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# **Consulting Civil Society: CSO Inputs to the Informal Ad-Hoc Working Group on the UN80 Initiative**

**Compiled by the Coalition for the UN We Need (C4UN)**

## **1. Introduction**

On November 5th 2025, The Co-Chairs of the Informal Ad-Hoc Working Group on Workstream II of the UN80 Initiative, Ambassador Carolyn Schwalger, Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations and Ambassador Brian Wallace, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations, convened a hybrid consultation with civil society, co-hosted by the Coalition for the UN We Need (C4UN). They also provided an opportunity for civil society to contribute written inputs to inform their deliberations on mandate creation, implementation, and review. Collectively, the Co-Chairs have received over twenty written submissions from civil society, representing a diverse range of stakeholders. These include organisations working on disability rights, women's and girls' rights, child rights, science and academic communities, development finance, as well as mandate monitoring and evaluation experts. This broad participation underscores the importance of a fully inclusive approach to strengthening the United Nations mandate system. This report synthesizes the key recommendations from civil society on the UN mandate lifecycle: how mandates are created, how they are implemented, and how they are reviewed and evaluated. The purpose is to inform and guide the ongoing discussions on Workstream II of the UN80 Initiative.

The report is structured according to the three phases of the mandate lifecycle: mandate creation, mandate implementation, and mandate review. In each section, technical recommendations from civil society inputs are clearly presented, good practices are identified, and key concerns or priorities are highlighted. Cross-cutting themes, including gender equality, disability inclusion, child rights, balance between the three pillars, evidence-based decision-making, adequate funding, localization, participation, and the responsible use of technologies, are integrated throughout. Taken together, these civil society perspectives offer a forward-looking agenda and a set of guiding principles to help Member States strengthen the mandate system for the future.

Overall, civil society contributors commend the UN80 Initiative's focus on improving mandate processes, stressing that a more streamlined and effective mandate system is essential for the UN and its Member States to deliver. At the same time, they caution that efficiency-driven reforms must not come at the expense of inclusivity or impact. Every mandate represents a commitment, often to vulnerable populations or more broadly to address critical global issues. When mandates go unfunded, under-resourced, or unimplemented they represent unfulfilled promises, which undermines trust in the entire system. Thus reforms should enhance, rather than undermine, the UN's ability to uphold peace and security, development, and human rights. This report captures that balance of ambition and caution, as voiced by civil society, and frames a constructive path forward.

## **2. Mandate Creation**

Civil society inputs emphasize that improving how mandates are designed and adopted can significantly reduce inefficiencies and duplication across the UN system. With

thousands of active mandates in play, stakeholders state that a more strategic and transparent approach to creating new mandates will help maximize relevance and impact. They also note the importance of ensuring that new mandates align with core UN standards and are equipped with the resources and data needed for success. Below are the key recommendations and observations from civil society regarding the mandate creation phase:

- 2.1. A consistent recommendation is to establish a comprehensive, public registry of mandates.** Such a registry would catalogue all existing mandate texts across the UN system and be accessible to all stakeholders. By providing full visibility of the mandate landscape, this tool would help identify overlaps and synergies before new mandates are proposed. Civil society groups point out that better information sharing could prevent duplicate resolutions on similar issues in different forums. A robust due diligence process should be in place whenever a new mandate is drafted, including an analysis of potential overlaps with existing mandates and how the proposed mandate fills a genuine gap. This coherence check is crucial given the interconnected nature of many issues. For example, a mandate addressing child protection may also relate to education, health, or climate change, among other issues. Early mapping of these connections could help to craft mandates that complement rather than duplicate each other.
- 2.2. Contributors call for mandate creation to be grounded in data, scientific evidence, and demonstrated needs.** They welcome proposals to use comprehensive and disaggregated data collection and analysis to inform mandate drafting. By increasing the use of science and factual evidence, mandates can be made more relevant to contemporary challenges. For instance, scientific stakeholders recommend creating an institutionalized science-policy interface for the UN General Assembly, acting as a mechanism to provide Member States with up-to-date scientific findings and expert advice as they negotiate new mandates. This would ensure that decisions on complex global issues, from climate change to pandemic response to governance of technology, are informed by the best available knowledge. Civil society also suggests that each new mandate resolution include a short “value-added explanation”, outlining how it relates to and differs from existing mandates, what specific problem it addresses, and how it will be implemented. This practice, akin to an explanatory memorandum, would improve clarity of purpose and avoid mandates being adopted for political symbolism without practical feasibility. Mandates should be crafted based on clear problem analysis, evidence of what works, and anticipation of future trends, rather than political expediency alone.
- 2.3. A strong cross-cutting message is that mandate creation processes should systematically include the voices of those who will be affected by or involved in implementing the mandates.** Inclusive stakeholder engagement, consulting a diverse range of civil society, community representatives, and UN entities, during the design of mandates, is seen as

