving greater attention alongside mitigation. Africa, she concluded, should be viewed not as a marginal actor, but as a key stakeholder capable of contributing solutions.



Mmusi Maymane built on these reflections by reframing the debate around Africa's global positioning. Drawing on the Covid-19 experience, he described the pandemic as a revealing moment that exposed vulnerabilities, while forcing African states to rethink their place in the world. For Maymane, the challenge was not isolation but insulation, protecting African interests while remaining actively engaged in global affairs. He expressed confidence in Africa's future, provided it gains clarity on how it acts internationally.

He outlined three pillars for strengthening Africa's strategic positioning. First, digital infrastructure: in an increasingly digitalized world, Africa must build and control its own technological systems. Second, the nature of global dialogue: African actors should move away from narratives of victimhood toward a more confident and forward-looking discourse. Third, economic pathways and integration: clearer strategies and stronger regional integration are essential to unlocking opportunities. Maymane emphasized that Africa has as much to teach as it has to learn in global dynamics and called for leadership focused on lifting populations out of poverty and into the middle class. He also underlined the continued importance of engagement with partners such as the United States, particularly in trade and Atlantic relations.





Peter Pham introduced a pragmatic and strategic perspective on coalition-building. He cautioned against the expectation that Africa must always speak with a single voice, noting that neither the United States nor Europe consistently act with full unity, even on major geopolitical issues. What matters most, he argued, is not formal cohesion but the ability to clearly define interests, articulate them, and work strategically toward achieving them. Self-interest, in this sense, should be understood as a legitimate and foundational principle of international relations.

Pham highlighted Morocco's Atlantic Initiative as a concrete example of interest-based coalition-building. He described it as a gradual, process-driven project that has evolved from a vision into a shared framework, expanding access to the Atlantic space beyond strict geography. In a global context characterized by shifting alliances and "multilateralism à la carte", such initiatives demonstrate how achievable coalitions can be built incrementally, grounded in clearly defined interests and strategic objectives.

Andrés Rozental concluded the panel by situating the discussion within broader global dynamics, identifying conflict, trade, and economics as the main forces shaping international politics today. Despite repeated claims that globalization is in decline, he argued that the world remains highly interconnected. The Covid-19 pandemic, he noted, exposed the limits of full self-reliance, as African countries largely depended on Europe and the United States for vaccine access. Rozental also challenged the notion of "one Africa", describing the continent instead as a diverse collection of states with distinct political and economic realities.











Key messages

- Strategic navigation over isolation: In a fragmented global order, Africa's challenge is to expand autonomy while remaining engaged through partnerships grounded in clearly defined interests.
- Climate governance and energy access: Africa's voice must be strengthened in climate debates, with adaptation and energy access treated as core development priorities, alongside mitigation.
- Flexible coalitions and interest-based agency: Africa does not need a single voice to act strategically; what matters is articulating interests, building pragmatic coalitions, and investing in digital and regional integration to shape outcomes.



"As much as Africa has things to learn, Africa also has something to teach in the global dynamics."

Mmusi maymani



"We live in a world where many analysts have killed and buried globalization, yet we still live in a very globalized world."

Andrés roztnal



Plenary VII

Decarbonisation Futures: One Goal, Many Journeys

Moderator

Uduak Amimo

Founder, Uduak Amimo Coaching & Consulting - Kenya

Speakers

Sergio Alcocer

Former President, Mexican Council on Foreign Relation - Mexico

Michel Derdevet

President, Confrontations Europe - France

R. Andreas Kraemer

Special Advisor, Board of Directors, Oceano Azul Foundation - Germany

Edward Scicluna

Governor, Central Bank of Malta - Malta



This plenary examined why the global pathway toward net-zero carbon emissions remains uneven despite a shared climate objective. The discussion pointed to a widening gap between ambition and delivery: national policy frameworks remain misaligned, fossil-fuel expansion continues, and climate instruments repeatedly collide with domestic political constraints linked to affordability, social stability, and distributional tensions. Decarbonization emerged less as a purely technological problem than as a governance and political-economy test, requiring coordinated infrastructure, credible incentives such as carbon pricing, and institutional arrangements capable of withstanding fiscal constraints and geopolitical shocks. The core message was that transitions will continue to diverge unless policy credibility, cross-border cooperation, and investable incentive structures are strengthened simultaneously.



Sergio Alcocer foregrounded the institutional boundaries of climate governance by arguing that central banks cannot be treated as transition leaders. Within their mandates, monetary authorities may contribute, but transition delivery ultimately depends on coordination among governments, engineers, firms, and research communities to scale technically robust and cost-effective solutions. Mexico served as an illustration of how ideology and regulatory uncertainty can slow renewable deployment, not through a lack of potential, but through policy instability. A distinction between two interpretations of energy sovereignty structured the intervention: sovereignty defined as affordable and reliable access to energy versus sovereignty defined as state control over production and technology. The latter was framed as financially constrained and structurally dependent on private-sector participation, making public–private partnerships a practical necessity rather than an ideological preference. Geothermal energy was presented as an underused low-carbon opportunity with relevance beyond Mexico, with AI-assisted exploration cited as a potential catalyst for scalability – conditional on evidence-based policy rather than doctrinal choices.



Michel Derdevet emphasized that the climate transition has outgrown purely national governance models, because the scale and speed required cannot be delivered through isolated and uncoordinated policies. A contrast between the momentum surrounding the Paris Agreement and the approach toward COP30 highlighted an uncomfortable assessment: targets remain off-track while fossil-fuel industries expand, signaling a structural failure of incentives. A credible carbon market capable of valuing emission reductions was positioned as a necessary condition for acceleration, not a secondary refinement. Energy interconnections and integrated networks were framed as central instruments of both efficiency and political solidarity, creating functional interdependence that forces cooperation rather than relying on rhetorical commitments. Hydrogen illustrated this logic through Europe's declared production and import plans, making regional partnerships unavoidable and placing Morocco in a structurally strategic position. The overarching implication was that inward retreat cannot deliver decarbonization at scale: the transition requires stronger cooperation, exchange, and joint infrastructure.



