

Global Cooperation Barometer 2026, Key Highlights, Recommendations

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The Global Cooperation Barometer 2026 provides a comprehensive assessment of how countries are cooperating with each other in today's changing global environment.

About Global Cooperation Barometer 2026

- The Global Cooperation Barometer 2026 is a flagship analytical report **released by the World Economic Forum in collaboration with McKinsey & Company.**
- It provides a **systematic assessment of the state and evolution of global cooperation** in a changing geopolitical and economic environment.
- The Barometer **evaluates cooperation across five key pillars: trade and capital, innovation and technology, climate and natural capital, health and wellness, and peace and security.**
- It **uses 41 indicators**, which are divided into:
 - Action metrics that capture actual cooperation (e.g., trade flows, capital movement, technology exchange)
 - Outcome metrics that reflect results influenced by cooperation (e.g., life expectancy, emissions levels)

- The analysis covers the **period 2012 to 2024**, allowing long-term trend assessment.

Key Highlights of Global Cooperation Barometer 2026

The Global Cooperation Barometer 2026 highlights critical trends and shifts in international collaboration, providing insights into areas of progress, emerging challenges, and opportunities for strengthening global cooperation in the current geopolitical and economic landscape.

- The overall level of **global cooperation has remained broadly stable**, even in the face of increasing geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation, and declining trust among nations.
- However, this stability hides a deeper structural shift, as the **nature of cooperation is changing significantly rather than declining outright.**
- **Traditional forms of cooperation based on large multilateral institutions are weakening**, with declining effectiveness in areas such as peacekeeping, global trade governance, and development assistance.
- At the same time, there is a clear **rise of minilateral and plurilateral cooperation**, where smaller groups of countries collaborate based on shared interests, flexibility, and strategic alignment.
- The global system is increasingly described as a **“patchwork model of cooperation”**, where different coalitions operate in different domains instead of a unified global framework.
- **Cooperation** is strongest in areas where countries see clear **economic or strategic benefits**, especially in **technology and trade.**
- There is an **increasing role of non-state actors**, including private companies and regional organizations, in driving cooperation.
- Globalization is evolving into a more controlled and strategic form, often described as **“selective globalization.”**

Pillar-wise Detailed Highlights

The Global Cooperation Barometer 2026 organizes its findings across key pillars, providing a structured analysis of how cooperation is evolving.

Trade and Capital

- Cooperation in this pillar has remained relatively stable, but significant internal shifts are visible.
- Global trade is not declining but is being reconfigured along geopolitical lines, with countries increasingly trading with trusted or aligned partners (friend-shoring).
- Services trade and capital flows are rising, while traditional goods trade faces pressure from protectionist policies.
- Official development assistance (global aid) has declined sharply, reflecting weakening multilateral commitments.

Innovation and Technology

- This pillar shows increasing cooperation, driven by the rapid expansion of digital technologies, **artificial intelligence**, and cross-border data flows.
- Investments in AI infrastructure, data centres, and digital services have strengthened collaboration among countries.
- However, cooperation is becoming selective due to technology restrictions, export controls, and concerns over technological sovereignty.
- There is a growing divide between cooperation among allies and competition among rival powers.

Climate and Natural Capital

- Cooperation has increased in areas such as climate finance, renewable energy deployment, and trade in green technologies.
- Clean energy expansion, including solar and wind, has accelerated due to global supply chains and falling costs.
- Despite these efforts, climate outcomes remain inadequate, with rising emissions and slow progress in protecting ecosystems.
- This highlights a mismatch between cooperative actions and actual environmental results.

Health and Wellness

- Health indicators such as life expectancy and disease burden have improved, largely reflecting post-pandemic recovery trends.
- However, there is a significant decline in development assistance for health, especially from major donor countries.
- Multilateral health funding is shrinking, while bilateral arrangements are increasing.
- This shift places greater financial pressure on developing countries, raising concerns about future health outcomes.

Peace and Security

- This is the weakest and most deteriorating pillar in the report.
- Global conflicts have increased, along with displacement and humanitarian crises.
- Multilateral peacekeeping efforts have declined, with fewer missions and reduced funding.
- Geopolitical tensions have limited the effectiveness of institutions like the **United Nations Security Council**.
- Defence spending is rising globally, indicating a shift from cooperation to strategic competition.

Recommendations

In response to the evolving nature of global cooperation, the Global Cooperation Barometer 2026 proposes following recommendations to enhance collaborative efforts among nations.

- Emphasize constructive and confidence-building dialogue to identify shared interests and advance cooperation.
- Avoid using dialogue as a tool for one-way positioning, and instead focus on mutual understanding and collaboration.

- Adopt a flexible and context-specific approach to cooperation, rather than relying on uniform global models.
- Proactively match the appropriate cooperation format to specific issues, depending on their nature and requirements.
- Promote multi-level cooperation frameworks, including global, regional, and minilateral arrangements.
- Encourage the development of agile, interest-based coalitions to respond to emerging challenges.
- Build organizational capabilities in both public and private sectors to strengthen cooperation and resilience.
- Maintain a continuous and updated understanding of the cooperation landscape, including platforms, partners, and financing mechanisms.
- Establish cross-functional teams and institutional mechanisms to identify and act on new cooperation opportunities.
- Develop clear decision-making processes, escalation frameworks, and pre-authorized mechanisms to enable rapid action.
- Strengthen information-sharing protocols and institutional linkages across governments and stakeholders.
- Enhance public-private collaboration as a key driver of global cooperation.
- Promote private-private cooperation to accelerate progress where public policy processes are slow.
- Utilize multi-stakeholder coalitions to combine public sector vision with private sector agility and financing capabilities.
- Adopt a proactive, adaptive, and resilient approach to cooperation in a rapidly changing global environment.

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