# *2021 Santo Stefano Summit*

# *Manifestos*

From July 27 to August 2, 2021, youth leaders came together for the very first Santo Stefano Summit, held on the historic Italian island of Ventotene, off the coast of Naples. Though commissioned by current and former members of the European Parliament, the Santo Stefano Summit was an independent conference organized and run entirely by students. The purpose of this event was simple: With so much to fear in the world, with so much to fight for and to change, the Santo Stefano Summit gave future leaders and problem-solvers a chance to convene and articulate issues that will become global priorities over the next 50 years. Together, participants strove to redirect narratives and establish plans of action for these most critical concerns. For seven days, attendees debated amongst one another and heard from world-renowned speakers through programming built around our three conference topics. The summit culminated in the writing of collaborative position papers, or "manifestos;" these documents pay homage to the iconic Ventotene Manifesto written by political exiles and detainees in the name of European federalism. Our manifestos outline and subsequently address the key issues underlying this year's conference topics.

The following document includes the three manifestos—one for each conference topic—developed by participants at the 2021 Santo Stefano Summit. The three topics are listed below:

1. Worsening Regional Crises—A Moral Conflict

*The Santo Stefano Summit's first topic looks at regional crises through both a personal, intimate lens and a global, theoretical one. Regional conflicts grow more frequent and more horrific each passing year, notably exacerbated by climate change and a weakening global governance system. We examined the moral conflict that arises when addressing regional crises: While many believe that the international community has a responsibility to protect those who are oppressed,*

*tortured, brutalized, and massacred by their own governments or other power-wielding entities, others argue that foreign nations—particularly Western ones—don't have the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of another state. At what point are human rights a greater priority than national sovereignty or the threat of neocolonialism? The Santo Stefano Summit also considered international institutions' past failures to protect victims of regional violence despite espousing the decades-old promise that humanitarian atrocities will "Never Again" be tolerated. The conference sought to understand more deeply the (often geostrategic) dynamics contributing to regional crises, as well as the more local experiences of those bearing the weight of such violence (including the refugee and asylum-seeker); in doing so,we can reinvent a more progressive, more effective global justice system.*

2. Human Dimensions of the Environment

*The Santo Stefano Summit aimed to approach the often objective and empirical topics of climate change through a refreshingly humanistic perspective. We take the word "environment" to mean the entirety of the social and ecological fabric that make up our respective communities. The Santo Stefano Summit examined interpersonal and community-based injustices that result from the current infrastructure, policies, and practices that dominate our environments.We maintain that access to a physically and socially healthy environment is a human right. How do we bolster such health? How do we configure the topic of climate change within a human rights context? How do we rebuild our local and global spaces to better reflect our shared values—and which values should these be? How can we imagine new paths to sustainability over the next 50 years?*

3. Multilateralism, Reimagined

*The Santo Stefano Summit looked to multilateralism as both a problem and a solution. We discussed the inherent power imbalances promoted both within and beyond the current global governance system—be it through the prioritization of wealthy, Western voices within the structures of international institutions, the neocolonial policies imposed upon countries of the Global South, or the like. We examined the role of neocolonialism on the liberal international order and the global economy as well as international institutions' shortcomings, limitations, and instances of ineffectuality. But we must also recognize that multilateralism, in essence, is nothing more than a principle, championing unity and global cooperation. What is the alternative to international cooperation? Nationalism and even fascism, both of which are on the rise worldwide. We hope to imagine a fresh, more equitable and more effective global governance structure. What values should be promoted by global governance, and how can we reform and reconfigure existing institutions to embody these values?*

The Santo Stefano Summit, as a community of global youth leaders, embarked upon an open examination and reimagining of present governance systems. Rather than focus on specific policy changes, the Santo Stefano Summit strives to renew and redefine the international community's collective values and create a new, radical vision for the future.

*Santo Stefano Summit Manifesto 2021*

*Topic 1: Worsening Regional Crises—A Moral Conflict*

Regional conflicts take place when two or more communities undergo a contentious conflict of interest that transcends borders. They can take the form of violent confrontations, political strife, or resource scarcity. Regional conflicts occur in an increasingly interconnected world, notably exacerbated by climate change and a weakening global governance system. This manifesto proposes a framework through which international organisations can support the prevention and mitigation of regional violent confrontations.

There are two different stages through which the international community can work to mitigate the threats imposed by regional crises. In situations where a crisis is identified before the outbreak of large scale violence, a **Prevention** approach should be deployed. Prevention should aim to strengthen the resilience of communities and nations to external and internal shocks, while also mediating existing tensions. In cases where large-scale violence develops too quickly for prevention interventions to be effective, a Mitigation approach should be deployed. Mitigation should aim to protect the human and physical capital of a country while supporting the mediation of the conflict.

