

## ONE PAGER

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# SOCIETAL PREPAREDNESS FOR SYSTEMIC FAILURE

*"The complexity of modern society is such that if you take out one or two pieces of the jigsaw, the whole thing collapses"*

*- Lord Arbutnot, Former chair, UK House of Commons Defence Committee*

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As our society becomes increasingly interdependent, high-speed and complex, our vulnerability to the risk of large-scale systemic failure is growing. The preconditions for such failure are set to deepen as the interacting impacts of climate change, resource constraints, endemic stresses in economic and financial systems, environmental degradation, and social polarization intensify.

Cascading disruptions across critical infrastructures, financial systems, supply-chains, and the operation of governments would pose a profound challenge to the provision of basic needs such as food, water, public health, and physical security. Such crisis could range from relatively localized and reversible to global and irreversible.

This transforming risk environment represents an unprecedented challenge because it lies outside the experience of advanced economies. It is thus essential to make sure that we are, at all levels, better prepared to anticipate and mitigate the societal impacts of systemic failures.

Geneva Global Initiative acts as a neutral forum working to increase understanding of the need for preparedness planning; support capacity building and the scaling of tools and procedures; identify and bridge major gaps in large-scale contingency planning; and help to set the framework for whole-society responses in partnership with government agencies, multilateral institutions, and civil society. We do this through a diverse range of multi-stakeholder collaborations.

What we want to achieve is:

- Increased understanding of the impact of large-scale systemic risks;
- A framework for contingency and preparedness planning;
- Greater cooperation between governments on how best to respond to deepening crises and between citizens and governments around whole-of-society preparedness.

*Geneva Global Initiative was created by the Foresight Analyses Network, an academic collaborative, which emerged in 2016 from Sanford University's Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. It is a non-profit organization based in Geneva Switzerland, with a 501c(3) representation in the United States.*

