CENTRE FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH (CMDR), DHARWAD.

Brainstorming Session on

CHANGING ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD
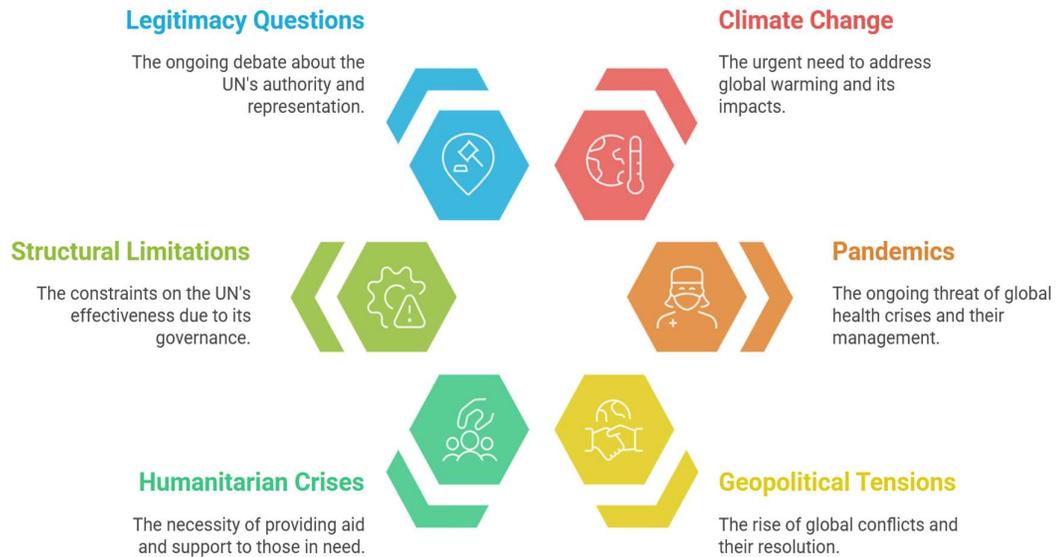
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Background and Rationale

The United Nations, founded in 1945 to uphold peace, security, and cooperation, faces unprecedented challenges in the 21st century. From climate change and pandemics to geopolitical tensions and humanitarian crises, the global order is increasingly complex, with a profound shift in the global order and polarization. Structural limitations, political rivalries, and questions of legitimacy often constrain the UN's ability to respond effectively. The world is fragmented and multipolar, and the role of the UN has not been so effective in addressing the problems and highlighting the challenges, citing the example of the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war, Israel-Gaza conflict, etc., for the last four years.

Throughout history, conflicts have always been there, and most of the time, they are settled by aerial warfare. While looking into the role of the UN, it is not democratic due to the veto **power** problem, which is arbitrary. This is the reason for undermining the development of developing and underdeveloped countries. As a result of veto power, we can see the emergence of the USSR (now Russia) and the US as superpowers. The main problems of Global South countries are evident in climate change and cybersecurity, largely due to the domination by Global North countries. Power and conflict are an indispensable part of the Politics. Conflict is an integral part of Human nature, and it is not possible to eliminate, but an institutional mechanism is required to manage and control the adverse effects of conflicts, and war is also termed as a form of conflict.

This veto power of the permanent members of the UNSC has been utilised, adversely affecting the developing countries. The role of the UN was not so effective during the Cold War in resolving conflicts. The US was involved explicitly or implicitly in the Cold War between North Korea and South Korea for about three years, and the Vietnam conflict for 25 years. The US-led coalition invaded Iraq **without the** legitimacy of the UNSC in 2003 on ground that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Against this brief backdrop, this brainstorming session aimed to critically examine the evolving role of the UN, assess its relevance, and explore pathways for reform and revitalization.

United Nations Challenges

Legitimacy Questions

The ongoing debate about the UN's authority and representation.

Climate Change

The urgent need to address global warming and its impacts.

Structural Limitations

The constraints on the UN's effectiveness due to its governance.

