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Former World Leaders Call for 'New Coalition of the Willing' to Address Poverty and Inequality

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Club de Madrid members and partners gathered for their Annual Policy Dialogue 2025 at the UN Office in Nairobi, Kenya on April 3, 2025. [club_de_madrid / Instagram](#)

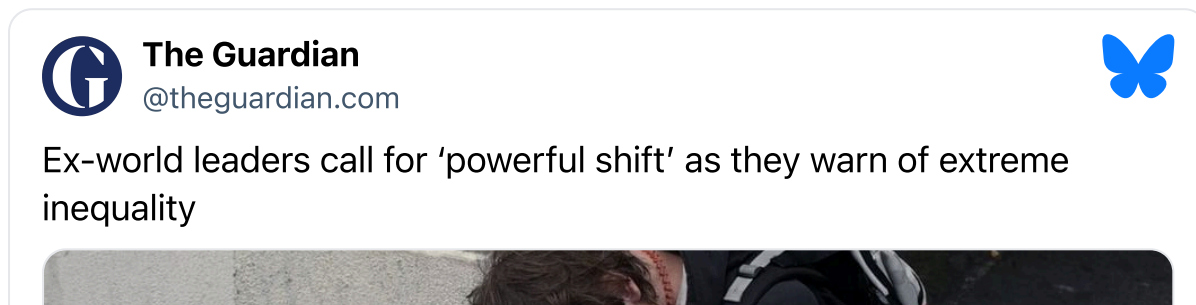
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Humanity is facing an [inequality](#) crisis that could mean the emergence of the first trillionaires, while almost half the world's population is stuck in [poverty](#), warns a [letter](#) by 40 former prime

ministers and presidents.

The letter is an appeal to [current leaders](#) to address rising threats of poverty, disparity and [environmental breakdown](#), reported The Guardian.

“Together, we call for a new economic coalition of the willing of countries to cooperate – to combat extreme inequality, end poverty and meet human rights. One that is founded upon values of solidarity and sovereignty,” the letter states.



The leaders condemned an “outdated” economic model developed during the Second World War.

“Today’s economic system, shaped in 1944 in Bretton Woods by wealthy nations at a time when colonialism still defined much of the world, is outdated. A more inclusive global order is needed — one that accurately reflects the leadership of Global South countries that are at the forefront of change,” the former leaders wrote in the letter.

They condemned “narrow unilateralism,” while encouraging international tax cooperation, debt relief and the reform of institutions like the International Monetary Fund.


Nonprofit [Club de Madrid](#) — the largest alliance of democratic former world leaders — organized the letter with support from the People’s Medicines Alliance and Oxfam.


Signatories include former Presidents of Costa Rica Carlos Alvarado Quesada and Óscar Arias; former Prime Minister of New Zealand Helen Clark; Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands; Sanna Marin, Tarja Halonen and Mari Kiviniemi of Finland; former Prime Minister of Senegal Aminata Touré; and former Prime Minister of Poland Hanna Suchocka.

The statement comes during a time of global upheaval with United States President Donald Trump closing development agency USAID and withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris Agreement.

“[A]lone, any one country – and its people – is left vulnerable when another chooses narrow unilateralism above all else. We need international cooperation, revamped for our era,” the letter

states.

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Club de Madrid's Members have issued a strong collective call against growing inequality and the rising tide of narrow, unilateral approaches to global challenges.

Read the full letter on our website: <https://clubmadrid.org/club-de-madrid-members-rebuke-narro.../...> See more

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According to one [report](#), former head of the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency Elon Musk, a tech entrepreneur, is set to become the first trillionaire in the world by 2027.

“Volatility orders our world today. Inequality spirals across nations. Trillionaires could emerge this decade, while near half of humanity lives in poverty. 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on interest to pay sovereign debt than on education or health,” the former leaders said.

Multilateral cooperation is in short supply, as is financing for global development aid, they warn, leading to increased poverty, health crises and environmental issues.

The former leaders expressed hope, however, saying that “2025 presents an opportunity for leaders to revive multilateralism with a renewed sense of purpose.”

“A powerful shift is possible. Countries are designing economies that prioritize human security. The powerful principle remains: from climate to taxation, solving our great challenges – especially at a time of rising new powers – depends upon cooperation,” the letter states.

The group of ex-world leaders pointed to the [Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development](#) from June 30 to July 3 in Sevilla, Spain; the United Nations COP30 Climate Conference in November; and the meeting of the Group of 20 in South Africa, also in November, as opportunities to address these issues.

“Leaders must seize the chance to spark a new agenda in Sevilla, at the IV Financing for Development Conference being boldly led by Spain. Then, we can build on it at the G20 led by South Africa — and we should support the development objectives that have been set out to ensure its success. Likewise, we should be actively supporting preparation efforts for a successful COP30 in Brazil, which will be a vital moment for advancing climate action on a global scale. These important political summits provide essential platforms for nations worldwide to act together,” the former leaders said.

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