

Former world leaders urge governments to back inequality panel



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Geneva, Switzerland — Dozens of former world leaders published an open letter to their successors on Wednesday, urging them to support the creation of a new international panel to address extreme wealth disparities.

The letter, signed by 37 former leaders including former German chancellor Olaf Scholz and former French prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, insisted the world's inequality "crisis" required an urgent policy response.

"We share alarm about a crisis of inequality that has reached record levels in country after country across the world," they said in the letter, seen by AFP.



Former German Chancellor Olaf Scholz delivers his speech on the second day of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) Party Congress at the City Cube in Berlin, on June 28, 2025. (Photo by Tobias Schwarz / AFP)

"While the bottom half of humanity have received just one cent of every dollar of growth since the year 2000, the richest one percent have captured 41 cents," the former leaders pointed out.





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too big."

The former leaders called on their successors to back efforts to create a new International Panel on Inequality (IPI), and to join a high-level event next week where the issue will be discussed on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The creation of such a body, modelled on the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), was recommended in a G20 report by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz.

The report demands action to address a global "inequality emergency", which it warned was undermining both democracy and economic progress.

Wednesday's letter --- with signatories from every region of the world including former presidents Joyce Banda of Malawi, Anibal Cavaco Silva of Portugal and James Michel of the Seychelles -- echoed the concern that "intensifying inequality... 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," it said.

The signatories -- also including many former prime ministers including Aminata Toure of Senegal, Helen Clark of New Zealand, Francisco Sagasti of Peru and Han Seung-soo of South Korea -- told the world's current leaders they understood "the weight of the complex challenges you face".

"And we also know that extreme inequality is exacerbating these very threats, putting your economies and democracies under profound strain."

Creating the IPI would provide "a most vital institutional response" to such challenges, they said, detailing how the new panel, much like the IPCC, would be able to track trends, impacts and drivers and assess evidence on policymaking.

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", the letter said.