R. Andreas Kraemer offered a more optimistic reading of global momentum by arguing that the Paris Agreement continues to anchor climate action through its influence on investment patterns and corporate transition strategies. Even under geopolitical stress, multilateralism was presented as resilient, sustained in part by the broadening of responsibility beyond national governments. Corporate and investor engagement in the United States was highlighted alongside the growing role of subnational governments and cities, reinforcing the view that climate action increasingly operates through a multi-actor ecosystem. Rapid expansion of corporate climate-reporting systems was framed as a material institutional shift: emissions monitoring, verification, standardized disclosure, and sector-level aggregation are now used by financial institutions to assess risk and guide capital allocation, strengthening accountability and embedding climate considerations into business strategy. Sovereignty was reframed as layered rather than absolute, spanning local, national, regional, and global levels because no state can solve climate change alone. Europe's vulnerability during the Russia–Ukraine war illustrated how renewables also function as tools of resilience and security, with domestic retention of jobs, taxes, and investment positioned as a political-economy advantage that strengthens autonomy.





Edward Scicluna returned the discussion to political constraints and fiscal realities by stressing that climate policy becomes significantly harder when it competes with defense priorities, social tensions, and affordability pressures. Repeated cycles of introducing and reversing carbon taxes were framed as symptoms of a deeper constraint: decarbonization requires lifestyle and behavioral change, which becomes politically costly under household stress. Shrinking fiscal space after COVID-era spending and subsequent geopolitical shocks was presented as a binding constraint on climate ambition, not because the need for transition is lower but because governments face tighter budgets, higher debt burdens, and intensified trade-offs. The role of central banks was again bounded by mandate, with price and financial stability remaining primary objectives even as climate change generates physical and transition risks that increasingly affect both. The European Central Bank's incorporation of climate considerations under Christine Lagarde was cited as an example of adaptation within mandate, justified through financial stability rather than assuming political leadership. The concluding implication was that climate and monetary policy are becoming intertwined, yet monetary institutions cannot substitute for government-led transition strategy.

Overall, the plenary converged on the view that the pace of decarbonization is being slowed by incentive failures, policy inconsistency, and political backlash, while continued fossil-fuel expansion undermines credibility and target achievement. The absence of credible carbon-pricing architecture was repeatedly identified as a central obstacle to scaling emission reductions and mobilizing investment. At the same time, geopolitical shocks have reinforced the strategic value of renewables as instruments of security and sovereignty, strengthening the case for acceleration rather than delay. The discussion closed on a governance conclusion: transition leadership must remain government-led, supported by corporate accountability systems and central-bank risk management, but it cannot be outsourced to monetary institutions.



Key Messages

- Decarbonization gaps reflect governance and political-economy constraints at least as much as technological limitations, with affordability, distributional tensions, and policy reversals repeatedly weakening delivery.
- Policy credibility is the scarce asset: reduce regulatory uncertainty, lock in stable investment signals, and avoid ideology-driven reversals that raise risk premia and slow deployment.
- A credible carbon-pricing and market architecture remains a central missing incentive; without it, emission reductions remain undervalued and fossil-fuel expansion continues to dominate investment logic.
- Integrated energy markets and cross-border interconnections should be treated as core transition infrastructure, creating functional solidarity and enabling scale, with hydrogen partnerships illustrating the strategic implications for regions such as the Euro-Mediterranean space.
- Clarify institutional roles: governments must lead transition strategy; corporations should be held to standardized disclosure and verification; central banks should manage climate-related financial risks within mandate, without being positioned as substitutes for fiscal and regulatory leadership.



Conversation V

Linking Social Safety Nets and Education for Resilient Societies

Moderator

Richard Lui

Anchor & Journalist, NBC News/MSNBC - USA

Speakers

Paula Disla

Vice Minister for International Relations, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Government of the Dominican Republic - Dominican Republic

Abdoulaye Idrissa Maiga

Former Prime Minister of Mali - Mali





This conversation examined the interdependence between social protection systems and education policies in fostering societal resilience in contexts exposed to climate, economic, health, and security shocks. Moderated by Richard Lui, the discussion brought together perspectives from the Caribbean and the Sahel, highlighting how structural vulnerabilities, compounded by climate change, pandemics, and insecurity, continue to challenge education systems and social safety nets. Through the cases of the Dominican Republic and Mali, the panel underscored that resilience is not solely a matter of income level or macroeconomic status, but rather of sustained public investment, inclusive governance, and the capacity of policies to reach the most vulnerable populations.

Paula Disla emphasized that the Dominican Republic, despite being classified as an upper-middle-income country, remains deeply exposed to climate and economic shocks that directly affect education and social stability. She stressed that children are growing up amid rising temperatures, hurricanes, extreme heat, and environmental degradation, making climate disruption a lived reality from early childhood. In tourism-dependent economies, such as coastal regions affected by sargassum, environmental change translates into economic instability, with direct repercussions on families' livelihoods and educational continuity.

She argued that social safety nets and education must operate in an integrated manner to build resilience, particularly for single mothers, isolated households, and children in situations of high vulnerability. Economic transition, she noted, does not eliminate the need for social assistance, as structural challenges such as educational gaps, illiteracy, and unequal access to healthcare persist. She highlighted significant progress achieved through civic mobilization, notably the successful campaign since 2012 to increase education spending to 4 percent of GDP, illustrating how cultural expression and social advocacy can shape public policy outcomes. Disla also pointed to ongoing reforms supporting early childhood education and school-based social support, including meal programs and full-day schooling aimed at assisting working families. However, she stressed that policy effectiveness depends on clear prioritization, particularly in addressing gender inequalities, school violence, and the abuse of young women, including early pregnancies. Legal reforms adopted in 2021 to ban and criminalize child marriage and informal unions were presented as major, though recent, achievements resulting from long-term advocacy. Throughout her intervention, she underscored the importance of dignity, warning that a gap often persists between decisions taken at ministerial level and their concrete impact in remote or marginalized communities.