**PREVENTION - BEFORE OUTBREAK OF A CONFLICT**

**1. This summit believes that early-stage prevention of the outbreak of conflict should be the primary approach to avoid the outbreak, and diminish the potential destructive impacts of regional crises.** Interventions should aim to identify the root causes driving conflicts and grievances through field-based research and local insight. Based on these insights, the design of interventions should be owned and led by local authorities in collaboration with international and regional bodies. Interventions should actively work to avoid or mitigate the polarisation between societal groups (sectarian and ethnic) by mediating conflicts and grievances to avoid the outbreak of intercommunal violence.

**2. Preventative intervention should be based on demands by local authorities for support.** Foreign nations and organizations should intervene preventatively based on legitimate potential threats to their spheres of interests and their allies. Such threats include large scale migration flows and transnational violent extremism.

**3. Foreign powers should first resort to indirect intervention to strengthen societal resilience.** Indirect intervention includes the creation of forums for dialogue under the umbrella of the United Nations to support the negotiation of grievances. On a regional level, such forums should support the transparent coordination of policy on a regional level.

Indirect intervention can also take the form of financial and technical support for the scale-up and improvement of existing programs and mechanisms that leverage established cultural and traditional methods and practices to mediate grievances and address root causes. If indirect, the primary tools for preventative intervention should be in the form of financial and technical assistance. If engaging in the strengthening of security forces, interventions must improve security forces' battle skills and respect for humanitarian rights.

**4. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of initiatives and non-aggression pacts must be an essential part of any intervention.** Clear baselines for key indicators of violence and other manifestations of grievance must be established at the start of each intervention. If the threat of proxy war is credible, this should be avoided at an early stage through the use of mutual non-aggression pacts between regional countries. In these pacts, regional countries agree to not intervene in the internal affairs of their regional neighbors, particularly through attempts to subvert a nation's autonomy. These pacts should be overseen and enforced by the United Nations.

**5. To improve the identification of signs of crisis, digital platforms should be leveraged to gather transparent and open-source data on the situation in countries.** This data should be made available in a transparent way to the citizens of the countries through periodic reports. A preventative approach should always remain in place at the edges of an existing conflict, to mitigate its further spread and intensification.

**MITIGATION - MILITARY INTERVENTION**

**6. Avoid international military intervention**

Due to the past military interventions by the international community in both Iraq and Afghanistan, it has become clear that direct military intervention fails to bring peace and stability in the intervening countries. Therefore we do not recommend sending any troops to the ground. Instead we suggest three main methods:

- support to local organisations
- Provide humanitarian assistance
- Support already existing allies’ troops on the ground

**7. Support to local organisations**

Providing financial and other material assistance to local organisations so that they can operate based on their cultural principals and the understanding of the needs of the people.
Such support should be channeled through legitimate international NGO’s that have the capability of monitoring and implementing the most efficient way to use the resources and to ensure a fair distribution. A mechanism needs to be built to guarantee the accountability and transparency of the process to minimize the possibility of corruption.

**8. Provide humanitarian assistance**

When people don't have the essential elements of survival, like water, food or medicine, it has the potential of leading the people to fight for the limited resources on the ground. Therefore we suggest, in addition to the traditional UN aid, to create a new mechanism that allows countries to bring aid to the areas in need if the UN fails to do so due to vetos that oppose an agreement for a delivery of humanitarian aid. The aid shouldn't be limited to survival but should also contribute to the development of independent efficient systems to enable a locally lead reconstruction of the regional infrastructure. When it comes to volunteers, especially health care staff, it is essential that the international community ensures their safety during the process of providing their services.

**9. Support already existing allies' troops on the ground/protection of volunteers**

By supporting regional allies who are already operating on the ground, with logistical support and military-to-military conversations, one can minimize the risk of inefficient military operations. Sending additional troops is very costly and poses the danger of further complicating and escalating the conflict. Instead, the already existing military resources of the allies should be optimized and if needed allocated.

The troops on the ground, if supported by the international community, also have a better ability to provide protection to the high-skilled volunteering health care staff.

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*Topic 2: Human Dimensions of the Environment*

1. Limitations of the Sustainable Development Goals

While the SDGs present an ambitious effort of the international community to tackle global challenges and are now an essential part of the directive of the United Nations, pressing issues are challenging the feasibility and effectiveness of this programme. During the conference, several key limitations were discussed by the participants to this existing framework.

