



SI OCA Plan - V2 - July 2022

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Context of this document

This document outlines SI's strategic thinking around and current plan to engage with Our Common Agenda (OCA). The plan was developed in July 2022 and includes deliverables until Q2 2023. The plan will be updated after our internal Q3 strategy 2022 meeting.

Our Common Agenda: an opportunity for long-term governance¹

Our Common Agenda ([OCA](#)) is a report published by the UN Office of the Secretary General (SG) that lays out a vision and action points for the UN system and its member states for the duration of Guterres' second mandate (2022-2027). OCA is the SG's response to a request made by the UN General Assembly (GA) to set a vision forward. [Resolution 76/6](#) gave the SG permission to move forward, requesting intergovernmental consultations with UN member states, which were concluded with a [speech by the SG](#) and summarized by the President of the General Assembly (PGA) in [this letter](#).

In terms of framing and agenda-setting, OCA posits that the world is at a crucial point in history, facing either breakthrough through progress and cooperation or breakdown through existential risk and nationalism. It aims to further the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and sets the tone for upcoming discussions about its renewal. Because OCA was published in 2021, COVID-19 and pandemics are very prominent in the report. We can expect that recent geopolitical tensions will contextualize OCA discussions more in a security framing.

It is important to note that OCA's success depends heavily on its adoption by UN agencies and member states. First, UN agencies - which can be fully independent from the secretariat - need to align with the SG's proposals. This alignment, while plausible, is not a given: OCA proposes several reforms and new entities whose work is likely to compete with existing ones. Second, all proposals depend on financial and political support from member states. While OCA has been adopted by the GA, no clear country champions have stepped up yet. The lack of enthusiastic member state support suggests that current affairs will likely slow down the process and many states might request changes. For example, Russia has already [expressed worries](#) that the agenda of the Summit for the Future might be set by selected elites and not member states.

SG proposals are always constrained by institutional inertia and current affairs. For example, despite the similarity to OCA, then-SG Ban Ki-moon's 2013 report "[International solidarity and the needs of future generations](#)" did not receive much attention from member states. This might be understandable, given that the UN system was already facing a monumental task under similar framing: developing the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - set out in a 2012 GA resolution titled "[The future we want](#)".

¹ Long-term governance (LTG) is the field of research and practice dedicated to integrating future generations into policymaking processes to secure posterity and preserve the option space they need to flourish.

Building on Ban's report and the success of the SDGs in streamlining sustainability policy across all sectors all around the globe, SG Antonio Guterres' has managed to clear a previously missed hurdle for future generations: OCA has been adopted as an intergovernmental process by the GA. OCA thus holds the promise of tackling a reform of the UN system toward multilateral structures that drive consideration of the long term across all levels of governance; ideally, catalyzing greater attention to future-proofed policymaking also on the part of member states.

Despite the typical contrast of lofty ambitions and at best incremental progress, OCA could become a major catalyst for disproportionate policy change, if well-resourced and supported. OCA has several advantages over other UN agendas: it lays out an action-oriented plan with GA approval to progress on practical issues that are hindering long-term governance. It also appears to benefit from an unusual level of willingness on behalf of the SG to devote financial, human and political resources to its implementation. Finally, the shared experience of intersecting global crises has created an unusually strong impetus for global governance reform. The next hurdle is to support representatives from the global south whose underresourced governments have implicitly been tasked with speaking for future generations.

We recommend actors who care about future generations to support OCA processes because:

1. **It offers an unprecedented opportunity:** out of 69 entry points, 15 are directly relevant to long-term governance. With concrete proposals for future generations and its consideration of existential risks, OCA offers unusually fertile ground for international efforts to secure posterity.
2. **It will create path dependencies:** if successful, OCA will lead to the creation of new processes (e.g. Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report), institutions (e.g. Futures Lab), and policy (e.g. Global Digital Compact) which will durably support future generations over decades. If unsuccessful, key framings or recommendations on existential risk and future generations might become diluted, politicized, stigmatized, or instrumentalized for other ends.

Strategy

Update to our theory of change

Our initial theory of change was designed to start engaging with OCA processes and sketch deliverables that would likely provide value. Four months later, thanks to rapid progress, SI has moved to a different situation and is now well connected to the UN staff in charge of delivering several proposals related to long-term governance. We can therefore formulate a more specific theory of change based on our refined understanding and the demands we received.

