



**TRT**  
**world**  
**forum**  
2023



**Responsibilities, Actions  
and Solutions**

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## TRT World Forum 2023

# Executive Summary

The global landscape faces unprecedented challenges, including geopolitical shifts, technological advancements, and trade dynamics. Great power rivalries threaten to divide the world, while national conflicts are influenced by regional and international interests. Despite these challenges, interconnectedness persists, necessitating proactive engagement, holistic thinking, and focused dialogue. Innovative approaches are required to adapt existing institutions and norms to meet present and future needs, fostering cooperation amidst diversity. The TRT World Forum in its 2023 edition held under the slogan “Thriving Together: Responsibilities, Actions and Solutions” aims to stimulate diverse perspectives, advocating for constructive dialogue as an essential component for sustainable global peace, justice, and freedom.

In this year’s forum, more than 150 speakers from all continents and more than 1000 participants from about 100 countries attended, including politicians, academics, journalists and members of civil society, who engaged in stimulating discussions on the challenges that lay before our world. During the two-day Forum, nine public sessions and eight closed sessions as well as several keynote speeches were delivered.

Under the auspices of H.E. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the 2023 TRT World Forum started its proceedings. President Erdoğan delivered an opening speech that emphasised several key points: the importance of reflecting on global events, the need for a free and just press, condemnation of violence in Gaza, and criticism of international inaction. The president has stressed the trajectory of Turkish media which was muzzled by the repressive military region before 2002. Since then, the state of Turkish media has progressed tremendously but comes routinely under flak by Western media for politicised reasons. However, the situation in Gaza has exposed the hypocrisy and double standards of the Western journalistic discourse. As thousands of innocent civilians and about a hundred journalists were killed by the Israeli military machine, the Western media remained silent. On the other hand, Turkish media outlets remained committed to spreading the truth and uncovering the atrocities, highlighting Türkiye’s multifaceted diplomatic efforts, media landscape, and commitment to justice. In this context, President Erdoğan commended TRT for addressing significant issues and praised its role as a trustworthy international news source as well as its expansion into the digital realm, aiming to offer an alternative to biased media.

Afterwards, Prof. Fahrettin Altun, Communications Director for the Republic of Türkiye, delivered a speech that acknowledged the importance of the TRT World Forum and emphasised the theme of “Thriving Together,” as the World must face its common responsibilities and act together to produce collective solutions. He also discussed the necessity of tackling disinformation, highlighting Türkiye’s efforts to combat it under President Erdogan’s leadership. Prof. Altun underscored that in today’s uncertain times, strategic communication has transitioned from a mere policy tool to

a critical component of national security. Türkiye has faced intense disinformation assaults due to its evolving global role, with numerous chapters ranging from the Gezi Park riots to the FETO coup attempt. However, President Erdogan's truth-centric approach has countered these attacks effectively, bringing truthful information to the centre of Türkiye's public sphere. Prof. Altun went on to stress the significance of truth in the media coverage amidst global challenges.

Subsequently, Prof. Mehmet Zahid Sobacı, Director General of TRT, offered his insights, stressing the role of TRT World Forum in gathering global movers and shakers to discuss the most pressing issues of our time. In his speech, Prof. Sobacı emphasised the importance of the forum's current edition as 2023 coincides with the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic. He underscored the fact that the first public session discusses the achievements of Türkiye in every field under the leadership of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, ranging from the defence industry to the humanitarian field, highlighting the long-term presidential vision for a fairer world for everyone. Prof. Sobacı, then, drew attention to the special session on Gaza, a landmark session, given the unprecedented atrocities taking place in the Palestinian territories. Finally, TRT's Director General invited the participants to join the insightful discussions and offer solutions while promoting fairness and justice.

Following the opening speeches, the 2023 TRT World Forum's proceedings officially started. The first public session, "Vision for Türkiye's Century: Türkiye as a System-building Actor," brought to light Türkiye's strategic stance in shaping global affairs. In his keynote speech, H.E. Dr. Cevdet Yılmaz, Vice President of the Republic of Türkiye, outlined Türkiye's vision for the next century, emphasising its role as a problem-solving and system-building actor. He stressed the need for a fairer global system, highlighted Türkiye's diplomatic efforts in conflict resolution, and called for collective action to address global challenges. The first speaker, Prof. Haluk Görgün, President of the Defence Industry Agency, emphasised Türkiye's commitment to reforming international systems to tackle contemporary challenges. Dr. Valeria Giannotta, Director of the CeSPI Observatory on Türkiye, highlighted Türkiye's balanced approach, prioritising regional integration while navigating between multilateralism and multipolarity. Drawing parallels with the keynote speech, Prof. Burhanettin Duran, General Coordinator of SETA, echoed sentiments on the importance of embracing diversity and promoting collective action in times of crisis. Former First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond, underscored Türkiye's humanitarian perspective in addressing global challenges, exemplified by initiatives such as the Green Deal. The session delved into President Erdogan's call for reform within the United Nations, symbolised by the slogan "the world is bigger than five," aiming to mitigate the effects of veto power hindering UN action, especially in conflict zones like Gaza. Speakers also emphasised Türkiye's pragmatic and adaptable approach to global challenges, stressing the importance of considering diverse interests for mutual benefit in international affairs.