Abdoulaye Idrissa Maiga situated the Malian experience within a series of structural turning points, notably the COVID-19 crisis of 2020, which he described as a lasting rupture requiring a fundamental rethinking of education systems for new generations. He recalled that since independence, education and health had been central state priorities, later complemented by human-rights-oriented reforms such as adult education and evening classes during the multiparty transition. However, reforms have consistently generated uneven satisfaction among stakeholders, reflecting the inherent limits of public policy in fragile contexts.

From the 2000s onward, Mali increasingly has relied on regional responses when national capacities proved insufficient. Since 2020, the convergence of health crises, poverty, and acute insecurity linked to terrorism in the Sahel has severely disrupted education, leading to widespread school closures. Maiga highlighted the cascading social effects of this disruption, noting that when schools close, parents lose not only educational services, but also the social infrastructure that enables daily economic activity.

Despite these constraints, he illustrated the resilience of Malian youth through personal trajectories of individuals who, having grown up in contexts of insecurity and displacement, pursued education nationally and abroad before assuming senior public responsibilities. These narratives, he argued, demonstrate that resilience is possible but cannot substitute for strong public policy. He concluded that reinforcing education systems requires sustained support, improved pedagogical capacity, and above all, better governance, which he identified as the decisive factor for quality and effectiveness across all sectors.











Key messages

- Strengthen the integration between social safety nets and education systems to address multidimensional vulnerabilities arising from climate change, economic shocks, health crises, and insecurity.
- Recognize that income status does not eliminate the need for social protection, and maintain targeted support for children, women, and vulnerable households throughout economic transitions.
- Prioritize governance quality and implementation capacity to ensure that education and social policies effectively reach marginalized and remote communities.
- Address structural inequalities within education systems, particularly gender-based violence, early marriage, and educational exclusion, through coordinated legal, social, and educational reforms.
- Invest in resilient education systems capable of adapting to long-term disruptions, including insecurity and demographic change, while reinforcing regional and cross-border cooperation where national capacities are exceeded.



"Being an upper-middle-income country does not mean social assistance is no longer needed."

"Educational gaps and illiteracy remain part of the challenges we face."

"Healthcare must be closer, more universal, and accessible to all."

Paula Disla



"Après le tournant de 2020 avec la COVID ça ne va plus être la même chose, il faut repenser les systèmes avec les nouvelles générations."

"Quel que soit le système, tout le monde n'est pas satisfait."

Abdula Idrissa Maiga



Plenary VIII

America First, Negotiation Room for Others?

Moderator

Kimberly Dozier

Global Affairs Analyst, CNN - USA

Speakers

Mohamed Beavogui

Former Prime Minister, Republic of Guinea - Guinea

Carmenza Jaramillo

President of the Advisory Council, IPDAL Institute for the Promotion of Latin America and the Caribbean - Colombia

Puneet Talwar

Former Ambassador of the United States of America to Morocco - USA



This conversation explored the implications of the United States' evolving foreign policy stance, particularly under the America First doctrine, for global alliances, multilateralism, and the strategic positioning of countries in the Global South. Drawing on perspectives from journalism, diplomacy, and policy practice, the discussion highlighted a central paradox: while the United States remains a pivotal actor in the international system, it is increasingly perceived, especially from the South, as an unpredictable and transactional partner. This shift has profound consequences for national budgeting, development planning, regional integration, and the future of multilateral cooperation.

A recurring theme across interventions was the erosion of the United States' image as a stable and predictable partner. Once regarded as a cornerstone of global order, Washington is now seen by many Southern actors as a source of strategic uncertainty, with abrupt policy reversals affecting trade relations, development aid, and long-term planning. This perception has been reinforced by the America First doctrine, which prioritizes domestic interests and weakens US leadership within traditional alliances, notably in Europe and Latin America. As the US retreats from multilateral commitments, geopolitical vacuums emerge, increasingly filled by actors such as China, particularly in regions historically shaped by US influence.

Speakers emphasized that this retrenchment is pushing regions of the Global South toward greater strategic autonomy. In Africa and Latin America, reduced engagement by institutions such as USAID and a declining commitment to multilateral frameworks are accelerating debates on regional and subregional solutions. Integration, diversification of partnerships, and intraregional cooperation are increasingly framed not as ideological choices, but as pragmatic responses to uncertainty. The notion of a "reliable ally" has also become more selective and differentiated. US partnerships are increasingly shaped by transactional and political considerations rather than shared norms or long-standing commitments.

Kimberly Dozier framed America First as a deeply disruptive doctrine that raises fundamental questions about US reliability. Citing audience perceptions, she noted that a large majority now view the United States as an unreliable partner under Donald Trump. She argued that decisions such as the withdrawal of USAID funding and the abandonment of Afghan allies who had supported US forces were widely perceived as acts of betrayal, severely damaging American credibility. This retrenchment, she added, has facilitated China's growing influence in regions where the US is disengaging. She also referred to US military operations in Latin America, particularly in relation to Venezuela, and highlighted internal divisions within the Trump administration regarding Ukraine, raising concerns that Kyiv could be pressured into territorial concessions to Russia.



Mohammed Beavogui stressed that the United States remains a central actor in the international system and that most countries continue to seek strong relations with Washington. However, from the perspective of the South, he observed growing confusion: a historically predictable partner has become a source of surprise, with tangible effects on national budgets, economic stability, and trade relations. He emphasized that many African countries have depended heavily on USAID, particularly in health and education sectors critical to development and crisis response, including in contexts affected by Ebola and HIV/AIDS. The sudden withdrawal of long-term assistance has triggered severe budgetary shocks, reinforcing the urgency of deeper intra-African integration and new economic dynamics.



Carmenza Jaramillo argued that the United States long functioned as a federating pole for Southern countries, but the adoption of America First has undermined this role and generated profound strategic uncertainty. While the US remains important, its withdrawal has allowed other powers to expand their influence, contributing to a significant devaluation of American leadership. She suggested that it will be difficult for Washington to regain its previous position, particularly in Latin America and Europe. In the Latin American context, she noted that the Trump administration is often perceived as hostile in the fight against narcotrafficking, with Colombia especially concerned about instability in Venezuela and the risk of refugee inflows. She raised the question of whether direct US action against the Maduro administration could be envisaged.



