

OUR COMMON AGENDA

Report of
the Secretary-General

COPYRIGHT:

Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General

Published by the United Nations

New York, NY 10017, United States of America

Copyright © 2021 United Nations

All rights reserved

This publication in its entirety may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without written permission from the publisher.

All queries on rights and licences, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to:

United Nations Publications

405 East 42nd Street, S-09FW001

New York, NY 10017

United States of America

E-mail: permissions@un.org; **website:** <http://shop.un.org>

Requests to reproduce excerpts or to photocopy this publication should be addressed

to the Copyright Clearance Center at www.copyright.com.

ISBN: 978-92-1101446-4

eISBN: 978-92-1001012-2

epubISBN: 978-92-1358389-0

Sales No. E.21.I.8

Designed and produced by:

Division of Conference Management, United Nations Office at Geneva

Department of Global Communications, United Nations, New York

Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, United Nations, New York

Credits:

All photographs used in this publication have been sourced from the United Nations Secretariat and other United Nations entities. Unless otherwise indicated, all data in this publication were sourced from the United Nations.

Cover: UN-Women/Paola Garcia

Summary

We are at an inflection point in history.

In our biggest shared test since the Second World War, humanity faces a stark and urgent choice: a breakdown or a breakthrough.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is upending our world, threatening our health, destroying economies and livelihoods and deepening poverty and inequalities.

Conflicts continue to rage and worsen.

The disastrous effects of a changing climate – famine, floods, fires and extreme heat – threaten our very existence.

For millions of people around the world, poverty, discrimination, violence and exclusion are denying them their rights to the basic necessities of life: health, safety, a vaccination against disease, clean water to drink, a plate of food or a seat in a classroom.

Increasingly, people are turning their backs on the values of trust and solidarity in one another – the very values we need to rebuild our world and secure a better, more sustainable future for our people and our planet.

Humanity's welfare – and indeed, humanity's very future – depend on solidarity and working together as a global family to achieve common goals.

For people, for the planet, for prosperity and for peace.

Last year, on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Member States agreed that our challenges are interconnected, across borders and all other divides. These challenges can only be addressed by an equally interconnected response, through reinvigorated multilateralism and the United Nations at the centre of our efforts.

Member States asked me to report back with recommendations to advance our common agenda. This report is my response.

In preparing the report, we have engaged with a broad array of stakeholders, including Member States, thought leaders, young people, civil society and the United Nations system and its many partners.

One message rang through loud and clear: the choices we make, or fail to make, today could result in further breakdown, or a breakthrough to a greener, better, safer future.

The choice is ours to make; but we will not have this chance again.

That is why **Our Common Agenda** is, above all, an agenda of action designed to accelerate the implementation of existing agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

First, **now is the time to re-embrace global solidarity** and find new ways to work together for the common good. This must include a global vaccination plan to deliver vaccines against COVID-19 into the arms of the millions of people who are still denied this basic lifesaving measure. Moreover, it must include urgent and bold steps to address the triple crisis of climate disruption, biodiversity loss and pollution destroying our planet.

Second, **now is the time to renew the social contract between Governments and their people and within societies**, so as to rebuild trust and embrace a comprehensive vision of human rights. People need to see results reflected in their daily lives. This must include the active and equal participation of women and girls, without whom no meaningful social contract is possible. It should also include updated governance arrangements to deliver better public goods and usher in a new era of universal social protection, health coverage, education, skills, decent work and housing, as well as universal access to the Internet by 2030 as a basic human right. I invite all countries to conduct inclusive and meaningful national listening consultations so all citizens have a say in envisioning their countries' futures.

Third, **now is the time to end the “infodemic” plaguing our world** by defending a common, empirically backed consensus around facts, science and knowledge. The “war on science” must end. All policy and budget decisions should be backed by science and expertise, and I am calling for a global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information.

Fourth, **now is the time to correct a glaring blind spot in how we measure economic prosperity and progress**. When profits come at the expense of people and our planet, we are left with an incomplete picture of the true cost of economic growth. As currently measured, gross domestic product (GDP) fails to capture the human and environmental destruction of some business activities. I call for new measures to complement GDP, so that people can gain a full understanding of the impacts of business activities and how we can and must do better to support people and our planet.

Fifth, **now is the time to think for the long term, to deliver more for young people and succeeding generations and to be better prepared for the challenges ahead**. Our Common Agenda includes recommendations for meaningful, diverse and effective youth engagement both within and outside the United Nations, including through better political representation and by transforming education, skills training and lifelong learning. I am also making proposals, such as a repurposed Trusteeship Council, a Futures Lab, a Declaration on Future Generations and a United Nations Special Envoy to ensure that policy and budget decisions take into account their impact on future generations. We also need to be better prepared to prevent and respond to major global risks. It will be important for the United Nations to issue a Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report on a regular basis, and I also propose an Emergency Platform, to be convened in response to complex global crises.

Sixth, **now is the time for a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations**. Effective multilateralism depends on an effective United Nations, one able to adapt to global challenges while living up to the purposes and principles of its Charter. For example, I am proposing a new agenda for peace, multi-stakeholder dialogues on outer space and a Global Digital Compact, as well as a Biennial Summit between the members of the Group of 20 and of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General and the heads of the international financial institutions. Throughout, we need stronger involvement of all relevant stakeholders, and we will seek to have an Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments.

For 75 years, the United Nations has gathered the world around addressing global challenges: from conflicts and hunger, to ending disease, to outer space and the digital world, to human rights and disarmament. In this time of division, fracture and mistrust, this space is needed more than ever if we are to secure a better, greener, more peaceful future for all people. Based on this report, I will ask a **High-level Advisory Board**, led by former Heads of State and Government, to identify global public goods and other areas of common interest where governance improvements are most needed, and to propose options for how this could be achieved.

In this spirit, I propose a **Summit of the Future** to forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like, and what we can do today to secure it.

Humanity has shown time and time again that it is capable of great achievements when we work together. This common agenda is our road map to recapture this positive spirit and begin rebuilding our world and mending the trust in one another we need so desperately at this moment in history.

Now is the time to take the next steps in our journey together, in solidarity with and for all people.



© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

KEY PROPOSALS ACROSS THE 12 COMMITMENTS

*From the declaration on the commemoration
of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations*

PROPOSED KEY MOMENTS



All proposed actions are in line with and designed to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.



1. Leave no one behind

- Renewed social contract anchored in human rights
- New era for **universal social protection, including health care and basic income security**, reaching the 4 billion unprotected
- Reinforce **adequate housing, education and lifelong learning and decent work**
- **Digital inclusivity**
- **World Social Summit in 2025**
- Identify **complementary measures to GDP**



2. Protect our planet

- Leaders meeting ahead of the global stocktaking in 2023
- Commit to the 1.5-degree Celsius goal and **net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner**
- Declarations of **climate emergency and right to a healthy environment**
- **Package of support to developing countries**
- Measures for adaptation and resilience
- No new coal after 2021 and phasing out fossil fuel subsidies
- **Account for the environment in economic models**, carbon pricing mechanisms and credible commitments by financial actors
- **Post-2020 biodiversity framework**
- **Transforming food systems** for sustainability, nutrition and fairness
- Action by the General Assembly on **territorial threats of climate change** and to prevent, protect and resolve situations of environmental displacement



3. Promote peace and prevent conflicts

- **New agenda for peace** to:
 - Reduce strategic risks (nuclear weapons, cyberwarfare, autonomous weapons)
 - Strengthen international foresight
 - Reshape responses to all forms of violence
 - Invest in prevention and peacebuilding, including Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Commission
 - Support regional prevention
 - Put women and girls at the centre of security policy
- **Peaceful, secure and sustainable use of outer space**, including through a multi-stakeholder dialogue on outer space



4. Abide by international law and ensure justice

- Human rights as a **problem-solving measure**, including by comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and promoting participation
- Application of **human rights online** and to frontier issues and new technologies
- Universal access to the Internet as a human right
- Human rights mechanisms on a more sustainable financial footing
- **Legal identity for all**, end to statelessness and protection of internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants
- New vision for the **rule of law**
- **Global road map** for the development and effective implementation of international law



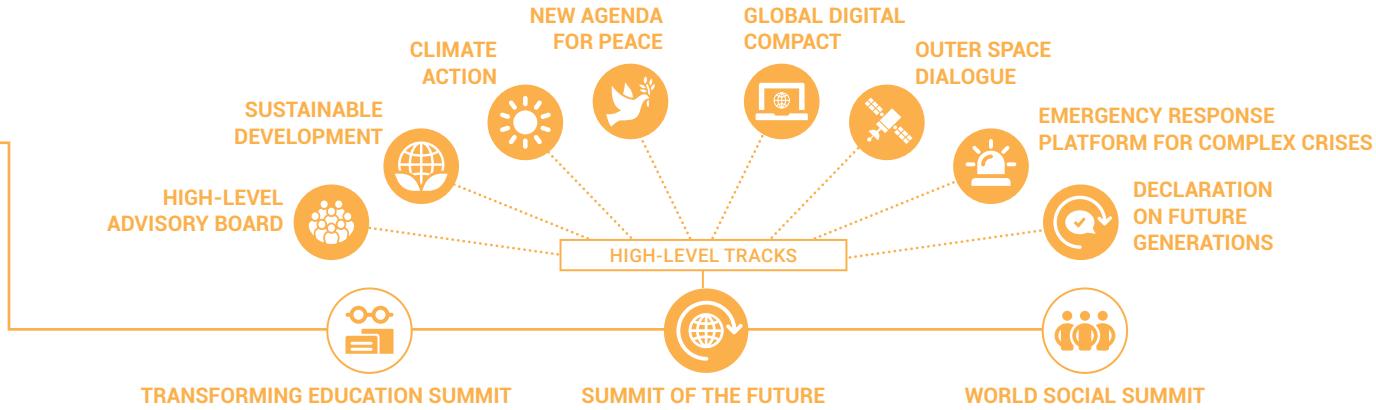
5. Place women and girls at the centre

- Repeal of gender-discriminatory laws
- Promote gender parity, including through quotas and **special measures**
- Facilitate women's economic inclusion, including investment in the care economy and support for women entrepreneurs
- Include voices of **younger women**
- Eradication of violence against women and girls, including through an **emergency response plan**



6. Build trust

- Global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information
- Improve people's experiences with **public institutions and basic services**
- Inclusive national listening and "envisioning the future" exercises
- Action to tackle **corruption** in line with the United Nations Convention against Corruption
- Reformed **international tax system**
- **Joint structure on financial integrity and tackling illicit financial flows**



7. Improve digital cooperation

- Global Digital Compact to:
 - Connect all people to the Internet, including all schools
 - Avoid Internet fragmentation
 - Protect data
 - Apply human rights online
 - Introduce accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content
 - Promote regulation of artificial intelligence
 - Digital commons as a global public good



9. Ensure sustainable financing

- Biennial Summit between the Group of 20, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General and the heads of international financial institutions for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient global economy including to:
 - Support a Sustainable Development Goal investment boost, including through a last-mile alliance to reach those furthest behind
 - Provide more flexible research and development incentives
 - Resolve weaknesses in the debt architecture
- Fairer and more resilient multilateral trading system, including a reinvigorated WTO
- New business models
- Improve the United Nations budget process



11. Listen to and work with youth

- Youth**
 - Remove barriers to political participation and measure progress through a "youth in politics" index
 - United Nations Youth Office
 - Transforming Education Summit in 2022
 - Recovery barometer to track career paths and labour market outcomes for youth
 - High-ambition coalition to promote green and digital-economy job creation
- Future generations**
 - Summit of the Future in 2023
 - Ensure long-term thinking, including through a United Nations Futures Lab
 - Represent succeeding generations, including through a repurposed Trusteeship Council, a Declaration on Future Generations, and a United Nations Special Envoy for Future Generations



8. Upgrade the United Nations

- High-level Advisory Board led by former Heads of State and Government on improved governance of global public goods
- System-wide policy that **puts people at the centre**, taking into account age, gender and diversity
- More listening, participation and consultation (including digitally), building on the seventy-fifth anniversary declaration and Our Common Agenda
- Gender parity within the United Nations system by 2028
- Re-establish the Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board
- "Quintet of change" for United Nations 2.0, including innovation, data, strategic foresight, results orientation and behavioural science



10. Boost partnerships

- Annual meetings between the United Nations and all heads of **regional organizations**
- Stronger engagement between the United Nations system, international financial institutions and regional development banks
- More systematic engagement with **parliaments, subnational authorities and the private sector**
- **Civil society focal points** in all United Nations entities
- United Nations Office for Partnerships to **consolidate access and inclusion**, including accessibility online

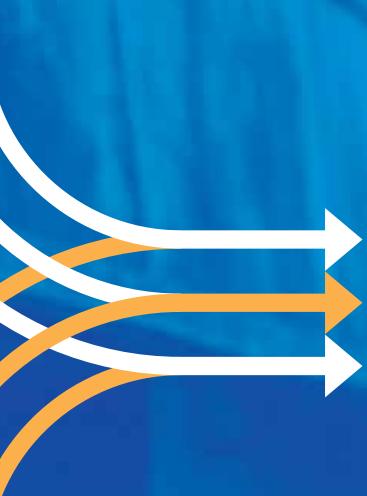


12. Be prepared

- **Emergency Platform** to be convened in response to complex global crises
- **Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report** by the United Nations every five years
- **On global public health:**
 - **Global vaccination plan**
 - Empowered WHO
 - Stronger global health security and preparedness
 - Accelerate product development and access to health technologies in low- and middle-income countries
 - **Universal health coverage** and addressing determinants of health

Contents

I. A wake-up call	12
A. The choice before us	14
B. Renewing solidarity	14
C. Our Common Agenda.....	18
II. We the peoples: a renewed social contract anchored in human rights.....	22
A. Foundations of a renewed social contract	22
B. Trust.....	24
C. Inclusion, protection and participation.....	27
D. Measuring and valuing what matters to people and the planet.....	33
III. Succeeding generations: shaping the future.....	38
A. Solidarity with younger generations	39
B. Solidarity with future generations	43
IV. Nations large and small: a new global deal to deliver global public goods and address major risks.....	48
A. Protecting the global commons and delivering global public goods	48
B. Addressing major risks.....	64
C. Next steps	65
V. Purposes and principles: adapting the United Nations to a new era	72
A. For the Secretariat and the United Nations system.....	72
B. For Member States' consideration.....	76
VI. Moving forward.....	82
Annex: Process for consultations on Our Common Agenda	84



A wake-up call





I. A wake-up call

1. Seventy-five years ago, the world emerged from a series of cataclysmic events: two successive world wars, genocide, a devastating influenza pandemic and a worldwide economic depression. Our founders gathered in San Francisco promising to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; to establish conditions under which justice and respect for international law can be maintained; and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. They believed in the value of collective efforts to achieve a better world and founded the United Nations to that end.

2. The Charter of the United Nations is an exceptional achievement. Since 1945, international norms and institutions have delivered independence, peace, prosperity, justice, human rights, hope and support for billions of people. For many others, however, these aspirations were never fully realized and are now receding. Too many people are also being excluded from the opportunities and benefits of technology and transitioning economies, facing a bleak future if we do not act fast.

3. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been a challenge like no other since the Second World War, revealing our shared vulnerability and interconnectedness. It has exposed human rights concerns and exacerbated deep fragilities and inequalities in our societies. It has amplified disenchantment with institutions and political leadership as the virus has lingered. We have also seen many examples of vaccine nationalism. Moreover, with less than a decade to go, the Sustainable Development Goals have been thrown even further off track.

4. At the same time, the pandemic has led to a surge of collective action, with people working together to respond to a truly global threat. The world needs to

THE COSTS OF COVID-19

- Global GDP decreased by an estimated 3.5 per cent in 2020.
- The pandemic has pushed a further 124 million people into extreme poverty. The pandemic-induced poverty surge will also widen the gender poverty gap, meaning more women will be pushed into extreme poverty than men.
- Nearly one in three people in the world (2.37 billion) did not have access to adequate food in 2020 – an increase of almost 320 million people in just one year.
- Early estimates suggest a potential increase of up to 45 per cent in child mortality because of health-service shortfalls and reductions in access to food.
- Total working hours fell by 8.8 per cent in 2020, the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs.
- Restricted movement, social isolation and economic insecurity are increasing women's vulnerability to violence in the home around the world.

