

A note to the reader:

Please note that feedback is still welcome, but a new version of this document is currently being worked on by a small group of drafters. Another opportunity will be opened in due course for further comment (the pre-COVID-19 timeline is [here](#)). Otherwise, please note:

1. There is an accompanying [survey](#) which we are using to gather input on the draft. This is to reduce the often challenging issue of too many comments appearing on one document. We may open this draft to comment, depending on the kind of feedback received.
2. You will note from the annexes at the bottom of this document (currently out of date in this draft, another draft has more robust annexes) that many specific challenges, groups, and possible solutions have been made. Recognizing that not everything could possibly be in this one document, this is a way to acknowledge the many helpful contributions received. However, whether and how to use the annexes is an open question.
3. The tone of this document is meant to be aspirational, yet realistic; hopeful, yet sober; concise, yet nuanced. Obviously this is a task which will require significant refinement. Assistance in this regard is most welcome.

UN75 People's Declaration: A Plan of Action for the International Community
“Humanity at a Crossroads: global governance at a time of challenges”

[TBD: add relevant intro text: Global Civil Society came together on 23-24 April, etc.]

1. The United Nations represents humanity's greatest achievement yet in terms of governance on a planetary scale. The results accomplished in its first 75 years are commendable. Efforts towards the eradication of poverty, disease and violence against women, the advancement of a rules based international order, the development of crucial international norms and standards, and the existence, for the first time in history, of a universal body that has the potential to represent the interests of every nation and every people on earth. Around the world, marked improvement across a variety of dimensions of life have been seen since the UN came into being. Global civil society takes this opportunity to congratulate the United Nations and its Member States on the work completed thus far. We also offer, on the occasion of UN75, our thoughts on the nature of the grave challenges we currently face as an international community. We propose solutions which, if resolutely applied, could begin to create an enabling environment suited to our collective road ahead.
2. Today demands an orientation to problem-solving that humanity has never seen, and we need to collaborate in unprecedented new ways. The paradigm of “us versus them” no longer meets our needs. We must construct a world of “us,” united together against our global challenges. We must build trust between governments and civil society, based on agreed upon international frameworks of human rights and participation. Civil society must be prepared to work in good faith with governments just as governments must operate transparently and collaboratively with civil society. Policy-makers have the responsibility to determine how civil society participates in inter-governmental processes; a responsibility that should be employed with justice and generosity. We are confident that the benefits of vibrant civil society participation, alongside the safeguarding of fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression, at the international level - and at all levels - can counter the shrinking space we see around the world. The more the door is open to the equal participation of civil society, the more will partnerships flourish in service of the protection and advancement of humanity in these challenging times.
3. At every significant moment in the history of the United Nations, international civil society has been a catalyst and leading voice for the articulation and application of global governance suited to the needs of the day. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document to which we must remain committed, to the international conferences of the 1990s, to the landmark civil society declaration arising out of the Millennium NGO Forum of 2000, to the articulation of Agenda 2030. These are but a few examples that show that without civil society, the effectiveness of the United Nations would be significantly undermined. The contributions of civil society are a testament to the value of a participatory, democratic order grounded in human rights, drawing on the creativity of many, allowing people to collectively shape their future. Notwithstanding a wide recognition of this value, we are alarmed at recent trends toward the closing of civil society space at all levels, and call

on all governments to strengthen efforts to draw on the knowledge and experience of their peoples, to see them as trustworthy partners, and to open space for the peaceful airing of diverse opinions. Lasting change depends as much on the quality and attitudes of a process as it does on the substantive outputs; indeed, attitudes of superiority will erode the foundations of every partnership.

