

TOGETHER FIRST

A GLOBAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL

www.together1st.org

Together First
is a global civil society movement
coordinated by the
United Nations Association - UK

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Together First - ideas for follow-up to UN75 Declaration

In September 2020, Member States adopted a Declaration on the occasion of the UN's 75th anniversary. The Declaration sets out a vision for the future we want, and the UN we need broken down into 12 commitments. It also calls on the Secretary-General to report back with "recommendations to advance our common agenda and response to current and future challenges". This paper sets out initial thoughts from members of Together First to inform this report, due to be published in September 2021.

Four Enabling Transformations

1. FROM COVID RECOVERY TO NEW GLOBAL DEAL

- a. A **new phase of COVID-19 recovery plans**, developed with IFIs that promotes a green transformation and takes into account the impact on women and girls, the most vulnerable communities and future generations. This could include making support to carbon-heavy industries (e.g. transport, infrastructure) conditional on green measures and on financial support reaching employees, helping them to re-skill and/or look for other work. It could also incentivise/prioritise support to key professions (such as education, health and social care, including unpaid care and work); to rural communities; and to LDCs and refugee hosting countries. *[This builds on various national, regional and international recovery plans, as well as proposals such as UNDP's temporary basic income initiative and different incarnations of "Green New Deal" proposals]*
- b. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, there could be a separate drive for a **just transition from fossil fuels** – building on the SG's call to end fossil fuel subsidies, the Carbon Neutrality Coalition and Climate Ambition Alliance, and linked to the Paris Agreement. Ideally, this would have year-on-year targets and a shorter time horizon than 2050, with a roadmap agreed at COP 26.
- c. **Multistakeholder partnerships** could be encouraged to take forward individual elements of the green recovery plans, using models such as GAVI to target particular issues and communities.
- d. This could build support for more **ambitious global governance transformations**, such as a Global Economic Coordination Council (Stiglitz Commission) or **Economic Security Council** (various proponents, including Socialist International). As neither has gained traction after many years, a new approach could borrow elements from these proposals, producing coordinating body outside the UN system but including UN, IFIs, WTO, regional banks etc.

2. PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE AND SUPPORTING FUTURE GENERATIONS

- a. More strategic horizon scanning and preparedness through mechanisms that are (potentially) within the SG's remit: (1) **panels of experts on areas of global risk** (modelled on but lighter touch than IPCC) to provide timely/high-profile advice; (2) **assessment of impact on future generations** in budgets, policies and programmes; and (3) building on the successful drive to reach gender parity at senior levels, a plan to **promote diversity – and rejuvenate – in UN staffing** at all levels.
- b. Creating a **Fund for the Future** – this could support youth-led activities on the ground and youth participation in decision-making at all levels, building on proposals made by the Youth, Peace and Security study 'Missing peace' as well as numerous calls by youth groups, including through the

UN75 process. This, or a similar fund, could also be used to invest in sustainable growth and/or build up funds to address future shocks.

- c. These developments could support more ambitious governance transformations, such as: (1) a **Future Generations Council**, for example, as subsidiary GA committee; and (2) **re-purposing the Trusteeship Council** as a forum for states to exercise trusteeship over global Commons and/or to provide a mechanism for more consistent engagement with stakeholders such as youth, civil society, parliamentarians and cities. *[This draws on the 1994 Commission on Global Governance proposal, put forward by Kofi Annan in 1997 and since developed by a number of parties, as well as proposals by many civil society and youth stakeholders]*
- d. A further step could be a long-term plan, with phase one coinciding with the SDGs, for the UN to engage in a **mass capacity-building exercise with the objective of transferring a number of its development and humanitarian functions to regional, national and local actors**. *[This builds on proposals made at the World Humanitarian Summit and the cluster approach, as well as various development reform proposals. It also supports the objectives of life-long learning and re-skilling those involved in carbon-heavy sectors, and could free up UN resources to focus on other tasks]*

3. LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND, LIFTING EVERYBODY UP

- a. To complement and avoid duplication with the SDGs, **digital technologies could be presented as a key enabler**. Implementing and building on the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation through: (1) normative work on **access to digital technologies as a right/basic need**; (2) partnerships to accelerate clean energy and universal access (building on GIGA, Digital Public Goods Alliance); (3) partnerships to deliver services, including online education (building on public-private partnerships such as Google for Education); and (4) partnerships to enhance public scrutiny and accountability through digitization of services (building on successful work done to advance SDG 16). To support more nuanced discussion, risks relating to new technologies should be addressed as challenges within areas such as peace and security, human rights, disarmament, rather than grouping everything 'digital' together.
- b. A second complementary area of focus could be **inclusion of stakeholders**. Given the growing calls for more inclusive multilateralism, and the limited progress made, a number of proposals should be considered that are within the SG's remit, including: (1) a **high-level civil society "champion"** to review, enhance and diversify engagement (builds on former senior UN posts, Cardoso report, and calls by civil society); (2) **stakeholder engagement capacity within UNCTs**; (3) more streamlined processes for partnerships (building on e.g. 2018 Joint Inspection Unit report) and more systematic engagement with informal networks of e.g. cities; and (4) ongoing opportunities for dialogue and feedback (building on UN75 consultation) as well as more prominent annual moment (e.g. upgrading the annual UN-NGO conference and making full use of virtual tools)
- c. As a next step, the report could initiate a process to explore **deeper, more consistent engagement** of stakeholders in UN decision-making and delivery, e.g. through multistakeholder models outlined under "green recovery" or by auditing best practices from e.g. ILO, ITU.

