UN80 AND THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS:

ASSESSMENT OF MEMBER STATES' POSITIONS AT THE 81ST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN80 Initiative provides an opportunity to examine the institutional, administrative and operational challenges facing the United Nations and to consider how the organisation can improve its effectiveness in a rapidly changing international environment. The General Debate of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly offers a useful perspective on how Member States connect the broader UN reform agenda with questions of institutional performance, representation, accountability and the implementation of existing commitments.

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) has conducted an analysis of the statements given during this year's General Debate. The accompanying dataset reveals several recurring themes. These include the need for more representative decision-making structures, the relationship between UN80 and the Pact for the Future, concerns about the implementation of previously agreed commitments, and calls for a more effective and financially sustainable multilateral system.

The findings suggest that Member States approach UN reform from different institutional and political perspectives. Some emphasise organisational effectiveness and the capacity of the UN to respond to contemporary challenges. Others give greater prominence to structural inequalities in international decision-making, particularly the underrepresentation of Africa on the Security Council. A further group of statements connects reform with the implementation of development commitments, financing and the practical delivery of results.

These positions are not necessarily contradictory. They nevertheless demonstrate that UN reform involves several distinct dimensions that should be assessed separately. Improvements in administrative efficiency do not, by themselves, resolve questions concerning representation, decision-making authority or political accountability.

The principal conclusion of this assessment is that the effectiveness of UN80 should be evaluated against verified institutional improvements rather than expressions of support for reform alone. Such an assessment requires clearly defined objectives, measurable indicators, transparent reporting, appropriate implementation arrangements and an explicit distinction between administrative reforms and changes requiring intergovernmental political agreement.

The technical and political dimensions of UN reform are inseparable. ACHRS firmly believes that, while organisational improvements may be achievable through management decisions and adjustments to existing processes, more fundamental changes to the UN's governance architecture depend on sustained political negotiations among Member States.

1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The United Nations operates in an international environment characterised by interconnected security, development, humanitarian and governance challenges. These pressures have renewed attention to the organisation's institutional capacity, its use of resources, its ability to implement mandates and the legitimacy of its decision-making structures. The UN80 Initiative forms part of this wider reform context.

The General Debate of the 81st session of the General Assembly provides an opportunity to examine these expectations. Statements delivered by national representatives articulate different priorities, identify perceived institutional shortcomings and indicate where governments believe further action is necessary.

This report analyses the accompanying dataset, which contains keyword-matched passages from General Debate statements. Its objective is to identify the principal themes reflected in those passages, compare the positions expressed by selected Member States and assess the potential implications for UN80. The report focuses on the relationship between reform objectives, implementation arrangements, organisational performance and accountability. Political and diplomatic considerations are addressed primarily in the concluding assessment.

1.1 METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Web scraping was used to systematically collect United Nations General Assembly General Debate statements from publicly available online sources. The retrieved material was compiled into a structured dataset to facilitate the organisation and subsequent analysis of statements across countries and sessions.

The workbook contains 958 keyword-matched records distributed across 13 thematic categories. Of these, 60 are classified under UN reform. These included references to the Pact for the Future (29 matches), Security Council reform (15 matches), UN reform (10 matches) and United Nations reform (6 matches).

The findings should be interpreted in light of the methodology used. Keyword matching provides a useful basis for identifying relevant statements, but the number of matches should not be interpreted as a direct measure of Member States' political priorities.



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2. UN80 WITHIN THE BROADER UN REFORM AGENDA

A central finding of the dataset is the prominence of references to the Pact for the Future in passages classified under UN reform. The 29 matches associated with this keyword group account for almost half of the 60 records in the category. The Pact for the Future establishes a broader political framework for international cooperation. UN80, by contrast, is relevant to questions about how the organisation functions, how its institutional capacity can be strengthened and how its resources and processes can better support its objectives. This indicates that discussion of UN reform frequently takes place alongside references to previously agreed commitments and the broader future of multilateral cooperation.

These agendas are related, but they should not be treated as interchangeable. Implementation of international commitments depends on a combination of political agreement, institutional capacity, adequate financing and the willingness of Member States to act.

2.1 MEMBER STATES' EMPHASIS ON IMPLEMENTATION

Several statements in the dataset explicitly stress the need to translate commitments into practical outcomes.

Angola connects the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Pact for the Future with the availability of affordable financing. Viet Nam emphasises the full implementation of existing commitments, including those concerning development financing. Botswana presents the Pact for the Future and UN80 as opportunities to translate shared commitments into practical improvements in the functioning of the UN. Namibia provides a particularly relevant perspective by describing the Pact for the Future as an ambitious framework while expressing concern that its implementation has not been as effective as anticipated.

These statements point to a recurring institutional challenge: ***the adoption of international commitments does not automatically produce implementation.***

From a technical perspective, this raises questions about the allocation of responsibilities, the coordination of implementation and the monitoring of results.

