



National Peace Corps Association

<http://peacecorpsconnect.org>

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2024 Pact for the Future

Written inputs for the zero-draft of the Pact for the Future

Chapeau

The National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) of the United States represents a community of people who have dedicated years of their lives to community-level partnerships in pursuit of sustainable development projects. What distinguishes our shared values is the Peace Corps model of sustainable development through community-level partnerships that represent all members of the affected community.

To get the Sustainable Development Goals back on track, and ensure robust action to address the needs of communities around the world, it is imperative that the actions of all member states meet certain fundamental criteria:

- **Respect for indigenous populations.** All countries have diverse populations, with both majority and minority groups in need of support. Governments must make it a priority to work with all indigenous communities in the planning and execution of development projects to ensure no group is left behind.
- **Inclusivity of all genders, age groups, sexual orientation and disability status.** Similarly to the above, development efforts must address the needs of all communities, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation and disability status. Auditing and monitoring of the recipients of aid must ensure that all groups are represented.
- **Forward-thinking.** Efforts to work with populations in need must be made with an eye to the future. With rapid changes in technology and the digital economy creating new opportunities for less-developed countries, it is critical that aid programs be forward-facing, leveraging mobile and digital technology to connect people to financing and partnerships beyond their communities to speed up access to the global community.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

For development efforts to be truly sustainable, they must involve local communities throughout the planning and implementation process. Partnering with communities to identify their distinct needs and enlist local expertise is critical to giving those impacted by these policies the ownership necessary to ensure they become self-sustaining.

It is not enough to work only with government representatives to ensure that financing of development programs is distributed in appropriate ways. We challenge all member states to make commitments to working with indigenous and local groups to define priorities for which projects to finance and how to best allocate budgets for this work.

Robust monitoring and record-keeping of those involved in decision-making will help ensure transparency around how investment decisions have been made.

Chapter II. International peace and security

The foundation of lasting peace and security is the recognition of the fundamental equality and rights of all human beings, no matter the color of their skin, ethnic background, gender identity, sexual orientation or other characteristic. So much conflict stems from the dehumanization of those viewed as “other” and therefore less worthy of dignity and respect.

Some of the fundamental documents of the United Nations do not reflect this core belief in the inherent equality of all persons, and we see a significant opportunity to show leadership in this important area.

For example, member states must revise the language in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be gender neutral, such as in Article 1, where the term “brotherhood” should be replaced with “fellowship” or “camaraderie” and all the following articles with his and he, should be expressed with the more inclusive and neutral they/them/their pronouns.

All such documents must be revised, and those revisions publicized to reinforce the UN’s commitment to the inherent equality of all people.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

Connectivity is a crucial enabler of so many forms of sustainable development - by empowering educational efforts, connections to far-off communities and access to tools that help people turn their ideas into reality. For this reason it is imperative that all countries make digital connectivity a priority, and one not limited to major population centers.

Communities in all areas can benefit from access to the internet, through cell phones or computers, and this must be viewed as critical infrastructure for development.

All efforts to connect populations must also be accompanied by educational efforts to ensure all people are aware of how to take advantage of the many opportunities created by digital cooperation and access to learning networks that support innovation and basic knowledge of science and technology.

Critically, the UN system must ensure that nobody is left behind in the current technological revolution, and that digital connectivity is viewed as a fundamental human right.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

The more than 240,000 returned Peace Corps volunteers tend to share a common experience of having worked closely with youth throughout their service. As the guardians of the future and representations of the hopes of their entire communities, young people are a central stakeholder in any and all conversations around sustainable development. We strongly urge all member states to put youth at the center, with several specific recommendations to achieve this:

- Align UN initiatives with the Generation Equality Forum's Young Feminist Manifesto to advance global gender equality and intersectional justice. Prioritize inclusive environments, encourage co-leadership, and enable co-creation across diverse generations. Emphasize the significance of young feminist leadership, challenge age-related biases, and advocate for genuine involvement in decision-making processes.
- Create materials to promote awareness about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda in secondary schools globally to instill a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness and importance of human rights and sustainable development principles from an early age.
- Adopt intersectional and intergenerational approaches across all policy domains, fostering inclusive participation among children, adolescents, youth, and older individuals. This can be done through adaptable participation methods and good documentation to provide easily accessible information.
- Encourage inclusive participation through educational programs to cultivate societies that universally prioritize both human rights and sustainable development. Empower grassroots individuals and connect global efforts in human rights and sustainable development with emerging local initiatives, emphasizing localization. This involves strengthening trained local personnel and empowering communities.

Chapter V. Transforming global governance

While the United Nations system is a valuable forum for global governance, and has consistently involved non-state actors in its operations, more needs to be done to engage non-governmental groups throughout the world to ensure that all parties have a say in multinational initiatives to address the sustainable development goals.

Most importantly, there needs to be a sustained effort to include indigenous groups in the work of the UN, as these groups are often not represented in the composition and decision making of their own national governments. As key agents of change and innovative solutions to local problems, the UN must do more to include such communities in policy discussions.

It is also important to expand the involvement of civil society, undertaking a comprehensive restructuring of civil society engagement within the UN framework that elevates key representatives to observer status across diverse UN bodies.

We also support the advancement of current proposals to appoint a high-level UN Civil Society Envoy, whose pivotal role would involve facilitating focal point coordination and establishing best practices to elevate civil society involvement throughout the UN system.