4. STRENGTHENING THE PEACE CONTINUUM

- a. On the Security Council, proposals that do not require Charter amendment could be presented as a **package/menu of options**, from improving UNSC working methods and making better use of existing mechanisms (e.g. Arria formula) to fostering stronger links between the UNSC and HRC and a greater role for the UNGA in peace and security
- b. Alongside this, a stronger, **more prominent role for the PBC could be considered**, including: (1) enhancing the PBC's capacities to host discussions about cross-cutting issues, such as the WPS and YPS agendas; (2) strengthening the PBC's advisory role to the UNSC, particularly with regards to peacebuilding elements of missions' mandates, as well as during reconfigurations, drawdowns, and transitions; (3) bolstering the PBC's advisory role to ECOSOC, with a view to promote greater coherence amongst development and peacebuilding actors in the field; and (4) potentially upgrading the PBC to a Council.

Ideas grouped by Declaration theme

Leave no one behind

- Universal access to basic services, in particular: healthcare, including mental health services; water and sanitation. Global compacts/agreements on free access to water and sanitation.
- Universal social protections, including full employment policies – with legal recognition and monetary value placed on ‘essential work’, including care work
- Universal access to digital technologies as a human right
- Access to life-long education and re-skilling in light of likely changes to job environment

Protect our planet

- Consolidated forum/mechanism for managing global commons, with greater powers than existing mechanisms and more consistent, meaningful engagement of stakeholders
- Greater emphasis on natural solutions, from reforestation to soil/land use (Forest Convention)
- Funded plan for a rapid but just transition to clean energy, including the cessation of fossil fuel subsidies and COVID recovery plans that will accelerate this transition, including conditional bailouts
- Ambition ‘spiral’ for UNFCCC bringing forward the timeline or carbon neutrality

Promote peace and prevent conflict

- Ban on lethal autonomous weapons
- Compacts/agreements on issues such as cyberwarfare, verification of information/evidence given greater ease of manipulation/fabrication
- More emphasis on human security and on non-traditional peace/security issues, e.g. violence in communities (in conflict and non-conflict settings)

Justice

- Potential new instruments / mechanisms on: human rights of older persons, forests, climate migrants/refugees, accountability for climate/environmental destruction and impacts e.g. on health

Women/girls

- Quotas, with consequences for not meeting them, on women in conflict resolution, mediation and peacekeeping (including more diversity in UN mediation roster)
- Global study on gender bias in data / policies and how to address these issues (e.g. in medical care, in health and safety assessments etc)
- Greater action on gender-based violence – in legal, policymaking and practical terms
- (As for ‘Leave no one behind’), legal recognition and monetary value placed on ‘essential work’, including care work

Trust

- Institutionalisation of surveys and dialogues (at the UN and nationally)
- Platforms to crowdsource best practices, share solutions etc. (promote citizen engagement with national governments and with the UN)
- Action to address corruption (strong priority, little detail on actions)
- Global ‘fact-check’ platform to serve as a source of fact-based information, to combat misinformation and – potentially – to provide information on the true costs of products and services

Digital cooperation

- New agreements / standards on clean technology, access to the internet/digital technology (including as a human right)
- “Digital roadmap” for the SDGs and COVID recovery, including plans for managing a just digital transition, including support to industries, employers and employees likely to lose out
- New forum for digital cooperation, bringing together functions from ITU, GGE etc.

Upgrade the UN

- Reviewing engagement with civil society engagement (including a high-level civil society champion)
- As under ‘Trust’, instituting a permanent consultation tool / process to engage citizens and seek their views and ideas
- “Decarbonising diplomacy” in light of climate change and likely future disruption due to environmental, health and other issues
- Greater investment in information and outreach (not only digital)
- Existing proposals contained in this UNA-UK report: <https://una.org.uk/news/una-uk-launches-new-report-%E2%80%9Crenewing-un-system-taking-stock-after-75-years%E2%80%9D?page=1>

Sustainable finance

- Fund(s) for transformation – e.g. to support just green and digital transition, as well as support local partners who can/should take on more in terms of delivery
- Rethinking the global economy including GDP, “true value” of goods and services
- Addressing corruption, illicit financial flows and tax evasion
- Leveraging civil society and business donations for UN resourcing

Partnerships

- As under Trust, creating platform(s) for stakeholders to engage with the UN and with each other
- Formalise the role of e.g. civil society in agreements/programmes to simplify the bureaucracy around partnerships, enable them to access funding, and play a greater role in delivery and monitoring
- As under Upgrade the UN, reviewing engagement with different constituencies

Youth

- As above, creating platforms for direct youth engagement with the UN and each other
- As under ‘Leave no one behind’, life-long education (also suggestion for global standard / compact on global citizenship education as part of national curricula)
- Youth Council or advisory body

Preparedness

- Global Resilience Council looking at prospective threat areas, specific threats or hotspots
- Future Generations Council, looking at the impact of policies/programmes on future generations

Together First is a global civil society movement coordinated by the United Nations Association - UK.

We are committed to making the best ideas for global governance a reality. We believe that by making the conversation on global governance accessible and inclusive, we will help create a more democratic, transparent and accountable system – one that works for all people, everywhere.

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