Pandemics

The ongoing threat of global health crises and their management.

Humanitarian Crises

The necessity of providing aid and support to those in need.

Geopolitical Tensions

The rise of global conflicts and their resolution.

Objectives

- To assess the effectiveness of the UN in addressing current global challenges (e.g., the Ukraine conflict, the Palestinian crisis, the climate emergencies, the Iran-Israel conflict).
- To explore the effective role of the UNSC and Specialized agencies (15), such as the WHO, UNDP, FAO, and UNEP, in sustainable development and humanitarian aid.
- To identify structural and political constraints in the functioning of the UN system, especially the Security Council.
- To generate actionable recommendations for enhancing the UN's legitimacy, inclusivity, and responsiveness.

Under the broader theme, Role of the United Nations in a Multipolar World, three sub-themes were identified, with a couple of sub-components under each sub-theme on which the deliberation was focused.

1. Global Environmental Governance
- Global Warming and Climate Change
- Financing for Equity in Global Environmental Governance

2. Global Economic Governance
- International Trade with reference to the **impact** of US Trade policies
- India Emerging as a Global Leader for Reforming the World order

3. Implications of Technology for World Politics
- Role of Technology in International Relations and Diplomacy
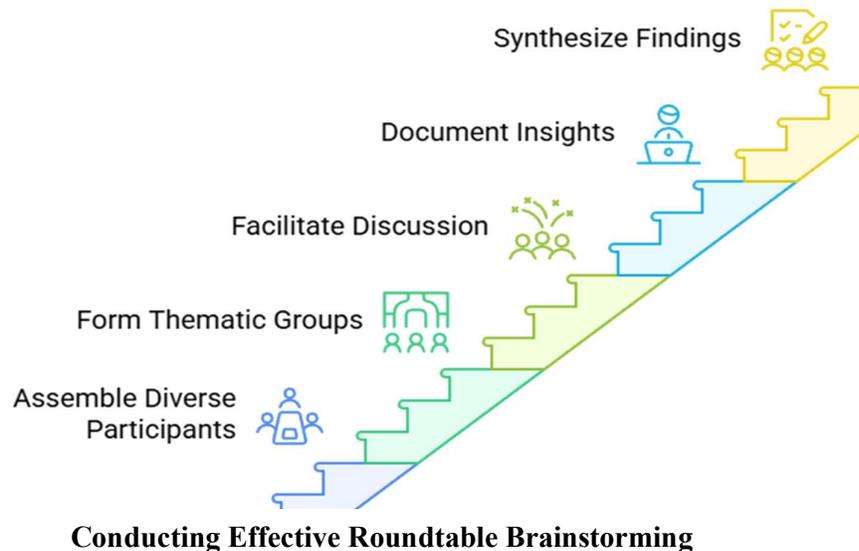- Impact of Cyber Space on International Relations

Methodology

Format: Roundtable brainstorming with thematic breakout groups
Participants: Academics, policy analysts, youth representatives, and civil society actors.
Facilitation: Moderated by a panel of experts with real-time documentation of insights
A multidisciplinary team of academicians belonging to various areas like Political Science, Economics, Law, Agricultural Science, Social Work, Indian languages, Physics, Management, Commerce, International Relations, Anthropology and Constitution

Conducting Effective Roundtable Brainstorming

The Key Issues Emerged from Subtheme-1: Global Environmental Governance Actionable Issues for the United Nations on Climate Change and other Environmental Governance issues

1. Strengthen Global Coalitions and Institutional Integration
   - Form a coalition of nations and institutions for coordinated disaster management.
   - Streamline multiple environmental agencies under the UN Security Council for unified action.
   - Identify the ways and means of ensuring cooperation to maintain an equitable structure for global governance.

2. Address Climate-Induced Displacement and Refugees
   - Recognize and support environmental refugees displaced due to climate change and global warming.
   - Include global south countries and India more prominently in peacekeeping and climate resilience efforts.

