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Rethinking global cooperation: three new frameworks for collective action in an age of uncertainty

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STIMSON

INTERNATIONAL
ORDER &
CONFLICT

REPORT

Rethinking Global Cooperation

Three New Frameworks for Collective Action
in an Age of Uncertainty

Doha
FORUM
مائدة الدوحة

 Global Governance
Innovation Network

Global Governance,
Justice & Security
Program

ABOUT THIS REPORT

In 2022, the growing impacts of climate change have been felt across the globe, from prolonged drought in the Middle East and North Africa, to erratic monsoons in South Asia and record-breaking heat waves in Europe and China. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic—which reached the tragic milestone of one million deaths within the first eight months of this year—and the ongoing war in Ukraine and other violent conflicts have impeded global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. To address these and other pressing global challenges, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for, one year ago in his *Our Common Agenda* report, a Summit of the Future to improve collective action worldwide. Among the summit’s anticipated outcomes are a Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace. This report elaborates on the challenges, proposed major elements, and potential spoilers to be overcome for each of these global policy frameworks. It further argues that meaningful civil society engagement in the summit’s preparations can reassure all stakeholders that decisions taken are well-informed, enjoy broad social ownership, and generate a sense of co-responsibility in supporting their implementation.

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Related Publications

- *Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance*, The Report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance (2015)
- *Just Security in an Undergoverned World* (2018)
- *Reimagining Governance in a Multipolar World* (2019, co-published with the Doha Forum)
- *UN 2.0: Ten Innovations for Global Governance – 75 Years beyond San Francisco* (2020)
- *Beyond UN75: A Roadmap for Inclusive, Networked & Effective Global Governance* (2021)
- *Building Back Together & Greener: Twenty Initiatives for a Just, Healthy, and Sustainable Global Recovery* (2021, co-published with the Doha Forum)
- *Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for the Future* (2022)

Foreword

While multiple, ongoing wars, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic continue to capture global headlines, the world has witnessed an increase of 150 million people affected by hunger since before the pandemic—a disturbing trend, arguably exacerbated by these “3-C’s”: conflict, a changing climate, and COVID. Meanwhile, the same cyberspace tools bringing unprecedented development opportunities to our hyperconnected world economy have precipitated the need for a new framework to regulate interstate relations to prevent and manage conflict across borders. The recent failure of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review also signals an urgency for innovative governance approaches and institutions to foresee and better grapple with today’s global threats and challenges.

Fortunately, a once-in-a-generation opportunity to review and dramatically improve tools for managing such enormous and complex problems worldwide, a Summit of the Future, will occur, in September 2024, during the General Assembly’s annual High-Level Week in New York by the United Nations’ 193 Member States, preceded by a ministerial meeting in September 2023.

Three global policy frameworks with the potential to focus and transform the summit’s agenda are a Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace. Perhaps in a way incomparable to earlier, less globally-integrated generations, this is a time for imaginative thinking, skillful diplomacy and coalition-building, and—most of all—courage, in support of these and related proposals spearheaded by UN Secretary-General António Guterres. The stakes could not be higher.

We wish to express our appreciation to the authors of *Rethinking Global Cooperation: Three New Frameworks for Collective Action in an Age of Uncertainty*. This report, with its detailed analysis and elaboration of newly-recommended frameworks for future generations, digital cooperation, and peace, represents the latest annual intellectual collaboration between the Doha Forum and the Stimson Center. We hope it will inform a rich and open exchange of ideas and bolster efforts to achieve a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world. By rethinking global cooperation through novel and lasting partnerships, we can ensure that the future we want becomes a reality for today’s younger generation and all future generations.

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Contents

Research Team and Acknowledgements.....	i
Foreword	ii
List of Abbreviations	v
Executive Summary.....	1
I. Introduction: A Wake-up Call for the Planet	4
<i>The Frameworks</i>	4
<i>Intersectionality of the Frameworks</i>	6
II. From Rethinking to Reforming: Conceptual Innovations and their Operationalization.....	9
<i>New Global Deal</i>	9
<i>New Social Contracts</i>	11
<i>Networked, Inclusive, and Effective Multilateralism</i>	12
III. Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations ...	15
IV. Facilitating an Open, Free, and Secure Digital Future for all through a Global Digital Compact	26
V. Advancing Inclusive and Just Peace through a New Agenda For Peace	37
VI. Road to the Summit of the Future	49
<i>2023 or 2024? Why Timing Matters</i>	49
<i>Advancing Future Generations, Digital Cooperation, and Peace on the Road to the Summit of the Future</i>	52
<i>Civil Society’s Role in Maximizing the Summit of the Future</i>	56
<i>A Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity to Renew Global Governance</i>	59
Endnotes	60
Annex 1: Illustrations of <i>Our Common Agenda</i> Follow-up Discussions.....	67
<i>Annex 1.1: Illustrative Highlights from Our Common Agenda Follow-Up Negotiations on Future Generations</i>	67
<i>Annex 1.2: Member States’ contributions during the PGA Thematic Consultations on the Global Digital Compact (February 21, 2022)</i>	70
<i>Annex 1.3: Member States’ contributions during the PGA Thematic Consultations on the New Agenda for Peace (February 21, 2022)</i>	71
Annex 2: List of resources on global governance innovation.....	72
Bibliography.....	73

List of Illustrations

Figures

Figure 1.1 Displaced persons as of 2021: Number of people (in millions)	15
Figure 2.1: Pushing the thinking on global cooperation	17
Figure 2.2: Parameters for Networked–Inclusive–Effective Multilateralism	20
Figure 3.1: Bottom twenty countries in the 2021 Global Commons Stewardship (GCS) Index. .24	
Figure 3.2: Welsh National Well-Being Indicators Framework	26
Figure 3.3: Illustration of dynamic interactions across generations	29
Figure 4.1: The relationship between technology and the SDGs	34
Figure 4.2: Member States’ general consensus on possible Global Digital Compact themes. . . .37	
Figure 5.1: New peace & security realities and challenges	44
Figure 5.2: Number of non-state-initiated violent conflicts since 1989.	45
Figure 5.3: Armed conflict by type (1946 - 2021)	47
Figure 6.1: Roadmap to the 2023 Summit	63

Boxes

Box 3.1 Gaps in the international community’s current response.	25
Box 6.1: Major Elements of the SOTF Modalities Resolution	57
Box 6.2: Global Policy Dialogue proposals for the Summit of the Future	64

Tables

Table 4.1: Responses from the international community to technological challenges	36
Table 5.1: Past Invocations of Uniting for Peace and General Assembly Outcomes.	54

List of Abbreviations

ACUNS	Academic Council for the United Nations System
AI	Artificial Intelligence
DPPA	(UN) Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
FGR	Future Generations Review
GCS	Global Commons Stewardship
GDC	Global Digital Compact
HIPPO	High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
HLAB	High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism
HRFG	Human Rights for Future Generations
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ISI	Intergenerational Solidarity Index
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MSU	DPPA's Mediation Support Unit
NA4P	New Agenda for Peace
NDC(s)	Nationally Determined Contribution(s)
NIEM	Networked, Inclusive, and Effective Multilateralism
OCA	Our Common Agenda
PBC	(UN) Peacebuilding Commission
new PBC	(UN) Peacebuilding Council
PGA	President of the United Nations General Assembly
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SOTF	Summit of the Future
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN75	United Nations' 75th anniversary
UNCSA	United Nations Collective Security Architecture
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

Executive Summary

“It would be difficult to fix the present crises and prevent new ones with the same mentality and logic that led to their onset. Our challenges are clearly reinforcing each other. The best approach would be to seek systemic solutions and act across silos. ... Concerning the Summit of the Future, it will be a major event ... as proposed by the Secretary-General in his *Our Common Agenda* report. ... it will be one of the most significant undertakings of the UN, certainly the most important since Agenda 2030.”

—Ambassador Csaba Kőrösi, President of the 77th UN General Assembly¹

In 2022, the growing impacts of climate change have been felt across the globe, from prolonged drought in the Middle East and North Africa, to erratic monsoons in South Asia and record-breaking heat waves in Europe and China. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic—which reached the tragic milestone of one million deaths within the first eight months of this year—and the ongoing war in Ukraine and other violent conflicts have impeded global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Global population affected by hunger rose to 828 million in 2021, a jump of 150 million since before the pandemic. While technological advances wield the potential to help tackle global inequities, the lack of an international framework regulating interstate relations in cyberspace leaves a crucial gap in the management of conflict across borders; equally alarming is the failure of the recent Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference to reach consensus on a substantive outcome.

To address these and other pressing global challenges, UN Secretary-General António Guterres presented to world leaders one year ago his seminal report, *Our Common Agenda*. In addition to providing conceptual innovations—a new global deal, new social contracts, and networked, inclusive, and effective multilateralism—and a wealth of recommendations, he called for a “Summit of the Future” to improve governance arrangements in critical areas that urgently require more effective collective action worldwide; to rethink global cooperation in the face of growing global competition, uncertainty, and anxiety. Among

the September 2024 summit’s anticipated and potentially far-reaching outcomes are an overarching Pact for the Future, as well as a Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace.

Convening the Summit of the Future in a way that complements next year’s “SDGs Summit” would recognize the gravity of the issues now undercutting the Sustainable Development Goals’ achievement. It would further highlight the need for a more urgent and capable response by the world’s governance system to the rising risk of nuclear war and the growing realities of runaway climate change, resurgent poverty, and myriad threats to human rights. While the summit will not tackle the world’s most colossal problems overnight, it presents a rare, once-in-a-generation opportunity to achieve some high-profile wins in the near-term, in order to generate momentum and improve conditions for even more ambitious global governance innovations in years to come.

This report’s companion study, *Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for the Future* (June 2022), presents twenty main recommendations intended to encourage more ambitious, forward-looking thinking and deliberation on global governance renewal in the run-up to the Summit of the Future. In this report, we elaborate on three of the most promising of these recommendations, which build in turn on ideas introduced initially in *Our Common Agenda*. Each of them pushes the boundaries of our thinking about the essential elements of future global cooperation:

■ Declaration on Future Generations

Proclaiming the well-being of future generations as a global public good, a Declaration on Future Generations should be crafted with consideration of:

- *Legal Rights of and Obligations toward Future Generations*: Providing legal recognition to the well-being of future generations requires that a “duty of care” is made explicit to which Member States can be held accountable. Globally, the connection between human well-being, our natural environment, and human rights was made ever clearer in the recent, historic UN General Assembly resolution that declared access to a clean and healthy environment to be a universal human right.
- *Realigning Political Incentives in Support of Future Citizens*: Realigning priorities and renewing intergenerational solidarity could be done through existing institutional mechanisms, such as evaluating the impact of UN resolutions on future generations (and then amending them as necessary) and strengthening national capacities for mainstreaming the interests and needs of future generations (including foresight-based national policymaking supported by forward-thinking legal, political, economic, and environmental research).
- *Youth, Agenda 2030, and Beyond*: The cross-cutting Sustainable Development Goals lay the foundation for thriving youth populations today and determine the opportunities they face as they grow into the adults of tomorrow. Such responsibilities toward young people must be inherent in a Declaration on Future Generations, as each generation must confront the challenges and opportunities of youth.

A repurposed Trusteeship Council or Stewardship Council, a Futures Lab, a universal periodic review mechanism and Intergenerational Sustainability Index, and a Special Envoy for Future Generations could all support the declaration’s implementation.

■ Global Digital Compact

Rapid advancements in technology pose ever increasing risks to the protection of human rights, even as they create opportunities for

development. The absence of a holistic, networked, and multilateral approach to technological governance necessitates a Global Digital Compact based on a framework that addresses three key dimensions of the technological life-cycle (the “3-I’s”):

- *Innovation*: Ensure that technological development, from ideation and sourcing to creation and deployment, strives to promote public interests, safeguards environmental sustainability, and adheres to basic human rights norms.
- *Infrastructure*: Foster universal access and connectivity to technological infrastructure and the Internet; adherence to Agenda 2030 also means that such infrastructure should be environmentally sustainable and secure.
- *Information*: Verify that the development or ownership of technology does not adversely impact human rights and confirm that human rights apply equally online.

■ New Agenda for Peace

The spirit of the original, 1992 Agenda for Peace can be recaptured by a new and dynamic approach to sustaining peace, and promoting a mutually reinforcing approach to justice and security in the twenty-first century, that focuses on:

- *Prevention*: Reinvigorated conflict prevention at local, regional, and international levels could prioritize new foresight capabilities, an enhanced political role for UN Resident Coordinators, a new Peacebuilding Commission audit tool, and disarmament.
- *The Changing Nature of Conflict*: Climate change and water security, cyber-warfare (including disinformation and misinformation), and the two-way interplay between sustainable security and a healthy global commons all merit special attention.
- *Inclusiveness*: Innovate the Women, Peace & Security and Youth, Peace & Security agendas through targeted investments in education and a policy opportunity approach that transforms the violence of exclusion into trust and partnerships.
- *UN Collective Security Architecture reform*: Strengthen the Security Council, General

Convening the Summit of the Future in a way that complements next year’s “SDGs Summit” would recognize the gravity of the issues now undercutting the SDGs’ achievement. It would further highlight the ... rising risk of nuclear war and the growing realities of runaway climate change ... and myriad threats to human rights.

Assembly, and Peacebuilding Commission, and adopt the Secretary-General’s proposed Emergency Platform, through membership re-configurations, new tools, and new modes of non-traditional engagement with regional organizations, local organizations, and non-state actors that contribute to peacemaking, peace-keeping, and peacebuilding.

Road to the Summit of the Future

Each of the three global policy frameworks proposed above would benefit from the formation of a task force or committee, led by one UN Permanent Representative from the Global North and one from the Global South, placed under one of the Pact for the Future’s proposed thematic pillars and given the requisite UN Secretariat support. Independent research should also be commissioned from academics and policy researchers to inform the task forces’ work, and the substantive inputs and perspectives of other diverse actors across civil society should be sought.

Given the sheer complexities, large number of policy issues to be deliberated upon, and the accelerated time-frame for the 2024 Summit of the Future, preceded by a September 2023 preparatory ministerial meeting, civil society groups could play a constructive role in the finalizing of ambitious goals within the Pact for the Future and associated policy frameworks. Meaningful civil society engagement, in the spirit of more networked, inclusive, and effective multilateralism in the summit’s preparations, can reassure all stakeholders that

decisions taken are well-informed, enjoy broad social ownership, and generate a sense of co-responsibility in supporting their implementation. Such collaboration could include:

- Ensuring that the intergovernmental negotiations both welcome and deliberate on substantive inputs provided by scholars, non-governmental organizations, major groups, business leaders, and parliamentarians.
- Opening formal negotiations to public observation.
- Supporting national, regional, and global multistakeholder forums in the run-up to the summit.
- Encouraging the involvement of civil society and parliamentarians in the national delegations preparing for the summit.

The aspirations of billions worldwide grow in favor of change toward a system of global governance that values cooperation over discord, global policy based on scientific evidence over fragmentation and disinformation, and, most of all, the embrace of human dignity and a rich notion of positive peace, where all peoples and nations have to live in free, safe, and habitable societies in harmony with both nature and their neighbors—now and in the long-term. But without the institutional and normative reforms we need mobilized through a high-ambition coalition of states, businesses, and civil society partners, “the future we want” will soon be out of reach for us and lost to posterity for good.

I. Introduction: A Wake-up Call for the Planet

“*Our Common Agenda* was intended as a wake-up call. One year on, we must ask ourselves: Have we woken up?” —*António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations*²

The year 2020 marked the 75th Anniversary of the UN (UN75). On this occasion, Secretary-General António Guterres shared his vision to prepare the United Nations for twenty-first century needs and challenges. A UN75 Global Conversation with civil society and survey of “We the Peoples” helped to craft a UN75 Political Declaration, which was adopted by Member States and identified twelve global priority areas with an eye to the centenary of the world organization in 2045.³ The declaration also called for the Secretary-General to report back, within a year, on recommendations to advance these priorities, which ushered in his September 2021 report, *Our Common Agenda* (OCA).⁴

The OCA report offered some ninety wide-ranging recommendations organized around eight “high-level tracks.”⁵ Perhaps the most significant was a proposal for a Summit of the Future (SOTF) to “advance ideas for governance arrangements in the areas of international concern mentioned in [*Our Common Agenda*], and potentially others ...”⁶ The summit’s chief outcome document, a “Pact for the Future”, could serve as a vehicle for building consensus among UN Member States around many of the OCA’s recommendations across the UN’s three main pillars, namely peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights. It could either incorporate or operate as a chapeau and overarching document that underscores several complementary global policy frameworks for consideration at the summit, including a Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace.

In November 2021, Member States lent their support to the OCA in a consensus resolution. Through its three operative clauses, the resolution welcomed the *Our Common Agenda* report’s further consideration by Member States and requested the Secretary-General’s support in

its follow-through. Member States then called on the President of the General Assembly to initiate “inclusive intergovernmental consideration of the various proposals, options, and potential means of implementation ... in collaboration with all relevant partners,” creating a legitimate entry point for multistakeholder inputs in taking the OCA forward (see annex 1 for details on these negotiations across the three proposed global policy frameworks).⁷

This report is the companion volume to *Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for The Future*, which was published, in June 2022, with the aim of encouraging more forward-looking and ambitious deliberation on global governance renewal, and paving the way for innovative solutions to global challenges in the run-up to the SOTF, now planned for September 2024.⁸ It draws from the expertise and experiences of the Stimson Center and Doha Forum and builds on their collaborative research and policy dialogues over the past four years.⁹ This report aims to contribute independent expert perspectives and a strategic outlook to the ongoing preparations for the Summit of the Future, with a view to amplifying the Secretary-General’s “wake-up call” issued one year ago with the release of his *Our Common Agenda* report.

The Frameworks

This report focuses on three of the proposed “tracks” for the Summit of The Future with the potential to become new and lasting frameworks for future global policymaking, namely: a Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace (note: the summit’s overarching “Pact for the Future” outcome document is addressed at length in Stimson’s *Road to 2023* report). Each is contextualized in light of the conceptual innovations underpinning the OCA—a new global

Cooperation is paramount to increasing our awareness of the connections, implications, and impacts of governance decisions. It is especially needed to address ... the challenges posed by today's global environmental, socioeconomic, technological, and political-security megatrends.

deal, new social contracts, and networked, inclusive, and effective multilateralism. For each framework, the report subsequently delves into identified current gaps in global governance, analyzing the international community's responses to those gaps, and making recommendations on how they can close them. It aims to:

1. **Catalyze ambition and offer concrete recommendations where a level of consensus is starting to emerge** (especially for the UN's Declaration on Future Generations);
2. **Add structured analysis to ideas and principles that have gained or are gaining support on the global agenda** (especially for the UN's Global Digital Compact); and
3. **Revisit earlier frameworks and offer new insights and proposals to keep up with changing global threats and challenges** (especially for the UN's New Agenda for Peace).

■ **A Declaration on Future Generations**

An Elements Paper for the Declaration on Future Generations has been presented to Member States, in a process co-facilitated by Fiji and the Netherlands. Hence, the objective of section III of the report is to provoke further reflection and to raise ambitions, grounded in practical means for implementation and operationalization, heading into the full intergovernmental negotiations that will follow UN General Assembly High-Level Week 2022.

Section III, therefore, presents the well-being of future generations as a global public good and considers the legal, political, and moral prisms of a Declaration on Future Generations, alongside

its implications for existing global priorities such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Financing for Development Action Agenda, and the Paris Climate Agreement. Moreover, the section proposes practical elements that would support the success of such a declaration's implementation, through a Special Envoy for Future Generations, a universal periodic review and Intergenerational Sustainability Index, and a repurposed Trusteeship Council or Stewardship Council.

■ **A Global Digital Compact**

With the appointment of a new UN Tech Envoy, Amandeep Singh Gill, the Global Digital Compact (GDC) is expected to take shape through a multistakeholder process in the upcoming months. Importantly, as an intergovernmental negotiated compact (informed by simultaneous multistakeholder consultations), it should build upon and reinforce existing initiatives in digital governance, including the 2020 UN Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.¹⁰

Given the rapid advances and increasing market and political forces in the digital space, section IV of this report explores a holistic, networked, and multilateral approach to the Global Digital Compact, based on the "3-Is"—innovation, infrastructure, and information—of the technological life cycle.

■ **A New Agenda for Peace**

Current global crises and violent conflicts have exposed current gaps in the UN's collective security architecture. While the need for change garners widespread support, this has

given rise to essentially operational shifts (for example, improvements in the functioning of UN peacekeeping and other conflict management tools) rather than equally important political, economic, and moral transformations. A more fundamental shift in the way peace is understood and in the way it can be seeded and sustained needs to take place. As called for in the *Our Common Agenda* report, this requires an ambitious overhaul of the 1992 Agenda for Peace.

Such a global normative update, however, requires a synthesis of the latest academic research, policy lessons learned, and analysis of the major global political faultlines. Section V of the report embarks on this endeavor and examines four fundamental drivers of a New Agenda for Peace: the need to innovate approaches to prevention, the changing nature of conflict, empowering women and youth in peacebuilding, and reforming the UN's collective security architecture.

Intersectionality of the Frameworks

It is important to note from the outset that these three policy frameworks do not exist in isolation. Each interacts with the others, and with wider global challenges and responses to them. For example, the rise of cyberwarfare confronts both digital governance and twenty-first century platforms for peace. Equally, both conflict and digital access have direct and deep impacts on the challenges and opportunities faced by youth, who play an important transitive role in the well-being of future generations. Finally, all of these frameworks cross-fertilize with the Sustainable Development Goals, the “triple planetary crisis” flagged by the OCA report (namely, climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution),¹¹ and the global financial architecture.

These intersectional relationships are reflected throughout *Rethinking Global Cooperation*. The key message for the reader is that in today's increasingly interconnected world, cooperation is paramount to increasing our awareness of the connections, implications, and impacts of governance decisions. It is especially needed to address effectively the

challenges posed by today's global environmental, socioeconomic, technological, and political-security megatrends.

Environmental Trends

In 2022, the growing impacts of climate change have been felt across the globe, from prolonged drought in the Middle East and North Africa to erratic monsoons in South Asia and record-breaking heat waves in Europe and China.¹² Undeniably, the data and evidence available are only able to capture the tip of a rapidly vanishing iceberg: global warming is likely to reach 1.5° Celsius after 2030, but record swaths of global forest are already alight; moreover, half of the most climate-fragile countries already suffer from conflict.¹³ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its recent sixth assessment report, argued the need for urgent adaptation, integrated global efforts to combat the growing climate crisis, and climate-resilient development across the globe.¹⁴

Notable advancements in international climate action include an increased focus on aligning the SDGs with the 2015 Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.¹⁵ The UN General Assembly, in a historic resolution in August 2022, declared access to a clean and healthy environment as a universal human right.¹⁶ However, the urgency of the intensifying crisis and related environmental crises, such as deforestation, beckon a more rapid, coordinated, and comprehensive response that moves beyond mere rhetoric and implements policies with consideration for both present and future generations.¹⁷

Socioeconomic Trends

The COVID-19 pandemic—which reached the tragic milestone of one million deaths within the first eight months of 2022—and the ongoing war in Ukraine have significantly impeded global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁸ Global populations affected by hunger rose to 828 million in 2021, a jump of 150 million since before the pandemic, and 670 million people will still face hunger in 2030, even if global economic recovery is stepped-up.¹⁹ Regions in the Global South such as Africa felt the heaviest

impact; approximately 20 percent of the population was hunger-stricken in 2021.²⁰ Worldwide, nearly 32 percent of women were moderately or severely food insecure, compared with about 28 percent of men.²¹ Global inflation driven by rising food and energy prices and lingering supply-demand imbalances was projected to reach 6.6 percent in advanced economies and 9.5 percent in emerging market and developing economies in 2022.²² Food price inflation, at 15 percent, has been especially hard for lower-income households who spend approximately 50 percent of their income on food.²³ Sixty percent of low-income countries are at a high risk of or are already in debt distress, up from 30 percent in 2015.²⁴ In the eighty-one countries where the UN World Food Programme works, acute hunger is projected to increase from 276 million to 323 million, with the steepest rise expected in Sub-Saharan Africa if Russia's war against Ukraine continues in 2022.²⁵

Adverse global growth patterns make the future outlook even more concerning. Economic growth is expected to slump from 5.7 percent in 2021 to 2.9 percent in 2022, significantly lower than the 4.1 percent that was anticipated in January 2022.²⁶ The World Employment and Social Outlook report projects that global unemployment will stand at 207 million in 2022, surpassing its pre-pandemic level.²⁷

Technological Trends

Better life expectancy, increased overall economic growth, and decreased global poverty, which have improved global living standards in recent decades, could be attributed, in part, to technological advancements. However, this

change is rarely linear and not always positive, affected by the inevitable challenges which arise from technological developments moving faster than public policy. Cyberspace, for instance, already poses a challenge to our understanding of the use of force, and the lack of an international framework regulating interstate relations in cyberspace leaves a crucial gap in international conflict management.²⁸ The ubiquity of Big Data suggests how fast change is happening.²⁹ From managing pandemics, such as COVID-19, to climate change and human rights, the advancement and regulation of data increasingly impacts all aspects of human life. The "metaverse," for instance, is believed to be the next evolution of the Internet, laying the foundation for an ever more realistic-seeming and immersive digital world.³⁰ As a result, "its disruptive potential could have significant impacts on society as technologies become more widespread and sophisticated."³¹

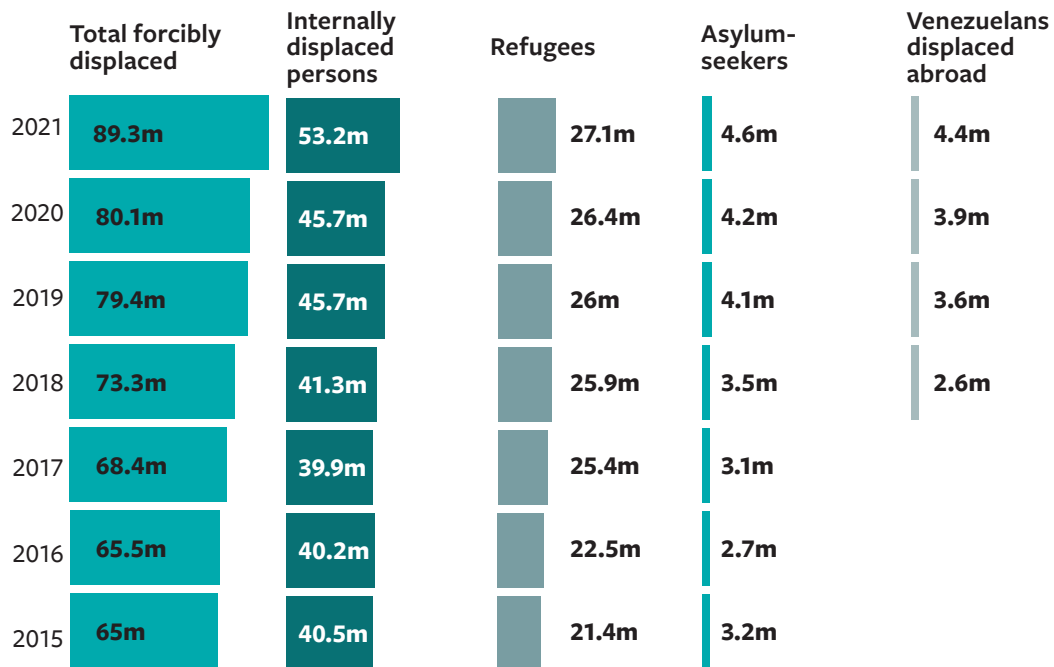
As technological shifts lead to changes in our understanding of crucial concepts such as international peace and security and sustainable development, socio-technological progress has become increasingly dependent on our ability to create global frameworks for digital governance that support an effective architecture for multistakeholder cooperation in technological innovation.

