

Article

Exploring the Role of Intercultural Communication and Cultural Intelligence in Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement and ESG Practices in International Organisations: Insights from the UN

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Abstract

This research investigates the critical role of intercultural communication and cultural intelligence in global international organisations and their link to effective stakeholder engagement and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices. There is still a scarcity of empirical research focusing on global governance institutions like the United Nations (UN), which was chosen as a case study. Such organisations are one-of-a-kind communicative spaces in which people from various cultural, linguistic, and professional backgrounds work together to achieve common international goals. However, despite the UN's prominent role in enabling global collaboration, the mechanisms by which intercultural communication occurs and adapts in such circumstances are little understood. Focusing on the social and governance dimensions of ESG, this research brings new insights into the work of the United Nations (UN)'s multicultural teams, as well as into the cross-cultural projects at the heart of this organisation and how they align with the goal of preserving local cultures in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study's findings confirm the critical role of intercultural communication in engaging internal and external stakeholders and reinforcing sustainable ESG practices in international institutions such as the UN. Moreover, the managerial implications of the research could be of relevance to other global organisations which operate across diverse cultural contexts, where understanding and managing these differences become essential for fostering trust, collaboration, and responsibility. The paper proposes a conceptual framework verified through corroborated semistructured interviews to illustrate how intercultural communication enhances inclusivity, tailors ESG strategies to cultural contexts, and improves organisational decision-making and accountability.

Keywords: intercultural communication (IC); cultural intelligence; international organisations (IO); the United Nations (UN); stakeholder engagement



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1. Introduction

The exacerbation of international and global exchanges in political, social, and cultural contexts, especially relations in the context of the networked society [1,2], has brought to the fore a new reality of intercultural interaction. By creating a new communicative framing

of contacts between different nationalities, traditions, rituals, values, norms and actions, multiple sub-systems of the human ecosystem have become cosmopolitan socio-cultural arenas. Like the phenomenology of any social system sub-system, socio-cultural and communicational dynamics within international organisations can be interpreted through the lens of theoretical models validated in the literature [3]. Crane, Matten and Moon [4] argue that globalisation has emerged as a catalyst for new opportunities for international interaction. They exert an effect on the globalisation process and also have an indirect impact on the transformation of people in the global era.

Intercultural communication plays a crucial role in international organisations, which bring together people from several countries, usually with different cultural backgrounds [5–9]. IC is important for effective interaction and collaboration between members of an organisation. Without intercultural communication skills, misunderstandings and conflicts can arise due to differences in language, customs, values and norms. Developing intercultural communication skills not only involves understanding those differences but also requires a deep appreciation and respect for diversity [10]. This study focuses on the United Nations as a representative example of a global international entity whose activity is dedicated to establishing transnational and universal benchmarks in essential areas for human development, while safeguarding the natural world.

Comprising 193 Member States, the United Nations Organisation is the place where world nations join forces, seeking partnerships and solutions to humanity's common problems. The UN system is made up of intergovernmental and expert bodies, agencies, funds and programmes, commissions, research and training institutions, and other bodies. Some 130,000 staff work for the UN in headquarters and field offices in many countries around the globe. The organisation's core values are peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet. Through its vast network, the UN connects public organisations, businesses, and non-governmental organisations with the aim of achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs are expected to be etched as the DNA of all business and management strategies (un.org). They cover priorities ranging from basic human needs (e.g., zero hunger) to fundamental human rights (like decent work and economic growth), and to environmental protection. The implementation of such strategic goals is supported by guidance provided in additional documents like the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards (SES Toolkit) [11] (undp.org (accessed on 8 August 2025)). In Ashta et al.'s [12] view, SDG 17, calling for international partnerships for development, is the underlying requirement for all the other goals. To this end, intercultural communication is paramount, since building close relationships for growth relies on common understanding, trust, and sustained cooperation to achieve joint goals.

International organisations operate in a global context, interacting daily with people from diverse cultural backgrounds [3,13]. As such, it is essential that team members are equipped with the ability to navigate these cultural differences with sensitivity and empathy. Communication across cultures also involves awareness of non-verbal communication cues, such as body language and expressions, which can differ from one culture to another [14,15]. Understanding and interpreting these non-verbal cues in a culturally appropriate manner can be just as important as verbal communication to promote understanding and trust between team members [16].

Moreover, intercultural communication is not only about avoiding conflict; it also enables international organisations to capitalise on the strengths and perspectives that come from diversity, for example, by enhancing a deeper understanding of specific socio-cultural contexts when managing regional projects [3,17]. By accepting and valuing different cultural perspectives, organisations can enhance creativity, innovation and problem-solving

capabilities. This, in turn, can lead to a more inclusive and effective work context where all team members feel valued and respected [10]. From a global perspective, the importance of intercultural communication in international organisations cannot be overestimated. It is a fundamental skill that fosters effective collaboration, mitigates misunderstandings and harnesses the full potential of diversity within the organisation [18].

The significance of this research lies in its attempt to address a notable gap in the existing literature on intercultural communication within international organisations and specifically within the UN. While prior studies have widely examined intercultural dynamics in multicultural workplaces and transnational corporations, there remains a paucity of empirical research focusing specifically on global governance institutions such as the United Nations (UN). Such organisations represent unique communicative environments where diverse cultural, linguistic, and professional backgrounds intersect in the pursuit of shared international objectives. However, despite the UN's central role in facilitating global collaboration, the mechanisms through which intercultural communication operates and adapts in such contexts remain underexplored. This gap underscores the need to examine how communication adaptation, cultural intelligence, and organisational outcomes interrelate within such complex intercultural settings. By outlining three core objectives—exploring communicative adaptation, assessing the influence of cultural intelligence, and identifying the organisational implications of intercultural communication—the study not only aims to fill this empirical void but also contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical improvement of communication within international organisations. The research objectives are carefully aligned with the study's questions, ensuring a focused inquiry into the perceptions and experiences of UN members. These objectives are significant because they move beyond general discussions of cultural diversity to offer nuanced insights into how individuals and organisations negotiate cultural differences in professional interactions.

The paper has been structured into three main sections, alongside the introduction and conclusions. The first section captures issues related to the specificity of intercultural communication in international organisations, integrating here references to cultural intelligence and communicative adaptation. The next section comprises the research methodology, while the third one is based on the findings of the survey through a semi-structured interview with eight UN members. The opinions collected from the subjects create a pertinent picture of intercultural communication in the international context, simultaneously covering the challenges and areas of potential development at the communicational and intercultural level.