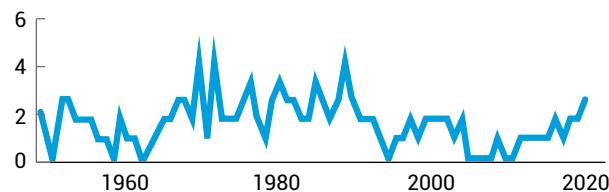
unite to produce and distribute sufficient vaccines for everyone. We have been reminded of the vital role of the State in solving problems, but also the need for networks of actors stretching well beyond States to cities, corporations, scientists, health professionals, researchers, civil society, the media, faith-based groups and individuals. When we all face the same threat, cooperation and solidarity are the only solutions, within societies and between nations.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

PEACE

Despite ongoing international tensions, conflict and violence, the multilateral system with the United Nations at its centre has helped to **avert a third world war or a nuclear holocaust**.

Conflicts between States, 1946–2020

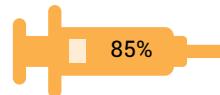


Source: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2020.



HEALTH

After a 10-year global effort led by WHO involving over **500 million vaccinations**, smallpox was officially eradicated in 1980.



Today, 85% of the world's children are vaccinated and protected from debilitating diseases.

Source: WHO, 2020.

HUMAN RIGHTS



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) has helped to ensure that **billions of people live safer, longer and more dignified lives**.



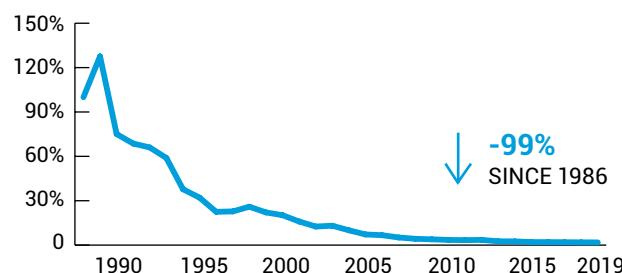
80% of Member States have ratified at least four core international human rights treaties, and all Member States have ratified at least one.

Source: OHCHR, 2021.

ENVIRONMENT



Ozone depleting emissions since the Montreal Protocol, Index 1986 = 100%



Source: UNEP, 2021.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION



In 2020, the United Nations and partner organizations provided humanitarian assistance to more than **98 million people in 25 countries**.

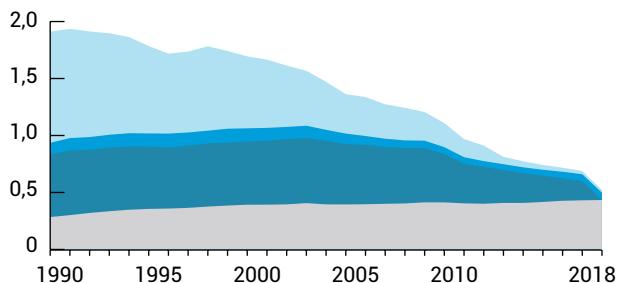
Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2021.

POVERTY ERADICATION



● East Asia and Pacific ● South Asia
● Rest of the World ● Sub-Saharan Africa

Total population (in billions) living in extreme poverty



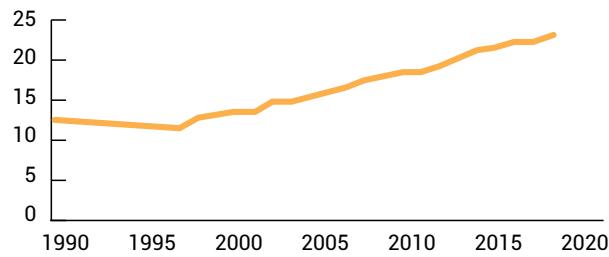
Source: World Bank, 2018.

GENDER EQUALITY



90% of United Nations Member States have ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (percentage)



Source: Statistics Division, 2021.

A. The choice before us

5. Let there be no illusion: COVID-19 may pale in comparison to future challenges if we do not learn from failures that have cost lives and livelihoods. Our best projections show that a stark choice confronts us: to continue with business as usual and risk significant breakdown and perpetual crisis, or to make concerted efforts to break through and achieve an international system that delivers for people and the planet. These omens must not be ignored, nor these opportunities squandered.

B. Renewing solidarity

6. As the United Nations marked its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020, people around the world [expressed](#) their belief in international cooperation while also conveying their concern at the mismatch between its promises and the realities in their daily lives. Member States echoed this in their [declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations \(see General Assembly resolution 75/1\)](#), resolving to keep the promises that they have already made and asking for recommendations to advance our common agenda and respond to current and future challenges.

7. This report seeks to answer these calls, taking stock of challenges and recommending actions that build on what is working and improve what is not. Multilateralism has evolved considerably since the United Nations was founded, and we have shown that we can come together to forge collective solutions. However, this does not happen often, effectively or inclusively enough.

8. Everything proposed in this report depends on a **deepening of solidarity**. Solidarity is not charity; in an interconnected world, it is common sense. It is the principle of working together, recognizing that we are bound to each other and that no community or country can solve its challenges alone. It is about our shared responsibilities to and for each other, taking account of our common humanity and each

WHAT WE MEAN BY SOLIDARITY



Solidarity is a fundamental value "by virtue of which global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes costs and burdens fairly, in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice, and ensures that those who suffer or benefit the least receive help from those who benefit the most" (General Assembly, resolution 57/213).

person's dignity, our diversity and our varying levels of capacity and need. The importance of solidarity has been thrown into sharp relief by COVID-19 and the race against variants, even for countries that are well advanced with vaccination campaigns. No one is safe until everyone is safe. The same is true of our biodiversity, without which none of us can survive, and for actions to address the climate crisis. In the absence of solidarity, we have arrived at a critical paradox: international cooperation is more needed than ever but also harder to achieve.

9. Through a deeper commitment to solidarity, at the national level, between generations and in the multilateral system, we can avoid the breakdown scenario and, instead, break through towards a more positive future. This report proposes a **path forward**, centred around a **renewal of our social contract**, adapted to the challenges of this century, taking into account young people and future generations and complemented by a **new global deal**.

10. A strong **social contract** anchored in human rights at the national level is the necessary foundation for us to work together. It may not be written down in any single document, but the social contract has profound consequences for people, underpinning their rights and obligations and shaping their life chances. It is also vital for international cooperation, since bonds across countries do not work when bonds within them are broken. The inequality, mistrust and intolerance that we are seeing in many countries and regions,

THE CHOICE BEFORE US: A SCENARIO OF BREAKDOWN AND PERPETUAL CRISIS



DEADLY PANDEMICS



- **COVID-19 is endemic, constantly mutating**
- Richer countries **hoard vaccines**, no plan for equitable distribution
- **Health systems** are overwhelmed
- **No preparedness** for future pandemics
- A number of countries are poorer in 2030 than before the pandemic hit

UNINHABITABLE PLANET



- Owing to unchanged emission levels from human activity, **global warming of 2°C will be exceeded** during the twenty-first century
- **Heatwaves, floods, droughts, tropical cyclones** and other extremes are unprecedented in magnitude, frequency and timing and occur in regions that have never been affected before
- The **Arctic is ice free** in the summer; most **permafrost is lost** and **extreme sea levels** occur every year
- One million species are on the **verge of extinction**, with **irreversible biodiversity loss**
- More than **1 billion people live with heat that is so extreme that it threatens their lives**

DESTABILIZING INEQUALITIES



- Continuous **erosion of human rights**
- **Growing poverty**, and massive loss of jobs and income
- Public goods like education and social protection systems are underfunded
- **Protests spread across borders**, often met with violent repression
- Technology fuels division
- **New types of warfare** invented faster than new ways of making peace

WARNING SIGNS



\$9.2 trillion – estimated cost to the global economy in 2021 alone if developing countries do not have equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines

Source: International Chamber of Commerce, 2021.



Increases in **concentrations of greenhouse gases since around 1750 are unequivocally caused by human activities** and have led to ~1.1°C of warming between 1850 and 1900

Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021.



36 low-income countries are in sovereign debt distress or at a high risk of falling into debt distress (February 2021)

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020.



Up to **827,000 viruses** that could infect humans exist in mammals and birds

Source: International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021.



The extinction rate is now **10–100 times higher than at any other time in the past 10 million years**

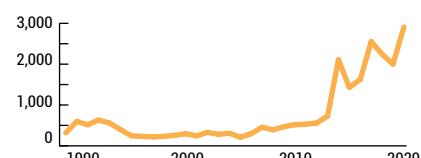
Source: United Nations, 2019.



By 2050 there could be **more plastic than fish** in the sea

Source: UNEP, 2020.

Rapid increase in non-State conflicts since 2010



Source: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2020.

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MULTILATERALISM



Social contract is eroded and geopolitical tensions rise



International institutions are trapped in a **cycle of underinvestment and underperformance**



Preference for **unilateralism over solidarity**



No consensus on facts, science or knowledge

THE CHOICE BEFORE US: A SCENARIO OF BREAKTHROUGH AND THE PROSPECT OF A GREENER, SAFER, BETTER FUTURE



SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY



- Vaccines shared widely and equitably
- Capacity to produce vaccines for future pandemics within 100 days and to distribute them globally within a year
- People in crisis and conflict settings have a **bridge to better lives**
- Revised international debt architecture
- Business incentives are reshaped to support global public goods
- **Progress** to address illicit financial flows, tax avoidance and climate finance
- Financial and economic systems support more sustainable, resilient and inclusive patterns of growth

HEALTHY PEOPLE AND PLANET



- Global temperature rise is limited to 1.5°C
- All countries and sectors **decarbonize by 2050**
- Support provided to countries heavily affected by climate emergencies
- Just transitions to a new labour ecosystem are ensured
- A functioning **ecosystem is preserved** for succeeding generations
- Communities are equipped to adapt and be resilient to climate change impacts

TRUST AND SOCIAL PROTECTION



- Strong commitment to the **universality and indivisibility of human rights**
- **Universal social protection floors, including universal health coverage**
- **Universal digital connectivity**
- **Quality education, skills enhancement** and lifelong learning
- Progress on addressing gender, racial, economic and other inequalities
- **Equal partnership between institutions and the people they serve** and among and within communities to strengthen social cohesion

SIGNS OF HOPE



146 million people lifted out of extreme poverty by 2030 through investments in governance, social protection, the green economy and digitalization (including 74 million women and girls)

Source: UNDP, 2020.



30% of methane emissions could be mitigated with existing technology today.

Source: UNEP, 2021.



Transitioning to **low-carbon, sustainable growth** approaches could deliver direct economic gains of \$26 trillion through to 2030 compared with business-as-usual approaches

Source: United Nations, 2021.

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MULTILATERALISM



New era for multilateralism, as countries and other actors work to solve the problems that matter most



The international system **acts fast for everyone in an emergency**



All actors accountable for keeping commitments made



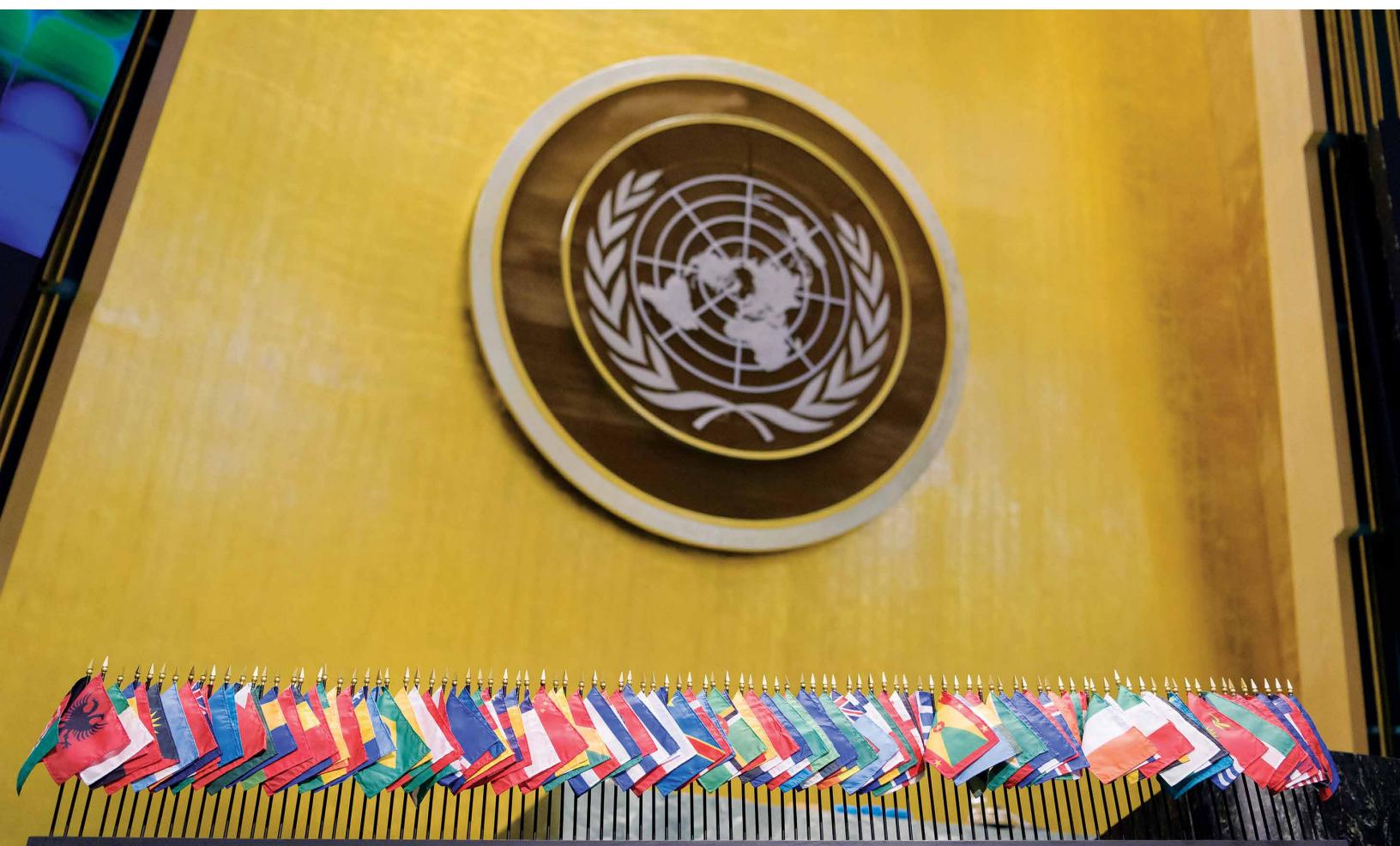
The **United Nations is a trusted platform** for collaboration between a growing number and diversity of actors

heightened by the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, suggest that the time has come to renew the social contract for a new era in which individuals, States and other actors work in partnership to build trust, increase participation and inclusion and redefine human progress.

11. The deepening of solidarity at the national level must be matched by a new commitment to **young people and future generations**, to whom the opening words of the Charter of the United Nations make a solemn promise. Strengthened solidarity is long overdue with the existing generation of young people, who feel that our political, social and economic systems ignore their present and sacrifice their future. We must take steps to deliver

better education and jobs for them and to give them a greater voice in designing their own futures. We must also find ways to systematically consider the interests of the 10.9 billion people who are expected to be born this century, predominantly in Africa and Asia: we will achieve a breakthrough only if we think and act together on their behalf for the long term.

12. To support solidarity within societies and between generations, we also need a **new deal at the global level**. The purpose of international cooperation in the twenty-first century is to achieve a set of vital common goals on which our welfare, and indeed survival, as a human race depend. Notably, we need to improve the protection of **the global commons** and the provision of a broader



© UN Photo/Manuel Elias

set of **global public goods**, those issues that benefit humanity as a whole and that cannot be managed by any one State or actor alone. Many of these objectives (the "what") are set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. I believe that it is high time for Member States, together with other relevant stakeholders, to devise strategies for achieving them (the "how"), through enhanced multilateral governance of global commons and global public goods. Furthermore, we must address **major risks** more robustly, learning lessons from our response to COVID-19.

13. Finally, States have at their disposal an organization whose very purpose is to solve international problems through cooperation. The **United Nations** presence is global, its membership is universal and its activities span the breadth of human need. Its fundamental values are not the preserve of any region. Indeed, they are found in every culture and religion around the world: peace, justice, human dignity, equity, tolerance and, of course, solidarity. However, while the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations endure, the Organization must evolve in response to a changing world to become more networked, inclusive and effective.

C. Our Common Agenda

14. We already have the blueprints for a better world, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on climate change and other key instruments. These are just some of the many resolutions and international instruments that have been painstakingly developed over 75 years and that constitute a crucial heritage. We can and must build on them and redouble our efforts to implement them.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR COMMON AGENDA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals are at the core of Our Common Agenda. The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity and peace, that seeks to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality. The Sustainable Development Goals are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. Many of the actions proposed in this report thus seek to accelerate achievement of the Goals, not least in the light of gaps and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Actions already under way to achieve the Goals will, in turn, be key for the implementation of Our Common Agenda.