Political-Security Trends

The current geopolitical landscape is marked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China's threat to Taiwanese autonomy, protracted civil wars in Yemen and Ethiopia, the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and Afghanistan,

The linkages between challenges and their multifaceted repercussions behoove international governance to move beyond narrow, reductionist approaches to a more cooperative and cohesive modus operandi.

Figure 1.1: Displaced persons as of 2021: Number of people (in millions)



Source: UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database. Data as of June 16, 2022.

and the diplomatic stalemate over Iran’s nuclear program. With many of the world’s major powers at odds, global security is in a perilous state.

In addition to climate, cyber, and other risks to international *and human* security, traditional military-based security continues to be a central cause for concern. The invasion of Ukraine, for example, has revived debate on disarmament and the need to place greater restraints on global nuclear threats.³² Not since the end of the Cold War, arguably, has the specter of nuclear weapons use seemed so real, and the review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in August 2022 in New York, failed to reach consensus on a “substantive outcome.”³³ The disruptive impact of war—whether interstate or internal—is most visible in the staggering numbers of forcibly displaced people. In 2021, UNHCR estimated that, for the first time in recorded history, the number of those forcibly displaced reached 89.3 million, of whom over some 53 million were displaced within their own countries (figure 1.1).

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The identified global trends highlight how concepts can no longer be deliberated upon within silos. The linkages between challenges and their multifaceted repercussions behoove international governance to move beyond narrow, reductionist approaches to a more cooperative and cohesive modus operandi. How the proposed Declaration on Future Generations, Global Digital Compact, and New Agenda for Peace can serve as key drivers in the operationalization of *Our Common Agenda’s* conceptual innovations (including a new global deal, new social contracts, and networked, inclusive, and effective multilateralism) is addressed in the next section. Subsequently, sections III through V of this report focus on these three global policy frameworks, detailing their targeted challenges, proposed major elements, and potential spoilers to be overcome. The report’s concluding section VI turns to a strategy for reform and implementation of the three frameworks by fully leveraging the 2024 Summit of the Future during UN High-Level Week in New York.

II. From Rethinking to Reforming: Conceptual Innovations and their Operationalization

“As curtains are raised and as the sun shines upon dark places, what was previously invisible comes into view. Technology has turned our world into one interconnected neighborhood. What happens in one place is seen in every corner, and there has been no better time for the spread of peace, democracy and their attending social justice and fairness for all.”
—Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *President of Liberia and Nobel Peace Laureate*³⁴

This section outlines the three main conceptual innovations expounded in the *Our Common Agenda* report—a new global deal, new social contracts, and networked, inclusive, and effective multilateralism (NIEM). It discusses, furthermore, how each of the three global policy frameworks on which this report focuses—a Declaration on Future Generations, Global Digital Compact, and New Agenda for Peace—can play a pivotal role in operationalizing each of these foundational concepts, thereby making important contributions to pushing the boundaries of our thinking about global cooperation (figure 2.1).

While the importance of military and economic power in international relations is undeniable, the power of ideas, concepts, and narratives is no less significant. Powerful concepts, such as sovereignty and territorial integrity, help countries that are threatened by stronger neighbors to justify their defensive actions and garner the support of the international community. Concepts such as sustainable development help to overcome seemingly irreconcilable positions, such as between those calling for environmental conservation and those calling for economic development.³⁵ The concept of human security further reveals the different dimensions of security at a human level, thereby bridging resources on national security and human development.³⁶ Similarly, albeit arguably less successfully, the responsibility to protect (R2P) concept was introduced, in 2001, to overcome the tension between the principle of non-intervention into a country’s internal affairs and the imperative of preventing mass atrocities.³⁷

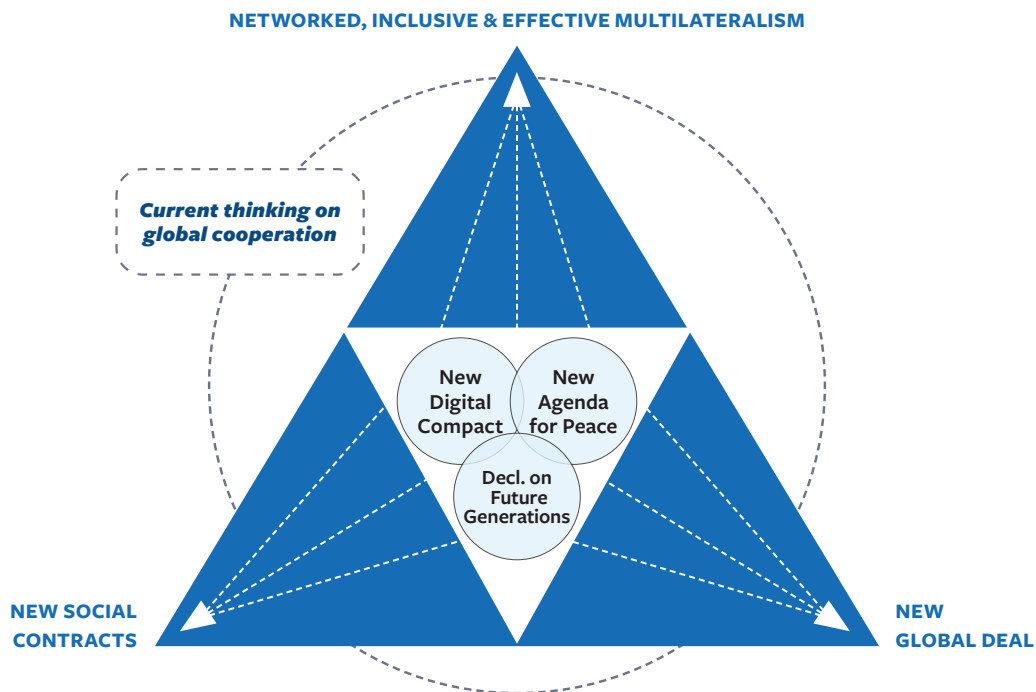
Hence, the importance of ideas, concepts, and narratives should not be underestimated when reforming global cooperation in the wake of the UN75 Declaration and the *Our Common Agenda* report. The UN75 Declaration served to recommit the Member States to core principles of their cooperation. With the crisis of global governance and the onslaught against international institutions and agreements of the past years,³⁸ followed by a global pandemic that saw the emergence of “vaccine nationalism,”³⁹ such a recommitment was direly needed.

Beyond highlighting commitments to norms that already existed—and some of which continue to be violated by powerful actors—new conceptual frameworks are needed urgently to underpin and guide the efforts toward “the future we want, and the United Nations we need.”⁴⁰ In recent years,⁴¹ UN Secretary-General António Guterres has developed a number of such innovations, each crystalized in the OCA and now anticipated to serve as “conceptual cornerstones” of the Summit of the Future and its accompanying Pact for the Future.⁴²

New Global Deal

The *Our Common Agenda* report calls for “a serious renewal of the principles and practices of collective action at the global level ..., building on what is working and what has been achieved.”⁴³ It notes further that the objectives of this collective action are, to a large extent, already defined by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN75 Declaration. Hence, the New Global Deal serves to achieve the SDGs,⁴⁴ on the basis of the principles set out in the UN75 Declaration. The New Global Deal, moreover, is

Figure 2.1: Pushing the thinking on global cooperation



to complement and strengthen the inauguration of new social contracts (see next sub-section) at the (sub)national level.⁴⁵ Whether the aim here is redistribution of resources or representation in global bodies is not entirely clear. At his 2020 Nelson Mandela Lecture, the Secretary-General had still stressed the need for “redistribution of power, wealth, and opportunities” in the world in 2020.⁴⁶ However, the redistributive dimension of the New Global Deal is not as fleshed out in the OCA report. Only the need to better “prioritize” the use of resources internationally, alongside the need to pool resources to deliver public goods at the national level, are mentioned.⁴⁷ It does, however, note that the majority of UN Member States think that the Security Council “could be made more representative of the twenty-first century, such as through enlargement, including better representation for Africa.”⁴⁸

The New Global Deal is anchored in the twin concepts of the global commons and global public goods. According to the *Our Common Agenda* report, the global commons “refer to natural or cultural resources that are shared by and benefit us all” and include the high seas, atmosphere,

Antarctica, and outer space as areas beyond national jurisdiction.⁴⁹ While some consider cyber space to be among the global commons,⁵⁰ the OCA report refers to the “digital commons as a global public good.”⁵¹

Global public goods, in turn, are characterized by the fact that “they cannot be adequately provided by any one State acting alone, and they concern the welfare of humanity as a whole,” including global health, science, and peace.⁵² In scholarship, global public goods have been considered to be marked by “non-excludability” and “non-rivalry,”⁵³ meaning that they are available to all and can be enjoyed repeatedly without diminishing the benefits for others, which may be an “ideal type,”⁵⁴ rather than reality. These characteristics are, however, not underscored in the OCA report; rather it observes that there are no “agreed definitions” for either the global commons or global public goods.⁵⁵

The *Declaration on Future Generations* can operationalize the New Global Deal in important ways, seeing that the latter is supposed to “support solidarity within societies and between

generations.”⁵⁶ Most importantly, it can entrench the intergenerational dimension of global public goods, and even recast the well-being of future generations as a global public good in its own right. Elaborating on their definition of global public goods, Kaul and others have explained that they should at least meet “the needs of current generations without foreclosing development options for future generations.”⁵⁷ A similar consideration applies to the global commons, the uses of which for future generations are threatened—potentially irreversibly—by plastic pollution, combustion of fossil fuels, climate change, and orbital debris, among others. This reasoning remains at the heart of the concept of sustainable development too, defined as “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”⁵⁸ Such a declaration would serve as a normative platform for the various institutional recommendations on enhancing the voices of youth and better representing the interests of future generations. For their part, these institutional innovations could become operational platforms to mainstream and further develop the narrative of a new global deal.

Moreover, the *Global Digital Compact* can spell out concrete ways on how to help preserve and improve the digital commons as a key global public good. In particular, this refers to the principle of neutrality in the operation of the internet as a global public good. It can furthermore reveal linkages with other global public goods, such as delivering peace and security online by preventing cyber attacks and cyber crime. Fleshing out ways to close the global digital divide would also represent the spirit of the new global deal, enhancing the opportunities of billions of people currently unconnected to the Internet.

Finally, the *New Agenda for Peace* has the potential of becoming a cornerstone in delivering peace as “one of the principal global public goods the United Nations was established to deliver.”⁵⁹ Adopting a broad understanding of peace, known as “positive peace,” goes beyond the mere absence of violent conflict to include the building of inclusive and just governing

structures rooted in the rule of law. A broad conception of peace further applies to the global and digital commons, which are increasingly seen as theaters of great power competition and where the reduction of strategic risks is imperative. Providing peace relates to the provision of other global public goods. In the absence of peace, for instance, public health suffers while disinformation thrives.

New Social Contracts

The *Our Common Agenda* report defines social contracts as “the understanding within a society of how people solve shared problems, manage risks, and pool resources to deliver public goods, as well as how their collective institutions and norms operate.”⁶⁰ It observes “a growing disconnect between people and the institutions that serve them, with many feeling left behind and no longer confident that the system is working for them, an increase in social movements and protests and an ever deeper crisis of trust fomented by a loss of shared truth and understanding.”⁶¹ The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably had a catalytic effect on this trend, which exerted enormous pressures on national health systems and torn at the fiber of societies at large, while also galvanizing thinking on equitable recoveries and post-pandemic reforms.⁶² The OCA report, therefore, calls for a renewed social contract at the (sub)national level.

The Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* sees a “strong social contract anchored in human rights at the national level” as the necessary foundation for international cooperation.⁶³ Hence, there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the new social contracts and the Global New Deal, with the latter complementing the former and the former facilitating the latter. As foundations for a renewed social contract within societies, the OCA report proposes three foundations: “(a) trust; (b) inclusion, protection and participation; and (c) measuring and valuing what matters to people and the planet.”⁶⁴ The three global policy frameworks detailed in this report are crucial for bringing about and entrenching these new social contracts.

Regarding the *Declaration on Future Generations*, according to the OCA report,

intergenerational solidarity is not just a matter for the global new deal, but it needs to be expressed at the national level in new social contracts,⁶⁵ which is in keeping also with indigenous philosophies on intergenerational justice.⁶⁶ The declaration, which is to be grounded in human rights (including the recently recognised right to a clean and healthy environment that future generations should have the ability to avail), can highlight and flesh out how intergenerational equity can be pursued at the national level.⁶⁷ Moreover, it can demonstrate how—through the Global New Deal—the international community can help states achieve this. This will be particularly important seeing that young people “feel that our political, social and economic systems ignore their present and sacrifice their future.”⁶⁸ The Declaration on Future Generations, and the related institutional innovations proposed by the *Our Common Agenda* report, can ensure that the new social contracts of this era, while enshrining a contemporary set of national and transnational values, do not become “dead hands of the past”⁶⁹ that will constrain and obstruct future generations.

Similarly, the *Global Digital Compact* can play a pivotal role in emphasizing and elaborating on the increasingly important digital dimension of the relationship between the state and those governed by it. Alongside a global digital divide, multiple divides exist within societies,⁷⁰ and hence, the primary responsibility to close them falls upon national governments, especially if equal access to the Internet is in the process of emerging as a universal human right.⁷¹ Similarly, it is primarily incumbent upon national governments to ensure the protection of those under their jurisdiction from cyber attacks, cyber crime, and misinformation spread through online channels—including, of course, through international cooperation. Furthermore, in light of attempts in many countries to use digital technologies to restrict people’s rights and freedoms, including to information,⁷² the Global Digital Compact can make a strong statement that the grounding of social contracts in human rights also applies to the digital sphere.

Lastly, the *New Agenda for Peace* can help make new social contracts resilient against

internal and external pressures that threaten the use of violence, a challenge which is particularly acute in fragile societies with a history of suppressing civic spaces. As underscored in the OCA report, revolutions, wars, and economic shocks put “the social contract under immediate pressure, leaving a society vulnerable to disruption.”⁷³ Complementary to actions associated with the future New Agenda for Peace’s global dimension, addressing pressures on new social contracts depends on regional, national, and sub-national peacebuilding institutions and approaches, including steps to identify and prevent emerging strategic risks that threaten to tear apart social contracts within and between communities worldwide.

Networked, Inclusive, and Effective Multilateralism

The *Our Common Agenda* report calls for adapting the United Nations system so it can “play a leading role in a more networked and inclusive world, improving our collaboration and strategic engagement with other actors and forums at the global and regional levels.”⁷⁴ Already at the UN’s seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020, the Secretary-General had called for networked and inclusive multilateralism to address what he called “a surplus of multilateral challenges and a deficit of multilateral solutions.”⁷⁵ The OCA report adds the adjective “effective” to “networked” and “inclusive”, a term later emphasized in the title of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB), which is to provide its report in early 2023.

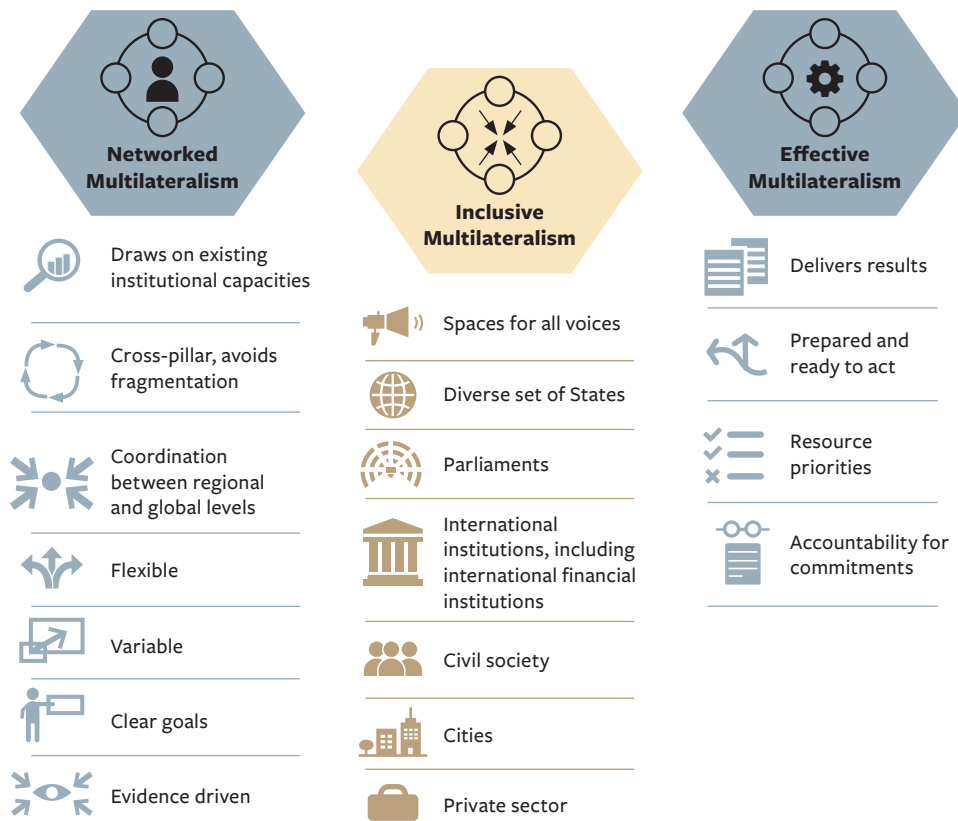
The OCA report defines “networked” as harnessing existing capacities, breaking down traditional silos, and improving cooperation across different levels of governance.⁷⁶ “Inclusive” is understood as providing a voice and better opportunities to stakeholders other than states, including inter-governmental organizations, parliaments, municipal and local administration, civil society and religious groups, universities, trade unions, and the business community sector.⁷⁷ Seeing its emphasis on non-state actors, whose growing importance and need for engagement has been long acknowledged,⁷⁸ the term “multistakeholderism”

might also have been fitting.⁷⁹ “Effective” is defined as meaning the ability of the global governance architecture to deliver on its promises and its readiness “to act or adapt in the face of present and new risks; prioritizes and resources the tasks that matter; delivers results; and can hold all actors, State and non-State, accountable for commitments made.”⁸⁰ In anticipation of the HLAB’s recommendations early next year, it is already clear that the three global policy frameworks, as elaborated below, can be important drivers for improved collective action based on the different parameters identified in the OCA report (figure 2.2).

The *Declaration on Future Generations* could cater to important aspects of inclusivity such as creating a normative standard that demands giving voice to young people, fostering a collective responsibility for future generations (the majority of whom will be born in the Global

South), and putting multilateralism more strongly in the service of generations to come.⁸¹ The declaration would represent a platform for fostering youth participation—and networking—in each of the relevant stakeholder groups identified in the report, ranging from governments to civil society organizations and the business community, rather than letting “youth” develop into its own new silo constituency group. Harking back to the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, multilateral cooperation, however successful in the here and now, will never be truly effective if it operates in a way that compromises the needs of future generations. Similarly, the declaration would thus play a key role in inspiring and back-stopping national models and frameworks on future-oriented policy, serving as the network generator, and bridging the narrative between the national and the global.

Figure 2.2: Parameters for Networked–Inclusive–Effective Multilateralism



Source: Guterres, *Our Common Agenda*, 67. © 2021 United Nations. Reproduced with permission.

What characterizes the three global policy frameworks is ... that each of them can play a key role in operationalizing and developing the full potential of the OCA report's three conceptual cornerstones.

In addition, the *Global Digital Compact*, too, would cater to all three dimensions of the enhanced style of multilateralism for which the OCA report calls. Though arguably non-binding, this new framework could entrench a moral imperative by leveraging digital technologies to include and connect relevant stakeholders from around the world. Specifically, the compact could build on large-scale consultations such as the UN75 Global Conversation that surveyed more than 1.5 million people and spurred over 3,000 dialogues worldwide,⁸² as well as draw lessons for digital cooperation developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, it can elaborate on ways for employing digital technologies to help the UN adapt and better use its limited resources. NIEM is thus a core principle on which the Global Digital Compact is based, given that the success and effectiveness of the endeavor is directly dependent on the extent to which key stakeholders are able to cooperate.

Finally, concerning the *New Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* notes how despite successes in multilateral cooperation in ensuring peace, traditional ways of preventing and resolving conflicts fail in “protracted conflicts involving transnational networks and new actors, frequently associated with terrorism, rapidly evolving weapons technologies and a growing willingness of regional actors to participate directly in wars.”⁸³ The *New Agenda for Peace* can help the UN deliver better on the core task and key public good of maintaining peace through more NIEM. The OCA report already suggests, among other things, a more inclusive approach to peacebuilding by placing “women and gender equality at the heart

of peace and security.”⁸⁴ It stresses the need for “a multistakeholder effort to reduce violence significantly worldwide and in all its forms ... and girls, in line with target 16.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals.”⁸⁵ Lastly, the multilateral system's peace efforts can be made more effective through better foresight, prevention, and avoiding relapses into violent conflict—points that are elaborated in section V of this report.

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The *Our Common Agenda* report contains a wealth of recommendations to take the UN and the wider multilateral system forward. Additional proposals have been developed in the independent policy research sphere, including through past Stimson Center-Doha Forum collaborations such as the reports *Reimagining Governance in a Multipolar World* (2019), *Coping with Old and New Crises* (2020), and *Building Back Together and Greener* (2021)—each drawn upon in this section on conceptual innovations.⁸⁶ What characterizes the three global policy frameworks on which this report focuses is, as this section aimed to show, that *each* of them can play a key role in operationalizing and developing the full potential of the OCA report's three conceptual cornerstones: Bringing about a New Global Deal, inaugurating New Social Contracts, and heralding a new age of NIEM. Yet, work remains: firstly, to flesh out each of these global policy frameworks further; and secondly, to bring them to fruition through intergovernmental *and* multistakeholder negotiations as soon as possible. The following sections speak to both the substance and the strategy on the way forward for the Declaration on Future Generations, the Global Digital Compact, and the New Agenda for Peace.

III. Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations

“The Peacemaker taught us about the Seven Generations. He said, when you sit in council for the welfare of the people, you must not think of yourself or of your family, not even of your generation. He said, make your decisions on behalf of the seven generations coming, so that they may enjoy what you have today.” —Oren Lyons (Seneca), *Faithkeeper, Onondaga Nation*⁸⁷

Global Policy Framework

Proclaiming the well-being of future generations as a global public good, a Declaration on Future Generations should be crafted with consideration of future generations’ legal rights, a country’s capacity for political mainstreaming, and the cross-cutting effects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A repurposed Trusteeship Council or Stewardship Council, a Futures Lab, a universal periodic review mechanism, an Intergenerational Sustainability Index, and a Special Envoy for Future Generations could all support the declaration’s implementation.

FutureGen

Challenges

Since 1997, the international system has acknowledged the responsibilities of present generations toward those of the future.⁸⁸ However, to date, efforts to put this potentially far-reaching set of commitments into practice have been fragmented at best. The responsibility of legacy, we presently face as ancestors of the future, is to ensure that we do not irretrievably foreclose possibilities for the well-being of those yet to be born, as well as an estimated 40 percent of humanity now living who will spend much of their lives in the world beyond 2050.⁸⁹ This leads to three major challenges fueled by knowledge and action gaps in the international community’s current attempts at long-term policymaking, namely: short-termism, high inequality, and unaccountability.

Short-termism in policymaking and the lack of political will

Much of political decision-making is reactive to trending issue-spaces and windows of

opportunity.⁹⁰ This can be attributed to the bounds of 21st century perceptions of democracy, wherein governments mostly seek to satisfy their current voter-base, rather than charting long-term action plans for the welfare of future generations.⁹¹ Especially under current political climates, where nationalism and populism are pushing back against supranational frameworks of globalization and pandemic recovery remains a priority for many, most governments find themselves working within conventional models of politics that privilege immediate gains in lieu of long-term strategies.

Given this induced myopia, and with the lack of globally understood obligations to politics beyond one’s immediate voting pool, there is little political or social cost to omitting consideration of future generations in policymaking, and where political will is present, it is often weak. Underfunding or lack of mainstreaming has caused many future-focused national strategies to fizzle out over time.⁹² In fact, without a legal, political, or moral obligation set out internationally to hold states and governments accountable—and thereby induce gains and losses to political capital—the costs of evaluating, let alone acting on, decisions made today on behalf of future citizenry too often outweigh any calculable current benefit.

The multiplier effect of existing inequalities and the lack of collective global responsibility

The challenge of political will is more repugnant in the Global North, where the short-term interests of the vast majority of people are met, opening the opportunity to address long-term

interests. Politicians in high income countries are often unable to see beyond the next election, and that is of particular concern, as they have the greatest resource potential to make decisions that would redound to the benefit of humanity in the future.

