

Declaration on Future Generations Summary of dialogues

The Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations, in their capacity as co-facilitators of the intergovernmental process for a Declaration on Future Generations, convened a series of dialogues between 14 March and 11 April 2023. These were intended to facilitate an open discussion with independent experts to deepen the collective understanding of Member States on the topic of future generations and to support thinking on the interlinkages between the Sustainable Development Goals and the forthcoming UN Declaration on Future Generations.

DIALOGUE I: EXPERT LEVEL INFORMAL EXCHANGE WITH PANELISTS ON NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND MULTILATERAL EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTING THE COMMITMENT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

[Recording](#)

Purpose: The dialogue convened stakeholders to consider existing examples of national, regional, and multilateral initiatives contributing to the advancement of future generations, focusing on lessons learnt and the gaps to be filled, in order to scale-up the impact of a UN Declaration on Future Generations.

Headlines from Experts

- **Ms. Alize Le Roux** (Institute of Security Studies in South Africa): Discussed [African Futures](#), an online interactive portal providing dynamic future forecasts of both a status-quo “base-case-scenario” and a “combined Agenda 2063” for each of Africa’s 54 states. The forecasts from the International Futures Forecasting System inform governments about where they are headed with current policies and suggest recommendations across sectors, in support of reaching governments long term development plans. The indicators used also inform about progress made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **Ms. Laura Sofia Castro** ([Innovations for Poverty Action](#) (IPA) in Colombia): Discussed the use of randomised control trials and other tools to gather information quickly and cheaply to inform public policy decision-making. Supporting government partners through the design and importantly, implementation phase, was underscored. IPA uses embedded labs in units of government to achieve this and install processes and capacity in government agents that institutionalise innovation, evidence-based decision-making and foresight. It support governments in developing and implementing more effective policies for long term sustainable development focused on poverty eradication and assists in efficient spending of limited resources.
- **Ms. Ana Graça Resident Coordinator Cabo Verde/Ms. Marta Cali** (UN Department of Development Coordination): Presented the Cabo Verde UN country team’s “[Foresight Ship](#)” initiative, which engaged government and stakeholders in a future proofing exercise for the national development strategy and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Among other activities, the workshop back casted from the desired 2030 scenario to internalize risks into strategy design and promote anticipatory planning.
- **Ms. Sophie Howe** (First Commissioner for Future Generations in Wales): Emphasised intergenerational equity at the heart of the [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act](#), in alignment with the SDGs, including shifting to a well-being economy that focused on how policies impacted the planet and people. An appointed Future Generations Commissioner, as champion and coordinator across the system, is crucial to development without compromising the well-being of future

generations. Systematically thinking in long term various future scenarios allows for more proactive instead reactive policy planning and implementation.

- **Mr. Raimundas Lopata** (Chair of the Committee for the Futures of the Seimas in Lithuania): Provided insight on Lithuania’s Parliamentary Committee on Futures, which tackles strategic issues and structural reforms to achieve Lithuania 2050 - the country’s national progress strategy developed using foresight methodology. The committee meets regularly and produces strategic reports, convenes wider conferences, and supports other fora with futures-thinking. The country’s “foresight ecosystem” is multistakeholder, data and evidence driven, and guided by foresight strategies.

Headlines Summary of Member State Discussions

The discussed highlighted the impact scientific data and testing can have on cost-effective public and private interventions, by utilizing forward future-oriented perspectives and foresight exercises for better informed decision making. In country examples of both Member States and the UN showcased the potential of utilizing these tools. Questions centred on how to scale national and regional examples globally (through multilateral mechanisms), as well as how to identify and address what is missing from these examples that a UN Declaration on Future Generations could attempt to address. Responses landed on the need for global accountability mechanisms through a declaration and a framework involving practical and tangible implementation mechanisms to generate political will. While the question of replication remained open to debate, many underscored the need for common knowledge sharing across national and regional practices. It was noted that different countries adopt different, sometimes unique perspectives when they consider future scenarios and, hence, addressing the needs and aspirations for future generations. Questions that remained open included how to relate risk analysis and uncertainty when working on long term issues.

Synergies with the SDGs	<i>Data collection and testing support informed and evidence based decision making for both SDG implementation and impact monitoring, as well as futures-thinking. Foresight exercises can support developments of roadmaps for achieving the SDGs.</i>
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DIALOGUE II: TO THINK AND ACT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

[Recording](#)

Purpose: This dialogue discussed the Secretary-General’s policy brief “[To Think and Act for Future Generations](#),” and it sought to gather reflections on the brief, in order to chart concrete ways forward from both experts in futures-thinking and action, as well as Member States.

Headlines from Experts

- **Under Secretary General Mr. Guy Ryder:** Briefed on the Secretary-General’s policy brief, emphasising three proposed methods for moving forward on future generations: the Declaration on Future Generations, a Special Envoy for Future Generations; and an intergovernmental forum as a subsidiary to the General Assembly, to oversee implementation of the Declaration. USG Ryder explained how the policy briefs support the achievement of the SDG’s and the preparations for the Summit of the Future, which will be complementary to the work on the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.
- **Ms. Catarina Zuzarte Tully** (School of International Futures): Discussed the data and constituency gaps in the present Future Generations agenda worldwide at a national level, highlighting the need globally for a citizen-centred approach, as well as a standing forum for peer learning and

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accountability mechanisms to review the intergenerational impact of all policies. Such an approach can support transformational steps towards the achievement of Agenda 2030.