critical to making mandates effective. For example, disability rights advocates stress that organizations of persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups should have opportunities to provide input when mandates related to their rights or needs are being developed. Similarly, women's and girls' rights groups urge that women's and girls' perspectives be integrated from the outset in mandates across all topics, not only those explicitly about gender. Child rights organizations note that children and youth, who represent one third of humanity, are rarely consulted in mandate design, and call for meaningful child and youth participation mechanisms as part of UN decision-making. Civil society suggests practical measures such as holding open hearings or informal dialogues with experts and grassroots actors before finalizing a mandate text. This participatory approach would improve the relevance and buy-in of mandates. It also reflects a broader principle of "nothing about us without us." Those whom a mandate is meant to serve or who have specialist knowledge should have a say in its formulation. In addition, consultations must be accessible and inclusive. Stakeholders emphasize providing information in multiple languages and formats, including accessible formats for people with disabilities, and creating safe spaces so that a wide variety of voices can freely contribute.

- 2.4. Civil society unanimously agrees that mandates should explicitly uphold the UN's foundational values and commitments.** In practice, this means embedding human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion, and child rights as core criteria in mandate design. One recommendation is to apply existing mainstreaming frameworks during the creation of mandates. For instance, child rights advocates point to the Secretary-General's Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming and urge that any new mandate be checked against how well it promotes and protects children's rights across the UN's pillars. Women's and girls' rights groups similarly argue that gender analysis should be mandatory in drafting mandates, with every mandate, whether on climate, development, or peace, should consider impacts on women and girls and include gender-responsive actions. Disability-focused organizations caution against treating disability as an afterthought or a sub-category of vulnerable populations. Instead, mandates should incorporate specific attention to persons with disabilities in objectives and indicators. By putting these rights-based considerations at the center of mandate language, Member States can ensure the UN's work contributes to equity and "leaving no one behind" from the very start. Moreover, against the broader backdrop of the UN80 Initiative, civil society urges that efficiency efforts must not weaken mandates that are essential for delivery. Rather, new mandates should be bold in advancing progress and reform discussions should strengthen, not roll back, specialized mandates in these domains.
- 2.5. A persistent concern is the common practice of adopting mandates "within existing resources",** without allocating new funding or staff to carry them out. Members of the development finance civil society community and

others note that this practice often leads to mandates that are born underfunded, creating strain and setting the UN up for under-performance. To address this, they recommend that mandates include clear and realistic indications of resource needs, including financial, human, and technical resources, and that Member States commit to meeting those needs. One concrete idea is that when a new mandate is proposed in the General Assembly, it should come with a brief statement of budget implications and sources of financing, reviewed alongside the mandate by the CPC, ACABQ, Fifth Committee, and other relevant bodies. The point stressed here by civil society is that if a mandate is truly important, then Member States must be willing to invest in it. Otherwise, adding tasks without resources only reduces overall efficiency. Some civil society contributors suggest tightening the existing procedure where the UN budget process, via Program Budget Implications (PBIs), must acknowledge new mandates. Rather than bypassing this with “no budgetary implications” language, mandates could be delayed for approval until a corresponding resource plan is agreed. In parallel, transparency tools like an accessible “Budget in Brief” for the UN or a system-wide mandate funding tracker are proposed, so that stakeholders can see how dues and contributions are being allocated to mandates. This would help build public trust that mandates are not empty promises but are backed by investments. Finally, disability and human rights groups add a caution that if Member States decide to stop creating mandates without secured funding, they must still find ways to support emerging or neglected issues. Important global agendas might initially lack earmarked funds. Civil society warns that these should not be abandoned in the name of efficiency, because today’s unfunded priority could become tomorrow’s essential program. Instead, the focus should be on mobilizing resources for such priorities, including through innovative financing or reallocation, rather than avoiding the mandates altogether.

- 2.6. Civil society inputs highlighted some good practices and principles that could guide Member States.** One principle is co-sponsorship and coordination among UN entities for cross-cutting mandates. For example, if a new thematic mandate spans multiple agencies’ expertise, designing it from the start with joint leadership or shared implementation roles can prevent siloization later. This might involve two or more UN entities co-authoring a proposal and sharing accountability for its delivery. Another good practice is adopting sunrise criteria for new mandates, essentially, setting clear objectives and success indicators at the time of mandate creation, which will later be used to evaluate it. Some submissions even suggest that each mandate resolution should specify when and how the mandate will be reviewed, thereby centering accountability into the creation phase. Mandates that include such forward-looking provisions encourage a culture of continuous improvement.

Civil society welcomes the emphasis placed by the UN80 co-facilitators on principles like inclusion, flexibility, and transparency in mandate creation. Stakeholders encourage Member States to formally endorse these principles as guidelines for negotiating



resolutions. The creation of mandates should mitigate the political elements of the exercise to become a more evidence-informed, consultative, and design-thinking process, one that asks at the outset “How will this mandate deliver meaningful impact, and how will we know?” In doing so, the UN can avoid proliferation of redundant mandates and instead create ones that are strategic, well-resourced, and aligned with the needs of the people they intend to serve.

