

**A TEST OF DIPLOMATIC MATURITY
DURING A MULTI-VECTORIAL CRISIS***

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Motto: “*The Coronavirus Pandemic will forever alter the World Order*”. Henry Kissinger in *The Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2020.

Abstract. The article focuses on the issue of global health from the perspective of multilateral diplomacy, with an emphasis on the role of diplomatic maturity in promoting the right to health. The relevant UN and WHO resolutions are analysed, special attention being paid to those adopted in 2020 on COVID-19. The importance of global solidarity and multilateralism is highlighted in the process of international cooperation for the realization of the fundamental right to health at the national, regional and global levels.

The article is strictly limited in its content to the basic diplomatic and institutional aspects of fighting COVID-19 as a multi-vectorial crisis presented in the light of official international documents and legal instruments.

Keywords: *Health; Maturity; United Nations; World Health Organization; Resolution; Diplomacy; Multilateralism; Solidarity*

The Institutional Context

The coronavirus disease, officially known as COVID-19 pandemic, continues to reverberate around our world and has already manifested itself as the largest global challenge in the history of the United Nations.

How has this topic entered the agenda of the world organization?

In 2019, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on behalf of 193 – member states, decided that the 75th anniversary of the United Nations (UN)

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shall be commemorated in 2020 under the theme “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism”¹.

The UNGA further decided to convene in New York, on 21 September 2020, a high-level meeting to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UN, with the participation of Heads of State and Government.

It was also decided to adopt by consensus at the high-level meeting on 21 September 2020 a concise, substantive, forward-looking and unifying declaration that captures the collective commitment of member states to multilateralism and to the UN and their shared vision for a common future².

Earlier, in 2018, under an agenda item entitled “Global health and foreign policy”, the UNGA requested the UN Secretary-General, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), to provide a progress report on the matter in 2020.

In 2019, the UNGA decided to convene a high-level meeting on universal health coverage in 2023 in New York in order to identify gaps and solutions to accelerate progress towards the achievement of universal health coverage by 2030. It was also decided that the scope and modalities of this objective should be decided no later than the 75th session of the UNGA in 2020, taking into consideration the outcomes of other existing health-related processes³.

At the same time, in 2019, the UNGA requested the UN Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the Director-General of the WHO, to address, *inter alia*, the challenges and opportunities of inclusive approaches to strengthening health systems⁴.

It should be reminded that on 11 December 2019 France, on behalf of the seven members of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative – Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa and Thailand introduced the draft resolution entitled “Global health and foreign policy: an inclusive approach to strengthening health systems”. Several paragraphs of the draft were approved by vote, while the resolution as a whole was adopted by consensus⁵.

There was no reference to COVID-19 in all diplomatic deliberations about the above 2019 resolution, in spite of the fact that, as announced by BBC, on 1 December 2019 the first onset of symptoms of this virus were observed, according to the *Lancet* medical journal⁶.

¹ All UN resolutions quoted in this article are permanently available at <https://www.un.org/en/sections/documents/general-assembly-resolutions/index.html>.

² The Declaration was adopted by consensus on 21 September and is available at <https://www.un.org/en/sections/documents/general-assembly-resolutions/index.html>.

³ See note 1 *supra*.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ See the process verbal of the relevant meeting of the UNGA at <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/PV.44>.

⁶ To assist health workers and researchers working under challenging conditions to bring this outbreak to a close, *The Lancet* has created a Coronavirus Resource Centre. This resource brings together new 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) content from across *The Lancet* journals as it is published. Information available at <https://www.thelancet.com/coronavirus>.

What Happened Meanwhile?

For a balanced answer we will refer to the Report of the UN Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, circulated in August 2020, a text of 31 pages in which COVID-19 is mentioned 29 times. The second section of the report – quasi-ignored for the time-being by the mainstream media – is entitled The United Nations response to COVID-19. Its first paragraph says: “The COVID-19 pandemic has swiftly taken hundreds of thousands of lives, infected millions of people, upended economies and disrupted every aspect of modern life. It is more than a health crisis: it is an economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, a security crisis and a human rights crisis. The global response requires reimagining the structures of societies and how we cooperate for the common good”⁷.