In a synthetic approach, this research contributes to the investigation of the characteristics of intercultural communication in a global international organisation—the UN—through the lens of members with experience and expertise in the field, with a focus on the dynamics within the UN. It provides a starting point for future studies interested in the weaknesses and strengths, opportunities and risks of intercultural communication and adaptation, and the purpose and influence of cultural intelligence in the equation of international interactions.

2. Theoretical Background

Drawing from the theoretical framework of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions model and the globalisation lenses, this research outlines a conceptual framework which links intercultural communication and cultural intelligence dimensions to organisational outcomes of a global international entity which aims to advance universally relevant ESG practices. The proposed theoretical context highlights how information and meaning are conveyed between people from different cultures to foster collaboration and enhance personal connections in an international context. While cultural adaptation aims at addressing

uncertainty and bias, cultural diversity can impact communication effectiveness and objective achievement. Thus, in multicultural organisations, appropriate managerial measures must be employed to mitigate the risks associated with cultural prejudice and bias, encourage understanding and adaptation, and attain stakeholder engagement, transparency and commitment, inclusiveness, compliance with ESG standards and accountability.

2.1. Intercultural Communication and Cultural Intelligence

According to Hofstede et al. [19], culture is a form of mental programming, and the cultural values acquired in childhood are the hardest to change. Cultural differences must be accounted for in leadership, decision-making, and communication in cross-cultural environments. According to the authors, the dimensions of national culture are: the perceived power distance (relation to authority and social equality), collectivism vs. individualism (relation between individual and society), masculinity vs. femininity (gender role models, success, recognition. . .), uncertainty avoidance (the cultural tolerance of uncertainty), the long-term vs. short-term orientation (perseverance, modesty, duty. . .), and indulgence vs. restraint (gratification, fun, desires. . .). Various cultural theories offer insights into cultural differences in a globalised world [20]. Low-context cultures, which emphasise individualism (e.g., Western countries), differ from high-context and collectivist ones, which favour group harmony (e.g., many Asian countries), in that they feature unambiguous and outspoken communication, independent of relational and contextual meanings. Managing cultural diversity and conflict resolution in mixed teams, particularly remote and virtual ones, presents new challenges and requires specific competencies.

For the purpose of this study, intercultural communication is understood as referring to the exchange of information between people from different cultures who collaborate within projects managed by international organisations. Pantelic et al. [21] argue that intercultural competencies comprise attributes, attitudes, and skills employed across cultural boundaries, both inside a culturally diverse organisation and also in interactions with extra-organisational stakeholders. In a wider sense, such competencies are utilised in human interactions among members of society from various categories (age-wise, gender-wise, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, etc.). IC involves understanding, respecting and effectively conveying messages across cultural boundaries, taking into account differences in language, customs, values and norms [9]. This process is essential for promoting effective collaboration, reducing misunderstandings and harnessing the benefits that diversity brings to interactions and relationships for example, by encouraging innovation and creativity [3,22]. Parent et al. [23] stressed the significance of intercultural competencies in sustainable development and cultural preservation in the international context, where relationships and interactions between cultures are paramount. Such competencies include cognitive (awareness of norms, values, and customs; understanding verbal and non-verbal communication and local social relationships), emotional (empathy, inquisitiveness, risk acceptance, and introspection), and social (behaviours, listening, and collaboration) dimensions.

IC also includes a strategic dimension [24,25]. It has been emphasised by the theory of communicative adaptation that in a social context the parties involved will try to adapt their language to be more similar to their communication partners, and will employ negotiation methods, according to their motivations. This is done to establish a sense of identification or to gain the approval of others [3,24]. This adjustment involves modifying behaviour during communication to express specific values, attitudes or intentions. People tend to prefer similarity to maintain social identity, but a lack of negotiation-oriented behavioural skills may hinder communication [10]. Language serves as a means of assessing social dynamics [23,26]. Relational adaptation refers to the different ways in which individuals may adjust their behaviour to settle or distance themselves from a potential business

partner. This process is characterised by a complex interplay of multiple options and aims to promote a mutually beneficial and evolving relationship [27].

The idea of ‘cultural intelligence’ advanced by Earley and Ang [28] and other authors [29,30] can serve as a criterion for improving intercultural communication. Cultural intelligence entails communicative adjustment methods [31] serving the best outcomes in international relationships [32]. Individuals’ cultural intelligence endows them with appropriate and effective means to react to various predicaments in their environment [33,34]. Employees of IOs are constantly exposed to diversity in the course of their work—interactions with colleagues, subordinates, managers of different nationalities, cultures, religions, and mentalities are part of the daily routine. Subsequently, the transformative action of individuals (nationally and culturally) generates a certain reaction towards the “others”, a cultural disposition to protect one’s own identity, and a fear of being absorbed into another cultural model [31]. A priori, we are proud of who we are, of our way of thinking and acting in an organisational context, and interference with other behavioural or attitudinal styles can put pressure on the work performed. A cultural collision will likely not only cause dysfunction at a local level but will also cause serious consequences at a systemic level, as indicated by some authors [35].

Cultural intelligence encompasses motivational, behavioural, cognitive and metacognitive dimensions [29], sustaining intercultural learning, suitable actions and reactions, knowledge uptake, and mental processes associated with intercultural exchanges. The metacognitive aspects are essential in reasoning and decision-making in intercultural contexts, and as a link between cognition and behaviours [29,36]. Accessing relevant information facilitates cultural adaptation [35,37,38].

Schein [39] argues that cultural diversity within the organisation cannot be addressed in any other way than through managerial intervention. Intercultural communication strongly calls for an active leader who does not wait for positive results to come naturally but acts in a sustained way so that cultural diversity finds a common reference point. Employees must be helped to integrate as effectively as possible into the new organisational system by setting superordinate goals, with the leader’s role being to regulate the frameworks for interaction and communication. With the activation of institutions in the intercultural area, a new culture gradually takes shape as professional links are formed between new colleagues and joint tasks require coordinated efforts. International initiatives like the Global Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness (GLOBE) Program, which focuses on leadership in cross-cultural contexts [40]. Insofar as processes at the personal and group level are spontaneous, at the organisational level, the assistance of the leader is one of the fundamental levers for creating a unified culture. Such an intervention is highly relevant in a global organisation like the UN, where the cultural diversity and the pressure for conformity with organisational policies are high.