The relationship between UN80 and existing commitments suggests that the initiative should be assessed partly on its ability to improve the institutional conditions under which agreed objectives are implemented. This requires a distinction between outputs (which include changes to organisational structures and revised procedures) and outcomes (which concern whether these changes improve the UN's ability to deliver its mandates, use resources effectively, coordinate activities and respond to the needs of Member States).

Therefore, UN80 should not simply be evaluated by the number of reform measures adopted, but by the extent to which those measures improve institutional performance and the delivery of existing mandates.

3. SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM AND INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Security Council reform constitutes one of the clearest areas of substantive institutional disagreement reflected in the dataset. Records associated with the keyword Security Council reform qualitatively reveal important differences concerning the composition and legitimacy of the UN's principal organ responsible for international peace and security. The statements identify concerns about representation, the distribution of decision-making authority and the relationship between the Council's current composition and contemporary geopolitical realities.

The dataset contains several statements ***emphasising the need to address Africa's underrepresentation on the Security Council.***

Botswana reaffirms its support for comprehensive Security Council reform and the common African position articulated through the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. The Central African Republic argues that the contemporary international system cannot be adequately represented by institutional arrangements established in 1945. Its statement calls for Africa to receive at least one permanent seat. Kenya stresses the prolonged duration of intergovernmental negotiations and argues that the historical injustice associated with Africa's representation must be addressed as a priority. Ghana similarly presents Security Council reform as a question of the UN's legitimacy and credibility rather than simply a matter of regional preference.

These statements connect institutional representation with broader principles of sovereign equality and the legitimacy of international decision-making. The African position should not be reduced to a general request for greater participation. It includes substantive proposals as articulated through established African positions.

Other perspectives on representation like Mongolia supports expanding both permanent and non-permanent membership to ensure more equitable representation. Bulgaria calls for more equitable regional representation, while the General Assembly President expresses support for General Assembly-led intergovernmental negotiations aimed at making the Council more representative and reflective of contemporary geopolitical realities.

Questions concerning the number and categories of seats, regional allocation, decision-making procedures and the relationship between permanent and elected membership remain substantive matters requiring political negotiation.

3.1 TECHNICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Security Council reform differs fundamentally from many administrative reform measures associated with UN80. Changes to internal administrative procedures may be possible within existing institutional authority. Changes to the composition of the Security Council require a much more demanding intergovernmental and legal process.

Under Article 108 of the UN Charter, amendments to the Charter require adoption by a two-thirds majority of the members of the General Assembly and ratification by two-thirds of UN Member States, including all permanent members of the Security Council.

This requirement creates a structural distinction between reforms that can be implemented through administrative decisions and those requiring formal agreement among Member States. The distinction has direct implications for the UN80 agenda. (1) Security Council reform should not be treated as a measure that can be delivered through management improvements alone. (2) Progress in the broader reform agenda should not be presented as evidence that the political question of Security Council reform has been resolved.

Security Council reform is a central test of the relationship between institutional effectiveness and political legitimacy. It also illustrates the limits of an efficiency-led approach to UN reform.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORM COMMITMENTS

Accountability is another important dimension of the reform agenda. In the dataset, Poland argues that UN reform must produce real effectiveness and accountability rather than declarations alone. Other statements connect the implementation of existing international commitments with the need for practical results.

These concerns suggest that accountability should be considered both an objective of reform and a mechanism for ensuring that reform measures are implemented.
For UN80, accountability requires a clear relationship between agreed objectives, assigned responsibilities, implementation timelines and reporting arrangements.
A reform measure should identify:

The institutional problem it is intended to address → The entity responsible for implementation → The resources and authority required → The expected results → The indicators against which progress will be assessed → The arrangements for reporting delays, risks and corrective action.

Without these elements, it becomes difficult to distinguish substantive implementation from procedural compliance. The dataset highlights a broader challenge concerning the implementation of commitments agreed by Member States.

The Pact for the Future and other multilateral commitments establish expectations for collective action. Theirimplementation, however, depends on national decisions, institutional coordination and the availability of resources. The UN's administrative reforms cannot independently resolve every implementation problem associated with thesecommitments.

5. FINANCING, DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFICIENCY

Several statements in the dataset connect the implementation of international commitments with development financing and the capacity of developing countries to achieve agreed objectives.

Angola stresses the importance of affordable financing in translating development commitments into concrete results. Viet Nam emphasises the implementation of commitments on financing for development. Uganda highlights the need to strengthen the voice of developing countries in international financial decision-making, while Senegal calls for better access to concessional financing and the implementation of existing commitments.

Institutional efficiency and financial resources are related, but they are not substitutes for one another. Improvements in administrative processes may help ensure that existing resources are used more effectively. Similarly, reforms to international financial governance involve decisions that may extend beyond the direct authority of the UN Secretariat.