### 3. Mandate Implementation

Once mandates are established, the focus shifts to how they are implemented and delivered on the ground. Civil society submissions point out that even a well-crafted mandate can falter if implementation is weak or fragmented. Many existing mandates struggle with exactly this. Reports are not being utilized, programs operate in silos, or activities stall due to lack of capacity or coordination. Workstream II’s aim of strengthening mandate implementation is therefore welcomed by civil society, who provide concrete ideas to enhance effectiveness during this phase. A recurring theme is that the UN needs to break out of insular and Headquarter-driven ways of working, and instead adopt more collaborative, flexible, and locally grounded approaches to fulfill mandates. Key recommendations and observations on mandate implementation include:

- 3.1. **Civil society emphasizes that better coordination is essential for mandates to deliver results.** Often, multiple UN entities work on different aspects of a similar issue. Without clear coordination, this can lead to redundancy or gaps. To address this, it is recommended to establish optimal arrangements for inter-agency collaboration on mandate implementation, learning from the best practices of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) operative in humanitarian settings. When a mandate is relevant to several entities, a lead or convening mechanism should be dedicated to ensure information flows and efforts are aligned. Some civil society experts propose a “co-sponsorship model” in implementation. Rather than each agency implementing a piece of a mandate in isolation, relevant entities would form an implementation task force, pool resources where feasible, and present joint progress updates. Such models have precedent in initiatives like the Global Migration Compact, where multiple agencies coordinate through a network. Additionally, UN Country Teams (UNCTs) are encouraged to play a bigger role in coordination at the national level. A suggestion is for UNCTs, under Resident Coordinators, to convene national multi-stakeholder forums for each major mandate active in that country, inviting Member State representatives, civil society, and different UN actors to coordinate activities, set complementary targets, and avoid working at cross-purposes. Improved coordination is not only a matter of efficiency but of credibility. As one submission noted, communities lose trust when different UN actors deliver inconsistent messages or services under what should be a unified UN mandate. By presenting a more coherent “One UN” front in implementation, mandates stand a better chance of achieving their intended outcomes.

- 3.2. A clear message from civil society is that they do not wish to remain mere observers, rather, civil society organizations (CSOs) should be treated as partners in mandate implementation.** Many CSOs, including grassroots community groups, NGOs, and coalitions, have on-the-ground presence, expertise, and established relationships that can complement UN efforts. For example, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) often have a deep understanding of how to reach and empower people living with disabilities in various countries, making them invaluable partners for implementing a disability-inclusive development mandate. Women's rights groups, likewise, are essential in implementing gender equality mandates and ensuring that programs genuinely reach women and girls. Civil society recommends that UN implementation plans formally incorporate roles for CSOs, through consultative committees, rights-based public-private partnerships, or sub-granting mechanisms that allow local actors to execute parts of UN mandates. There are already good practices in fields such as peacebuilding projects where local peace committees, composed of community leaders and civil society, work alongside UN peacekeepers or mediators. These models should be expanded. Moreover, civil society should be involved not just in delivering services but also in monitoring implementation progress. Several submissions call for community-based monitoring or social audits to be integrated, wherein communities regularly assess how a mandate's activities are affecting them and provide feedback. This participatory approach would make implementation more responsive and accountable. Mandate implementation should, therefore, be a multi-stakeholder endeavor by design, leveraging the comparative strengths of civil society, academia, the private sector, local authorities, and government, in partnership with UN agencies.
- 3.3. Many stakeholders highlight localization as a pivotal reform priority in mandate implementation.** Localization means shifting power, decision-making, and resources closer to the people and communities a mandate serves. Civil society notes that too often UN mandates are implemented in a top-down fashion, with initiatives conceived at Headquarters and only minimal adaptation to local contexts. To change this, they recommend empowering field offices and local partners with greater authority and funding. Concretely, this could involve decentralizing certain UN resources to regional or country levels, so that field teams can hire needed expertise or extend program coverage in line with local realities. It also means listening to local knowledge, for example, child rights-focused NGOs stress that local child protection agencies and youth-led groups should help shape how a child-related mandate is rolled out in their country, since they know the cultural and social dynamics best. Best practice standards for localization should guide these efforts. Civil society suggests criteria such as engaging local civil society and community leaders in planning and budgeting, ensuring materials and communications are translated into local languages, adapting global mandate indicators to reflect country-specific baselines, and directly funding local organizations as implementers or

sub-contractors. A recurring point is the need to recognize and trust local expertise. Mandates will have a more lasting impact if they build the capacity of local actors and institutions, rather than creating parallel structures that vanish when a project ends. Some submissions reference positive examples, such as community-driven development programs where communities themselves decide how to use small grants in line with a UN mandate's objectives, leading to greater ownership and sustainability. In humanitarian contexts too, the importance of local responders is emphasized. Mandates in disaster relief or conflict situations should prioritize working through local NGOs and volunteers whenever possible, strengthening resilience. Civil society is calling for a UN that delivers as close to the people as possible. This means rethinking implementation models to be bottom-up, culturally sensitive, and driven by those with the most at stake.

