

“Our Common Agenda”
Thematic consultation 1
Accelerating and scaling up the Sustainable Development Goals, leaving no-one behind
10-11 February 2022, UN Headquarters New York
BACKGROUND NOTE

I. Background

In line with General Assembly resolution 76/6 of 15 November 2021, and the letters from the President of the General Assembly to Member States dated 23 December 2021 and 13 January 2022, this is the first in a series of five open, inclusive, informal thematic consultations convened by the President of the General Assembly on the UN Secretary-General’s report on “Our Common Agenda”.

II. Overview of proposals for consideration at thematic consultation 1

This consultation seeks the feedback of Member States on the proposals in Our Common Agenda report that aim to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals, leaving no-one behind.

These proposals were developed in light of lagging progress on the SDGs, compounded by the dramatic but unequally distributed impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which threaten to leave populations that were already vulnerable even further behind. With only nine years left till 2030, the proposals were intended to turbo-charge implementation of all the SDGs while flagging gaps that may have emerged or grown since the goals were adopted, including as a result of the pandemic, growing global mistrust, a financial system that favours the wealthy and leaves the poor further and further behind, rising inequalities, political unrest, and deep uncertainty about our present and, especially, our future.

The ideas and initiatives in Our Common Agenda report were guided by the commitments made by Member States in the UN75 declaration to leave no one behind, and specifically to implement the 2030 Agenda in full and on time, with particular attention to people in vulnerable situations.

The first cluster of ideas and initiatives on which Member State feedback is sought during this first consultation are those that aim to advance **inclusion, protection and participation for all** as part of the renewal of the social contract anchored in human rights. These include improving and investing in social protection coverage in line with SDG target 1.3. They also aim to improve access to education in line with SDG 4 and to ensure adequate housing in line with SDG target 11.1. There are also proposals for providing people with decent jobs in line with SDG 8. Relatedly, ideas on making invisible populations – such as informal workers and those lacking legal identity (SDG target 16.9) – visible, have also been included in this cluster for discussion. While many of these ideas are for national level action, support of the UN system at global, regional and country levels can be made available to Member States should they so request.

At the global level, for Member States’ consideration, a **World Social Summit** is proposed to take stock of progress in 2025, 30 years after the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. Member States are invited to consider using the Summit outcome to update the 1995 Copenhagen

Declaration on Social Development, covering issues such as universal social protection floors, including universal health coverage, adequate housing, education for all and decent work, and accelerating momentum towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the last 5 years of the Decade of Action.

Feedback is also sought on the ideas and initiatives that pay special attention to **women and girls**, in line with SDG 5. The proposals in the report were guided by commitment 5 in the UN75 Declaration to place women and girls at the centre, including to accelerate action to achieve gender equality, women's participation, and the empowerment of women and girls in all domains. Our Common Agenda accordingly proposes five transformative measures related to gender for States' consideration. These include an emergency response plan to accelerate the eradication of violence against women and girls, backed by a global campaign to eliminate any social norm that tolerates, excuses or overlooks such violence. Extra efforts are also urged to consider the strengthening of gender equality within the UN system. Member States are also encouraged to consider efforts towards gender equality in all United Nations intergovernmental processes, including as part of discussions on the working methods of the Commission on the Status of Women.

There are also a series of proposals that aim to deliver on the UN75 Declaration's pledge to **listen to and work with youth**. This includes the proposed establishment of a dedicated UN Youth Office in the Secretariat to serve as an anchor for advocacy, UN system coordination and accountability on youth matters. The proposed office would integrate the current activities of the Office of the Envoy on Youth. Measures to promote more meaningful youth engagement at the national level and in UN processes are also proposed, including a "youth in politics" index, which could be taken forward under the leadership of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth in a consultative manner.

Further, to bolster resilience by preparing people for a changing world of work and creating decent jobs in line with SDG 8 (especially target 8.6), the UN Development System is currently further developing the idea of a "high-ambition coalition of ministers" on digital and green economies. This would involve a critical mass of countries whose labour markets and workforce will expand most rapidly over the next decade. It would also ensure the new economy supports women and those in the care economy.