15. The world has also changed, however, creating new needs that call for new understandings and arrangements to meet them. We must combine the best of our past achievements with the most creative look to the future if we are to deepen solidarity and achieve a breakthrough for people and the planet. The actions suggested in this report are urgent and transformative and fill critical gaps. Just as the founders of the United Nations came together determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we must now come together to save succeeding generations from war, climate change, pandemics, hunger, poverty, injustice and a host of risks that we may not yet foresee entirely. This is Our Common Agenda.



We the peoples: a renewed social contract anchored in human rights



II. We the peoples: a renewed social contract anchored in human rights

16. COVID-19 has brought new urgency to the choice before us. Even before the pandemic, solidarity had dwindled in many societies. Governance has become more difficult against the backdrop of a heightened sense of unfairness and a rise in populism and inward-looking nationalist agendas that peddle simplistic fixes, pseudo-solutions and conspiracy theories. There is a growing disconnect between people and the institutions that serve them, with many feeling left behind and no longer confident that the system is working for them, an increase in social movements and protests and an ever deeper [crisis of trust](#) fomented by a loss of shared truth and understanding. There has been questioning of how we share our societies and this fragile planet, of the fundamental ties that connect us, and of how we engage with those who disagree, who feel unjustly treated or who feel excluded.

17. At the heart of this is a frayed social contract: the understanding within a society of how people solve shared problems, manage risks and pool resources to deliver public goods, as well as how their collective institutions and norms operate. The exact nature of these reciprocal norms varies, but their existence is universal.

WHAT WE MEAN BY SOCIAL CONTRACT



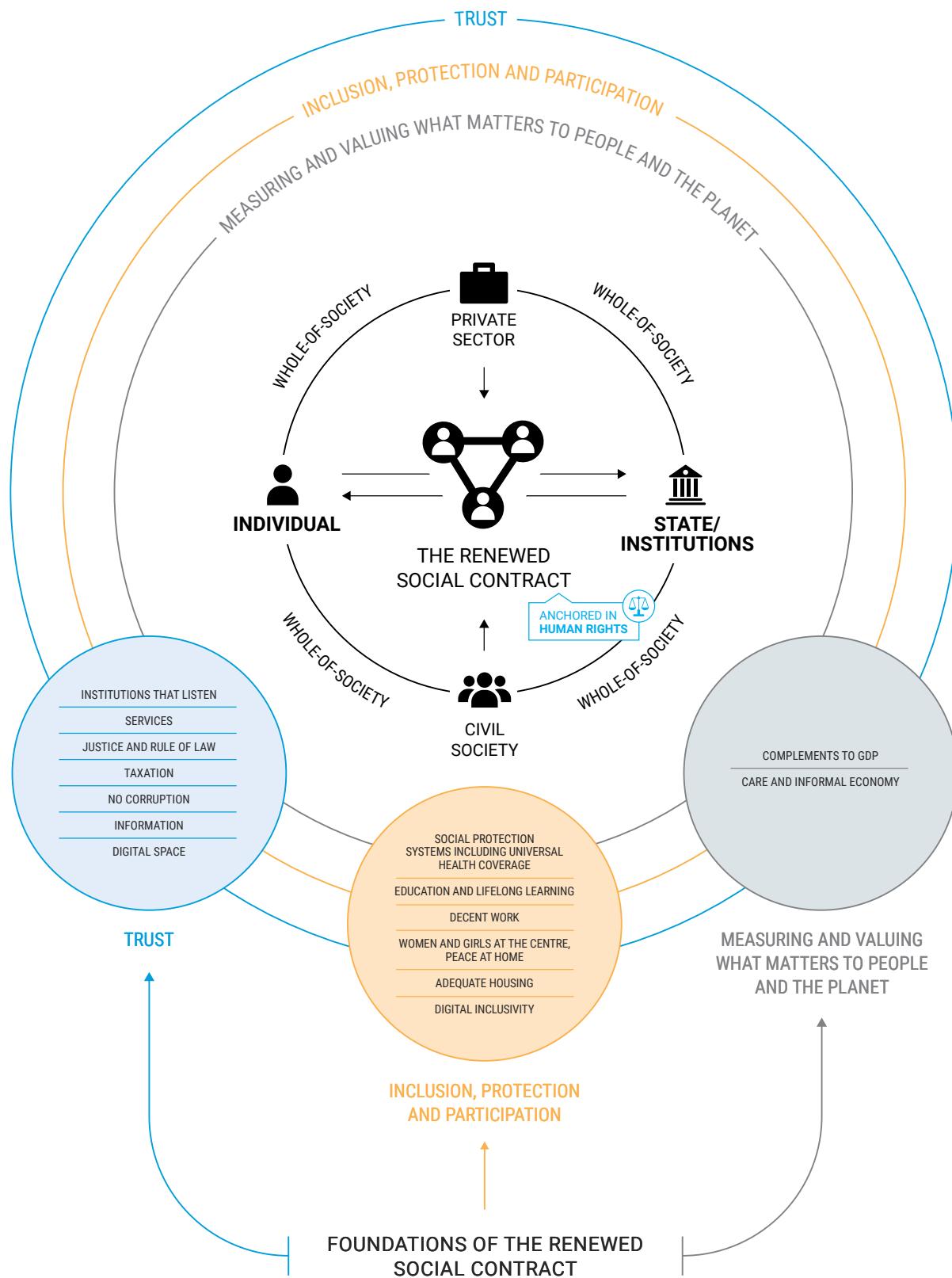
The term "social contract" is often understood to have its origins in Western or European philosophy. However, related concepts reflecting the reciprocal obligations between people, households, communities and their leaders exist across regions and religious traditions, including in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Middle East.

18. A social contract needs to evolve to respond to changing circumstances. A revolution, war, economic collapse or other cataclysm puts the social contract under immediate pressure, leaving a society vulnerable to disruption if it is unable to adapt fast enough. For the first time in decades, all countries have experienced a dramatic change in their circumstances because of COVID-19. This shock has happened at a time when we were already failing in many ways in our duty of care to each other and the planet we share. We urgently need a renewed social contract, anchored in a comprehensive approach to human rights, in the light of the pandemic and beyond, one that allows many more actors to tackle increasingly complex and interconnected problems.

A. Foundations of a renewed social contract

19. The social contract originates at the subnational and national levels, and its exact architecture is unquestionably up to each society to determine. However, any social contract also has a global dimension. All societies face and are affected by global pressures, while solidarity within countries provides the foundation for our cooperation internationally. I will therefore mobilize the whole United Nations system to assist countries in support of a renewed social contract, anchored in human rights. Drawing on the consultations for Our Common Agenda, I see three foundations for a renewed social contract fit for the twenty-first century: **(a) trust; (b) inclusion, protection and participation; and (c) measuring and valuing what matters to people and the planet.** These ideas are articulated in different ways across societies, regions and cultures, but the international community has generated consensus on them through the United Nations by

THE RENEWED SOCIAL CONTRACT



enshrining core principles, such as solidarity, respect for human rights, accountability and equality. The 2030 Agenda gives practical expression to these principles through its commitment to leave no one behind.

B. Trust

20. Building trust and countering mistrust, between people and institutions, but also between different people and groups within societies, is our defining challenge. Both **interpersonal and institutional trust** are important and mutually reinforcing, but the recommendations below focus largely on the latter. There has been an [overall breakdown in trust](#) in major institutions worldwide due to both their real and perceived failures to deliver, be fair, transparent and inclusive, provide reliable information and make a difference in people's lives. For example, public distrust of governments and government distrust of publics made it harder to maintain consensus behind public health restrictions on COVID-19. Conversely, countries with higher levels of trust in public institutions (along with higher levels of interpersonal trust) did better at managing the pandemic. The types of challenges that we will face in the future will require similar, if not greater, levels of trust in each other and in our institutions.

21. People wish to be heard and to participate in the decisions that affect them. Institutions could establish better ways of listening to people whom they are meant to serve and taking their views into account, especially groups that are frequently overlooked, such as women, young people, minority groups or persons with disabilities. As an initial step, I invite Governments to conduct **national listening and "envisioning the future" exercises**. These can be done digitally to ensure breadth and inclusivity, albeit with commensurate measures to reach those 3.8 billion people who are still offline. I also commit to ensure that the United Nations builds on recent innovations in listening to, consulting and engaging with people around the world.

22. Failing to **deliver what people need most**, including basic services, drives mistrust, regardless of how open institutions are to public participation. Societies vary in terms of which **public goods** are delivered publicly and which are delivered privately, including health, education, the Internet, security and childcare. However, regulatory frameworks that ensure effectiveness and accountability can be provided and kept up to date by States. Moreover, a key [lesson](#) from COVID-19 is the importance of the State as a provider of trustworthy information, goods and services, especially in times of crisis. Institutions can analyse and reduce administrative burdens that make it hard for people to gain access to their services. Making government services digital can enhance transparency and accessibility, if provision is made for communities that currently do not have access to the digital world. At a time of rapid change, I encourage societies to discuss what are the most essential and valued public goods and the best means of ensuring their delivery, bearing in mind the roles of both the public and private sectors and building on the Sustainable Development Goals. I would also urge **investment in public systems and ensuring quality public servants**, as the main point of contact between the State and people. The international system needs to better support countries that lack the capacity and funding to make such investments.

23. **Justice is an essential dimension of the social contract.** In all parts of the world, distrust is fuelled by people's experience of inequality and corruption, and by their perception that the State and its institutions treat them unfairly. The 2030 Agenda promises to promote the rule of law and provide access to justice for all (target 16.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals), but many justice systems deliver only for the few. It is estimated that 1.5 billion people have unmet criminal, civil or administrative justice needs. They are unable to use the law to defend themselves from violence and crime, protect their rights or resolve disputes peacefully. In a number of countries, the law still actively discriminates against women, who in effect [enjoy](#) only three quarters of the legal rights of men.



© UNDP

When security and justice actors are abusive and act with impunity, they exacerbate grievances and weaken the social contract. Distrust is also fuelled by people's experience of **corruption**, which has a disproportionate impact on **women**, exacerbates inequality and costs the world trillions of dollars annually. During our consultations, I **heard** from Member States about the potential for transforming justice systems in ways that strengthen the bonds that hold our societies together. In support of efforts to put people at the centre of justice systems, I will promote a **new vision for the rule of law**, building on Sustainable Development Goal 16 and the [2012 Declaration of the High-level](#)

[Meeting](#) of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (see resolution 67/1). We will examine how our rule of law assistance can support States, communities and people in rebuilding their social contract as a foundation for sustaining peace. In this vein, it will also be important to accelerate action **to tackle corruption**, in line with the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

24. **Taxation** is one of the most powerful tools of government, critical to investing in public goods and incentivizing sustainability. Governments should consider using taxation to reduce extreme

inequalities in wealth. This would be an important signal in the wake of a pandemic in which millions of people lost their jobs and governments around the world faced declining fiscal space while the wealth of billionaires saw a massive jump. Taxation can also drive a sustainable and just transition, as governments shift subsidies from activities that damage the environment to those that sustain and enrich it; tax carbon emissions and other polluting activities rather than people or income; introduce fair royalty regimes in extractive activities; and channel resources to sustainable investments. These reforms can have different impacts on different countries, sectors and people, however, and it is especially important to ensure that they do not create new inequalities and to compensate and support any perceived to lose out. Countries across

different income categories also face challenges in terms of domestic resource mobilization. Addressing this is an integral part of financing for development and crucial in supporting the efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Any new approach to taxation will need to embed the principles of sustainability while also considering the views and capacities of developing countries.

25. More broadly, a reformed **international tax system** is needed to respond to the realities of growing cross-border trade and investment and an increasingly digitalized economy while also addressing existing shortcomings in fair and effective taxation of businesses and reducing harmful tax competition. The G20 has agreed on



© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

a new international tax architecture that addresses the tax challenges arising from globalization and digitalization and introduces a global minimum tax for corporations, with a blueprint in place for broader implementation under the [auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#). As discussions continue, the perspectives of all countries must be heeded, including the potential for asymmetrical impacts on countries at different stages of development. Consideration could also be given to measures to tax the value of the digital economy, taxation of financial technology innovations, including cryptocurrencies, and a digital development tax, whereby the companies that have benefited for decades from a free and open Internet contribute to the connectivity of the 3.8 billion people who are still offline and to a safer digital world. I also propose stronger international cooperation to tackle tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance, money-laundering and illicit financial flows, including through a **new joint structure on financial integrity and tackling illicit financial flows**, with membership centred around the United Nations, international financial institutions, OECD, major financial centres and expert civil society organizations. Its role could include promotion of transparency and accountability through the provision of data and other information, as well as fostering agreements to address illicit financial flows.

26. The **Internet** has altered our societies as profoundly as the printing press did, requiring a deep reimagining of the ethics and mindsets with which we approach knowledge, communication and cohesion. Along with the potential for more accessible information and rapid communication and consultation, the digital age, particularly social media, has also heightened fragmentation and "echo chambers". Objectivity, or even the idea that people can aspire to ascertain the best available truth, has come increasingly into question. The goal of giving equal balance to competing points of view can come at the expense of impartiality and evidence, distorting the public debate. The ability to cause large-scale disinformation and undermine

scientifically established facts is an existential risk to humanity. While vigorously defending the right to freedom of expression everywhere, we must equally encourage societies to develop a common, empirically backed **consensus on the public good of facts, science and knowledge**. We must make lying wrong again. Institutions can be a "reality check" for societies, curbing disinformation and countering hate speech and online harassment, including of women and girls. I urge acceleration of our efforts to produce and disseminate reliable and verified information. The United Nations plays a key role in this regard, which it can continue to strengthen, building on models such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Meteorological Organization [Scientific Advisory Panel](#) or the Verified initiative for [COVID-19](#). Other steps include support for public interest and independent media, regulation of social media, strengthening freedom of information or right to information laws and ensuring a prominent voice for science and expertise, for example through representation of science commissions in decision-making. A **global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information** could be explored together with States, media outlets and regulatory bodies, facilitated by the United Nations. With recent concerns about trust and mistrust linked to technology and the digital space, it is also time to understand, better regulate and manage our **digital commons as a global public good** (chap. IV).

C. Inclusion, protection and participation

27. A vibrant social contract guarantees the conditions for people to live a decent life, leaving no one behind and enabling all to participate in society, as promised in the 2030 Agenda. This means measures to address discrimination and to ensure that human rights are protected and people can meet their basic needs. Food, health care, water and sanitation, education and decent work are basic human rights. We must ensure a broad sharing of opportunity and human security

across society as we work towards a greener, more sustainable future. When people are left behind, this can be a profound driver of division, both within and between communities, ethnicities and religions, and of instability nationally, as well as in the international order.