Puneet Talwar structured his intervention around two key concepts: alliance and reliability. He argued that the meaning of "ally" is increasingly contingent on the specific country concerned. For certain partners, particularly in the Gulf, Morocco, and Hungary, the United States continues to be perceived as a reliable ally. For traditional allies, however, reliability can no longer be taken for granted. He further warned that the pursuit of peace, particularly in Ukraine, could come at the cost of major concessions, and that overlapping or improvised peace initiatives risk neutralizing one another. At the same time, he acknowledged that Trump's improvisational approach has occasionally produced positive outcomes, such as the lifting of sanctions on Syria.





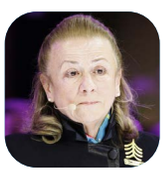






Key Messages

- Reassess alliance frameworks in light of growing US unpredictability, distinguishing between transactional partnerships and long-term strategic cooperation.
- Strengthen regional and subregional integration in Africa and Latin America to mitigate external shocks and reduce dependence on volatile external partners.
- Adapt to a more fragmented international system by developing flexible, pragmatic diplomatic strategies while preserving core multilateral principles.
- Anticipate the budgetary and developmental impacts of declining US assistance by diversifying financing sources and reinforcing domestic and regional capacities.
- Engage with emerging powers without substituting one dependency for another, maintaining strategic autonomy amid intensifying geopolitical competition.



"China is increasingly present in Latin America, although the US has historically been a key factor in this region. But with its continuous withdrawal, things are changing. China is covering the gap the US is leaving in Latin America."

Carmenza Jamillo



"Africa is starting to think by itself. Maybe we cannot have global solutions, but can we have regional and subregional solutions that can be effective?"

Mohammed Beavogui



Plenary IX

North-South Atlantic Partnerships: Managing Expectations and Realities

Moderator

Derla Cardoso

Head of International, CNN Brazil - Brazil

Speakers

Astanah Abdul Aziz

Deputy Secretary General, ASEAN for Political-Security Community - Malaysia

Leon B ernardino

Former Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya, United Nations - Spain

Renato Flôres

Director, Fundação Getulio Vargas International Intelligence Unit - Brazil

Omar Hilale

Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations - Morocco

The panel examined the evolving contours of North–South relations in a period of profound systemic transition, marked by geopolitical shocks, economic pressures, and growing uncertainty about how the emerging world order will function. Moderated by Derla Cardoso, the discussion explored how traditional partnerships are being strained by overlapping crises, wars such as Ukraine, renewed tensions in Latin America, and intensifying US-China rivalry, while Southern actors face persistent asymmetries in access to influence, financing, technology, and security support. Across the exchanges, participants emphasized the need for a new, inclusive agenda to reduce fragmentation and restore multilateralism's capacity to deliver solutions, while also protecting cultural diversity in the digital age and strengthening bridge-building roles, particularly for actors such as Morocco, between North and South.



Derla Cardoso, Head of International at CNN Brazil, framed the discussion around the growing pressures shaping North–South partnerships, stressing that global disruptions are increasingly felt in daily life, "in our pockets", and are undermining people's ability to pursue stability and long-term aspirations. She noted that wars, such as in Ukraine, are not only geopolitical shocks but also drivers of policy alignment pressures, pushing Southern partners to adapt to Northern choices, while facing domestic constraints and social expectations at home. In a fragmented international environment, she highlighted how Southern countries are compelled to manage simultaneous economic, political, and security challenges, and raised the central question of whether North–South relations can move beyond historical alliances and declaratory cooperation toward frameworks that generate tangible and balanced benefits. She also emphasized the strategic dilemma of navigating US–China rivalry, while managing persistent tensions and asymmetries with Northern partners.



Astanah Abdul Aziz, Deputy Secretary-General at ASEAN for Political-Security Community, presented ASEAN as a regional grouping of eleven developing countries, following the accession of Timor-Leste, enabling it to fully represent Southeast Asia as a sub-region. She highlighted ASEAN's deep internal diversity across religions, cultures, and political systems, including democracies, socialist governments, an absolute monarchy, and a military-led system, and used this diversity to challenge the assumption that democracy is the only legitimate model of governance, describing that claim as a predominantly Western position that ASEAN does not endorse. Reaffirming ASEAN's commitment to sovereignty, she argued that each country must determine the governance model best suited to its national context, in line with both the UN Charter and ASEAN's founding principles.



Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, described a world where multipolarity has become the norm, alliances are mutating, international law is increasingly violated in an openly assumed manner, multilateralism is shrinking, and the UN is weakened while undergoing reform in a complex environment, raising a strategic question about where the Atlantic fits within these shifting realities. He argued that North–South cooperation is fragmenting as Northern countries retreat inward and prioritize domestic interests, with development aid declining and Northern publics increasingly questioning its relevance, a trend reinforced by populist narratives. He highlighted three concrete manifestations of these strains: the persistence of the digital divide despite Southern demand for technology transfer and the continued lack of electricity for large parts of Africa; the rise of insecurity, including terrorism in the Sahel and maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea; and the structural marginalization of Southern countries from negotiating tables and credit facilities, while migration is used as a scapegoat, despite limited South-to-North flows and Europe's growing demographic need for migrants.





Leon Bernardino, Former Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, argued that the ongoing change in world order should be paired with a reconceptualization of North–South relations, recalling Gramsci's idea that "the old world is dying" while the new one struggles to emerge, creating uncertainty and instability. He insisted that this transition requires changing the concepts through which global politics are understood, pointing to the Gulf countries as an illustration: historically leaning toward the North, they have increasingly engaged with ASEAN and begun to position themselves as part of the South.