To that list of crises, in our opinion, it is appropriate to add five more crises: a crisis of political leadership at the national and global levels; a crisis of universal values; a crisis of basic principles of international law; a crisis of affection; and a crisis of imagination. But the analysis of these crises goes beyond the purpose of the present article and needs further elaboration and additional research. This description of COVID-19 pandemic and of its consequences justifies to call it a multi-vectorial crisis, having in mind its unique characteristics, the multitude of its impacts and its planetary proliferation.

In the light of this challenging and unprecedented reality, diplomats from all countries of the world will have the imperative duty to cooperate in order to give a collective practical response to the COVID-19 as a multi-vectorial crisis.

What was the first collective reaction of the UN faced with the COVID -19 pandemic?

The UNGA adopted in April 2020 two resolutions which are self-explanatory by their official titles: “Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)” and “International cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19”⁸.

UNCTAD released the same month a special paper the first paragraph of which says: “The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is substantially impacting people’s lives and livelihoods and putting extreme stress on socioeconomic systems. International collaboration, coordination and solidarity among all is going to be key to overcoming this unprecedented global challenge”⁹.

In May 2020, on the proposal of 130 co-sponsors, including Thailand and Australia, as well as the European Union and its members, the WHO adopted a comprehensive resolution. In its first operative paragraph, the World Health Assembly “Calls for, in the spirit of unity and solidarity, the intensification of cooperation and collaboration at all levels in order to contain and control the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigate its impact”¹⁰.

⁷ Full document available at <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/75/1>.

⁸ See note 1 *supra*.

⁹ The full text of the UNCTAD paper is available at https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/presspb2020d3_en.pdf.

¹⁰ The full text of the resolution entitled COVID-19 Response is available at https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_CONF1Rev1-en.pdf.

The most recent resolution on the matter was adopted by the UNGA on 11 September 2020 with the official title “Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic” under the symbol A/RES/74/306.

It should be noted that this 14-page document was the result of extensive bilateral and multilateral negotiations with the participation of all geographical groups of states.

All the above-mentioned reports and resolutions are on the table of the 75th session of the UNGA. All of them recommend action-oriented measures to combat COVID-19 pandemic.

Legitimate Expectations

In the light of a tragic reality generated at the global level by COVID-19, diplomats from all countries of the world will have the imperative duty to work in a spirit of solidarity by giving a strong collective response to this multi-vectorial pandemic.

In this regard, diplomats have to perform a cardinal function in accordance with the Vienna Convention on the Representation of States in their Relations with International Organizations of a Universal Character (1975) which recognized *expressis verbis* the increasingly important role of multilateral diplomacy in relations between states and the responsibilities of the UN, its specialized agencies and other international organizations of a universal character within the international community¹¹.

The UN and the WHO documents have the great merit of strongly emphasizing the full potential of multilateralism during the current times of global vulnerabilities, perplexities and discontinuities, as dramatically enhanced by COVID-19 pandemic.

Indeed, robust multilateralism can effectively contribute to solving planetary problems. That’s why the Alliance for Multilateralism established in 2019 by France and Germany could have a positive role in giving tangibility to a vital universal objective of promoting vibrant international cooperation and worldwide solidarity in dealing with COVID-19¹².

In another diplomatic framework, on 4 September 2020 the G20 Foreign Ministers held an extraordinary meeting to discuss enhancing international cooperation to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, as well as strengthening preparedness for future pandemics.

The participants in this significant online diplomatic event discussed the importance of coordinating precautionary measures on cross-border management to protect lives and livelihoods.

¹¹ The official text of the Vienna Convention on the Representation of States in their Relations with International Organizations of a Universal Character is available at https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/5_1_1975.pdf.

¹² The Alliance for Multilateralism aims at bringing together those who believe that strong and effective multilateral cooperation, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and justice, are indispensable foundations to secure peace, stability and prosperity and who want to join hands to act along this endeavor. Romania is a participant in this Alliance. For details see <https://multilateralism.org/>.

During the meeting, foreign ministers acknowledged the importance of opening borders, uniting families, and promoting measures to allow the economy to thrive in light of the protective measures adopted by health organizations and by national regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic¹³.

The 75th session of the UNGA will offer to the G20 members the chance to demonstrate their diplomatic maturity by helping all UN members to reach a consensus for a genuine strategy for promoting and defending global health. Diplomatic maturity cannot be separated from the general concept of maturity which means in all Indo-European languages the quality of thinking and behaving in a sensible, adult manner.