28. **Social protection systems** have demonstrated their value during the COVID-19 pandemic, saving lives and backstopping economies at large. Without the surge in State-provided social protection, economic damage [could have been far worse](#). This is also the case for [previous crises](#). We must not lose this momentum. A new era for social protection systems would be a foundation for [peaceful societies](#) and other measures to leave no one behind and eradicate extreme poverty. I urge States to accelerate steps to achieve **universal social protection coverage**, including for the remaining 4 billion people currently unprotected, in line with target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. While the types and modalities of coverage may vary, [at a minimum](#) this means access to health care for all and basic income security for children, those unable to work and older persons. The gradual integration of the informal sector into social protection frameworks is also essential if we are to move towards universal coverage. To support this new era for social protection, I will ask the United Nations system to work with Member States to identify resources to invest in their systems where needed, including by **ring-fencing and setting spending targets** as a percentage of GDP, reallocating public expenditure, using proven techniques to combat corruption and illicit financial flows, deploying progressive fiscal policies and increasing budget transparency, participation and accountability. The establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection, being explored by the International Labour Organization (ILO), could support countries in increasing levels of funding devoted to social protection over time. Efforts by international financial institutions and States to achieve a fairer and more sustainable global economy and to provide liquidity to high-debt vulnerable countries would also increase fiscal

INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

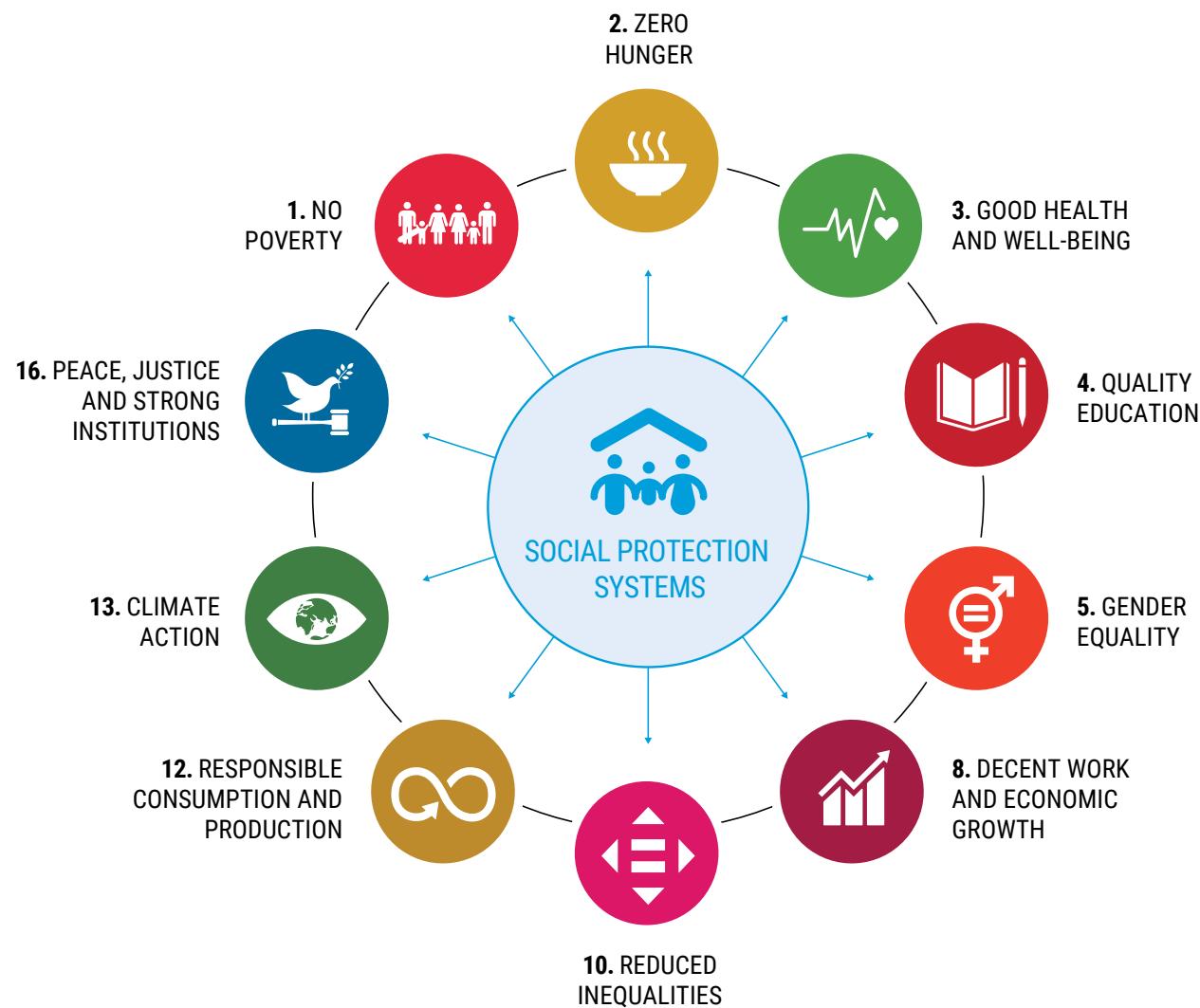
- [The wealth of billionaires increased by over \\$3.9 trillion between March and December 2020](#), while 4 billion people are still without any form of basic social protection.
- [92 per cent of African women are in the informal economy](#). This keeps them outside of social security systems.
- [A total of \\$78 billion would be needed for low-income countries](#) to establish social protection floors, including health care, covering their combined population of 711 million people.

space and ensure that money can be spent on vital social programmes (chap. IV). Similarly, if all donors met the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income, the ability of many countries to finance their human development, including social protection, would be radically transformed.

29. I encourage States to forge a post-pandemic consensus on other measures that speak directly to the social contract. **Education** (chap. III) and skills development must better support people's capacity to navigate technological, demographic, climate and other transitions throughout their lives. I would urge formal recognition of a **universal entitlement to lifelong learning** and reskilling, translated into practice through legislation, policy and effective lifelong learning systems. **Decent work** opportunities for all are also needed for shared prosperity. With the nature and types of work transforming rapidly, this requires a floor of rights and protections for all workers, irrespective of their employment arrangements, as laid out in the [ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#). Workers should not shoulder all the risks when it comes to their income, their hours of work and how they cope if they are ill or unemployed. Investment

SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS ARE CRITICAL TO ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



in sectors with the greatest potential for creating more and better jobs, such as the green, care and digital economies, is key and can be brought about through major public investment, along with incentive structures for long-term business investments consistent with human development and well-being. In particular, we need road maps to integrate informal workers into formal economies and to benefit from women's full participation in the workforce. The advancement of the human right to **adequate housing**, in line with target 11.1 of the

Sustainable Development Goals, proved its value in the public health measures taken in response to the pandemic. Impressive actions taken to house people have demonstrated what is possible with sufficient political will.

30. To take stock of these commitments and progress made as the world seeks to recover from COVID-19, consideration should be given to holding a **World Social Summit in 2025**. This would be an opportunity to hold a different form of global deliberation and to live up to the values, including



© UN-Women/Johis Alarcón

trust and listening, that underpin the social contract. The Summit outcome could be an update of the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, covering issues such as universal social protection floors, including universal health coverage, adequate housing, education for all and decent work, and give momentum towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. Perhaps humanity's greatest resource is our own collective capacity, half of which has historically been constrained as a result of gender discrimination. No meaningful social contract is possible without the active and equal participation of **women and girls**. Women's equal leadership, economic inclusion and gender-balanced decision-making are simply better

for everyone, men and women alike. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and [the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality](#) point the way. I urge Member States and other stakeholders to consider five related and transformative measures: (a) the full realization of equal rights, including through repeal of all gender-discriminatory laws (target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals); (b) measures to promote gender parity in all spheres and at all levels of decision-making, including quotas and special measures; (c) facilitating women's economic inclusion, including through large-scale investment in the care economy and equal pay, and more support for women entrepreneurs; (d) greater inclusion of the voices of younger women; and (e) an **emergency response plan** to accelerate

GENDER INEQUALITY

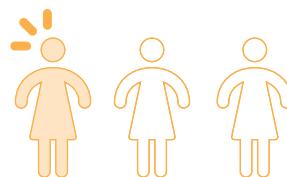
DISCRIMINATION



On average, **women have only 75%** of the rights of men.

Source: World Bank, 2021.

VIOLENCE



1 in 3 women are subject to **sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner** in their lifetime.

Source: WHO, 2021.



In 88 countries, **laws restrict the jobs and hours that women can work**, affecting **1.6 billion** women.

Source: World Bank, 2021.

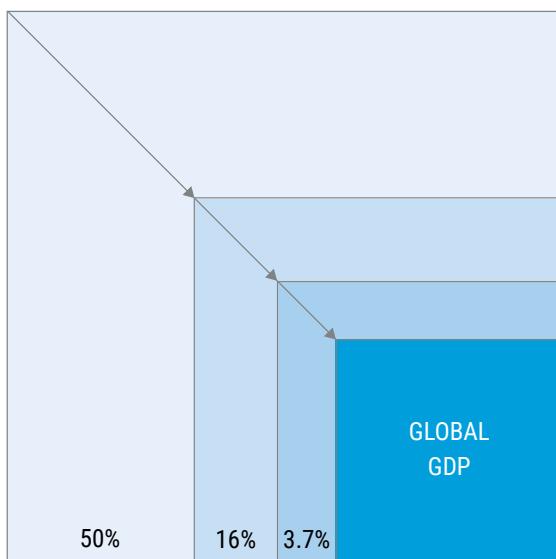


>1.4 billion women lack legal protection from domestic sexual or economic violence.

Source: World Bank, 2018.

ECONOMIC LOSS

Gender inequality causes **major losses in global GDP**.



GENDER INEQUALITY IN EARNINGS

GENDER DISCRIMINATION

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sources: World Bank, 2018; OECD, 2016; World Bank, 2019.

the eradication of violence against women and girls, as a priority, which the United Nations will support, backed by a global campaign to eliminate any social norm that tolerates, excuses or overlooks violence against women and girls, in line with target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals. This will also be central to the multi-stakeholder effort to significantly reduce all forms of violence worldwide (chap. IV).

32. I encourage Member States to strengthen efforts towards gender equality in all United Nations intergovernmental processes. The review of the working methods of the **Commission on the Status of Women** in 2021 could include a reassessment of the role of the Commission in relation to other intergovernmental mandates, and consideration of how to build on the multi-stakeholder momentum of the [Generation Equality Forum](#). The United Nations itself [will ensure gender parity](#) at all levels within the Organization by 2028. We will also undertake a review of United Nations system capacity – staffing, resources and architecture – to deliver on gender equality as a core priority across all entities.

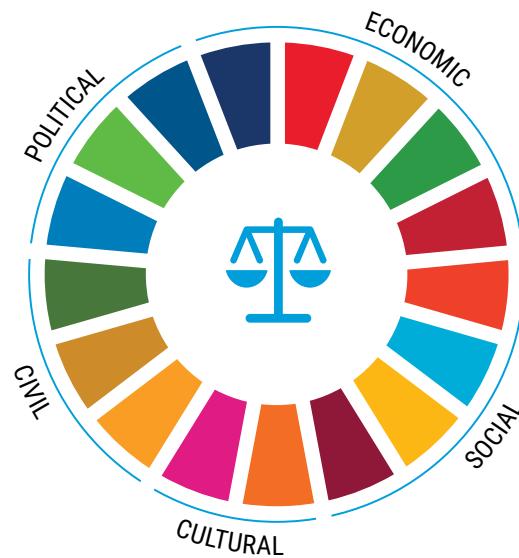
33. Underpinning the social contract is an unequivocal commitment to human rights. In my [Call to Action for Human Rights](#), I set out seven domains in need of particular attention, which are reflected across Our Common Agenda. Implementation of the **full spectrum of human rights** is at the heart of our capacity to recover from the pandemic, renew the social contract and more. Civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are mutually reinforcing, indivisible and universal, not ordinary services with a market-set price tag but essential factors in building more inclusive societies. Promoting and protecting civic space makes societies stronger and more resilient, building on the right to participate and freedom of expression, association and assembly. While upholding human rights is an obligation for all States, beyond that it is also time to treat rights as **problem-solving measures and ways to address grievances**, not just for individuals but for communities at large. We have a growing body of evidence that shows how institutions can be

THE CENTRALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

“Human rights are universal and indivisible. We must see human rights with a **vision that speaks to each and every human being** and encompasses all rights: economic; social; cultural; civil and political.”

- Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights

Human rights are vital problem-solving tools that **safeguard lives and livelihoods** and can prevent grievances from arising.



92% of all the **Sustainable Development Goals** are linked to human rights and labour standards.

Human rights serve the **whole of society** – not only the individual – and are central to the **social contract**.

designed to prevent human rights abuses. We also know that rights-respecting institutions strengthen the social contract, protecting societies as well as individuals.

34. Racism, intolerance and discrimination continue to exist in all societies, as seen during the pandemic with scapegoating of groups blamed for the virus. As a start, the adoption of comprehensive laws against discrimination, including based on race or ethnicity, age, gender, religion, disability, and sexual orientation or gender identity, is long overdue. New approaches to proactively support the participation in public affairs of those who have traditionally been marginalized, including minority and indigenous groups, are also necessary. Fuller use could be made of human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, in this regard, and I support the update of the modalities of the universal periodic review by the Human Rights Council as part of the new guidelines.

35. In 2023, we will commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 30 years since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights. As this milestone nears, the time has come to take stock, rejuvenate our shared values and update our thinking on human rights. Consideration should, for instance, be given to updating or clarifying our application of human rights frameworks and standards to address **frontier issues** and prevent harms in the digital or technology spaces, including in relation to freedom of speech, hate speech and harassment, privacy, the "right to be forgotten" and neuro-technology. The right to a healthy environment also warrants deeper discussion. It may be time to reinforce universal access to the Internet as a human right, with accelerated steps to connect the remaining 3.8 billion people offline to the Internet by 2030, notably those most often left behind, including women, along with indigenous and older people. The United Nations stands ready to work with Governments, businesses and civil society to find alternatives to disruptive blanket Internet shutdowns and generic blocking and filtering of

services to address the spread of disinformation and harmful life-threatening content, in line with international human rights law.

36. Finally, to ensure that everyone is seen and recognized, measures to prove legal identity (target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals) and end **statelessness**, including by [closing legal loopholes](#), and disaggregating data by age, gender and diversity are urged. People on the move require special attention, support and protection. While COVID-19 pandemic restrictions had severe consequences for human mobility and left many refugees and migrants stranded, [displacement continued to grow](#). Measures to protect, assist and find solutions for **the internally displaced**, benefiting from the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, are essential to leaving no one behind. I urge Governments and other stakeholders to make progress in putting the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration into practice, including through respect for the fundamental principle of non-refoulement and measures to provide access to asylum for refugees, by protecting and upholding the rights of all persons on the move, regardless of status, by supporting host countries and through the inclusion of **refugees and migrants** in essential public services.

D. Measuring and valuing what matters to people and the planet

37. Even with our planet undergoing rapid and dangerous change, economic models continue to assume endless expansion and growth and overlook the broader systems that sustain life and well-being. We need a pathway that protects people and the planet, allowing for sustainable development. This means broad shifts in what prosperity and progress mean, how to incentivize and measure them, and how to evaluate policies.

38. We must urgently find measures of progress that complement **GDP**, as we were tasked to do by

2030 in target 17.19 of the Sustainable Development Goals. We know that GDP fails to account for human well-being, planetary sustainability and non-market services and care, or to consider the distributional dimensions of economic activity. Absurdly, GDP rises when there is overfishing, cutting of forests or burning of fossil fuels. We are destroying nature, but we count it as an increase in wealth. Such discussions have been ongoing for decades. It is time to collectively commit to complementary measurements. Without that fundamental shift, the targets that we have fixed in relation to biodiversity, pollution and climate change will not be achievable. I will consult the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to determine how to advance this issue. Any process would need to bring together Member States, international financial institutions and statistical, science and policy experts to identify a complement or complements to GDP that will measure inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity, building on the work of the Statistical Commission. In addition to identifying complementary measures, the process would also need to agree on pathways for national and global accounting systems to include additional measurements, and to establish systems for regular reporting as part of official statistics. In the interim, I urge Member States

and others to already begin implementation of the recent System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) [Ecosystem Accounting](#) and the system for population and social conditions, and to consider existing complements or alternatives to GDP, such as the [human development index](#), the inclusive wealth index, the Genuine Progress Indicator, [the multidimensional poverty index](#) and the [inequality-adjusted human development index](#).

39. In rethinking GDP, we must also find ways to validate the care and informal economy. Specifically, most of the care work around the world is unpaid and done by women and girls, perpetuating economic inequality between genders. COVID-19 also had deeply gendered economic and job impacts that highlighted and exacerbated the trillions of dollars that are lost owing to billions of hours of unpaid care work performed every year. Rethinking the care economy means valuing unpaid care work in economic models but also investing in quality paid care as part of essential public services and social protection arrangements, including by improved pay and working conditions (target 5.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals). More broadly, we also need to find new ways to account for and value the vast informal economy.



Succeeding generations: shaping the future



III. Succeeding generations: shaping the future

40. In 1945, the promise was to save "succeeding generations" from the scourge of war. A similar promise today would necessarily encompass a much broader range of threats, including the very viability of human life on earth. Yet we are far from keeping that promise. This current generation of young people sees a world in which their future is compromised in multiple ways. We are already feeling the impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, which will only become more devastating and irreversible in the future. Many young people have a lack of trust in the ability of existing institutions and leadership to meet their concerns. COVID-19 threw these questions into even sharper relief. Any renewal of the social contract must include a profound deepening of solidarity between generations. Young people need to believe that they have a stake in society and a viable future. They also need to see society believe and invest in them.

41. This renewal of solidarity between generations should extend not only to those currently alive but also to their children and grandchildren. Humanity faces a series of long-term challenges that evolve over the course of multiple human life spans: warming and degradation of the planet, as well as managing new technologies such as artificial intelligence and gene editing, demographic shifts towards an older population, urbanization and the evolution of social welfare provision. With the fourth industrial revolution, we are in one of the most important transformational moments in recent history. The way in which people live, work, eat and interact with each other is likely to look very different in the future. Yet our dominant political and economic incentives remain weighted heavily in favour of the short term and status quo, prioritizing immediate gains at the expense of longer-term human and planetary well-being. Decisions made today will shape the course of the planet for centuries. Our understanding of "we the peoples" in the Charter of the United Nations needs

SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS

Decisions made today will define the future for younger and future generations.