Renato Flôres, Director, Fundação Getulio Vargas International Intelligence Unit, questioned the continued relevance of the classic North–South divide, arguing that while it may still hold limited value for certain analyses, it is increasingly misleading as a primary frame for interpreting present dynamics. He noted that alternative labels, such as "Global South" or

"incumbent North", also fail to fully capture today's realities, given evolving positions on both sides. He highlighted that Europe is entering a prolonged period of internal flux without clear short-term stabilization, and proposed a more realistic understanding of the international system centered around the persistence of a hegemonic power that remains dominant but is increasingly uncertain about its own strength. Citing the most recent US National Security Strategy, he suggested that repeated assertions of power can reflect underlying insecurity rather than confidence and argued that global relations are increasingly shaped by a narrative of fear. He warned that fear-driven policy choices often lead to poor strategic outcomes and called for approaches that focus instead on managing complexity and asymmetry in relations with a dominant but unsettled power.

Key Messages

- Develop a new, inclusive global agenda to reduce fragmentation and respond to urgent challenges (migration, energy, trade), while reaffirming multilateralism as the platform capable of bringing all actors to the table.
- Reframe North–South cooperation toward tangible and balanced benefits, moving beyond declaratory partnerships and adapting to intensified geopolitical rivalries and persistent asymmetries.
- Promote bridge-building roles, including Morocco's positioning between North and South, and encourage cooperative crisis-management approaches based on dialogue with all stakeholders.
- Strengthen regional frameworks as pragmatic platforms for resilience, intraregional trade, food security, and complementary financial arrangements, while ensuring cultural diversity is protected in digital and development models.





"We don't know how the new world will be, but we know it should be fairer."

Leon Bernardino



"I must clarify this distinction: North, South is over. It can be useful for certain kinds of analysis, but i think it is misleading if we use it as a frame of reference to discuss the present situation."

Renato Flôres



Plenary X

A Think Tank Conversation: Bridging Regions, Building Futures

Moderator

John Yearwood

Editorial Director, Diversity & Culture, Politico - USA

Speakers

Karim El Aynaoui

Executive President, Policy Center for the New South - Morocco

Sunjoy Joshi

Chairman, Observer Research Foundation - India

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos

Chief Executive, South African Institute of International Affairs - South Africa



This plenary explored the evolving role of think tanks in a global context marked by rising unilateralism and fragmented multilateral systems. Moderated by John Yearwood, Editorial Director, Diversity and Culture, Politico USA, the discussion examined how think tanks act as bridges across regions, sectors, and perspectives by creating spaces for dialogue, reflection, and long-term thinking. Speakers reflected on the ability of think tanks to foster trust, circulate ideas beyond traditional power centers, and engage wider audiences beyond policymaking elites. The session highlighted the challenges think tanks face in maintaining relevance and legitimacy while contributing to more inclusive and forward-looking global conversations.



Karim El Aynaoui, Executive President, Policy Center for the New South, emphasized that the strength of think tanks lies in their ability to create safe spaces for open and sometimes difficult conversations. He stressed that meaningful intellectual exchange requires time, reflection, and cooperation, distinguishing think tank work from policymaking, which is often driven by urgency and immediate decisions. Think tanks, he argued, help capture societal moods and transform knowledge into a public good that informs decision-making over the long term. He described the Atlantic Dialogues as an exercise in exchange, highlighting the appetite for dialogue and the importance of transmitting knowledge and values to future generations through initiatives such as ADEL. He further noted that such open exchanges are not possible everywhere, underscoring Morocco's role as a place where free and constructive debate is encouraged.



Sunjoy Joshi, Chair, Observer Research Foundation India, argued that if think tanks appear to be underperforming today, this reflects a broader crisis of legitimacy rather than a lack of relevance. He traced the deep historical roots of think tanks to centuries-old traditions of knowledge exchange, including intellectual networks linking Africa, the Sahel, and beyond. According to Joshi, the major disruption facing think tanks today is a crisis of confidence, particularly among younger generations questioning who curates the international order and whose narratives dominate. Rebuilding trust, he stressed, requires renewing discourse, learning from history, and recognizing that all actors are part of the debate.





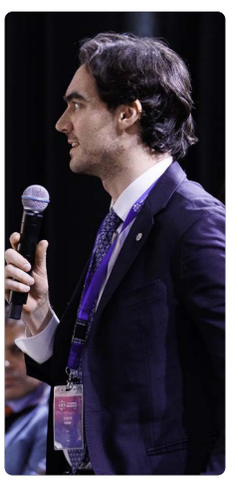


Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive, South African Institute of International Affairs South Africa, highlighted that think tanks operate within a broader ecosystem where stakeholders increasingly expect tangible impact. She noted that relevance today requires moving beyond traditional outputs, such as policy briefs, to engage youth, civil society, and local communities more directly. Drawing on experiences from Africa, she emphasized the growing role of partnerships and networks in building trust and collaboration. She pointed to community-based renewable energy initiatives as examples of how think tanks can translate ideas into action and extend their work beyond elite circles.













Key Messages

- Think tanks derive their legitimacy from trust, reflection, and long-term engagement rather than rapid policy outputs.
- Relevance depends on broadening engagement beyond elites to include youth, civil society, and local communities.
- Building regional and cross-sectoral networks strengthens the ability of think tanks to translate ideas into action.



"You don't win a revolution with your heart; you win it with your brain."

"Think tank work requires time to reflect, exchange ideas, and build trust."

Karim El Aynaoui



"If think tanks are not delivering today, there is a bigger crisis of legitimacy."

"The whole purpose of those different voices in one room is, like we do here in the PCNS, to exchange conversations which have not been had in other places in the world; those conversations don't take place in Washington or Brussels, they are taking place in Rabat."

Sunjoy Joshi



"In Africa, we have seen collaboration and interaction emerge to build relationships driven by the same purpose."

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos



Plenary XI

The Weaponization of Everything: From Bytes to Bots to Beliefs

Moderator

Kimberly Dozier

Global Affairs Analyst, CNN - USA

Speakers

Fonteh Akum

Executive Director, Institute for Security Studies - South Africa

Juan Battaleme

Secretary for International Defense Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Government of Argentina - Argentina

Manjeet Kripalani

Co-Founder & Executive Director, Gateway House - India

Hubert Védrinei

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of France - France



The session captured a defining feature of the contemporary international system: the transition from structured confrontation to diffuse, multidimensional competition. While the war in Ukraine remains a central shock to the global order, speakers converged on the idea that it is not the primary driver of systemic transformation. Rather, it acts as an accelerator of deeper trends, technological militarization, ecological stress, erosion of multilateral governance, and intensifying great-power rivalry, particularly between the United States and China. In this emerging environment, power is no longer exercised primarily through military force or formal alliances, but through the progressive weaponization of economic interdependence, technological ecosystems, information spaces, and belief systems. Traditional geopolitical blocs are eroding, the notion of a unified "West" is increasingly contested, and the Global South appears less as a coherent actor than as a fragmented arena of competition, adaptation, and strategic hedging.