Effective intercultural communication requires the individual to break out of the national or ‘monocultural’ habitat by addressing cultural otherness. From this point on, there is only one viable path that involves the construction of a new cultural architecture at the interactional level [23]. The second element organically complements the first and is concerned with the natural initiation of interactions between individuals by virtue of common projects. The second element organically complements the first and is concerned with the natural initiation of interactions between individuals by virtue of common projects. Once the spontaneous intercultural harmonisation option is empirically challenged, the leader must provide the action plan for managerial intervention through clearly defined programmes: training, team building, informal meetings, joint meetings, etc. At this level, supporting intercultural communication becomes a managerial priority and a major area of intervention, with the leader becoming a catalyst for intercultural adjustments [23,26].

Such an approach faces many ups and downs, with the coordination of human resources still a long way from being achieved and requiring concessions from the entities involved. In this light, the leader needs to make employees understand that the process of intercultural communication may generate win-lose situations at the beginning, but in time, the end result will be a mutual benefit for all members of the organisation and for the company as a whole. Furthermore, the leader must share with the other stakeholders a fair perspective on trade-offs, constantly mediating between different cultural force fields.

Through coherent strategies, the effective leader prescribes the cultural co-existence of organisational subsystems, encouraging continuous and essential harmonisation. At this point, he plays the role of the creator, of the architect who builds his strategy on human nature predisposed towards the search for order, understanding and partnership in the management of shared responsibilities. To this end, the leader treats coexistence as a gradual process, whose time and frequency of contacts can reinforce [26,39].

2.2. International Organisations from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication and Cultural Intelligence

An international organisation is generally considered to be an entity that involves members from several countries coming together to work on common problems or objectives. These organisations can be either governmental or non-governmental [41]. Intergovernmental organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), are made up of member states and operate at the international level, often to facilitate cooperation on political, social or economic issues. Non-governmental organisations are usually independent of governments and can work on a variety of issues, from humanitarian aid to environmental protection. There is no universally accepted definition of an international organisation, and such entities encompass a wide variety of forms and functions [40,42].

The UN is a prime example of an international intergovernmental organisation that embraces diverse cultures and promotes intercultural communication. As an organisation with member states from around the world, it provides a platform for dialogue and cooperation across cultural differences [43]. The structure and programmes of the UN are designed to address issues of global concern, which often require effective intercultural communication to understand different perspectives and promote mutual respect among its members [44]. Intercultural communication within the UN is essential in negotiating resolutions, creating policies and implementing programmes that respect and integrate the cultural sensitivities and practices of its member states. The organisation works on a variety of issues, from peacekeeping and human rights to development and environmental conservation, all of which require cultural awareness and communication competence [45]. UN initiatives often stress the importance of cultural understanding as a basis for effective international relations and collaboration. UN programmes and commissions, such as UNESCO, focus specifically on cultural issues, emphasising that the cultural substrate plays a central role in development and should be integrated into policy at all levels. In this sense, the UN serves as a centre for intercultural dialogue, learning and policymaking aimed at inclusive and sustainable global development [46].

Tocar [47] highlighted several factors which lead to successful intercultural communication in organisations, namely cultural (e.g., values, identity, language) and communication-related (e.g., process, media, style, context), management-related (e.g., leadership style, strategies, cooperative orientation), and group (e.g., ethnicity) and individual-related (e.g., self- vs. other-oriented, self-development, attitude to new and different). Przytuła et al. [48] found that the development of cross-cultural competencies through educational exchanges in international environments enhances trust and tolerance, and augments conflict management and negotiation skills.

In turn, cultural intelligence is equally important in international organisations, and there are several arguments for this. Firstly, it catalyses effective communication between members of the organisation. With members from different cultural backgrounds, understanding nuances in communication styles is vital to accurately convey and interpret messages, reducing the potential for misunderstanding [49]. Additionally, it aids collaboration and teamwork. The ability to communicate and work effectively across cultures improves collaboration. Cultural intelligence helps team members appreciate different perspectives and working styles, thus improving group dynamics and productivity [42].

Second, cultural intelligence supports conflict resolution by enabling individuals to recognise and navigate through cultural differences that can lead to conflict, ensuring that issues can be resolved in a way that is respectful to all parties involved [50,51]. It also informs decision-making, especially in that understanding cultural nuances can influence how decisions are made and implemented within the organisation. Concomitantly, it can affect how strategies and policies are perceived by different cultural groups [42].

Third, cultural intelligence works to the benefit of employees and partners alike. Fostering an environment where all cultural expressions are valued can contribute to the overall well-being and satisfaction of employees because they feel respected and included. In parallel, organisations operating internationally often engage with external stakeholders, including governments, NGOs and community groups. Cultural intelligence thus helps create sustainable partnerships and networks that are sensitive to cultural contexts [16]. Consequently, organisations known for their cultural intelligence are more likely to be respected on the global stage, attract diverse talent, and be more successful in their international endeavours [52]. According to Latif et al. [53], cultural intelligence and adaptation impact integration and knowledge sharing in multicultural environments.

In conclusion, it can be said that cultural intelligence is the foundation for creating an inclusive organisation that can navigate the complexity of global interactions and harness the full potential of a diverse workforce. The next subsection examines how intercultural communication and cultural intelligence can be employed in a global organisation such as the UN to put into practice effectively core principles and mutually agreed ESG practices.

2.3. UN Stakeholder Engagement and ESG Practices

The UNDP Guidance Note Social and Environmental Standards on Stakeholder Engagement sets out the principles of stakeholder engagement with the organisation's work, highlighting: enhancing the quality of programmes and observance of agreed principles, augmenting social and environmental opportunities and benefits, avoiding and/or mitigating adverse impacts to people and the environment, strengthening partnerships for managing social and environmental risks, and ensuring full and effective stakeholder engagement, including through mechanisms to respond to complaints from project-affected people. The key elements of SES are the programming principles (concerning inclusion, empowerment, sustainability, resilience, and accountability), project-level standards (e.g., natural resources management, community health, safety, and security, cultural heritage), and the social and environmental management system (quality assurance and risk management, stakeholder engagement and response mechanisms, access to information, monitoring, reporting, and compliance) [11].