Efforts to transform education and accelerate achievement of SDG 4 are a critical part of this cluster, including through the convening by the Secretary-General of a **Transforming Education Summit** in September 2022 to reboot global efforts to achieve SDG 4 and forge a common vision for the future of education.

The full list of proposals that will be considered at thematic consultation 1 is provided in the **Annex**.

III. Participation and organizational matters for thematic consultation 1

Thematic consultation - 1 will be held over two full days and be chaired by the Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait in his capacity as Vice-President of the General Assembly.

The first day of the thematic consultations will take place at the General Assembly Hall and will consist of a plenary segment. It will include a statement by the President of the General Assembly, and an opening briefing by the Secretary-General on the cluster of proposals for this first thematic consultation, followed by an informal debate with the participation of Member States and observers of the General Assembly.

For inscribing on the list of speakers for the plenary segment, please contact the General Assembly Affairs Branch (email: galindo@un.org with copy to gaspeakerslist@un.org). Short and focussed interventions, as well as group statements, are encouraged (3 minutes for individual delegations and 5 minutes for statements on behalf of group of delegations). Longer statements and position papers may be submitted through *e-Statements* (email: estatements@un.org).

The second day of the thematic consultations will feature two moderated “fire side chat” style panel discussions with (i) senior officials from the United Nations system (morning), and (ii) relevant partners including the private sector, young people, academia and civil society representatives (afternoon). The meeting will take place in the Trusteeship Council Chamber and there will not be a pre-established list of speakers. Member States and observers of the General Assembly will be able to intervene in both panel discussions. In accordance with resolution 76/6, to ensure broad and inclusive consultations, relevant partners will be invited to intervene in the afternoon session through either in-person participation or pre-recorded statements.

All meetings within the thematic consultations will be webcast on UN WebTV.

The Vice-President overseeing the thematic consultation will prepare a summary of the proceedings. This will constitute the outcome of the meeting.

Tentative Program

Day 1: PLENARY SEGMENT

Morning (General Assembly Hall)

10.00am – 1.00pm: Opening panel with remarks from the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, followed by statements of Member States and observers of the General Assembly

Afternoon (General Assembly Hall)

3.00pm – 6.00pm: Statements by Member States and observers of the General Assembly

Day 2: PANELS (“fire side chats”)

Morning (Trusteeship Council Chamber)

10.00am – 12.00pm: Panel-1 *fireside* chat with senior officials of the UN system.

Opening Remarks:

Deputy-Secretary-General and UNSDG Chair Ms. Amina J. Mohammed

Moderator:

UNDP

Panelists:

ILO; UN Women; UNESCO, OHCHR, Envoy on Youth

Afternoon (Trusteeship Council Chamber)

3.00pm – 4.45pm: Panel-2 *fireside* chat with relevant partners from youth; civil society; private sector; academia/thought leaders; and local actors.

4.45pm – 5.00pm: Closing session

ANNEX – Proposals from the Our Common Agenda report for thematic consultation 1

SN	Proposal	Para number in OCA Report
1.	I will therefore mobilize the whole UN system to assist countries in support of a renewed social contract anchored in human rights...	19
2.	<p>I urge States to accelerate steps to achieve universal social protection coverage...</p> <p>I will ask the UN system to work with Member States to identify resources to invest in their [social protection] systems where needed, including by ring fencing and setting spending targets as a percentage of GDP, reallocating public expenditure, using proven techniques to combat corruption and illicit financial flows, deploying progressive fiscal policies and increasing budget transparency, participation and accountability...</p> <p>The establishment of a global fund for social protection being explored by the ILO could support countries in increasing levels of funding devoted to social protection...</p>	28
3.	<p>I would urge formal recognition of a universal entitlement to lifelong learning and reskilling, translated into practice through legislation, policy and effective learning systems.</p> <p>Decent work opportunities for all are also needed for shared prosperity...this requires a floor of rights and protections for all workers, irrespective of their employment arrangements as laid out in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.</p> <p>Investment in sectors with the greatest potential for creating more and better jobs, such as the green, care and digital economies, is key...</p> <p>...we need roadmaps to integrate informal workers into formal economies and to benefit from women’s formal participation in the workforce.</p> <p>The advancement of the human right to adequate housing, in line with target 11.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, proved its value in the public health measures taken in response to the pandemic. Impressive actions taken to house people have demonstrated what is possible with sufficient political will.</p>	29