Fonteh Akum framed the war in Ukraine as one theatre within a broader global confrontation in which "everything" becomes a weapon. Sanctions regimes, supply chains, digital infrastructures, and narratives are now integral components of power projection. This shift, he argued, is producing a paradoxical outcome: while polarization undermines certain multilateral institutions, it simultaneously creates political and strategic space for intermediate powers and flexible coalitions.

Turning to Africa, Akum challenged dominant narratives that portray the continent as ideologically aligned with Russia or locked into binary geopolitical choices. Instead, he described Africa as a highly fragmented strategic space where external powers operate opportunistically rather than hegemonically. Russia's presence, often overstated, should be understood as part of a competitive ecosystem rather than a decisive realignment. By contrast, China's influence is embedded more deeply through its expansive diplomatic network – the largest consular presence on the continent – and its long-term economic and infrastructural engagements. Turkey's rapidly expanding diplomatic footprint further illustrates the multiplication of external actors.

For African states, Akum argued, the strategic imperative is not alignment but diversification. The priority lies in leveraging competition among external partners to address concrete structural challenges, notably debt sustainability, industrial capacity, and connectivity. Three interrelated priorities emerged: (1) diversifying partnerships beyond traditional poles, (2) strengthening domestic industrial infrastructure, and (3) developing new regional and transcontinental development corridors. Crucially, Akum warned against alarmist discourses, stressing that political adaptation must be grounded in realism rather than crisis-driven rhetoric.



Juan Battaleme's intervention highlighted Latin America's distinctive positioning within the current international disorder. The region's perception of Russia remains deeply ambivalent, reflecting both historical ties and contemporary anxieties. More broadly, Battaleme characterized the present moment as one of diffuse conflict, an environment ill-suited to binary frameworks of allies and adversaries.

The war in Ukraine, he noted, is experienced in Latin America as a distant conflict, lacking the immediate security and economic reverberations felt in Europe. This strategic distance shapes public opinion and elite discourse alike, reinforcing a pragmatic, often non-aligned posture. Media ecosystems play a critical role in this dynamic: Russian outlets such as Russia Today have successfully penetrated regional information spaces, at times surpassing Western media in audience reach and narrative influence.

Battaleme emphasized that US regional dominance has structurally eroded. While Washington remains a key actor, China and Russia have significantly expanded their presence through distinct but complementary strategies. Russia seeks to influence public opinion and political discourse, whereas China focuses on shaping institutional frameworks, economic dependencies, and intellectual ecosystems. US naval deployments near Venezuela, he argued, should be read as strategic signaling not only to Caracas but also to its external partners, underscoring the persistence of deterrence logics in a multipolar context.

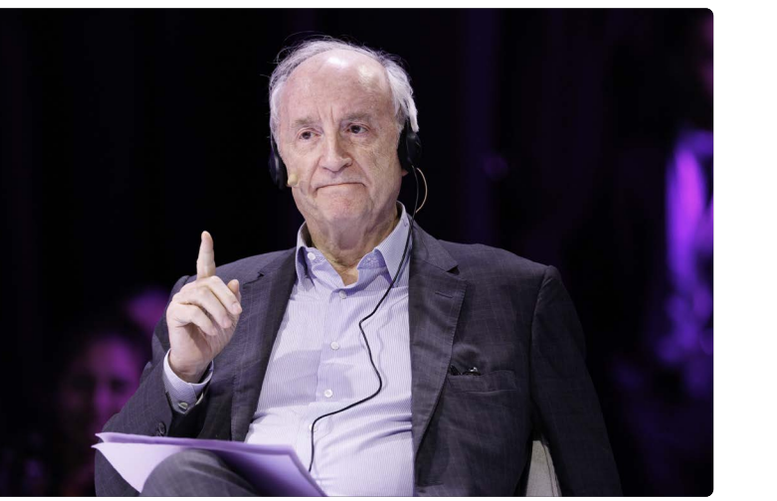
Revisiting the Monroe Doctrine, Battaleme underlined its enduringly negative symbolic legacy in Latin America, despite its original anti-European rationale. In a fragmented global order, he concluded, the challenge is not to impose corrective narratives but to articulate credible, context-sensitive solutions capable of resonating with regional realities.



Manjeet Kripalani's contribution focused on South Asia, where Russia is increasingly perceived as engaged in a broader confrontation with the West rather than a localized war with Ukraine. India's deepening ties with Moscow reflect both historical continuity and contemporary recalibration, particularly in response to new trade and technology restrictions imposed by the United States.

Kripalani identified disinformation, deep-fake technologies, and viral content as central threats to social cohesion and political stability. In response, India has adopted an explicitly securitized approach to the digital sphere. Information is treated as a security domain: viral videos can constitute crime scenes, while platforms facilitating the dissemination of harmful narratives may be legally classified as terrorist actors. This approach illustrates the collapsing boundaries between internal security, information governance, and technological regulation.

Domestically, Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to enjoy strong political legitimacy, particularly among younger demographics. China, by contrast, is viewed overwhelmingly as a strategic adversary, driven by unresolved border tensions and concerns over digital infiltration. The comprehensive ban on TikTok, framed as a counter-espionage measure, exemplifies the extent to which technology has become a front-line of geopolitical contestation.



Hubert Védrine, in his concluding remarks, reframed the discussion by situating the war in Ukraine within a broader hierarchy of global risks. He argued that the ecological countdown and the structural rivalry between the United States and China constitute more decisive drivers of long-term instability. Rejecting the notion of a cohesive Western bloc, Védrine highlighted persistent strategic and political divergences between the United States and the European Union. Similarly, the Global South, far from being unified, is characterized by divergent aspirations, capabilities, and strategic trajectories.