Apart from the SES Toolkit and the UN SDGs, which emphasise human rights, societal well-being, and environmental protection, the UN has also developed other guides and policies which are widely acknowledged at the international level, both at the governmental level and in the global business, such as the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investment (UN PRI). These focus on embedding ESG in decision-making, policies, and practices. The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) is concerned with ten principles of

conducting business by observing human and labour rights, combating corruption, and enhancing environmental responsibility.

Following the theoretical considerations explained above, a conceptual framework is proposed in Table 1.

Table 1. Conceptual framework.

Aspect	Role of Intercultural Communication and Cultural Intelligence	Impact on Stakeholder Engagement and ESG Practices
Building Trust and Understanding	Culturally sensitive dialogue builds mutual trust	Increased stakeholder participation and support
Enhancing Collaboration and Inclusivity	Facilitates the inclusion of diverse cultural voices	More equitable and effective outcomes
Tailoring Messaging and Actions	Adapts communications to cultural norms and values	Greater relevance and stakeholder buy-in, and commitment
Improving Decision-Making and Accountability	Integrates diverse perspectives; fosters transparent communication	Leads to stronger ESG governance and stakeholder accountability

Source: Own creation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and Data Acquisition

The data acquisition method employed in this study was non-probabilistic, a choice necessitated by the unique circumstances of our interviewees. Due to their demanding schedules and global distribution, conducting in-person interviews was not feasible. Instead, we opted for a digital approach, a written interview protocol to current or former UN staff members. All participants participated in the study voluntarily, based on their informed consent; they had the right to withdraw at any time or ask for clarifications; all the data were analysed anonymously. The data were collected between the end of May 2024 and August 2025. The invitation to answer the questions was then extended internally by the first contacts, with the documents translated into English for all the respondents. Despite our efforts to maximise responses, we received only eight filled-in documents. Nevertheless, according to Malterud, Siersma and Guassora [54], data saturation relies on information power in qualitative research, as there is no widely agreed standard as to how many interviews suffice to achieve the research objectives. Furthermore, given their professional background and experience, the interviewees provided quality data, which is validated by the extant literature, as observed during the analysis. The respondents' written answers were assessed during the phase of content analysis for each question, according to the themes listed in Section 3.2.

Table 2 visualises the demographic data regarding the interviewees' age, gender, work experience, and area of expertise.

3.2. Interview Instrument

The interview protocol, which comprises ten questions, was designed to address several key themes in a logical sequence: the importance of intercultural communication in IOs; the benefits of effective IC in IOs; the challenges of IC in IOs; strategies for adjusting IC; the role of cultural awareness; factors contributing to conflict in IC; the managers' role in IC in IOs; effective IC practices; priorities of IC in IOs; and potential areas for improvement. The interview was semistructured, allowing for more freedom in exemplifying and narrating

personal experiences but following a predefined thematic structure. The interviewees' responses to each of these themes are presented and analysed below.

Table 2. Overview of the respondents' demographics and work experience.

Interviewee	SP	RC	RS	CC	CM	ED	TT	EMG
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female
Age	26	30	27	34	37	51	45	25
Experience	<1 year	1 year	<2 years	3 years	3 years	7+ years	21 years	4 years
Work area	Volunteer (Migrants)	Communication	Project Assistant	Human Rights	National Representation	International legal cooperation	International legal cooperation	Project Management

Source: Own creation.

4. Results and Discussion

This section provides an overview and interpretation of the replies to the interview questions. For each question, excerpts are included from the answers received from all participants, excluding some replies if they were not detailed enough or to avoid redundancy.

4.1. The Importance of IC in IOs (UN): Building Trust and Understanding

All the respondents agreed that IC is a crucial aspect of the IOs' functioning since so many people from different cultural backgrounds come together to fulfil the organisation's objectives. Moreover, the IOs' staff cannot accomplish their mission without good communication with various stakeholders inside and outside the organisational boundaries. No matter if the beneficiaries of their services are other organisational departments, local entities from the organisation's headquarters site, or individuals to whom the IOs' work is dedicated, e.g., people displaced by conflicts or natural disasters, migrants, refugees, etc., the UN employees, must be able to exchange professional information, gain other people's trust and express empathy for each individual's challenges.

RS noted that adaptability, cultural awareness, and intelligence are required competencies of UN staff. TT stressed the importance of IC *"in understanding others, avoiding any difficult situations and interpreting correctly their communication (...) when we work directly with different countries. Understanding the culture, traditions, and ethnic specificities is crucial in successful communication with those countries"*. SP found that *"communication has been both the key to resolving difficult challenges and the source of hard misalignments"*. RC highlighted that *"Intercultural communication is essential to working in an IO. Good communication helps better understand others' backgrounds, behaviours, beliefs, work values, etc. It aids in fulfilling one's tasks, creating stronger bonds, and resolving problems faster"*. CM argued that *"IC communication is a critical factor in IOs for effective outcomes, conflict resolution, and inclusiveness"*. According to ED, IC in IOs is a complex issue from both perspectives, individual and organisational. *"Behaviours and manners of expression which are familiar to us and seem widely acknowledged and accepted in our culture might become restricted or taboo in another cultural space or in interactions with other people, including in IOs. An overlay of norms regulating specific behaviours can also be added by the IO, depending on the nature or context of its on-site activity. (...) Moreover, most IO staff live and work in a foreign environment for a longer time. Cultural misalignments and distance from family or friends can affect their social life and even negatively impact their well-being"*. EMG found IC *"essential in international organisations because it fosters collaboration across cultures, brings different perspectives to the table, stimulates creativity and innovation, and enhances the organisation's global strategy"*.

The data reinforces the literature on cultural diversity in IOs [3,10,13,17], the role of efficient IC [9] and trust and understanding between members of cross-cultural teams [15].