Our **goals** related to Our Common Agenda are the following:

1. Overall aim: improve long-term survival and flourishing by successfully leveraging OCA as a vector of narrative and policy development for inclusion of future generations and x-risk mitigation.
2. Specific aims:
 - a. Preserve and improve future generations and existential risk narrative by avoiding its dilution and contributing substantial input.
 - b. Ensure relevant OCA proposals succeed by contributing to their design, socialization and implementation.
 - c. Make sure that both, existential-risk-related and future generations-related proposals, inform one another to avoid superficial treatment of future generations on the one hand, and neglect of x-risk on the other.

Our **approach** is to both pull and push:

1. Pull: we design our activities based on OCA proposals which offer entry points for our engagement. This allows us to reverse-engineer our planning and outputs such that we can be maximally useful to UN agencies and member-states. This work will often result in providing reports and briefings to the relevant proposals.
2. Push: we identify opportunities within the future generations and existential risk field to translate into OCA processes, and we also proactively work with UN officials and member-states to support them in understanding the benefits of these opportunities. This work will often result in organizing coordination retreats, dinners with key individuals, and parallel briefings.

Our **tactics** are twofold and feed into each other:

1. Provide expert input on existential risk, future generations and institutional design through written submissions, studies, briefings, retreats and more.
2. Foster diplomatic support for future-oriented ideas by member-states, NGO and other stakeholders by briefing them and coordinating their engagement through bilateral meetings, retreats, and more.

Entry points and status

Out of the 69 OCA proposals, 15 provide entry points for long-term governance and 7 are particularly relevant and tractable (July 2022).

Entry point	Relevance for LTG	Reasons for prio	Status	Comments
<i>World Social Summit 25</i>	Narrative - post 2030	Potential turning point in multilateralism	Waiting	No info yet
<i>Summit of the Future 23</i>	Narrative for SG term; Pact for the Future; Network rep	Key and first meeting on the future	Contributing through entry points below	Much uncertainty: many moving parts, limited EOSG capacity
<i>High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism</i>	HLAB shapes agenda of Summit of the Future & implementation of proposals	Opportunity for direct impact; alignment with secretariat on importance of FG	Contributing	Formal collaboration with UNU-CPR
<i>Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report</i>	Replace WEF risk report; shape understanding of GCRs/x-risks	Opportunity for direct impact; alignment with report lead on FG	Contributing	Contribution through UNDRR+ISC
<i>Global Digital Compact</i>	Integrate safe governance of advanced AI into multilateral processes	Opportunity to repeat similar messages	Contributing	Preparing a submission Offering advice to AI governance actors on submission best practices
<i>Declaration on Future Generations</i>	Encode concern for future generations into core UN text	Symbolically important and contains possibility of concrete institutions (e.g Envoy for Future Generations)	Contributing	Particularly good to coordinate on with other FG-concerned actors Requires more capacity
<i>Special Envoy for Future Generations</i>	Represent future generations in UN system	Could be powerful recurring voice on FG consideration	Contributing	Particularly good to coordinate on with other FG-concerned actors Requires more capacity

Management

In the section below, we outline our approach to contribute to OCA entry points and specify deliverables until Summer 2023. The list is not exhaustive and not fixed as opportunities and ideas will come up and will require us to adapt. The details of each substantial deliverable (e.g. reports) are in separate documents.

0. Pilot and overall coordination

Under ‘pilot and overall coordination’, we organize deliverables that cut across OCA entry points. This includes strategy, evaluation, prioritization, capacity development, general coordination work. Here, we also log all the work that is not directly related to an entry point (EP).

Goals: Ensure consistency and clarity both internally and externally about SI’s OCA engagement; prioritize carefully; and coordinate activities at large.

Internal deliverables

Strategy and management	Assessments and intelligence	Monitoring-Evaluation-Learning	Capacity-building (fundraising/hiring)
• 1x OCA plan v2 • 1x OCA plan v3 • Weekly OCA meetings	• 1x simple stakeholder analysis • 1x plan for message testing • 1x assessment of a member-state alliance • 1x assessment of LMIC representation • 1x assessment of retreats and other events • 1x list of research questions • 1x web-scraping project to	• 1x MEL plan and repository for OCA activities • 1x impact and cost evaluation	• Generate work tests based on deliverables • >3x hires by end of 2023

	collect OCA info • 1x assessment of advanced AI and multilateralism • 1x assessment of synthetic bio and multilateralism • 1x assessment of long-term space governance and multilateralism		
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External deliverables

