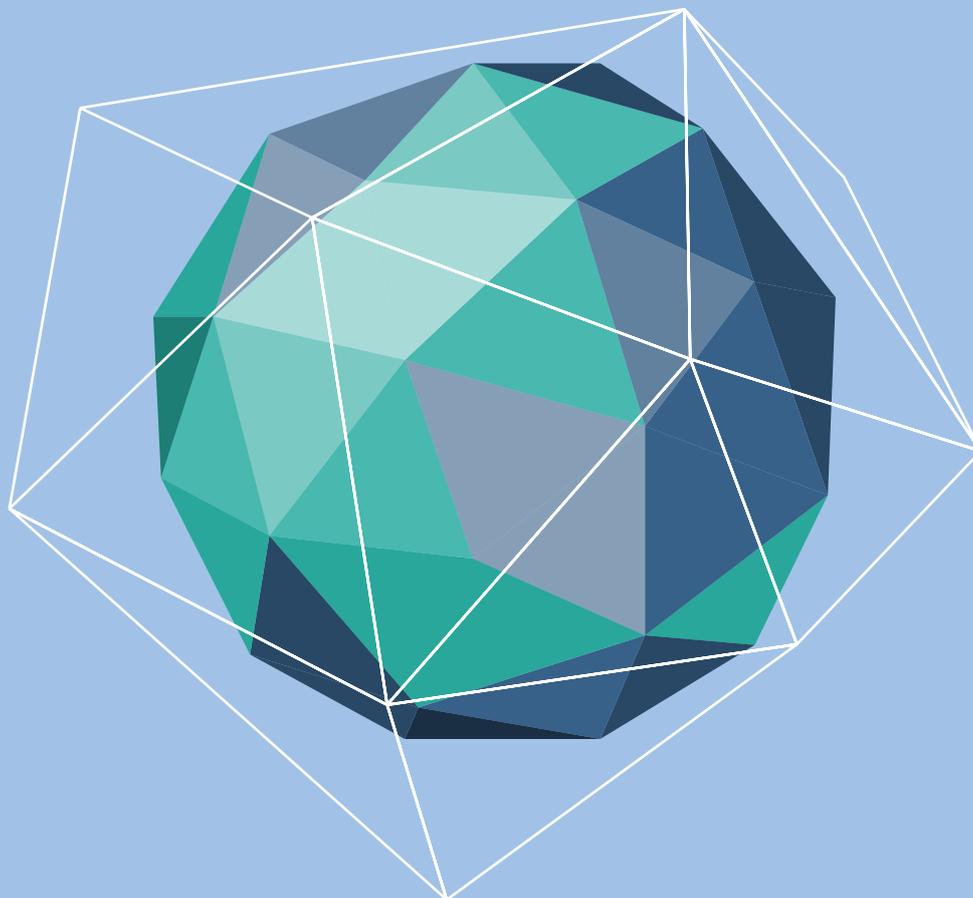


THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES PRIZE 2017

A New Shape

Remodelling Global Cooperation



Dear participants,

My name is Laszlo Szombatfalvy. I am the founder and chairman of the Global Challenges Foundation, created in 2012 with the aim of deepening understanding of the greatest risks to humanity – and catalyzing ideas around how these global risks can be minimized or eliminated.

HUMANITY IS FACING UNPRECEDENTED GLOBAL RISKS

I have spent the last decade studying and analyzing global threats such as climate change, other large-scale environmental degradation and serious conflicts. It has become apparent to me that mankind's future prospects have changed more during the past century than in any other period in human history. The most dramatic change is that we humans have gained the ability to influence – and fundamentally disrupt – the ecosystem upon which we depend.

It is also clear that the structure of our society has changed. Increasingly, we can be said to be living in a global community. This means that the inhabitants of every individual country, through their behaviours and decisions, can have a major impact on the essential interests of the inhabitants of all other countries.

Let me point at two of our largest risks, which illustrate this fact. Global warming is an obvious example, as greenhouse gas emissions in any individual country have an impact on global climate change.

Political violence is certainly a threat in itself, but it also has very serious side effects. Today's enormous rearmament leads to international tension which translates into suspicion, fear and hatred, which in turn worsen possibilities for cooperation and distract politicians from solving acute problems.

My conclusion is that humanity must urgently address the following interlinked challenges:

- Climate change, which, in the worst case scenario, can make the planet uninhabitable.
- Other types of large-scale environmental degradation, which, among other things, can cause serious problems for the supply of food and water, and reduce the resilience of the ecosystem.
- Violent conflict, including interstate and civil wars, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and the risks associated with nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.
- Extreme poverty, which is an ongoing catastrophe affecting more than one billion people.
- Rapid population growth, which has quadrupled the world population during the last century and, and which to a great extent is at the root of today's problems, is expected to continue, with a predicted 50 per cent rise by 2100. All else being equal, this would significantly increase all other challenges and risks.

These major challenges are interconnected and impact each other negatively. They include the greatest threats to humanity today and should be at the top of the international political agenda. In my view, political and business leaders, influenced as they are by short-term and self-interested concerns, are gravely underestimating most of them, particularly population growth. These problems demand urgent global collective actions in order to safeguard future generations.

The greatest threats we face today transcend national boundaries; they therefore need to be addressed jointly by all countries based on an increased realization of our mutual dependence. That is why I believe a new global framework for managing them must be found.

OUR GLOBAL SYSTEM IS NOT EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH TODAY'S RISKS

Our current international system – including but not limited to the United Nations – was set up in another era, following the Second World War. It is no longer fit for purpose to deal with 21st century risks that can affect people anywhere in the world. We urgently need fresh new thinking in order to address the scale and gravity of today's global challenges, which have outgrown the present system's ability to handle them.

In my lifetime I have witnessed an explosion of technological and scientific advances. Our industrial development has indeed caused some of the problems we now face, but I firmly believe that human ingenuity, having brought us this far, will also manage to find solutions to them.

That is why the Global Challenges Foundation is bringing together the brightest minds from academia, politics, business and civil society to create better conditions for securing a better future for coming generations. Global governance needs to be reshaped to fit our realities. By launching the 'Global Challenges Prize – A New Shape' we hope to produce viable ideas for new models for global decision-making to tackle global threats – and to stimulate urgent debate about the challenges and problems we collectively face.

Further details on how to enter the competition can be found below. We look forward to receiving your submissions and reviewing your approach to the most important issues of our time.



Laszlo Szombatfalvy

Chairman of the Global Challenges Foundation