4. Challenges, both concrete and of values, assail humanity from all sides. A notion of leadership that is defined by domination and control; a concept of progress that is defined in narrowly material and often exclusively economic terms; and an attachment to limited forms of identity - be it national, ethnic, religious or other - which serves to create notions of “otherness” inimical to universal progress: these lie at the heart of the afflictions which the United Nations and well-wishers of humanity around the world are striving to address. The result is a global order where rules too often benefit those with great access to power, while marginalizing those with limited or no voice; a biodiversity and climate crisis with implications beyond our understanding; and rising tides of prejudice and suspicion causing rifts in societies of all kinds.
5. Confronting these challenges requires a fundamental shift in thinking about the role and nature of power, of success, and of humanity itself. As the challenges humanity faces become more complex, our collective approach to the organization of international affairs must become correspondingly more sophisticated, with clarity as to our shared values. No institutional structure can, on its own, cure the ills humanity faces - the solutions lie in just leadership, an active and informed citizenry, and a commitment to the wellbeing of humanity. Global governance achieves its highest expression when all see themselves as working towards the common aim of peace, justice and prosperity.
6. The catastrophic risk of the climate crisis, due to its gravity and all-encompassing nature, may well be the catalyst which produces more effective modalities of collective leadership suited to the needs of this century. Never before has anthropogenic activity impacted the world to such a profound degree, and never before has a global crisis had such far reaching implications. Ironically, it is the very economic indicators of advancement which we often promote that have pushed humanity to this point. Climate change also represents a clear example of the limitations of the current system. As the impacts of our national and global choices become ever more disruptive, humanity - more than at any time in history - will be pushed to come together as one community and respond. How many more catastrophes and disasters must we endure before taking significant steps towards accelerated international collaboration is the question before us.
7. New forms of violence and warfare unimaginable 75 years ago are also increasing our collective risk on a variety of fronts. The rise of violent non-state actors to cyberwarfare and misinformation on a globally interconnected network, constitute new threats to the global community, while the increased risk of well-known threats - such as nuclear and small-arms proliferation - continue unabated in the absence of the enforcement of international law. The interconnection between various risks is intensifying, while coherence in our response is falling far short. It is incumbent upon leaders of principle and character to objectively assess the state of the world, and commit the necessary resources to its advancement.

8. “We the peoples” have increasingly raised our voices in countless intergovernmental spaces, especially in the past quarter century. The United Nations has represented a key venue in which partnership has been valued. But civil society has witnessed a corresponding resistance by governments in the closing of spaces around the world and growing attacks on the human rights of communities and individuals. In this regard, it is important to recognize that there are a host of groups which face compounding discrimination the world over. All people deserve full inclusion and equal treatment under the law, especially those in positions of specific vulnerability and marginalization. It is unacceptable that discrimination against diverse group memberships and identities have been used to deny the rights to any human being. If universal commitment to human rights is taken to heart and put into practice by governments, communities and individuals around the world, the closing of civic spaces can be reversed and movement toward a world of justice, generosity, and trusteeship advanced.

The Need for a Comprehensive Approach

9. To confront our collective challenges, the whole of society is required, with each actor contributing a different dimension of knowledge, experience and capability. Governments, for example, have primary responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of everyone within their borders. For its part, civil society must hold itself accountable to the same standards that it demands of governments. Yet so long as a diversity of perspectives is perceived as a threat, so long as we treat any change with resistance, and so long as we do not fulfill our diverse responsibilities, humanity will remain hamstrung in its ability to advance. In this regard, below are a few enabling conditions required for the United Nations and the international order as a whole to advance:
 - a. A stronger rules-based international system that does not allow the power of some to violate principles of justice and equality before the law and which can serve as a beacon of hope and source of guidance to which all can turn.
 - b. The application of the principle of subsidiarity which has the dual effect of preventing overcentralization and encourages greater ownership, resilience, coherence, and a diversity of approaches.
 - c. The financing of programs and institutions vital to humanity’s advancement coupled with the responsible and thoughtful utilization of such funds.
 - d. The gathering of information both through disaggregated and diverse data sets and statistics, but also through the inclusion of a broad range of actors and perspectives in the policy-making process.
 - e. Ensuring an informed citizenry through a focus on a transformative education that is suited to the needs of the day while also providing the fundamental necessities to contribute to society’s advancement.

Our Call for Action: Making the UN an Institution Equal to our Global Challenges

[This section is very much in development, hence the gray color. Suggestions and proposals are still coming in, and we are in consultation with other organizations specifically aiming to help articulate those proposals which are most salient.]

10. Recognizing that effective and durable changes in institutions, policies, and norms across the United Nations system cannot be achieved in a single high-level meeting or single year of General Assembly deliberations, we request the initiation of a follow-on process of consultations and formal deliberations that engage all governments, international organizations, and diverse stakeholders. As an initial contribution to this process, civil society from around the world wishes to propose the following three specific calls for action from the United Nations on the occasion of its 75th anniversary:
11. **The creation of an Independent Commission on Global Governance:** The establishment of the United Nations took place at a time when member state participation was limited to the victors of World War II, when the number of independent countries was little more than a quarter we have today, and when the types of challenges confronting humanity were vastly different from what we presently face. Therefore, 2020 must represent the starting point of a *global* conversation on the types of governance suited to meet the needs of present and future generations. Such conversations, taking place over the course of two years, should serve as an opportunity to hear from the people and governments of the world regarding options for new international arrangements. Options, such as those in the annex to this document, can be robustly deliberated upon with the specific intent of creating a new global compact for international governance. A corresponding Independent Commission should be formed which will have the task of advancing this global consultation and producing a set of options to be considered by the Member States of the United Nations.
12. **Broadening the scope of meaningful participation at all levels:** The increased complexity and sophistication of the problems we face, combined with the tremendous advances in knowledge and capacity of the generality of humankind, demand that the sources of information and perspectives drawn on by the UN be broadened widely. Most importantly, inclusion must be meaningful. This requires a spirit of consultation which sees as its aim the genuine search for truth, rather than the defending of national or specific-group positions. This requires a greater emphasis on science, knowledge, experience, and humility. It will mean incorporating the views of those who will be affected by a given policy and ensuring that they continue to be consulted as the policy's effectiveness is measured over time. Finally, this must take place at all levels. The United Nations can and should set the example by adopting models of inclusive engagement, and such a process must be replicated at local, national, and regional levels; otherwise the voices of too many of the world's people will continue to be sidelined.
13. **Implementing proposals that already receive widespread support:** There are a number of proposals which have received widespread support after years of deliberation that we wish to highlight:

