

Group of 78 Update

G78 AGM Honours Roy Culpeper's Leadership

Tribute to Roy Culpeper

On May 28, 2025, in Ottawa, the Group of 78's 2025 annual general meeting paid tribute to the superb leadership of **Roy Culpeper** as he stepped down from his role as Chair of the organization, a position he held for 11 years. A development economist, Dr. Culpeper was praised for his intellectual acuity, inclusive style, vast network of contacts, quiet sense of humour, and, above all, his unstoppable commitment to building a better world that prioritizes peace, climate and justice.

Roy has agreed to assume the post of Past Chair and will remain on the G78 Board and Executive Committee, where his dedication

and expertise will continue to benefit the organization.

Incoming Chair: Ted Jackson

Over 30 G78 members participating in person in Ottawa and online elected **Ted Jackson**, a public policy professor and development consultant, as the incoming Chair. "I'm honoured to build on Roy's fine leadership and aspire to meet the standards he has set," said Dr. Jackson. "Today Canada's sovereignty is under threat and the international order is in chaos. This is a moment when our organization must step forward and work even harder in this new context for progressive Canadian foreign policy and renewed multilateralism."

New Board Members Welcomed

The meeting also elected new Board members **Genevieve Harrison**, a Carleton University research administrator who will become G78's new Treasurer, and **Tierra Habedus-Sorensen**, an international affairs student at Carleton. Both will join the Executive Committee.

Contributions Recognized

Outgoing Treasurer **Gord Breedyk**, a leader in the peace and conflict field, stepped down from the Executive but will remain on the Board. His diligent stewardship of the G78's



Photo by Ruby Dagher

finances, including improvements in our financial reporting, were important contributions and much appreciated.

The hard work and dedication of the Group's Executive Secretary, **Maude Stephany**, was recognized, as well.

An Active Year of Stimulating Webinars

In his report to members for 2024-2025, Roy Culpeper reviewed G78's very active past year, which featured a rich program of webinars on a wide range of issues, including the Geneva Conventions and international law, inequality and global tax reform, reforming the Sustainable Development Goals, paths to a just peace for Israel and Palestine, nuclear threats in the Ukraine-Russia war, and most recently, the geopolitics underlying the Ukraine-Russia war with Board member **Manfred Bienefeld**.

Advocacy for Peace and Disarmament

In its advocacy role, the G78 called on the Canadian government to continue funding the life-saving work in Gaza of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) for Palestine. In addition, with other organizations, the Group urged Canada's Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister to push for a no first-use agreement among nuclear powers.

Dr. Ruby Dagher, Chair of the G78 Peace and Security Working Group, told the AGM that the report and recommendations of the 2023 G78 conference on peace were sent to federal Ministers, Premiers and Mayors across Canada. She also highlighted the innovative

partnership between the G78 and G20 Inter-Faith Forum (IFF 20), of which longstanding G78 Board member Jim Christie is also a member. The partnership plans several joint webinars in the year ahead.

Roy Culpeper recognized the participation in the AGM of three leaders of a critical sister organization of which G78 is a member: the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. CNANW Chair **Earl Turcotte** and former Co-Chairs **Robin Collins** and **Dr. Sylvie Lemieux**, a valued G78 Board member, signaled an advocacy push by their organization, the Canadian Pugwash Group and others planned for late October 2025 in Ottawa.

Climate Action by Citizens and Governments

Climate action is a fundamental priority for the Group of 78. Vice-Chair **Susan Tanner**, a respected Canadian leader in both the environmental and women's movements, reported on the successful 2024 G78 conference held in Ottawa in late September 2024. The gathering explored the theme of citizens confronting climate crisis—and of citizens retaking the climate action agenda from their governments, whose climate policy implementation has too often been too slow, fragmented and insufficient in a world that is burning.

Keynote speakers at the climate conference included Tzeporah Berman, founder of the non-government Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, which names fossil fuels as the prime driver of climate change and global

warming. FFNPTI is supported worldwide by 16 nation states—many of them small islands—plus 135 cities and local governments, 4,000 organizations, and one million individuals.

Another keynoter was Catherine Abreu, an award-winning climate-justice champion, who emphasized the importance of Canada’s ongoing engagement in multilateral climate diplomacy, including through the Conference of the Parties (COP) series.

The climate conference also heard from two key players in a youth-driven climate litigation project: youth litigant Alex Neufeldt and attorney Reid Gomme. Working with lawyers from Ecojustice and Stockwells, seven young people have sued the Ontario government for its backtracking on climate policies as a violation of their Charter rights. The Supreme Court of Canada recently ruled that the case must be heard by the Ontario Superior Court.