- 3.4. A major implementation challenge identified is the inflexibility and fragmentation of funding.** Civil society groups observe that many UN mandates, especially in development and humanitarian work, are funded through tightly earmarked donor contributions that limit how money can be used. This can impede a holistic approach to implementation, whereby agencies might focus only on the deliverables tied to specific funding streams, rather than the broader mandate outcomes. To address this, it is recommended to align financing more closely with mandate objectives and to increase the share of flexible funding. One proposal is for Member States and donors to expand pooled funding mechanisms or trust funds dedicated to integrated mandate delivery, where resources can be allocated across agencies and activities as needed to meet the overall goals. Another suggestion is to tie donor funding to efficiency and collaboration incentives. For instance, donors could commit more core or softly earmarked funds to agencies that demonstrate joint work or have reformed their operations for greater impact. Monitoring and evaluation networks note that efficiency measures, such as shared services or cost savings, should explicitly free up resources that can be reinvested in program delivery rather than returning to treasuries. Also important is predictability of funding. Multi-year funding commitments enable stable implementation plans, whereas short-term funding leads to stop-start project cycles that undermine results. Civil society working within the financing for development arena underscore that mandates aimed at systemic issues require sustained investments. Piecemeal funding not only slows progress but can distort priorities on the ground. Adequate funding must also extend to often under-resourced mandate components such as data collection, monitoring, and capacity building, which are essential for long-term success. Member States are urged to match mandates with means. The political will to approve a mandate should be accompanied by the financial means to implement it effectively.
- 3.5. As the UN implements mandates in an era of budget constraints, civil society warns against across-the-board cuts that inadvertently cripple mandate delivery.** True efficiency reforms are those that cut bureaucratic



overhead while boosting field-level delivery and knowledge. Monitoring and evaluation experts have observed a risk of “mandate narrowing by attrition,” where funding pressures lead agencies to quietly drop activities or expertise areas that are actually vital to mandates, especially to normative and oversight functions. For example, if budget cuts reduce the number of human rights or gender officers and policy advisers in the field, a mandate’s impact on institutional reform or rights protection may decline, even if the mandate formally still exists. To prevent this, civil society recommends that any efficiency or downsizing measures be strategically managed with mandate goals in mind. Member States should demand evidence from UN entities that core capacities, such as gender experts, disability inclusion advisors, conflict analysts, or monitoring and evaluation specialists, are being protected even as agencies streamline. Efficiency exercises should be guided by clear criteria that prioritize retaining functions directly tied to mandate results. Redeployment of staff to lower-cost duty stations can be useful, however, decisions must account for maintaining expertise and institutional memory. Civil society stresses that efficiency should not mean hollowing out the very expertise that makes mandates meaningful. They call for protecting what they term the “last mile” of mandate implementation, the interface where UN staff and partners engage with communities, as this is where real-world change happens.

- 3.6. Through their submissions, civil society groups shared a number of positive practices that have led to effective mandate implementation, urging that these be learned from and replicated.** One such practice is the use of integrated planning and review mechanisms. For instance, several contributors praised the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as a model where concrete targets and a unified monitoring system have driven coherent action across agencies and countries on disaster risk mandates. Another good practice cited is social dialogue and community engagement as a standard feature of implementing mandates in areas such as labor rights, health, or urban development. When implementing a mandate on improving labor standards, for example, involving trade unions, employers, and workers in dialogue has proven to create more buy-in and practical solutions, a lesson that could be applied to many other mandates. Civil society also encourages the UN to build on pilot programs that showed success. For example, if a particular approach to localizing humanitarian aid, such as empowering a local disaster management committee, worked well in one context, the UN should consider institutionalizing that approach and resourcing it under relevant mandates elsewhere. Furthermore, knowledge-sharing across UN entities is vital. Learning from what works, and what doesn’t, in mandate implementation should be a continuous process. Civil society stands ready to contribute their grassroots knowledge into these learning loops. They also suggest that the UN make greater use of south-south and triangular cooperation in mandate delivery, meaning countries or communities that have successfully tackled an issue can mentor others, with the UN facilitating such exchanges. This peer-learning approach can sometimes achieve more lasting

change than external technical assistance. Finally, it was noted that some mandates have benefitted from innovative technologies in their implementation, for example, geospatial mapping to monitor deforestation under an environmental mandate, or mobile phone surveys to gather real-time feedback in development projects. Civil society urges the UN to embrace such innovations more broadly, as long as they are used responsibly.