Communications	General UN coordination and network	General x-risk ecosystem coordination
• 3x blog post related to OCA • 1x OCA engagement page on SI website • 1x podcast appearance talking about LTG and OCA	• Regular meetings with EOSG • Meetings with Volker Türk and Michelle Griffin • 1x trip to New York in September 2022	• 1x OCA brief for x-risk/FG academic field • 1x January retreat

EP 1: High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism

- **Contact point:** Adam Day, UNU-CPR Geneva Office
- **How we work:** Formally through Max as a research fellow at UNU-CPR; contributions include reports and briefings
- **Goals:** Future-proof HLAB recommendations and establish a lasting relationship with HLAB
- **Resource dedication:** high
- **Deliverables**

Provide expert input	Foster diplomatic support	Coordinate x-risk/FG field
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• 1x contract with UNU-CPR • 1x draft paper on Future Proofing the HLAB report • 1x HLAB briefing on Future Proofing the HLAB report • 1x draft paper on Future Proofing Our Common Agenda • 1x report on safe governance of advanced AI for HLAB	• TBD	• Bring in relevant orgs (e.g CSER/GovAI/LPP) to contribute to 2 HLAB papers at initiation and review stages • Invite CSER/GovAI/LPP to contribute to HLAB briefings if relevant
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EP 2: Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report

- **Contact point:** David Kelly, Executive Office of the Secretary General - NY
- **How we work:** Direct collaboration with David Kelly (TBD) and input through UNDRR
- **Goals:** Ensure accurate representation of GCRs and x-risks (including emerging technologies) in the report
- **Resource dedication:** high
- **Deliverables**

Provide expert input	Foster diplomatic support	Coordinate x-risk/FG field
• TBD (waiting on David Kelly) • 1x paper on GCRs/x-risk with UNDRR & ISC • 1x paper on x-risk and rapid technological change for mid-term review of Sendai Framework (via UNDRR)	• TBD	• Involve CSER to contribute to TBD work with David Kelly • Involve CSER/GovAI to contribute to UNDRR/ISC paper through survey, consultation and review. • Involve CSER/GovAI in paper on x-risk and RTC for MTR SF • Provide advice on other submissions to GRR (if any)

EP 3: Global Digital Compact

- **Contact point:** Amandeep Gill, UN Tech Envoy, New York
- **How we work:** Submission to Global Digital Compact (c.f. [this info](#))

- **Goals:** Ensure input on transformative AI safety within Global Digital Compact
- **Resource dedication:** low to medium
- **Deliverables**

Provide expert input	Foster diplomatic support	Coordinate x-risk/FG field
• 1x submission on AI risks to Global Digital Compact • 1x meeting with Amandeep Gill	• TBD	• Involve CSER/GovAI in GDC submission (draft and review stages) • Coordinate x-risk field's submissions (if any) to GDC

EP 4: Declaration on Future Generations

- **Contact point:** Claire Inder, Executive Office of the Secretary General - Geneva
- **How we work:** Loose engagement by contributing input and drawing our network
- **Goals:** Ensure declaration also covers GCRs/x-risks and 'future generations' include unborn generations up to and beyond 2100
- **Resource dedication:** low to medium
- **Deliverables**

Provide expert input	Foster diplomatic support	Coordinate x-risk/FG field
• 1x participation to consultation on Elements Paper on the Declaration on Future Generations • 1x 1-pager on practical tools and approaches for LTGov e.g foresight	• TBD	• Bring LPP and GPI to discussions to contribute their expertise for the drafting of the declaration

EP 5: Envoy for Future Generations

- **Contact point:** Claire Inder, Executive Office of the Secretary General - Geneva
- **How we work:** Loose engagement by contributing input and drawing our network
- **Goals:** Ensure mention of GCRs/x-risks and 'future generations' include unborn generations
- **Resource dedication:** low
- **Deliverables**

Provide expert input	Foster diplomatic support	Coordinate x-risk/FG field
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• TBD	• TBD	• TBD
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EP X: Summit of the Future 2023

Too early to decide but we will ~60% likely have a retreat before the summit of the future (2023/24)

EP Y: World Social Summit 2025

TBD

Other deliverables feeding into this plan

- Rapid Technological Change & X-Risk report for Mid-Term Review of Sendai Framework
- Message-testing studies
- Retreats and other events
- Member-state alliance building with a focus on the Global South
- Swiss Government engagement on X-risk & Intl Law + Disaster Risk Reduction & RTC
- A research agenda for multilateral long-term governance