The second public session was titled "Israel's War in Gaza: Humanitarian Crisis and Prospects for Peace." The session featured very informative interventions, shedding light on the multifaceted failures within the international community and legal institutions. Gideon Levy, a Journalist in Haaretz, underscored how little the Israeli public opinion knows about the atrocities committed in its name. The powerful censorship machine prevents the Israelis from knowing the truth, and

hence, prevents them from influencing the policies of the government. Ambassador Hussam S. Zumlot, Head of the Palestinian Mission to the United Kingdom, criticised Israel for making a mockery of the International Law, highlighting at the same time the significant shortcomings of international law and institutions, which have failed to effectively address the atrocities in Palestine and hold perpetrators accountable for war crimes and human rights violations. Prof. John Dugard, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Palestine, criticised leading Western nations for putting obstacles in the face of UNSC and other UN organisations, giving total impunity to Israel. The United States' refusal to recognise the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court undermines accountability efforts and demonstrates a prioritisation of national interests over international justice. The fourth speaker, Evarist Bartolo, Former Minister for Foreign and European Affairs for the Republic of Malta, also criticised the United States for its abject failure to stand for human rights, the rule of law, and democracy, while it pretends to be the champion of these values. Additionally, the European Union was criticised for its inaction in challenging harmful US policies and advocating for accountability within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The 2nd day of the 2023 TRT World Forum opened with the 3rd public session, titled "The Return of Geopolitics: Rivalries and Re-alignments in the New Century." Panellists delved into the multifaceted nature of contemporary geopolitics and its challenges to global stability. Dr. Bruno Maçães, Former Secretary of State for Europe in Portugal, highlighted a discernible shift in global power dynamics, transitioning from unipolarity to a mix of bi-polarity and multipolarity, with power moving from the West to the East and from the North to the South. While the United States has revealed its lack of abidance to international law by blindly supporting Israel's war on Gaza, China is overtaking the US and strategically engaging in a long-term endeavour to reshape the global system from within. The second speaker, Prof. Vali Nasr, who is Professor of International Affairs and Middle East Studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), underscored the fact that the era of globalisation is waning, marking the end of American unipolar dominance in the world order. The rise of China as a challenge to American hegemony has prompted a shift in strategic focus from the US towards further geopolitical competition among major powers. Prof. Charles A. Kupchan, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, the peak of Globalization has passed, evident in economic decoupling, supply chain repatriation, and the gradual fragmentation of the global economic system. He also expressed his concerns over a potential reversal of the historical trend towards greater freedom within liberal democratic societies, posing challenges to liberal democratic values and institutions. Prof. Kupchan underscored the significance of regional actors like Türkiye in various conflicts, emphasising the importance of maintaining strong ties with the West.

The 4th public session, titled "Public Broadcasting in the Digital Era: Challenges and Opportunities," brought to light the challenges and accomplishments of public service broadcasters amidst the digital age's turbulence. In his keynote speech, Prof. Fahrettin Altun, Communications Director of the Republic of Türkiye, emphasised the pressing issue of combating disinformation, a topic that has gained immense importance in recent years. Noel Curran, Director General of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), emphasised the decline in trust in news outlets that was the direct result of digitization. For him, the key struggle is to regain that trust in today's media landscape, and the

need to embrace technological advancements to remain relevant and accessible to audiences. Alex Stuart Aiken, Executive Director of the Government Communications for the UK, highlighted the importance of governmental Strategic communication for public service broadcasters to communicate their value proposition effectively and garner support, especially to younger generations. For him, amidst tumultuous events, government leadership in storytelling has been indispensable, as disinformation thrives in the absence of coherent narratives from public institutions and broadcasters. Ahmed Nadeem, Secretary-General of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) focused on the need to update policies and procedures that hinder the progress of public broadcasters. These aspects must be tackled to facilitate the inclusion and use of digital tools for audience interaction and feedback, which is crucial for tailoring content and services that meet audience preferences effectively. The fifth panellist, Dana Al Suyyagh, CEO of Al Mamlaka TV in Jordan, highlighted the importance of narrative and contextualization emerged as central themes in the discussions. According to her, Public service broadcasters must focus on crafting compelling narratives and providing context to enhance audience understanding and engagement.

