

Club de Madrid | Former World Leaders' Call to Governments Worldwide

An International Panel on Inequality needs your support

Dear World Leaders,

In our destabilised world, 'inequality defines our time'. These are the words of the UN Secretary General António Guterres just six years ago at the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture.

We share alarm about a crisis of inequality that has reached record levels in country after country across the world. While the bottom half of humanity have received just 1 cent of [every dollar of growth since the year 2000](#), the richest 1% have captured 41 cents. The world even briefly saw its first ever trillionaire this year – while [one in four people](#) face food insecurity worldwide.

It is clearer than ever to us that inequality is a challenge that leaders, from all political backgrounds, can and must work together to address. Today, we are writing to you as former Heads of State and Government to urge you to support an initiative that can support countries around the world to meet the scale of the inequality crisis where it is: an International Panel on Inequality (IPI).

We know well the weight of the complex challenges you face as world leaders. And we also know that extreme inequality is exacerbating these very threats, putting your economies and democracies under profound strain.

There can be no mistaking that the gap between the richest and the poorest has simply grown too big. But it is also the case that inequality rests at the root of multiple challenges that affect ordinary people – from poverty, to societal polarisation, and climate breakdown.

There is considerable concern that intensifying inequality indeed erodes democratic freedoms, undermining the checks and balances societies depend upon. Studies show the most unequal countries are now [seven times more likely](#) to experience democratic erosion than more equal countries.

Times of historic crises birthed institutional responses, including in the founding of the United Nations itself. And an effective institutional response to inequality has long been needed.

Today, an 'International Panel on Inequality' offers a most vital institutional response for our time. Borne from the [G20's first ever report on global inequality](#) – led by Nobel Laureate Professor Joseph E. Stiglitz – an IPI would serve as a world-leading multilateral authority on inequality analysis. Since then, it has begun to take shape, engaging policymakers, leading academics and the international community around the world.

Governments worldwide – together with the private sector, multilateral agencies, academia and civil society – would benefit from independent, robust and reliable evidence and analysis on inequality. Much like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an IPI would track trends, impacts and drivers, bringing together experts across diverse disciplines to assess evidence on policymaking. Operating with full academic freedom, an IPI would see leading experts step in to

bridge the evidence gaps that have so far meant that efforts to tackle the inequality crisis have fallen short.

At the UN General Assembly in September 2026, the IPI founding governments of South Africa, Brazil, Norway and Spain – joined by the UN Secretary-General – will hold a high-level leaders' side event where they will explore how the proposed panel could work in practice, build political support for its establishment and lay the groundwork for a UN resolution.

We wholeheartedly encourage you to join that meeting, and to support the establishment of an IPI. At a time of heightened division, an IPI offers practical cooperation: a unifying, impactful and innovative solution that governments can get behind.

With a better understanding of inequality and its drivers, we can truly begin to address the scale of the crisis before us.

That's why we are offering our full support to a proposed International Panel on Inequality – so that extreme inequality no longer 'defines our time', but our past.

Signed,

1. Oscar Arias, former President of Costa Rica and Peace Nobel Laureate
2. Jan Peter Balkenende, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands
3. Joyce Banda, former President of Malawi
4. Valdis Birkavs, former Prime Minister of Latvia
5. Aníbal Cavaco Silva, former President of Portugal
6. Laura Chinchilla, former President of Costa Rica and Club de Madrid President
7. Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand
8. Cellou Diallo, former Prime Minister of Guinea
9. Natalia Gavrilita, former Prime Minister of Moldova
10. Paolo Gentiloni, former Prime Minister of Italy
11. Dalia Grybauskaitė, former President of Lithuania
12. Alfred Gusenbauer, former Chancellor of Austria
13. Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland
14. Han Seung-soo, former Prime Minister of South Korea and Club de Madrid Vice-President
15. Ivo Josipovic, former President of Croatia
16. Mari Kiviniemi, former Prime Minister of Finland
17. Aleksander Kwaśniewski, former President of Poland
18. Ricardo Lagos, former President of Chile
19. Yves Leterme, former Prime Minister of Belgium
20. Stefan Löfven, former Prime Minister of Sweden
21. Moussa Mara, former Prime Minister of Mali
22. Rexhep Meidani, former President of Albania
23. James Michel, former Prime Minister of the Seychelles
24. Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria
25. Roza Otunbayeva, former President of Kyrgyzstan
26. George Papandreou, former Prime Minister of Greece

27. Jean Pierre Raffarin, former Prime Minister of France
28. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, former Prime Minister of Spain
29. Petre Roman, former Prime Minister of Romania
30. Francisco Sagasti, former President of Peru
31. Katerina Sakellaropoulou, former President of Greece
32. Olaf Scholz, former Chancellor of Germany
33. Jigmi Thinley, former Prime Minister of Bhutan
34. Aminata Touré, former Prime Minister of Senegal
35. Danilo Türk, former President of Slovenia
36. Cassam Uteem, former President of Mauritius
37. Leo Varadkar, former Prime Minister of Ireland
38. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, former President of Indonesia