- 3.7. Many civil society inputs recognize the potential of new and emerging technologies, including data analytics, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms, among others, to improve mandate implementation.** They suggest that digital tools can streamline reporting and enhance transparency. For instance, creating shared digital dashboards for mandates could allow Member States and the public to track progress in real time. Such dashboards make it easier to spot delays or duplications and can improve accountability. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning could also help in implementation by synthesizing large volumes of UN documentation and research to inform decision-makers, or by helping predict emerging needs. However, civil society voices strongly emphasize responsible use and safeguards in employing technology. They warn that algorithms can inadvertently perpetuate bias or exclude those with limited digital access and connectivity. Any technological solution must be developed with human rights and inclusion in mind. As one disability rights organization stated, if AI tools are used in managing the mandate lifecycle, they must be audited to ensure they are accessible, for example, compatible with assistive technologies, and do not discriminate against persons with disabilities or other marginalized groups. Additionally, technology should support, not replace, human judgment and local knowledge. Decisions on mandate implementation often involve complex social dynamics that no algorithm can fully grasp, making human oversight crucial. Civil society suggests investing in building UN staff capacity to use new technologies effectively, training personnel to interpret data analytics or to manage digital engagement platforms, so that the benefits of innovation are widely shared across the system. Partnerships with academia, technological companies, or open-source communities can also be pursued to develop tailored tools for the UN. These partnerships must be governed by clear ethical and human rights standards, and public-interest orientation, ensuring, for instance, that data privacy is respected and that the UN's neutrality is not compromised by private partners. Thus, innovation can be a force-multiplier for mandate implementation if harnessed prudently. It can free up staff time and capacity, reveal patterns for effective interventions, and connect the UN more directly with communities. Civil society is largely optimistic about these possibilities, while reminding that a people-centered and rights-respecting approach must anchor any technological enhancement to the UN's work.

Civil society's reform proposals for mandate implementation revolve around making the UN system more collaborative, field-focused, and accountable to the people it serves.

They envision implementation modalities where UN agencies act less like isolated silos and more like components of a cohesive whole, working in true partnership with civil society and communities. They also stress that without the right resources and flexibility, even the best-intended mandates will fall short.

In sum, Member States can greatly enhance the effectiveness and credibility of UN mandates on the ground by adopting these recommendations, which pertain to:

- strengthening coordination;
- embracing inclusivity and localization;
- securing proper funding;
- protecting critical capacities;
- scaling up proven practices; and
- and innovating responsibly.

The ultimate test of any mandate is whether it delivers tangible improvements in people's lives; according to civil society, this requires the UN to implement mandates in a way that is nimble, inclusive, and centered on impact rather than bureaucracy.

## 4. Mandate Review

The final phase of the mandate lifecycle is review and evaluation, which determines whether mandates remain relevant and are achieving results, and informs decisions about their continuation or adjustment. Civil society contributors strongly endorse the importance of this phase, noting that historically the UN has struggled with systematically reviewing mandates. Many mandates continue indefinitely without rigorous assessment, while others may lapse without learning from their successes or limitations. A more robust monitoring, review, and evaluation system is seen as key to ensuring accountability and continuous improvement in the mandate landscape. Civil society's recommendations aim to reinforce mandate review mechanisms and strengthen the UN's accountability for impact. They also promote the idea that review processes themselves must be inclusive, transparent, and oriented towards learning, not just auditing. The following are the major points raised on mandate review and evaluation:

- 4.1. One of the clearest recommendations is that every mandate should have a built-in schedule for review.** Civil society suggests adopting a two-tier review cycle which. First, a light annual or biennial review to capture early signals, and to check if implementation is on track, if any duplication with new initiatives is emerging, or if context changes are affecting the mandate. Second, a more comprehensive review every 3 to 5 years that evaluates performance and continued relevance in depth. By formalizing such review points, the UN would move away from the ad hoc or politically driven reviews of the past. Contributors cite as a good example the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the human rights system which operates on a fixed cycle and ensures every country's human rights situation, a form of mandate, is reviewed regularly with broad input. A similar ethos could be applied to mandates. Knowing that a

mandate will definitely be assessed at set intervals creates an incentive for implementation and for Member States to remain engaged beyond just adopting the resolution. During comprehensive reviews, Member States can decide to renew, adjust, merge, increase resources, or terminate mandates based on evidence. This ties into another proposal of introducing “sunset clauses” or sunset provisions for mandates. A sunset clause means a mandate would expire after a certain period unless explicitly renewed. Civil society sees this as a way to prevent mandates from simply carrying on by inertia. However, they also caution that the goal is not to arbitrarily cut mandates, but to ensure mandates are meaningful. If an expiring mandate is still valuable, the review should lead to its renewal with updates, whereas if it’s obsolete or ineffective, it can be phased out. The key is that these decisions should be driven by data and evaluation, not by political deals or neglect.

