



**Name of Group:** ECE-RCM (ECE Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism)

**Website:** <https://ece-rcem.eu>

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ECE-RCM is a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of Economic Commission for Europe sub-regions are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG implementation. Against this background, ECE-RCM makes the following inputs and recommendations for the Pact for the Future:

### **Chapeau**

In reaffirming the UN Charter and recalling the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and 2030 Agenda and the three pillars of the United Nations – development, peace and security, and human rights; the commitment to the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions; and the Declaration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN, the ECE Regional Civil Society Mechanism (RCM) calls attention to the extremely worrying ‘shrinking space’ for civil society. This is a global concern, but very prevalent in the ECE region. It undermines government commitments to human rights and imperils the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

### **Recommendation:**

The chapeau in the ‘zero draft’ should recognize the dangers inherent to peace and the sustainability of shrinking space for civil society and include a clear recognition of, and commitment to, the full involvement of civil society in all its diversity, across all ages, in all countries, in all areas for the effective implementation of the Pact for the Future.

### **Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development**

Organizations and individuals in the ECE Region are strongly committed to and wish to emphasize the vital interconnected pillars of the 2030 Agenda. As a region, we are impacted by several simultaneous and interconnected political, economic and social crises, exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic and energy crises, environmental and climate catastrophes, forced migration and the surge of xenophobic, nationalist and far-right populist movements. Limited decent job opportunities, austerity measures and the lack of social protection for people from marginalized groups, have created a complex web of economic and social challenges. This has led to increased inequalities within and between countries, giving rise to a worrisome 'back-sliding' on pivotal issues such as gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, combating ageism and gender-based violence, and decreasing crucial

investments in social protection. The repercussions disproportionately affect women, girls, individuals with disabilities, youth, and older persons, and those in the care economy often unrecognized for the vital work they do. Gender equality and human rights must be highlighted as cross-cutting issues for the development of the Pact for the Future.

**Recommendations:**

- (a) Greater investment in social protection and social protection floors in line with SDG 1, target 3 should be included in the Pact for the Future
- (b) The negative impacts of the rise of populism and xenophobia on human right compliance by member states must be fully addressed.

**Chapter II. International peace and security**

- (i) Without a concerted effort to have sustainable ceasefires and humanitarian support for those affected by war and conflict, now stretching across the region, international peace and security are at risk.

**Recommendations:**

- (a) We call for ceasefires, compliance in all circumstances with international law, and peace negotiations for sustainable living solutions of all peoples and nations.
- (b) We advocate for the expansion of the UN Security Council to include countries from diverse regions, particularly from the Global South. Expansion should align with principles of representation, equity, and commitment to the UN Charter's purposes and principles. The negative effects of the veto power of Permanent Five members should be examined.

- (ii) The region has high and increasing numbers of migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and asylum seekers who experience systematic human rights violations, abuses and intimidation. Instead of supporting civil and economic integration of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees according to the provisions of refugee and international law, they are scapegoated and blamed for national problems, detained and imprisoned and subjected to human rights violations. Communities and organizations of civil society are essential partners to member states in supporting migrants refugees and asylum seekers in their integration.

**Recommendation:**

The Pact for the Future should condemn the scapegoating of asylum seekers, migrants and refugees and recognize the role of civil society in supporting their integration.

**Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation**

Civil society organizations, in all their diversities and across all age groups, together with academia, must be involved in efforts to bridge the digital divide. Their expertise and experiences will enable them to engage in ethical monitoring and ensure that no one is left behind.

**Recommendations:**

- (a) Pact for the Future should include civil society organizations and academia in all aspects of science , technology and innovation and digital cooperation.
- (b) In order to uphold human rights principles and ensuring human control over AI in the Pact for the Future, specific action should be included to foster inclusive governance and digital rights by holding Big Tech accountable for the use of their platforms to spread digital misinformation and hate, which is

impacting public participation and the shrinking space of civil society; and through promoting social dialogue and ICT education.

#### **Chapter IV. Youth and future generations**

(i) Civil society organizations in the UNECE region welcome the elaboration of a Declaration on Future Generations. Ageing is very prevalent with a high percentage of the population in the region over the age of 70 and with life expectancy of 90 plus for women and men. It should also be noted that cities will be home of the majority of older persons and should therefore be age-friendly in their design.

##### **Recommendation**

The Pact for the Future should urge all countries to adapt to the rights and needs of older persons in the formulation and development of health and social services, in the provision of social protection, and the development of cities and housing, educational opportunities and transportation.

(ii) Youth are facing heightened susceptibility to enduring effects of climate change, job insecurity and ecosystem changes. It is fundamental for children and young people as they age that the protection of their welfare, health, and job prospects is given priority through effective age and gender inclusive social and economic policies and regulations grounded in human rights.

##### **Recommendation**

The Pact for the Future should promote lasting resilience based on human rights principles, and affirm the entitlement of present and future generations to inherit a sustainable and livable planet, with recommendations to deliver this in practical and actionable ways in line with the principle of intergenerational equity.

(iii) Civil society organizations in the ECE region can make essential inputs into the Summit of the Future and Pact for the Future negotiations given their specialist experience and knowledge based on their experiences, including those working with marginalized groups, including persons with disability, older persons, Roma, migrants and asylum seekers.

##### **Recommendation:**

The Pact for the Future should fully acknowledge the role of civil society in working with marginalized people and enable them to contribute with their expertise.

#### **Chapter V. Transforming global governance**

(i) ECE RCEM strongly supports the call for the appointment of a Civil Society Envoy to the UN to serve as a focal point and advocate for civil society within the UN system, fostering dialogue and partnerships between civil society and other stakeholders.

##### **Recommendation:**

The Pact for the Future contributes to the development of the framework for the Envoy's clear mandate, adequate resources, and access to all levels of the UN system.

(ii) One lesson that can be learned from progress in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda is that regions move at different speeds in implementing UN programmes, and that they have different priorities. We

face challenges due to rising economic, civil and social inequalities in and between countries. This threatens the vision of the 2030 agenda and world peace.

It is unacceptable that the richest one per cent hold 45.6 percent of global wealth while the poorest half of the world have just 0.75 per cent.<sup>1</sup> We need to move away from looking at progress through the limited lens of economic growth and GDP, and shift to a progress assessment through the values of the 'wellbeing economy' that fully recognizes care work, challenges stereotypical gender roles and values and prioritizes citizen participation and inclusion.

Transforming global governance requires strengthening and give voice to regional organizations including regional-based civil society organizations to ensure greater cooperation, best practice sharing and political, financial and technical expertise to address present and rising inequalities.

#### **Recommendation:**

The Pact for the Future give its support for redistributive economic justice through universal social protection, fair taxes, efforts to tackle tax evasion, the lifting of crippling debt servicing and building stronger and accountable public institutions that are more resilient to corruption, and engage with civil society organizations at national and regional level.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfam 'Survival of the richest' January 2023