



## PRESS RELEASE

### COVID-19 spurs need for multilateralism revamp – progressive political leaders

#### United Nations in urgent need of renewal to deal with shared health, economic and climate challenges

**NEW YORK (18 September 2020)** – On the eve of the 75th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and its partners warned today that the COVID-19 pandemic, the ensuing economic crisis and the climate emergency have heightened the need for an in-depth reform of the multilateral system.

The backdrop of the UN 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary is bleak: some world powers knowingly undermine multilateralism, and the escalating global crises – health, climate and economic, among others – have led to a further deterioration of the UN system that was created in the wake of World War II. The Covid-19 pandemic, economic downturn and climate emergency have made it blatantly clear that our most critical challenges are transnational and can only be dealt through coordinated action. But the gap between our shared challenges and the capacity of global governance to meet them keeps widening.

Against this backdrop, and in order to both protect and renew the multilateral system, FEPS unveiled a Policy Report at the “UNited for a New Multilateralism” conference, presenting concrete proposals for a new, fair and inclusive multilateralism. The report is the result of work with high-level experts from across the world.

Speakers at the FEPS event included **Josep Borrell**, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security and Vice President of the European Commission; Nobel Laureate **Joseph Stiglitz**; **Fabrizio Hochschild-Drummond**, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the 75th UNGA; and German Foreign Affairs Minister **Heiko Maas**, among many other top intellectuals and policymakers.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis are brutal reminders that our most critical challenges flow across borders and can only be dealt with through coordinated action. Moreover, the current UN system, built 75 years ago, in a very different context, has proved to be outdated to deal with today’s shared challenges. Our interconnected problems demand interconnected solutions – namely, a new, fair and inclusive multilateralism,” said FEPS president Maria João Rodrigues.

A fair multilateralism should allow us to eliminate the gap between globalization’s winners and losers. For example, a COVID-19 vaccine must be a global asset belonging everyone rather than the object of a battle between countries. The post-Covid economic recovery is also an opportunity to build economies that implement the Sustainable Development Goals and where everyone, including digital platforms and multinational corporations, pays their fair share of taxes.

This new multilateralism must also be inclusive, moving away from a mostly Western-centred system towards one that brings in voices of women and men from all cultures, and includes countries big and small, regional organizations and civil society.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Please contact FEPS Head of Communication Ainara Bascuñana  
ainara.bascunana@feps-europe.eu 0032499726398

**ABOUT FEPS:**

The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), is a European political foundation based in Brussels, working with the EU institutions and counting on UN-ECOSOC Consultative Status.

UNited for” is FEPS’ annual international conference launched in 2018 and normally held in New York on the eve of the UNGA. Each year, the conference is that of the UN General Assembly, with previous editions focused on migration and on climate. This time, FEPS has the support of the following organisations: the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung New York Office, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), the Fondation Jean Jaurès, the Fundación Pablo Iglesias and the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI) and Olof Palme International Centre.

FEPS  
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN  
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES



FRIEDRICH  
EBERT  
STIFTUNG

iai Istituto Affari  
Internazionali

Fondation  
Jean Jaurès

FUNDACIÓN  
PABLO IGLESIAS

Centro Studi  
di Politica  
Internazionale  
CeSPI

OLOF PALME  
INTERNATIONAL  
CENTER