In addition to endemic resource shortages when contemplating longer-term policies, leaders in the Global South often face multiple intersectional challenges, given the need to take different development pathways to accommodate global challenges compared to “developed” countries. These include climate change, pre-existing demographic inequalities, and the imbalanced governance of the global commons. Today, around 920 million children live under severe water stress, forming the majority in the Global South. Worsening climate change will further add to their water woes with debilitating repercussions for future generations, especially through causal links with regional conflicts as elaborated in section V.⁹³ The COVID-19 pandemic has further widened the socioeconomic inequalities within and between countries. Currently, almost half of the world’s emerging-market and developing economies are falling behind in meeting the sustainable development goals.⁹⁴

With these multifaceted challenges to development, countries often take up “bandage solutions” that support their population’s near-term needs, or immediate progress toward the SDGs, without necessarily thinking about the long-term sustainability of the policy or program itself. Moreover, several overlapping and ad hoc global treaties, declarations, and compacts to address these challenges have, inadvertently, engendered an unclear framework in which to dedicate resources and balance existing priorities with foresight-driven policy.

Consequently, any attempts made at representing future generations’ well-being in policy today tend to emanate from the Global North (see discussion of national models below). Nevertheless, many cross-cutting global challenges deeply affect groups in the Global South that are already vulnerable and facing socioeconomic inequalities, including women,

indigenous populations, and ethnic and racial minorities. With the lack of a framework to induce shared and collective global responsibilities toward future generations’ cross-cutting needs (and one that skillfully employs today’s younger generations as a bridge to future generations), we see the horizontal inequalities of today created through gender, race, or ethnicity become the vertical inequalities of tomorrow, which impinge upon socioeconomic capabilities and opportunities for development.⁹⁵ This temporal multiplier effect is especially concerning given that the Global South will host the majority of future generations born by the end of the century.⁹⁶ Collective global responsibility will require a clear conceptualization of future generations’ well-being and obligations toward them, the intentional championing of needs and future-oriented agendas from around the world, and the introduction of new tools, training, and capacity-building opportunities.

Lack of Global Accountability

Despite intergenerational justice being a popular buzzword in global governance, especially in the context of managing the global commons which include the high seas, the atmosphere, Antarctica, and Outer Space, there currently is no institutional mechanism at the global level set to convene on matters regarding the protection of and utilization of the commons (as well as other major matters of intergenerational concern such as the global financial architecture), making it difficult to promote intergenerational justice on more than an unfocused, discursive level.

Without such an institutional apparatus, civil society-driven accountability cannot be applied toward countries that have historically diminished the global commons through unsustainable production and consumption practices. Figure 3.1 lists the 20 countries with the greatest absolute negative effect on the global commons, often the largest countries by population or wealth. High-income countries continue to consume on a per capita basis at a rate 60 percent higher than upper-middle-income countries, and 13 times the level of low-income

Figure 3.1: Bottom twenty countries in the 2021 Global Commons Stewardship (GCS) Index

COUNTRY	OVERALL	DOMESTIC	SPILLOVER
Iran		33.4	58.7
Turkey		36.1	47.8
Spain		44.0	37.6
Korea, Rep.		49.3	32.5
Italy		48.2	31.2
France		55.5	25.6
Mexico		29.6	47.1
Saudi Arabia		34.4	38.5
Canada		36.7	35.1
Australia		23.0	50.6
United Kingdom		48.7	23.0
Brazil		24.1	43.2
Indonesia		12.1	52.8
Germany		45.4	11.6
Russian Federation		16.3	26.3
India		4.4	30.6
Japan		46.2	1.3
European Union		9.1	1.0
United States		7.8	1.0
China		4.5	1.0

Units are in absolute terms, where 0-30 is categorized as “extreme” impact on the Commons, 30-50 as “very high” impact, 50-70 as “high,” 70-80 as “medium-high,” 80-90 as “medium-low,” 90-95 as “low,” and 95-100 as “none or very limited.”

Source: Modified from Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), *Global Commons Stewardship Index 2021*, 23.

FutureGen

countries, while generating the largest share of international spillovers (figure 3.1).⁹⁷ The five entities with the worst impacts are China, the United States, the EU27, Japan, and India. Eighteen of the 20 top contributors are part of the G20, who bear a special responsibility in safeguarding the global commons, as its member countries’ represent around 80 percent of global GDP.

The International Community’s Limited Response to Future Generations

The first global commitment to recognize responsibilities toward future generations came with UNESCO’s 1997 Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations toward Future Generations.⁹⁸ However, despite its breadth, it lacked effective accountability mechanisms or champions and failed to promulgate substantive rights for future generations, instead enumerating the notion of intergenerational equity in a loose manner: more a

presentation of behavioral guidelines than a serious framework for collective action. The UNESCO declaration remains insufficient as a tool for effectively mainstreaming future generations’ well-being into policies.⁹⁹

Cross-cutting initiatives, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, have pushed Member States to consider the idea of forward-looking strategies. However, as box 3.1 shows, international instruments developed under the traditional ad hoc, and often implicit approach to future-based policymaking, in the absence of an explicit and comprehensive guidance framework, have left a number of serious knowledge and action gaps.

Some Best Practices from National Models

Despite gaps in the international agenda, national and regional attempts at future generations frameworks have met varying degrees of success. Studying these initiatives may help one to configure a “bottoms-up approach” that

Box 3.1: Gaps in the international community's current response

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

- The Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment (1972)
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982)
- Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987)
- The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 (1992)
- The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights (1993)
- The Convention on Biological Diversity (1993)
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1994)
- The Paris Climate Agreement (2015)

KNOWLEDGE GAPS

- The concept of intergenerational equity has been interpreted to place responsibility on the present generation rather than ensuring future generations' rights.
- Lack of a coherent approach at the global level to protect the well-being of future generations.
- Lack of inclusion of the interests of the future generation in knowledge platforms.
- International fora discussions are limited to the protection of the global climate, thereby failing to establish standards to prevent existential threats and preserve the global commons.
- Understanding future generations as a rights-based, political, and moral force.

ACTION GAPS

- Insufficient nationally determined goals, apart from climate, that account for the interests of future generations.
- Lack of long-term policy foresight.
- Failure to establish structured parameters that could influence the actions of Member States, as well as international institutions.
- Failure to formulate a rights-based approach that could shape substantive commitments and processes by powerful countries and global bodies.
- Lack of institutional accountability (who owes the "duty of care.")
- Lack of significant representation of future generations' interests.

Source: *Original Box, Stimson Center.*

It is worth noting that one cannot, definitionally, get a "member of the future generations group" to sit on, for example a panel, as is often done with women, youth, and other minority groups. While a proxy, such as an Envoy, could champion the interests of Future Generations, and Statespersons should consider future generations' well-being in policymaking, this unique form of proxy representation means we must empathize with Future Generations, rather than tokenizing their representation in global governance, as is many times the case seen with minority groups.

could further guide a comprehensive multilateral governance framework.

Some notable innovations at the national and regional levels provide initial sketches for a successful global approach. For example, the Parliament of Hungary established the Office of the Deputy-Commissioner for Fundamental Rights in 2011 and recognized the need to protect natural resources. The associated law stated that it shall be the obligation of the state to protect and maintain natural resources, and to

preserve them for future generations.¹⁰⁰ It stipulates the idea of "common heritage of nation" in regards to natural resources, and it calls upon the state to protect, maintain, and preserve natural resources for future generations. Moreover, domestic courts in several jurisdictions, such as the Netherlands, have relied on existing supranational agreements (such as those in box 3.1) for interpreting national rights and obligations. The Dutch Supreme Court recently established the government's duty of care on the basis of the European

Convention on Human Rights, in order to protect the rights to life and home from the threat of climate change.¹⁰¹

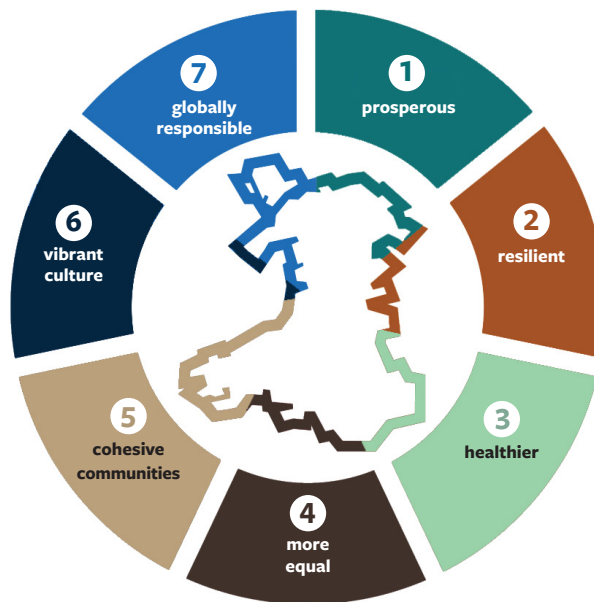
Alternatives to legal practice are seen in, for example, the 2015 Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, wherein responsibilities were placed on specific public bodies to act in a manner to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (a principle adapted from the 1987 Brundtland Commission).¹⁰² It lays down seven future well-being goals to guide the actions of the national, local, and public bodies. The Wales Act proposed the establishment of indicators against a particular outcome across several dimensions that could be expressed as a value or characteristic measured quantitatively or qualitatively (figure 3.2). Importantly, a periodic “Future Trends Report” increased the transparency and accountability of public bodies. The Act went a step further by defining five criteria, (Long-Term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration, and Involvement) through which to measure the extent and scope of intergenerational sustainable development. And it provided a window of opportunity to apply a Disaster Risk Reduction approach with an emphasis on prevention.¹⁰³

Wales’ “all-in” approach can be contrasted with Barbados’ methodology, in its FutureBarbados initiative of choosing champions to work with the government as entry points to carry forward advocacy for the mainstreaming of future generations’ interests and equities.¹⁰⁴

Outside the realm of law- and politics-focused methods lies Japan’s Future Design movement, a localized foresight approach that exemplifies the Inclusive Imaginaries methodology being piloted by UNDP’s Strategic Foresight initiative.¹⁰⁵ Established with the mission of strengthening intergenerational justice, the participatory decision-making model advanced in Japan employs behavioral sciences to design social systems that enable residents at the local level to discuss and decide on long-term plans by simulating negotiations between stakeholders of the future and those of the present.¹⁰⁶ This builds on ideas from indigenous philosophies of “intergenerational facing” and building intertemporal relationships.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, no system is universally applicable. Continued scenario planning, articulation of small wins to stakeholders, clear targets and metrics to measure implementation, transparency and accountability through consistent

Figure 3.2: Welsh National Well-Being Indicators Framework



Source: Welsh Government, “Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015,” 2015.

Within the bounds of what we have come to understand as “sustainable” politics, the future lies at the crux of political intent and realignment of our moral and social constructs.

reporting, and due consideration of how economic models interact with the social fabric of a society, country, and region will best promote a policy framework’s success.

Major Elements of the Global Policy Framework

Despite challenges, the world’s capacity for long-term planning is greater than ever. Advanced modeling systems enable us to anticipate the consequences of our actions many years into the future (the life-cycle of these technologies is further discussed in section IV).

The Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* report acknowledges this and recommends taking action on protecting the equities of future generations. While the idea is featured throughout the report, from new social contracts to a new global deal and better emergency response mechanisms, specific proposals include a Declaration on Future Generations, establishing a Futures Lab, repurposing the Trusteeship Council for deliberations on future generations, and appointing a Special Envoy for Future Generations. What the OCA lacks, however, is an in-depth consideration of these ideas, as well as a conceptual understanding of the notion of doing right by future generations.¹⁰⁸ Metaphorically, while the goals exist, and the principle of “scoring goals is good” is agreed upon, the strategy of how to play and even the reason why we should play the game is yet to be agreed upon.

Conceptualizing Future Generations’ Well-Being as a Global Public Good

Let us start by thinking of why we should play the game. A global public good is understood to meet two characteristics: non-rivalry in consumption and non-excludability. Their benefits are quasi universal in terms of countries, people

and generations—for example, meeting the needs of current generations without foreclosing development options for future generations.¹⁰⁹ In other words, the well-being of future generations should be considered as a global public good, catering to the similar ideals of global health, peace, and a healthy planet (as envisaged in *Our Common Agenda*).¹¹⁰ From a moral perspective, this poses a duty of guardianship toward the management of this global public good, and by recognizing the well-being of our successors as a good for us today, we bring forth the notion of legacy and set normative standards for the type of ancestors we seek to become.¹¹¹

Having elucidated the framing of the moral dimension, the following operational elements consider the “asset management” of this global public good through legal and political prisms, the importance of establishing institutional support systems to overcome these challenges, and the need to learn from past lessons.

A Declaration on Future Generations

Legal Rights of and Obligations toward Future Generations

Providing legal recognition to the well-being of future generations requires a direct link between the effect of the actions or operations of an entity and the needs and interests of future generations. In other words, a “duty of care” must be made explicit to which Member States can be held accountable. Such a notion of “duty of care” could be established on the premise of intergenerational equity, which has been recognized under numerous domestic jurisdictions. In the case of *Future Generations v. Ministry of the Environment and Others*, the Supreme Court of Colombia applied the principle of intergenerational equity to “future generations, including the children who brought this action,” and it

ordered the government to formulate an inter-generational pact for the life of the Colombian Amazon with the active participation of the youth plaintiffs.¹¹²

Globally, the connection between human well-being, our natural environment, and human rights was made ever clearer in the recent, historic UN General Assembly resolution carried by 161 Member States that declared access to a clean and healthy environment to be a universal human right.¹¹³ Importantly, by connecting human rights to an issue which would outlast current populations—the environment—the resolution introduces an inter-temporal sense of duty to human rights which extends across generations. In this extension of our societal relations and obligations beyond those presently living, we find ourselves obliged to protect the ability of future generations to avail their universal human right as well. Thus, within the context of global environmental regulation, people and their governments can mark the emergence of a collective global legal obligation toward intergenerational equity and the well-being of future generations.

A Declaration on Future Generations should prescribe a standard of care that could lay the foundation for accountability and transparency measures focused on recognizing existing intergenerational rights, but equally extending the rights of future generations beyond the environment and the global commons to consider a wider set of existential threats. And in doing so, it could lay the foundation for potential national legislation. Even if establishing concrete rights (instead of simply needs and interests) of future generations proves to be politically infeasible, on the basis of established “standards of care”, precise interests could be left for the young and future generations to decide upon themselves, interpreting the legal interests of future generations as a living concept. The new declaration must move past the 1997 UNESCO declaration, laying down substantive provisions and incentivizing states to follow their obligations, in order to better protect and promote the interests, and ensure the rights, of future generations.

Realigning Political Incentives in Support of Future Citizens

Within the bounds of what we have come to understand as “sustainable” politics, “the future” lies at the crux of political intent and realignment of our moral and social constructs.¹¹⁴ Realizing the well-being of future generations as a global public good through a declaration would require a framework that is not blind to the mechanisms that power political will.

Realigning priorities and renewing intergenerational solidarity could be done through existing institutional mechanisms. For example, just as every UN resolution undergoes a budgetary implications analysis, the UN should include in its review of resolutions their impact on future generations. Any resolution that would, in effect, be harmful to future generations could be either modified or made time bound (or both). Equally, one may employ *horizon scanning* techniques to establish signals, based on trends and patterns, that connect the well-being of today’s generations with those of the future.¹¹⁵ Going beyond trend predictions of what current activities mean for future generations, one would consider how variations in, for example, the stability of funding in education systems today would affect the development capabilities of future generations, thus connecting and comparing policy effects today to the outcomes of the future. Such innovative approaches should be complemented by early warning systems, climate and global commons “roadmaps,” and robust forecasting mechanisms to enable decision-makers to sequence policies and take timely action to combat existing and future challenges.

The Futures Lab proposed in *Our Common Agenda* would provide a strong backstop to the declaration by promoting an exchange of best practices, narrowing knowledge gaps, and providing capacity-building services to countries and institutions globally to mitigate against the multiplier effect of inequities.¹¹⁶ Facilitated by a Special Envoy for Future Generations (see below) in partnership with a wide range of governmental, civil society, and private sector entities, the lab would operate on the indigenous principle of *seventh generational thinking*, which

involves making governance decisions based on the most strategic ways to secure the health of the planet for seven generations into the future. This would increase capacity to deal with anticipated challenges and help to ensure that approaches to risk mitigation and prevention do not fall prey to short-termism.¹¹⁷ Indigenous logic is being brought to the forefront across the UN system as a foundational guide for decision-making.

The proposed Futures Lab may further support the operationalization of the Declaration on Future Generations by aiding UN Member States in the creation of entities and departments within multilateral forums, academic institutions, and national governments that are dedicated to forward-thinking legal, economic, and environmental evolution. Oxford University already has excelled in this regard with its prolific Human Rights for Future Generations (HRFG) research program funded by the Oxford Martin School. The program contributes to academic and policy thinking on the human rights aspects of politics, climate change, and conflict-based scenarios in the 21st century—but with broad ramifications for the future. Another good example is that of Barbados, which has emerged as one of the most advanced green economies in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Employing a step-by-step approach toward a just transition, Barbados has demonstrated a strong sense of commitment to achieving a sustainable and secure future for its generations to come.¹¹⁸ Singapore has also spearheaded foresight-based

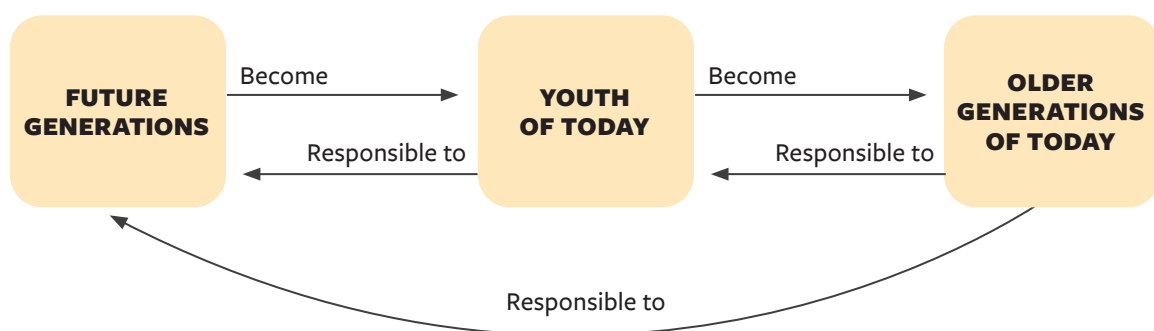
policymaking since the 1990s; its Center for Strategic Futures has been working on capacity-building and strategic adaptation, keeping in mind future trends and their impacts.¹¹⁹

Youth, Agenda 2030, and Beyond

The Sustainable Development Goals would transpose across any comprehensive declaration on the well-being of future generations, as well as across other aspects of *Our Common Agenda*. These include, but by no means are limited to, preserving the planet, the importance of creating a new agenda for peace (discussed in section V), the necessity for digital inclusion and reclaiming the digital commons (elaborated in section IV), the importance of addressing growing inequalities, and renewing the social contract anchored in human rights.

When concerning youth and intergenerational equity, the SDGs lay the foundation for thriving youth populations today and determine the opportunities they face as they grow into the adults of tomorrow. Such responsibilities toward young people must be inherent in a Declaration on Future Generations, as each generation must confront the challenges and opportunities of youth (figure 3.3). The importance of considering youth in, and with, a Declaration on Future Generations is, thus, one of setting up the right foundations for a thriving future citizenry. As such, young people play an important transitive role in the process of intergenerational equity and justice as both the introduction of future generations into societies, but also the guardians of responsibility

Figure 3.3: Illustration of dynamic interactions across generations



Source: Original Graphic, Stimson Center.

toward the generations that will succeed them as they grow older.

Conceptualizing and operationalizing the well-being of future generations as a global public good through a new declaration develops an overarching framework to consider global agendas, such as the SDGs, through a lens that holds Member States and other stakeholders accountable to 2030 and beyond. For all its advances over previous international development efforts, Agenda 2030 did not sufficiently center the well-being of future generations. Certainly, by proxy it does so—achieving the 17 SDGs would, necessarily, redound to the benefit of future generations—but the lens and approach it takes must be transposed with an overarching future generations perspective.

A Council for Future Generations, A Future Generations Review, and an Intergenerational Solidarity Index

Enhancing intergenerational equity across the UN system will require deep engagement and cooperation by all Member States, which can be facilitated by repurposing the Trusteeship Council into a Council for Future Generations and appointing a Special Envoy for Future Generations (see below), as proposed in the OCA.¹²⁰ The Council for Future Generations would serve as an oversight body of the declaration, composed of both Member States and other stakeholders, in line with the Secretary-General's call for more inclusive and networked multilateralism. The council could facilitate collaboration among these state and non-state

actors on effective strategies to infuse the principles outlined in the Declaration on Future Generations into intergenerational policy implementation.¹²¹

The Council for Future Generations could also provide a space for Member States to deliberate upon the governance of the global commons, whose protection and preservation are imperative to ensuring the well-being of future generations. Sustainable governance of the global commons advances intergenerational equity, and with the overarching concept of the well-being of future generations as a global public good—as understood through the declaration—humanity can close the gaps in policy agendas that currently manage different facets of the global commons in distinct (and disconnected) silos.

Keeping in mind the potential inertia of UN Charter reform (which would be required for a repurposed Trusteeship Council), an alternative proxy to the Council for Future Generations could be a separate, specialized Stewardship Council, which would also aim to transcend the traditional state-centric framework. Such a multistakeholder forum is needed to tackle the challenges of short-termism, reactive policymaking, and the intersectionality of global challenges, as manifested in the diverse development pathways that developing countries must pursue to address climate change and governance of the global commons. A multistakeholder approach can propagate greater results in bringing the declaration to life, for it enables cross-sector engagement which will

FutureGen

Conceptualizing and operationalizing the well-being of future generations as a global public good through a new declaration develops an overarching framework to consider global agendas, such as the SDGs, through a lens that holds Member States and other stakeholders accountable to 2030 and beyond.

allow for a multitude of perspectives and expertise to be harnessed within civil society, the business community, and governments.

To ensure that Member States are held accountable to the declaration, either the proposed Council for Future Generations or Stewardship Council could carry out a Future Generations Review (FGR), modeled on the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), designed to acknowledge the collective responsibility of present generations toward the rights of future generations. A Future Generations Review will serve as an accountability mechanism vis-a-vis Member States, as well as increase the transparency of countries' commitments in adhering to the rights of future generations, thereby ensuring that policymakers operate under the principle of a "duty of care." The FGR could be renewed on a cyclical basis, so that Member States are encouraged to increase their ambitions, over time, in implementing long-term intergenerational strategies that reflect best practices worldwide.

The development of an Intergenerational Solidarity Index (ISI), as part of the FGR, could further showcase the degree to which Member States are actively working to provide for future generations, demonstrating how different countries are performing in relation to one another to reach specific shared targets. Besides creating a sociopolitical cost to myopic policymaking, an ISI could provide a baseline by which all countries are assessed, employing the Sustainable Development Goals' agreed indicators as the metrics by which intergenerational solidarity is measured. This could help to further universalize the SDGs so that their implementation extends beyond the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making it more inclusive of future generations.

Alternatively, the FGR and the ISI should be contextualized country-by-country, in order to fully understand the state-specific factors that either inhibit or enable countries from meeting specific targets. In this model, states would submit their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) through Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to report their efforts in increasing intergenerational solidarity, similar to how the

Paris Agreement operates. This is especially important for states that face intersectional challenges in providing for future generations, as such an approach could provide clarity on how to best assist them in capacity-building strategies for addressing present needs, while simultaneously preparing for the future.

Current models of intergenerational indexes have been designed to measure the level of intergenerational solidarity *within* nation-states, since some countries have developed high levels of intergenerational solidarity through the procurement of sovereign wealth funds, which, in many cases, have been funded through fossil fuels extraction, thus creating wealth for states at the expense of degrading the planet.¹²² Systematic multilateral efforts to enact international intergenerational solidarity have ceased to exist, but the proposed development of the FGR and ISI for driving multistakeholder engagement on the Declaration on Future Generations would be a step toward making such solidarity a global reality.

A Special Envoy for Future Generations

A new office of a Special Envoy for Future Generations, reporting directly to the Secretary-General at the level of a UN Under-Secretary-General, could give a voice to future generations within the highest echelon of the UN Secretariat, representing their rights and championing the perspectives of those speaking up for intergenerational equity.

The Special Envoy would be appointed by the Secretary-General to a five-year term of office—with the possibility of renewal—equipped with sufficient support staff to enable them to work in collaboration with all UN entities in future-forward decision-making, the implementation of agreed policies, and the collection of evolving best practices. The Special Envoy's office would further staff the Council for Future Generations or Stewardship Council. This mutually reinforcing relationship could strengthen representation of future generations, as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights does vis-a-vis the UN Human Rights Council for its issues and objectives within and beyond the UN system.¹²³ The Special Envoy for

If future generations must rely on proxies as their only means of representation today, then these proxies will have to overcome at least some of the current gaps in their effective representation.

Future Generations should also work closely with the UN's Youth Envoy in shaping future agendas, thereby increasing intergenerational solidarity and enhancing efforts toward the creation of new social contracts (see section II of this report).

Given that countries in the Global South bear the greatest social inequality, economic instability, and climate vulnerability and will host the majority of people from future generations, the Special Envoy should strive, in particular, to champion the developing countries voices, alongside those of minority groups worldwide who are equally vulnerable to cross-cutting challenges.

Output from the Futures Lab would further empower the Special Envoy's ability to bring a direct, future-forward influence to policymaking across the UN system. More than just embodying the Declaration on Future Generations, the Special Envoy could work to make long-term perspectives the crux of UN decision-making, guided by research and innovations proposed by the Futures Lab, which could supercharge Agenda 2030 and make the UN more effective as a whole.

Overcoming Potential Spoilers and other Bottlenecks

Member States should seek to present and sign a Declaration on Future Generations as an integral part of (or closely in connection with) the Pact for the Future at the Summit of the Future (see section VI). To this end, the President of the General Assembly has appointed the Permanent Representatives of the Netherlands and Fiji to co-facilitate intergovernmental negotiations, first on an elements paper followed by the declaration itself (see annex 1.1 for related procedural summaries).

While there is general support for a declaration, concerns raised by Member States have included the stark differences foreseen in the well-being and overall prospects of future generation across different countries worldwide; the need to focus on and prioritize existing frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Financing for Development Action Agenda, and the Paris Climate Agreement; competing perspectives on repurposing the Trusteeship Council; and the limited amount of time to negotiate an ambitious and effective declaration.