SOLIDARITY WITH YOUNGER GENERATIONS

-  Voice and participation
-  Quality education
-  Sustainable jobs

SOLIDARITY WITH FUTURE GENERATIONS

-  Long-term thinking
-  Represent future generations

SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE

-  **HEALTHY PLANET**
-  **STRONG INSTITUTIONS**
-  **HEALTH, SOCIAL PROTECTION**
-  **EDUCATION, WORK**
-  **PREPAREDNESS**

to be expanded to protect the interests of all the people of the twenty-first century and to bequeath a liveable world to those who will follow.

42. Young people today, along with future generations, will have to live with the consequences of our action and inaction. Today's generation of young people is distinct from future generations. However, it is time to find ways to give more weight to their collective interests and to make our systems work to safeguard their futures. This renewal of solidarity between generations is an integral part of the other actions identified in this report, otherwise the social contract that shapes the future will be designed exclusively by those who will not live to see it realized.

A. Solidarity with younger generations

43. The world today is home to the largest generation of young people in history at 1.8 billion people, close to 90 per cent of whom live in developing countries. Young people have never been more educated or more connected, yet they continue to face significant obstacles to achieving their full potential. Some [267 million young people](#) (15–24 years old) are not in education, employment or training, two thirds of whom are young women as a result of [gendered expectations](#) of unpaid family work and informal employment. The pandemic has only made this [worse](#). The pandemic also exposed large disparities between developed and least developed countries in the numbers of young people online, notably affecting their capacity to continue education remotely during school closures. Young people tell us that our systems do not listen to them meaningfully and that our systems are short-sighted and do not take their concerns seriously.

44. Delivering on the priorities of young people and meaningfully including them in decision-making are investments that will deliver immediate returns, as well as build human capital and social cohesion for the longer term. The actions below respond to

the priorities identified by young people during the [consultations](#) for Our Common Agenda and the [seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations](#).

Having a voice

45. Some countries have created opportunities for younger generations to have a voice in decisions that affect them, through youth councils, parliaments and ministries. However, these solutions have not always avoided tokenism, often remaining peripheral to core political processes. Youth-led protest movements are frequently driven by deep distrust of today's political classes and desire for proper engagement in decision-making. Yet some authorities have clamped down on peaceful protest, dismissed young people as too inexperienced and treated them as beneficiaries or, worse, as [threats](#) rather than equal partners. At the global level, young people have been formally recognized as critical actors within intergovernmental frameworks on peace and security, sustainable development, climate change, human rights and humanitarian action. Yet here, too, engagement is not always meaningful, nor does it guarantee geographical, gender, income and other forms of diversity.

46. In line with the commitments made by Member States in the [declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations](#) to listen to and work with youth, governments are urged to promote **political representation for youth**, including young women and girls. This could entail lowering the voting age and the eligibility age for standing as a candidate for elected office, as well as strengthening youth participatory bodies. Supporting the political participation of a diverse range of young people may mean challenging social norms and stereotypes, especially in relation to gender, as well as in relation to other forms of marginalization. Young people are also urged to seize the opportunities available to them, including by exercising their right to vote. Together with leading researchers and academic institutions, I will explore a "**youth in politics**" index to track the opening of political space in countries around the world that younger generations are so clearly

demanding, as well as the participation of young people in these processes.

47. Within the United Nations system, the bond with young people can be further strengthened, for instance through regular check-ins, recognizing their diversity and reaching those who are marginalized. Efforts will be stepped up to increase youth participation in our support to electoral processes and in peacebuilding efforts, including by building the capacity of local youth networks and youth-led organizations. While our envoys on youth have increased the profile of youth issues in the Organization, if the United Nations is to live up to its [commitments](#) this work must be put on a more sustainable footing. I propose the establishment of a **dedicated United Nations Youth Office** in the Secretariat, which will integrate the current activities of the Office of the Envoy on Youth, continue to lead high-level advocacy and serve as the anchor for United Nations system coordination and accountability on youth matters across our work on peace, sustainable development, humanitarian issues and human rights. In the meantime, my Envoy on Youth will prepare recommendations for **more meaningful, diverse and effective youth engagement in United Nations deliberative and decision-making processes**, for the consideration of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and their respective subsidiary bodies. This will be done in consultation with the world's young people and in coordination with United Nations system agencies and other stakeholders.

Learning

48. **Quality education** (including early childhood education) is a fundamental [human right](#) – one of society's great equalizers, a prerequisite for young people to be equipped to exercise their voice and contribute to the social contract, and a foundation for tolerance, peace, human rights and sustainability. Yet the provision of education today is in turmoil. Over 90 per cent of children in the world have had their education interrupted by COVID-19, [the largest](#) disruption of education

systems in history. For many students, especially girls and young women, this break may become permanent, with potential consequences for their rights, equality and development for future generations. Even prior to COVID-19, traditional education systems were still not reaching some 258 million children and young people in the world and were [failing to provide](#) many students with even basic foundational skills such as reading and mathematics. Students in developing and developed countries alike tell us that they leave the education system without the tools that they need to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world, including digital literacy, global citizenship and sustainable development. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that both early childhood education and lifelong learning, so crucial for individuals and society at large, remain an aspiration in most countries.

49. Our priority should be to help children and young people to catch up on learning lost during the pandemic while transforming education systems so that students reach their full potential. I will champion lifelong learning for all and convene a **Summit on Transforming Education in 2022** to accelerate progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The Summit will forge a common vision for education, building on the forthcoming work of the [International Commission on the Futures of Education](#) and other recent progress including the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education fund and the establishment of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism. We need a road map for teaching all children to read, write and perform basic mathematics and for giving them other core skills. Education systems need to be modernized and connected, making learning more student-centred, dynamic, inclusive and collaborative. We can succeed only if we value the world's teachers and work with them as partners in transforming schools, colleges and universities. The Summit will tackle crucial issues, including equity, the education obstacles faced by girls and young women, the transition from education to employment, and the promotion of lifelong learning and reskilling. It will

THE LEARNING CRISIS



COVID-19

School closures from COVID-19 have left over a billion students out of school and could cause students to **lose \$10 trillion in earnings** over their working lives.

\$10,000,000,000,000

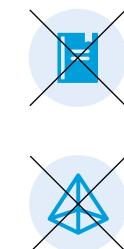
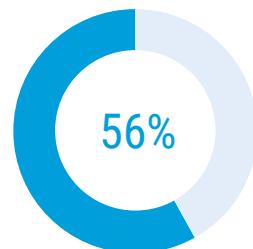


Source: World Bank, 2020.



FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

More than half - 56% - of all **children will not be able to read or be proficient in mathematics** by the time they complete primary education.



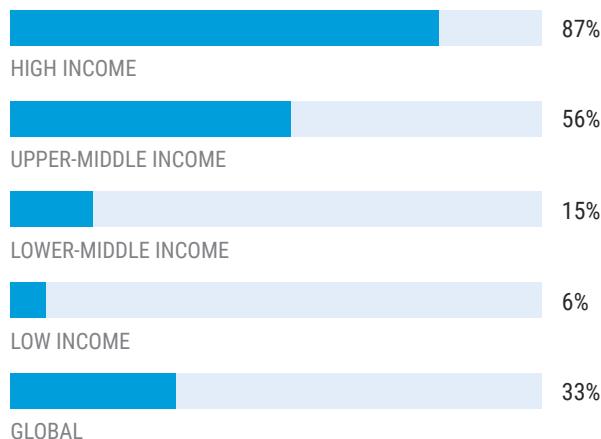
Source: UNESCO, 2017.



DIGITAL INCLUSION

Reimagining education means investing in digital literacy and digital infrastructure to **close the digital divide**.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ONLINE, 2020



Source: ITU, 2020.



FUNDING GAP

Low- and middle-income countries face a **\$148 billion annual education funding gap** when compared with what is needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, quality education.

TOTAL ANNUAL EDUCATION FINANCING NEEDS: \$504 BILLION

\$148 billion

29% FINANCING GAP

Source: UNESCO, 2020.

also address the lack of adequate financing for national education transformation efforts, including the operationalization of the International Finance Facility for Education and other domestic and international resources. Digital inclusivity will be a vital part of the Summit, building on existing efforts such as the [Giga initiative](#), which aims to ensure that all schools are connected to the Internet by 2030. Broader investments in the education sector could also be explored, including the next generation of teachers and open-source digital education tools. Summit preparations will involve governments, students, teachers and leading United Nations entities, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). They will also draw on the private sector and major technology companies, which can contribute to the digital transformation of education systems.

COVID-19 IMPACT ON EDUCATION

- [Half of the world's students were still affected by school closures](#) a year after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which contributed in part to an increase in child marriage and child labour.

Prospering

50. Another priority identified by youth is the availability and sustainability of decent **jobs and economic opportunities**. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on young workers and those transitioning to employment, particularly young women. Too many are settling for work in the informal sector or jobs for which they are



© UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

overqualified and underpaid, neither meeting their aspirations nor allowing them to unleash their full potential, and perpetuating underdevelopment and lack of tax revenue in low- and lower-middle-income countries. A focus is needed on (re)skilling and upskilling youth and connecting them from learning to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. The availability of decent jobs for youth is also tied to the sustainability of their futures, including efforts to transition to low-emission and climate-resilient labour markets.

COVID-19 IMPACT ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

- Globally, [youth employment fell by 8.7 per cent in 2020](#) compared with 3.7 per cent for older adults.

51. As they emerge from the pandemic, Member States are urged to consider **youth labour guarantees**, alongside macroeconomic and industrial policies to boost labour demand, drawing on the "not in education, employment or training" (NEET) indicator. Other measures could include extending social protection systems to young workers; reducing barriers to advanced education and labour market participation, including due to gender or other forms of discrimination; expanding apprenticeship schemes and technical and vocational training; and integrating young voices in social dialogue and decision-making. Youth have, in particular, asked that entrepreneurship be promoted, including through start-up capital and training in business, digital and essential soft entrepreneurship skills. In support of State efforts and the existing Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, the United Nations, together with international financial institutions, will launch a **recovery barometer** that will track career paths and labour market outcomes for youth between now and 2025 and beyond as part of the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, concerted efforts to adopt new technologies and invest in green economies could

result in [24 million new "jobs of the future" by 2030](#). One way to proceed could be the formation of a **high-ambition coalition** to promote green and digital economy job creation, involving relevant ministers (finance, planning, labour and education), youth and other key stakeholders from the 20 countries whose labour markets and workforce will expand most rapidly over the next decade, emphasizing equal access for women and girls to these jobs and the transition from the informal to the formal sectors.

B. Solidarity with future generations

52. Investing in younger generations will deliver crucial returns for those alive today, but the complex problems that we face will unfold over multiple lifespans. Today's decisions on issues such as climate, technology and development will profoundly alter the livelihoods of the [10.9 billion](#) people who are expected to be born later this century, predominantly in Africa and Asia.

53. The principle of **intergenerational equity** – recognizing responsibilities towards future generations – has deep roots in diverse cultural and religious traditions and is reflected in the Charter of



© UN Photo/Mark Garten

the United Nations. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development [found](#) that the “profligacy” of living generations was “rapidly closing the options for future generations”, calling for drastic action to protect them. The well-being of future generations has since been acknowledged in international documents on sustainable development and the environment, as well as the UNESCO [Declaration on the Responsibility of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations](#). However, this recognition has not necessarily resulted in meaningful steps to account for the interests of future generations, either nationally or within the multilateral system. Short-term calculations continue to dominate policymaking.

54. The proposals in this report would lead to approaches being put in place that will benefit future generations over the long term. Beyond this, I invite States and other stakeholders to **consider specific steps to account for the interests of future generations** in national and global decision-making. While the modalities at the national level are matters for States to decide, some options are set out below. Accounting for the interests of future generations would require two adaptations: strengthening our capacities to understand and assess the future, building long-term thinking into important policies and decision-making; and creating specific forums and instruments to protect the interests of future generations at all levels of governance.

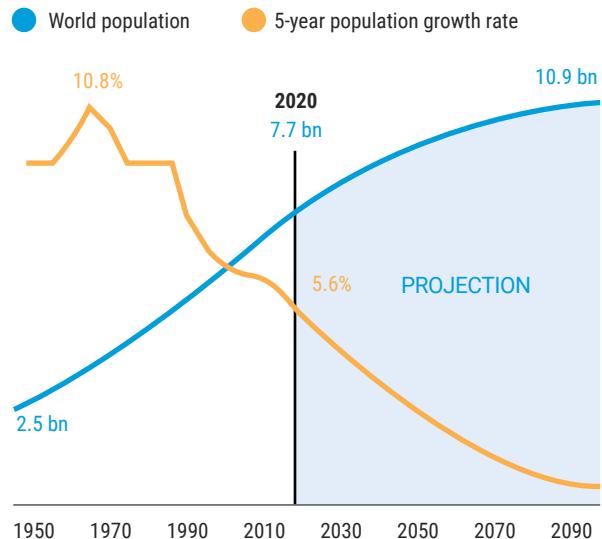
Long-term intergenerational thinking

55. The gravitational pull of short-term thinking is strong and growing. Ours is an age of acceleration and volatility, where boom-bust markets, shifting political dynamics and technologically driven innovations demand rapid responses and quick results. At the same time, we have the capacity to think for the longer term more than ever before. Technological, climate and demographic modelling offer us empirically backed scenarios reaching until the end of the twenty-first century and beyond. We know, for example, that our current rates of carbon emissions are leading to global temperature changes

POPULATION GROWTH

POPULATION GROWTH PEAKED IN THE LATE 1960s

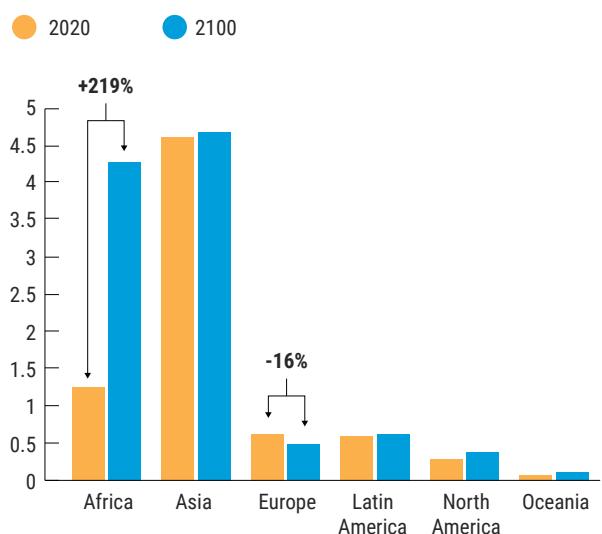
World population growth, 1950–2100



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019.

POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS TO 2100: LARGEST INCREASE IN AFRICA; DECLINE IN EUROPE

The world population in 2020 and 2100 (in billions)



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019.

that will irreversibly affect every person on the planet. This knowledge needs to become a source of action. It is time to place long-term analysis, planning and thinking at the heart of national governance and the multilateral system. We must expand our thinking and institutions across time.

56. The United Nations will review its work to strengthen this capacity. This will include conducting future impact assessments of major policies and programmes, convening foresight and planning experts across the United Nations system and its multilateral partners, regularly reporting on megatrends and catastrophic risks (chap. IV) and working with a wider community of governmental, academic, civil society, private sector, philanthropic and other actors to strengthen strategic foresight, preparedness for catastrophic risks, and anticipatory decision-making that values instead of discounts the future. Collectively, this body of work would come together in a **Futures Laboratory ("Futures Lab")** and could support States, subnational authorities and others to build capacity and exchange good practices to enhance long-termism, forward action and adaptability.

Representing future generations

57. Future generations are, by definition, unrepresented in today's decision-making and unable to articulate their needs. To translate the principle of intergenerational equity into practice, consideration could be given to forums to act on their behalf, as their trustees, as well as instruments to further protect their interests.

58. At the national level, some countries have established **committees for the future or future generations commissioners** who advise governments and public bodies on the effects of

present decisions on people in the future. Other States could establish similar mechanisms, building on these good practices. At the multilateral level, a growing number of Member States and advocates have proposed options to represent succeeding generations in the United Nations system, including through a Commissioner or Ombudsperson for Future Generations, a Commission of Global Guardians for the Future, or a repurposed Trusteeship Council. To help explore the viability of these and other options, I propose the appointment of a **Special Envoy for Future Generations**, building on a proposal by my predecessor in 2013. The Special Envoy could be tasked with representing the interests of those who are expected to be born over the coming century. The Special Envoy could also support the work of the multilateral system on long-term thinking and foresight, including through the Futures Lab mentioned above. One of the first tasks of the Special Envoy could be to explore, together with Member States, the use of the Trusteeship Council to give a voice to succeeding generations (chap. V).

