

Stakeholder Forum

FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Vurehout 373 • 1507 EC Zaandam • NL & 2 The Links •
Herne Bay • Kent • CT6 7GQ • UK e:
info@stakeholderforum.org • www.stakeholderforum.org

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<https://stakeholderforum.org/>

Focal Person: Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Senior Adviser.

jgstrandenaes@gmail.com

Chapeau

A Preamble/Chapeau to the Pact of the Future

The Summit of the Future must have a strong, credible and optimistic message for the Future. The proposed content for the Pact of the Future contains five thematic chapters and two declarations – one on the Digital Compact and one on the Future Generations. Our submissions contain general ideas and references to basic principles that must penetrate the entire Pact of the Future. We also have a focus on the preambular text, the Chapeau.

Though cautious we may feel forced to be, and conscious of the stark demands of reality, we owe it to ourselves and future generations to open the Pact of the Future with a strong, heartfelt and honest preambular text expressing our hopes for a better future for all living species. A strong Chapeau sets the tone of what is to be the content of the Pact of the Future. The introduction must express our ambitions, our aspirations and our hopes for a better world, including the fact that this is possible to do if we act differently.

A key legacy of the UN is building aspirations and hope for humanity, engendering optimism, and creating a belief that tomorrow will be better than today, and vastly better than yesterday. Such sentiments are ingrained in the pantheon of UN documents, of which the most important ones are introduced by inspirational and convincing preambular texts. These documents have been written at watershed moments in time. Key examples are the preambular texts of the UN Charter itself, with its momentous and all-inclusive opening words – ‘We, the peoples’¹; the solemn preamble of the Declaration of the Human Rights², once and for all defining just freedom is another; the SG’s report “In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all” stating in the introduction that “we have it in our power to pass on to our children a brighter inheritance than that bequeathed to any previous generation” is yet a third

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>

² <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

example of the importance of the Chapeau. A final example is the “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”³ which gave us a blueprint to save the world.

These and other documents have expressed hope and sustained our belief that a better world is possible. The Pact of the Future cannot be less ambitious.

The Principle of no-regression.

The UN today represents an amassed global knowledge, developed through more than 80 years of multilateral collaboration. Efforts have been constantly made to improve the lives of humanity and protect the world from ruin, and member states have agreed to these efforts. Thus, the principle of no-regression from these agreements must be expressed and done so already in the Chapeau to the Pact.

Strengthening the entire UN family

The entire UN family should also be strengthened to deliver a stronger implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This also depends in part on an improved operationalisation of the core principles of that agreement - universality, indivisibility/interlinkages, integrated approaches, participation, inclusion/LNOB, partnerships. Each of the five chapters while emphasising and involving civil society and non-state stakeholder engagement should also be guided by these principles.

Ideas to be reflected in the various chapters.

In line with our statement, made at the December 13, 2023 hearing on the Pact of the Future, and speaking for a vast number of civil society and non-state organisations, we would reiterate a number of ideas that should be included in the Pact. These ideas are not new by any means. What will be new, will be a commitment to respect and implement these earlier agreements. Therefore these ‘truths’ must be reiterated.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

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- No weakening or delinking of nature-based solutions from sustainable development and well-being for all or slowing down on our ambitions to restore the world’s climate to normal levels including safeguarding the oceans and the global biodiversity. As a complete implementation of the 2030 Agenda only requires ca 4-5% of the global GDP, it is by all means an affordable activity, it simply lacks a total decision to act on all the 17 SDGs. Hence adequate funding for this must be provided.

³ A/Res/70.1

- It is imperative that the Pact recognizes the vital importance of the SDGs-agenda to address interconnected challenges and find ways to streamline the use of the entire SDGs framework and its interlinkages in all relevant issue areas.

Chapter II. International peace and security.

- No weakening or delinking of financial and political support, or of government participation in and with respect for multilateral institutions. A direct reference to the completion of the Quintet of Change for the UN must be stated.
- Decision makers control the future, often with horrible results. By their decisions people everywhere, including thousands of children, have been killed in presently ongoing wars. Their future ended yesterday. The future we talk about in the Pact, must be a future with no wars or armed conflicts.
- The Secretary-General of the UN must be given adequate resources and widened powers to work to build peace and forestall conflicts. Peace, developing security and human rights are the three pillars of the United Nations. The UN with the member states must work across these three pillars, and this integrated approach must be strengthened. The Peacebuilding Commission should be strengthened, and the Responsibility to Protect not be undermined. Peace-building, peacekeeping, Human Rights and humanitarian aid through the UN must be strengthened in terms of resources, implementation and political decisions.

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

- The future of sustainable development could end in 2030 – should we fail to achieve the SDGs, stop global warming and phase out all fossil fuels. Education for all, independent research, independent science, all based on transparency, accountability and freedom must be respected, including in the formation and dissemination of knowledge and information. Truths and facts must be defended at all costs. Understanding and protecting this is a guarantee for meaningful and sustained innovation, which will contribute to meaningful solutions.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations.

- Principles related to inter-generational solutions should be integrated into the Pact. Treating youth with respect and without patronising approaches or symbolic involvement of youth is paramount. Former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan expressed this well at a youth conference in the year 2000 when he said: “No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.”

Chapter V. Transforming global governance.

- No weakening or delinking of rights for all, of freedom, of justice, equality, participation, access, or of transparency at all levels. Continued adherence to the UN Charter and international law, implementation of the 1966 Human Rights Covenants, all MEAs and the 2030 Agenda is a minimum. Respect and support, political and financial, of the International Court of Justice, at the Hague, must be strengthened. Protecting, supporting and financing civil society as a foundation for democracy must be understood and continued.
- A successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda approach to sustainable development is preconditioned by the integration of the principles of good governance including a strengthened UN.

A global digital compact must contain language and understanding to the effect that the private sphere and a person's individual rights, are always respected and protected. Democracies must govern the future of the digital world with equal access and usability for all. The overarching purpose pertaining to this development must be strengthening democracy, protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development. Unbridled development and exploration by market forces of the digital world will ultimately undermine democracy as we know it.

In conclusion

Understanding the future is always complicated. Different futures are today elements of far-reaching plans. Ascertaining predictability, as an important element of the future, must never jeopardise basic democratic principles, the protection of the environment including climate, and basic rights enshrined in the legacy of the UN. Shortcuts to the future are destined to undermine it.

The challenges we face are incapsulated in the following quote:

“Informed tolerance toward our total legacy is a necessary condition of enhancing the present and enabling the future.”⁴

For Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future
Jan-Gustav Strandenaes
December 30, 2023

⁴ David Lowenthal «The Past is a Foreign Country - Revisited», Cambridge University Press, 2015