Some of these concerns were addressed above, but overcoming other anticipated challenges will require leadership by Member States that already demonstrate a national commitment to future generation policies and investments, including those active in the Network of Institutions for Future Generations.¹²⁴ Additionally, the Secretary-General should encourage, for an upcoming cycle of ECOSOC Commissions and other gatherings, that the theme of the cycle emphasize future generations, in order to build a body of knowledge and understanding, including by encouraging UN research bodies to focus on future generations.¹²⁵

If future generations must rely on proxies as their only means of representation today, then these proxies will have to overcome at least some of the current gaps in their effective representation, by way of strong frameworks, concrete operational mechanisms, and even stronger commitments from governments, the business community, and civil society. An effective, deliberate, and courageous Declaration on Future Generations will enable present generations to serve not only as empathetic proxy representatives, but as ancestors with a legacy for which they should be proud.

IV. Facilitating an Open, Free, and Secure Digital Future for all through a Global Digital Compact

“The most important thing is to make the technology inclusive — make the world change. Next, pay attention to those people who are 30 years old, because those are the internet generation. They will change the world; they are the builders of the world.” —*Jack Ma, Founder and Executive Chairman, Alibaba Group*¹²⁶

Global Policy Framework

Rapid advancements in technology pose ever increasing risks to the protection of human rights, even as they create opportunities for development. The absence of a holistic, networked, and multilateral approach to technological governance necessitates the need for a Global Digital Compact based on a framework that addresses three key dimensions of the technological life-cycle, namely innovation, infrastructure, and information (the “3-I’s”).

Challenges

The dynamic nature of technology creates new frontiers for progress but also poses novel challenges. At no other time have the impacts of technology been as rapid, widespread, and acutely interwoven with every aspect of human life. As a result, there is an urgent and pressing need for the development of a Global Digital Compact outlining “shared principles for an open, free and secure future for all,” re-affirming human rights in an age where the lines between the “human” and the “digital” are becoming increasingly blurred.¹²⁷

Currently, intergovernmental and UN-led efforts toward digital and technological governance remain piecemeal and fragmented at best. The Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, despite its scope and breadth, fails to address all elements of technology or the need to create a set of global principles agreed upon by the international community.¹²⁸ Consequently, a better way to frame global risks

posed by technology, both present and in the future, would be to envision them across a “3-I’s” framework centered around the key facets of technology—namely, its innovation and development, its accessibility through infrastructure, and its use of information.

The *innovation* of technology refers to its stage of ideation, materials sourcing, development, production, and deployment, and is fraught with increasing challenges to human rights. Algorithmic bias, for example, even when unintentional, can serve to reinforce historical discrimination.¹²⁹ Wrongful arrests have occurred in the U.S. due to mistakes in facial recognition software, while the UN notes the reinforcement of gender biases through the use of “submissive” female voices in virtual assistants.¹³⁰ Exploitative working conditions in the sourcing of materials, such as cobalt, have fueled the rise of violence in parts of Central Africa, while forced and bonded labor in materials sourcing promotes inequality, such as the forced labors of the Uighur minority in China, which were linked in 2020 to resource production for such corporations as Apple, Microsoft, and Samsung.¹³¹ Operating primarily unchecked and unregulated at the international and transnational level, the private sector has little motivation to adhere to human rights standards, and may unwittingly contribute to further abuse.

The second key dimension of technology—*infrastructure*—refers to the matter of its distribution, access, and connectivity. Regarding the latter, approximately 1.4 billion individuals are estimated to be living in Internet poverty today,

with roughly half of the world’s population still lacking any Internet access.¹³² The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the digital divide, particularly for low-income countries, of which only 25 percent have the necessary platforms for remote learning and work, which hurts their ability to harness educational, civic, and economic opportunities.¹³³ A standardized set of global principles concerning digital infrastructure governance is sorely needed to protect the integrity of the Internet and digital commons as a public good, which is currently being jeopardized by legislation at national levels intending to repeal net neutrality laws.¹³⁴

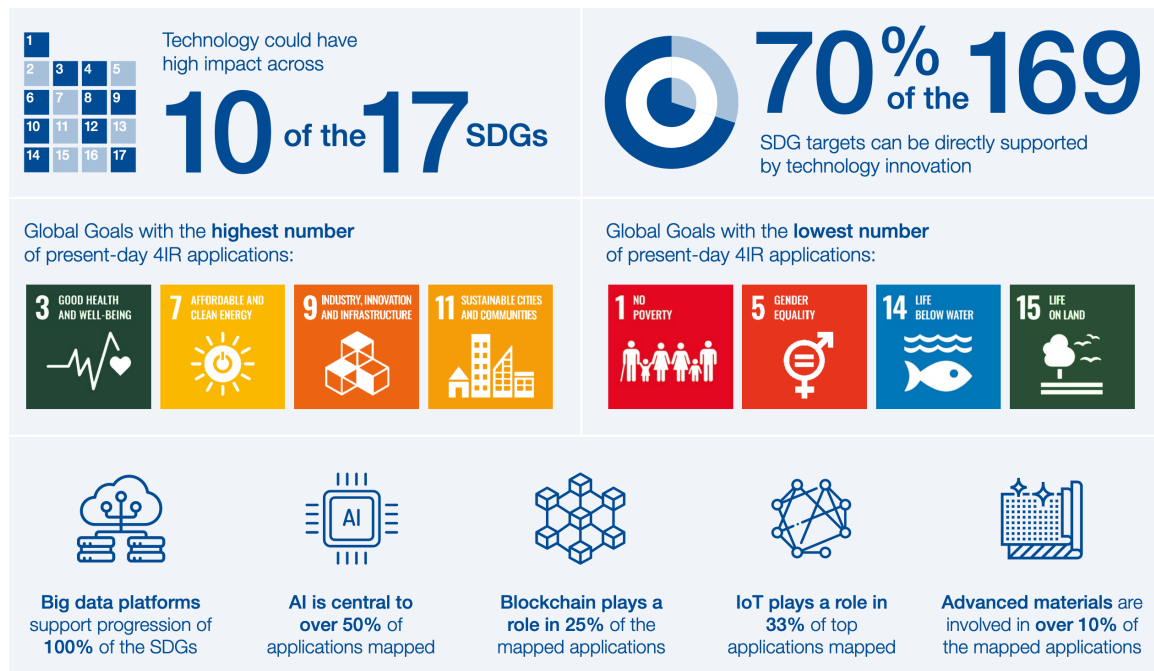
The final key dimension of technology is the quality and use of *information*, i.e., how individuals use technological products and its effect on human rights online. Dis- and misinformation have emerged as key global threats to the international rules-based and normative order, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the World Economic Forum, the EU, and the UN naming misinformation as a “primary threat to humanity.”¹³⁵ Disinformation was pivotal in determining the outcome of the Brexit campaign, as was Facebook’s role in the

Rohingya genocide, while misinformation contributes to the development of echo chambers, which may lead to group polarization and democratic degradation.¹³⁶ Issues of Internet shutdowns and censorship, mass surveillance by both governments and the private sector, and noncompliance with the principles of net neutrality further undermine human rights online. Cyberbullying and cybercrime pose additional risks to human rights, particularly among youth, of whom seven in ten have experienced online abuse at some point.¹³⁷

The response to these global issues, thus far, lacks a truly networked and multilateral approach, with efforts to address these challenges being fragmented and siloed across different UN departments, national governments, and among various private sector and civil society stakeholders. Furthermore, given the high rate of global change in technology, there is a considerable pacing problem with the UN’s response to technological developments. An overarching structure within the UN system is sorely needed to effectively coordinate varying stakeholders, while providing common baselines to which technological development can be held

GDC

Figure 4.1: The relationship between technology and the SDGs



Source: World Economic Forum, *Unlocking Technology for the Global Goals*, 2020.

globally accountable, based on a “3-I’s” framework. The proposed Global Digital Compact can, therefore, serve to simultaneously reinforce and reaffirm existing digital goals (such as the Sustainable Development Goals, see figure 4.1), while providing a normative, overarching, and holistic framework to support the Secretary General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. In so doing, the GDC can chart a united vision for technology and its impact on human rights going forward.

The International Community’s Limited Response to Digital Governance

Global principles on technology abound at the national, regional, and international levels, recommended from governmental, private sector, civil society, and multistakeholder perspectives. This section of the chapter offers an overview of current responses to the challenges listed above, noting that despite the proliferation of governance mechanisms (see table 4.1), there is no one entity which sets, coordinates, or monitors implementation of global standards for digital technology, especially as regards the impact of such technology on the non-discriminatory enjoyment of basic human rights.

Principles and mechanisms that do exist are inherently unenforceable due to national sovereignty (with most—particularly governmental ones—being contradictory), and they lack effective incentives to ensure multistakeholder adherence.¹³⁸ For instance, in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the U.S. intends to focus on establishing voluntary guidelines, while promoting ethical research and use of technology.¹³⁹ Conversely, the European Union’s proposed Artificial Intelligence Act suggests the development of mandatory AI rules intended to safeguard and protect civil rights and individual privacy.¹⁴⁰ The UK, in comparison, has adopted an innovation-first policy approach to AI regulation, leaving the regulation of this technology to its existing regulators, leading to a relatively fragmented national approach.¹⁴¹ “Safe harbor” provisions in the U.S. for social media content in trade agreements make it difficult to regulate content internationally.¹⁴² Conversely, China’s

“great firewall,” with its emphasis on full data localization, allows for effective action and a national response in fighting emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, but can simultaneously be used more controversially to isolate its citizens from the global net.¹⁴³ These varying national approaches to digital governance highlight the obstacles in coordinating a global response to addressing the challenges outlined above.

At the regional level, multiple initiatives seek to secure a free and fair digital future. For instance, the EU General Data Regulation Protection and Digital Services Act seeks to create a more inclusive governance mechanism on the moderation of social media. Civil society and the private sector were key participants in this process, creating initiatives such as the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, which continues to include members such as Zoom, Amazon and AirBnB. Furthermore, various efforts have been undertaken, such as the Digital ASEAN initiative by the World Economic Forum, the Arab Regional initiatives introduced by the World Telecommunications Development Conferences, and the Central Asia Regional Economic Program Digital Strategy 2030, to create greater cooperation amongst nations on digital issues and benefit the digital economy.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, a key theme among most of these regional efforts are the western-centricity of their outputs, the aspirational and unenforceable nature of their content (due to the absence of an overarching compulsory juridical system), and a skew toward focusing on increased digital accessibility to the detriment of other technological factors, such as the protection of human rights online.¹⁴⁵

While a patchwork of international institutions dedicated to technology exists, such as the International Telecommunication Union and the Internet Governance Forum, there is no single UN framework or institution which collectively covers and spans innovation, infrastructure, and information, leading to piecemeal and fragmented initiatives across national, regional, and international levels (see table 4.1).¹⁴⁶ Different UN entities, including the Security Council (which discussed threats posed to security through technology on May

Table 4.1: Responses from the international community to technological challenges

TECHNOLOGICAL STAGE	NATIONAL RESPONSE	REGIONAL RESPONSE	INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE
Innovation	Korea Digital Development Program ¹⁴⁷	Beijing AI Principles ¹⁴⁸	The Charlevoix Common Vision for the Future of Artificial Intelligence ¹⁴⁹
Infrastructure	WBG Digital Gambia Project ¹⁵⁰	WBG Digital Economy for Africa (DE4A) ¹⁵¹	Global Governance on the Stability of Cyberspace ¹⁵²
Information	Critical Infrastructure Threat Information Sharing Framework ¹⁵³	The Digital Services Act ¹⁵⁴	Sao Paulo NetMundial Declaration ¹⁵⁵

Source: Original Table, Stimson Center.

23, 2022), offer fragmented inputs to technology governance—and how to best respond to the challenges and risks it poses—thereby facilitating the need for a whole-of-system approach within the UN to address these risks.

The UN Secretary-General’s convening of a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation beginning in July 2018, followed by his comprehensive Roadmap for Digital Cooperation in 2020, provided two important steps forward, by offering, for instance, useful and timely recommendations on achieving universal connectivity by 2030, promoting digital public goods, and ensuring digital inclusion (please see section VI for a full exploration of the current state-of-play toward a proposed Global Digital Compact). However, these earlier processes were not convened in an intergovernmental format. As these initiatives represent outputs of the Office of the Secretary-General, they are, thus far, lacking in true multilateral ownership.¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, there is also little onus on non-governmental stakeholders, such as the private sector or civil society groups, to participate, much less hold themselves accountable to these recommendations.

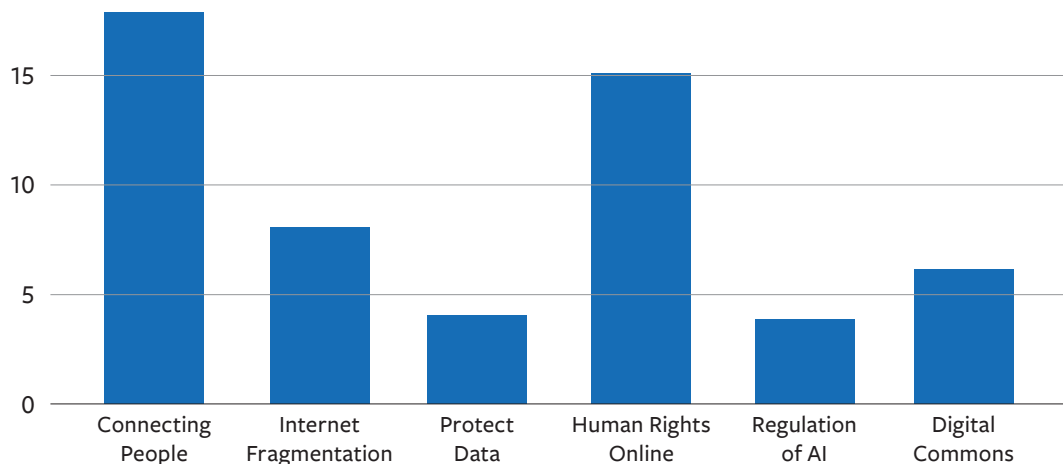
Major Elements of the Global Policy Framework

In the OCA report, the Secretary-General proposed the development of a Global Digital Compact “outlining shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all.”¹⁵⁷

Given the considerable diversity of approaches to the governance of technology outlined above, and the ever-increasing challenges to peace, security, and development posed by technology, the time is ripe for the creation of a compact aligning the UN, governments, the private sector, and civil society under shared global principles for “complex digital issues”—including avoiding fragmentation of the Internet, applying human rights online, and introducing accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content.

Intended to be unveiled during the Summit of the Future, preparations for the GDC have included broad thematic consultations organized by the President of the General Assembly on this topic, in early 2022, with the Office of the Secretary General’s Special Envoy on Technology convening a multistakeholder technology track to discuss inputs. Figure 4.2 below outlines a general consensus among Member States, thus far, on key potential themes of the GDC, as outlined in the *Our Common Agenda* report, with improving Internet connectivity and ensuring the application of human rights online as key front-runners.¹⁵⁸ While the Y-axis represents the number of states broadly supporting the six themes, it is important to note that the figure reflects a general trend toward certain themes, rather than a clear consensus on each topic.

Whereas the Secretary General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation provides a “technical

Figure 4.2: Member States’ general consensus on possible Global Digital Compact themes

Source: Original Figure, Stimson Center, based on data gathered from the President of the General Assembly’s Our Common Agenda Thematic Consultations.

backbone” for the Global Digital Compact, so to speak, this innovative set of ideas also offers a unique opportunity, going forward, for the UN to align its fragmented work on technology and promote a common vision for technological governance and development.¹⁵⁹ The GDC can serve as the basis for developing core ideals of digital governance, reaffirming and reinforcing the UN’s three pillars of human rights, peace and security, and development, while “turbo-charging” the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁶⁰

Given the current proliferation of principles and mechanisms to govern technology and its impact, the GDC should not create a set of new principles and mechanisms, but rather address the glaring absence of an international entity able to amalgamate the existing networks and architectures of global technological norms under one overarching superstructure. Doing so would resolve redundancies stemming from the duplication of efforts, while strengthening existing principles. Simultaneously, it would serve to strengthen the legitimacy of these norms, based, in part, on the support it receives from the United Nations.

The Global Digital Compact can, thus, be considered an overarching vision of technological governance, seeking to strengthen existing frameworks and principles, while creating new

avenues for multiple stakeholders to interact in a forum where they can benefit from increased information exchange. Consequently, the GDC should be cross-cutting and holistic in its approach. Specifically, it should echo how the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation has addressed a variety of issues by identifying clear roles for each stakeholder type, while, simultaneously, creating a unique space whereby all related stakeholders can facilitate cooperation, and create lasting synergies and partnerships.¹⁶¹ By serving as a robust and dynamic platform where concerned stakeholders—such as governments, the private sector, and civil society—can come together to exchange knowledge, information, and best practices in their respective sectors, the compact could provide coordination among major stakeholders and reduce policy inflation (i.e a proliferation of potentially overlapping policy initiatives on digital governance) by promoting greater discussion.¹⁶²

The GDC should reaffirm and emphasize the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This sentiment was broadly reflected by Member States in the President of the General Assembly’s thematic consultations on *Our Common Agenda*, as noted in annex 1.2. For instance, in a Joint Statement by a diverse group of countries, it was noted that the Global Digital Compact should “leverage digital

transformation to improve lives, empower people, and advance the SDGs”—a view echoed by Estonia, which noted that “affordable, meaningful connectivity and digital inclusion are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.”¹⁶³ As such, the GDC must be firmly set within the SDGs, and used to “rescue and uplift” it through the use of digital technologies.¹⁶⁴ Finally, as affirmed by fifteen Member States during the President of the General Assembly OCA Dialogues (see figure 4.2), it is crucial that the GDC should be built on human rights protection foundations.¹⁶⁵

Given differences among Member States, including three differing views from permanent members of the Security Council, on how to effectively govern technology, the Global Digital Compact offers a unique platform to bridge divides and garner cooperation on technological issues. During the PGA’s OCA Dialogues, no country opposed the need for the development of the GDC, and several offered unique insights on what it should constitute. A GDC firmly rooted in the SDGs would be better positioned to overcome the challenge of Member State differences, building on a blueprint of global cooperation on which stakeholders already agree. As such, the Global Digital Compact should not aim to be too detailed and comprehensive a set of principles, but rather act as a vision for global cooperation over technological governance, allowing different modalities and avenues for alliances to organically develop from this instrument. Nevertheless, at its very essence, the GDC ought to represent a standard-setting, compliance-measuring, and publicizing entity, promoting cooperation through adequate incentives for relevant stakeholders, as opposed to being a governing and enforcing entity. Therefore, a key aspect of the GDC, in order to ensure full ownership among relevant state and non-state actors, should be to reflect a multistakeholder consensus.

Whereas the Secretary-General, in the *Our Common Agenda* report, outlined seven broad themes across for the Global Digital Compact (reflecting the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation’s key themes), it is important for

this instrument’s principles to ensure sustainability and account for the development and governance of future technologies, whose effects we cannot begin to imagine at present. Emerging technologies will play key roles in the promotion or abuse of human rights and affect the character and course of armed conflict, with implications for other international instruments such as the New Agenda for Peace (see section V). As such, it is important to develop the GDC in a manner which is, simultaneously, forward-thinking and flexible; its principles, therefore, cannot be developed solely to meet the challenges of the present.

Consequently, we propose consideration of the “3-I’s” framework of *innovation*, *infrastructure* and *information* for the Global Digital Compact. These categories serve to demarcate challenges arising from technologies, yet are open-ended enough to allow adaptation as existing technologies advance and new technologies emerge, such as Artificial Intelligence, a topic that was insufficiently addressed in the OCA report. For instance, the challenges of algorithmic bias and issues of unsustainable and unethical sourcing of materials for AI could be addressed under *innovation*, improving access and connectivity to AI-products could be addressed under *infrastructure*, and the protection of human rights and data privacy could be solved under *information*. Any subsequent challenges arising from AI (or other emergent technologies) could be further tackled under the “3-I’s” framework. Below are suggested core principles and key commitments envisaged under each element of the proposed framework.

Innovation

This first category of the “3-I’s” framework refers to governance of the conceptual, developmental, and roll-out stages of technological products, covering elements such as ethical coding, non-biased algorithms, fair employment, and human-rights-cognizant materials sourcing. It is important to note that as technologies develop, this category can expand to include a wider set of issues, as and when they arise. Accordingly, the core principle under this category is to ensure that technological development, from ideation

and sourcing to creation and deployment, strives to promote public interests, safeguards environmental sustainability, and adheres to basic human rights norms.

As such, the international community should commit to the development of human-centered innovation and ensure greater coordination and cooperation among researchers, policymakers, and the tech industry through the promotion of policy environments conducive to cross-border data flows, research and development, and value-added data services.¹⁶⁶ Various examples of human-centered technology policies already exist and can serve as bedrock principles for the GDC. For instance, Italy's national AI policy recommends the development of AI to be centered around the active promotion of economic and social inclusion, in addition to ensuring human rights and sustainability.¹⁶⁷ The international community as a whole should broadly commit to using technologies to achieve this aim in the course of achieving the wider 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Governments, at the stage of innovation of technological products, should commit to the strict regulation of products such as mass surveillance software, bugging devices, and hacking technology to ensure compliance with human rights. This includes working collaboratively with the private sector and civil society to develop and test products to ensure that they meet the qualifications of existing regulations, and that they do not create avenues

for the abuse of human rights in areas which are, hitherto, unregulated. As such, governments should actively commit, in partnership with the private sector and civil society, to the development of global ethical guidelines for future iterations of digital technologies.

Along the same vein, the private sector should commit to ensuring the ethical and responsible development of new technologies, to include eschewing forced and bonded labor and exploitative sourcing practices, as they relate to both workers and the environment. Businesses can ensure their compliance to ethical standards by agreeing to engage with international bodies and non-governmental groups overseeing standardization, such as the ITU, while aligning their human resources guidelines with existing international treaties and publishing transparency reports on their practices. The GDC could thus produce a list of accountability criteria for human rights and sustainability that the private sector should abide by, which could be measured from a combination of company disclosure requirements, transparency reports, and pledges.¹⁶⁸

Accordingly, the private sector should also commit to the development of unbiased and fair algorithms to ensure that their products are not continuing forms of discrimination and structural violence. This can be measured through enhanced partnerships with civil society and the involvement of experts in their consultative and developmental deliberations, while also employing more diverse staff.

The international community should commit to the development of human-centered innovation and ensure greater coordination and cooperation among researchers, policymakers, and the tech industry through the promotion of policy environments conducive to cross-border data flows, research and development, and value-added data services.

As mentioned earlier, a core principle of the GDC under the innovation category refers to the promotion of the development of sustainable and secure technologies, which can have far-reaching positive implications for future generations (see section III) and building durable peace (see section V). The Global Digital Compact could, therefore, benefit from a digital sustainability index to measure the private sector's progress in creating sustainable digital products and solutions, similar to the Asia Pacific Digital Sustainability Index.¹⁶⁹ This would require an agreement among Member States, the private sector, and civil society on how to measure and weigh sustainability through appropriate indicators.

Introducing a rating system that judges the ethical practices of companies and other entities, the GDC could incentivize the normative uptake of its principles. The Global Digital Compact should further leverage other standardization, such as the International Labor Organization's or the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's cultural codes of conduct pertaining to supply chain security.¹⁷⁰ Civil society could strengthen this aspect of the GDC, by committing to collaborate more frequently with governments and the private sector on the development of ethical, fair, and diverse technological products. Consequently, governments should seek to promote and improve the inclusion of civil society by increasing their participation in working groups, consultations, and committees.

Civil society could also commit to promoting human rights under the category of innovation by actively researching, advocating for, and ensuring that governments and businesses are held accountable for not following through on their commitments. The GDC could serve not only to introduce core principles and key commitments from relevant stakeholders, but also to provide a platform and the means for these stakeholders to interact more frequently and effectively. A key commitment taken by all three sets of stakeholders—Member States, the private sector, and civil society—should be to cement sustainable cooperation with each community and to create avenues for trilateral consultation.

Infrastructure

Fostering universal access and connectivity to technological infrastructure and the Internet merit consideration as a core principle under this category of the GDC; adherence to Agenda 2030 also means that such infrastructure should be environmentally sustainable and secure. As a result, the international community—particularly development agencies and the international financial architecture—should commit to fast-tracking the SDGs where concerned with technology, while promoting digital development and the core principle of the Internet as a “digital public good”, the physical and financial availability of which should transcend boundaries of state and socioeconomic status.

In light of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the food and energy crises caused by the war in Ukraine, and a potential global economic recession, it is imperative for international development and financial organizations to assist governments struggling to provide and maintain basic technological infrastructure for their citizens. The international community should, thus, commit to the promotion of regional, transnational, and international global connectivity, to ensure that each individual is able to access high-speed Internet as a fundamental human right. In order to promote a shift toward the uptake of sustainable technologies, the international community should further commit to easing access to, and increasing local development of, green technology by providing a platform where governments, the private sector, and civil society can exchange best practices and information, while cementing partnerships to ease the flow of intellectual property and facilitate funding.

Accordingly, governments should commit to ensuring fair and equitable access to digital infrastructure as a basic human right, while promoting international cooperation in digital infrastructure development. This remains key, for instance, in ensuring that systems are not inherently biased or perpetuate structural violence. For instance, in the U.S., one report found that only 30 percent of Black Americans have access to high-quality broadband connections, compared to 70 percent of whites.¹⁷¹

Governments, at the stage of innovation of technological products, should commit to the strict regulation of products such as mass surveillance software, bugging devices, and hacking technology to ensure compliance with human rights.

While recognizing the competing needs facing governments, new public sector-facilitated initiatives are essential to connect more people to the Internet, subsidize expansion to keep the cost of Internet low for the average person, and eliminate social (e.g., class-based or racial) disparities in digital access.

The private sector can also work to improve access to digital infrastructure, particularly in broadband blind spots. For example, the Starlink project by SpaceX has helped to provide satellite Internet connectivity to thirty-four countries—most recently in Ukraine, allowing essential services, such as hospitals and clinics, to remain connected amidst conflict.¹⁷² Such initiatives highlight the changing nature of the private sector as a key actor in international affairs, and the need to utilize public-private partnerships to maximum effect in order to promote human rights, peace and stability, and development. The Global Digital Compact can embed and promote such public-private partnerships by appointing champions from the private sector, similar to the Champion Countries Initiative in the Global Compact for Migration.