- First, the contradictory nature of the socio-economic goals and the environmental goals render the realization of the goals more difficult. This further leads to aggravation of some challenges, like climate change, while addressing others, like industrialization and economic growth.
- A second issue is the largely normative nature of the SDGs, which brushes aside the scientific nature of key challenges and over-emphasize the politics behind them. Thus, an important issue regarding the response to climate change in the narrative of these SDGs is the politicization of the environmental goals.
- Through the narrative nature of the SDG goals, which lack a clear target for enforcement, as there is no scientific or quantitative commitment, it limits the ability of states and companies to create sustainable long-term environmental policy. This often occurs without evaluation or holding policy-makers accountable for their stated 'targets'.

The entire United Nations framework and many other institutions, both national and international, adopted and committed to contributing to the Agenda 2030 and the fulfilment of the SDGs. Our recommendations to improve are the following:

- Fulfilling one goal can counteract the fulfilment of another, most visible in the contrast of (socio-)economic ones and environmental ones. This can only be addressed by acknowledging the necessity of an integrated approach to solving the challenges ahead. Structural reform is needed to combine efforts of different organizations, and to rethink the paradigms that led us to face these challenges in the first place. The summit acknowledges the past efforts and need for gradual adjustments, but only by tightening screws of present goals in order to achieve the necessary turn in policies can we really face the problem of unsustainability.
- This can be facilitated by refashioning them in a more quantitative style, especially regarding the methods which we are using. Quantifying the trade-off effects between SDGs is further crucial, which can only be done by including academics and scientists in the evaluation and determination of the goals.
- An enforcement structure is needed, both on a global governance level (for international actors) and national level, with goals set internationally (for domestic actors) if the SDGs are to be adequately addressed. An accountability framework that holistically evaluates the impact of a specific project or company on *all* SDGs is necessary to achieve this.

2. Climate Injustice in Development

Following from the previous points on contradictions within sustainable development, there are also several questions raised regarding the priorities that need to be set and pursued by individual nations. Problems that were raised during the discussions were the following:

- Western, industrialized nations have historically emitted by far the most greenhouse gases, oftentimes on the backs of formerly colonized countries in the Global South. Now, while the former are on the path of reducing emissions, developing countries are trying to catch up economically, which in the current framework requires rising emissions.
- Local stakeholders are often not involved in climate negotiations or planning of projects that will affect them. As pointed out by one of our speakers, constructions of hydrological dams in the developing world have severely damaged the integrity of local communities.

A careful evaluation is again necessary to prudently address those issues of injustice and inequity. The summit proposes the following approaches:

- Investment and development cooperation of any form needs to be subject to just and sustainable evaluation. Furthermore, the knowledge of relevant technology needs to be transparently communicated with relevant countries where the development is happening. The world needs to perceive climate change as a global problem, and neither statist politics nor imprudent investment have a place in solving it.
- Local communities hold a lot of potential when it comes to holistic solutions. They are the best informed regarding local dynamics and behaviour. To incite a change in the latter or gather support for realizing projects, it is crucial to consult and collaborate with local communities and specialists. Imposition of values and coercively moving forward with projects is a form of neo-colonialism, which should be avoided at all costs by acknowledging and appreciating the inherent value of those communities. Further, through education and exchange of cultural heritage and scientific knowledge, creative new solutions can be designed.

3. Lack of Enforcement of Global Sustainability Norms

One inherent problem of the current international framework is the lack of coercion that is needed to enforce compliance with sustainability measures. The following dynamics are underlying this:

- There is no accountability scheme to evaluate the exact impact of actors on the environment. Different aspects of sustainability are not necessarily comparable, which further renders this problem more difficult.
- There is a huge spatial and class disparity regarding conscience of the pressing nature of sustainability challenges. This leads to environmental policy being considered “elitist” and politicized.

Given the complexity and perpetuity of the problem of enforcement, characterized by the sanctification of the principle of state sovereignty, solutions need to be designed in the least controversial way possible. The summit proposes:

- Using aggregated and reliable indicators, again designed in collaboration of policymakers and scientists. We need an international mandatory directive, which establishes indicators and makes them mandatory for national and global actors. A sustainability component then needs to be included in all projects affecting the environment, which should be monitored by the government and independent committees.

- By educating about the climate crisis and sustainability issues, and communicating possible solutions, a broader conscience can be created, which bolsters sustainability efforts and incites the necessary change. The resulting shift in public opinion can drive both local efforts and policymaking on every level.

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*Topic 3: Multilateralism, Reimagined*

After a period of increased cooperation through organizations such as the United Nations, and the World Trade Organisation, there is a perceived decrease in the efficiency and sustainability of the organizations at hand. In an era of major global challenges, multilateralism is, now, more important than ever, and a change in the current global governance system is necessary. Within this summit, we have identified three major issues that hamper the effectiveness of cooperation and multilateralism that is beneficial for the global community at large. Most of these issues are interlinked and therefore, the solutions must be as well.