Following the election of a new federal government and the installation of a new Cabinet, G78 will convey the recommendations arising from the climate conference, in both French and English, to the Prime Minister, Environment Minister, Natural Resources Minister, and other relevant Ministers, calling on the Government of Canada to put climate and sustainability at the *centre* of their plans, not on the sidelines.

Revitalizing the Group of 78

At its 2024 AGM, G78 members mandated a special initiative to explore ways and means of renewing the Group of 78 as an organization.

The Revitalization Committee (RC) was formed and met six times in late 2024 and early 2025. In addition to the Executive Committee, members of the RC included **Tim Brodhead, Joan Broughton, Jim Christie** and **Shane Roberts** and was chaired by Ted Jackson.

The Committee’s final report was tabled and accepted by G78 members at the 2025 AGM. The report concluded that “this is a moment in history when the Group of 78 must continue to revitalize itself to play a more effective role in building a stronger Canada and the new international order that we want: one that prioritizes peace, climate, and economic and social justice through renewed multilateralism and progressive Canadian foreign policy.”

To this end, the Executive Committee will coordinate follow-up action to identify and advance emerging critical policy issues through creative partnerships, expand and diversify G78’s membership, apply new fundraising approaches while carefully stewarding the organization’s finances, and step up communications and outreach.

Looking Ahead: Working for Progressive Canadian Foreign Policy

In 2025-2026, the Group of 78, led by former Past-Chair and now Board Secretary **Richard Harmston**, will also develop a broader advocacy effort to push for a progressive foreign policy stance by Canada on climate and peace and disarmament, and also on other critical issues, including redefining and strengthening development cooperation,

doubling down on human rights protections, reining in defence spending, affirming Indigenous rights in Arctic sovereignty efforts, and deepening bilateral and multilateral relationships in Asia, the Americas and Europe.

Renewed Multilateralism: Realizing the Pact for the Future

G78 will also use its programming and advocacy to support efforts inside and outside the United Nations system to renew multilateralism in this unprecedented moment. Across all the domains in which the Group works—climate action, peace and disarmament, and economic and social justice—the Group will cooperate with allies in civil society, universities, and the UN itself to enable the reform and acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of the UN Pact for the Future, its post-2030 strategy.

Adopted by world leaders on September 22, 2024, the Pact seeks to turbocharge the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate, listen to young people at all levels, build stronger partnerships with civil society, the private sector and local authorities, redouble efforts to build peaceful, just societies, protect all civilians in armed conflict, and accelerate commitments on women, peace and security.

An annex to the Pact, the Global Digital Compact, aims “to ensure that digital technologies contribute to sustainable development and human rights, while addressing risks like digital divides, cybersecurity, and misuse of technology.”

Conference 2025: Redefining Development in a Disordered World

In addition, on October 10, 2025, at the University of Ottawa, and with the support of the International Development Research Centre, G78 will host its annual conference with the title of Redefining Development in the New World Disorder: Harnessing AI and Innovative Finance to Reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr. Dani Rodrik, Harvard University economist and a leading scholar on economic development and globalization, will provide the opening keynote address to the conference. A second keynote will be given by Dr. José Antonio Ocampo, well-known Colombian academic, politician and former UN under-secretary general.

The conference will feature panels on the benefits and risks of using artificial intelligence in development, new financing strategies for a “post-aid” world, and the reform and acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals. The recommendations arising from conference deliberations will inform G78’s work on economic and social justice in the coming years.

Led by Roy Culpeper and working in cooperation with IDRC and the University of Ottawa’s School of International Development and Global Studies, G78’s Conference Organizing Committee will be working hard to identify a full set of panelists and plan the logistics of this cutting-edge event.

Looking Ahead to a Demanding, Exciting Year

All Canadians and our partners abroad face a polycrisis of unprecedented complexity and uncertainty. This is a time when we must do what the Group of 78 has done very effectively for 45 years: assess challenging, emerging issues in foreign policy, and, through learning and action, propose policy solutions to them through learning and action.

As we proceed forward under these conditions, we must teach ourselves new ways of building a world that is clean, peaceful and prosperous for all—the new world order that we want—while contributing to a stronger and more inclusive Canada.

It will be a demanding year—and an exciting one. It will take us out of our comfort zones. We will re-examine our assumptions and open our minds to innovative ideas and tools. We will expand and diversify our membership. We will mobilize new resources for our mission. We will celebrate our successes. And we will move forward with energy and resolve.

June 3, 2025