- 4.2. Effective review depends on substantive monitoring during implementation.** Civil society calls for improved results monitoring systems that generate the information needed for meaningful evaluations. This includes developing better indicators that measure outcomes, not just activities, collecting disaggregated data to see who is benefiting, and who is not, while tracking follow-up to past mandate recommendations. One frequent observation is that current UN reporting tends to focus on outputs, such as the number of meetings held or reports published, which do not by themselves show real-world impact. Instead, evaluation metrics should focus on outcomes and impacts, such as changes in policy, improvements in social conditions, or the experiences of affected populations. For example, if a mandate is about advancing disability inclusion, the review should examine evidence like how many UN programs adopted disability-accessible practices or how policies in countries changed due to the mandate’s influence, not just count the pages of a report. Civil society also underscores the need for transparent and accessible reporting. All progress reports and evaluation findings related to mandates should be made easily available to Member States and the public in user-friendly formats. A suggestion is to create an online dashboard or repository for mandate performance data, which could be part of the aforementioned mandate registry. This transparency would enable external stakeholders to help monitor and hold the system accountable. Additionally, some submissions propose modernizing the way results are measured by incorporating qualitative feedback and stories of change, which can capture nuances that quantitative indicators miss. In this vein, the use of independent evaluators is encouraged, for instance, involving academia or third-party evaluators to provide an objective assessment of a mandate’s effectiveness. Data and evidence must underpin the review process, which are key to supporting transparency and accountability of mandates. Therefore, investing in better data systems, including possibly using big data or AI to analyze trends, is seen as an essential part of mandate review reform.

- 4.3. A powerful theme across civil society inputs is that those outside of government should have a formal role in mandate evaluation.** The rationale is that they often have firsthand insight into how mandates are working on the ground. Participatory evaluation methods are recommended, such as involving CSO representatives, independent experts, and even beneficiaries in evaluation teams or consultations. To enable such participation, evaluation processes must be safe, accessible, and responsive. This means providing information in local languages, ensuring meetings or surveys are accessible to persons with disabilities, and protecting participants from any reprisals for honest feedback. Some submissions go further to suggest joint evaluations, where UN staff and civil society conduct monitoring visits or surveys together, fostering shared ownership of findings. If a mandate is about a particular marginalized group or issue, representatives of that group should be directly involved in assessing its progress. Not only does this increase legitimacy, it can also reveal impacts or challenges that might be overlooked. Civil society also advocates for the establishment of formal channels for stakeholders to feed into reviews, such as written input calls or stakeholder hearings when mandates come up for evaluation, much like the process that allowed civil society to input into UN80 Workstream 2 itself. In summary, mandate evaluations should move beyond purely Member State or Secretariat-led exercises to become multi-stakeholder accountability forums, which will enrich the quality of reviewing mandates.
- 4.4. Building on the above, civil society emphasizes that reviews must scrutinize how mandates are impacting different segments of the population, especially those who are marginalized.** A key proposal is to conduct regular Equity and Inclusion Audits of mandates. These audits would assess whether mandates are reaching the most marginalized groups or if there are blind spots. For instance, are there mandates in the development sphere that are failing to benefit women, or particular minorities, or people with disabilities? Are resources under certain mandates disproportionately going to some regions over others? By examining results through an equity lens, the UN can identify where mandates might be unintentionally perpetuating inequalities or missing those “left behind.” The findings of such audits should be public and should directly inform how mandates are adjusted. Gender equality advocates specifically call for tracking and evaluating mandates’ contributions to gender goals. They urge the UN to require that all entities report their expenditures and results broken down by gender impact, including how much of a mandate’s budget is invested in women’s and girls’ empowerment or gender mainstreaming, and what outcomes are observed for women and girls. Financial data disaggregated by target group (gender, age, disability status, etc.) is needed to see if mandates are allocating resources in line with equity commitments. Disability rights groups likewise want to see mandate evaluations consider compliance with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and other benchmarks, asking, “Did this mandate incorporate persons with disabilities in its work, and with what effect?” If not, that should be flagged in the review with recommendations for

improvement. Human rights organizations add that qualitative outcomes like empowerment, justice, and dignity should be core criteria in evaluating mandates that have normative or protective roles. For example, the success of a human rights mandate is not just about producing reports, but whether it helped victims obtain remedies or prevented abuses, metrics which are harder to quantify but crucial to capture through case studies or stakeholder testimonies. Civil society recommends mandate reviews to measure what truly matters. Are mandates changing lives for the better, especially for those most in need? If not, why, and what can be done differently?