While the private sector can commit to improving access to technology for individuals, governments and the international community must continue to intervene, including by instituting common standards under the auspices of the UN, to ensure that improved access to technology does not occur at the risk of environmental damage or interference with important scientific endeavors.¹⁷³

Governments should also provide clear guidance to the private sector on the development and use of environmental-friendly products. They should commit to creating investment environments conducive to local development

of digital technologies, such as incubator hubs and special technology zones, and to support the transformation of technologies (requiring economies of scale) into utilities. Governments should further establish means to monitor environmental impacts, including carbon emissions, and to enforce environmental standards.

The private sector should commit to embedding social and environmental impacts into the Key Performance Indicators of technology product development teams. It can do this by committing to the development of energy-efficient and environmentally friendly, as well as secure, technologies that do not emit excessive carbon. Furthermore, the business community should commit to digital literacy training, capacity-building, and improving the cybersecurity awareness of its teams. It should further strive to develop cost-effective technologies based on economies of scale, so that individuals do not have to pay a high price for digital connectivity.

Moreover, in order to promote financial inclusion while bridging the digital divide, the private sector should commit to conducting stakeholder consultations with civil society groups, such as women and girls, minorities, and those with disabilities. Through these dialogues, its stated aim should be to develop effective products and services focusing on a variety of ages, classes, ethnicities, income levels, abilities and gender identities. Civil society could collaborate with governments in order to provide increased digital literacy and capacity-building skills, at local and national levels. Where governments lack capacity or sufficient resources, they should commit to greater cooperation with civil society and establish a firm partnership with organizations on the

ground in order to promote access to technology, particularly for marginalized groups and communities, such as people with disabilities and an aging population. Furthermore, civil society should both campaign and train tech developers on the need for environmentally friendly infrastructure.

The 2020 Roadmap for Digital Cooperation observed that “close to half of all countries in the world do not have a Computer Emergency Response Team” that could appropriately deal with critical cyber threats emerging on short notice.¹⁷⁴ Governments should commit to ensuring the cybersecurity of their critical infrastructure projects, such as the energy, emergency services, communications, financial services, food and agriculture, health-care, and other sectors they consider critical. Collaborative, multilateral cybersecurity initiatives, such as the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise, can also make great strides in preventing cybercrime and lessening vulnerability to cyber attacks, in large part thanks to cooperation between governments, civil society, and the private sector.¹⁷⁵

Information

The final category of the “3-I’s” framework refers to the manner in which individuals and citizens use technology, and the types of risks associated with that use. As a core principle, stakeholders should verify that the development or ownership of technology does not adversely impact human rights and confirm that human rights apply equally online. Furthermore, they should abide by the principles of promoting data protection, suppressing the prevalence of false information online and ending the information gap resulting from it, protecting against censorship or Internet shutdowns, and promoting multistakeholderism in governance. Accordingly, Member States should commit to greater cooperation and information / best practice exchange on the subjects of countering disinformation, data protection, and human rights abuse online.

Member States should work together, where possible in light of political differences, to ensure that their national policies on the above

subject matters are aligned or, at the very least, not introducing loopholes that malevolent actors can abuse. The international community should coordinate on clearer global responses to the “infodemic” of misinformation, similar to the level of coordination which takes place between international security agencies on the issue of illicit financial flows and counter-terrorism. Ideally, this should follow from a multis-takeholder approach that engages governments, the private sector, and civil society.

Governments and civil society should commit to improving media literacy among citizens, whereas the private sector should commit to increasing the transparency and accountability of the media landscape.¹⁷⁶ The latter could include flagging content deemed misleading or false, as social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have begun doing in recent years.¹⁷⁷ Although some laws and regulations are emerging to increase platforms’ responsibilities (for instance the U.K’s proposed amendment to the National Security Bill and Online Safety Bill requiring social media companies to proactively tackle foreign state-sponsored disinformation), online platforms still independently administer their businesses, and their guidelines on the handling of mis / dis-information should be transparent and evenly applied.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, civil society groups should launch “correct information” campaigns that attempt to convey the truth on topics rife with conflicting information, as well as to give the general population the tools to identify misinformation.

Data privacy is another major issue that international organizations, governments, the private sector, and civil society should commit to resolving. Based on an agile governance approach, the international community should commit to greater data protection mechanisms in order to decrease complexity across jurisdictions, reduce costs to firms, and increase government efficiency through better interagency cooperation and information sharing.¹⁷⁹ For instance, Japan’s Society 5.0 initiative requires the establishment of an accessible platform, whereby data can be stored and utilized across borders without monopolies, while guaranteeing privacy and security.¹⁸⁰ All

governments should consider data protection to be a national interest and commit to refrain from conducting mass surveillance against their citizens. Toward this end, governments should beef up their requirements to report on data breaches and encourage their citizens to report complaints of data compromises.

A key aspect of this proposed information component of the Global Digital Compact is ensuring that the private sector and civil society collaborate intensively on cyber-security, in order to protect breaches against data privacy. Accordingly, the private sector should enhance their systems' ability to protect user data from cyber attacks, and should not hand-over user data to a third-party. Governments or civil society can review the data policies of companies and evaluate if they fall under the acceptable data regulation. Internet users should further be given simple, straightforward ways to control their options for sharing personal information. Similarly, civil society groups should commit to advocating for better data privacy and educating the public on ways to secure their online data, given their previous success in doing so.¹⁸¹

Finally, the backbone of the Global Digital Compact is human rights. Therefore, the Member States should commit to upholding human rights online, including through the protection of net neutrality (which refers to the principle of fair and equitable access to all content and applications irrespective of source). Consequently, governments should commit to safeguarding the free and public nature of the Internet. If governments do seek to censor speech, they should do so on the basis of meeting the needs of legality, necessity, and proportionality. They should also commit to taking appropriate steps to protect human rights online and to prevent any form of maltreatment, abuse, or extortion. Accordingly, governments should commit to taking the necessary steps toward the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and redress of abuse.

The private sector, conversely, should commit to adhering to all standards and international principles surrounding human rights online and offline, and express transparency in

providing access to a company's internal information when conducting assessments. Civil society plays a key role in bridging the divide between governments and the private sector, by researching, advocating, and campaigning at local, regional, and international levels for amendments to existing laws and principles to be more inclusive in the digital age.

Overcoming Potential Spoilers and other Bottlenecks

Three key challenges arise from the proposed Global Digital Compact. *First*, the UN's Office of the Special Envoy on Technology, which is likely to be tasked with overseeing the compact's implementation, must ensure that proper incentives are put into place in order to attract key stakeholders. These diverse groups must be encouraged to develop an agenda which they feel obliged to commit to and measure progress against (i.e., to be held accountable). At present, the *Our Common Agenda* report provides key themes that reflect a rich set of issues the GDC could encompass. Moreover, the Special Envoy Office's efforts in calling for stakeholder inputs provides a promising step toward fostering the inclusion of distinct and sometimes competing perspectives.

Second, the Office of the Special Envoy must ensure the private sector and civil society's full and unrestrained engagement in the GDC, not only through broad-based consultations, but also in the instrument's full development and implementation stages. Accordingly, the Office should ensure the engagement of these diverse stakeholders by increasing their access to relevant working groups, committees, workshops, and consultations.

Third and finally, the multiplicity of stakeholder perspectives necessarily means the existence of contradictory objectives, which the Global Digital Compact must both welcome and effectively navigate to ensure that the instrument's core principles and major commitments are both ambitious and overarching, without being watered down. An important debate among Member States, the business community, and civil society groups that can be anticipated during consultations includes the protection of state sovereignty versus the facilitation of a shared consensus on fundamental issues.¹⁸²

V. Advancing Inclusive and Just Peace through a New Agenda For Peace

“Of all our dreams today, there is none more important—or so hard to realize—than that of peace in the world.” —Lester B. Pearson, former Prime Minister of Canada¹⁸³

Global Policy Framework

The spirit of the original, 1992 Agenda for Peace can be recaptured by a new and dynamic approach to sustaining peace, and promoting a mutually reinforcing approach to justice and security in the twenty-first century, that focuses on prevention, the changing nature of conflict, inclusiveness with an emphasis on innovations in Women, Peace & Security and Youth, Peace & Security, and reform of the UN Collective Security Architecture.

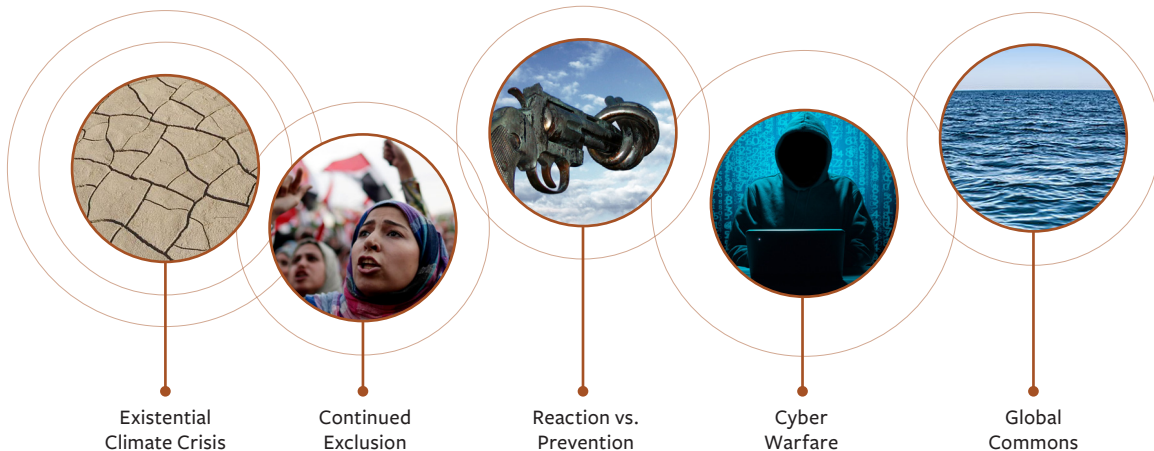
Challenges

In recent decades, global understanding of—and the nature of—violent conflict and corresponding broader threats to international peace and security have shifted. Most notably, modern conflicts have become multi-dimensional in character due to climate change, cyberwarfare, resource rivalry amidst rising population demands, record numbers of displaced persons

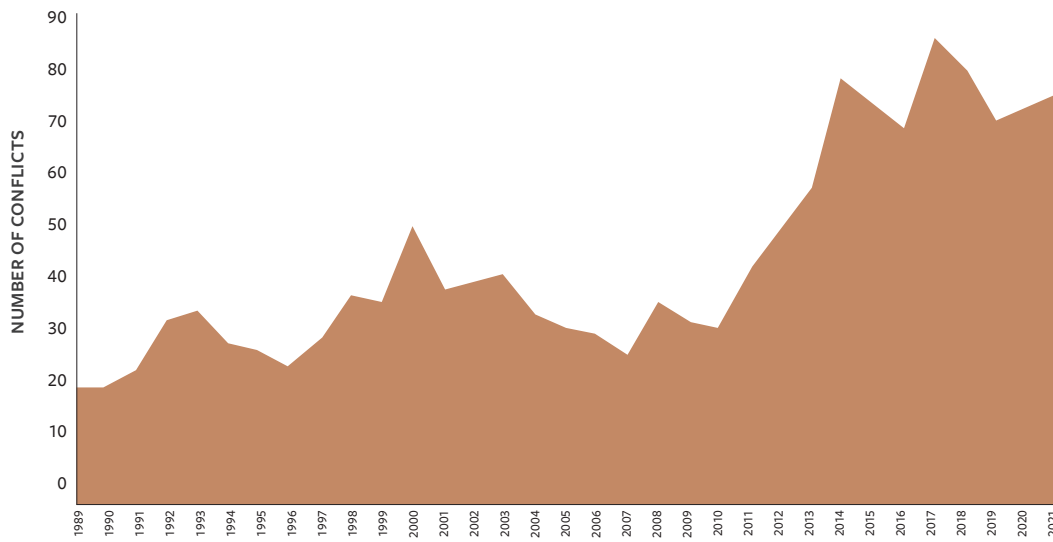
and refugees worldwide, pandemic diseases, and resurgent authoritarianism (figure 5.1).¹⁸⁴ Yet, even as tools for examining the factors driving deadly conflict have advanced, the lack of a coherent and comprehensive approach to conflict *prevention* stymies effective UN responses to simmering future conflicts, from local to regional and global levels.¹⁸⁵ Preventive action is further undermined by acute social, economic, and political inequalities within and between nations, social fragmentation, and economic insecurity, each factor reinforced by growing mistrust of a multilateral system perceived as weak and inefficient; by a lack of consensus among the great powers on multiple sensitive issues; and by rapid technological changes that, as they build global connectivity, also let the world be easily flooded with disinformation that is designed to erode trust.¹⁸⁶ Against this blanketed yet fractured backdrop, UN and other organizations’ efforts to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict have failed to curb a relatively

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Figure 5.1: New peace & security realities and challenges



Source: Adapted from the DPPA Innovation Cell Vision Document, April 2020.

Figure 5.2: Number of non-state-initiated violent conflicts since 1989

Source: Davies, Petterson & Öberg, "Organized Violence 1989-2021 and Drone Warfare," 2022.

steady rise in the number of non-state initiated and sustained conflicts (see figure 5.2).

Effective regional cooperation and mechanisms to prevent conflict are equally urgent in areas beyond the realms of traditional security. Non-traditional security challenges stemming from the climate emergency and water insecurity demand close attention. According to UN-Water, nearly half of the world's population lives in water scarce areas at least one month per year, and this could grow to affect some 4.8–5.7 billion people by 2050 and fuel conflict globally.¹⁸⁷ In South Asia, disputes persist between India and China over rights to the Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra River.¹⁸⁸ In the Tigris-Euphrates river basin, schisms between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq continue to prevent effective co-management of the basin's rivers.¹⁸⁹ In Africa, water-related violence is prevalent across the continent, including in Nigeria and Mali.¹⁹⁰ Beyond the severe socioeconomic and political impacts, patterns of climate and water-induced migration are also emerging—as per the World Bank, in 2021, water deficits were linked to 10 percent of the rise in global migration.¹⁹¹ These trends can be considered threat multipliers for instability and civil unrest.¹⁹²

Cyberwarfare has grown in scale and frequency. In 2021, ransomware attacks on governments

increased globally; the finance and healthcare industries, in particular, saw increases of 243 percent and 328 percent in ransomware targeting.¹⁹³ Cyber attacks on critical infrastructure pose especially serious security risks for states, as electrical grids, banking systems, transportation networks, nuclear power plants, and weapons systems can be targeted.¹⁹⁴ The perpetrators are both state and non-state actors, with states investing the lion's share in digital-related technologies such as robotic weapons, unmanned drones, and computer software and hardware for spearheading cyberattacks.¹⁹⁵

Unsustainable use of the global commons is a third rising threat to international peace and security.¹⁹⁶ When the integrity of the oceans, atmosphere, Antarctica, and even outer space are threatened, the potential for inter-state conflict over scarce resources grows.¹⁹⁷ The ocean, in particular, faces multiple challenges, including rising temperatures, over-exploitation, and pollution.¹⁹⁸ These threats have a negative impact on marine life, including fisheries (overall fish populations have decreased seventy six percent between 1970 and 2016), and have placed the livelihoods and food security of more than three billion people at risk who rely on fish for a living and basic sustenance.¹⁹⁹ To supplement

their incomes and protect their fisheries, some fishermen have turned to piracy.²⁰⁰ Meanwhile, outer space also faces global commons related challenges and can provide an arena for violent conflict. While the 1967 Outer Space Treaty affirmed that space should only be used for peaceful purposes and free of nuclear weapons, it has failed to limit the deployment and use of weapons in space.²⁰¹ The ambiguity of international laws regarding military capacities in space creates the possibility of a space arms race between states seeking military superiority over their competitors, as the rivalry between the United States and Russia demonstrates.²⁰²

While marked progress on the youth, peace and security and women peace and security agendas has been achieved through global and regional institutional mechanisms, these same mechanisms have yet to be integrated effectively at the national level, eroding their ability to deliver effectively on global-level commitments made to youth and women. Consequently, despite international efforts, 67.6 million young women and men are still severely affected by unemployment.²⁰³ Moreover, in most national policymaking, young people are still considered beneficiaries rather than partners in peace processes.²⁰⁴

At the same time, an estimated one-in-four young people are affected by violence or armed conflict. In 2015, 90 percent of all deaths resulting from violent conflicts involved young males.²⁰⁵ Despite the strength of the Women Peace and Security Agenda leading to over 100 countries enacting national plans for its implementation, women still remain largely absent in peace and security space.²⁰⁶ More alarming still is how both government armed services and insurgent groups alike have resorted to sexual violence as a weapon of war, especially in Ukraine, Myanmar, and Tigray.²⁰⁷

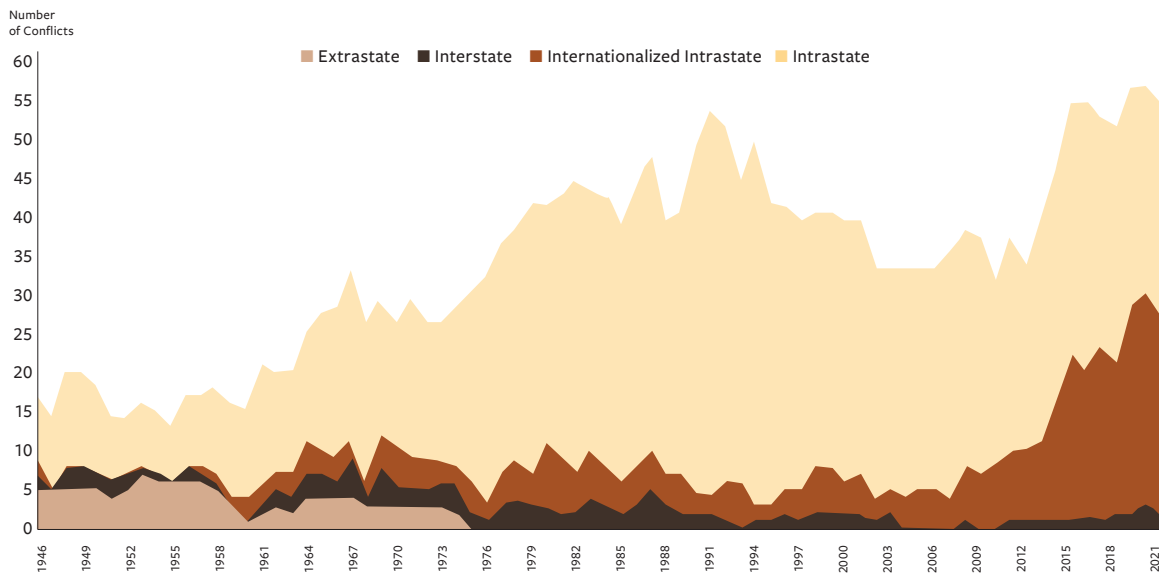
The International Community's Limited Response to Building Peace

In 1992, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali introduced *An Agenda for Peace*, a set of recommendations and concepts for ensuring peace and security in the post-Cold

War world. UN Member States reflected over time much of the agenda's thinking in their deliberations on conflict management and post-conflict peacebuilding in the Security Council and General Assembly, and from 2006, in the Peacebuilding Commission as well. The 1995 *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* further reiterated the UN's commitment to peace-capacity-building and implementing preventive diplomacy.²⁰⁸

In 2000, in an effort to improve peacekeeping doctrine and operations at the field level, the *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations* ("Brahimi Report"), critiqued the conduct of UN peacekeeping during the 1990s.²⁰⁹ However, as the 2015 High Level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report argues, the implementation of reforms within the UN remains contingent on bureaucratic templates which are unable to cater effectively to fastidious and rapidly evolving geopolitical scenarios.²¹⁰ In the same year as the HIPPO report, reviews of both the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace & Security concluded that UN peacebuilding efforts are still largely under-prioritized and under-resourced by the organization, and women—although recognized as agents of change—participate in very few peace processes and are rarely able to have their voices amplified.²¹¹

The growing number of intractable conflicts worldwide has taken a toll on the UN's conflict management system.²¹² Deadly attacks perpetrated against peacekeepers, and the use of digital technology by non-state actors to spread dis / mis-information, have both undermined the credibility of UN peacekeeping missions.²¹³ Moreover, the decades-long "Global War on Terror", beginning with the 9/11 attacks and soon followed by wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have added a new layer of complexity and a counter-terrorism lens to the UN's work to prevent, manage, and recover from deadly violent conflict. Although Russia's invasion of Ukraine has profoundly exhibited the devastating impact of interstate conflicts, the quantum of such conflicts has declined exponentially.²¹⁴ It is imperative to note that along with internal conflicts, the

Figure 5.3: Armed conflict by type (1946 - 2021)


Source: Davies, Petterson & Öberg, "Organized Violence 1989-2021 and Drone Warfare," 2022.

number of internationalized-internal conflicts have surged in recent years (see figure 5.3).

Additionally, conflicting national interests (especially among great powers)—coupled with funding constraints and a rapidly growing global population—have further watered-down some of the UN’s ambitions and inhibited its ability to implement an inclusive and effective dialogue on unresolved issues, such as rising food insecurity and a growing refugee crisis in the developing world. In March 2020, in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, great power divisions were compounded by the Security Council’s inability to pass a resolution endorsing Secretary-General António Guterres’s call for a global cease-fire.²¹⁵ UNHCR estimated that 89.3 million people, globally, were experiencing displacement due to conflict and violence in 2021, more than double the number in 2012, capping a decade of steady increase that threatens to overwhelm the UN’s relief agencies.²¹⁶

Fortunately, the concept of peacebuilding has returned to its origins (by covering the full conflict spectrum, rather than only post-conflict situations), with a heightened focus on conflict prevention. The changing nature of conflict and emerging threats to humanity demand that the UN and other global and regional institutions

embrace their practical and moral obligations to address these complex and inter-related challenges head-on.

Emphasizing the importance of effective multilateralism and focusing on prevention, the Independent Commission on Multilateralism, in its 2016 final report *Pulling Together: The Multilateral System and Its Future*, called for a “New Agenda for Peace” to serve as a plan of collective action to address present and future challenges that transcend borders: human displacement, climate change, and pandemics.²¹⁷ The new agenda would aim to break away from existing silos to support implementation of new reforms, promote inclusive decision-making which involves civil society and local actors, and pave the way for more participatory governance models.

With the Security Council’s inability to prevent Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the current global collective security system’s flaws have become more self-evident.²¹⁸ Besides the well-trodden arguments about the failure of the membership of the Security Council to reflect present day political realities, the Council’s veto mechanism is frequently abused to protect permanent members’ narrow national interests. Russia and China have both vetoed humanitarian efforts

related to the conflicts in Syria and Burma, and for the first time in over fifteen years, on a resolution in May 2022 seeking to impose new sanctions on North Korea following its latest missile tests.²¹⁹ In 2021, the United States blocked proposed resolutions calling for a cease-fire in the Gaza conflict.²²⁰

Meanwhile, the February 2022 emergency session on Russian aggression against Ukraine demonstrated an opportunity for a more prominent United Nations General Assembly role in the realm of peace and security. The invocation of emergency special sessions by means of the *Uniting for Peace* resolution, initially introduced in 1950, shows that the UNGA can assert itself, but as demonstrated in the case of Ukraine, it still requires new tools to navigate around Security Council paralysis. Similarly, the Peacebuilding Commission, as an advisory body to the Security Council and UNGA, does not have independent authority or decision-making power and is, thus, unable to effectively coordinate UN peacebuilding efforts.²²¹ In short, the timely and progressive reform of the Security Council, UNGA, and Peacebuilding Commission should be given renewed focus and political momentum through the New Agenda for Peace, now under consideration for the upcoming Summit of the Future.

Major Elements of the Global Policy Framework

The Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* report makes the case for a New Agenda for Peace that intensifies efforts toward reducing strategic risks from weapons of mass destruction, strengthening international foresight, and enhancing investments in prevention and peacebuilding.²²² It sets forth the need to reshape responses to all forms of violence, enabling UN agencies to address violence holistically. As Member States also remarked recently, this new framework will help to “strengthen international foresight” and “prevention”, and encourage closer cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, to defuse evolving threats, prevent spill-over, and promote stability (see annex 1.3).²²³ Thus, the Secretary-General has called for enhanced

support for regional initiatives to fill critical gaps and to address complex transnational challenges that can fuel instability, such as climate change.²²⁴

Building on consultations and research following the (June 2022) publication of *Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for the Future*, a New Agenda for Peace has the potential to both recapture and extend beyond the spirit of its predecessor, in 1992, by adopting a modern and dynamic approach toward sustaining peace and just security in the twenty-first century, focusing on: (i) prevention, (ii) the changing nature of conflict, (iii) inclusiveness, emphasizing innovations in the Women, Peace & Security and Youth, Peace & Security Agendas, and (iv) reforming the UN Collective Security Architecture.²²⁵

Prevention

A reinvigorated focus on conflict prevention at local, regional, and international levels could both enhance current capabilities and introduce new approaches. Near the start of his tenure, in mid-2017, the Secretary-General established a High-Level Board for Mediation (“the Board”), composed of current and former world leaders, to provide mediation support to Special Representatives of the Secretary-General.²²⁶ Nevertheless, recent examples of significant peace processes (for example, Afghanistan²²⁷ and the Abraham Accords²²⁸) reflect the diminishing mediation role of the United Nations.

