COVID-19 has brutally underlined the need for greater international cooperation to face 21st Century challenges. Inequality and exclusion within and between countries have thwarted efforts to successfully contain the pandemic. The Leaders Network Reinforcing Multilateralism Together is an informal group of nations seeking to support strengthened multilateralism and international cooperation. It is supported by the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies Grand Challenge, hosted at NYU’s Center for International Cooperation. Together they will host this High-Level event focused on practical policies and actions.

This event will launch a flagship report led by the Pathfinder’s Grand Challenge on Inequality and Exclusion, a cross-regional partnership involving Governments of Canada, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay, the UN, the World Bank, the OECD, Oxfam, and CIVICUS, along with numerous other partners and international experts. The report presents practical and politically viable policy recommendations for dealing with the growing problems of inequality and exclusion within and between countries, and practical steps that governments have instituted towards inclusive recovery from COVID-19.

The countries of the Leaders Network Reinforcing Multilateralism Together adopted the Joint Statement Reinforcing Multilateralism together building on the United Nations 75th Anniversary Declaration last November 10th, 2020. The informal group came together to support the UN75 Declaration and the United Nations Secretary General’s efforts in achieving the 2030 agenda, particularly reducing inequality and leaving no one behind, as well as addressing the current challenges of international cooperation by strengthening multilateral mechanisms and actions.

In response to the UN75 Declaration, the Secretary-General will present a report – Our Common Agenda – in September 2021 that will outline proposals for how multilateral cooperation should evolve to better tackle the threats, challenges, and opportunities of the 21st century.
The COVID-19 pandemic has set back global progress on development by years, thrown 120 million more people into extreme poverty, and exposed deep inequalities and exclusion. Many more are now being left behind due to disease, loss and grief, unequal access to vaccines, record levels of newly poor, unemployed, children out of school for prolonged periods. Many had to risk their health to keep working in essential occupations, often because they had no safety net. Those marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, migrant status, and other factors have suffered more.

By contrast, some people were able to protect themselves and even prosper. 2020 saw an astonishing rise in incomes for those right at the top: the total wealth of billionaires worldwide rose from $5 trillion to $13 trillion in 12 months. The top 20 percent of the population in most countries will have preserved or increased their income and savings. This contrasts sharply with the bottom 20 percent of people who struggled to meet daily needs and medical treatment. By the 2021 UN General Assembly, we will likely see a world of COVID haves and have-nots, with divisions between and within countries.

Such sharply rising inequality and exclusion affect everyone, not only those left behind. Inequality and exclusion are associated with a lack of trust in institutions and political instability, and unequal societies cannot provide public goods, such as containing pandemics and violence. Without drastic intervention, we will therefore end the SDG decade with more, not less inequality, fueling grievances and resulting in instability, injustice, and violence.

The recovery from the devastating consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic gives us an opportunity for transformation to make our societies more inclusive and sustainable. There is an urgent demand for policy solutions and action to systematically address inequality and exclusion and demonstrate that change is possible. The UN75 Declaration adopted in 2020 provides a roadmap for the future we want and the UN we need to help make this happen. It offers a clear vision for multilateralism in the 21st century and outlines 12 concrete commitments to strengthen multilateral cooperation so that we can jointly build back better and greener.

The Pathfinders Flagship report - and the consultative way it was designed - will be a tangible deliverable of the UN75 Declaration. Countries from the Leaders Network Reinforcing Multilateralism Together and the Pathfinders Grand Challenge are looking forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with other actors, with the ambition of building multilateral cooperation for concrete action to decrease inequalities within and between countries.

Objectives
This high-level event will:

- Highlight humanity’s greatest challenge requires tackling inequality and exclusion and forging a new social contract to meet shared goals, as underlined in the UN75 declaration and the Secretary General’s “Common Agenda.” Such action is necessary to tackle threats to people, the planet, and our shared prosperity.

- Present practical and politically viable solutions to meet the Sustainable Development Goals commitments to fight inequality outlined in the Flagship Report.

- Spotlight inspiring national actions to combat inequality and exclusion, demonstrating that success is possible and the strong collaboration between Government and civil society.

Format
Open virtual event, with primarily live panels and some pre-recorded contributions:

- It is expected 4-7 Heads of State/Government will open the event.

- The event will also include live moderation, with the moderator presenting each segment and speaking directly to the virtual audience.

- Panels will feature thought leaders, public advocates, civil society, and youth champions.

- Pre-recorded segments will need to be produced at least one week before event launch to allow time for post-production.

- The event will be hosted through a digital platform, allowing for various interactive elements and including on-demand content.

Register at EqualityAndInclusionNow.Summit.tc