



The UN & You

BY TERESA KOTTURAN SCN – SEPTEMBER 2021

Our Common Agenda

For Renewed Solidarity Between Peoples and Future Generations

[Our Common Agenda](#) is a report prepared by the United Nations Secretary-General at the request of the UN Member States, given the problems faced by people around the world—poverty, the pandemic, access to basic services, inequality, economic insecurity, climate change and natural disasters, conflicts and violence, etc.—are very similar. The report was prepared in consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including Member States, thought leaders, young people, civil society and the UN system and its partners during the 75th anniversary of the UN. Member States recognized that these challenges are interconnected, and to address them, the world needs a reinvigorated multilateralism.

Why a Common Agenda now? The guideposts of the past—the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, etc.—are inadequate to meet the current challenges. Hence, it is time to combine the best of the past with new creative thinking and transformative actions to save “succeeding generations from war, climate change, pandemics, hunger, poverty, injustice and a host of risks that we may not yet foresee entirely.”

The Secretary-General says that humanity is at an inflection point and “faces a stark and urgent choice: a breakdown or a breakthrough.” This Common Agenda is to strengthen and accelerate the implementation of existing multilateral agreements, including Sustainable Development Goals, to make a difference in the lives of people. He extends an invitation to “take the next steps in our journey together, in solidarity with and for all people.” Recommendations of the Common Agenda fall under four broad areas for “renewed solidarity between peoples and future generations, a new social

contact anchored in human rights, better management of critical global concerns, and global public goods that deliver equitably and sustainably for all.”

Key proposals across the 12 commitments

Leave no one behind—Renewed **social contract anchored in human rights**. New era for universal social protection, including health care and basic income security. Adequate housing, education and lifelong learning and decent work. Digital inclusivity.

Protect our planet—Commit to the 1.5 degree Celsius goal and net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner. **Declarations of climate emergency and right to a healthy environment**. Package of support to developing countries. Measures for adaptation and resilience. No new coal after 2021 and phasing out fossil fuel subsidies. Transforming food systems for sustainability, nutrition and fairness.

Promote peace and prevent conflicts—New agenda for peace to reduce strategic risks (nuclear weapons, cyberwarfare, autonomous weapons). Strengthen international foresight. Reshape responses to all forms to violence. **Invest in prevention and peacebuilding**, including Peacebuilding fund and Peacebuilding Commission. Support regional prevention and put women and girls at the center of security policy.

Abide by international law and ensure justice—Human rights as a problem-solving measure, including comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and promoting participation. Application of human rights online and to frontier issues and new technologies. **Universal access to the Internet as a human right**. Human rights mechanisms on a more sustainable financial footing.

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Legal identity for all, end to statelessness and protection of internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants. New vision for the rule of law and global road map for the development and effective implementation of international law.

Place women and girls at the center—[Repeal all gender discriminatory laws](#). Promote gender parity, including through quotas and special measures. Facilitate women’s economic inclusion, including investment in the care economy and support for women entrepreneurs. Include voices of younger women. Eradication of violence against women and girls, including through emergency response plan.

Build trust—Global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information. Improve people’s experiences with public institutions and basic services. Inclusive national listening and **“envisioning the future” exercises**. Action to tackle corruption in line with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Reformed international tax system. Joint structure on financial integrity and tackling illicit financial flows.

Improve digital cooperation-global digital compact—Connecting all people to the Internet, including schools. Avoid internet fragmentation. **Apply human rights online**. Introduce accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content. Promote regulation of artificial intelligence. Digital commons as a global public good.

Upgrade United Nations—[High-level Advisory Board](#) led by former Heads of State and Government on improved governance of global public goods. System-wide policy that puts people at the center, taking into account age, gender and diversity. More listening, participation and consultation (including digitally), building on the 75th anniversary declaration and Our Common Agenda. Gender parity within the United Nations system by 2028. Re-establish the Secretary-General’s Scientific Advisory Board. “Quintet of Change” for United Nations 2.0, including innovation, data, strategic foresight, results orientation and behavioral science.

Ensure sustainable financing—[Biennial Summit](#) between the Group of 20, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General and the heads of international financial institutions for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient global economy including:

- Support a Sustainable Development Goal investment boost, including through a last-mile alliance to reach those furthest behind
 - Provide more flexible research and development incentives
 - Resolve weaknesses in the debt architecture
- Fairer and more resilient multilateral trading system, including a reinvigorated WTO. New business models. Improve the United Nations budget process.

Boost partnerships—Annual meetings between the United Nations and all heads of regional organizations. Stronger engagement between the UN System, international financial institutions and regional development banks. More systematic engagement with parliaments, subnational authorities and the private sector. **Civil society focal points in all United Nations entities**. United Nations Office for Partnerships to consolidate access and inclusion, including accessibility online.

Listen to and work with youth—Youth: Remove barriers to political participation and measure progress through a “youth in politics” index. United Nations Youth Office. **Transforming Education Summit** in 2022. Recovery barometer to track career paths and labor market outcomes for youth. High-ambition coalition to promote green and digital-economy job creation. **Future generations: Summit of the Future in 2023**. Ensure long-term thinking, including through United Nations Futures Lab. Represent succeeding generations, including through a repurposed **Trusteeship Council, a Declaration on Future Generations**, and a **United Nations Special Envoy for Future Generations**.

Be prepared—[Emergency platform](#) to be convened in response to complex global crises. Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report by the United Nations every five years. On global public health:

- Global vaccination plan
- Stronger global health security and preparedness. Accelerate product development and access to health technologies in low-and middle-income countries.
- Universal health coverage and addressing determinants of health.

The Common Agenda has provided the following reasons for our engagement:

- **“Now is the time to re-embrace global solidarity**

and find new ways to work together,” especially for a global vaccination plan and to address the triple crisis of climate disruption, biodiversity loss and pollution destroying our planet.

- “Now is the time to renew the social contract between Governments and their people and within societies,” to rebuild trust and to embrace a comprehensive vision of human rights.
- “Now is the time to end the ‘infodemic’ plaguing our world to have a consensus on facts backed by science and knowledge.” It is time to end the war on science.
- “Now is the time to correct a glaring blind spot in how we measure economic prosperity and progress.” The cost on people and our planet, the human and the environmental destruction is overlooked when progress is measured only by GDP; it needs to be complemented by other measures.
- “Now is the time to think for the long term, to deliver more for young people and succeeding generations and to be better prepared for the

challenges ahead.” The agenda proposes recommendations for meaningful, diverse and effective engagement both within and outside the UN.

- “Now is the time for a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations.” Multilateralism is necessary to live up to the UN Charter principles and for a new peace agenda and dialogue on outer space and a Global Digital Compact.

“To secure a better, greener, more peaceful future for all people,” the Secretary-General would like to have a **High Level Advisory Board**, led by former heads of state and government, to identify global public goods and areas of common interest with governance improvements and options to achieve them. Another proposal is a **Summit of the Future** to build consensus on what our future should look like and how to secure it.

[Our Common Agenda](#) is ambitious, and it needs the cooperation of every segment of society for its implementation. Though long, the [full report](#) is worth reading.

