



CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE UN WE NEED

**TOGETHER FIRST**  
A GLOBAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL

# UN75 PEOPLE'S DECLARATION & PLAN FOR GLOBAL ACTION

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**Humanity at a Crossroads:  
Global Solutions for Global Challenges**



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UN75 PEOPLE'S FORUM FOR THE UN WE NEED  
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## HUMANITY AT A CROSSROADS: GLOBAL SOLUTIONS FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES

1. At a time when change is progressing at a pace and scale unparalleled in history, we can and must lay the foundation for a better path for humanity. This year holds the potential to serve as a crucial turning point in our trajectory towards a world of shared prosperity based on commitments made. A world-encompassing health crisis has shaken the global order to its core. No community is immune and we can no longer behave as if our current institutions are sufficient to secure our future. Like the United Nations rising from the ashes of World War II, our response to this challenge has the potential to transform global governance to reflect a new reality.
2. The UN has achieved much in its 75-year history to fulfill its core objectives: to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,” promote “fundamental human rights,” establish conditions for the respect of “justice and international law,” and “promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.” We are grateful to it and to the thousands who have dedicated their lives to its success.
3. The current pandemic reveals more than ever that the destiny of people and planet is shared, and that the systems on which we rely are interdependent. Risks well understood but long ignored, such as inequalities of all kinds, are being exposed and exacerbated. No longer can we continue prioritizing narrow economic paths as if they satisfy the social, financial, and environmental needs of communities, or reflect the real wealth of nations. The climate crisis, entrenched indignities such as social, gender, and race discrimination, and the absence of sufficient coordination to solve even preventable problems demonstrate the need for leadership characterized not by short-term victories but by urgent action toward a long-term, globally inclusive vision. We have tremendous technical capacities, but far greater collective will is required to bring them to bear on the risks we face.
4. Confronting global challenges requires a fundamental shift in thinking about humanity’s relationship to the earth, true wealth, progress, development, the role and nature of power and governance, and the essential values of humanity. Solutions will be found through commitment to a new posture of collaboration, innovation, and action. The paradigm of “us versus them” no longer meets humanity’s needs. We must rebuild the bonds of trust at all levels, with an active and informed citizenry, supported by democratic and accountable leadership. It is time to recommit to justice and the wellbeing of every population without prejudice, grounded in international human rights frameworks.
5. We are committed to galvanizing the grassroots, mobilizing the masses, and doing our part to implement agreements made. Our impact is, however, hindered by democratic backsliding, rising levels of corruption, the repression of fundamental freedoms, the spread of misinformation, and global mistrust. We are turning to the United Nations and its Member

States to respond decisively and to strengthen international cooperation. We rely on them to chart a course for humanity that not only addresses vulnerabilities, but also fulfills the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda.

6. This moment represents a rare window of opportunity for humanity to imagine and create more effective institutional arrangements through strengthened, people-centered, and values-driven global governance. To enable the future we want—to prevent war and sustain peace, to facilitate sustainable development, to end poverty, and to protect universal human rights—those in positions of authority and responsibility need to take a transformational approach to global governance.
7. The time has come to **launch an ambitious, nonpartisan, transparent, and inclusive process to identify global governance gaps and develop a coherent strategy to fill them** to better realize the vision of the UN Charter. The risks we face are too great for any segment of society to address alone, which is why we stand ready to work together with our governments, the United Nations, and all people to open a new chapter of partnership for peace, justice, equality, dignity, and sustainability.
8. The contributions of civil society and critical social movements - sometimes made at great personal risk - are testament to the need to create a more participatory democratic order that draws on the creativity of many and allows people to collectively shape their future. Civil society's constructive voice needs to be heard and included by protecting the fundamental freedoms of assembly, association, and expression. Shrinking civic space worldwide, including at the United Nations itself, and the rise in oppression, intimidation, and threats against civil society must be reversed.
9. Progress depends on universal participation. All must be prepared to work constructively and in good faith for the common benefit of all, while governments must commit to transparency, inclusion, and collaboration. We recognize that the wisdom of indigenous populations has intrinsic value for all; that the innovation that empowers persons with disabilities leads to breakthroughs in a vast array of fields; that bringing the creativity of youth together with the experience of older persons combine to create new solutions for all; that gender equality leads to more peaceful, secure, sustainable, and thriving societies; and that caring for the environment and for our own wellbeing are inextricably interlinked. The advance of one leads to the advance of all.