3. Enforcement of Climate Commitments and Accountability
   - Imposing sanctions on countries failing to meet emission targets.
   - Develop and maintain a Global Climate Accountability Index.
   - Enforcement of the duties and responsibilities of all UN member states.
   - Introduce pollution-based taxation systems for states and nations.

4. Reform Financial Mechanisms
- Ensure climate fund transfers are concessional grants, not loans, contingent on annual emission target compliance.
- Monitor and regulate electronic waste through dedicated financial and technical mechanisms.

5. Promote Clean Energy and Technological Equity
- Strengthen the International Solar Alliance under UN auspices.
- Lead technological sharing between developed and developing countries to combat environmental challenges.

6. Cultivate Environmental Conscience and Education
- Promote environmental consciousness as a core value in global governance.
- Integrate psychological education into curricula to foster clean minds for addressing the complexities of issues of environment effectively.
- Encourage philosophical and adopting international ethics, especially from Indian traditions like the Vedas, to understand sustainable living.

7. Empower Grassroots and Indigenous Participation
- Involve NGOs actively in environmental protection and climate action.
- Recognize and integrate the role of indigenous and rural communities as custodians of traditional ecological knowledge.

8. Advance Sectoral and Integrated Approaches
- Focus UN efforts on sustainable agriculture and industrial transformation.
- Adopt an integrated approach to combat climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.
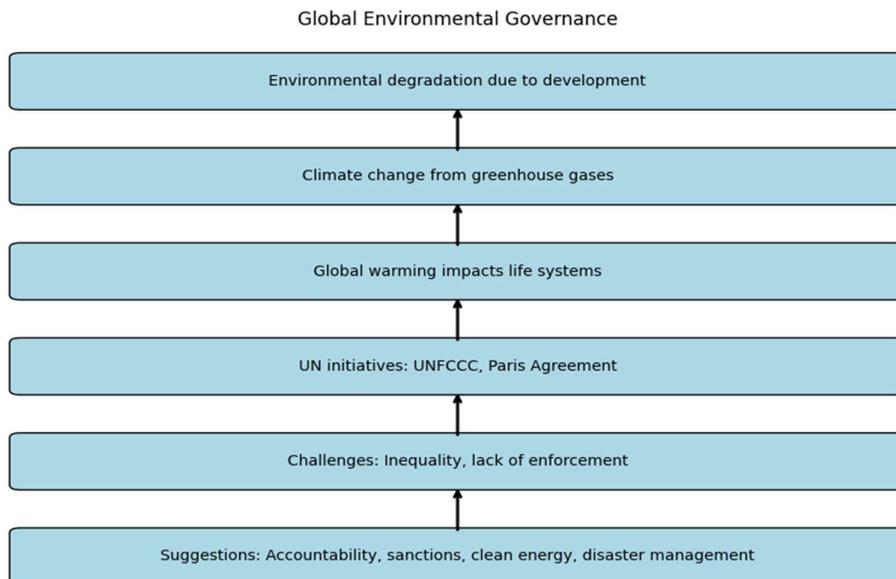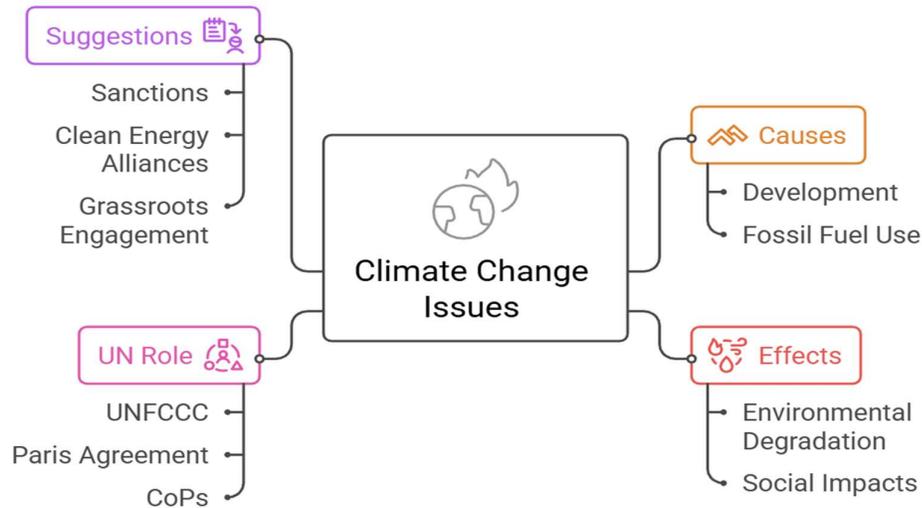- Include global forest cover assessments in environmental monitoring and policy.