- a. *Enhancing the essential architecture of the United Nations*: we call for (1) a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly which, thinking beyond national borders, would have as its objective the well-being of all present and future generations of humanity; (2) a World Citizens' Initiative modeled on the EU system whereby a critical mass of individuals could petition the UN to respond to pressing issues; (3) systematized, inclusive mechanisms of civil society participation at the UN, incarnated in, for example, a standing civil society advisory forum to the UNGA and other UN organs, and, including; (4) the creation of a youth advisory body.
- b. *Financing*: (1) the implementation of a new funding mechanism for Member contributions to the UN to ensure greatly enhanced and reliable funding for the global body; (2) the convening of an independent High Level Panel of experts to make recommendations as to supplementary international funding mechanisms and issues, including, e.g., an international financial transaction tax, tackling international tax havens, a minimum international corporate tax, and other policy options.
- c. *Peace and security*: we call for (1) the reform and significant strengthening of the peacebuilding architecture, including its focus on prevention and on the mandatory peaceful settlement of disputes; (2) the universal ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; (3) the banning of lethal autonomous weapons; (4) ensuring the universal jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice for all UN Members, without reservation, to provide for a genuine rule of law among States.
- d. *Climate and development*: we call for (1) increasing the financing of development plans, for genuinely sustainable development fully compliant with the lower 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement and with other international environmental obligations; (2) a full recognition of the international climate / environment emergency, through a variety of measures, including a UN “whole system” response equal to this crisis (including the UN SC and other principal organs), recognizing climate change governance as a fourth pillar of the United Nations; (3) strengthening the international climate governance regime, including through the convening of a High Level Panel of experts to make concrete recommendations as to consolidation of existing UN environmental bodies and treaties, as well as the possible creation of a related, enhanced global environment body tasked with keeping humanity safely within scientifically-determined planetary boundaries .
- e. *Human rights*: we call for (1) significantly increasing the budget of the human rights system, which currently receives only 3% of the UN budget, (2) the convening of a High Level Panel of independent experts to make concrete recommendations as to the reform, consolidation and substantial enhancement of existing UN human rights architecture, including the development of a genuine international enforcement mechanism (e.g., an international human rights tribunal).

14. The global risks now confronting humanity are unprecedented, and the consequences of not addressing these risks with an adequate governance response will be enormously destructive. Dangers unimagined in all history gather around a distracted humanity. The greatest error that the

world's leadership could make at this critical juncture, however, would be to allow current crises to cast doubt on our capacities and on the ultimate outcome of our shared efforts to manage our common, global affairs. The international community, the diverse populations, nations and cultures of which it is composed, have the skills and resources to tackle the challenges before us. However, we must together work to transcend outworn habits, attitudes, and institutions that have accumulated over the centuries, which are now being subjected to severe tests. Conceived properly, these tests should be viewed in a positive light, catalyzing ambitious action and yet greater levels of cooperative achievement. What is required of the leaders and peoples of the world is the resolve and courage to match the enormous challenges we face, and the vision to implement positive changes to safeguard our shared future. Let the 75th anniversary of the United Nations serve as a rallying point for all of humanity to constructively bring about the governance we need, in order to create the world we want.

Annex 1: List of challenges that have been proposed

As mentioned above, a long list of challenges have been proposed by many brilliant and committed contributors. Some of these items on the list also included supporting data. I am listing them here (in alphabetical order) to show the diversity and quantity of issues which could be mentioned in the declaration.