UN80 should be assessed in terms of whether institutional changes support the effective use of available resources while preserving the capacity required to fulfil agreed mandates. Any claimed savings should be evaluated against the costs of implementation, the sustainability of the changes and their consequences for operational delivery.

6. COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF MEMBER STATES' POSITIONS

The statements in the dataset reveal several areas of convergence, but the extent of agreement varies by issue.

Reform dimension	Evidence in the dataset	Nature of convergence	Principal unresolved issue
UN effectiveness	Montenegro, Kuwait, France, Tanzania, and Poland call for a more effective organisation; Georgia, and Botswana connects UN80 with practical institutional improvements	General support for improved performance	Which measures should be prioritised and how success should be measured
Implementation of commitments	Angola, Croatia, Viet Nam, Botswana and Namibia emphasise implementation and practical results	Recognition that commitments must produce outcomes	Responsibility, financing, sequencing and monitoring
Security Council representation	Botswana, the Central African Republic, Kenya, Ghana, Mauritania, and Mongolia call for changes to representation or Council composition	Recognition of representational shortcomings	The composition and decision-making arrangements of a reformed Council

Accountability And the Rule of Law	Poland emphasises accountability and the need to move beyond declarations Finland warned that the questioning of fundamental norms erodes confidence in the multilateral system, while Lithuania highlighted the implications of Russia's actions for the international order. Kyrgyzstan proposed developing a UN mechanism to strengthen the implementation of decisions and accountability. African countries also emphasised the need for effective international responses to conflict and greater respect for international obligations. Collectively, these statements highlight the importance of consistent application of international law and the implementation of decisions for the credibility and legitimacy of the UN system.	Support for demonstrable results	How responsibilities and performance should be assessed
Financial and development capacity	Angola, Tanzania, Solomon Islands, Uganda, Jamaica, Namibia, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Lebanon, Senegal and Viet Nam, address financing and development-related commitments	Recognition of financing as a condition for implementation	Resource mobilisation and the distribution of decision-making authority

This comparison identifies shared concerns, but the main distinction is between **agreement on the need for reform and agreement on the institutional design of reform**.

Member States may support a generally more effective UN while disagreeing about budgetary priorities, governance arrangements or the redistribution of decision-making authority. Similarly, support for Security Council reform does not establish consensus on the number of seats, their allocation or the privileges associated with membership.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the positions reflected in the dataset, the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) issues five recommendations for strengthening the assessment and implementation of UN80.

- **Recommendation 1: Establish a transparent results framework.**

Each major reform measure should have a defined objective, an assigned implementation responsibility, a baseline, a timeframe and measurable indicators. Progress reporting should distinguish between administrative outputs and improvements in institutional performance.

- **Recommendation 2: Differentiate administrative reform from governance reform.**

UN80 assessments should clearly distinguish between measures that can be implemented through existing administrative authority and changes requiring intergovernmental agreement. Security Council reform should be examined as a much larger and distinct political and institutional process, even where it forms part of the broader debate on UN effectiveness.

- **Recommendation 3: Link efficiency measures to mandate delivery.**

Claims of efficiency gains should be supported by evidence demonstrating how resources have been used more effectively.

- **Recommendation 4: Strengthen implementation accountability.**

Reform plans should identify the institutions responsible for delivery, the decisions required from Member States and the resources necessary to achieve the expected results.

- **Recommendation 5: Integrate reform with existing commitments.**

UN80 should be assessed in relation to the implementation of existing mandates and commitments, including those associated with the Pact for the Future and the 2030 Agenda. The purpose should be to strengthen implementation capacity, not simply to produce additional reform commitments.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The statements reflected in the dataset indicate broad recognition that the United Nations must improve its capacity to respond to contemporary international challenges. However, they also demonstrate that the meaning of reform differs among Member States.

For some, the priority is to improve institutional effectiveness, financial sustainability and accountability. For others, reform must also address longstanding inequalities in Security Council representation and decision-making power.

The broader challenge for UN80 is therefore to connect technical improvements with the political expectations of Member States. ***The principal political and diplomatic conclusion is that the success of UN80 will depend not only on the quality of its technical proposals, but also on the ability of Member States to agree on priorities,responsibilities and the distribution of the costs and benefits of reform.***

The Amman Center for HUman Rights Studies (ACHRS) believes credible reform process must therefore combine demonstrable improvements in organisational performance with sustained dialogue on representation, accountability and institutional legitimacy. Ultimately, UN80 should be judged by whether it strengthens the UN's ability to fulfil its mandates, improves the use of available resources and contributes to a multilateral system that Member States regard as effective, accountable and representative.

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The **Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS)** is an independent, non-governmental think tank and research center dedicated to advancing human rights, democracy, and the rule of law across the Arab region. Through research, publications, advocacy, training, and international engagement, ACHRS works to strengthen civil society, promote human rights education and support democratic participation. The Center holds special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and was awarded the United Nations Human RIghts Prize in 2023.

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