9. Reform UN Structures and Decision-Making
- Control and eventually abolish the exercise of veto power in climate-related decisions.
- Foster consensus-building mechanisms to overcome current failures in climate negotiations.

The inclusive opinion was that these actions aim to transform the UN into a proactive, inclusive, and accountable leader in global environmental governance.

These issues can be summarised as:

- Causes → Effects → UN Role → Suggestions
- Shows how development and fossil fuel use lead to climate change, and how UN initiatives (UNFCCC, Paris Agreement, CoPs) attempt to respond, with recommendations like sanctions, clean energy alliances, and grassroots engagement.

Climate Change Issues

Suggestions
- Sanctions
- Clean Energy Alliances
- Grassroots Engagement

Causes
- Development
- Fossil Fuel Use

UN Role
- UNFCCC
- Paris Agreement
- CoPs

Effects
- Environmental Degradation
- Social Impacts

Global Environmental Governance

- Environmental degradation due to development
- Climate change from greenhouse gases
- Global warming impacts life systems
- UN initiatives: UNFCCC, Paris Agreement
- Challenges: Inequality, lack of enforcement
- Suggestions: Accountability, sanctions, clean energy, disaster management

The Key Issues Emerged from Subthme-2: Global Economic Governance

1. Institutional mechanism: The WTO has to make a legal and institutional mechanism for addressing the tariff problems between its members in international trade.

2. Abolition of Veto Power: The domination of any country or a few countries needs to be prevented by reforming the UNSC. The UN Charter provision of veto power is to be deleted to **prevent domination of the global north countries in the UN and its specialised agencies**

3. Addressing Vulnerabilities in Global Supply Chains: Members of the WTO need to collaborate to ensure secure, predictable, and sustainable supply chains that support economic

growth without creating new dependencies. The resilience-based supply chain management needs to be fostered by the WTO.

4. Depoliticisation of Trade: Consolidation of global south countries in the WTO and UN, subordinating their ideological political affiliation to ensure global justice in trade **and other matters**.

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5. Accelerate Market Diversification: Overdependence of countries on a single market or region increases economic vulnerability. Countries should diversify export destinations, import sources, and investment partners. Diverse import-export destinations reduces risk, opens new opportunities, and improves long-term resilience.

6. Reinforce Dispute Resolution and Monitoring Mechanisms: Effective systems are needed to monitor compliance with trade agreements and resolve disputes swiftly. Strengthening legal, institutional, and diplomatic mechanisms reduces uncertainty for businesses and prevents escalation of trade conflicts.