4.	To take stock of these commitments and progress made as the world seeks to recover from COVID-19, consideration should be given to holding a World Social Summit in 2025.	30
5.	<p>I urge Member States and other stakeholders to consider five related and transformative measures</p> <p>(a) the full realization of equal rights, including through repeal of all gender-discriminatory laws (target 5.1 of the SDGs)</p> <p>(b) measures to promote gender parity in all spheres and all levels of decision-making, including quotas and special measures (targets 5.5 and 16.7 of the SDGs)</p> <p>(c) facilitating women’s economic inclusion, including through large-scale investment in the care economy and equal pay, and more support for women entrepreneurs (target 5.4 of the SDGs)</p> <p>(d) greater inclusion of the voices of young women (target SDG 16.7)</p> <p>(e) an emergency response plan to accelerate the eradication of violence against women and girls, as a priority, which the United Nations will support, backed by a global campaign to eliminate any social norm that tolerates, excuses or overlooks violence against women and girls (target 5.2 of the SDGs)</p>	31
6.	<p>I encourage Member States to strengthen efforts towards gender equality in all UN intergovernmental processes. The review of the working methods of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2021 could include a reassessment of the role of the Commission in relation to other intergovernmental mandates and consideration of how to build on the multi-stakeholder momentum of the Generation Equality Forum.</p> <p>The United Nations will itself ensure gender parity at all levels within the organization by 2028. We will also undertake a review of UN system capacity – staffing, resources and architecture – to deliver on gender equality as a core priority across all entities.</p>	32
7.	To ensure that everyone is seen and recognized, measures to prove legal identity (target 16.9 of the SDGs) and end statelessness, including by closing legal loopholes, and disaggregating data by age, gender and diversity are urged.	36

8.	<p>...governments are urged to promote political representation for youth, including young women and girls.</p> <p>Together with leading researchers and academic institutions, I will explore a “youth in politics” index to track the opening of political space in countries around the world. This could entail lowering the voting age and the eligibility age for standing as a candidate for elected office, as well as strengthening youth participatory bodies.</p>	46
9.	<p>I propose the establishment of a dedicated United Nations Youth Office in the Secretariat, which will integrate the current activities of the Office of the Envoy on Youth, continue to lead high-level advocacy and serve as the anchor for United Nations system coordination and accountability on youth matters across our work on peace, sustainable development, humanitarian issues and human rights.</p> <p>...my Envoy on Youth will prepare recommendations for more meaningful, diverse and effective youth engagement in UN deliberative and decision-making processes for the consideration of the General Assembly, the Security Council and ECOSOC and their respective subsidiary bodies.</p>	47
10.	<p>I will...convene a Summit on Transforming Education in 2022...to forge a common vision for education</p>	49
11.	<p>...Member States are urged to consider youth labour guarantees, alongside macroeconomic and industrial policies to boost labour demand, drawing on the “not in education, employment or training” (NEET) indicator.</p> <p>In support of State efforts and the existing global initiatives on decent jobs for youth, the United Nations, together with international financial institutions, will launch a recovery barometer that will track career paths and labour market outcomes for youth between now and 2025 and beyond...</p> <p>One way to proceed could be the formation of a high-ambition coalition to promote green and digital economy job creation, involving relevant ministers (finance, planning, labour and education), youth, and other key stakeholders from the 20 countries whose labour markets and workforce will expand most rapidly over the next decade, emphasizing equal access for women and girls to these jobs and the transition from the informal to the formal sectors.</p>	51

12.	I call on all countries to embrace the ILO guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All and adopt them as the minimum standard to ensure progress on decent work for all.	80
13.	...the United Nations Secretariat will develop a policy that puts people at the centre of all its actions and takes into account the impact of intersecting personal characteristics such as age, gender and diversity.	111