4.2. The Benefits of Effective IC in IOs (UN): Enhancing Collaboration and Goal Achievement

In SP's view, good IC leads to great team collaboration and cohesion. Having worked with migrants made SP discover that *"learning how to communicate with them really helped me be a better guide and mentor for them."* Also, weekly staff meetings enabled people to share their challenges and concerns, ask for support, and plan the next tasks, thus increasing productivity and team performance. In RC's opinion, the main advantages of good IC are *"better collaboration and conviviality at work, as well as swifter resolution of unforeseen work challenges"*. RS stated, *"Exposure to new cultures at work opens new perspectives, helps develop a global, multicultural mindset, and increases adaptability, as well as trust in working with migrants"*. For TT, the most significant advantage of IC while working inside a team spread in different countries *"is the ability to learn from each other. We are all human beings, and we have different values, visions, and attitudes that we have obtained throughout our lives. Sometimes we cannot see something that can be obvious to others"*. ED shared that *"Good communication with people from other cultures in international teams favours easier and better team integration and good personal relationships, which in turn nurture trust, work efficiency and ensures goal achievement in team projects. Proficient communication is the foundation of a professional reputation, while perceiving the subtle linguistic and cultural aspects avoids misunderstandings and allows for stronger and harmonious bonds between people and interactions with individuals from different cultures, professions and environments"*. CM stressed the *"effective collaboration, stronger relationships, and trust, especially during crises"*, while CC highlighted *"the openness, respect, and understanding of different perspectives"*. For EMG, it is about *"promoting the UN values and best practices globally, developing knowledge, and augmenting impact by connecting with beneficiaries at the local level, which is very important in the context of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"*.

From the above, it can be inferred that good IC in IOs is the cornerstone of trust and deep understanding between team members and the basis of fruitful teamwork. As such, proficiently employing IC touches upon the strategic role of communication [24] and the IC's motivational, behavioural, cognitive and metacognitive dimensions [29,36]. Envisaging and grasping others' perspectives is quintessential for developing a mindful and considerate view of their needs.

4.3. The Challenges of IC in IOs (UN): Avoiding Exclusion and Prejudice

Good communication in cross-cultural contexts can be hampered by a plethora of barriers and obstacles, from linguistic issues to cultural values or personal prejudice, as illustrated by the respondents' replies.

If RC highlights language barriers as one of the main challenges in IC, RS focuses on *"cultural stereotypes and prejudice, which impede good intercultural communication since active listening is blocked and you cannot hear what others say because of biases"*. As SP underlines, *"Each culture has specific elements that are so particular that it's quite difficult to be understood by others (from religious aspects to how society works, women's rights. . .; what is considered normal in one culture can be seen as offensive in another). Furthermore, sometimes, people are not open and ready to give up on fixed ideas; they lack empathy or focus on the desire to be right"*. EMG referred to *"stereotypes and biases which hinder open communication, language barriers which limit expression, and a lack of cultural awareness which impedes understanding and bonding"*. TT stated: *"Sometimes, some barriers appear due to cultural differences, misinterpretation of someone's intentions and the existing habits, norms and traditions formed in certain environments. When a newcomer from another country joins the team with its established rules and traditions, it will take some time before the obstacle can be lifted. Sometimes, after a certain time, the barriers that initially were obvious disappear. Sometimes, it requires a "top-down" approach from the management's side"*. Finally, ED enumerated among the common barriers and obstacles in IC: *"non-proficient use*

of the working language because it can foster misunderstandings, the impossibility to fully grasp subtle and specific cross-cultural or organisational culture-related aspects, or awkwardness and social distancing; non-comprehension of etiquette in interactions with persons from other cultures; stereotypes and prejudice regarding other persons' abilities, missing out on professional and personal opportunities for development".

Avoiding conflict in multicultural environments relies on understanding cultural diversity [3,13] and correctly interpreting verbal and nonverbal communication [14]. Cultural collisions that bring about work dysfunctionalities [35] can be prevented by removing stereotypes and generalisations [38].

4.4. Strategies for Adjusting IC in IOs (UN): Tailoring Messaging and Actions

CC underlined: *"It is necessary to be respectful and accommodating of other people's views and expressions". "The IC communication requires adjustment to your partner, for example, by avoiding unnecessary comments or focusing the discussion on the topic at hand", according to CM. EMG recalled: "It was necessary to adjust communication depending on the communication style of the interlocutor (e.g., direct vs. contextual). More formality is required with seniors, compared to peers". SP underscored the importance of adapting one's communication manner to interlocutors of various nationalities, ages, genders and beliefs, as it helped connect with people and gain their trust. That was particularly useful in the volunteer work unfolding for the International Organization for Migration (IOM). "In IOM, people are used to working with diverse and multicultural groups, so it was something that we did every day. Adapting the communication style helped me connect more with the people I worked with and gain their trust."* Similarly, RS considers that adaptation of communication is vital in this line of work since difficult decisions must sometimes be conveyed. *"Empathy and calm are essential, especially when working with refugees from conflict zones". RC admitted that it is not easy sometimes to adjust to various needs and cultural customs because we are set in certain ways of doing things, but "we must never stop trying". TT said: "It is always important to keep in mind the person with whom you communicate (write, speak, etc.). Sometimes, what seems normal to some people may be rude to others. I often try to find additional information about the person I have never met". ED also underlined the need to adapt to others' needs in order to try to interact at a deeper level with them and build trust. To this end, contingent on their language proficiency and cultural and emotional intelligence, people should always try to reach others at their level of understanding. "This way, we can nurture trust, professional and personal understanding and emotional safety. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that cultural adaptation should not result in the propagation of values, behaviours and attitudes below the standards upheld by the international organisations regarding human rights, protection of vulnerable persons or other ethical norms".*

Communication style adjustment and cultural intelligence appear to be prerequisites for exchanges with internal and external stakeholders. Adapting communication is paramount for IO employees, whether to enhance productivity and cohesion or to transfer information and express empathy. The data validates the communication accommodation theory and derived works [25,55], and the literature confirming the positive effects of reducing cultural distance and building trust [37]. At the same time, the role of cultural intelligence in international settings is acknowledged, giving credit to Earley and Ang [28] and Ang et al. [29].

4.5. The Role of Cultural Awareness in IOs (UN): Addressing Cultural Sensitivity

As ED explained, a deeper cultural understanding facilitates more profound connections between people and produces positive outcomes in teamwork. *"Apart from helping avoid misunderstandings, stereotypes, prejudice and xenophobia, cultural awareness increases*

tolerance and acceptance of diversity and values from unfamiliar cultures". In the same vein, SP observed: *"Knowing how others see the world and observing their perspectives can expand your cultural horizons and prevent you from making important mistakes. For example, you need to be careful to make sure not to offend the people in front of you and respect their culture"*. RC added in this respect that cultural awareness can ensure better collaboration inside multicultural teams. RS noted: *"The organisation's global nature requires sensitivity to other people's values and well-being and giving up to fixed ideas. Being open to something different is an important skill"*. TT underscored the creativity gained while learning from others. CM referred to the cultural differences *"Naturally, cultural awareness can reveal a different understanding of concepts (like time or deadlines) or resistance to change, and helps find appropriate arguments in various interactions"*. CC stated: *"Awareness of cultural patterns can enhance openness and respect, while stereotypes hinder communication and lead to misunderstandings"*. EMG said: *"Understanding different cultures helps avoid misconceptions and boosts teamwork and diversity of perspectives"*.