7. Strengthen the Voice of the Global South: Developing countries must assert their collective interests on global platforms. Through coordinated diplomacy, they can influence global trade rules, climate negotiations, financial reforms, and technology governance. A stronger Global South voice under the emerging leadership of India needs to be raised for global justice
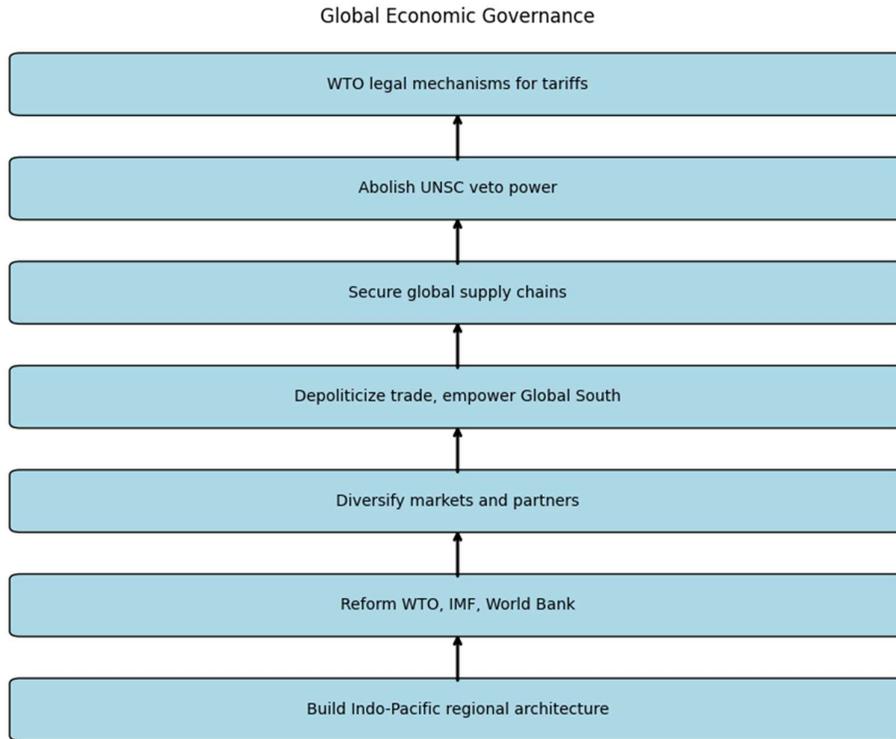
8. Reform Multilateral Institutions: Institutions such as the WTO, IMF, and World Bank need reforms that reflect present-day realities, including equitable representation, transparency, and more flexible frameworks to address the problem of domination. The concern of reforms is to strengthen trust building process, enhance effectiveness, and support global stability. Countries must uphold consistent policies, honour commitments, and project reliability in global affairs. Credibility in diplomacy and adherence to international norms enhance trust, attract partnerships, and strengthen a country's global standing.

9. Build Regional and Indo-Pacific Architecture: Strengthening regional cooperation—especially in the Indo-Pacific—can enhance security, connectivity, trade, and maritime governance. Building regional architecture involves regional trade agreements, digital partnerships, supply-chain coalitions, and security frameworks that promote peace and stability.
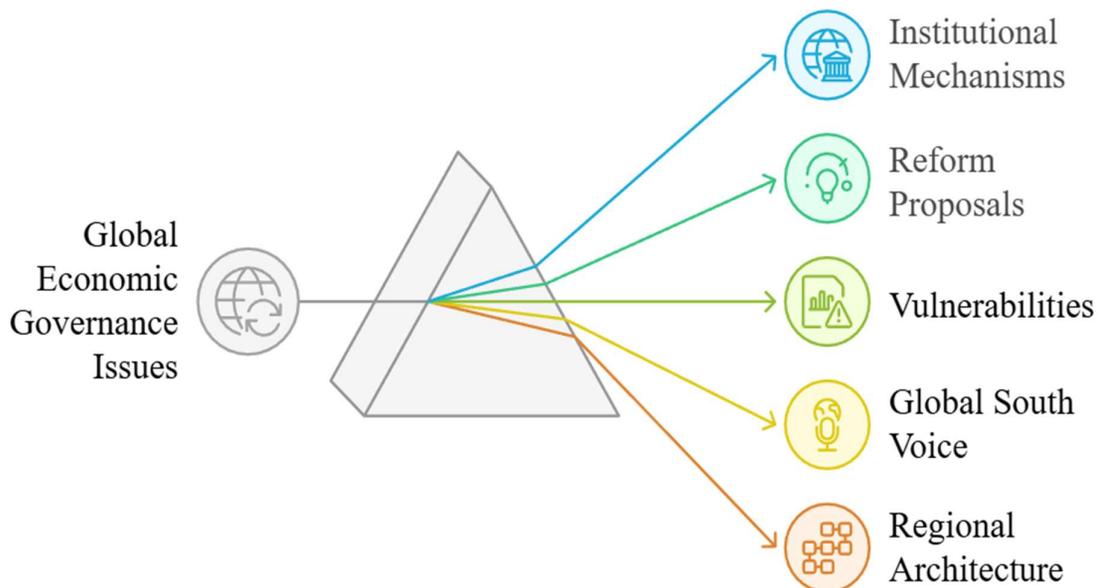
Building Trust :The complexities of bilateral and multilateral issues within regional organisations need to be addressed on a priority basis by building mutual trust. Building bilateral and multilateral trust needs to be extensively and intensively debated from divergent perspectives to identify actionable ways and means.