The 5th public session, titled “Remaking The Global Economy,” underscored the complexities and interdependencies inherent in remaking the global economy. In his keynote speech, Mehmet Şimşek, the Turkish Minister of Finance highlighted several significant challenges facing both the Turkish economy and the global economy at large. However, Türkiye is emerging as a significant investment destination due to its strong fundamentals, including robust public finances, favourable demographics, strategic location, and a vibrant manufacturing sector, positioning Türkiye as a promising business hub in 2024. Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana, Secretary-General of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), emphasised hope despite economic fragmentation. For him, Asian countries, particularly in the East, have made strides towards OECD membership, offering a potential model for further exploration and economic development. Challenges present opportunities for leveraging regional cooperation. Mirek Dušek, Managing Director of the World Economic Forum, highlighted the need to build a new system for the current era amidst fragility. Stakeholders are actively seeking solutions, emphasising inclusive dialogue and addressing global divides, while also navigating challenges posed by emerging technologies like generative AI. The third panellist, Umberto Del Panta, The Head of the European Investment Bank to Türkiye, underscored the fact that the activity of the European Investment Bank was limited in the last four years due to an EU council decision. However, post-Earthquake, a £400 million earthquake reconstruction agreement was signed, signalling a potential resumption of engagement with Türkiye. The fourth speaker, Dr. Çetin Nazikkol, Chief Strategy Officer of Decarbon Technologies at thyssenKrupp, highlighted the fact that the past 40-50 years have brought unprecedented global challenges, particularly in climate change. Disruptions like floods and droughts impact supply chains, emphasising the need for affordable, decarbonized energy, where Türkiye holds potential. The final panellist, Timothy Ash, Senior Sovereign Strategist at RBC Bluebay Asset Management, stated that Türkiye is positioned as a prime investment hub with strong public finances, favourable demographics, and strategic location. He also added that Minister Simsek’s policies generate enthusiasm among investors, marking Türkiye as a standout story for 2024.

The 6th public session, titled “All-Knowing AI: Creative Potential or Disruptive Evil?”, delved into

the complex dynamics surrounding the emergence of AI technology, exploring both its promising possibilities and concerning implications. The Keynote Speaker, H.E. Mehmet Fath Kacır, Minister of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye, stated that the advancement of AI brings transformative opportunities and challenges. Türkiye's AI Strategy aims to harness AI's potential, fostering innovation, collaboration, and ethical use to ensure societal benefit and global competitiveness. The first speaker, Dr Ali Taha Koç, CEO of Turkcell, acknowledged that AI mimics human behaviour but lacks consciousness. It won't replace humans but those who use it will excel. According to him, Governments face challenges regulating AI due to rapid technological advancements and data abundance. Data quality, transparency, and human oversight are crucial for ethical AI use. The second speaker, Dr Kalev Hannes Leetaru, Founder of the GDELT Project, highlighted the fact that AI transforms tasks and generates new content, now accessible to consumers. It aids in tasks like media analysis but brings risks like misinformation and job displacement. Governments must address disparities and regulate AI's societal impact. The third speaker, Elena Contioso-Fleming, Interim Regional Director South at EIT Digital, underscored that AI holds promise to improve lives across sectors like healthcare and transportation. However, Europe faces a digital skills gap, hindering widespread adoption. Despite leading in research, lagging investment raises concerns about data ownership.

The 7th public session, titled "Dis/United Nations: Working Towards Effective Multilateralism," delved into critical questions surrounding the effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations (UN). The first speaker, H.E. Awn Al-Khasawneh, Former Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, emphasised that criticism towards the UN reflects global complexities. The Security Council, influenced by powerful states, faces scrutiny, especially in conflicts like Palestine. Reforming the UN is challenging due to power dynamics, not just academic ideals. For him, amidst fear-driven responses, upholding international law remains crucial. The second speaker, H.E. Dr. Jorge Castaneda, Former Foreign Minister of Mexico, stated that the UN's necessity is evident, but its efficacy depends on member states' will. The P5's influence is notable, yet the UN's crucial role, especially through agencies like UNHCR and IOM, is often overlooked. Reform debates ponder Mexico's position in a shifting global landscape, questioning Security Council reforms' feasibility. Despite hopes for change, scepticism persists about major shifts or universalizing bodies like the Human Rights Council. The third speaker, Hans von Sponeck, Former UN Assistant Secretary-General, highlighted that The UN encompasses political, judicial, and executive dimensions. Reform challenges differ across these, with political reform, especially regarding the Security Council, deemed most crucial. Imbalances demand rectification for fair representation. For him, engaging civil society is vital for optimistic change. The final speaker, Gwi-Yeop Son, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia at the United Nations Development Coordination Office, underscored the UN Secretary-General's emphasis on urgent reform of the UN in his General Assembly address. Efforts focus on Security Council and General Assembly reforms, aiming for inclusivity and consensus-based decision-making.