It appears that, in general, people working in IOs value cross-cultural exchanges and enjoy learning about different cultures. The data endorses works that discuss the tendency for cultural awareness and communication competency in global organisations [43,45]. Furthermore, it acknowledges the UN's role as a promoter of intercultural dialogue, learning and inclusive development [46].

4.6. Factors Contributing to Resolution of Conflict in IC in IOs (UN): Cultural Adaptation and Value Alignment

Regarding the potential conflict drivers of IC in IOs, the respondents generally agreed that cultural differences, misinterpretation, lack of knowledge and the misalignment of values are the most obvious ones. The data is in the same vein as scholarly sources (see [3,13,14,38]).

SP outlined conflicting values and a lack of empathy as common sources of misunderstandings. *"Communication adaptation can do a great job when it comes to finding a resolution because it implies understanding, respect, and really seeing the other person"*. TT added a *"lack of knowledge about your counterpart and their culture, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of someone's intentions, working traditions accepted by the overwhelming majority, gender differences, cultural, religious and other differences"* to this framework. RC focused on the lack of cultural awareness as a main factor in conflicts within teams. ED observed that conflict drivers range from linguistic misunderstandings to intolerance, low cultural and emotional intelligence, lack of knowledge, erroneous gestures or misinterpretation thereof. Conflicts could be avoided by increased awareness, tolerance, mindfulness and dialogue. RS indicated that *"a preliminary alignment of team values before starting to work together could help prevent conflicts"*. According to EMG, the factors leading to misunderstandings could be *"The communication style, which may be perceived as too aggressive or passive in direct vs. indirect communication cultures, the divergent national interests, or stereotypes and biases about certain cultures"*. Similarly, CM responded: *"Differences in communication styles and customs can lead to confusion or a perceived lack of respect"*. CC stressed: *"Many times, conflicts in IC contexts are generated by ignorance and the belief that certain cultures are more important or right than others"*.

4.7. The Managers' Role in IC in IOs (UN): Promoting Integration and Transparency

According to RS, *"Managers are both mediators and guardians in intercultural communication"*. For SP, they should *"create a safe space for people to share more insights about their culture, remind people that it's a privilege to be part of an international organisation, lead the team to create a common sense culture-wise, deal with conflict resolution and help people reach agreements in case conflicts arise"*. RC made arguments on the same line. CC and CM highlighted the managers' role in implementing communication strategies which foster respect, inclusiveness, and

efficient teamwork. EMG added: *“Managers should be proactive in setting guidelines for IC communication that favour diversity and inclusiveness, facilitating collaboration and resolving conflicts”*. ED added in this respect that *“In international organizations managers are facilitators of team integration through shared values and onboarding of new team members; they should lay the grounds for an atmosphere of trust and empathy favouring collaboration and strong team bonds; preventing and resolving disputes; promoting necessary knowledge development; establishing and maintaining work standards”*. TT also referred to *“increasing staff awareness about different cultures; share the organization’s values, vision and mission; disseminate relevant information to all teams and remain accessible; check that staff undertakes required training sessions; address any potential conflict issues immediately without any delay”*.

From the respondents’ point of view, managers play an important role in IC in IOs. They promote team cohesion and understanding through assessment and monitoring of team performance, identification of challenges and bottlenecks, implementation of policies and procedures, encouragement of team synergy, augmented awareness and training, and deflection and solving of any tension that might appear between team members. The replies support previous literature on the leader’s normative role [39] and catalyst [24,26], as well as the global leadership framework [40].

4.8. Effective IC Practices in IOs (UN): Increased Stakeholder Participation and Commitment

For CC, *“Managers should ensure a safe space for sharing opinions without fear of repercussions”*. CM stated: *“In cross-cultural teams, managers should offer opportunities for learning, informal exchanges, safe and open communication, and leading by example”*. EMG elaborated: *“The best managerial practices for IC communication should prioritise respect and trust, effective communication through transparency and feedback mechanisms, identifying and addressing potential points of conflict, and implementing clear guidelines for expected behaviour”*. As RC notes, *“A good manager should treat team members equally”*. Similarly, ED stressed the prerequisite of non-discriminatory treatment and respect for diversity, *“no matter the nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic and health status; establishing an organisational culture that encourages trust, respect, inclusion for all cultures; team building; developing and implementing ethical codes and policies that can be updated to new realities; promoting open dialogue and exposing stereotypes, prejudice, intolerance; regular training on IC communication; sharing common organisational and team values; opportunities for everyone to develop their cognitive, social and cultural competencies; quick and firm thwarting of discords”*. SP observed that, in their experience, managers in IOs tend to be *“open-minded, transparent, with a huge knowledge related to culture diversity, calm and really focused on people”*. RS added that managers need to be active listeners, encouraging open and transparent cultural exchanges with no tolerance for discrimination. Finally, TT stressed the need for staff to complete regular mandatory training. At the same time, *“managers have to raise staff awareness and ensure the implementation of the existing rules and regulations of that organisation. The United Nations has annual Leadership Dialogue meetings organised by management to discuss important aspects of the organisation’s functioning. Intercultural adaptation and collaboration are one of the main pillars of the successful functioning of an international organisation”*.

It is evident from the answers that managers in IOs need to act as promoters of team bonds, promoting cultural awareness and cognitive growth, averting possible frictions and guaranteeing equal and inclusive treatment for all. This is conducive to trust among the team members and harmonious working relationships. The data reconfirms previously cited works on the leaders’ role in developing and sustaining cross-cultural communication in international environments.

4.9. Priorities of IC in IOs (UN): Stronger ESG Governance and Accountability

Regarding the most common factors that are paramount for IC in IOs, respondents SP, EMG, and RC highlighted cultural understanding, eliminating language barriers, adaptability, and trust, respectively. CC and CM referred, among others, to respect and cultural awareness. TT stressed the need to “*plan, practice, and rehearse intercultural communication*.” RS and ED emphasised respect for diversity and non-discrimination, as well as active listening and empathy, and openness to continuous learning and dialogue to avoid disputes, respectively.

