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Issues Paper on the Intergovernmental Process for the Declaration on Future Generations

Background

During the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, the co-facilitators of the Declaration on Future Generations organized a series of meetings with the UN members and observers in New York. This issues paper attempts to reflect the discussions during these meetings and provides an update on the work conducted on the intergovernmental process for a Declaration on Future Generations.

This process started in June 2022 when the President of the General Assembly of the 76th session appointed the Permanent Representatives of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Fiji as co-facilitators for the Declaration on Future Generations. In the limited time frame of their mandate, the co-facilitators delivered an [elements paper](#) on 9 September 2022. In October 2022 the co-facilitators were reappointed to proceed and in March 2023 the Permanent Representative of Jamaica took over the co-facilitator role, following the departure of the former Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations.

The co-facilitators organized three dialogues on the topic of safeguarding the interests of future generations in March and April. A summary and a recording link for each dialogue was shared and can be found [here](#). After the series of dialogues, the co-facilitators engaged in regional and group consultations to listen to feedback on a [concept note](#) shared in advance.

The co-facilitators took note of a broadly shared sentiment on the importance of addressing our commitment to future generations. The membership made clear that given other imminent processes, including the preparations for the SDG Summit, more time and space was needed to ensure meaningful engagement to negotiate a Declaration on Future Generations. Moreover, it was proposed that the Declaration on Future Generations could be one way to follow up on the outcome of the SDG Summit and therefore having the negotiations after the SDG Summit would provide an opportunity for full alignment with its outcome. After all, taking account of more long term policy considerations will ensure that our decisions today and tomorrow will lead to truly sustainable results that benefit present and future generations.

Significant steps have been taken in the past year to deepen our common understanding on what it means to safeguard the interests of future generations, including by engaging with experts within and outside the UN system. Steps have also been taken to maximize alignment and to streamline the various processes related to the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future. The co-facilitators hope that the groundwork, including this issues paper, on this important topic will support negotiations for a Declaration on Future Generations in the 78th session.

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Guiding Principles for the Declaration on Future Generations

Taking into consideration the perspectives and priorities of Member States in safeguarding the interests of future generations, as well as their commitment to the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN75 Declaration, the co-facilitators envision that the Declaration on Future Generations will be elaborated in accordance with the following guiding principles.

1. In the continued effort to uphold the principles of the UN Charter, in particular the commitment “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, it is necessary to promote international peace and security and full respect for the international rule of law. Within this context, Member States should promote full respect for the principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity.
2. Member States must promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction or discrimination of any kind, thereby preserving the ability for future generations to enjoy these rights and freedoms.
3. Member States have a duty to preserve the ability for future generations to achieve sustainable development, including by effectively eradicating poverty, ensuring that no one is left behind.
4. The achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are crucial for a sustainable future.
5. Multilateralism must be strengthened if we are to create a world that is more equal, more resilient and more sustainable. It is therefore imperative to address the growing inequality within and among countries, to build trust, and foster effective and efficient multilateralism to ensure the future that we want.
6. The survival and prosperity of generations to come are dependent on the sustainability of the planet they will inherit. As such, efforts should be increased to counter environmental threats and address the devastating impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
7. Closing the digital divides, both between and within countries, is essential in order for Member States to maximize the benefits of rapidly advancing technology in their development and to minimize and mitigate the associated risks.
8. Investing in our capacity to better forecast, prepare for and respond to various future global shocks, including by creating the necessary infrastructure, identifying opportunities and avoiding or mitigating risks, is essential to support long term sustainable policy impact.

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9. Our decisions, actions and inactions, today have an intergenerational multiplier effect, such that our conduct today will impact future generations exponentially. Therefore present generations, including youth and children, carry a responsibility towards future generations to act with their interests in mind. The pursuit of intergenerational equity and solidarity requires meaningful engagement and dialogue.

The Way Forward

The co-facilitators bear in mind that the intergovernmental process to determine the scope and elements of the Summit of the Future is ongoing. It is also noted that it is the prerogative of the President of the General Assembly to appoint co-facilitators for intergovernmental processes during the 78th session. The co-facilitators recommend that the text of the Declaration is negotiated in the next session of the General Assembly, as part of the follow up of the SDG Summit and the preparatory process of the Summit of the Future. The co-facilitators feel that the application of the guiding principles embodied in this document will enable the membership to engage in the negotiations of a Declaration on Future Generations in a constructive and efficient manner. The negotiations will take place within a timeline to be determined after the Summit of the Future Ministerial, in close coordination with other related processes.