- **Dr. Craig Conley** (World Sustainability Forum): Considered Future Generations from a human rights and responsibilities based approach, and the importance of such moral principles underlying the work done in UN fora including in preparation for the SDG Summit, Financing for Development convenings and other gatherings. He encouraged taking a systems perspective when developing initiatives.
- **Mr. Cecil Abungu** (Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, University of Cambridge): Reflected on his research of Indigenous communities in Africa, where community level decisions placed the interests of future generations ahead of their own. He emphasised the importance of legal commitments and ethical codes in the implementation phases of a commitment to future generations. He suggested to integrate future proof decision making into the various existing UN practices.

Headlines Summary of Member State Discussions

Emphasis was placed on the eradication of poverty and the restructuring of the global financial architecture, while anchored around the notion of “doing right” by future generations. Member States underscored leveraging the Declaration on Future Generations to turbocharge the 2030 Agenda, and they outlined the need to consider science, technology and innovation, data strategies, and foresight strategies in planning for a concise, action-oriented declaration. The timeline for the declaration remained an open question, and suggestions shared included September 2023, June or July 2024, and September 2024. Additional questions that remained open to debate asked: (i) whether the policy brief proposed institutions that would replicate existing practices; while some expressed support for an Envoy on Future Generations and a new intergovernmental forum, their mandates would need to be clarified; and (ii) what were the existing barriers to the implementation of futures thinking and action?

Synergies with the SDGs

See table on page 12 of [“To Think and Act for Future Generations.”](#)

DIALOGUE III: YOUTH EXPERT PANEL ON SAFEGUARDING THE INTERESTS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

[Recording](#)

Purpose: The dialogue provided an opportunity for meaningful youth engagement. It focused on youth involvement in discussions and decision-making in relation to future generations, and it sought to further develop thinking on the topic of safeguarding the interests of future generations.

Headlines from Experts

- **Ms. Nudhara Yusuf:** Underscored that youth and future generations should not be institutionally nor normatively conflated, as this increases the burden on today’s youth, when the safeguarding of future generations is a joint, intergenerational responsibility. She suggested that existing barriers to futures-based policy include a lack of accountability and progress assessments, which could serve as a chief role of a Future Generations Envoy. Responding to current obstacles also requires that the rights of future generations are normatively recognised. She noted that the duplication of efforts across the UN system and countries is more likely where mechanisms for coordination and knowledge-sharing do not exist, and a new intergovernmental forum would play an important role in ensuring the sustainability of the Declaration on Future Generations.
- **Mr. Daniel Odediran:** Showcased the potential of the youth constituency’s innovation and foresight capabilities. Outlining a Youth Foresight [project](#) conducted by the UNICEF Innocenti team and its Youth Foresight Fellows with seventy young people from across the world, he demonstrated the

power of young people in foresight planning and recommended that youth be included in the design and delivery of the Summit of the Future. While youth should be differentiated from future generations, they are capable of supporting thinking in this area and should be engaged as a critical partner. He outlined his work in training children aged 6 - 19 years old in foresight skills in Nigeria and emphasized the need to work with the private sector as young people are the next generation entrepreneurs.

- **Ms. Chelcéé Brathwaite:** Discussed how the SDGs provide a blueprint for safeguarding future generations, underscoring how vulnerable countries benefit the most from successful SDGs' implementation and are likely to represent the largest share of the population of future generations. She discussed the importance of finance, technical assistance in data collection, and models used by [Future Barbados](#) for meaningful youth engagement to jointly shape the future.
- **Mr. Jacob Ellis:** Noted that the needs and interests of future generations will be different to those of today, and that the challenges they face can only be resolved through a multilateral approach, long-term binding commitments and cohesive international framing. At the very least, the status quo is not working, so a Declaration on Future Generations must centre around implementation, accountability and engaging youth in monitoring. Importantly, safeguarding future generations means the development of current generations, without harming future generations.
- **Ms. Xiomara Acevedo Navarro:** Emphasised the shared responsibility to reverse the curve of climate change and biodiversity loss, as the burden disproportionately impacts future generations' development possibilities. Acting on behalf of future generations requires transformational education, a human-rights based approach and intergenerational equity.

Headlines Summary of Member State Discussions

In the discussion, interest was shown to a proposed Envoy for Future Generations and there was a call to consider how the declaration compliments or incorporates existing frameworks and processes, such as the Sendai Framework review, Global Policy Goals and the COPs. Intergenerational equity, including striking a balance between the needs and interests of both younger and older generations, was seen as a central principle for the declaration. In response to concerns raised on whether there was a trade-off in resources to focus on future generations over present generations, it was emphasised that safeguarding future generations entails largely recognizing that the way we develop and address the needs of present generations should not harm the ability of future generations to avail their rights (including those already recognised through the UDHR, and, more recently, for a clean and healthy environment). It was suggested that language on this central principle could be included in the SDG Political Declaration. Regarding timelines, it was further stressed that the focus this year should be on the SDG Summit. At the same time, cases were made both to raise the ambition of the declaration (to be agreed by world leaders in September 2024), and to agree on the declaration well in advance, so that its principles could be implemented in negotiations heading into the September 2024 Summit of the Future.

<i>Synergies with the SDGs</i>	<i>We can think of the SDGs as our duties today toward fulfilling the rights of future generations of tomorrow. The key is to achieve the SDGs without harming future generations. Given the definition of sustainability, the needs and aspirations of present and future generations can be viewed as one and the same. A Declaration on Future Generations will serve to turbocharge the “sustainable” in the Sustainable Development Goals.</i>
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