## *Creating an Enabling Environment*

10. We urge our governments to ensure an environment that enables the whole of society to contribute to sustainable development and build resilient communities. The following preconditions are central to the advancement of societies, nations, and the world:
- a. **Good governance** must be understood as public service committed to the empowerment of all, especially historically neglected and underprivileged communities, to become protagonists in their development. Everyone has the right and responsibility to participate in public affairs.
  - b. **Peaceful and inclusive societies** are necessary for sustainable development, including providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Peace is more than an end to war and violence. It is the promotion of economies, actions, behaviors, and laws consistent with a culture of peace.
  - c. **Dignity and human rights** are universal, and all institutions must proactively overcome prejudice and promote justice.
  - d. **Equal Opportunity** must be given to all those whose voices have been limited in the public sphere in order to ensure that society benefits from their input. Gender equality is a prerequisite for the success of any policy or program. Inclusion of young people in decision-making at all levels ensures intergenerational equity.
  - e. **Trust** is built through a consistent and effective rules-based order that is inclusive, open, accountable, representative, and fair, ensuring the rights of all. Decisions must be taken consistent with science and empirical data.
  - f. **Education** is at the heart of any society's advancement. Our interconnected world requires that children and adults develop an ethos of global citizenship and solidarity.
  - g. **Sustainability** requires accounting for the costs of remedying environmental degradation, mitigating anthropogenic harm, staying within planetary boundaries, and managing the global commons. It implies considering the impact on future generations when making policies today.
  - h. **Prosperity** is the natural result of resilient societies that think beyond solely material progress to include the social and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing.
  - i. **Financing** must be made available to counteract discrimination and inequalities, protect those in greatest need, and support social movements that advance people's needs.
  - j. **Implementation of international agreements made**, including the UN Charter itself, is required if those accords are to have an impact beyond rhetoric and aspiration.

**PLAN FOR GLOBAL ACTION:  
THE UN WE NEED TO CREATE THE WORLD WE WANT**

***A People's Commitment***

11. Since time immemorial, individuals and communities have found ways to advance their societies regardless of the political environment. Today is no different. We commit to the continued and robust engagement of diverse stakeholders to find solutions to the most pressing global problems through a variety of means. We will:
  - a. Uphold our commitments and rededicate ourselves to achieving international agreements made;
  - b. Apply basic human rights principles, and work on behalf of those left furthest behind;
  - c. Advance fundamental principles in all our work, including, but not limited to, gender equality, inclusivity, global citizenship and solidarity, and sustainability;
  - d. Seek, initiate, and strengthen partnerships among governments and stakeholders at all levels;
  - e. Raise our voices in the face of injustice;
  - f. Protect and enhance space for the participation of civil society in the public sphere;
  - g. Seek innovative solutions to local, regional, and global challenges;
  - h. Increasingly ensure that our contributions are based on a solid evidentiary basis;
  - i. Find and exploit new avenues for change, including adequately supporting technologies that offer such opportunities;
  - j. Support and engage the grassroots and those who are most profoundly impacted by policies and their application;
  - k. Support the United Nations and its Member States to strengthen global governance and representation, including advancing the recommendations laid out below and future innovations.
  
12. "We the peoples" will continue to work to strengthen global systems and encourage our governments to meet the political commitments they have made in Beijing, Addis Ababa, Paris and beyond. The warnings and reports issued by the United Nations must be respected. Current threats to peace, unimagined 75 years ago, demand ever greater collective action yet the Security Council, left unchanged, is unable to respond adequately.
  