59. Member States might also consider reflecting duties to future generations in their Constitutions and national legislative frameworks, a step already taken by many countries. The interests of younger and future generations are increasingly being considered by national courts, particularly in the context of climate change and the environment. Internationally, these efforts could be consolidated in a **Declaration on Future Generations**. This could build on the above-mentioned UNESCO Declaration to specify duties to succeeding generations and develop a mechanism to share good practices and monitor how governance systems address long-term challenges.



IV

Nations large and small: a new global deal to deliver global public goods and address major risks



IV. Nations large and small: a new global deal to deliver global public goods and address major risks

60. A renewed social contract at the national level and stronger intergenerational solidarity must find expression in a new deal at the global level. The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us that we are more interconnected and interdependent than ever before in human history. International cooperation mitigated some of the harms caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the response to the pandemic also exposed serious gaps in the effectiveness of multilateral action when it was needed most. We cannot afford to ignore those gaps if we are to be ready for the potentially more extreme, or even existential, threats that may lie ahead of us. To achieve the breakthrough scenario, a serious renewal of the principles and practices of collective action at the global level is needed, building on what is working and what has been achieved.

A. Protecting the global commons and delivering global public goods

61. The twin concepts of the global commons and global public goods are used in various contexts and fields, including law and economics. While they lack agreed definitions, for our purposes they represent a useful starting point for a serious review of where we stand. The **global commons** usually refer to natural or cultural resources that are shared by and benefit us all. They include the four conventionally understood commons that are beyond national jurisdiction – the high seas, the atmosphere, Antarctica and outer space – all of which are now in crisis. Public goods are understood as those goods and services provided to and benefiting all of society, which at the national level may include street lighting, fire departments,

traffic control or clean water. Certain **public goods have long been acknowledged as being global** in nature, in that they cannot be adequately provided by any one State acting alone and they concern the welfare of humanity as a whole. These have traditionally ranged from global aspirations for peace, to practicalities, such as international civil aviation regulation. Ultimately, what distinguishes these precious domains is that their protection is an increasingly urgent task that we can only undertake together. Despite this, the multilateral system is not yet geared for the strategies, investments or solidarity needed, leaving all of us vulnerable to crises, such as in global public health, demonstrated by COVID-19, in the global economy and financial system, as in the 2008 financial crisis and current COVID-19 shock, and in the health of our planet, resulting in the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution we now face.

62. One of the strongest calls emanating from the consultations on the seventy-fifth anniversary and Our Common Agenda was to strengthen the governance of our global commons and global public goods. This does not require new institutions. Rather, we need new resolve and ways of working together that are suited to the challenges we face and the diverse landscape of actors (public, civic and private) that have the capacity to contribute to solutions. The balance between a global breakthrough and a breakdown scenario hinges on the choices we make now. These choices are ultimately in the hands of Member States, with the support of other relevant stakeholders.

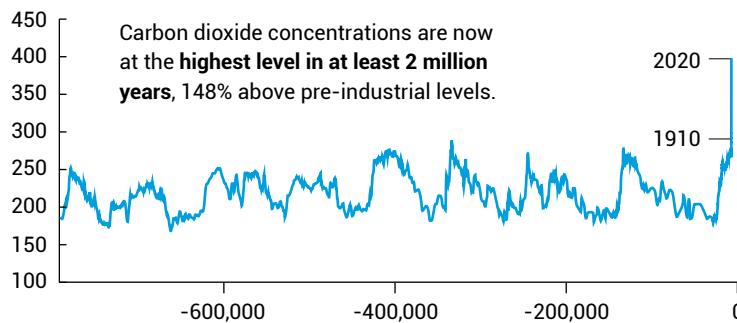
63. Drawing on our extensive consultations and the guidance of the seventy-fifth anniversary declaration, I set out below some areas of international concern that could be considered

PROJECTED DEGRADATION OF THE GLOBAL COMMONS

ATMOSPHERE

Trends in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration over 800,000 years

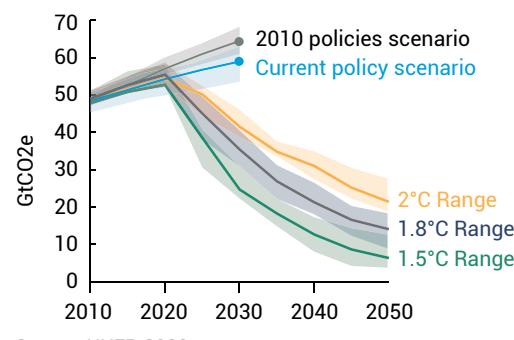
Mean carbon dioxide concentrations globally
ppm



Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2020.

Projections for global GHG emissions under different scenarios

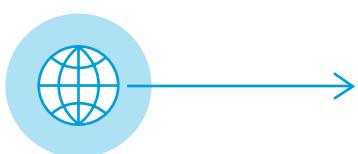
Note: Projections do not take into account commitments announced in early 2021.



Source: UNEP, 2020.

OUTER SPACE

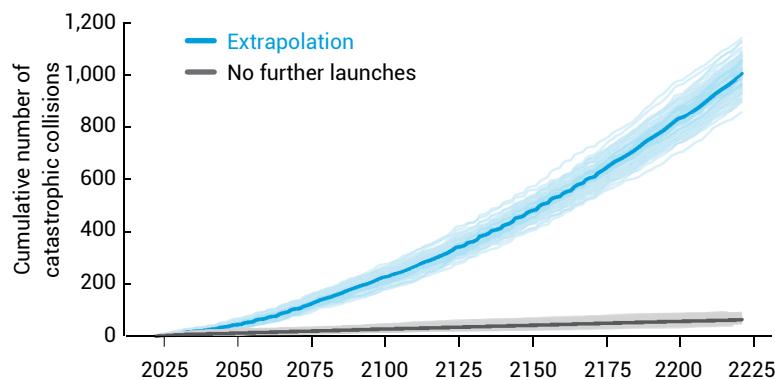
As the density of objects in orbit increases, so does the likelihood of collisions, where each collision will create further debris in a chain reaction **potentially rendering space unusable for generations**.



Lower orbit (2,000 km)

Outer space debris

Source: European Space Agency, 2021.



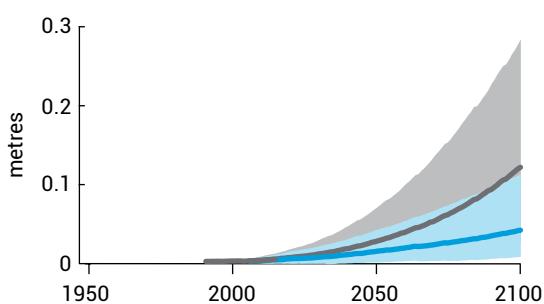
ANTARCTICA

Antarctic ice sheet mass loss

Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2019.

as sea level equivalent, change relative to 1986–2005

+1.5°C scenario +4.3°C scenario

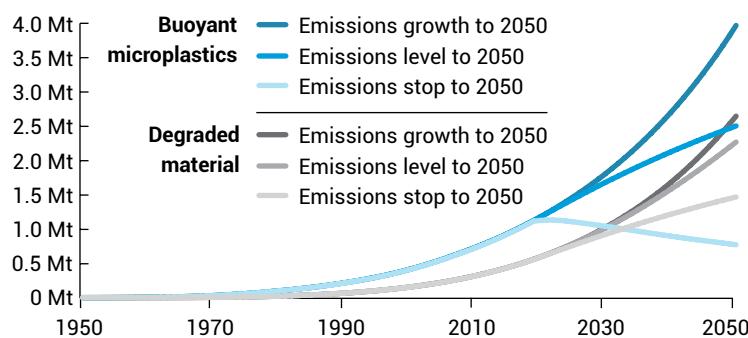


HIGH SEAS

Projected pollution of the sea

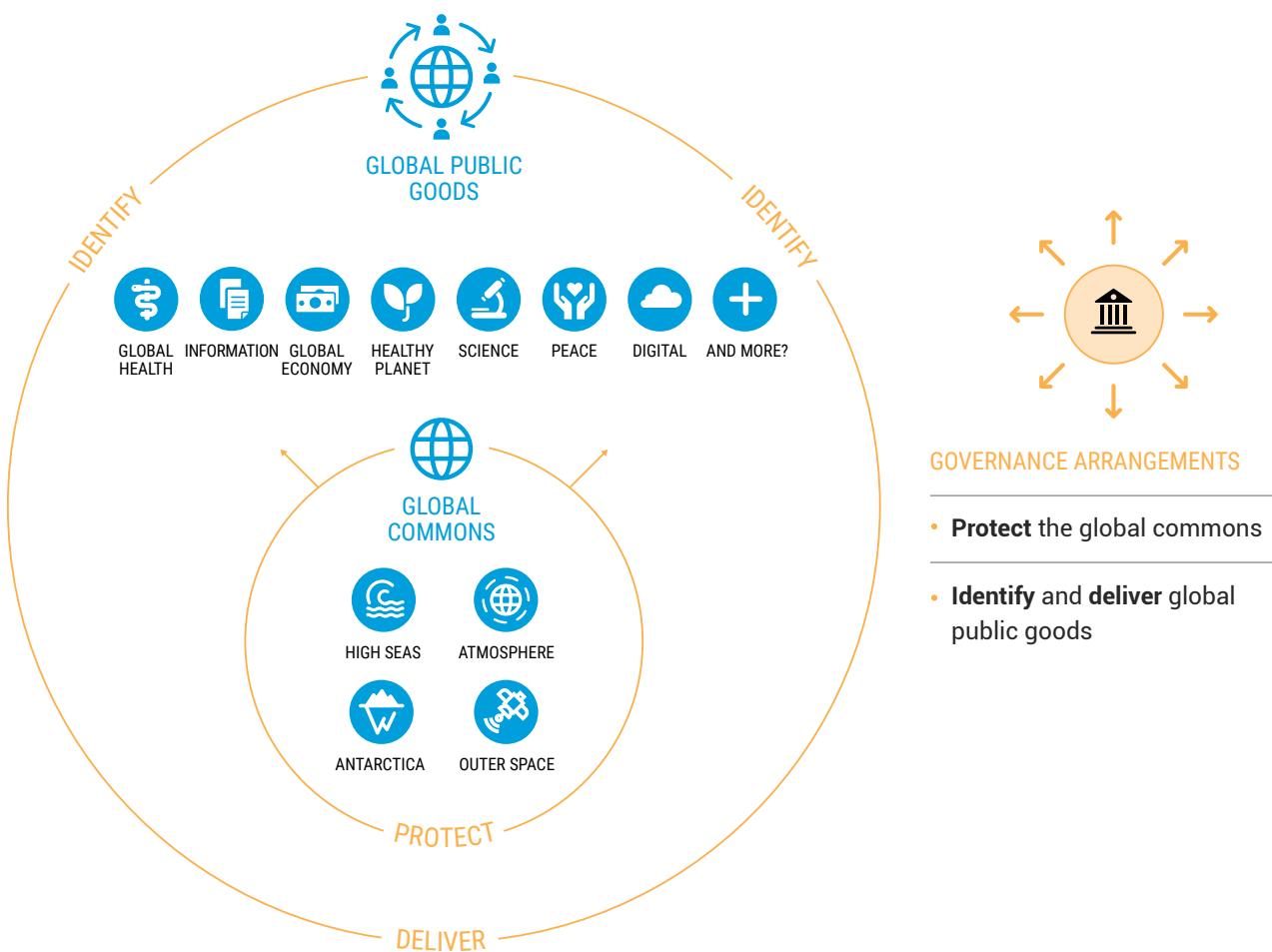
Source: Lebreton and others, 2019.

Even with an extremely ambitious scenario (no further emissions in the ocean by 2020), **the level of microplastics in the ocean could double by mid-century as already accumulated plastic waste slowly degrades into smaller pieces**.



GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS AND THE GLOBAL COMMONS

DELIVER AND PROTECT



as global public goods where action is needed. I also consider how these global concerns could be better served or protected. In some areas, robust agreements and momentum exist but they are failing to keep pace with the gravity of the challenge or are suffering from lack of implementation, while in other areas agreements or road maps are dated, fragmented or nascent.

Global public health

64. The costs of our failure to heed the warnings of a possible pandemic and work together more effectively once the virus took hold will reverberate for generations to come. We must ensure this never happens again. Mechanisms to manage health as

a global public good effectively and proactively are essential for the very sustainability and safety of human life. To achieve many of the proposals set out in this report, we must first work to end and recover from the pandemic. We must also address the gaps and inequities that made us so vulnerable in the first place, building on what has worked and drawing lessons from what has not.

65. Governance of global public health is underfunded, siloed and distorted by a lack of incentives for equity. Improvements in recent decades in response to specific crises have not always been sustained or implemented in full. Global leadership has been impeded by limitations in the mandate of the World Health Organization

(WHO) and its chronic underfunding, with 80 per cent of its \$2 billion annual budget dependent on earmarked contributions, which undermines its independence and capacity to deliver on its mandate. However, even in the face of necessary but hard questions, it is important not to lose sight of what has gone right, thanks in part to a robust ecosystem of partnerships, as well as recent steps to strengthen WHO, the International Health Regulations (2005) and regional capacities, such as the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Had the virus broken out a decade or more earlier, the consequences would have been more dire. Improved health surveillance, scientific advances and public-private partnerships have been vital to the unprecedented development of effective COVID-19 rapid tests, treatments and vaccines.

66. The recommendations of the [Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response](#) provide an important starting point. I lend my support to many of its findings and offer the following additional proposals.

67. The greatest near-term test of multilateralism is the effort to end the COVID-19 pandemic, notably by winning the race between vaccines and variants. As of mid-July 2021, over 3.4 billion vaccine doses had been administered globally, but in an uneven manner leaving us all vulnerable. We need over 11 billion doses for the global population to cross the 70 per cent vaccination threshold that might end the acute phase of this pandemic. This will involve the largest public health effort in history. In short, the world needs a **global vaccination plan** to: (a) at least double the production of vaccines and ensure equitable distribution, using the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility as the platform; (b) coordinate implementation and financing; and (c) support countries' readiness and capacity to roll out immunization programmes while tackling the serious problem of vaccine hesitancy. To realize this plan, I have called for an emergency task force which brings together all the countries with vaccine production capacities, WHO, the Gavi Alliance and international financial institutions

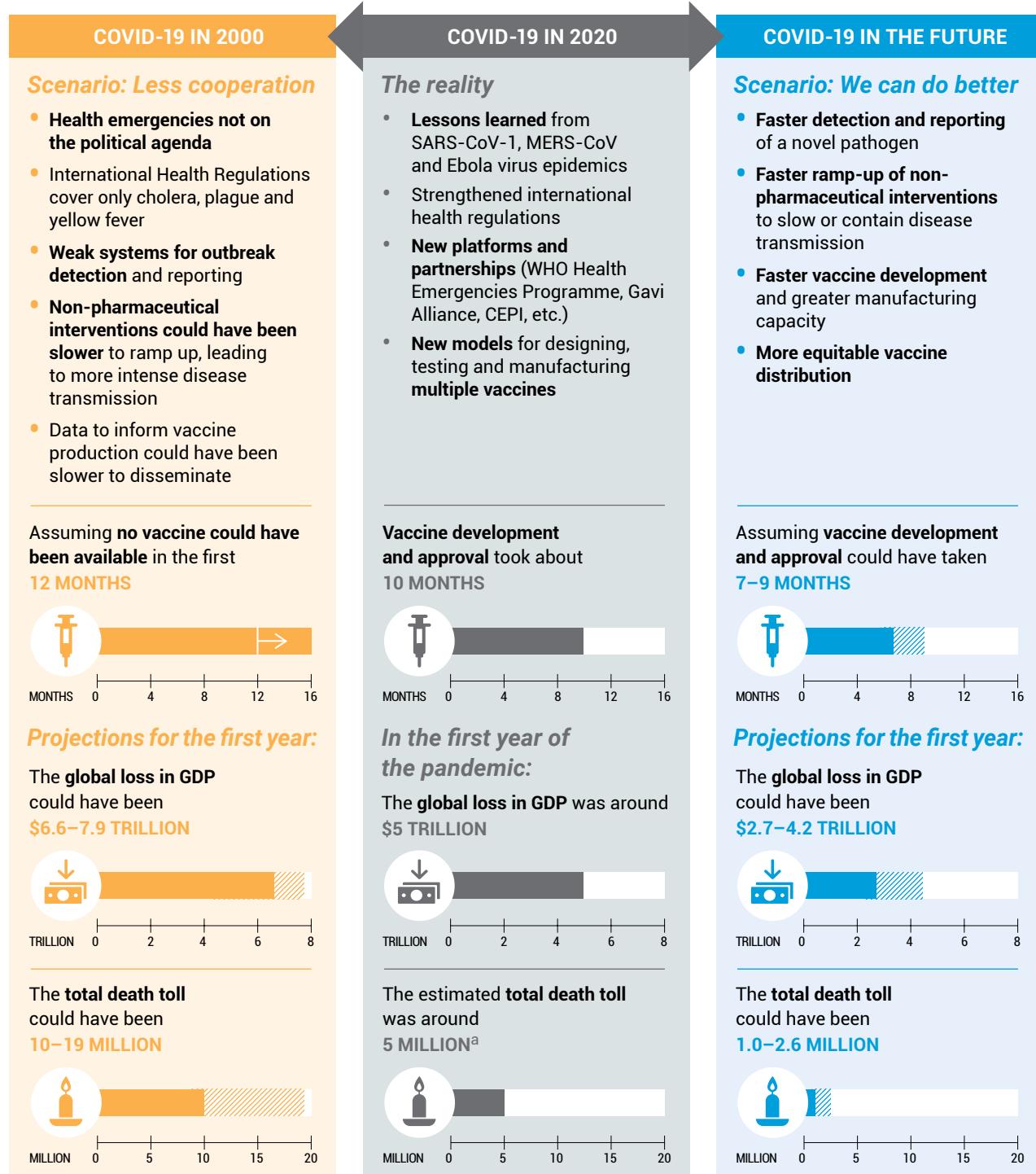
able to deal with the relevant pharmaceutical companies and manufacturers, as well as other key stakeholders. Greater sharing of technology and know-how will need to underpin such an effort, including strengthening and building local production capacities around the world. It is critical that efforts are sustainable, so that we are better prepared to respond to the next health emergency.