The emerging Global Economic Governance issues can be summarised as

- o Institutional Mechanisms → Reform Proposals → Vulnerabilities → Global South Voice → Regional Architecture
- o Captures WTO reforms, UNSC veto abolition, supply chain resilience, and Indo-Pacific cooperation.

Global Economic Governance

WTO legal mechanisms for tariffs

Abolish UNSC veto power

Secure global supply chains

Depoliticize trade, empower Global South

Diversify markets and partners

Reform WTO, IMF, World Bank

Build Indo-Pacific regional architecture

Unveiling the Dimensions of Global Economic Governance

Global Economic Governance Issues

Institutional Mechanisms

Reform Proposals

Vulnerabilities

Global South Voice

Regional Architecture

The Key Issues Emerged from Theme-3: Implications of Technology on World Policy

The UN and its associated bodies in the last eighty years have many achievements to their credit with regard to maintaining global peace and security as a whole, in the management of health crises, conflicts, and so on. The UN has shown enormous responsiveness to the changing technological landscape, especially the emerging technologies, by releasing "2025 Tech and Innovation Report: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development" through the UNCTD. Seventeen emerging technologies have been identified, namely, AI, IoT, Big Data, Robotics, Green Hydrogen, Nanotechnology, Gene Editing, among others, that have begun to impact all countries to varying degrees.

Since the acceleration of the adoption, adaptation, and utilization of the frontier technologies is decided by the big Tech Companies and the rich countries where these Companies operate, there is a genuine concern whether or not the benefits of the technologies are passed on to the people of the member-states on an equitable and inclusive basis to achieve the SDGs.

The other areas of concern are:
- the rapid spread of misinformation;
- the infringement on citizens' privacy and the states are to become surveillance states using big data being collected for public services;
- the sheer dominance of the big tech companies leading to geopolitical rivalry;
- the possibility of the 'tech-rich' and 'tech-poor' countries leading to more 'digital divide';
  - in the arena of cyberspace,
  - the threat of state-sponsored cyber espionage,
  - cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure (i.e. power grids, airports, nuclear plants, fibre-optic cables, etc),
  - cyber warfare, and widespread online financial fraud that affects millions;
  - the violation of human rights, the suppression of dissenting voices,
  - the manipulation of electoral politics by states.

1. Persuade the member-states using such mechanisms as deemed necessary for the achievement of the "Sustainable Development Goals".

2. Motivate the member-states to reduce the gaps in digital infrastructure both within and among them, so as to focus on productivity and job creation.

3. Recognizing the need for "Global AI Governance", shall direct the fast-emerging AI technologies towards inclusive and equitable development. Given this responsiveness of the UN, it is therefore imperative for the member-states to foster a global level alignment or cooperation to achieve equitable income distributions among people of all sections of society. International Law on Digital Data Protection needs to be prepared and implemented in member countries.