The **first issue** identified is the lack of a diverse citizen representation among international institutions which, as a result, undermines their legitimacy and power. This unequal representation is present among NGOs, international organizations, i.e the United Nations (UN), and national governments with youth, religious, economic and racial minorities, and the LGBT+ community facing the lowest level of representation. Even when these actors are involved in the political process, their voice is often tokenized and policed, resulting in an empty democratic process that protects the rights of a privileged few.

In order to begin addressing this issue, increased stakeholder engagement throughout the processes - negotiations, agreements, project developments, agenda setting - of the multilateral system is crucial. Increased stakeholder engagement entails free and early access to information for NGOs and individuals and ensuring transparency of the processes. Furthermore, stakeholders should be meaningfully included throughout all stages of the processesses, particularly in the designing stages through feedback mechanisms and, at a minimum, advisory roles. Moreover, participation in national and local democratic processes should be ensured and facilitated so as to increase representation. For example, through higher voter turnout, mistrust in democracies could go down as citizens become more involved and invested in the civic process and their presence, in turn, keeps their representatives accountable.

The **second issue** identified is the unequal distribution of power among multilateral organizations. In recent years, the global imbalance in power between countries has become increasingly evident with the rise in power of a few global ‘superpowers.’ Some of these superpowers enjoy veto rights and often, due to national interests, actively block meaningful development among the international community. Moreover, most of the superpowers are often from the Global North which further increases the problematic power imbalance between the Global North and Global South, potentially paving the road for further neo-colonialist actions in which the economic and humanitarian interests of the Global South come second to those of the Global North. This collision of interests in turn creates a lack of unity among allied states,

making it difficult to find common points and pursue shared goals. Finally, the present distribution of costs and benefits is challenging the maintenance of a multilateral system as nations become increasingly discontent with what they perceive to be their respective economic gains from multilateralism.

This issue is hard to reconcile due to global powers' opportunity to block any initiative that will decrease their power. Balancing the needs of both the Global North and Global South within the current power structure is challenging. Therefore, in order to take steps towards correcting this power imbalance, it is important to begin discussing the possibility of reparations between the Global North and South in order to facilitate the development of previously colonized nations. Secondly, setting limits to the veto power among the permanent members of the United Nations - perhaps through the use of supermajority voting - is crucial in preventing the blocking of majority supported global efforts, especially in times of regional crises. Thirdly, developing regional multilateral organizations such as ASEAN and the African Union can help countries from the Global South leverage power against the Global North in terms of trade deals. Decreasing tariffs and other economic restrictions within the region can also bolster economic relationships within the Global South and, thus, decrease their reliance on the Global North. Finally, there is a need to balance the perceived benefits for all states to be active in the international community. The key for future collaboration therefore is in recognising the value of diversity and shifting states' isolationist and nationalist attitudes towards multilateral ones.

The **third issue** is a growing general distrust in the multilateral system, which can be seen as a result of the issue of representation as well as a cause for further disengagement with the international institutions. This distrust has partially grown due to a rise in populism which has especially been detrimental for the multilateral system in the case of the Trump administration. The administration's disengagement with the international community set a potential precedent for other nations to follow in their isolationist and nationalist footprints. This growth of populism is further fueled by misinformation and algorithms due to the unlimited power of international tech giants. Moreover, this issue also ties in with the issue of representation and a general belief that the multilateral system does not represent the individual. Ultimately, multilateralism is at risk as a growing number of governments lack the domestic support to forge stronger multilateral ties.

A few important developments that can increase trust consist of educating organizations on the importance of international cooperation, connecting organizations and local governments to everyday citizens, limiting the power of tech giants, and holding said tech giants accountable. As tech giants can heavily influence daily narratives due to the algorithms in their products and drive users in polarizing directions, it is crucial to hold these companies accountable for misinformation on their platforms. Due to increasingly complicated multilateral processes, citizens are often uninformed or misinformed about the benefits of international cooperation,

especially in regards to how this connects to their own lives. A project that focuses on the positive personal impact of multilateralism and informs the public on the basic workings of international institutions can prevent distrust among citizens. Ultimately, meaningful representation of diverse opinions mitigates the feeling of disconnection to the governance systems, as there is an increased feeling of belonging to a global community where representation is ensured.

To conclude, the lack of representation, the unequal distribution of power and the distrust in the multilateral system are issues that all overlap and interact. The lack of representation ensures that the unequal distribution of power is sustained, while these two issues further feed into the distrust in the multilateral system. The path ahead to solve these issues will be challenging, but in case solutions are found the multilateral system has the potential to address the global challenges we are facing as a united global community.