The 8th public session, titled "Empowering Humanity: Addressing Social Crises and Inequalities," highlighted various humanitarian crises and the responses required to address them. In her keynote speech, H.E. Mahinur Özdemir Gökteaş, Minister of Family and Social Services of the Republic of

Türkiye, delved into the role of governments, NGOs, and innovative strategies in humanitarian response, emphasising the need for empathy and humane responsibility, especially in light of the tragedy unfolding in Gaza, urging UN reform for justice and equality, highlighting the role that Türkiye plays in providing humanitarian aid and multifaceted solutions. The first speaker, Daniela Carmela Cicchella Representative a.i. of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Türkiye, highlighted the global refugee crisis, urging attention beyond Gaza and Russia to other displaced populations worldwide. She also emphasised collective action, innovation, and involving diverse stakeholders in finding solutions. The second speaker, Chris Lockyear, Secretary General of Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), stated that the crisis in Gaza exposed vulnerabilities in healthcare, the economy, and job market. Despite efforts, humanitarian aid falls short due to limited resources and immense needs. Political solutions are crucial for lasting change. The third speaker, Dr Fatma Meriç Yılmaz, President of the Turkish Red Crescent, stated that the world faces increasing challenges from natural and man-made disasters due to environmental degradation and globalisation. Collective efforts, exemplified by the IFRC Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, are crucial for effective humanitarian response. The fourth speaker, Michael Spindelegger, Director General of the International Center for Migration Policy Development, observed that efforts to address inequalities persist amid emerging solutions. Involving the private sector in creating sustainable workplaces curbs irregular migration, with legal pathways offering alternatives. Partnerships along migration routes signal progress, while proactive measures in vulnerable regions mitigate climate-induced displacement. The fifth speaker, Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh, a Former member of the SNP (Scotland), delved into the power of personal narratives, and that the media must focus on human stories to foster connection amidst political discord. For her, Scotland's vote for a ceasefire in Gaza offers hope, as all sorts of policies, ranging from immigration to climate justice demand global collaboration and principled leadership.

The final public session, "The Critical Nexus of Food, Water and Energy Security," highlighted how issues in one area, such as water scarcity or energy instability, can significantly impact the availability and access to other essential resources. Thus, addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers the nexus between food, water, and energy. The first speaker, Stephen Cahill, United Nations World Food Program (WFP) Türkiye Director and Country Representative, stated that Climate change and conflict pose significant challenges for organisations like WFP, with 80% of their budget directed to conflict-affected areas. Preparedness is crucial, with a \$1 investment yielding a \$7 return during emergencies, but lack of resources exacerbates disparities. The second speaker, Dr Naji Abi Aad, Chief Operating Officer at Petroleb, highlighted the fact that unequal energy distribution led to the idea of interconnecting countries for stability, but reality shows mixed results. Europe's link to Russian gas, for instance, hasn't always eased tensions. Political stability is crucial for energy security, especially in volatile regions like the Middle East. The third speaker, Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Kibaroğlu, Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Relations at MEF University, stated that the water-energy-food nexus concept illustrates the complex relationships between these resources, influenced by global politics. It offers a framework for policymakers to address challenges collaboratively, promoting sustainable resource management despite political instability. The fourth speaker, Dr Asit K. Biswas, a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University

of Glasgow, observed that the world has abundant food and energy, but managing them effectively is lacking. Water is crucial for both energy and food production. Despite global food surplus, distribution and resource management are key issues. Economic growth hasn't translated into sufficient job creation, exacerbating challenges. Water scarcity, though local, demands innovative local solutions.

During the two-day event, eight expert roundtable sessions (invitation-only) were also conducted, serving as exclusive platforms for deep engagement with prominent figures in politics, policy-making, academia, journalism, and civil society across various fields. Adhering to the Chatham House Rule, participants engaged in frank discussions on pressing issues such as multilateralism, challenges to the liberal order, humanitarian crises, and conflict transformation efforts. These sessions also delved into specific regional concerns, including Africa, the Israel-Palestine conflict, Türkiye's historical trajectory, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe's challenges, the Middle East's dynamics, the Balkans' tensions, and Central Asia's cooperative endeavours.

Following the success of previous forums, the 2023 edition affirmed the TRT World Forum's status as a global platform for constructive discourse on critical global issues. Gratitude is extended to all esteemed speakers and guests for their invaluable contributions in charting paths for global peace and prosperity.



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