In the first of what would become an annual report issued by its leadership in 1922, the founders of the Council on Foreign Relations described the institution and themselves: “The Council is not a trade organization nor has it any connection with any political party. It simply is a group of men concerned in spreading a knowledge of international relations and, in particular, in developing a reasoned American foreign policy.” CFR was founded by a group of delegates to the Paris Peace Conference, a mix of scholars and government professionals who believed deeply in the United States’ continued engagement abroad. Inspired by the richness and candor of their conversations at the conference, and eager to continue them at home, the delegates organized themselves as a council—a body of individuals dedicated to discussion—emphasizing the deliberative exchange among members that is at the heart of this institution. Indeed, though CFR has changed in many ways over its many decades, members—today a larger and more diverse group in every way—remain its core; CFR is a publisher and a think tank, but, fundamentally, it is a membership organization. In addition to their intellectual contributions through meetings, CFR publications, and the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, members are also CFR’s gatekeepers, its advisers, and the stewards of its operational and financial well-being.

CFR’s members are and always have been its most valuable asset, a pillar of the institution’s strength, and an indication of its influence. The roster today counts two former U.S. presidents and two vice presidents (there have been a total of seven of each in CFR’s history); twenty-six Pulitzer Prize winners; nine Nobel laureates; ninety-six Rhodes scholars; fifty-two leaders of Fortune 500 companies; forty-two special envoys; and sixty-two admirals and generals in the U.S. armed forces. Since CFR’s founding, thirty secretaries of state have served as members. Thoughtful exchange and a fair hearing are valued commodities in this day and age, and the caliber of CFR’s members is one reason the organization is able to attract such prominent speakers.

Members contribute in myriad other ways as well—first, as an intellectual resource to the entire institution, by participating in study groups, advising fellows, and populating and often chairing CFR-sponsored Independent Task Forces. Members speak or preside at meetings and author pieces for the websites and the magazine. In addition to the thirty-six of us on the Board of Directors, dozens serve on ten nonexecutive committees of the Board, advising on programming and scholarship through the committees on Studies, Meetings, *Foreign Affairs*, and the National and Washington Programs.

Members also preside over CFR’s operational well-being. The Finance and Budget Committee and its Investment Subcommittee oversee CFR’s finances, adeptly advising on the endowment, budget, and investment portfolio. The Committee on Membership is tasked with the especially difficult (and time-consuming) job of building classes of experienced, dedicated, and expert members and term members from the hundreds of applications the committee receives every year. Members are also responsible for CFR’s future and financial strength: more than one-third donated to
the Annual Fund this year, and gifts from our leading donors in the Harold Pratt Associates and the Chairman’s Circle offer significant support for programming and activities, ensuring a solid foundation for the future.

Although members have been fundamental to CFR since its founding, the membership itself has changed significantly. In recent years, CFR has strengthened its commitment to building an organization that includes individuals, communities, and sectors with a growing influence on foreign policy. Participation by women and minorities across the institution has increased substantially over time. By many measures, we have come a long way. Owing to a strong belief in maintaining a balance between scholarly insight and practitioner experience, the membership has always included individuals reflecting a variety of fields and backgrounds. In recent years, however, this has become even more significant. Issues including globalization, public health, digital policy, and U.S. competitiveness have widened the scope of CFR’s work and broadened the membership, drawing professionals from fields such as science, medicine, technology, religion, and education that are increasingly relevant to foreign policy and international affairs.

The membership has grown over the years at a relatively modest rate—this year it reached 4,900—and changes to it have mirrored those in American society. CFR has evolved from a New York–centered organization to one with an established presence in Washington, DC, and now its members are divided almost equally among the New York City area, the capital, and the rest of the country. We are also changing when it comes to gender and ethnicity. Today, women represent about 27 percent of the overall membership, having increased by nearly a third in number over the past decade; minority groups represent approximately 16 percent of total membership, up 40 percent over the past ten years.

We are also encouraged by trends in the Stephen M. Kellen Term Member Program, which selects the most talented young professionals for five-year terms, and through which we seek to cultivate the next generation of foreign policy leaders. Term members have full access to CFR’s resources, as well as tailored programming, events, trips, and an annual conference that this year included sessions on U.S.-Russia relations, the Middle East, and the economy. Over the past ten years, the program has grown by more than 20 percent. Term members represent the future of American leadership as well as the future of CFR’s membership, putting both on a good foundation with regard to talent and diversity.

CFR is continually evolving to meet the challenges of U.S. foreign policy, many of which were unimaginable when it was founded, and the membership has changed as well, growing and broadening in important ways. Through it all, members have remained the foundation of the institution and the source of its influence and strength, a testament to CFR’s abiding belief in the role of research, discussion, and debate in the development of American foreign policy. We look to them and trust them to guide the institution through a second century of success.

Members should be proud of what CFR has accomplished in the past year, detailed in the following pages and for which we would like to thank a few individuals in particular. We are grateful to Vice Chairman David M. Rubenstein for his many contributions to the organization, and to all of our colleagues on the Board of Directors. We also thank President Richard N. Haass for all that he does on behalf of CFR, and for his capable leadership this year and in the decade before it.

Carla A. Hills and Robert E. Rubin

Co-Chairs of the Board