13. We reaffirm our commitment to the visionary human rights covenants and treaties, especially as the pandemic heightens the risk and discrimination faced by marginalized groups. Discrimination against anyone based on any identity is unacceptable. Remedying the severe underfunding of the human rights system is crucial to legitimizing Member States' rhetoric on the centrality of human rights to the international order.

14. We support the Paris Climate Agreement and will continue to advocate for its full implementation. We recognize that, in addition to voluntary national commitments, addressing the climate crisis must entail coordinated global action, as well as legally binding frameworks, on a scale without historic precedent.
15. We reaffirm our commitment to the 2030 Agenda as the roadmap for sustainable development. We recognize that current systems prioritize a GDP-driven development that is deepening inequalities, promoting unsustainable consumption, rewarding inequitable competition, and exacerbating environmental degradation and climate change. Our economic and financial order, as constituted, is antithetical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. There is a need to urgently align macroeconomic frameworks with the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, recognizing the economy should be a means, not an end, to a better society and healthier planet.

### ***Recommendations for Member States and the United Nations***

16. Our deliberations over the past months have centered on three priorities set out below, as well as a host of other suggestions (annex) which, if implemented, would lead to more effective global governance. Our priority proposals for the Member States are:
- a. **Establish a mandated post-2020 follow-up mechanism to enhance global governance.** The goal of this mechanism, mandated by the Member States, is to usher in a new compact for more equitable and effective global governance and to rebuild confidence in global institutions. Such a mandated mechanism needs to undertake, in collaboration with the Secretary-General's Office, a detailed examination of global challenges and our responses to them in order to identify options to make the UN system and other multilateral institutions more fit for purpose and truly representative. It should ensure the highest level of inclusivity and transparency, and tap the ideas, networks, expertise, and capabilities of all actors, state and non-state, in tackling new and emerging transnational problems.
  - b. **Reliably and increasingly fund the United Nations.** The ongoing shortfall of funding undermines effective action by the UN system. Without Member States fulfilling their annual dues and financial commitments, the UN system will be unable to meet the increasingly interdependent needs of peoples and nations worldwide. Moreover, archaic UN budgetary processes must be streamlined. Moreover, a range of ancillary options must be considered to better fund the UN such as global taxation on commodities like fossil fuel or carbon.
  - c. **Enhance civil society and other stakeholders' participation modalities.** Civil society and other stakeholders are key implementation partners, and systemically increasing their participation is crucial to meeting current and future global challenges:

- i. *Dedicate a civil society focal point at the UN Secretariat.* A UN focal point for civil society at the Under-Secretary-General level would bring deeper partnerships with civil society into the work of the UN. The UN and Member States can do more and do better by harnessing the profound commitment of thousands of NGOs by means of a dedicated office.
- ii. *A system-wide review of stakeholder participation in UN processes* — followed by discussion, adoption, and implementation of a few well-designed reform proposals — would contribute to a transparent and more democratic approach to incorporating the voices of “We the Peoples.”
- iii. *Increase the use of communications technology.* At a time when communications innovations make possible greater transparency, inclusivity, accountability, and participation, the UN must harness the benefits of new technology for all peoples everywhere to mitigate the digital divide.
- iv. *Create a global petition mechanism.* A world citizens’ initiative would allow a critical mass of individuals to direct Member States to place issues of concern on the United Nations’ agenda.

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17. The global threats now confronting us are unprecedented, and the consequences of inaction are dire. We call upon the UN and its Member States, heads of state and government, civil society organizations and other stakeholders, elected representatives and all citizens to take bold action based on recognition of our shared destiny, and to work to create global institutions that reflect and respond to this reality. Our diverse populations, nations, and cultures have the skills and resources to address the challenges before us. We hereby reaffirm the values and principles enshrined in the UN Charter “to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems” and to promote “respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all” by incorporating UN values and principles into the habits, assumptions, attitudes, metrics, and institutions so central to realizing the world’s collective potential.