While history teaches us, that diplomatic maturity is a rare phenomenon at the global level, there is no doubt that, at present, worldwide solidarity in fighting COVID-19 will remain just a pure aspiration if diplomatic maturity does not become a mobilizing force able to overcome national egoisms in searching for universal solutions.

It is instructive to remind that in 311 pages book published by Jeremy Black in 2010 under the title *A History of Diplomacy* the expression “diplomatic maturity” is totally absent.

The same absence has to be noticed by the readers of the 766 pages of *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, edited by Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur and published in 2013.

In the current political literature, it is asserted that “one meaning of diplomatic maturity is getting done what you want to without making a lot of noise – which risks bringing in a lot of attention and attendant criticism”. It is also found that in particular cases – “Diplomatic maturity is a euphemism for concessions”. Other authors believe that “bigger and smaller states, both have to mature diplomatically”.

Some researchers suggest that “political differences among the member states can be bridged up by incorporating certain political elements in their behaviour. Diplomatic maturity is one of these”¹⁴.

In the light of an increasingly challenging reality, diplomats from all countries of the world will have no other option, but to accept as an imperative duty the necessity to actively cooperate in a mature way in order to give a strong coordinated response to the COVID-19 as a multi-vectorial crisis.

What diplomats’ participants in multilateral diplomacy under the auspices of the UN and WHO are expected to do is to give nations they represent a perspective of what is possible to accomplish, help them to win the battle with an invisible enemy which has generated this multi-vectorial crisis.

Academics in many countries emphasize the fact that multilateral diplomacy should be able to motivate, catalyse, inspire, instruct, facilitate, encourage, support,

¹³ Details about the G20 activities are available at <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/>.

¹⁴ On various practical definitions of the concept of diplomatic maturity see file:///C:/Users/loan/Downloads/11_chapter7.pdf and Google entries for the content of diplomatic maturity. See also other quotations available at <https://www.orfonline.org/research/indian-diplomacy-coming-of-age/>, accessed on September 21, 2020.

assist in finding consensus solutions. However, insufficient diplomatic maturity can be detrimental in this highly complex and responsible process. Advanced responsible preparation is an imperative prerequisite in order to succeed with any diplomatic initiative in this sensitive field¹⁵.

That is why some recent inter-regional proposals deserve full attention.

The representatives of Canada, Denmark, Qatar, the Republic of Korea and Sierra Leone to the UN informed the UN Secretary-General about the creation of the Group of Friends of Solidarity for Global Health Security, which includes 43 states and the European Union.

This Group – insufficiently publicized by mainstream media – aims to complement ongoing global efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and other threats to global health security by providing an informal platform for UN member states to share their experiences, including best practices and lessons learned from responding to COVID-19 and past health crises.

The Group will primarily focus its discussions on the impact of COVID-19 and other health crises on peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian aspects, and on how to respond to these challenges. It will take a comprehensive approach and discuss topics that address the wide-ranging and multifaceted impact of COVID-19 and other health crises.

The Group of Friends reaffirmed its shared commitment to multilateralism and collective action in the face of these challenges and will encourage enhanced political will and solidarity among member states, the UN, academia, civil society and other actors.

Legitimate expectations can be expressed about the long-term success of the activities of the described Group of Friends of Solidarity for Global Health Security¹⁶.

Unavoidable Responsibility

On 19 February 2000 the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) adopted by consensus a document entitled “Bangkok Declaration: Global Dialogue and Dynamic Engagement” which contains relevant provisions fully applicable during COVID-19 times.

I was in the conference room when this first programmatic document of the 21st Century was enthusiastically welcomed by all delegations. It says *inter alia* that “Solidarity and a strong sense of moral responsibility must be the guiding light of national and international policy. They are not only ethical imperatives, but also prerequisites for a prosperous, peaceful and secure world based on true partnership”¹⁷.

¹⁵ See *inter alia* the article *Diplomacy as an instrument of good governance* available at <https://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/diplomacy-instrument-good-governance>.

¹⁶ For details concerning the activities of the Group of Friends of Solidarity see http://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=321143.

¹⁷ The full text of the UNCTAD Bangkok Declaration is available at https://unctad.org/en/Docs/ux_td387.en.pdf.

After 20 years, the full implementation of these objectives is still on the waiting list. The UN Secretary-General recognized it in clear terms. In his remarks on 4 September 2020, at the G20 extraordinary meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs, he said: “we still lack effective international solidarity to respond to the economic and social impacts and the underlying fragilities exposed by the pandemic”¹⁸.

