

Leaders join push to create UN body to tackle 'awful reality' of inequality

[theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/24/un-global-inequality-panel-plan-proposal-general-assembly-ipcc](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/24/un-global-inequality-panel-plan-proposal-general-assembly-ipcc)

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The Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya. The proposed panel would recognise inequality as a challenge threatening world security, leaders said. Photograph: Donwilson Odhiambo/Getty Images

Body would be modelled on climate panel and recognise inequality as a global challenge threatening world security

Plans to set up a global UN body on inequality modelled on the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) are likely to be proposed to a meeting of the UN general assembly in the coming months.

Speaking at an event on the sidelines of the general assembly in New York, left-leaning leaders from Brazil, [Norway](#) and Spain claimed momentum was building behind calls for a standing international panel on inequality that would recognise the issue as a global challenge

threatening world security. Two G7 countries – Germany and Japan – have given public backing.

Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel prize-winning economist, recommended the establishment of the new body in a report commissioned by South Africa for its G20 chairing last November. The dislocation caused by inequality was also the focus of the 2024 G20 meeting, chaired by [Brazil](#).

But the proposal is likely to make little political headway during this year's [G20](#), to be led by Donald Trump, and some countries are wary of talk about new globally imposed taxes, or assertions that economic analysis can be compared to climate science.

The UK foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, has said he wants inequality to be part of the agenda of the UK-chaired 2027 G20, but no British diplomat spoke at this week's high-level event on the issue.

Cyril Ramaphosa, the South African president, told this week's meeting that inequality was "the new multilateral frontier". "Inequality is not inevitable but a problem that can be solved with evidence, analysis and political action," he said.

The panel would not just track trends but propose solutions, though many would be likely to face opposition from multinationals and billionaires.

The Spanish prime minister, [Pedro Sánchez](#), argued: "Inequality is not an abstract concept but an awful reality. It is about disaffection and whether the people feel the system is working against them."



Pedro Sánchez addresses the UN general assembly on Wednesday. Photograph: Stephani Spindel/UPI/Shutterstock

He added: “Think what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has done for climate change – bringing together the best available knowledge, independently assessing the evidence and giving governments around the world a scientific basis on which to act. We need something similar for inequality, and we need to do it now. Not ideology but knowledge. Not another layer of bureaucracy but instead a tool for better policymaking.”

Spain’s foreign affairs minister, José Manuel Albares, said progressive tax systems and better tax cooperation were necessary to prevent tax evasion.

The UN deputy secretary general, Amina Mohammed, told the meeting: “We see breathtaking levels of income and wealth inequality; the richest 10% earning 75% of all wealth. This emergency could get worse – and fast. The breakneck emergence of frontier technology, and the concentration of this technology in a tiny number of hands, could unleash global inequality on a scale far beyond what we have ever seen. A world in which only a few powerful countries are wealthy is a ticking timebomb.”

Stiglitz, [an advocate of a billionaire’s wealth tax in California](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/24/un-global-inequality-panel...), said: “Inequality within and between nations is a collective threat to the functioning of our economies, and our ability to

support human dignity. This kind of global stress akin to the crisis of climate change needs to be very much better understood and studied in the same way.”

Mia Mottley, the prime minister of Barbados, said the need for a groundbreaking general assembly resolution to establish the panel was urgent. She asked: “Who is really participating in growth, who owns the assets and who shapes the rules?”



Mia Mottley, centre, at a session of the UN general assembly this week. Photograph: Bianca Otero/Zuma Press/Shutterstock

Referring to a UN resolution in March condemning the transatlantic chattel slave trade as the [“gravest crime against humanity”](#) and calling for reparative justice, she added: “If we condemn slavery, we condemn the notion of people exploiting other human beings in order to make profit, but slavery is just the extreme condition, and as I have come to reflect more and more, the *mens rea* [criminal intent] that informs slavery, regrettably, is still existent in the modern world.”

Drawing on the Stiglitz report to last year’s G20, she said that between 2000 and 2024 the richest 1% captured 41% of all new global wealth, while 50% of the world’s population received just 1%. “Equal effort therefore does not guarantee equal opportunity,” she said.

Sarah Colenbrander, the director of the climate and sustainability programme at the London-based thinktank ODI Global, said: “The IPCC has consistently demonstrated the overwhelming

scientific consensus on the importance of cutting emissions and the consequences of failing to do so. A panel on inequality could likewise cut through the noise and make the case for poverty reduction and wealth redistribution.

But she warned: "We have seen that the IPCC's summaries for policymakers have consistently been watered down by countries with fossil fuel interests. In the same vein, it is hard to imagine that billionaires – and the world leaders among them or in their pockets – would engage constructively."