The introduction of new foresight capabilities through the New Agenda for Peace could strengthen the Board's and other UN capabilities' reach to anticipate and prevent conflicts in a manner that not only addresses short-term challenges, but undertakes comprehensive long-term planning.²²⁹ The political role of the country-level UN Resident Coordinator should also be enhanced, in coordination with UN's Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), to help host country actors tackle underlying conflict drivers, avert local-level escalatory conflict dynamics, and strengthen national prevention capacities. This could take the form of the deployment of more UN

Peace and Development Advisers, which have provided thought leadership to UN Resident Coordinators in more than sixty countries since 2004, with backstopping support from DPPA and UNDP.²³⁰

This enhanced role for UN Resident Coordinators could be bolstered further through the rapid deployment of a Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisors within DPPA's Mediation Support Unit (MSU), who are equipped to provide technical support and advice on local priorities.²³¹ Together, these enhanced preventive capacities could help UN field-based operations better adapt to the changing nature of violent conflict worldwide.²³² The background of individuals tapped from the Board, MSU, the Peace and Development Advisers, and other capabilities should reflect the geopolitical realities on the ground and strive to bring both global and regional powers on the same page. Furthermore, regional and local actors working to facilitate peace should be encouraged and provided technical support from the United Nations.²³³

In order to improve the UN's mass atrocity and wider conflict prevention decision-making capabilities, the New Agenda for Peace should further focus on strengthening the UN system's conflict analysis and crises warning capabilities, including a systematic approach toward information gathering, assessment, and dissemination of analysis and advice to Member States. Building such capacities to prevent violence requires close attention to the political, social, and institutional factors known to generate it. The New Agenda for Peace could extend beyond current conceptualizations of the "Responsibility to Prevent" and search for greater consensus of both national and international institutions regarding appropriate international action when states are unable or unwilling to uphold their conflict prevention and civilian protection responsibilities.²³⁴ In emphasizing the Responsibility to Prevent, UN agencies and programs could be called upon to develop a plan of action, in consultation with regional and civil society partners, to review the relevance of their work around the broader Responsibility to Protect.²³⁵

The Secretary-General's role under Article 99 of the UN Charter could also be sharpened, as advocated by the "veto initiative" introduced by Liechtenstein and adopted, in April 2022, by the General Assembly.²³⁶ Article 99 has been given a wide interpretation by some states and leading scholars, entrusting the Secretary-General with the prerogative to establish a fact-finding mission or international commission of inquiry, and to further offer good offices for prevention or resolution of conflicts.²³⁷ If the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC) were strengthened to fulfill their mandates by increasing their enforcement powers, preserving their independence, and innovating available tools (e.g., the ICJ's advisory opinion and the ICC Prosecutor's ability to investigate war crimes enumerated under the Rome Statute), these international courts could also contribute to international preventive action to curb and deter deadly violence.²³⁸

Our Common Agenda calls for expanding the role of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to more geographical and substantive settings, as well as for addressing cross-cutting issues of climate change, gender equality, development, and human rights from a *preventive perspective*.²³⁹ In this spirit, and deriving lessons from the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, the PBC could establish a Peacebuilding Audit tool to monitor various indicators associated with the onset of violent conflict. Early warning from this new mechanism would better inform decision-making by both the Peacebuilding Commission and Security Council and enable earlier and more effective preventive action. The Peacebuilding Audit would be consistent with current efforts tracking Member States' progress toward meeting their commitment to SDG 16, while privileging prevention over mitigation-related indicators.

In *Our Common Agenda*, the Secretary-General also makes the case for a renewed approach to disarmament to ensure human, national, and collective security. The New Agenda for Peace provides an opportunity for stronger commitments on the non-use of nuclear weapons and a

time frame for their elimination, enhancing cooperation to prevent and to counter terrorism.²⁴⁰ Similarly, this new framework could identify ways forward for dealing with lethal autonomous weapons, facilitating the start of negotiations toward a legally binding treaty.²⁴¹ Finally, the New Agenda for Peace should recognize the deleterious impact of the illegal trade of small arms and light weapons and prioritize the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. An important indicator of progress involves full state adherence to international humanitarian law when trading conventional weapons.

The Changing Nature of Conflict

Moving past the decades-long emphasis on counter-terrorism (beginning with the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon), the New Agenda for Peace should further address the changing nature of conflict, giving special attention to climate change and water security, cyber-warfare (including disinformation and misinformation), and the two-way interplay between sustainable security and a healthy global commons.

With climate change fast becoming a defining issue of our time, water scarcity has intensified and water related violence is on the rise. To address these climate crisis-related security threats, proactive forms of hydro-diplomacy, new regional governance mechanisms, and legally binding transboundary water governance commitments are urgently needed.²⁴² A first step toward an invigorated approach to hydro-diplomacy should include the ratification, by all countries sharing waters, of the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses.²⁴³ The Convention entered into force with the clear objective of ensuring an equitable and sustainable use of international watercourses for present and future generations.

Additionally, basin-wide treaties and agreements that legally bind upstream and downstream riparian countries to cooperate and engage in regular dialogues may help to dilute any water-related tensions. The Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, for example, is regarded as one

of the world's most successful water sharing endeavors that has stood the test of two wars between India and Pakistan.²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, any such existing treaties must also be periodically reviewed and updated to meet the needs of ever-changing environments. Furthermore, regular data sharing and policy transparency between governments within a shared basin should become a norm. One positive illustration of this is the Senegal River Basin Development Organization, which facilitates the successful sharing of water resources through joint investments between regional states in river basin development programs.²⁴⁵

With states' increased reliance on digital infrastructure and systems, cyber-warfare has also become an emerging dimension of interstate conflict. Cyberthreats are borderless, unpredictable, and potentially untraceable, making accountability difficult to establish.²⁴⁶ This underscores the need for international collaboration to face these common threats.

In addition to adopting new defining principles and norms on free and secure digital usage—as outlined in section IV of this report concerning the Global Digital Compact—legally binding agreements are also needed to address these security risks. A Digital Geneva Convention is one possible direction.²⁴⁷ Like the original Geneva Conventions, a Digital Geneva Convention would establish norms and protocols to protect civilians on the internet—without introducing restrictions in online content, or unnecessary surveillance—and regulate state behavior in cyberspace. Adjusting the scope of prohibited weapons to include anti-satellite weapons that affect access to cyberspace would also help to ensure the peaceful use of this globally shared space. Such a convention would discourage state-sponsored cyber-warfare and suggest collective measures for combating cyber-terrorists.

Digital cooperation must also be a multistakeholder effort.²⁴⁸ Governments (through the UN General Assembly and other international fora), the private sector, and civil society must work together if policy responses to threats of cyber-warfare are to be effective and inclusive.

Tragedies of the commons are another set of fast changing global threats with the potential to undermine global well-being. There exists several potential triggers for conflict, such as disputes over what falls within sovereign or global jurisdiction, as well as a state's impact on pollution and over-extraction of shared resources. To mitigate against a rise in violent conflicts, multilateral and legally-binding agreements on stewardship of the global commons must be updated or, in some cases, signed and ratified by certain states. Although some legal agreements already exist for the high seas,²⁴⁹ atmosphere,²⁵⁰ Antarctica,²⁵¹ and outer space,²⁵² states must reaffirm their commitment to protecting these examples of the global commons.

The high seas and outer space are prominent examples of risks facing the global commons. The oceans' important role as a food source and economic well-spring means that pollution and unsustainable fishing place the global public good provided through oceans at severe risk. Depletion of fisheries due to climate change and overuse has, in turn, fueled illegal fishing and armed conflict.²⁵³ A strict implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which calls for protecting thirty percent of the world's oceans by 2030, managing fisheries sustainably, and drastically reducing pollution, is an important first step toward maintaining the high seas.²⁵⁴ In addition, amending the United Nations 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to reflect the modern environmental issues of climate change and excessive resource depletion, represents another crucial step.

Outer space, like the high seas, faces threats of pollution and conflict.²⁵⁵ Through the testing of satellite targeting missiles, the United States, Russia, and China create unwarranted risks for increasingly valuable space assets of all nations; threaten the peace in space; and risk a growing possibility of an outer space arms race. The militarization of space also highlights inequality of access and uneven technological capacities among states. Amending the 1967 Outer Space Treaty to move beyond nuclear armaments and include a ban on anti-satellite weapons is a necessary step for facilitating greater international cooperation in space. The UN Office for Outer

Space Affairs has further begun to encourage access for developing country space-faring entities to space research facilities, infrastructure, and information through its Access to Space for All initiative.²⁵⁶

Inclusiveness

Building on commitments to ensure just, peaceful and inclusive societies, as set forth in SDG 16 and the UN75 Declaration,²⁵⁷ forging a New Agenda for Peace involves moving beyond simply the "lack of violence" to an understanding of peace fully centered around human rights, gender equality, diverse youth perspectives, democracy, accountability, and justice. In order to build such a system nationally, regionally, and globally to ensure robust, positive peace, it is necessary to view the problem through gender and next generation lenses.²⁵⁸ It also means creating an equitable international framework that targets inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, class and other forms of discrimination, as well as the complex dynamics created as these issues, and their solutions, intersect.

The UN has led many efforts to enshrine greater equity in international peace and security. On October 31, 2000, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, stressing the role of women in advancing peace—subsequently strengthened through the passage of several follow-on resolutions.²⁵⁹ In 2020, with the adoption of Resolution 2538, the Security Council further recognized the indispensable role of women in improving the performance, effectiveness, and credibility of UN peacekeeping operations.²⁶⁰ The success of initiatives such as Women4Yemen, the MAUJ for Development, and the UN Global Compact's Business for Peace network, in engaging more and more with other non-state actors and increasing women's participation in the peacebuilding realm, must be followed by systemic restructuring to allow for increased access and participation of women in preventing war and building peace.²⁶¹

However, the compounded effects of multiple crises of the past few years speak to the need for meaningful reforms to overcome continued

discrimination and inequities that impede effective, collective remedial action worldwide. As called for in *Our Common Agenda*, we need a system that allows for “networked and inclusive multilateralism” and is “geared at solving problems by drawing on the capacities and hearing the voices of all relevant actors.”²⁶² Importantly, this new system must include and emphasize the voices of women and young people, “one in four of which are affected by violence or armed conflict.”²⁶³

The Youth, Peace and Security Resolutions 2250 (in 2015), 2419 (in 2018) and 2535(2020) sought to change the narrative from viewing young people as perpetrators of violence, based on a reactive, panic-based approach, to a policy opportunity-based approach that engages young people as partners in peace and security, thus establishing the younger generation as a political force for peace.²⁶⁴ Significant results have been achieved since the adoption of the resolutions, including the publication of an independent progress study reaffirming the importance of youth inclusion in peace processes. Moreover, national action plans, coalitions, policies, and funding streams have been created in order to address the growing demand for youth protection, inclusion, and participation in peacebuilding.²⁶⁵ However, the UN must pursue efforts to develop a policy opportunity approach involving the younger generation to strengthen peace processes, including at the grass-roots level, and transforming trust deficits into trust opportunities.

The evidence suggests that young people, who are the majority of many societies, feel excluded from various forms of decision-making efforts, especially when they are the ones inheriting the negative consequences of the tragedy of the commons or depleted global public goods. The Youth, Peace, and Security agenda frames this as the violence of exclusion. Transforming the violence of exclusion into trust and partnerships that embrace policy opportunities can become the bedrock for preventive action.²⁶⁶

Our Common Agenda calls for enhancing youth political participation, including by establishing a “Youth in Politics” index that tracks the opening of political space for youth around the world. A new, dedicated United Nations Youth Office

(agreed to, in September 2022, in a UN General Assembly resolution) could integrate the current activities of the Office of the UN Youth Envoy and further serve as an anchor for UN system coordination and accountability on youth matters across the world body’s three substantive pillars of peace, sustainable development, and human rights.²⁶⁷ Additionally, youth representation in decision-making could be bolstered through a UN Youth Council that advances the 2030 Youth Framework.²⁶⁸ The New Agenda for Peace should call upon Member States to ensure that all UN system institutions are representative of the people whom they seek to serve, thereby acknowledging the substantive contributions of young people to global problem-solving.

Investments in quality education could further assist young people, particularly girls, in overcoming structural barriers that limit their participation and capacity to influence decision-making on any number of pressing global challenges, including threats to peace and security.²⁶⁹ Along similar lines, financing for youth leadership must be ensured, along with sound monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.²⁷⁰ This would generate incentives for youth-oriented programming, and leverage resources that could help countries transition out of conflict by transforming the broader political, social and economic systems that are excluding young people.²⁷¹ In addition, the New Agenda for Peace could help to establish a knowledge management platform that connects and integrates the efforts of different youth constituencies.²⁷² Doing so would not only help to avert duplication of efforts, but to provide opportunities for sharing best practices.

Reforming the UN’s Collective Security Architecture

The UN Collective Security framework seeks to fulfill a central organizational mission: the maintenance of international peace and security. When authoritarian regimes give way to more democratic forces and responsive governments, the UN is poised to assist through preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, and peacemaking. However, as noted earlier, these tools and the system of collective security that employs and

These tools and the system of collective security that employs and underpins them need significant upgrading to better cope with ... threats to international peace and security.

underpins them need significant upgrading to better cope with current and emerging threats to international peace and security.

To mobilize the political will required to build that capacity, the New Agenda for Peace could reinforce and supplement ongoing efforts to reform and strengthen the Security Council, General Assembly, and Peacebuilding Commission.²⁷³ It could further lend support to the Secretary-General's recently proposed Emergency Platform. Priority ideas the New Agenda for Peace could champion include the following:

Expand Security Council Membership and Allow Re-election of Non-permanent Members

Many proposals have called for expanding the Security Council, particularly its permanent membership.²⁷⁴ But any negotiation for Council expansion is limited by geopolitical constraints, as manifested in the more than decade-long effort of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform (and its precursors, initiated in 1993). For this reason, the international community should focus on more limited, feasible reform measures, even some that may also require Charter amendment. Among these would be expanding the number of non-permanent seats by six, and allowing the immediate re-election of non-permanent members, who are currently not allowed to serve consecutive terms. Allowing for immediate re-election would bring more regional expertise to UNSC decision-making and create incentives for elected Member States to act fairly and take responsibility in the Council. The General Assembly should also redraw the regional groups for the allocation of non-permanent UNSC seats, with particular regard for the impact on Sub-Saharan countries in the African Group.

Assert the General Assembly's Role through the Uniting for Peace Resolution

On March 2, 2022, the General Assembly, acting under *Uniting for Peace* (see table 5.1 for previous instances) denounced the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine with the support of 141 Member States.²⁷⁵ It was followed, on April 26th, by the consensus passage of Resolution 76/262, which calls for the President of the General Assembly to convene the UNGA "within 10 working days of the casting of a veto" and to hold a debate on the subject of the veto.²⁷⁶ An initiative of Liechtenstein, Resolution 76/262 should complement more frequent use of the *Uniting for Peace* resolution when the UNSC fails to act in critical matters of international peace and security. To avoid appearing to usurp the Security Council's primacy, invocation of *United for Peace* should require a two-part process initiated by a procedural vote of a qualified majority of the UNSC determining that a veto was used in "bad faith," followed by a two-thirds majority vote in the UNGA, as is required for important questions.²⁷⁷ The debates mandated by Res. 76/262 on veto usage might inspire UNSC members to initiate this process.

Upgrade the Peacebuilding Commission to an Empowered Council

A more authoritative UN Peacebuilding Council ("new PBC") could complement and assist in the Security Council's challenging task of maintaining global peace and security. With an expanded mandate, the Peacebuilding Council would have enhanced powers and responsibilities to lead on conflict prevention (including through a new Peacebuilding Audit tool) and peacebuilding policy development, coordination, and resource mobilization on critical second- and third-order conflicts, freeing up the Security Council to concentrate on first-order conflicts that most

Table 5.1: Past Invocations of Uniting for Peace and General Assembly Outcomes

Situation	Security Council Resolution Vetoed by	Uniting for Peace invoked by	General Assembly Outcome
Korea (1951)	USSR	SC	General Assembly Resolution 498 (V) “confirmed the mandate of US-led forces in Korea” and “kept the UN involved in the diplomatic efforts to end the war”
Middle East (1956)	FR and UK	SC	adopted seven resolutions, including Resolution 1000 (ES-I) mandating the UN Emergency Force (UNEF)
Hungary (1956)	USSR	SC	adopted five resolutions, including Resolution 1004 (ES-II) mandating a commission of inquiry into foreign intervention in Hungary
Middle East (1958)	USSR	SC	adopted Resolution 1237 (ES-III) calling for early withdrawal of foreign troops from Jordan and Lebanon.
Congo (1960)	USSR	SC	adopted Resolution 1474 (ES-IV) confirming the mandate of the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC).
Bangladesh (1971)	USSR	SC	“UN Assistance to East Pakistan Refugees.”
Afghanistan (1980)	USSR	SC	adopted Resolution ES-6/2 calling for the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.
Middle East (1982)	US	SC	adopted Resolution ES-9/1 declaring Israel a non peace-loving state and calling on members to apply a number of measures on Israel
Middle East (1967)	USSR draft resolution failed to get nine votes	GA	adopted six resolutions, including Resolutions 2253 and 2254 (ES-V) calling on Israel to rescind unilateral measures in Jerusalem
Palestine (1980)	US	GA	adopted eight resolutions (ES-7/2 through ES-7/9) calling for the unconditional and total withdrawal of Israel from territories occupied since 1967
Namibia (1981)	FR, UK and US	GA	adopted Resolution ES-8/2 condemning South Africa for occupation and calling for assistance to the liberation struggle
Palestine (1997)	US	GA	adopted inter alia, Resolution ES-10/14 requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice
Ukraine (2022)	Russia (voted against)	SC	U.N. Security Council Resolution 2623 called for the eleventh emergency special session of the U.N. General Assembly on the subject of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Albania and the U.S. introduced the resolution before the U.N. Security Council, which adopted it on February 27, 2022. Russia voted against while China, India and the United Arab Emirates abstained. As this was a procedural resolution, no permanent member could exercise their veto power.

Source: *Original Table, Stimson Center*. Based on data gathered from the Security Council Report, *Security Council Deadlocks and Uniting for Peace*, 2013.

threaten international peace and security. The new PBC would focus on countries and regions in non-peacekeeping and post-conflict environments where it can monitor and coordinate actions to prevent conflict recurrence. This proposed upgrade would follow the precedent of the UN Commission on Human Rights' transformation, in 2006, into the UN Human Rights Council. In addition, a reinvigorated focus on prevention calls for adequate, predictable and sustained funding of the Peacebuilding Fund, including from assessed dues, thereby strengthening the world body's core mission of sustaining peace.²⁷⁸

Stand up a new Emergency Platform within the UN system

To better anticipate and prepare for future global shocks and large-scale crises and effectively complement the formal emergency management roles of established UN bodies, from the Security Council to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (and its Inter-Agency Standing Committee of field-operational civil society organizations), a proposed new Emergency Platform—expanding on what was called for in *Our Common Agenda*—could identify gaps in international action to address not only humanitarian emergencies (such as fears of a growing global food crisis) or violent conflict, but also political crises or threats arising from new technologies.²⁷⁹ The Platform could convene both the usual and some less traditional entities, within and beyond the UN system, that could play a role in ameliorating a particular crisis. Through careful yet swift, context-sensitive analysis and skillful diplomacy, the Secretary-General could also add-value to existing arrangements by forging, through the Platform, an international and multistakeholder consensus on the underlying causes of, and the most urgently needed measures to manage and over time resolve, a complex emergency. In addition, the Emergency Platform would benefit, at the operational level, from the ability to draw upon new rapid response capacities.

Overcoming Potential Spoilers and other Bottlenecks

Advancing the New Agenda for Peace will require skillful analysis, political mobilization,

and courageous leadership to overcome potential spoilers and bottlenecks, such as veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council, developing countries leery of having their sovereignty threatened, and financial constraints as the world slowly emerges from a global pandemic (while possibly entering a global recession).²⁸⁰ Skillful analysis is needed, for instance, to understand the emerging drivers of violent conflict and derive appropriate historical lessons from how best the General Assembly can fill, at times, a void in Security Council leadership in maintaining international peace and security. Political mobilization remains fundamental to whether women and youth will continue to make inroads in asserting their voices in the hope of achieving more durable, inclusive, and just peacebuilding outcomes. And courageous leadership will be needed in pursuing upgrades in the Peacebuilding Architecture from, for example, emerging powers and countries making significant financial contributions, as they continue to await long overdue Security Council reform.

Pursued simultaneously, skillful analysis, political mobilization, and courageous leadership can best position UN Member States, the Secretariat, civil society, and the private sector to address the current geopolitical and geoeconomic context. The accelerated time-frame—between now and September 2024—in preparing for the Summit of the Future, combined with the spillover effects of the war in Ukraine, should be leveraged, in particular, to navigate around or over would be spoilers and bottlenecks.

“Peace” has remained an elusive, aspirational goal for millions and must feature at the heart of the Summit of the Future agenda. The Ukraine crisis and the others of our time invite us to rethink fundamental assumptions, including what it means to secure and maintain peace and the role the UN can play in doing so. A New Agenda for Peace that captures the above four building blocks could serve as a guiding light to help the UN and broader international community promote a more robust notion of positive peace and better safeguard the future for all nations and peoples.

VI. Road to the Summit of the Future

“The United Nations needs to reinvent itself to remain relevant in the future, in a post-pandemic world. Fulfilling the objectives ... outlined by the UN in its ‘*Our Common Agenda*’ report and its proposal for a Summit of the Future will be essential towards accelerating the implementation of the SDGs and ensuring that the talks and discussions finally turn into actions on the ground to truly leave no one behind.” —*Youngest Councilor of the World Future Council, Kehkashan Basu*²⁸¹

UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ report, *Our Common Agenda*, called for a Summit of the Future, timed to coincide with the General Assembly’s high-level week in September 2023. Preceded by preparatory events and consultations, the summit would work to “advance ideas for governance arrangements in the areas of international concern mentioned in this report, and potentially others”²⁸² Among its anticipated and potentially far-reaching outcomes are a Pact for the Future, a Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace.

This concluding section explores two scenarios for the Summit of the Future’s proposed timing, detailing the potential advantages of convening the summit sooner rather than later (while acknowledging that this contentious issue was finally addressed in the newly passed September 2022 SOTF Modalities Resolution). It further outlines the current state-of-play and practical ideas for taking forward the Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace in the run-up to the Summit of the Future. In addition, it underscores the central role and proposed milestone activities for civil society contributions to the summit’s preparations. Together with champion countries and leaders across the UN system and the business community, diverse civil society groups are poised to inject dynamism and creative thinking into a high ambition coalition for renewing, strengthening, and repurposing our institutions and approaches to global governance.

2023 or 2024? Why Timing Matters

Given the universal consensus behind the UN75 Declaration that commissioned the *Our Common Agenda* report, the vocal misgivings and even distrust expressed toward the UN Secretariat by some Member States—including Brazil, Pakistan, Cuba, and Russia—with regard to the report was remarkable.²⁸³ It resulted in the watering-down of an otherwise straightforward follow-through procedural resolution approved, in November 2021, by the General Assembly, ultimately calling into question the value of such “consensus-based resolutions.”²⁸⁴ Indeed, in an effort to move quicker and with greater ambition, sentiment is growing among Member States to allow dissenting votes on such resolutions without derailing them, including for modalities resolutions and major intergovernmental declarations that have historically operated through consensus.²⁸⁵

The companion volume to this report, *Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for the Future*, detailed three major fault-lines threatening a meaningful strengthening of a global governance innovation agenda, namely tensions between great powers, between the Global North and South, and between both Member States and the UN Secretariat on the one hand, and between Member States and civil society organizations, on the other.²⁸⁶ Against this backdrop—and despite a serious effort, in early 2022, by the President of the General Assembly to build greater trust and confidence through a five-part *Our Common Agenda* thematic consultation series²⁸⁷—divisions have persisted in the run-up to and preparation of a modalities resolution for the Summit of the Future.

Unsurprisingly, many of the same countries which prolonged negotiations on the November 2021 *Our Common Agenda* support resolution have raised objections with convening the Summit of the Future in September 2023 in New York—preferring a proposed postponement until the start of the General Assembly’s 79th session in September 2024 (box 6.1).²⁸⁸ The arguments for postponement have ranged from needing more time given the ambitious summit agenda under consideration and continued confusion and lack of consensus surrounding many *Our Common Agenda* proposals to a worry that the Summit of the Future could divert scarce political attention, resources, and the time required for planning the already agreed “SDGs Summit” to be convened during UNGA

High-Level Week in September 2023. At the same time, some potential advantages of 2024 are allowing more time for serious substantive preparations, multistakeholder consultations, and intergovernmental negotiations, possibly grouped within several thematic committees and associated task forces (see below); having sufficient time to incorporate results from the September 2023 “SDGs Summit” into the planning of the Summit of the Future; and encouraging the initial proposed “Biennial Summit on the World Economy” to take place now, in September 2023, alongside the “SDGs Summit” in direct support of a broad-based and green recovery coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. While Member States decided in their modalities resolution to postpone the summit until

Box 6.1: Major Elements of the SOTF Modalities Resolution

Passed by consensus on September 8, 2022, major elements of the Summit of the Future Modalities Resolution include:

- | | | |
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| <p>1. Decides that the Summit of the Future has an important role to play in reaffirming the United Nations Charter, reinvigorating multilateralism, boosting implementation of existing commitments, agreeing on concrete solutions to challenges, and restoring trust among Member States;</p> <p>3. Further decides that the Summit of the Future will be held on 22 and 23 September 2024, in New York, preceded by a preparatory ministerial meeting on 18 September 2023;</p> <p>4. Further decides to adopt at the Summit a concise, action-oriented Outcome document (‘A Pact for the Future’), agreed in advance by consensus through intergovernmental negotiations;</p> | <p>16. Requests also the President of the General Assembly to appoint co-facilitators no later than 31 October 2022, one from a developed country and one from a developing country, to facilitate open, transparent and inclusive inter-governmental consultations on the preparatory process of the Summit, and decides that the inter-governmental preparatory process of the Summit shall consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consultations to determine the scope of the Summit, topics and organization of the interactive dialogues and the process of negotiations to conclude the Outcome Document; and • negotiations to conclude the Outcome Document with adequate time for the negotiating sessions; | <p>17. Encourages major groups and other stakeholders to participate and engage in the preparatory process of the Summit of the Future;</p> <p>18. Further decides that the Summit should be well-coordinated with, and complementary to, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit (the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the General Assembly), and requests the President of the General Assembly to ensure the two Summits are well-coordinated;</p> |
|---|--|---|

Source: Original Box, Stimson Center. Data: General Assembly, “Modalities of the Summit of the Future” (7 September 2022, L.87).