18. Let future generations look back on 2020 as the year a threatened humanity determined, with one voice, to shed harmful legacies and move toward a shared future of dignity, hope, and prosperity for all. Let the Member States, on this 75th anniversary, join hands with the peoples of the world to inspire the action so urgently needed to finally realize the vision of the United Nations Charter.



## ANNEX OF PROPOSALS

1. Member States are invited to consider the following recommendations as a starting point for deliberation in advance of the UN Summit and beyond. Divided into three categories of immediate actions, medium term proposals, and long term aspirations, these suggestions would lead to a strengthened United Nations system for its centenary and beyond.
2. **Immediate actions** must reflect the urgency of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of the Paris Agreement, especially in light of the ongoing pandemic. We must take every opportunity to accelerate progress and demonstrate measurable change at the country and subnational levels. Our recovery efforts must include fully-fledged investments to propel us toward a more equal, inclusive, just and resilient world. Particularly in times of crisis, we call upon governments to ensure the protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and civic space. Immediate, tactical steps that can be implemented in the near term include:
  - a. **Adopt a whole-of-ecosystem approach by linking climate governance to other environmental agreements, protocols, conventions and innovations**. An ecosystem wide approach will harmonize myriad international environmental agreements with state and nonstate parties and their regulatory and technology development actions. Enhanced coordination should begin with the four major environmental conventions (climate change, biodiversity, combating desertification and law of the sea), but then extend to the more than 300 other existing environmental agreements (such as dealing with ozone depletion, pollution, land and water) as reflected by the current negotiations toward a new Global Pact for the Environment. Climate action and the transition to net-zero-carbon economies bring opportunities to reduce poverty, inequality, biodiversity loss, and injustice. To meet the existential challenges of climate change, threats to global biodiversity and other planetary boundaries, we call for reinforced scientific and technological assessments and development processes (including commitment to the findings of the IPCC); increased financing of development plans for sustainable development; and deployment of new technologies fully compliant with the lower 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement and with other international environmental obligations. The United Nations should also continue supporting country-level mitigation of current and future ecological threats as well as national and international technological innovations.
  - b. **Improve the credibility, efficacy, vitality, and legitimacy of the international human rights architecture**. The full realization of fundamental human rights would represent, in itself, a transformational shift towards revitalizing the global system. This would require increasing the drastically underfunded budget of the human rights system and ensuring that human-rights centered values drive policy and practice. The Universal Periodic Review must have increased accountability in order to affect change on the ground. The Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights can

only be a mere aspiration without a more robust human rights architecture that supports said action.

- c. **Create a more coordinated, comprehensive and resilient global health system.** There is a need for pandemics-related, collaborative global guidelines and norms; advanced independent research and development into vaccines and treatment; outbreak monitoring and early warning systems; and the management of transmission across borders. Additionally, it is time to strengthen the resilience of global supply chains and prevent the deepening of global inequality in the face of a crisis. Governmental leaders and policymakers must work with scientists and others to strengthen the multilateral system to provide better global coordination for the highest attainable standard of health. We must ensure robust public health systems with universal access to, and provision of, healthcare, regardless of country or circumstance, that upholds human rights, gender equality and inclusion.
- d. **Increase institutional effectiveness for leaving no one and no nation behind.** The mandate of oversight bodies for the various international agreements must be enhanced, through greater accountability and incentives for compliance and disincentives for non-compliance. The ongoing review of the modalities for the High-level Political Forum, for example, must result in a strengthened and more accountable body allowing for increased national and local ownership.
- e. **Bolster institutions and services to promote risk informed development and recovery.** To better prepare for future global crises, United Nations agencies must be strengthened to incorporate prevention and preparation at all policy levels. Certain policy measures to achieve these ends could include universal social protection measures as well as investment in community programs, justice services, and safe spaces in times of crisis.