Can the 75th session of the UNGA lead to significant solutions?

As anticipated, the Declaration already adopted on 21 September 2020 by the high-level segment of the UNGA session does not contain specific solutions related to COVID-19¹⁹. More results can be expected from the substantive deliberations in the UNGA plenary about global health and foreign policy.

In this regard, Indonesia has already officially announced that during its chairmanship of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative in 2020, it has chosen “Affordable health care for all” as the central theme. It is appropriate to remind in this respect that every year the Initiative member countries have pioneered, and succeeded in mainstreaming health issues.

In the light of the reality resulting from the current multi-vectorial crisis, all diplomats, irrespective of their geographical area, will have an unavoidable responsibility for a well-coordinated cooperation in order to be able to give a strategic response to the COVID-19 within the global health and foreign policy agenda at the UNGA and at the World Health Assembly.

Since promoting global health involves and requires concerted efforts on the part of multiple stakeholders, Indonesia would like to revitalize the Initiative to translate this specific cooperation into more concrete actions and results and affordable care for all²⁰.

As pointed out in the national intervention of Romania presented by H. E. Bogdan Aurescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, at the General Debate of the 75th session of the UNGA, on 29 September 2020, Romania has an active participation in this process of cooperation. Romania has become part of “The Coronavirus Global Response” pledging initiative (emphasized in the original) At the same time, we have re-oriented several projects this year towards responding to health emergencies, particularly in our Eastern Neighbourhood and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Romania has redirected more than half of its budget for international development cooperation to respond to COVID-19. We contribute to consolidating the institutional capacity of health systems, ensuring food security and sustainable water management, as well as countering fake news in the COVID-19 context”²¹.

It is in this organizational framework that a new comprehensive resolution could be adopted during the UNGA 75th session after serious consideration of

¹⁸ The Secretary-General remarks are available at <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-09-03/secretary-generals-remarks-the-g20-extraordinary-foreign-ministers-meeting-delivered>.

¹⁹ The full text of the *Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations* is available at <https://www.undocs.org/en/A/75/L.1>.

²⁰ For Indonesia’s statement see the document mentioned in note 5 *supra*.

²¹ The full text of the Romanian intervention is available at <http://www.mae.ro/en/node/53721>.

the WHO report on the relevant agenda item. In this framework an authentic test of diplomatic maturity can take place. Yet, such a maturity cannot emerge spontaneously without a strong stimulus from national leaders who need themselves a true political maturity as decision-making actors.

In the opinion of some academics, leadership maturity may be the most overlooked factor in the global political arena. This is a paradox, because almost every meaningful decision of national leaders has multi-systemic and sometimes local, national, regional and even global implications affecting diplomacy. In such circumstances, in order to be able to pass the test of diplomatic maturity it is necessary to take advantage of the most mature transformative leadership capacities at the national level²².

From this perspective, an interesting concept launched by Princeton University (USA) Professor Richard Falk, one of the world's leading authorities on international politics, might be considered during the forthcoming UN deliberations on global health. Professor Richard Falk used the expression "medical solidarity" in an article and in a recent interview while pleading for "rule-governed geopolitics, anchored in respect for the UN Charter and embodying commitments to promote a more peaceful, just, and ecologically responsible world"²³.

In the opinion of the same distinguished professor, it is useful to talk of "diplomatic maturity" as a way to suggest the need for a drastic rethinking of national interests in the 21st century. Indeed, health and medical activity are the most favourable settings for overcoming current political and civilizational tensions, and find a large domain of common ground in combatting the consequences of a multi-vectorial crisis²⁴.

The benefits of active multilateral approaches and global cooperation for world health have never been greater, and the need for such a refocusing of intentions by diplomats has become what Professor Richard Falk calls "a survival imperative"²⁵.

While UN future resolutions are expected to contain appeals for developing global solidarity in fighting COVID-19, it can be anticipated that, irrespective of their substance, they will contain only recommendations. A resolution is an invitation to act which may not be implemented by some member states. This is a valid reason for robust diplomatic efforts to start preparing an international convention dedicated at least to "medical solidarity", a legal instrument which once adopted, ratified and entered into force would oblige states parties to it to act and to report periodically about the implementation of its provisions.