The principal risk ahead, Védrine warned, lies in the unchecked escalation of technological confrontation, a form of "technological savagery" in which innovation outpaces governance. Against this backdrop, the international system faces two competing trajectories: a fragile and unstable coexistence marked by managed rivalry, or a descent into heightened systemic disorder driven by fragmentation, mistrust, and uncontrolled technological competition.



Key Messages

- Competition is becoming diffuse and multidimensional as economics, technology, information, and narratives are increasingly weaponized beyond classic military confrontation.
- Ukraine is an accelerator rather than the root cause as deeper drivers dominate, notably US–China rivalry, ecological stress, and weakening multilateral governance.
- Regions are adapting through hedging and diversification as Africa and Latin America navigate partner competition, while digital ecosystems and disinformation become core security fronts, with technological escalation outpacing governance.



"Ultimately, we will have to adopt credible solutions without sounding the alarm about the state of the world."

Fonteh Akum



"In Latin America, we have always had a sense of the existence of a 'Global South,' whereas the relationship should instead be viewed from a transatlantic perspective."

Juan Battaleme



Closing Plenary XII

Wider Atlantic Challenges Viewed by Emerging Leaders

Moderator

Kimberly Dozier

Global Affairs Analyst, CNN - USA

Speakers

Aliyyah Ahad

Director & EU Representative, Government of Bermuda, Brussels Office - Bermuda

Maria Fernanda Bozmoski (Perez Arguello)

Director, Impact and Operations | Central America Lead, Atlantic Council - Costa Rica

Noureddine Hamri

Founder, Offshore Electrical systems Project Manager, Turn up the light, Aventa - Morocco

Carlos Moura Teixeira

Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative for the Sahel, Office of the EU Special Representative for the Sahel - Portugal



This closing plenary brought together four emerging leaders to reflect on the future of the Atlantic Basin and the practical lessons they will take home from the Atlantic Dialogues. Rather than focusing on abstract geopolitical concepts, the discussion centered on people, youth, and action-oriented cooperation. Speakers agreed that existing governance models often fail to respond to real needs and that young people feel disconnected from decision-making processes. The panel called for a renewed Atlantic vision built on inclusion, responsibility, flexibility, and bottom-up collaboration, capable of addressing shared challenges such as climate change, economic opportunity, and social cohesion.



Noureddine Hamri argued that policy discussions must be humanized and grounded in reality. He stressed that large multilateral narratives often feel distant from people's daily lives and rarely lead to concrete results. Instead, he promoted a bottom-up approach, where practitioners, engineers, and sector-specific agencies work directly together across borders. Using the example of cooperation between the Moroccan and Portuguese Energy Agencies, he showed how technical collaboration on issues like solar and hydrogen energy can build trust and deliver tangible outcomes. For Hamri, policy should emerge from practical experience, not the other way around, and South–South cooperation offers strong potential.



Aliyyah Ahad focused on the disconnect between young people and institutions. She explained that youth are not rejecting democracy but are frustrated by systems that do not deliver. According to her, the Atlantic space is not currently seen by young people as a meaningful political framework, because dominant narratives focus on major power rivalries such as the US–China or EU–US relationships. She called for rebuilding an Atlantic narrative that speaks to young people's realities, supported by concrete initiatives such as Atlantic-wide youth exchange programs. For Ahad, genuine co-creation and early youth involvement are essential to restore trust and relevance.





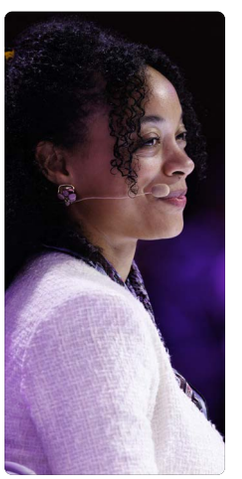
Carlos Moura Teixeira highlighted the need to rethink how cooperation in the Atlantic is organized. He argued against rigid institutional structures and instead promoted a model based on flexibility and "variable geometry", where coalitions of the willing form around shared interests and move at different speeds. He also introduced the idea of the "New South" as a space defined not by geography, but by agency and responsibility. Teixeira warned that focusing only on self-interest or non-alignment risks isolation, and that rebuilding forgotten Atlantic connections is necessary for a more balanced global order.



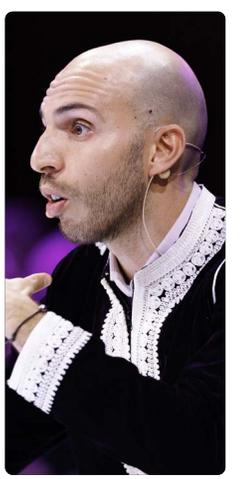


Maria Fernanda Bozmoski emphasized that many governments remain reactive rather than forward-looking. She pointed out that youth priorities, especially climate change, often differ from those of elected leaders, creating frustration and disengagement. Bozmoski called for integrating youth voices directly into policymaking, not as symbolic participants but as contributors to real decisions. She also advocated for mini-lateral cooperation models, similar to ASEAN, where smaller groups of countries work together pragmatically based on shared economic and social interests rather than ideology.

Overall, the session concluded that the future of the Atlantic depends on inclusive governance, practical cooperation, and renewed trust between generations. By listening to youth, building flexible partnerships, and focusing on concrete solutions, the Atlantic space can become more relevant, connected, and resilient.









Key Messages

- Youth and legitimacy: The Atlantic's relevance depends on reconnecting governance with young people's priorities and restoring trust through genuine participation.
- From narratives to delivery: Cooperation should be human-centered and results-driven, privileging practical, bottom-up collaboration that produces tangible outcomes.
- Flexible coalitions: Future Atlantic cooperation will rely on variable-geometry partnerships and mini-lateral formats built around shared interests, responsibility, and inclusion.



"We need to humanize the discussion and move toward a bottom-up approach, because broad multilateral narratives often disconnect from people's real needs."

