

## Global South Survey Shows Faith in the United Nations but Questions Its Influence Distribution

*“Southern Voice survey highlights growing demand for a more representative, credible, and politically balanced United Nations.”*

**London, Methodist Central Hall Westminster, May 28, 2026** — A new survey published by [Southern Voice](#) finds that Global South respondents continue to see multilateral cooperation as necessary, while raising sharp concerns over unequal influence within the United Nations system.

Published as *Rethinking United Nations Leadership: A Global South Survey*, the assessment points to a widening gap between the UN’s continued legitimacy in areas such as humanitarian response, climate governance, and global norm-setting, and declining confidence in its political authority.

Only 3.8% of respondents believe the UN currently has sufficient political authority in global governance. Nearly half identified global power asymmetries as the principal risk surrounding UN reform, while bureaucracy and institutional fragmentation ranked significantly lower.

“The findings do not point to a rejection of multilateralism,” said Margarita Gómez, Executive Director of Southern Voice. “They call to rethink how it works, who shapes it, and whose voices matter within it.”

Released ahead of the [United Nations Association-UK](#) event, *The Leader the World Needs: Appointing the Next UN Secretary-General*, on May 28, the report comes at a relevant time. At the event, Southern Voice’s Executive Director joins four of the five current UN Secretary-General candidates in London to discuss the kind of leadership required for today’s international landscape and the future of multilateral cooperation. The participating candidates are Michelle Bachelet, María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, Rebeca Grynspan, and Rafael Mariano Grossi.

Survey responses suggest that frustration with the UN is increasingly driven by concentrated power, limited Global South participation in agenda-setting, and doubts about whether international institutions can act independently when major geopolitical interests are at stake.

Only around 10% of respondents believe Global South civil society currently has a meaningful influence on UN agenda-setting processes. Respondents also identified informal power dynamics, limited access to decision-makers, and concentrated geopolitical influence as the main barriers to participation.

The survey points to growing demand for a different kind of UN leadership. Respondents prioritise political independence, institutional transformation, crisis leadership, and the ability to navigate geopolitical tensions in the next Secretary-General. These priorities suggest a preference for a political leader rather than a mere administrative manager.

“There is still legitimacy to build on,” Gómez remarked. “But the findings also suggest the next five to ten years may be decisive for whether the multilateral system can rebuild public confidence before deeper disillusionment sets in.”

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### **About Southern Voice**

*Southern Voice is a global organisation that hosts a network of over 70 think tanks from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, working to amplify Global South perspectives in global development debates and multilateral governance discussions. The organisation is also part of the Steering Committee of the [1 for 8 Billion](#) campaign, a global civil society initiative advocating for a fairer, more transparent, inclusive, and merit-based process for selecting the next United Nations Secretary-General.*

Access the report Rethinking UN Leadership:  
A Global South Perspective here:  
<https://bit.ly/SVUNSurvey>



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