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²² See the article *The Transformation Factor in Politics* by John T. Kesler, available at <https://www.kosmosjournal.org/reader-essay/leadership-maturity-the-transformation-factor-in-politics/>.

²³ Richard Falk's interview is available at <https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/04/17/richard-falk-on-world-order-and-covid-19/>.

²⁴ See note 23 *supra*.

²⁵ See the entry "survival imperative" at <https://www.google.ro/search?tbm=bks&hl=en&q=richard+falk+%E2%80%9Ca+survival+imperative%E2%80%9D>. See also *Predatory Globalization: A Critique, 1st Edition*, by Richard Falk, available online at <https://www.amazon.com/Predatory-Globalization-Critique-Richard-Falk/dp/0745609368ED>. See also by the same author *Power Shift: on the New Global Order*, Zed Books, 2016.

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The starting point of such convention could be the UN Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000 which in the section dedicated to fundamental values gives solidarity the following interpretation: “Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most”²⁶.

In resolution 55/2 containing the UN Millennium Declaration section I dedicated to Values and Principles starts as follows: “We, heads of State and Government, have gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 6 to 8 September 2000, at the dawn of a new millennium, to reaffirm our faith in the Organization and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world”.

The part of this section related specifically to values reads as follows in paragraph 6: “We consider certain fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. These include:

- Freedom. Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights.
- Equality. No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.
- Solidarity. Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most”.

Fundamental values are considered in the same document to be “essential to international relations in the twenty-first century”.

The adoption of a convention on “medical solidarity” would be in full compliance and harmony with the very essential functions of multilateral diplomacy, such as the representation of humanity, the setting of aspirational goals for humanity, the establishment of rules with global application. Multilateral diplomacy is also the most efficient means to negotiate international treaties that improve the state of the world²⁷.

²⁶ The UN Millennium Declaration is available at https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_55_2.pdf.

²⁷ See Dan Dungaciu, coordinator, *Encyclopedia of Diplomacy* (in Romanian), Rao Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019, pp. 223 -224. See also the collective volume entitled *In the fight against us, the virus and the crises of the world. Academic journal in pandemic* (in Romanian), coordinators Cristina Vohn, Dan Dungaciu,

In all these efforts all diplomats can get useful inspiration from the wisdom of a great American diplomat, William J. Burns who, on the basis of extensive diplomatic experience summarized in the book *The back channel: a memoir of American diplomacy and the case for its renewal* described the diplomat of the 21st century as follows: “A diplomat serves many roles: a translator of the world to Washington and Washington to the world; an early-warning radar for troubles and opportunities; a builder – and fixer – of relations; a maker, driver, and executor of policy; a protector of citizens abroad and promoter of their economic interests; an integrator of military, intelligence, and economic tools of statecraft; an organizer, convener, negotiator, communicator, and strategist. Diplomatic engagement is not a favour to an adversary, but a means of reconnaissance and communication. It is a way to better understand trends, assess motivations, convey determination, and avoid inadvertent collisions. It is a method of manoeuvring for future gain, a means of gaining wider support by demonstrating our willingness to engage and exposing the intransigence of rivals or foes”²⁸.

This realistic and nuanced description of diplomat’s roles is valid not only for bilateral diplomacy, but also for all actors of multilateral diplomacy who are expected to successfully pass in the near future the test of diplomatic maturity.

The test will be a very difficult one. As rightly pointed out by a Romanian researcher of the topic under consideration, “Even across the EU, the normal diplomatic channels are too bureaucratic and too slow facing a virus which does not care about procedures and diplomatic protocol”²⁹.

In the opinion of the same author “Health Diplomacy” may need faster tracks and simplified procedures than other types of diplomacy in order to be effectively practiced during emergencies”.

A practical suggestion has been advanced in this field. Having in mind that so far “health attachés” are a rare position in embassies, it would be recommendable to include in diplomatic missions “agents” of health diplomacy which are not only diplomats or medical personnel, but also auxiliary personnel, such as sociologists, psychologists, biologists, educators, communicators³⁰.