Challenges:

1. Accessibility (lack thereof)
2. Accountability (lack thereof)
3. Biodiversity loss
4. Breakdown of trust
5. Climate change
6. Coherence (lack thereof)
7. Consensus means lowest common denominator
8. Conservation of heritage and culture
9. Corruption
10. Crisis of leadership
11. Data and statistics
12. Decent work
13. Democratic deficit
14. Demographic change (e.g. ageing)
15. Diplomacy deficit
16. Discrimination
17. Diseases/pandemics
18. The economic order
19. Ego
20. Energy (sources, etc.)
21. Enforceability of UN resolutions
22. Financing
23. Food issues
24. Forced migration (climate caused, violence caused)
25. Fossil fuel subsidies
26. Gender based violence
27. Gender Equality
28. Greed
29. Housing
30. Human rights (in general, many specific calls)
31. Human trafficking
32. Humanitarian
33. Identity
34. Implementation (“the last mile”, e.g.)

35. Inequalities
36. Institutional silos
37. Lack of knowledge (scientific, etc.)
38. Legitimacy (lack thereof) of the UN
39. Misinformation
40. Multilateralism (weakening), international order as threat to national governments
41. North/south relationship and dichotomy
42. Nuclear proliferation
43. Nutrition
44. Oceans
45. Ownership at the local/national level
46. Participation
47. Politics
48. Positional approaches
49. Power
50. Racism/Xenophobia
51. Redundancy of UN processes
52. Security council reform
53. Self-interest
54. Social media
55. Small arms
56. State sovereignty/state centrism
57. Subsidiarity (regional, national, local engagement)
58. Sustainable development (and its goals)
59. Technology (disruptive, ICT, etc.)
60. Terrorism
61. Transparency (lack thereof)
62. Universal health care
63. Urban/rural specific issues
64. Violence
65. Violence against women
66. Water (access to, WASH)
67. Women, peace and security
68. Youth matters (e.g. employment, peace and security)

Annex 1: List of vulnerable or other types of groups that have been mentioned

Groups to highlight: (and there are others not yet mentioned such as people with albinism, children without parental care, etc.)

1. Caste or descent based disadvantaged groups
2. Children
3. Ethnic minorities
4. Indigenous peoples
5. LGBTQ individuals and communities
6. Linguistic minorities
7. Migrants
8. Older persons
9. People living in poverty
10. Persons with disabilities
11. Racial minorities
12. Religious minorities
13. Unborn children
14. Volunteers
15. Widows
16. Women
17. Youth

Annex 3: Proposals for UN reform

This annex represents a repository (truly in brief) of a number of ideas, in alphabetical order, which have been suggested to include in this civil society declaration. A number of these could be included in the main body of the document, some others could be included in an annex, and others could be scrapped altogether.

1. Accountability (via fines) for unmet commitments
2. Banning of lethal autonomous weapons
3. Budgetary matters (e.g. the allocation of funding)
4. Capacity building for CSOs
5. Citizens petition mechanism
6. Civil society “desk” in all UN country programs
7. Civil society focal point
8. Climate governance in general, making it a fourth pillar of the United Nations in particular
9. Commission on Youth and/or UN Youth Organization (like UN Women)
10. Council for future generations
11. Create a stronger platform for global civil society interaction
12. Create a new set of “global governance indicators” to align with the various other agreements
13. Dedicated UN Peace/Security Force
14. ECOSOC functional commission reform
15. Ending fossil fuel subsidies
16. Enhanced peacebuilding commission
17. Equal geographic rotations
18. Financial transaction tax
19. Funding for Agenda 2030
20. G20+ configuration for economic cooperation
21. Global education/communication on UN
22. Global tax body
23. High level panel on governance reform
24. Human rights up front
25. Inclusive processes at all levels: policy formation, implementation, assessment
26. Increase participation of civil society in more spaces
27. Liaison for parliamentarians
28. Liaison for civil society
29. Localization
30. Loyalty to UN Charter (reform not necessary until Charter itself loyally implemented)
31. National level HLPFs
32. ODA commitments should be met
33. Peacebuilding architecture reform
34. Public information and education campaign
35. Punitive measures for noncompliance, including losing voting rights when bills unpaid

36. Ratification of numerous treaties (including TPNW, among others)
37. Reference to significant agreements and documents which have not been loyally implemented?
 - a. Responsibility to protect
 - b. Human rights treaties
 - c. Paris Agreement, Addis Ababa, Agenda 2030
38. Reform of the UN rules and regulations
39. Reform to the selection of the Secretary General
40. Representative for civil society at the highest levels of the UN
41. Security council reform - various (sometimes contradicting) proposals
42. Strengthen UN country teams
43. Sustainable development council (like the human rights council)
44. Technology governance body
45. Ratification of Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
46. Two chamber system (UNGA & UNPA)
47. UN Coherence body
48. Universal UN presence (in all countries, “developed” and “developing”)
49. Universal jurisdiction of the ICJ
50. World parliament (UNPA)