September 2024 (preceded in September 2023 by a preparatory ministerial meeting), some of the counter-arguments arising against postponement were:

First, avoid letting-up political momentum for the summit: Precisely because of the bumpy start in passing a simple procedural resolution, in November 2021, to recognize *Our Common Agenda*—coupled with the further geopolitical uncertainty caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022—the newfound political momentum for a Summit of the Future should not be taken for granted (including recent progress on the Declaration on Future Generations’ elements paper and the recently passed UN Youth Office resolution). Moreover, the timely and integrated policy issues to be addressed by global governance reform ideas taken-up at the summit, across complex political, economic, social, and environmental arenas, have not lessened in terms of political or moral urgency, but have rather increased. For some states, and many in civil society, some three years ago—during UN75 in 2020—was the time for action. For the Secretary-General, the OCA report of 2021 was supposed to be the “wake-up-call.” The world cannot afford to wait any longer.

Second, let the Summit of the Future complement the SDGs Summit: Far from potentially working at cross-purposes, the “twin-summits” can bolster one another in multiple practical ways, just as other back-to-back summits have done so during UNGA High-Level Week (in 2019, for instance, a Climate Action Summit, followed by the SDG Summit and multiple high-level meetings).²⁸⁹ For one, side-by-side, they both can demonstrate how strengthening global institutions and approaches can help to enhance national and sub-national capacities for delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the present Decade of Action. Both summits are equally concerned with ensuring generous, reliable, and sustained (public and private) financing for the closely interlocking issues of the UN system and sustainable development financing. Together, they can also forge effectively a strong, coherent, and mutually reinforcing public narrative; these intertwined summits are, for instance, creating

tangible multiplier effects to tackle the underlying causes of political and criminal violence, mitigate against the chief factors accelerating climate change, and build opportunities to move people and nations out of extreme poverty and toward sustainable development.

Third, give UN Secretary-General Guterres more time to see through summit implementation: The last Secretary-General to oversee a comprehensive UN reform effort was Kofi Annan at the time of the September 2005 (UN60) World Leaders Summit. Its comprehensive (nearly 40 pages, with dozens of new commitments) Outcome Document was adopted with only fifteen months to go in Secretary-General Annan’s tenure at the helm of the world organization, limiting the amount of time he and his team had to ensure successful follow-through to the UN60 summit.²⁹⁰ Holding the summit at UNGA High-Level Week next year would have given António Guterres and his colleagues more than three years to ensure effective follow-through on a Pact for the Future and related instruments (see below).

Fourth, free up the UN calendar to convene a Biennial Summit in 2024 and the World Social Summit in 2025: With the world only slowly emerging from a global pandemic, while possibly entering a global recession, the urgency of adopting—at the Summit of the Future next year—a newly proposed Biennial Summit on the World Economy, as introduced in the OCA report, only grows.²⁹¹ Specifically, another year should not be lost in having the staff of the UN, international financial institutions, WTO, and G20 presidency come together to prepare an ambitious global green growth and recovery agenda at an inaugural meeting, in September 2024 in New York, of the Biennial Summit. Similarly, a World Social Summit, as further proposed for 2025 in the *Our Common Agenda* report, is needed to address the social dimensions of a green recovery from the pandemic, as well as to begin to chart new universal development goals post-2030.

Fifth and finally, refrain from convening potentially divisive summits near a U.S. presidential election: Especially when the United States, a superpower, is highly polarized in its domestic and foreign policies between its two main

political parties, when countries have a choice, it is best that they steer clear of the U.S. political calendar and the possibility of the United Nations becoming a political punching-bag and misused straw man in the final leg of a hotly contested presidential election.

Convening the Summit of the Future in September 2023 would have better recognized the gravity of the issues demanding a more urgent and capable response by the world's governance system, including the rising risk of nuclear war and the growing realities of runaway climate change, resurgent poverty, and myriad threats to human rights. While the summit will always result in some “unfinished business,” time is of the essence, and we must never forget that success begets success—achieving some high-profile wins in the near future can generate momentum and improve conditions for subsequent, even more ambitious changes. In sum, world leaders can ill-afford to take the foot off the pedal on the road to a much-needed and, arguably, long overdue gathering of global statespersons to prepare the United Nations for 21st century threats and opportunities. At the same time, with the recent decision to push back the Summit of the Future to September 2024, Member States and other partners in civil society and the private sector should now make full use of the additional twelve months to ratchet-up ambition and realize the full potential of this once-in-a-generation opportunity for the international community. For concrete ideas on an ambitious and participatory two-year consultative process with multiple preparatory meetings outside of New York too, please see the Stimson report *Beyond UN75: A Roadmap for Inclusive, Networked & Effective Global Governance* (June 2021, Section V, pp. 76-83).

Advancing Future Generations, Digital Cooperation, and Peace on the Road to the Summit of the Future

Secretary-General António Guterres' *Our Common Agenda* report has begun to take the UN75 Declaration from vision to action.

Through the recently finalized modalities resolution, UN Member States have outlined a formal, UN Member States will outline a formal negotiation process, culminating in the adoption of a proposed “Pact for the Future” and related instruments at a Summit of the Future. Without such an intergovernmental negotiating framework, many of *Our Common Agenda's* and related global governance innovation proposals are unlikely to come to fruition.

As recommended in the companion volume to this report, *Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for the Future*, the Pact for the Future—main outcome document of the Summit of the Future—should be organized around four main thematic pillars, whose work would support a fifth, integrative pillar. Key themes could be: i) peace, security, and humanitarian action; ii) sustainable development and COVID-19 recovery; iii) human rights, inclusive governance, and the rule of law; and iv) climate governance. The fifth pillar would promote integrated, system-wide reforms in connection with the ideas put forth by the four other pillars, following a holistic approach to networked, inclusive, and effective multilateralism.

Ideally, UN Member States would focus on building consensus around a select number of priority institutional, policy, legal, operational, and normative global governance strengthening proposals (e.g., around 8-10 per thematic pillar, plus 8-10 more to promote integrated, system-wide innovation). To mitigate against an unwieldy Pact for the Future and to ensure strong linkages with the twelve UN75 Declaration commitments—as well as proposals from *Our Common Agenda*, the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, and elsewhere—Member States could be encouraged to rank their proposals according to criteria involving desirability, policy impact, urgency, cost, and implementation feasibility.

At the same time, the Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace, as detailed in this report, represent three comprehensive and unique global policy frameworks that both individually complement (and round out) the Pact for the Future, falling under one or multiple of the

Pact’s proposed thematic pillars. Here we present the current state-of-play and offer some suggestions for taking forward, on the road to the Summit of the Future, each global governance innovation instrument:

■ **Declaration on Future Generations**

State-of-play

In June 2022, the President of the General Assembly appointed the Permanent Representatives of Fiji and the Netherlands as Co-Facilitators for the Declaration on Future Generations. A subsequent Expert Briefing on the declaration, held on June 30, 2022, recaptured the essence of the PGA’s OCA consultation held earlier in the year on future generations, by encouraging constructive informal consultations between Member States and non-governmental stakeholders.²⁹² The Executive Office of the Secretary-General further called for a new platform to facilitate institutional follow-up to the declaration, alongside a Special Envoy for Future Generations. Specifically, it suggested a mechanism either under the General Assembly, or through a repurposed Trusteeship Council, as an intergovernmental or multistakeholder forum that could ensure long-term thinking by considering and acting on behalf of future generations.²⁹³

During the first informal consultations on the Declaration on Future Generations, held on July 7, 2022, diplomats stressed the need for a Member State driven process that could result in an action-oriented political declaration achieved through consensus. Several Member States began to propose priority elements, including ensuring that the declaration is “youth inclusive” and reinforces the 2030 Agenda on

Sustainable Development.²⁹⁴ Others, especially within the Group of 77, cautioned against renegotiating existing commitments by Member States, while underscoring the importance of measures for adequate financing and technology sharing.²⁹⁵ At a briefing on *Our Common Agenda* follow-through, held on August 4, 2022, the Permanent Representative of Fiji informed Member States that the Elements Paper for the declaration would be circulated in early September and subsequently taken up at an informal consultation planned for 9 September (see annex 1.1 for details).²⁹⁶

Way Forward

Building on the current forward momentum for the Declaration on Future Generations, three sub-committees or task forces (each co-led by a UN Permanent Representative from the Global North and Global South) could be stood up to facilitate work on: i. the Declaration and its chief elements; ii. a Council for Future Generations to oversee the Declaration’s implementation (possibly by repurposing the UN Trusteeship Council or through a Stewardship Council); and iii. a Special Envoy on Future Generations to champion intergenerational equity at the highest echelon of the UN system. Building on the Declaration on Future Generation’s current Elements Paper, the first sub-committee could give attention to legal rights and obligations toward future generations, realigning political incentives in support of future citizens, and the role of youth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond. The second sub-committee could introduce thinking on a Future Generations Review and Intergenerational Solidarity Index as important tracking and

The second sub-committee could introduce thinking on a Future Generations Review and Intergenerational Solidarity Index as important tracking and oversight activities of the proposed Council for Future Generations.

oversight activities of the proposed Council for Future Generations. Meanwhile, the third sub-committee would focus on the mandate and specific resource requirements of the proposed Special Envoy on Future Generations. The Declaration on Future Generations and its associated components could fall under the Pact for the Future's thematic pillar on sustainable development and COVID-19 recovery (though relate closely to all four pillars).

To support the efforts of all three sub-committees, the Summit of the Future's secretariat could commission research from leading academics and policy researchers, as well as solicit contributions from other diverse actors from across civil society. In particular, a "Future Generations Campaign," led by diverse civil society organizations in the Global South and North, could seek to galvanize the support of people worldwide, including young people, in championing the rights of future generations and speaking up for intergenerational equity and justice.

■ **Global Digital Compact**

State-of-Play

The High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, convened by the Secretary-General in 2018, presented its report on *The Age of Digital Interdependence*, in 2019.²⁹⁷ The report while focusing on three major goals, which are (a) leaving no one behind, (b) focusing on individuals, societies, and digital technologies, and (c) creating mechanisms for global digital cooperation, put forth five recommendations, under the headings:

- i. Build an Inclusive Digital Economy and Society;
- ii. Develop Human and Institutional Capacity;
- iii. Protect Human Rights and Human Agency;
- iv. Promote Digital Trust, Security and Stability; and
- v. Foster Global Digital Cooperation.

Shortly afterwards, the Secretary-General's *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation*, released in 2020, envisaged key action points for the way forward on recommendations pertaining to

connectivity, digital public goods, digital inclusion and capacity-building, ensuring human rights online, regulating AI, promoting digital trust and security, and building a more effective architecture for global digital cooperation. In order to lend legitimacy to these aforementioned goals, the Secretary-General suggested a Global Digital Compact in the *Our Common Agenda*, which aims to strengthen multilateralism by providing a vision for a digitally interdependent world.²⁹⁸

During the PGA's thematic consultations on *Our Common Agenda*, held in February and March, 2022, notably, no single Member State directly opposed the proposal of a Global Digital Compact. However, some countries, such as Ethiopia, raised concerns on the possibility of politicization of certain elements of the proposal, such as underscoring human rights in the compact, which may be "instrumentalized against states."²⁹⁹

Annex 1.2 provides highlights of the varied Member States' responses during the PGA's thematic consultations, and discussion along similar lines are expected to pick-up again with the appointment of Global Digital Compact co-facilitators by the President of the General Assembly during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly. In the meantime, the newly appointed Special Envoy on Technology, Amandeep Singh Gill, has led efforts to liaise with relevant Member-States, civil society groups, and related stakeholders to create a broad, multistakeholder effort to encourage diverse thinking around a Global Digital Compact.

Way Forward

Building on the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Technology's current online consultations, a Global Digital Compact task force or committee—led by one UN Permanent Representative from the Global North and one from the Global South—should be established under the Pact for the Future's thematic pillar on human rights, inclusive governance, and the rule of law (while relating closely to all four pillars). In support of the Office of the Special Envoy on Technology's

secretariat functions, independent scholarly research could be commissioned and multi-stakeholder dialogues convened to tap insights and ideas from tech-savvy non-governmental organizations, pioneering businesses, and human rights groups.

Major work streams for the Global Digital Compact task force could include the “3-I’s” of innovation, infrastructure, and information, and together, they should give ample attention to the thematic issues of connecting people, internet fragmentation, data protection, human rights online, AI regulation, and the digital commons. To ensure effective follow-through in implementing the Global Digital Compact’s core principles and practical guidance, consultations should be undertaken by the task force and the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Technology with relevant multilateral internet governance fora, including the UN’s Internet Governance Forum, the International Telecommunications Union’s Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues and World Summit on the Information Society Forum, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, the Global Conference on Cyberspace, the Global Forum on Cyber-Expertise, and the Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus.

■ **New Agenda for Peace**

State-of-play

In response to the UN75 Declarations’ call to promote peace and address new security threats, the New Agenda of Peace, as introduced by the OCA report, is proposed by the Secretary-General to enhance the capacities of the UN to prevent the outbreak and escalation of hostilities on land, at sea, in space, and in cyberspace.³⁰⁰ The PGA, during his third thematic consultation on the OCA, in February 2022, called for enhancing bilateral, multilateral, and regional mediation capacities, and preventing the proliferation of nuclear as well as conventional weapons.³⁰¹ Preliminary work on the New Agenda for Peace has commenced “under the radar” by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA), with support from the UN Office for Disarmament

Affairs (UN ODA), UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UN OCT), and UN Department of Peace Operations (UN DPO). At his OCA follow-through briefing to UN Member States, on August 4, 2022, the Secretary-General reiterated his hope that the New Agenda for Peace would represent a major element of the Summit of the Future’s agenda.³⁰²

During the global ceasefire conference, held on June 28, 2022, several Member States, especially Switzerland, indicated their support for a New Agenda for Peace that strives to enhance the UN’s prevention toolkit.³⁰³ Whereas Western countries have called for focusing on cross-cutting issues, such as organized crime, corruption, and climate change through the New Agenda for Peace,³⁰⁴ Global South representatives have stressed new investments in prevention mechanisms, while underscoring that conflict prevention is, first and foremost, a state’s responsibility. On this latter point, representatives of the African Group and Egypt, stressing the importance of national ownership, called for the UN to support nationally owned and led prevention strategies.³⁰⁵

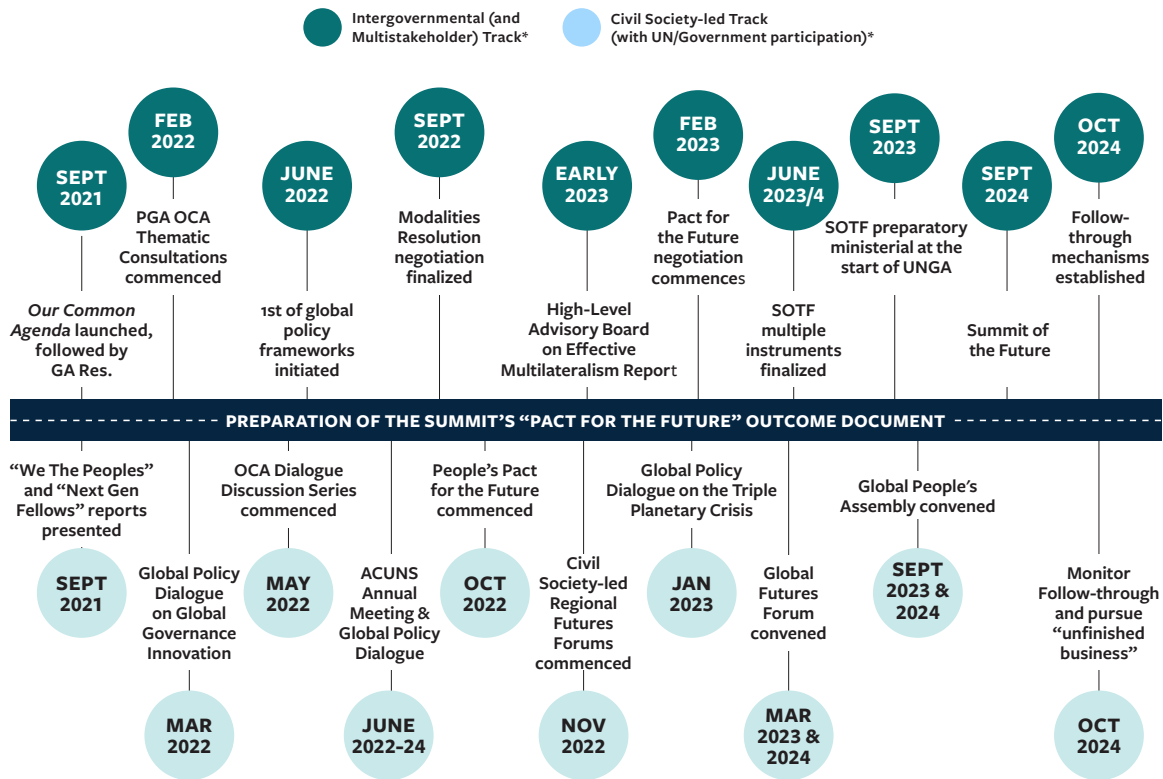
Way Forward

Learning from progress already underway on the Declaration on Future Generations, a New Agenda for Peace task force or committee—led by one UN Permanent Representative from the Global North and one from the Global South—should be created under the Pact for the Future’s proposed thematic pillar on peace, security, and humanitarian action. It should build directly on the preliminary work undertaken by UN DPPA, ODA, OCT, and DPO, which should continue to perform secretariat duties for the task force. Independent research should be commissioned from academics and policy researchers to inform the task force’s work, and the substantive inputs and perspectives of other diverse actors across civil society (e.g., youth and community-led peacebuilding organizations and participants in the UN Global Compact’s Business for Peace network) should also be sought.

The New Agenda for Peace could be organized around the ideas showcased in this report (namely, prevention; the changing nature of conflict;

Figure 6.1: Roadmap to the 2024 Summit of the Future

(recommended)



* Only select recommended activities listed.

Source: Original Figure, Stimson Center.

inclusiveness, emphasizing innovations in the Women, Peace & Security and Youth, Peace & Security Agendas; and reforming the UN Collective Security Architecture), as well as disarmament in the areas of conventional weapons, new technologies, weapons of mass destruction, and space. To overcome potential spoilers and circumvent bottlenecks during the framework’s negotiations, a global communications effort—including op-eds and short public service announcements from prominent religious leaders, artists, and Nobel Peace Laureates—could help to buttress the analytical work, political mobilization, and leadership led by UN Member States, the Secretariat, and partners across civil society. Member States driven intergovernmental negotiations aimed at advancing future generations, digital cooperation, and peace in the run-up to the Summit of the Future will,

simultaneously, depend on the level of engagement of myriad non-state actors. Given the sheer complexities and large number of policy issues to be deliberated upon, and the accelerated time-frame, civil society groups could play a constructive role in the finalizing of ambitious goals within the Pact for the Future and associated policy frameworks.

Civil Society’s Role in Maximizing the Summit of the Future

Diverse civil society groups—from policy advocacy and service delivery organizations and research institutes and universities, to religious movements, youth groups, business representatives, journalists, and community-level bodies—made, in 2020, an indelible mark on the UN75 Global Conversation through some 3,000 civil society dialogues worldwide and surveys involving some



Box 6.2: Global Policy Dialogue proposals for the Summit of the Future

1

Called for the **Global Digital Compact** to “regulate access to data” and be “community service oriented”, in order to strike a better balance between private sector interests and the needs of the poor.

2

Recommended that the Secretary-General’s proposed **Emergency Platform** serve as “a series of protocols and statements of procedure (SoPs amounting to—in its simplest form—a document that commits the global system to come together in times of crisis.”

3

Proposed the need for **Border Carbon Adjustments** and an **Adaptation Fund** that is “funded by different countries according to their carbon footprint” and supported further by multilateral agreements on “green materials and trade in environmental goods” to ensure greater mutual accountability.

4

Suggested that the **New Agenda for Peace’s disarmament pillar** prioritize a more transparent Arms Trade Treaty, “guided by even stronger legal and ethical standards”; “making nuclear weapons unacceptable” and addressing the “nuclear dilemma”; and the need for a Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems Treaty.

Source: Global Governance Innovation Network, Global Policy Dialogue on Evidence-Based Solutions and the Road to 2023: Strengthening Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, Sustainable Trade & Disarmament Cooperation: Summary of Major Findings and Recommendations, 2022.

1.5 million people in 195 countries.³⁰⁶ The UN75 Office reported that the Conversation showed “overwhelming public support for international cooperation” and for a more people-centered multilateralism.³⁰⁷ These civil society-led consultations fed into and shaped intergovernmental negotiations on the UN75 Declaration, culminating in a joint commitment by Member States to twelve priority areas during the General Assembly’s High-Level Week.³⁰⁸

Over the coming twelve to twenty-four months, in the spirit of making multilateralism more networked and inclusive, civil society is further poised to inject dynamism and creative thinking into a high ambition coalition—alongside like-minded states and visionary UN officials—aimed at maximizing the full potential of the Summit of the Future, including its endorsement by world leaders of a Pact for the Future, Declaration on Future Generations, Global Digital Compact, and New Agenda for Peace. Indeed, without the active engagement of civil society, the summit may end up merely tweaking the global governance system—rather than weighing seriously more ambitious solutions commensurate with today’s challenges, threats, and opportunities. Major milestone partnership-building activities in the coming year are expected to include (as detailed, alongside related intergovernmental milestones, in figure 6.1):

People’s Pact for the Future: Building on the UN75 People’s Declaration, the People’s Pact for the Future will serve as a chief vehicle for channeling civil society perspectives into the Summit of the Future outcome document(s) negotiations. Organized around several thematic headings and facilitated by an online consultation and monthly and regional forums, the People’s Pact is expected to be finalized, in early 2023, at the Global Futures Forum (see below).

Global Policy Dialogues: In March 2022, the Global Governance Innovation Network and other partners convened a Global Policy Dialogue (GPD) in Washington, D.C., with civil society policy advocates and researchers, UN Ambassadors, and other senior officials to further develop proposals from *Our Common Agenda* and generate new ideas for the Summit of the Future. A similar GPD took place in June

Ensure that the intergovernmental negotiations both welcome and deliberate on substantive inputs provided by scholars, non-governmental organizations, major groups, business leaders, and parliamentarians ...

2022 in Geneva, during the Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the UN System, focused on global governance and humanitarian action, human rights, sustainable trade, and disarmament (see box 6.2). The next GPD, this coming January 2023 in Recife, will focus on the Triple Planetary Crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

Monthly and Regional Forums: In May 2022, the Coalition for the UN We Need and other partners convened the first in a series of monthly forums to deepen the conversation on the opportunities and implications from the Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* report recommendations. Similarly, civil society-led online Regional Futures Forums will take place, in late 2022, to ensure that diverse regional global governance strengthening ideas and insights are fed into the preparations of the People's Pact for the Future, the Global Futures Forum, and the Summit of the Future.

Global Futures Forum: Civil Society Perspectives on the Summit of the Future: Proposed for early 2023 in New York by the Coalition for the UN We Need, Global Governance Innovation Network, and other partners worldwide, it aims to:

- i. explore the design and impact of wide ranging proposals for a more inclusive United Nations, from the unique vantage point of civil society;
- ii. finalize and widely socialize a "People's Pact for the Future"
- iii. raise awareness, build ownership, and mobilize energy around the promise of the Summit of the Future to deliver on an ambitious set of outcomes; and
- iv. model true partnership and creativity

worldwide among civil society.

In doing so, the forum will help to forge a common strategy for civil society engagement to shape the intergovernmental negotiations toward a Pact for the Future and other anticipated global policy frameworks, including a Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace.

Policy-Oriented Research: All dialogues and forums are underpinned by a robust policy research track that encourages short policy briefs, longer reports, journal articles, books and book chapters, and other kinds of scholarly, yet policy-oriented, publications. Special attention is given to encouraging younger scholars and volunteering research, including through periodic expert roundtables, to the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism.

Information Platform for Civil Society and Smaller UN Missions: The Coalition for the UN We Need, Global Governance Innovation Network, and other partners across civil society are committed to supporting civil society advocacy and Member States (especially smaller UN Missions) with tools for effective engagement in the Summit of the Future's preparations through a regular bulletin, steady stream of policy briefs, an interactive, web-based outreach platform, and other knowledge products and resources in support of the intergovernmental negotiations.

Op-Eds, Media, and Social Media Outreach: Through regular op-eds and other tools, partners across civil society are committed to expanding media and social media outreach to raise public awareness and capture the attention of policymakers and norm-setters on issues of global governance renewal, strengthening,

With a determined focus on the future, time and action are of the essence.

and repurposing.

Meaningful civil society engagement, in the spirit of more networked, inclusive, and effective multilateralism in the Summit of the Future's preparations, can reassure all stakeholders that decisions taken are well-informed, enjoy broad social ownership, and generate a sense of co-responsibility in supporting their implementation. Summit preparations should, therefore:

- i. ensure that the intergovernmental negotiations both welcome and deliberate on substantive inputs provided by scholars, non-governmental organizations, major groups, business leaders, and parliamentarians;
- ii. open formal negotiations to public observation;
- iii. support national, regional, and global multistakeholder forums in the run-up to the summit; and
- iv. encourage the involvement of civil society and parliamentarians in the national delegations preparing for the summit.

A Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity to Renew Global Governance

The last time the UN attempted a comprehensive overhaul of the entire system was September 2005, when world leaders gathered during UNGA High-Level Week to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the organization.³⁰⁹ While Security Council expansion failed and ambitious disarmament goals were not realized, a new Peacebuilding Architecture and Responsibility to Protect norm were introduced, and the enfeebled Human Rights Council was upgraded into an empowered Council with new tools, such as the Universal Periodic Review, to better promote and safeguard human rights.

Nearly two decades later, the Summit of the

Future is poised to expand ownership of and realize the *Our Common Agenda* report's full vision and operational potential through inter-governmental deliberations on a Declaration on Future Generations, Global Digital Compact, and New Agenda for Peace, all under the chapeau of a comprehensive, apex Pact for the Future. This once-in-a-generation opportunity to renew global governance must not be squandered, not least because time is running-out to tackle conflict-drivers that may spread and pit great powers against each other, to protect millions more people from falling into abject poverty, and, perhaps most ominous of all, to reverse the most severe effects from climate change. Any progress achieved in the coming months, however limited at first, must be amplified, as an integral step toward building momentum for more ambitious goals.