Indeed, at present, the role of health diplomacy has become an essential one. Health has to be treated as an increasingly critical element in foreign policy at

ISPRI Publishing House, Bucharest, 2020. For health diplomacy in Europe see Peter Van Kemseke, *Europe Reinvented: How COVID-19 Is Changing the European Union*, Boeklyn, 2020, 228 pages. According to this book, the lack of solidarity between European countries seemed to bring the union – once again – to its knees. For the situation in ASEAN countries, see <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-crisis-response-in-asean-member-states-02f828a2/>. A fundamental book on the matter remains Kickbusch Ilona (Editor), *Global health diplomacy*, Springer, New York, 2013.

²⁸ See William J. Burns, *The back channel: a memoir of American diplomacy and the case for its renewal*. First edition. New York: Random House, 2019; Includes bibliographical references and index (quotation from e-version of the book).

²⁹ See Lucian Jora, *Considerations Regarding the Global Need for a “Health Diplomacy”*, in *Romanian Review of Political Sciences and International Relations*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, 2020, p. 121, available online at https://2c2e45e5-12d6-4ee7-81f3-41c6c611007c.filesusr.com/ugd/1c5576_dced57e895d744e98bf5370e45b643b5.pdf.

³⁰ See note 29 *supra*.

the local, national, regional and global levels, in the fields of security, development strategies and trade agreements. Therefore, all decision – makers should imperatively acquire appropriate skills to be able to negotiate and to reach win-win situations in favour of health over other interests.

However, the current multi-vectorial crisis generated by COVID-19 crisis may be amplified by the anticipated inability of the great powers to put together a realistic strategy situated above and beyond the current political tensions at the global level. There is no doubt that there is no immunity against this pandemic emerging from geopolitical calculations or propaganda activities developed during election campaigns. That is a source of unavoidable scepticism about the successful development of a global diplomatic maturity in face of COVID-19.

Yet, fatalism is not an option. In this regard, it is appropriate to quote Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, who on 26 September 2020, in his statement before the UNGA's 75th session, said: "I don't think there is any reason for fatalism: of course, the dangers can never be wholly eliminated, but human ingenuity and expertise can reduce the risk"³¹.

From this semi-optimistic perspective, we can continue this article by joining Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, who after a critical assessment of the situation created by COVID-19, said: "we need unity and solidarity. Returning to old, discredited systems is out of the question. The pandemic is a tragedy – but it has also created a moment of possibility"³².

The results of the 75th session of the UNGA are expected to offer persuasive examples about the capacity of the world organization to use that possibility in order to effectively deal with a multi-vectorial crisis tragically affecting now the whole human society on our planet. A major condition for positive results in this field will be the genuine recognition of solidarity among nations as the indispensable foundation in coping with pandemics, and thus, international cooperation based on this universal value must be at the core of all diplomatic efforts.

No final conclusion can be formulated at this stage. In this regard, we join the prudent view expressed by ambassador and professor Bogdan J. Góralczyk, Director, Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw, who wrote that "The COVID-19 will bring about, almost for sure, a new Great Re-Definition of our lives, institutions, mechanisms and solutions, as well as projections of the future. What will be the final result, is of course too early to say, as we are still in the game with the lethal virus"³³.

For the time being, humanity is invited to reflect on an expectation clearly emphasized in the Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, adopted by consensus by the UNGA, at the highest level, on 21 September 2020. This document says *inter alia* that "The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us in the most powerful way that we are

³¹ For the full speech see <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-to-un-general-assembly-26-september-2020>.

³² See <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20269.doc.htm>.

³³ Bogdan J. Góralczyk, *Coronavirus in Poland: domestic solutions, international impact*, Preliminary Report, available at [Working_paper-202010-by-Bogdan-J.-G%C3%B3ralczyk%20\(11\).pdf](https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20269.doc.htm).

closely interconnected and only as strong as our weakest link. Only by working together and in solidarity can we end the pandemic and effectively tackle its consequences. Only together can we build resilience against future pandemics and other global challenges. Multilateralism is not an option but a necessity as we build back better for a more equal, more resilient and more sustainable world. The United Nations must be at the centre of our efforts”³⁴.

A truly persuasive success in this gigantic process envisaged by the UN will be considerably dependent on the mature leadership of the political decision-makers at the national, regional and global levels without which diplomatic maturity risks to remain an on-going aspiration in a world so strongly affected by global vulnerabilities, perplexities and discontinuities.

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Documents

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³⁴ See note 19 *supra*.

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All UN resolutions quoted in this article are permanently available at <https://www.un.org/en/sections/documents/general-assembly-resolutions/index.html>.

ANNEX

Full text of the resolution Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/306>.