- 4.5. An important concern is that reviews and evaluations should not be box-ticking exercises, they must lead to concrete follow-up.** Civil society recommends establishing clearer processes for acting on evaluation results. For instance, after a comprehensive mandate review, there should be a formal session or mechanism where Member States discuss the findings and agree on next steps, be it renewal, revision, resourcing, termination of the mandate, or simply directives to improve implementation. It could be useful to integrate mandate review outcomes into the budget cycle, ensuring that decisions on resource allocations consider performance evidence. Some submissions propose the idea of a periodic “mandate review conference” or inclusion of Workstream II discussions as a regular agenda item in the General Assembly’s work. This would signal high-level commitment to using evidence in governance. Civil society also highlights the need for the UN system and Member States to learn and adapt continuously. If a mandate review identifies best practices or successful approaches in one area, those should be distilled and shared across other mandates. Conversely, if a particular structural obstacle is repeatedly noted, for example, lack of coordination or insufficient field staff, the system should address that broadly, not just in the context of one mandate. Essentially, the mandate review process should feed an organizational learning loop. Some monitoring and evaluation experts suggest creating a central repository of lessons learned from mandate evaluations and having an inter-departmental committee that analyzes these lessons for cross-cutting themes. Moreover, civil society insists on public accountability. They want brief, digestible summaries of review conclusions to be published, so that citizens and stakeholders can hold the UN accountable for follow-through. When evaluations do result in changes, those changes should be communicated. Over time, if stakeholders see that the UN is capable of course-correcting based on evidence, trust in the institution will grow. One cannot overlook the psychological aspect. Embracing evaluation and even closing mandates that have run their course can demonstrate that the UN is serious about impact over symbolism. Civil society encourages a shift in mindset from defensiveness about mandates, where every mandate is guarded as turf, to an outcome-oriented mindset, where mandates are seen as tools, to be refined or retired as needed to achieve goals.



**4.6. In discussing mandate review, civil society also notes some good practices that exist and could be models for broader application.** The Universal Periodic Review (UPR), as previously mentioned, is one such model, valued for its universality, regularity, and the way it involves both state and non-state inputs. Another example from the development sphere is the review mechanism of the 2030 Agenda via the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which, although not without flaws, provides a scheduled opportunity to reflect on progress towards each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and encourages countries to conduct inclusive national reviews. Lessons from these processes include the benefit of peer review (Member States reviewing each other's progress), and the encouragement of multi-stakeholder participation. Civil society suggests that mandate reviews could borrow elements of peer review, for instance, have Member States volunteer or be selected to present on how they have implemented certain mandates domestically, with others offering constructive feedback. On the innovation front, as in other stages of the mandate cycle, data analytics and technology can aid reviews. Advanced tools can help sift through the myriad of UN reports and resolutions to map the evolution of mandates, detect where recommendations are repeated without progress, or flag where implementation might be stalling. Some have proposed AI-assisted analysis to evaluate sentiment or attention to issues across the UN, which could supplement traditional evaluation. However, these should complement, not replace, qualitative assessments. Civil society also warns that over-reliance on big data without context can mislead, hence, any technological-based evaluation methods should be paired with expert human analysis. Finally, an emergent idea is joint review panels or advisory groups that include civil society, academics, and former UN officials to support the mandate review process. Their independent perspectives can enhance credibility and creativity in thinking about mandate futures. The forward-looking orientation is critical. Reviews should not only look backward at what has been done, but also scan the horizon. A mandate might be performing well now, but will it address tomorrow's challenges? Should it be adjusted to new realities? Incorporating foresight into evaluation is another innovative suggestion.

Civil society's contributions on mandate review and evaluation push for a culture of accountability, learning, and inclusivity. They want to see a UN that candidly assesses its work, engages stakeholders in honest reflection, and uses those insights to become more effective and relevant. By reinforcing mandate review mechanisms, with regular schedules, strong data, and broad participation, the UN can ensure that the end of the mandate lifecycle contributes to effective implementation and positive impact in the long term. This will help prevent mandates from drifting into irrelevance or inefficiency, and instead keep the UN's work aligned with evolving global needs and the expectations of the international community. A mandate system with robust review is one where every mandate is a living instrument, continually refined to deliver maximum impact or retired when its mission is complete.

## 5. Guiding Principles

Across all three phases of the mandate lifecycle, the diverse inputs from civil society converge on a vision of a UN that is more agile, inclusive, and impact-focused in all it does. By implementing the recommendations summarized in this report, Member States can take significant strides toward a mandate system that truly delivers for people and the planet. Below are some forward-looking principles and proposals that can guide Member States in strengthening the mandate system as a whole. These guiding ideas, drawn from civil society's collective inputs, provide a conceptual framework for reform:

- 5.1. **No mandate should be designed, implemented, or evaluated in isolation from the people it affects.** Inclusivity must be a deliberate feature at every stage. This means institutionalizing stakeholder participation, from consulting civil society and experts when creating mandates, to partnering with local actors during implementation, to involving communities in reviews. Embracing this principle will ensure mandates remain grounded in real-world needs and have broad support. In practice, Member States could adopt guidelines requiring stakeholder consultations for new mandates and establish formal roles for civil society in monitoring and review processes.
- 5.2. **The UN mandate system should function as a coherent whole, not a collection of silos.** When creating mandates, Member States should consider the overall landscape and seek synergy with existing efforts. During implementation, UN entities must coordinate and avoid duplication, working towards common goals. In review, overlaps or inconsistencies should be addressed by adjusting or consolidating mandates. In practice, this could involve developing a central mandate registry, improving inter-agency planning mechanisms, and periodically tasking the system to identify areas where mandates can be streamlined or better aligned, for example, related mandates across the peace, development, and human rights pillars).
- 5.3. **Adopt a “mandates-match-means” approach.** A mandate is only as credible as the resources and capacities backing it. Member States should commit to ending the practice of proliferating mandates without funding. Instead, ensure each mandate has a realistic budget and skilled personnel, and use innovations like pooled funding for cross-cutting mandates. Sustainable financing must underpin mandates, including stable core funding for normative and coordination functions that often lack earmarked support. In practice, this might mean revising budgetary rules to automatically integrate mandate approvals with funding approvals, expanding the Funding Compact commitments, and encouraging donors to provide more flexible, multi-year contributions tied to mandate outcomes.
- 5.4. **Mandates must come with accountability for results and a willingness to learn and adapt.** This principle translates to setting up robust monitoring

and evaluation for every mandate, making results transparent, and being prepared to reform or conclude mandates based on evidence. A culture of continuous learning should be fostered whereby successes should be replicated, and challenges openly discussed, seen as opportunities to improve. In practice, Member States could mandate regular reviews for all long-term resolutions, create forums for reflecting on collective progress, and empower the UN Secretariat's evaluation offices to play a more prominent, independent role in assessing mandate performance system-wide.

**5.5. All mandates should advance the fundamental values of the UN, including human rights and gender equality.** Civil society urges that reforms explicitly safeguard mandates and mechanisms that protect these values. Efficiencies must not be pursued at the cost of weakening human rights monitoring, gender equality initiatives, child rights, or inclusion of persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups. On the contrary, these cross-cutting priorities should be integrated across the entire mandate system as metrics of success. In practice, Member States can apply “impact on vulnerable groups” as a criterion in mandate evaluations, ensure that any restructuring of mandates leaves dedicated space for these issues, and continue to champion new mandates when genuine gaps in protection or equity emerge.

**5.6. The mandate system should evolve to meet future challenges, leveraging innovation while upholding ethics.** As global contexts change, whether due to technological revolution, climate crisis, or new social movements, UN mandates must be forward-looking. Incorporating scientific advice and foresight into mandate formulation will be key. Likewise, adopting modern tools for data analysis, communication, and program delivery can greatly enhance efficiency. However, any innovation must be guided by transparency, respect for human rights, and the aim of empowering people.

## **6. Conclusion**

By centering these recommendations and principles, Member States can navigate the mandate lifecycle and review process with clarity of purpose. The civil society contributions synthesized in this report illustrate that the world's engaged citizens and organizations are not only ready to critique, but also to support and partner in this journey of reform. They offer their expertise, their grassroots reach, and their passion for the UN's ideals as assets to build a stronger mandate system.

Ultimately, a mandate system that delivers results will bolster trust in the UN and enable it to more effectively address the urgent global challenges of our time. Every mandate, whether addressing peace and security, development, humanitarian needs, or human rights, should be a promise that is kept. Civil society's message to Member States is that by making mandates more strategic, inclusive, well-resourced, and accountable, the UN can transform that promise into tangible improvements in people's lives. They urge

Member States to seize the opportunity of the UN80 Initiative to enact meaningful reforms, knowing that a more impactful United Nations benefits all nations and peoples.

This report serves as a civil society-driven roadmap for mandate lifecycle reform. It reflects a consensus among varied civil society actors that the UN must be “united to deliver” in the truest sense, united across its pillars, in partnership with those it serves, and firmly guided by the principles of the Charter. By heeding these recommendations and working together with civil society, Member States can ensure that the mandates they create today become the solutions and successes the world sees tomorrow. The path to a rejuvenated UN mandate system is clear, and now it is time to move forward and implement these transformative ideas.

## **Annex:**

### ***Civil society organizations who provided written contributions:***

1. Action by Churches Together (ACT Alliance)
2. Afrodescendant Civil Society
3. Child Rights Connect
4. ChildFund Alliance
5. Edmund Rice International
6. Environment Africa Zambia
7. Foundation Apprentis d’Auteuil International
8. Frontline AIDS
9. Instituto Alana, Brazil
10. International Disability Alliance
11. International Disability and Development Consortium
12. International Science Council
13. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
14. International Sexual and Reproductive Rights Coalition
15. Major Groups and Other Stakeholders
16. New End Hunger, Malnutrition and Poverty Initiative (NEHMAP)
17. Plan International
18. Plataforma de Infancia, Spain
19. Sanabel Al-Ataa, Sudan
20. SOS Children’s Villages International
21. The USCIB Foundation
22. Together 2030
23. Women and Gender Constituency
24. Women’s Major Group
25. Women’s Rights Caucus
26. World Vision
27. Young Feminist Caucus