While the Summit of the Future will not represent a silver bullet in tackling overnight many of the world's most pressing problems, if designed and led well, it could set into motion a series of events and facilitate, over time, a more thorough rethink of our international system and of the laws and norms that underpin it. With a determined focus on the future, time and action are of the essence, perhaps in ways incomparable to earlier, less globally integrated generations. As the clock ticks, the aspirations of billions worldwide grow in favor of change toward a system of global governance that values cooperation over discord, global policy based on scientific evidence over fragmentation and disinformation, and, most of all, the embrace of human dignity and a rich notion of positive peace, where all peoples and nations have opportunities to live in free, safe, and habitable societies in harmony with both nature and their neighbors—now and in the long-term. But without the reforms we need mobilized through a high ambition coalition of states, businesses, and civil society partners, “the future we want” will soon be out of reach for us, and lost to posterity for good.³¹⁰

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VI. Road to the Summit of the Future

281. Basu, “World Future Council offers support to UN Summit of the Future 2023.”
282. Guterres, *Our Common Agenda*, 66.
283. Ponzio and Zhang, *Here Are the Next Steps the US Should Take to Re-Engage With the UN*.
284. United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution on the Follow-up to the Report of the Secretary-General Entitled “Our Common Agenda.”*
285. Conclusion reached based on interviews by Richard Ponzio with multiple UN Permanent Representatives in April and July of 2022 in New York.
286. Ponzio et al., *Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for the Future*, 66-67.
287. President of the General Assembly, *Our Common Agenda, Summary of Thematic Consultations*.
288. United Nations General Assembly, “Follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General entitled ‘Our Common Agenda.’”

289. In his August 4, 2022 *Our Common Agenda* briefing to Member States, UN Secretary-General Guterres described the proposed Summit of the Future and the second SDG Summit in 2023 as “twin summits” that share the common objective of “creat[ing] conditions for a sustainable, equitable and inclusive future ... the ‘twin summits’ are our last, best chance to deliver on ... a multilateral system that manages and solves global challenges in a timely, effective and fair way ...” Guterres, “Briefing by the Secretary-General on the progress on ‘Our Common Agenda.’”

290. United Nations General Assembly, 2005 *World Summit Outcome*.

291. International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Update July 2022: Gloomy and More Uncertain*.

292. United Nations General Assembly, *Briefing to Member States on the Declaration on Future Generations*.

293. Ibid.

294. United Nations General Assembly, “First Informal Consultations on July 7th, 2022.”

295. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Ministerial Declaration of the Group of 77 and China to UNCTAD XV*.

296. Guterres, “Briefing by the Secretary-General on the progress on ‘Our Common Agenda.’”

297. United Nations, “The Age of Digital Interdependence.”

298. Guterres, *Our Common Agenda*.

299. Minale, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

300. United Nations, “At ‘Our Common Agenda’ Talks, Secretary-General Says Summits on Future, Sustainable Development Goals ‘Last, Best Chance’ to Manage, Solve Global Challenges.”

301. President of the General Assembly, *Our Common Agenda, Summary of Thematic Consultations*.

302. Guterres, “Secretary-General’s remarks to the General Assembly Consultation on ‘Our Common Agenda.’”

303. United Nations, “From Words to Action: A Global Ceasefire Beyond COVID-19 Pandemic.”

304. EU, UK - thematic consultations.

305. African Group and Egypt in the thematic consultations.

306. United Nations, *Shaping Our Future Together: Concluding Report of the UN75 Office*.

307. United Nations UN75 Office, *Resolved to Combine Our Efforts: Preliminary Assessment of the UN75 Survey and Dialogues*.

308. The twelve priority areas were planet, conflict, law and justice, women and girls, building trust, digital cooperation, upgrading the UN, sustainable financing, partnerships, youth, and preparedness. United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on the Commemoration of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations*.

309. United Nations General Assembly, 2005 *World Summit Outcome*.

310. United Nations *The Future We Want, The United Nations We Need*.

Annex 1.1: Illustrative Tracking of Highlights in Our Common Agenda Follow-Up Negotiations Concerning Future Generations

311. United Nations General Assembly, “Common Agenda consultation 4: Protecting our planet and being prepared for the future.”

312. United Nations General Assembly, “Briefing to Member States on the Declaration on Future Generations.”

313. United Nations General Assembly, *First Informal Consultation by Co-Facilitators for the Development of an Elements’ Paper on the Declaration on Future Generations*.

314. United Nations General Assembly, *Stakeholder Consultation on the Formulation of an Elements Paper on the Declaration on Future Generations*.

315. United Nations General Assembly, “Briefing by the Secretary-General on the progress of ‘Our Common Agenda.’”

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316. Kloss, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

317. Jürgenson, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

318. Minale, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

319. Skoog, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

320. Russian Federation, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

321. Joint Statement Finland, Mexico, Colombia, Denmark, Fiji, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Namibia, the Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Switzerland, Singapore, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

322. United States, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

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323. Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ), “Statement at Our Common Agenda Informal Thematic Consultation on the 3rd Thematic Cluster: ‘Frameworks for a Peaceful World – Promoting Peace, International Law and Digital Cooperation.’”

324. Wallace, “Statement at Our Common Agenda Informal Thematic Consultation on the 3rd Thematic Cluster: ‘Frameworks for a Peaceful World – Promoting Peace, International Law and Digital Cooperation.’”

325. China, “China’s Intervention at the Thematic Consultation 3 on ‘Our Common Agenda.’”

326. Skoog, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

327. Ishikane, “Statement at Our Common Agenda Informal Thematic Consultation on the 3rd Thematic Cluster: ‘Frameworks for a Peaceful World – Promoting Peace, International Law and Digital Cooperation.’”

328. Joint Statement Finland, Mexico, Colombia, Denmark, Fiji, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Namibia, the Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Switzerland, Singapore, “Statement at General Assembly on Our Common Agenda.”

329. Norway, “Statement at Our Common Agenda Informal Thematic Consultation on the 3rd Thematic Cluster: Frameworks for a Peaceful World – Promoting Peace, International Law and Digital Cooperation.”

330. United Kingdom, “Statement at Our Common Agenda Informal Thematic Consultation on the 3rd Thematic Cluster: Frameworks for a Peaceful World – Promoting Peace, International Law and Digital Cooperation.”

331. Joyini, “Statement at Our Common Agenda Informal Thematic Consultation on the 3rd Thematic Cluster: Frameworks for a Peaceful World – Promoting Peace, International Law and Digital Cooperation.”

332. Bae, “Statement at Our Common Agenda Informal Thematic Consultation on the 3rd Thematic Cluster: Frameworks for a Peaceful World – Promoting Peace, International Law and Digital Cooperation.”

Annex 1: Illustrations of Our Common Agenda Follow-up Discussions

Annex 1.1: Illustrative Highlights from Our Common Agenda Follow-Up Negotiations on Future Generations

MEETING	SUMMARY OF ILLUSTRATIVE REMARKS
<p>PGA Thematic Consultations Fourth Cluster (March 3, 2022.)³¹¹</p>	<p>G77</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Group believes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the agreed framework for safeguarding the prosperity of both current and future generations. • Creation of forums and processes to protect the interests of future generations should avoid overlapping of mandates. • Requested clarification on the inter-operability of “Proposed Futures Labs” and the “Office of Special Envoy for Future Generations” as well as on the proposed mandate of the Special Envoy’s Office. • Emphasizes the primacy of existing multilateral framework for cooperation on Climate Change, namely United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. <p>EU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomed the proposals for a “Futures Lab” and a Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report. • Noted that the proposal for a Special Envoy for Future Generations deserves positive consideration as they could play a key role in preparing the proposed “Declaration on Future Generations” as one of the deliverables for the Summit of the Future. <p>Africa Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasized the important need for prior coordination with Member States in this regard. • Noted that we need to be mindful of to not duplicate structures and institutions, and stressed that the interests of future generations should be embedded within policymaking at the national levels. • The Group further emphasized the primary role Member States have in data collection and conducting forecasts regarding the future. <p>Pacific Islands Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressed the adaption and territorial threats of climate change, conserving biodiversity and oceans, preparing global vaccination plan, and ensuring pandemic preparedness.
<p>Summary of Expert Briefings on the Declaration of Future Generations (June 30, 2022)³¹²</p>	<p>EU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighted that the human rights pillar is important in the present discussion and further pointed out the Human Rights Council resolution on right to a healthy environment. <p>EOSG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested establishing an alternative platform for institutional follow-up on the Declaration of Future Generations, along with the appointment of the Special Envoy for Future Generations. • Suggested establishing a mechanism either under General Assembly, or the repurposing Trusteeship Council; to consider and act on behalf of the Future Generations. • Pointed out that the declaration shall seek inspiration from International Human Rights Law and strive for inclusive decision-making for pursuing the interests of future generations. <p>G77</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted that the elements of the declaration must be devised by the Member States and urged states to look for common priorities through discussions with the G77. <p>Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt and Iran</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasized the importance of 2030 Agenda, and its alignment with the declaration.

<p>First Informal Consultations (July 7, 2022)³¹³</p>	<p>EU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasized the importance of clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, along with quality education, enhance multistakeholder engagement especially meaningful participation of youth. Considered priority elements for the declaration especially - accountability for violation of Human Rights, focus on economic, social, and cultural rights, along with Agenda 2030, climate action, biodiversity, and increasing pollution. <p>Brazil</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Called for accelerating the implementation of Agenda 2030 and not to renegotiate outcome documents but build upon such instruments. Noted that Agenda 2030 includes commitments toward future generations thus the focus should be on fulfillment of agreed frameworks. <p>Pakistan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect priorities of South, bridging financial and technological gaps, ensure means for poor and most vulnerable. Pointed out that Agenda 2030 achieved through global consensus includes commitments for present and future generations, and provides sufficient safeguard along with Paris Agreement. <p>Mexico</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pointed toward specific elements for the consideration in the declaration such as adopting a youth inclusive approach, emphasis on the climate crisis, and support the digital transformation that calls for protection of Human Rights.
<p>Stakeholder Engagement (July 22, 2022)³¹⁴</p>	<p>EOSG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Called for renewing the social contract and delivering on global public goods. <p>G77</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that commitments undertaken by the Member States should not be renegotiated, and measures for adequate financing, and technology sharing should be ensured. <p>C4UN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted the well-being of future generations as a global public good and called for future generations inclusive national decision making. Noted the need to bring commitments in legal, political (accountability and transparency), and moral parlance. <p>Multistakeholder Experts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Called for establishing the UN Special Envoy for Future Generations and enhancing its engagement at regional and national levels through institutional networks. Highlighted the protection from, existential risks arising from climate change, engineered pandemic, bioweapons and advanced AI, as global public good. <p>Brazil</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that climate element could not be isolated and other elements such as famine, pollution, debt sustainability and environmental protection should be a core focus.
<p>Summary of Briefing by the Secretary General on the <i>Our Common Agenda</i> (August 4, 2022)³¹⁵</p>	<p>Fiji (Co-Facilitator)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elements paper for Declaration on Future Generations will capture elements proposed by the Member States and stakeholders, and it shall be consolidated by the first week of September and thereupon member state informal consultations will be held on the 9th of September. <p>Colombia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The declaration shall focus on preventing future shocks and crises along with closing the digital divide and empowering women. <p>Senegal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Called for avoiding duplicity of processes and making a Declaration on Future Generations a forward-looking agenda beyond 2030. <p>Mexico</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human rights should be at the center of the Declaration on Future Generations that should address triple planetary threats. <p>Nicaragua</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Declaration on Future Generations should reflect grievances of youth on environmental issues and unilateral coercive measures should be abolished.

Summary of Elements Paper on the Declaration for Future Generations (September 9, 2022)

Key takeaways from the Elements Paper include the need to promote intergenerational equality through multistakeholder approaches, which could advance knowledge and policies designed to safeguard the well-being of future generations and mitigate existential risks. Operational mechanisms proposed in the paper to protect future generations include the appointment of representatives on behalf of future generations at all government levels and the creation of monitoring and reporting tools, such as the development of a knowledge base composed of intergenerational data and best practices that can be used to develop long-term strategies to address issues of planetary preservation, conflict prevention, effective digital governance, along with other matters that pertain to the well-being of future generations. As the interests of future generations are grounded in sustainable development, the paper recognizes the need for accelerated action on the SDGs to meet the needs of present and future generations, proposing the SOTF as an opportunity to commit to pathways that could safeguard the well-being of future generations. Finally, the paper recognizes the complementarity of a New Agenda for Peace and Global Digital Compact in advancing the goals of a Declaration on Future Generations.

Mapping of Elements Paper with Rethinking Global Cooperation

ELEMENTS PAPER	RETHINKING GLOBAL COOPERATION
Asserts the need to promote the well-being of future generations (3).	Promotes the well-being of future generations as a global public good (Section 3: Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations, Global Policy Framework, p. 27).
Integrating the needs and interests of future generations into legal frameworks (2).	Declaration should be crafted in consideration of future generations' legal rights (Section 3: Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations, Global Policy Framework, p. 27).
The social, political, and economic empowerment of women and girls functions as a multiplier for long-term development (3).	The multiplier effect of existing horizontal inequalities today created through race, gender or ethnicity become vertical inequalities of tomorrow which impede upon long-term. (Section 3: Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations, The Multiplier Effect of Existing Inequalities and the Lack of Collective Global Responsibility, p. 23)
The 2030 agenda poses intergenerational relevance; achieving SDGs is inclusive of future generations (4).	SDGs transpose across initiatives to safeguard future generations (Section 3: Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations, <i>Youth, Agenda 2030, and Beyond</i> , p. 29).
Look to existing best practices in national constitutions to inform international models (4).	Examples of best practices at the national level from Whales, Hungary, and Barbados (Section 3: Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations, Some Best practices from national models, p. 25).
Development of monitoring and reporting mechanisms such as an Intergenerational Sustainability Index and Universal Periodic Review mechanism to measure member states' abilities to provide for future generations (5).	Development of a Future Generations Review and an Intergenerational Solidarity Index to measure member states' abilities to provide for future gens (Section 3: Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations, A Council for Future Generations, A Future Generations Review, and an Intergenerational Solidarity Index p. 30-31).
Development of a Futures Lab to understand the future risks and challenges that future generations face (5).	Development of a Futures lab to promote exchange of best practices, knowledge, and strategic foresight mechanisms (Section 3: Representing Succeeding Generations through a Declaration on Future Generations, A Declaration on Future Generation, Realignment Political Incentives in Support of Future Citizenry, p. 28).

Annex 1.2: Member States' contributions during the PGA Thematic Consultations on the Global Digital Compact (February 21, 2022)

MEMBER STATES/ COALITIONS	REMARKS
Brazil	Concerning a Global Digital Compact, however, more clarity is needed on the nature of this proposal, including its relation to the IGF and the UN system. ³¹⁶
Estonia	Affordable, meaningful connectivity and digital inclusion are essential in achieving SDGs. Estonia considers that the Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation and the work done in its Roundtables can provide important inputs toward the Global Digital Compact. ³¹⁷
Ethiopia	We would like caution against disruption of multilateral platforms due to undue approximation of issues to human rights. Unfortunately, human rights are one of the most politicized in international relations, also instrumentalized against states. We suggest the report to reconsider what is defined as "frontier issues" and their approximation to human rights. ³¹⁸
European Union	The Global Digital Compact could serve to "turbo charge" the implementation of the SDGs and other areas. The round tables and the Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation can form the technical backbone for principles and commitments, while a public "listening" exercise with true multistakeholder engagement could launch the reflection as to what the new compact should entail. ³¹⁹
Russia	We take note with interest of the UN Secretary-General's initiative to develop a Global Digital Compact. It is necessary to emphasize that, along with the relevance of the involvement in the rgos of non-governmental actors - the private sector and civil society - it is no less important to prevent any blurring of the foundations of the State sovereignty and the exclusive right of UN Member States to participate in the decision-making process. ³²⁰
Joint Statement Finland, Mexico, Colombia, Denmark, Fiji, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Namibia, the Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Switzerland, Singapore.	We believe that the overarching focus of the Global Digital Compact should be on leveraging digital transformation to improve lives, empower people, and advance the SDGs. We should also build upon the good work that has been done to implement the Secretary General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation. The UN provides the inclusivity and legitimacy that is much needed to work together to lay down common principles and guidelines for cooperation. ³²¹
United States	The United States remains firm that such efforts [toward a GDC] must take an inclusive multistakeholder approach; not duplicate ongoing efforts, particularly on cyber; reinforce human rights, including freedom of expression online, and add value to the global dialogue on digital cooperation. ³²²

Annex 1.3: Member States' contributions during the PGA Thematic Consultations on the New Agenda for Peace (February 21, 2022)

MEMBER STATE	REMARKS
Canada, Australia, New Zealand (CANZ)	Investments in conflict prevention and peacebuilding are critical to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing the root causes of violence; • staving off an escalation that heightens the risk of atrocity crimes; • preventing a recurrence in conflict affected areas; • helping countries affected by conflict attain the SDGs; as well as • promoting human rights and gender equality.³²³
The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)	What is clear to us and made all the clearer by a number of ongoing international security crises is that, in its present form, the Council does not appear able to address, as effectively as we would wish, the security challenges the world is facing. ³²⁴
China	We are open to the proposed New Agenda for Peace and support in principle Secretary General's efforts to respond to the evolving international security situation and promote multilateral arms control and disarmament agenda in a step-by-step manner so as to maintain global strategic stability. ³²⁵
European Union	Extended support for a "New Agenda for Peace" that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> advances a comprehensive and integrated approach to peace and security. reinforce the commitment to WPS by ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes and peacebuilding, and ensuring accountability for its implementation. places focus on prevention, and strengthen mediation capacities, including those of regional organizations.³²⁶
Japan	Supported the emphasis on "investing in prevention and peacebuilding", along with the proposal to expand the role of the Peacebuilding Commission to "more geographical and substantive settings as well as to addressing the cross-cutting issues of security." Proposed adding "strengthening international order based on the rule of law" as the seventh core area of the "New Agenda for Peace." ³²⁷
Switzerland	Called to enhance investment in prevention and peacebuilding. Extended support for a substantial role for the Peacebuilding Commission, and placing women and girls at the heart of security policy. ³²⁸
Norway	New agenda would need to build on the principles of women, peace and security and place women and gender equality at the heart of collective efforts. ³²⁹
United Kingdom	Extended support for proposals - "strengthening international foresight" and "prevention", and called for adopting a holistic, cross-pillar approach - in line with the agreed Sustaining Peace resolutions. New Agenda for Peace must be underpinned by the principles of human rights, international law and the UN Charter. Supports the idea of placing gender equality at the center of the security agenda, and increasing the effectiveness, sustainability and impact of peacebuilding financing. ³³⁰
South Africa	Called to increase investments in prevention, preventive diplomacy, UN Good Offices and peacebuilding. Noted that the PBC could expand its scope both geographically and thematically, and the PBF requires predictable and sustainable financing. Called for enhancing focus on implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. ³³¹
Republic of Korea	Supported the focus on prevention and cross-pillar approaches. Expanded support for viable funding in prevention and peacebuilding, and called upon PBC to address regional engagements as well as cross-cutting issues such as climate change, development, and human rights. Supported the OCA report's approach to putting women and girls at the center of peace. ³³²

Annex 2: List of resources on global governance innovation from the Stimson Center and its partners

Reports and Books:

- *Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance* (June 2015)
- *Just Security in an Undergoverned World* (Oxford University Press, 2018)
- *An Innovation Agenda for UN75: The Albright-Gambari Commission Report and the Road to 2020* (June 2019)
- *Reimagining Governance in a Multipolar World* (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, September 2019)
- *UN 2.0: Ten Innovations for Global Governance – 75 Years beyond San Francisco* (June 2020)
- *Coping with New and Old Crises: Global and Regional Cooperation in an Age of Epidemic Uncertainty* (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, December 2020)
- *Fulfilling the UN75 Declaration’s Promise: An Expert Series’ Synthesis of Major Insights and Recommendations* (June 2021)
- *Beyond UN75: A Roadmap for Inclusive, Networked & Effective Global Governance* (June 2021)
- *Building Back Together and Greener: Twenty Initiatives for a Just, Healthy and Sustainable Global Recovery* (co-published by the Doha Forum and Stimson Center, September 2021)
- *Road to 2023: Our Common Agenda and the Pact for the Future* (June 2022)

Action Plans from the Global Policy Dialogues series:

- *Preventive Action, Sustaining Peace & Global Governance* (Doha: Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, December 2018)
- *Global Security, Justice & Economic Institutions* (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, June 2019)
- *Climate Governance: Innovating the Paris Agreement and Beyond* (Seoul: Global Green Growth Institute, October 2019)
- *Global Economic Institutions* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, November 2019)
- *Roadmap for the Future We Want & UN We Need: A Vision 20/20 for UN75 & Beyond* (UN75 Global Governance Forum, September 2020)
- *Global Policy Dialogue on Global Governance Innovation: Beyond UN75 & Our Common Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, Georgetown, and USIP, March 2022)

UN75 Global Governance Innovation Perspectives policy brief series:

- *Towards Multiple Security Councils* (June 2020)
- *Multilateralism for Chronic Risks* (June 2020)
- *Closing the Governance Gap in Climate, Security, and Peacebuilding* (September 2020)
- *Strengthening the Rules-Based Global Order* (September 2020)

UN75 Regional Dialogues summaries:

- *UN75 Regional Dialogue for Africa: Toward Innovation and Renewal of Global and Regional Governance* (online, March 30–May 10, 2020)
- *UN75 Regional Dialogue for the Americas: Toward Innovation and Renewal of Regional and Global Governance* (online, March 20–April 26, 2020)

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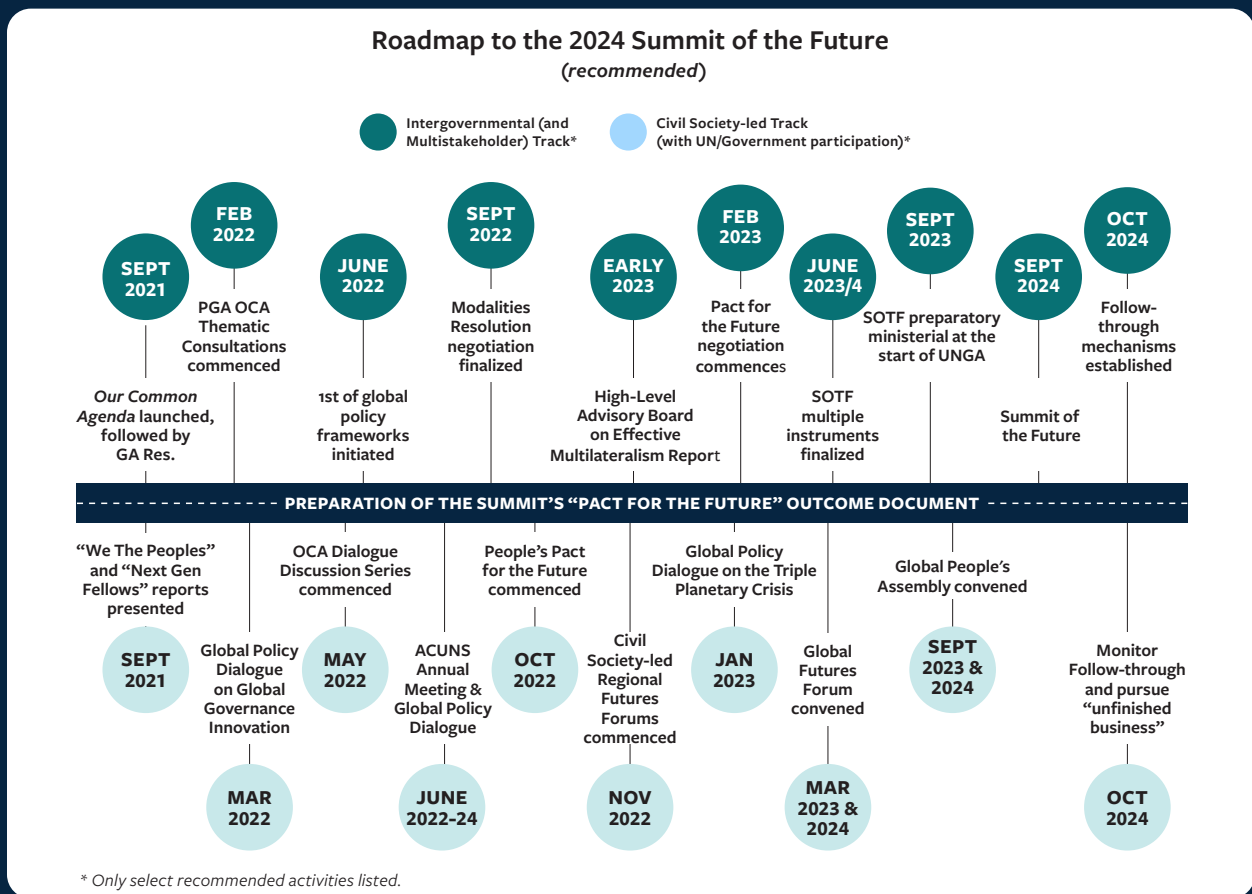
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Rethinking Global Cooperation

Three New Frameworks for Collective Action in an Age of Uncertainty

In 2022, the growing impacts of climate change have been felt across the globe, from prolonged drought in the Middle East and North Africa, to erratic monsoons in South Asia and record-breaking heat waves in Europe and China. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic—which reached the tragic milestone of one million deaths within the first eight months of this year—and the ongoing war in Ukraine and other violent conflicts have impeded global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. To address these and other pressing global challenges, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for, one year ago in his *Our Common Agenda* report, a Summit of the Future to improve collective action worldwide. Among the summit’s anticipated outcomes are a Declaration on Future Generations, a Global Digital Compact, and a New Agenda for Peace. This report elaborates on the challenges, proposed major elements, and potential spoilers to be overcome for each of these global policy frameworks. It further argues that meaningful civil society engagement in the summit’s preparations can reassure all stakeholders that decisions taken are well-informed, enjoy broad social ownership, and generate a sense of co-responsibility in supporting their implementation.



Other collaborative reports between the Doha Forum and Stimson Center:

Reimagining Governance in a Multipolar World (2019)

Coping with New and Old Crises: Global and Regional Cooperation in an Age of Epidemic Uncertainty (2020)

Building Back Together & Greener: Twenty Initiatives for a Just, Healthy, and Sustainable Global Recovery (2021)