4. Influence the member-states to frame implementable science, technology, innovation, and industrial policies to catch up with the developed countries in establishing, adapting, and in the utilization of three key leverage aspects like, "Digital Infrastructure, Big Data Centers, and Skilled Manpower". The UN will ensure that policies framed by the member-states will
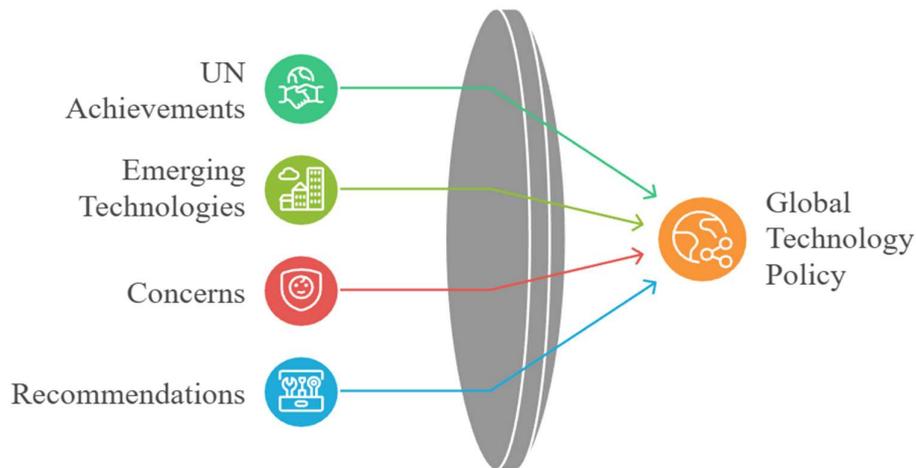
mitigate potential labor unrest, create more jobs, strengthen economic activity, and move towards achieving SDGs.

5. Monitoring mechanism to observe human rights are not violated by the member-states while adopting and adapting the emerging technologies, including AI. The member-states will take all necessary steps to mitigate the cyber-attacks in any form.

6. Assess the impact of the emerging technologies on the diplomatic, political, and bilateral relations among the member-states in the context of the potential risks associated with cybersecurity and cyber-threats. This should be followed by efforts to avoid any potential regional or global-level conflicts.

Summary of the issues discussed
1. UN Achievements → Emerging Technologies → Concerns → Recommendations
2. Maps UN's responsiveness to AI, IoT, Big Data, etc., alongside risks like misinformation, privacy, and cyber threats, with recommendations for global AI governance, digital infrastructure, and rights protection.
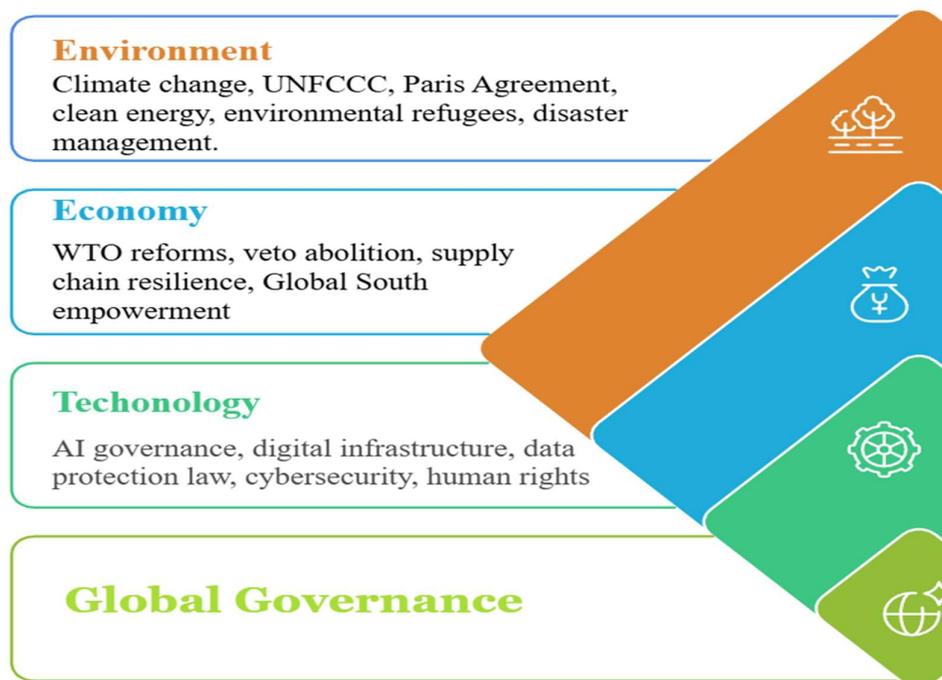

