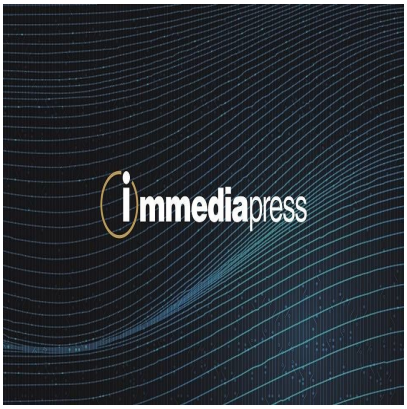

Around 100 Former Heads of State and Government Call on Current Leaders to Renew International Cooperation

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COMUNICATO STAMPA â?? CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

NEW YORK, Sept. 21, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? Around 100 former heads of state and government from every continent and across political traditions today issued a joint call for current leaders to renew international cooperation grounded in common principles and translate those principles into concrete results for people around the world.

Against that backdrop, the former leaders underscore that todayâ??s challenges â?? from conflict, climate change and pandemics to inequality, migration and transformative technologies such as artificial intelligence â?? require not more unilateral responses, but better international cooperation: grounded in human dignity, the rule of law and mutual respect; honoring sovereignty while recognizing interdependence; and delivering tangible benefits for people and communities.

â??Even amid multiplying threats and growing pessimism, most people around the world still want to work together to solve problems. Leaders should listen,â?• said Rajiv J. Shah, President of The Rockefeller Foundation. â??These former leaders are showing us how: seeking the common ground new polling shows exists. The Rockefeller Foundation looks forward to working with all those who want to take risks and build new coalitions to tackle the toughest challenges facing humanity.â?•

The call comes as new global polling suggests that, despite rising nationalism, populism and isolationism, public demand for international cooperation remains strong. A survey conducted by Focaldata with support from The Rockefeller Foundation in association with its public charity, RFCC, found that 57% of people across 34 countries agree that their country should cooperate with other countries to solve global challenges, even if it means compromising on some national interests. In every country surveyed, a majority said they would support their countryâ??s leader publicly endorsing a shared set of principles for international cooperation alongside other current and former world leaders.

The polling also points to substantial agreement about what those principles should protect and advance. More than 80% of respondents supported including commitments to ensure that all human beings can live with dignity and to take collective action on threats to life, peace and security.

â??We know that, even in a divided world, there is remarkable common ground â?? with a clear majority in every continent including the United States â?? committed to the need for cooperation and the principles that should underpin itâ?•, said The Rt. Honorable Gordon Brown, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and member of The Rockefeller Foundationâ??s Board of Trustees. â??At 57% in favor to just 10% against, we find that a decisive majority want leaders to support shared principles around cooperation. What we have now set out is a statement on the principles of cooperation, as an important step toward turning that common ground into a stronger basis for cooperation â?? for leaders around the world to engage with, shape and ultimately put into practice.â?•

The statement is part of the wider Principles of Cooperation initiative, developed over the past year through The Rockefeller Foundationâ??s Build the Shared Future effort, building on dialogues convened in diverse and dynamic communities around the world. The Principles of Cooperation initiative seeks to help establish a stronger basis for international cooperation capable of addressing the shared challenges of the twenty-first century and fostering more equitable partnership between the Global North and South.

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Drawing on global polling into public attitudes toward cooperation, consultations with think tanks, civil society and the private sector across regions, and engagement with former leaders, the initiative is designed to build broad, cross-regional ownership around a common foundation for future cooperation and a practical agenda for collective action. The statement represents an important step in that wider effort, creating a pathway for further engagement with current leaders and, over time, broader support for and adoption of shared principles for international cooperation.

â??The world does not need us to agree on everything. It needs us to find enough common ground to act together. From across regions and political traditions, nearly 100 former heads of state and government are sending a clear message: in a fragmented world, we must choose cooperation over confrontation. The challenges of our time demand nothing less.â?• said Laura Chinchilla, former President of Costa Rica and President of Club de Madrid.

â??The challenges confronting our world do not stop at national borders, and neither can our responsibility to address them. We may differ in our histories, our politics and our perspectives, but we must not allow those differences to prevent us from working together. At a time when trust in international cooperation is being tested, this broad coalition of former leaders sends a simple message: dialogue remains possible, common ground can be found, and cooperation remains essential to building a more peaceful and prosperous future.â?• said Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria and Member of Club de Madrid.

In the statement, the former leaders welcome the purpose and ambition of the initiative and call on current leaders to engage with and shape it, build a framework for cooperation on this basis, and work to translate it into practical action. The signatories also commit to lend their experience and support to the effort, contributing to its development and championing the call for renewed cooperation in their countries, communities and international forums.

The statement is intended to build momentum for continued engagement around the principles and their wider adoption, while underscoring the stakes of the choices ahead: decisions made now will shape not only relations between states, but the security, prosperity and wellbeing of future generations.

A Call to Action for Renewed International Cooperation: Joint Statement by Former Heads of State and Government

We, former heads of state and government from different regions of the world, are united in the belief that the global challenges we face today can only be overcome through international cooperation. Yet, the international order that enables such cooperation is fracturing. The rules on which it was built are being willfully set aside or ignored, narrow interests increasingly prevail over common purpose, and the result is deepening tension, conflict, inequality and mistrust.

Societies everywhere confront challenges that no country can solve alone: economic instability, humanitarian crises, climate change, pandemics, irregular migration, new and renewed conflicts, organized crime, and the profound implications of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. These realities require not less cooperation, but better cooperation: grounded in human dignity, the rule of law, and mutual respect. As the world changes, cooperation must also renew itself â?? honoring sovereignty, while recognizing interdependence, and delivering tangible benefits for people and communities.

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Despite rising nationalism, populism, and isolationism, the demand for international cooperation remains strong across regions and political traditions. We believe that, if cooperation is to endure in a more fragmented and multipolar world, it must rest on a common foundation of principles capable of bridging differences and commanding broad support.

We therefore welcome the Principles of Cooperation initiative and endorse its purpose and ambition: to help rebuild trust, bridge differences and establish a stronger basis for international cooperation based on common principles.

We commit to lend our experience and support to this effort: contributing to its development and championing its call for renewed international cooperation in our countries, our communities and international forums.

At a time of accelerating geopolitical and economic challenges, we call on current leaders to seize this opportunity: to engage with and shape the initiative, build a framework for cooperation on this basis, and work to translate it into practical action. The choices made now will shape not only relations between states, but the security, prosperity and well-being of future generations.

About The Rockefeller Foundation

Investing $30 billion over the last 113 years to promote the well-being of humanity, The Rockefeller Foundation is a pioneering philanthropy built on unlikely partnerships and innovative solutions that deliver measurable results for people in the United States and around the world. We leverage scientific breakthroughs, artificial intelligence, and new technologies to make big bets across energy, food, health, and finance, including association with its public charity, RFCC. For more information, sign up for our newsletter and follow The Rockefeller Foundation on X, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

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