© World Bank/Vincent Tremeau

68. Longer-term governance of global health must focus more on prevention, preparedness and equity. There are several areas where collective action is urgently needed. First, the **independence, authority and financing of WHO** must be strengthened. This includes greater financial stability and autonomy, based on fully unearmarked resources, increased funding and an organized replenishment process for the remainder of the budget. As recommended by the Independent Panel, it also requires empowerment of WHO with respect to normative, policy and technical guidance and evaluation, as well as full access to information and information-sharing. WHO needs to play a leading and coordinating role in the emergency response to a pandemic, and WHO country offices must have the resources and be equipped to respond to technical

THE CASE FOR COOPERATION: POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE TRAJECTORIES FOR COVID-19



Sources: United Nations Foundation and Metabiota, 2021.

Note: These estimates are based on simulations of the potential trajectory and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic under different levels of multilateral cooperation. The simulations used contemporary demographic and population mobility data and ran from the start of the pandemic through 28 February 2021, covering approximately the first year of the crisis.

Abbreviations: CEPI, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations; MERS, Middle East respiratory syndrome; SARS, severe acute respiratory syndrome.

^a This is an estimate of total deaths; reported COVID-19 cases and deaths over the same time period are lower due to underreporting.

requests from Governments to support pandemic preparedness and response.

69. Secondly, **global health security and preparedness** (particularly investment in pandemic preparedness, but also for a broader set of potential health challenges) need to be strengthened through sustained political commitment and leadership at the highest level. I encourage States to consider the recommendations made by the Independent Panel, including the updating of national preparedness plans for future health crises and a universal periodic peer review process to foster accountability and learning between countries. The international system for pandemic preparedness and response, including systems to ensure early detection, an independent verification capacity for WHO and the containment of emerging pathogens, must be adequately and predictably financed, possibly through a facility that builds on existing global health financing mechanisms to reduce fragmentation. I encourage States collectively to commit to increasing international financing for pandemic prevention and preparedness, as recommended by the [G20 High Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response](#). We also need a more robust toolbox for compliance with the International Health Regulations (2005). Efforts by WHO member States to achieve a pandemic preparedness and response instrument are welcome in this regard. The platform for complex emergencies, proposed below, would also be available in the event of a future pandemic as a complement to any measures taken by WHO to strengthen its global surveillance system and declare public health emergencies of international concern.

70. Thirdly, building on the ACT-Accelerator model, **product development and access to health technologies** should be accelerated in low- and middle-income countries, especially for neglected or emerging infectious diseases, but also for a wider range of health threats such as antimicrobial resistance. This will require more resilient manufacturing and supply chains, including at

the regional level, along with incentives that link research and development investments with health results rather than profits, such as reward systems or health-impact funds to foster future innovations. Further consideration could be given to technology transfers and commitments to voluntary licensing in agreements where public funding has been invested in research and development.

71. Finally, COVID-19 has shown the deep social impacts of global health crises. Some Governments have taken steps to put in place universal health coverage, including for mental health, and all countries are urged to do so without delay. Measures to address the social determinants of health are also vital. This means recognizing the interconnection between people, animals and plants and their shared environment through concepts such as One Health, reducing pollution, de-risking our food systems, reducing poverty and gender inequality, and promoting global biosecurity.

A global economy that works for all

72. The COVID-19 pandemic is only the latest reminder of our vulnerability to economic shocks. Rapid improvements were made to global systems to avoid a worldwide recession in response to the 2008 crisis, but blind spots in national economic policies continue to be mirrored at the global level, including the tendency to judge success by narrow, short-term measures of profit and growth and the perverse incentives of business practices that put shareholders' interests above those of all other stakeholders. The pandemic also exposed other problems, not least the limits of GDP as a threshold for determining international support despite other risks and vulnerabilities, the lack of resilience in international trade and supply chains and the short-sightedness of a system that cannot agree to invest adequately in a global vaccine drive that could [save half a million lives in 2021 and add \\$9 trillion to the global economy](#) through 2025, a return that far exceeds the estimated costs of \$50 billion.

73. A global economy that is sustainable and equitable has characteristics of a global public good, requiring robust international cooperation

together with a rethinking of the interdependence between the economy, people and the planet. Economic governance is driven disproportionately by a small number of States and financial actors, and is siloed from other areas of international agenda-setting and decision-making, despite welcome efforts being made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, among others, to better account for sustainable development, human rights and preparedness and resilience. Building on the spirit of previous proposals for an Economic Security Council, as well as the collaboration observed during the pandemic, I propose a **Biennial Summit at the level of heads of State and Government between the members of the G20 and the members of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General and the heads of the international financial institutions** to work towards a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient global economy. This would allow us to combine more systematically the respective strengths of relevant bodies and to make fuller use of the follow-up to the intergovernmental process on financing for sustainable development. Immediate matters this biennial gathering could promote include ultra-long-term and innovative financing for sustainable development and a Sustainable Development Goals "investment boost" for a green and just transition for all countries in need, more flexible research and development incentives to foster innovation and a process to resolve longstanding weaknesses in the international debt architecture. Agreement could also be pursued on a "last mile alliance" to catalyse and elevate policy action to reach those furthest behind as part of efforts to achieve the Goals.

74. A fairer and more resilient multilateral **trading system** would be open, rules-based, transparent and non-discriminatory. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is being reinvigorated and updated to take account of twenty-first century realities, such as electronic commerce and the digital economy, which offer opportunities for the inclusion of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and women in international trade. Efforts are also needed, however, to align international trade

with the green and circular economies, including by broadening negotiations on environmental goods and services. We must move away from protectionist approaches, maximizing trade at all costs, with massive spillover effects, towards a system that incentivizes the adoption of welfare-improving practices and effective multilateral trade agreements. This also means promoting and valuing technological capacity, innovation and resilience in developing countries, including through more flexibility in intellectual property rights, technology transfer, trade facilitation support and limits on the use of trade restrictions, especially in a global pandemic. Reinstating an effective dispute settlement mechanism to be able to address trade tensions is key.

75. A resilient global economy would also see more countries able to support their own inhabitants, through financing for sustainable development linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. This, in turn, requires adequately resourced public sectors and private actors who understand themselves to be contributing to and benefiting from the delivery of global public goods. Stronger global cooperation to promote financial integrity by addressing endemic **tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance**, as well as illicit financial flows, is long



© UN Photo/Manuel Elias

overdue (as discussed in chap. II above). Measures to increase fairness, such as a minimum global corporate tax and solidarity taxes, would be clear signals that private enterprises and the very wealthy who benefit most from current economic models must contribute to the national and global public good. Efforts to find consensus on complementary measures to GDP could be reinforced by a global shift away from relying on GDP to determine access to concessional finance and support, led by international financial institutions along with the United Nations. Indices of vulnerability to external shocks and systemic risk criteria could be given greater weight. Multilateral development banks could also revise their operations and asset management rules to increase their capacity to support investment in developing countries.

76. Achieving this new dynamic for the global economy means changing **business models** to better connect businesses, markets and society. Strong and sustainable businesses are built on global values, including human and labour rights, environmental sustainability and fighting corruption, all of which are embodied in the [United Nations Global Compact](#). Coordinated action by the business community to align their business practices with global goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals, is crucial.

77. Finally, we still lack pre-negotiated ways to convene relevant actors in the event of a global economic crisis. As with future pandemics, the proposed emergency crisis response platform (see chap. IV.B below) could be available in the event of future economic crises and shocks of sufficient scale and magnitude. In addition to being prepared for a crisis, we should be doing everything we can to invest in resilience and prevention; thus economic models and policies to secure sustainability, well-being and the future, as recommended throughout this report, are the most vital steps of all.

A healthy planet for its people

78. We are waging a suicidal war against nature. We risk crossing irreversible thresholds and accelerating crises that could take centuries

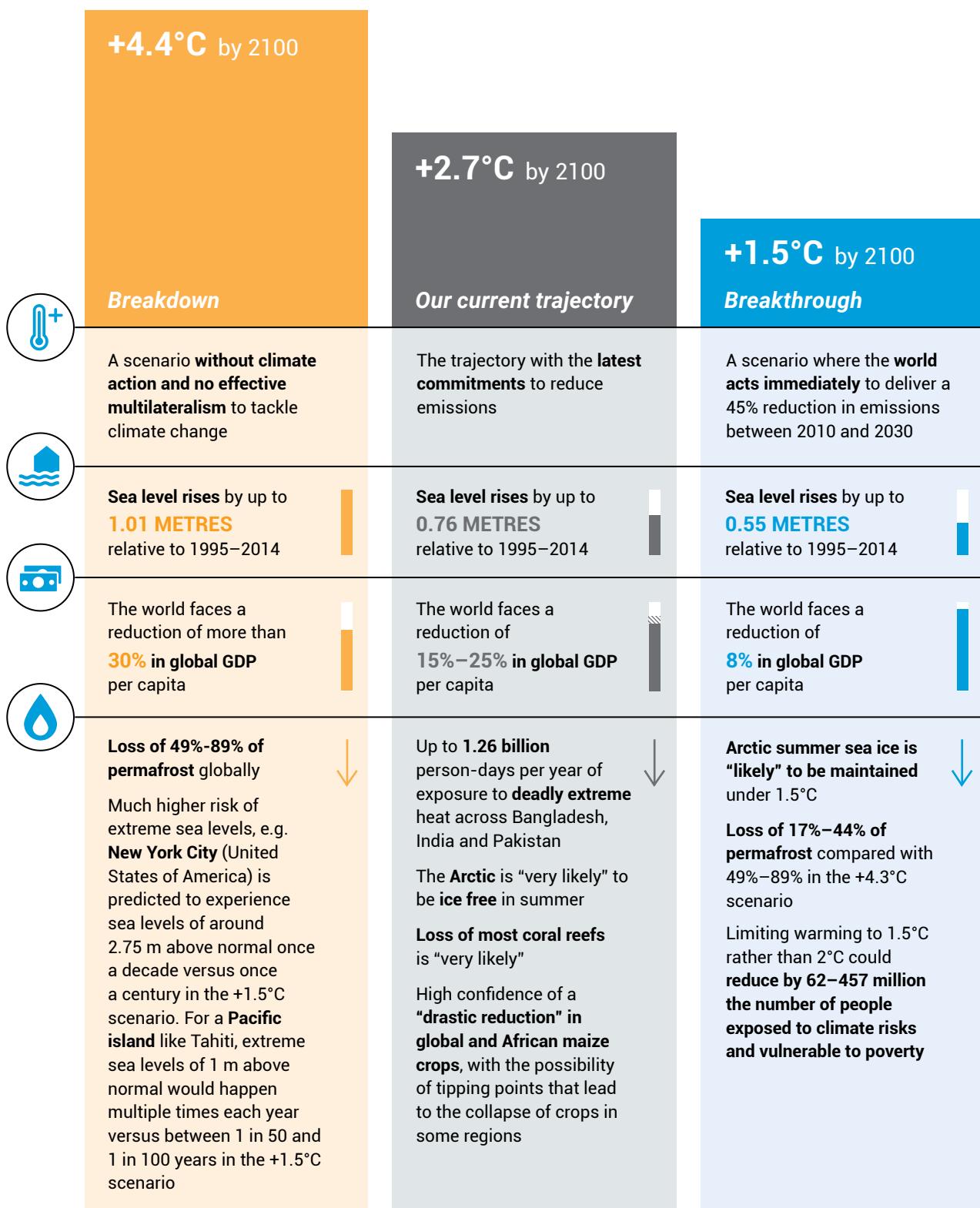
TRANSITION TO A GREEN ECONOMY

- Air pollution caused by the burning of [fossil fuels, chemicals and other pollutants is responsible for the death of 7 million people](#) every year, costing around \$5 trillion annually.
- Shifting to a green economy could yield a direct [economic gain of \\$26 trillion through 2030](#) compared with business-as-usual and create over 65 million new low-carbon jobs.

or even millennia to reverse. Our climate, our environment and our planet are critical global commons that must be protected for all people, now and in the future. We are already at 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and rising rapidly. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned us in August 2021 that we are at imminent risk of hitting the dangerous threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius in the near term. Every fraction of a degree represents lost lives, livelihoods, assets, species and ecosystems. We should be dramatically reducing emissions each year, towards a 45 per cent reduction by 2030 and **net zero emissions by 2050**, as made clear by the Panel, yet temperatures continue to rise. We should be shoring up our populations, infrastructure, economies and societies to be resilient to climate change, yet adaptation and resilience continue to be seriously underfunded.

79. We largely agree on what needs to be done. The Paris Agreement is a singular achievement, bringing all nations into common cause to combat climate change and adapt to its effects. To meet the demands of science and the goals of the Paris Agreement, we need the parties and all stakeholders to present more ambitious 2030 national climate plans and deliver on concrete policies and actions aligned with a net zero future, including no new coal after 2021, shifting fossil fuel subsidies to renewable energy and setting a carbon price. We

CLIMATE BREAKDOWN OR BREAKTHROUGH



Sources: United Nations Foundation, Climate Analytics and E3G, 2021.



© UN Photo/Igor Rugwiza

need a **credible solidarity package of support to developing countries**, one that includes meeting the goal of providing \$100 billion every year, allocating 50 per cent of climate finance for adaptation and resilience, as well as the provision of technological support and capacity-building, which will all increase as needs expand. We need multilateral development banks and other financial institutions to align their portfolios to the Paris Agreement. The process to negotiate a new post-2025 climate finance goal that will begin in 2021 must also be based on, and respond to, the needs of developing countries.

80. It is equally important to jump-start a global effort to organize a just transition to create decent work and quality jobs as a key enabler for climate action and ambition. ILO and many other studies estimate that the transition from the grey to the green economy will result in the net creation of millions of jobs by 2030. I call on all countries to embrace the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All and adopt them as the minimum standard to ensure progress on decent work for all. The United Nations will fully support this just transition and efforts to ensure

that thriving and prosperous communities emerge from this transition to a net zero future.

81. There are some signs that the world is waking up to the danger we face. A growing global **coalition** of Member States, including all Group of Seven nations, cities and businesses, has committed to reaching **net zero emissions by 2050** and is setting the tough and credible interim targets needed to get there. The social movement to halt climate change and accelerate international cooperation, led by young people, has spread to every continent and every country. The price of renewable energy is falling rapidly, the end of coal is in sight and technologies are being deployed at a scale to achieve rapid reductions in emissions over the course of this decade. We can still limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, increase investments to promote resilience to impacts and combat ecosystem and biodiversity loss. To do so, however, we need faster, nimbler and more effective climate and environmental governance to enable socially just transitions.