"When you take a subject to a more technical and implementable level, you can actually make things happen instead of staying stuck in abstract narratives."

Noureddine Hamri



"People are disappointed with how institutions deliver, but that doesn't mean they reject democracy, they want one that works for them."

"We've heard throughout the week about co-creation: young people don't want to be outside the system; they want to be part of building a system that delivers."

Aliyyah Ahad



"We have shared challenges and experiences, but we do not always see them because we're not looking through an Atlantic lens."

Carlos Moura Teixeira



"Youth voices must be integrated into the conversation, not placed on the side as a symbolic event."

Maria Fernanda Bozmoski



Townhall (II)

Nik Gowing

Founder & Co-Director,
Thinking the Unthinkable -
United Kingdom

Moderated by **Nick Gowing**, the Townhall offered a wide-ranging examination of the pressures reshaping today's global landscape, moving across inequality, democratic fragility, multilateral drift, technological disruption, and geopolitical securitization. A central paradox framed the discussion: global resources are sufficient to sustain the world's population, yet inequality remains entrenched within and between societies. This tension anchored a broader diagnosis of governance under strain, where institutional legitimacy is weakening, policy delivery lags behind public expectations, and international cooperation struggles to keep pace with compounding crises. The core message was that restoring stability requires not only better policies, but political systems capable of inclusion, credibility, and rapid adaptation.

A recurring priority was electoral and voter reform as a practical lever to address domestic inequality and rebuild trust in democratic systems. Political inclusion was treated as a foundational condition rather than a procedural detail, with the implication that distributive outcomes cannot be improved sustainably when representation is distorted or confidence



in electoral accountability erodes. Multilateralism was simultaneously portrayed as fragmented and increasingly ineffective at managing complex global shocks, reinforcing the view that domestic legitimacy and international cooperation are now interdependent. Technological literacy and institutional adaptability were emphasized as baseline requirements for governments seeking to remain effective, given that policy environments are being reshaped by rapid technological change and new forms of economic and informational power.

Youth voices placed human connection and intergenerational solidarity at the center of the discussion, arguing that empowerment cannot be reduced to symbolic inclusion or isolated opportunities. Meaningful youth participation was framed as requiring mentorship, transmission of experience, and institutionalized pathways to responsibility, conditions often absent even when policy rhetoric is ambitious. A persistent gap between policy intention and lived outcomes was highlighted as a primary driver of declining trust, with an associated call for governance models that are more agile and experimental. Regulatory sandboxes and iterative policymaking were presented as tools to test solutions under real conditions before scaling, shifting governance from declarative commitments to evidence-based delivery.

Regional integration emerged as a strategic necessity rather than an optional ideal, with particular attention to the Middle East where cooperation remains difficult but indispensable given shared vulnerabilities and interconnected risks. The discussion also elevated the role of cities and mayors as governance actors able to translate policy into tangible outcomes by mediating national priorities and local realities. Employment scarcity – especially for younger generations – was treated as a structural risk to social stability, with heightened urgency in developing countries where demographic pressures, weaker safety nets, and limited mobility amplify the consequences of jobless growth.

Geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics were interpreted through the lens of securitization, describing a trend in which states increasingly frame economic, technological, and social issues as security imperatives. This shift was linked to broader governance concerns: declining trust, perceived double standards in global politics, and weakened educational and security fundamentals in contexts of high illiteracy. The conversation also confronted uncomfortable critiques about democratic systems themselves, including the erosion of traditional alliances, especially those led by the United States, and the perception of self-enrichment within democratic politics. At the same time, wealth creation was defended as an essential engine of growth, and historically low global poverty levels were cited as achievements that should be consolidated rather than dismissed, suggesting that the central challenge is not growth versus fairness, but rebuilding institutions so that wealth creation translates into widely shared opportunity.

Power dynamics in the international system were described as hardening toward a "might makes right" logic, narrowing the space for rule-based cooperation. In response, strategic autonomy and rational self-interest were framed as pragmatic imperatives for medium-sized and smaller states, combining cooperation with diversification and resilience. Technology was widely recognized as a source of opportunity, but only when coupled with organized action and concrete steps to improve security and prosperity rather than treated as an automatic driver of progress. The discussion closed by reaffirming democratic politics, despite its imperfections, as the least flawed mechanism for accountability, while warning that democracy requires responsive institutions and leaders able to translate ideals into delivery. A final reflection pointed to a deeper challenge in the geopolitical reset: weakening shared moral reference points and spirituality, raising questions about meaning, cohesion, and the value foundations of global governance.







Key Messages

- Restoring stability requires rebuilding institutional legitimacy and policy delivery through political inclusion, agile governance, and technological adaptability, while linking domestic trust to effective cooperation in an increasingly securitized and fragmented global order.



Closing Remarks

Karim El Aynaoui

Executive President, Policy Center for the New South - Morocco

Karim El Aynaoui, Executive President of the Policy Center for the New South, concluded the exchange on a notably optimistic and forward-looking note, highlighting how struck he was by the energy that characterized the discussions, as well as by the openness and quality of interactions among participants.

He emphasized the sense of collective pride that emerged from this shared willingness to work together, despite the complexity of the challenges being addressed. For Karim El Aynaoui, this spirit of collaboration demonstrated that meaningful progress remains possible when individuals and institutions commit to dialogue and joint action.

Moving beyond diagnosis and reflection, he issued a clear call to action, urging participants to translate insights and debates into concrete initiatives, and stressing that responsibility must be assumed at both the individual and institutional levels. Ideas, he noted, only gain value when they are transformed into tangible outcomes.

He concluded by underscoring that the work carried out collectively is not merely an intellectual exercise, but a crucial investment in the future of countries and societies. This shared effort, he argued, is essential for ensuring sustainable progress and for delivering real impact for future generations.

Coordination :
Amal El Ouassif
Mahmoud Arbouch

Editing : Keith Povey
Graphic design: Youssef Ait El Kadi

Photo library - Policy Center for the new south
flickr.com/photos/142333681@N04/albums

Copyright © 2026 - Policy Center for the New South

www.atlanticdialogues.org