3. **Medium-term proposals.** Revitalizing multilateralism relies on governments, intergovernmental organisations and international organizations seizing opportunities to advance global cooperation and synergies. Key proposals for action in the medium-term include:

- a. **Establish ad hoc commissions to address emerging issues.** As humanity deepens its understanding of the threats and opportunities it faces and of its global interdependence, new institutions that speak to those threats and opportunities will need to be established. These could include, for example, an intergenerational commission to address concerns of youth and ageing populations; a commission on media and technology to address the role of misinformation and other cyberthreats; and a commission on displacement to address protections, legal recognition, and access to services for those involuntarily displaced.
- b. **Implementing more representative global governance.** In particular, we recommend the creation of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, which could serve as an advisory body to the General Assembly mandated to offer recommendations that

would promote the well-being of all people and the planet. The delegates to the Parliamentary Assembly could be directly elected by the people they represent.

- c. **Increase the universal acceptance of international justice institutions, in particular the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).** Moreover, increase their enforcement powers, preserve their independence, and enhance their resilience against political pressures. For the ICJ, this requires expanding the acceptance of the court's compulsory jurisdiction through so-called "optional clause" declarations under Article 36(2) of the ICJ Statute. Similarly, a campaign to boost ICC membership could strengthen the body's credentials as a universal institution. Regarding enforcement, the UN Security Council should establish enhanced working methods with the ICC, including a protocol or code to support ICC investigations and prosecutions, including sanctions (such as asset freezing), and the enforcement of ICC arrest warrants.
- d. **Elaboration of UN staff/consultancy rules and regulations.** Ensure that all international civil servants are provided with appropriate guidance and support to enable them to actively implement and defend the UN's values and principles. Outline how the UN will uphold its commitment to protect staff who do so and hold accountable staff who do not.

4. **Long-term aspirations.** Realizing the vision of the world we want requires bold and fundamental transformation of the current global system at all levels. Moreover, meeting growing global risks demands a revitalized and nimble UN system that is reliably financed, efficiently-operated and free of the inconsistencies, opaque practices, and contradictions that have emerged through decades of practice. Key long-term proposals include:

- a. **Incorporating changes to the existing peace and security architecture.** Profound changes will be necessary to ensure the long-standing legitimacy of the United Nations. This includes revisiting the arrangements of the Security Council, the reliance on consensus which can significantly reduce ambition, and the interplay between the UN, Member States, and regional organizations.
- b. **Upgrade the Peacebuilding Commission into a UN Peacebuilding Council and entrust it with both a conflict-prevention and a reconciliation/transitional justice mandate.** The new Council would gain enhanced powers and responsibilities, and be mandated to lead on policy development, coordination, resource mobilization, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding efforts not addressed directly by the Security Council. It should be able to operationalize its conflict prevention mandate through a new "Peacebuilding Audit" tool, modeled on the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review instrument.
- c. **A more integrated and coherent framework for the organization's efforts to restore peace and security** consistent with the Secretary-General's "Sustaining Peace" agenda that would value preventive action and post-conflict peacebuilding equally with peacemaking and peacekeeping. The systems for deployment to UN peace operations rely on an antiquated "standby system" based on donated personnel from

contributing Member States. What is required is a much greater investment in all aspects of the organization's peace-making capacities including the need for more "standing" capacities, i.e. permanent civilian, police and peacekeeping personnel that would be available on short notice for all manner of UN operations as well as culture of peace building operations.

- d. **Peace, disarmament and law.** It is critical to address the growing threats to peace and increasing violence through accelerated collective action at all levels without resorting to the threat or use of force. Equally vital is achieving the elimination of all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and the comprehensive abolition of state-sponsored war by the centenary of the United Nations. In addition to government representatives, peace and disarmament negotiations should include legislators, experts, and representatives from all affected communities, especially women, youth, and minorities. Importantly, peace processes should provide the appropriate forum to move beyond symptomatic approaches to peace by identifying, considering and addressing the underlying causes of conflict. Developing consensus around shared needs, priorities, values and vision can lead to outcomes less reliant on security-led negative forms of peace making and more reliant on prosperity-led positive peace building.