Navigating the Digital Policy Landscape

The Combined Mind Map for Environment, Economy, and Implications of Technology on World Policies into One Governance Framework:

1. **Environment**: Climate change, UNFCCC, Paris Agreement, clean energy, environmental refugees, disaster management.
2. **Economy**: WTO reforms, veto abolition, supply chain resilience, Global South empowerment, multilateral reforms and strengthening emerging global leadership of Global South Countries.
3. **Implications of Technology on World Policies**: AI governance, digital infrastructure, data protection law, cybersecurity, human rights, tech diplomacy.
4. **Interconnections**:
   4.1 Climate change ↔ Economy (supply chains, trade vulnerabilities).
   4.2 Digital divide ↔ Economic inequality.
   4.3 Technology ↔ Climate solutions (AI for monitoring emissions, green hydrogen).
   4.4 UN reforms ↔ All three domains

Environment
Climate change, UNFCCC, Paris Agreement, clean energy, environmental refugees, disaster management.

Economy
WTO reforms, veto abolition, supply chain resilience, Global South empowerment

Techonology
AI governance, digital infrastructure, data protection law, cybersecurity, human rights

Global Governance

United Nations: Integrated Global Governance Framework
1. Issues for the Environment
   1. Financial & technical support for vulnerable nations.
   2. Recognize *environmental refugees*.
   3. Enforce sanctions for non-compliance.
   4. Build clean energy alliances (Solar).
   5. UN-led disaster management.
   6. Global climate taxation.
   7. Grassroots engagement & NGO collaboration.

2. Issues for Economy
     i.   Diversify supply chains & markets.
     ii.   Depoliticize trade.
     iii. Strengthen monitoring & dispute resolution.
     iv. Build Indo-Pacific regional architecture.

3. Issues for Technology on World Policies
     i.   Global AI Governance.
     ii.   Bridge digital infrastructure gaps.
     iii. International data protection law.
     iv. Science & tech policies for jobs & stability.
     v.   Human rights monitoring.
     vi. Cyber threat mitigation & tech diplomacy.

Interconnections
   A. Climate ↔ Economy: Supply chains disrupted by disasters.
   B. Digital ↔ Economy: Digital divide mirrors inequality.
   C. Digital ↔ Climate: AI & Big Data for emissions monitoring.
   D. UN Reform ↔ All Domains: Accountability is the common thread.

Pulse of Academics – Need of the Nation – What the Global South is Looking for
1. **Institutional Reform**: Abolish veto, enforce sanctions, reform WTO/IMF/World Bank.
2. **Climate Action**: Support vulnerable nations, clean energy alliances, disaster management, and environmental refugees.
3. **Economic Governance**: Diversify supply chains, strategy to empower the Global South, and strengthen dispute resolution.
4. **Digital Governance**: AI governance, data protection law, infrastructure development, cyber threat mitigation.
5. **Cross-Sector Collaboration**: WHO, FAO, IMF, World Bank, Community-Based Organisations.
6. **Global Accountability Frameworks**: Climate taxation, compliance monitoring, and inclusivity.

Global South Aspirations

Institutional Reform
Abolish veto, enforce sanctions, reform WTO/IMF/World Bank.

Climate Action
Support vulnerable nations, clean energy alliances, disaster management, and environmental refugees.

Economic Governance
Diversify supply chains, empower the Global South, and strengthen dispute resolution.

Cross-Sector Collaboration
WHO, FAO, IMF, World Bank, Community-Based Organisations.

Global Accountability Frameworks
Climate taxation, compliance monitoring, and inclusivity.

Digital Governance
AI governance, data protection law, infrastructure development, cyber threat mitigation.

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