From the above, it can be derived that respect for diversity and cultural differences is quintessential for good IC in IOs. At the same time, filling knowledge gaps about other people and their cultural specificities helps cognitive development and increases tolerance for diversity. Finally, trying to understand different points of view through dialogue and going beyond the language barrier can build trust and prevent conflicts in international contexts. Once again, the data gives credit to authors previously cited [8,9,13,17].

4.10. Potential Areas for Improvement of IC in IOs (UN)

According to their work experience, the interviewees proposed possible changes and improvements to IC in IOs. All of them underlined the need for IC training development. CM added, “*capitalising on new technologies for collaboration and implementing a feedback culture*”. EMG highlighted “*Creating opportunities for cultural exchanges within teams, mentorship programs, and open communication to enhance learning, and developing clear guidelines for IC communication*”. SP appreciated that recruiting people with “*a fresh vibe*” may improve cultural communication, but mandatory training on IC and soft-skill development is also needed. RC also agreed to the latter point and expressed the need to increase the offer of language training for languages that are utilised by the beneficiaries of the IO’s projects. RS stressed the requirement for more IC training, which could be combined with opportunities for staff to gain experience in various workstations in different world regions. TT and ED envisaged IC skills as part of the regular performance assessment, an approach that would need support from top management, according to TT. ED felt regular training and appraisal could identify and fill cognitive deficits and skill shortages. At the same time, a multidisciplinary training approach could be beneficial by providing more insights concerning non-discrimination and ethics, for example. Such multidisciplinary, cross-cultural learning sessions would benefit not only IO staff but any cross-cultural team.

Regular mandatory training that sustains cognitive development seems to be the way forward in IC in IOs, according to all the respondents. Other good practices might include hands-on experience in workstations in different locations where the UN staff is present. Making IC part of the staff appraisal and offering multidisciplinary, multicultural training appear desirable, too.

Table 3 illustrates a synthesis of the respondents’ replies and advances the main derived themes as highlighted by the UN members.

Table 3. Synthesis of the respondents' replies.

Theme	SP	RC	RS	CC	CM	ED	TT	EMG
IC's importance in IOs	One of the most important aspects	Essential	Strategic importance	Very important	IC is a critical factor in IOs for effective outcomes	IC is a complex and important issue from both individual and collective perspectives. Certain communication and behaviour patterns can be restricted within IOs, and the organisation can add new norms.	Very important	Essential for collaboration, strategy implementation, and networking
Good IC advantages	Increased team performance and cohesion	Better collaboration, especially in resolving unforeseen challenges	Personal and professional development; mutual support	Openness, respect, and understanding of different perspectives	Effective collaboration, stronger relationships, and trust, especially during crises	Good IC enhances trust, reputation and better professional and personal relationships, which in turn increase efficacy and productivity.	Learning from each other	Promoting UN values and best practices globally, developing knowledge, and augmenting impact by connecting with beneficiaries at the local level
IC challenges	Different views stemming from cultural approaches, lack of empathy, and adaptability	Communicating in a common language	Using a common language; apprehension or prejudice towards others	Misunderstandings and a lack of reciprocity	Language barriers, communication styles, customs, work ethics, etc., can lead to frustration and inefficiency.	Lack of proficiency in utilising the common work language, which can appear as incompetent communication and leads to misunderstandings; missed opportunities, prejudice and bias, and social distancing	Cultural differences; misinterpretation	Stereotypes and biases hinder open communication; language barriers limit expression; a lack of cultural awareness impedes understanding and bonding.
IC adjustment	Adapting one's communication style is important for a volunteer to connect with people and gain their trust.	Our own habits can sometimes impede us from adapting to others' culture sometimes, but one should always try.	Appropriate communication style and empathy are required.	It is necessary to be respectful and accommodating of other people's views and expressions	The IC requires adjustment to your partner, for example, by avoiding unnecessary comments or focusing the discussion on the topic at hand	Language proficiency, cultural intelligence, and emotional intelligence are prerequisites for IC flexibility and adaptation to individual needs. However, IC adaptation should not happen at a subpar level that could propagate discrimination or unethical behaviours.	Try to find more information and adapt your communication depending on the people you talk to.	It was necessary to adjust communication depending on the communication style of the interlocutor (e.g., direct vs. contextual); more formality in relation to seniors, compared to peers.

Table 3. Cont.

Theme	SP	RC	RS	CC	CM	ED	TT	EMG
Cultural awareness	Observing various cultural perspectives expands horizons and helps avoid mistakes.	Cultural awareness is paramount to reaching a common understanding and synergy within teams.	Being open-minded and adaptable is an important skill.	Awareness of cultural patterns can enhance openness and respect, while stereotypes hinder communication and lead to misunderstandings	Naturally, cultural awareness can reveal a different understanding of concepts (like time or deadlines) or resistance to change, and helps find appropriate arguments in various interactions	Advanced cultural awareness can nurture trust and a deeper understanding among people while avoiding unnecessary stress and prejudice and promoting respect for diversity.	Understanding cultural patterns and stereotypes improves work efficiency and creativity.	Understanding different cultures helps avoid misconceptions and boosts teamwork and diversity of perspectives.
Conflict factors in IC	Conflicting cultural norms and values, and a lack of empathy	A lack of knowledge and awareness of the other's cultural values	Differences in perspectives can impede work; thus, team alignment is important.	Many times, conflicts in IC contexts are generated by ignorance and the belief that certain cultures are more important or right than others	Differences in communication styles and customs can lead to confusion or a perceived lack of respect	Intolerance, lack of openness, cultural and emotional intelligence, misunderstandings regarding language or gestures, etc.	A lack of knowledge, misunderstandings, and cultural, gender and religious differences can be conflict drivers.	The communication style may be perceived as too aggressive or passive in direct vs. indirect communication cultures; divergent national interests; stereotypes and biases.
Managers' role in IC	Create a safe space for diversity; share common organisational values	Support the development of knowledge about different cultures; guard against transgressions that could lead to conflicts	Managers should be both mediators and guardians of ethical values in cross-cultural environments.	Managers should nurture diversity and inclusiveness, and clarify the justifications leading to certain decisions which could be perceived as discriminatory	Managers must actively implement communication strategies which foster cultural awareness, inclusiveness, respect, and efficient teamwork	Creating and enforcing policies that foster cross-cultural understanding and respect, developing a safe and secure organisational culture, conflict prevention and resolution, knowledge development, and training	Managers should uphold the organisation's mission, vision and values. They should increase awareness, conduct training and address any potential conflict immediately.	Managers should be proactive in setting guidelines for IC that favour diversity and inclusiveness, facilitating collaboration and resolving conflicts.

Table 3. Cont.

Theme	SP	RC	RS	CC	CM	ED	TT	EMG
IC managerial practices	Open-mindedness towards diversity;	Non-discrimination and equal treatment for each team member	Support dialogue, encourage cultural exchanges and transparency, and sanction discrimination	Managers should ensure a safe space for sharing opinions without fear of repercussions	In cross-cultural teams, managers should offer opportunities for learning, informal exchanges, safe and open communication, and leading by example	Creating an organisational culture which is inclusive and diverse; developing and implementing ethical codes to create shared values; open communication; fair treatment and opportunities for all; firm and immediate actions against discrimination and to prevent conflict escalation; team building and training	Complete mandatory training and raise awareness	The best managerial practices for IC should prioritise respect and trust; effective communication through transparency and feedback mechanisms; identifying and addressing potential points of conflict; and implementing clear guidelines for expected behaviour.
Priorities in IC in Ios	Communicate clearly; adapt your communication style; listen to everybody	Enhancing language abilities and understanding; trust	Active listening and empathy, cultural understanding, and respect for diversity	Mutual respect, flexibility, and acknowledging each team member's value	Adaptability, flexibility, and awareness	Respect for diversity and non-discrimination; developing knowledge; open communication	Planning, practising and rehearsing ICC	Active listening, language skills, and adaptability
Possible changes	Increase empathy through soft-skill training; employ people with good vibes; mandatory IC training.	ICC communication and language training	More IC development, extend knowledge and allow for job exchanges in various regional offices.	Less bureaucracy, more transparency	Developing IC training, capitalising on new technologies for collaboration, and implementing a feedback culture	Regular multidisciplinary training, e.g., including non-discrimination, ethics, and cross-cultural communication; regular appraisals to identify and address knowledge deficits	Make ICC part of the performance assessment, ensure support from the top management and enhance visibility.	Creating opportunities for cultural exchanges within teams; mentorship programmes, and open communication to enhance learning; and developing clear guidelines for IC.

Source: Own creation.

As can be seen from Table 3, the interviewees attach particular importance to open communication and empathy in managing the conflict factors that can arise in the context of intercultural communication. To these are added communicative adaptation through the development of social interaction, knowledge and skills, active listening and language training.

The role of managers and their strategic approach to intercultural communication is validated by all respondents who are of the opinion that decision-makers at the organisational level should intervene directly in the creation and maintenance of a communication climate conducive to the creativity and productivity of international work teams. Only through sustained managerial action can interpersonal and intercultural adaptation be fostered, and cultural intelligence developed in a sustainable way.

5. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research Directions

As the world is confronted with numerous challenges and conflicts, culture can enhance unity, support sustainable development, and encourage collaboration in international relations. Strategies for international cultural relations contribute to the development of channels of communication between peoples and societies, stimulating the safeguarding of cultural heritage, the dialogue between cultures, conflict resolution, and the advancement of the cultural industry and tourism.

This paper endeavoured to investigate the particularities of intercultural communication in international organisations, and more specifically within the United Nations (UN). Several research objectives were pursued, including exploring communicational adaptation at the UN level, the role of cultural intelligence in intercultural communication, and the organisational effects of intercultural communication at the UN level from the perspective of selected subjects. The research questions were: To what extent do members of international organisations perceive the importance of communicational adaptation at the professional and organisational level for sustainable development? What impact does cultural intelligence have on effective intercultural communication in international organisations? What are the effects of effective versus poor intercultural communication in international organisations? By presenting and analysing the interview responses, some empirical benchmarks were provided to clarify the three research questions as follows.

Regarding the extent to which UN members perceive the importance of communicational adaptation at the professional and organisational level, there was unanimity of responses in favour of the process of alignment with the communicational style of interlocutors. IC supports a culturally sensitive dialogue which builds trust and understanding, thus impacting stakeholder engagement. In the absence of this deliberate approach, there is a high chance of communication failure, as exemplified by the interviewees. Next, the assessment of the importance of cultural intelligence in the equation of effective intercultural communication also led to the centralisation of convergent positions. Cultural intelligence, manifested in particular through the planned adjustment of communication style and understanding of cultural patterns and stereotypes, occupies a central place in ensuring the effectiveness and productivity of intercultural work teams. Inclusion of diverse cultural voices leads to more equitable and effective outcomes, enhancing collaboration. Managerial practices which tailor messaging and actions favour adaptation to cultural norms and values, augmenting stakeholder engagement and commitment. Finally, integrating diverse perspectives fosters improved decision-making, leading to stronger ESG governance and accountability. Harmonising approaches in the context of international organisations can be done through open communication with interlocutors, expressing empathy and developing active listening, beyond the barriers of one's own cultural limitations. Regarding the effects of effective versus poor intercultural communication, interviewees believe that without constant communicational adaptation, international work teams cannot collaborate produc-

tively, encounter major coordination difficulties that can result in open conflict. A concerted effort is needed at the managerial and executive level to ensure that organisational processes are supported by a favourable communication climate.

Investigating these key issues, the contribution of this study is its in-depth look at the specifics of intercultural communication in international organisations through the lens of members with experience and expertise in the field, with a focus on the dynamics within the UN, grounded in guidelines for stakeholder engagement and implementation of ESG principles. It provides a starting point for future studies interested in the weaknesses and strengths, opportunities and risks of intercultural communication and adaptation, and the role and influence of cultural intelligence in the equation of international interactions.

Despite the elements of originality it brings, this study also has limitations that can be addressed by future research. Firstly, it is based only on qualitative research, i.e., semi-structured interviews, which relay subjective views, and the results obtained cannot be generalised. Secondly, the number of subjects interviewed is small (eight subjects), and the replies may not cover the whole range of experiences and diversity of knowledge within a global organisation. This is a common pitfall of empirical research, which relies on inductive reasoning based on data. Secondly, the number of subjects interviewed is small (eight subjects), so future research could expand the target sample. Thirdly, the focus is on intercultural communication issues, with other concepts—communicative adaptation, cultural intelligence, language barriers, ESG, etc.—playing a secondary role in the theoretical and empirical analysis.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

IC	Intercultural
UN	United Nations Organisation
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SES	Social and Environmental Standards

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