82. At the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in 2021, **all countries should commit to the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius** as the global benchmark for mitigation ambition. I would also urge the Conference, in line with my call for all States to declare a **climate emergency**, to accelerate action on an emergency footing, including by addressing new issues quickly and evolving with the science. In the Paris Agreement, Member States committed to regularly present updated and more ambitious nationally determined contributions. They also agreed to assess collective progress towards the Agreement's long-term goals every five years at a global stocktaking of the Paris Agreement. **I intend to convene leaders ahead of the first global stocktaking in 2023** to reach a political understanding on the urgent steps needed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, protect people and communities from climate impacts and align public and private finance with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

83. The Conference of the Parties has the potential to act as a platform that captures the growing insistence of people all over the world on climate action, magnifying the voices of those most affected and who will hold us all to account. Fulfilling the objectives of the Paris Agreement is a responsibility of all stakeholders. Some companies have larger emissions profiles than entire countries and cities are responsible for over 70 per cent of emissions worldwide. I urge Governments formally to recognize the engagement and contributions of **all stakeholders** who significantly contribute to the delivery of countries' commitments at the Conference. I also intend to invite leaders from civil society, the private sector and young people to the leaders meeting ahead of the first global stocktaking in 2023 and to ensure that they can meaningfully participate in that process.

84. Addressing risks to our planet needs to be part of every decision, every policy, every investment and every budget. The countries that are members of the G20 provided over \$3.3 trillion in direct support for coal, oil, gas and fossil fuel power between 2015 and 2019. In 2019, 60 per cent of fossil-fuel subsidies went to producers and utilities despite Governments' climate commitments. Fossil-fuel subsidies distort prices and risk increasing investment in emission-intensive assets that place the goals of the Paris Agreement out of reach. With too much of the international financial architecture still incentivizing economic growth with little or no consideration for sustainability and climate impacts, I urge States, international financial institutions and multilateral and national development banks to work with us to find complementary measures to GDP that account for the environment and to use this new measure to change fundamentally their mandates and investments.

85. More broadly, **all finance flows** must be consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilient development. Public finance is critical, particularly for those investments that yield no financial returns, such as some adaptation action. We also need **large-scale private finance** to support countries in shifting from

economies that are dependent on fossil fuels to ones that are low emission and climate resilient. I urge all countries to implement **carbon pricing mechanisms** and ultimately to set a carbon price, and I encourage Group of 20 nations to consider the proposal from IMF to create an international carbon price floor. Financial actors within the G20 are taking decisive steps by pledging net zero commitments, but now comes the credibility test: all financial actors must set verifiable targets that cover their entire portfolios to shift them away from high-emission sectors to the climate resilient and net zero economy, along with timelines to implement their pledges. The United Nations-convened Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance provides an important model with transparent and accountable targets. As initiatives around carbon markets multiply, the use of offsets must be the last resort. I urge all private actors to prioritize reducing absolute emissions and negative biodiversity impacts across their entire value chain and to hold to the highest standards of environmental integrity.

86. Even as we work tirelessly to prevent climate change, we need to be prepared for a drastically different climate and environment in the future. **Most countries need to adapt** their economies, their infrastructure and their services to account for the impact of climate change, with increased adaptation support for developing countries as stated above. Only one in three people globally are covered by early warning systems and it is essential to fully capitalize the World Meteorological Organization Systematic Observations Financing Facility to ensure that every person is covered. As the impacts of climate change worsen and displacement grows, the General Assembly could consider measures to address territorial threats of climate change, especially for small-island developing States and other States facing a severe risk. Building on the work of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, along with the Global Compact on Refugees, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Task Force on Displacement of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts,

further consideration could be given to finding ways to **prevent, protect and resolve situations of environmental displacement**.

TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS

- Sustainable food systems and strong forest protection could [generate over \\$2 trillion per year of economic benefits](#), create millions of jobs and improve food security, while supporting solutions to climate change.

87. Climate action is a central part of a fundamental reset in our relationship with nature. More broadly, a **strong post-2020 biodiversity framework** is needed to provide sufficient financing to reverse the catastrophic biodiversity loss the planet is currently experiencing. **Food systems** must also be transformed, aligning with health, climate, equity and the Sustainable Development Goals. Building on the outcomes of the [Food Systems Summit](#), which will be held in New York in September 2021, we must anticipate and respond to risks of large-scale food insecurity and famine driven by our changing environment. Revisiting our patterns of unsustainable consumption and production should enable more efficient and greater equity in resource use, less food loss and waste, and sound management of chemicals and waste to minimize adverse impacts on human health and the environment. Food systems need to ensure that all people have access to healthy diets that contribute to the restoration of nature, address climate change and are adapted to local circumstances. This transition can help to deliver across all the Goals and is best supported through inclusive participation of various stakeholders, in particular producers, women, indigenous people and youth. The international meeting "[Stockholm+50](#): a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity" offers an opportunity to redefine humankind's relationship with nature and to achieve

a healthy planet for the prosperity of all. I would urge recognition of the **right to a healthy environment**.

A new agenda for peace

88. Peace is the central promise of the Charter of the United Nations and one of the principal global public goods the United Nations was established to deliver. In crucial respects, our multilateral architecture has succeeded: there have been no world wars and nuclear weapons have not been used in war for the past 75 years, while some of the greatest risks of escalation have been prevented. Nevertheless, our collective peace and security is increasingly under threat as a result of emerging risks and dangerous trends for which traditional forms of prevention, management and resolution are ill suited. This includes protracted conflicts involving transnational networks and new actors, frequently associated with terrorism, rapidly evolving weapons technologies and a growing willingness of regional actors to participate directly in wars. Climate change is contributing to instability and is affecting livelihoods, access to resources and human mobility trends. With [significant numbers of people displaced](#) and overall levels of violence outside armed conflict reaching new highs, it would be hard to argue that we are delivering on the promise of the Charter. Risks to peace and security are growing: new technologies are placing the capacity to disrupt global stability in the hands of far more actors; longstanding agreements on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are increasingly fragile as trust among major powers continues to erode; and emerging domains of potential conflict or lawlessness, such as cyberspace, have highlighted gaps in our governance architecture. The world is moving closer to the brink of instability, where the risks we face are no longer managed effectively through the systems we have.

- a) 89. To protect and manage the global public good of peace, we need a peace continuum based on a better understanding of the underlying drivers and systems of influence that are sustaining conflict, a renewed effort

to agree on more effective collective security responses and a meaningful set of steps to manage emerging risks. To achieve this, we need a **new agenda for peace**, potentially focusing on six core areas:

- b) **Reducing strategic risks.** I have already proposed to work with Member States to update our vision for disarmament so as to guarantee human, national and collective security, including through broader support for non-proliferation, a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, effective control of conventional weapons and regulation of new weapons of technology. The new agenda for peace could be an opportunity to take this forward, in particular through establishing stronger commitments for the non-use of nuclear weapons and a time frame for their elimination, ensuring continued cooperation to prevent and counter-terrorism, strengthening digital transformation and promoting innovation by United Nations peace and security entities, banning cyberattacks on civilian infrastructure, putting in place measures to de-escalate cyber-related risks and tensions, and establishing internationally agreed limits on lethal autonomous weapons systems. The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in January 2021 was an extraordinary achievement and a step towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons;
- c) **Strengthening international foresight and capacities to identify and adapt to new peace and security risks.** The proposals laid out in chapter III above to ensure the future of succeeding generations and chapter IV.B below on addressing major risks could allow us to identify and adapt to new risks to peace and security;
- d) **Reshaping our responses to all forms of violence.** Large-scale conflict kills fewer people than other forms of violence, including violence from criminal groups and interpersonal violence

in the home. At the same time, increases in some forms of violence, particularly against women, [tend to be](#) an early warning sign of diminishing law and order and rising insecurity that may catalyse into broader conflict. The new agenda for peace could consider how to more effectively address violence holistically. For instance, this could be through a multi-stakeholder effort to reduce violence significantly worldwide and in all its forms, including against women and girls, in line with target 16.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and building on the movement to halve global violence by 2030;

- e) **Investing in prevention and peacebuilding.** Investments in prevention and preparedness pay for themselves many times over in the human and financial costs that are spared, yet we continue to make the case in vain. The new agenda for peace could involve a set of commitments to provide the necessary resources for prevention, including at the national level; reduce excessive military budgets and ensure adequate social spending; tailor development assistance to address root causes of conflict and uphold human rights; and link disarmament to development opportunities. There has also been too little progress on adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding, with demand for support from the Peacebuilding Fund significantly outpacing available resources. The new agenda for peace could renew calls for Member States urgently to consider allocating a dedicated amount to the Peacebuilding Fund from assessed contributions, initially through the peacekeeping budget and later through the regular budget, as a complementary investment that would increase the sustainability of peacekeeping outcomes and support the development agenda. Relatedly, the Peacebuilding Commission has reshaped the responses by the United Nations to multidimensional threats to development, peace and security through an inclusive



© UN Photo

approach. Member States are called on to dedicate more resources to the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, with commensurate support from the United Nations system, to enable these important instruments to meet the increasing demand. Consideration could also be given to expanding the role of the Commission to more geographical and substantive settings, as well as to addressing the cross-cutting issues of security, climate change, health, gender equality, development and human rights from a prevention perspective;

- f) Supporting regional prevention.** Regional actors are central to sustaining peace and preventing and responding to insecurity, but these critical frontline responses require further consolidation. It is becoming urgent to secure predictable financing for peace support operations delivered under Chapter VIII of the Charter covering regional arrangements: these operations fill a critical gap in our global peace and security architecture and should not rely on ad hoc arrangements. More broadly, the new agenda for peace could consider how to deepen United Nations support for regional capacities, including with regard to security arrangements, military cooperation and joint peacebuilding work, cooperation to address complex transnational peace and security challenges, and by expanding into new areas

such as the effects of climate change on security. My previous proposals for regional coordination platforms could provide a useful framework on which to build;

- g) Putting women and girls at the centre of security policy.** Building on the existing women and peace and security agenda and its principles of prevention, demilitarization and equality, the new agenda for peace would place women and gender equality at the heart of peace and security. Not least, the linkages between interpersonal violence and insecurity and between women's equal participation in peacemaking and its effectiveness call for women's equal participation in all peace and security decision-making and a reassessment of core assumptions, including how peace and security are defined, negotiated and sustained.

Peaceful, secure and sustainable use of outer space

90. Outer space has traditionally been acknowledged as a global common, beyond the jurisdiction of any one State. The potential for its peaceful, secure and sustainable use would benefit all humanity today and into the future. Governance arrangements for outer space, including the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, were established in an era of exclusively State-based activity and provide only general guidance on managing traffic in outer space, the permanent settlement of celestial bodies and responsibilities for resource management. We are in an era of renewed exploration and use of outer space, with active programmes to return humans to the Moon and beyond and the planned launch of mega-constellations of thousands of new satellites. Space assets have transformed the way we live and outer space systems are vital for understanding and solving global problems, such as implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and climate action. Many of these developments are driven by actors in the private sector. They also pose new risks to security, safety and sustainability. Increasing congestion and competition in outer



© UN-Women/Ryan Brown

space could imperil access and use by succeeding generations. Our governance and regulatory regimes require updating in line with this new era to preserve outer space as a global common.

91. Recently agreed Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities have shown that progress in governance is possible, but many gaps remain. A combination of binding and non-binding norms is needed, building on existing frameworks and drawing in the full range of actors now involved in space exploration and use. Immediate actions could include the development of a global regime to coordinate space traffic and the elaboration of new instruments to prevent weaponization of outer space. To that end, consideration could be given to a **multi-stakeholder dialogue on outer space** as part of a Summit of the Future (see para. 103 below) bringing together Governments and other leading space actors. The dialogue could seek high-level political agreement

on the peaceful, secure and sustainable use of outer space, move towards a global regime to coordinate space traffic and agree on principles for the future governance of outer space activities.

Reclaiming the digital commons

92. The fourth industrial revolution has changed the world. The Internet has provided access to information for billions, thereby fostering collaboration, connection and sustainable development. It is a global public good that should benefit everyone, everywhere. But currently the potential harms of the digital domain risk overshadowing its benefits. Governance at the national and global levels has not kept pace with the inherently informal and decentralized nature of the Internet, which is dominated by commercial interests. Serious and urgent ethical, social and regulatory questions confront us, including with respect to the lack of accountability in cyberspace; the emergence of large technology companies

as geopolitical actors and arbiters of difficult social questions without the responsibilities commensurate with their outsized profits; exacerbation of gender bias and male default thinking when women do not have an equal role in designing digital technologies, as well as digital harassment that has particularly targeted women and girls and pushed many women out of the public conversation; and the use of digital surveillance and manipulation to influence behaviour and control populations.

COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE INTERNET

- Total [global Internet usage rose 40 per cent](#) during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

93. It is time to **protect the online space and strengthen its governance**. I would urge the Internet Governance Forum to adapt, innovate and reform to support effective governance of the digital commons and keep pace with rapid, real-world developments. Furthermore, building on the recommendations of the [road map for digital cooperation](#) (see A/74/821), the United Nations, Governments, the private sector and civil society could come together as a **multi-stakeholder digital technology track** in preparation for a Summit of the Future to agree on a **Global Digital Compact**. This would outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all. Complex digital issues that could be addressed may include: reaffirming the fundamental commitment to connecting the unconnected; avoiding fragmentation of the Internet; providing people with options as to how their data is used; application of human rights online; and promoting a trustworthy Internet by introducing accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content. More broadly, the Compact could also promote regulation of artificial intelligence to ensure that this is aligned with shared global values.

International cooperation guided by international law

94. As underlined in the seventy-fifth anniversary declaration, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law remain timeless, universal and an indispensable foundation for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. International legal regimes underpin and are essential to the protection of the global commons and the delivery of many of the global public goods identified above, and more broadly to an international order based on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The fact that international law, in particular international human rights law, [underpins approximately 90 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals](#) is a strong example of this.

95. States play the primary role in the development of international law, whether within the framework of international organizations such as the United Nations or outside it. The United Nations has also played and continues to play a unique role in the identification and development of customary international law. The ongoing discussions within the United Nations on the development of norms and standards for a number of matters of global concern, such as [information and communications technology](#) (see A/75/816) and the conservation and sustainable use of [marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction](#), underscore the importance of the United Nations as a vital forum for the development of international law. For those many instruments already in place, I urge States to implement their obligations and stand ready to provide support through the various United Nations activities for capacity-building and technical assistance.

96. In the seventy-fifth anniversary declaration, States agreed to abide by the international agreements they have entered into and the commitments they have made, to promote respect for democracy and human rights, and to enhance democratic governance and the rule of law by strengthening transparent and accountable



© UN System Staff College

governance and independent judicial institutions. Building on these commitments, consideration could be given to **a global road map for the development and effective implementation of international law**. This could encourage more States to ratify or accede to treaties of universal interest, such as on disarmament, human rights, the environment and penal matters, including those for which I am the depositary (of which there are over 600). It could also urge States to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and to withdraw reservations to treaty clauses relating to the exercise of its jurisdiction. Assisting States in identifying and addressing pressing normative gaps could be another component, as well as, drawing on my role related to compliance mechanisms, understanding reasons for non-compliance. As a further part of this road map, States could consider holding regular inclusive dialogues on legal matters of global concern at the General Assembly. I continue to welcome the [role of the International Law Commission](#), which, pursuant to article 1 (1) of its statute, is entrusted with making recommendations for the purpose of promoting the progressive development of international law and its codification.

B. Addressing major risks

97. A central question remains prevention in all its aspects. Our success in finding solutions to the interlinked problems we face hinges on our ability to anticipate, prevent and prepare for major risks to come. This puts a revitalized, comprehensive and overarching prevention agenda front and centre in all that we do. We need more innovation, more inclusion and more foresight, investing in the global public goods that sustain us all. Where global public goods are not provided, we have their opposite: global public “bads” in the form of serious risks and threats to human welfare. These risks are now increasingly global and have greater potential impact. Some are even existential: with the dawn of the nuclear age, humanity acquired the power to bring about its own extinction. Continued technological advances, accelerating climate change and the rise in zoonotic diseases mean the likelihood of extreme, global catastrophic or even existential risks is present on multiple, interrelated fronts. Being prepared to prevent and respond to these risks is an essential counterpoint to better managing the global commons and global public goods.

98. An effort is warranted to better define and identify the extreme, catastrophic and existential risks that we face. We cannot, however, wait for an agreement on definitions before we act. Indeed, there is an ethical imperative to act in a manner compatible with the dignity of human life, which our global governance systems must follow, echoing the precautionary principle in international environmental law and other areas. The cost of being prepared for serious risks pales in comparison with the human and financial costs if we fail.

99. Learning lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, we can seize this opportunity to better anticipate and prepare to respond to large-scale global crises. This requires stronger legal frameworks, better tools for managing risks, better data, the identification and anticipation of future risks, and proper financing of prevention and preparedness.



© UN Photo

Many of these elements are set out in other parts of this report. Importantly, however, any new preparedness and response measures should be agnostic as to the type of crisis for which they may be needed. We do not know which extreme risk event will come next; it might be another pandemic, a new war, a high-consequence biological attack, a cyberattack on critical infrastructure, a nuclear event, a rapidly moving environmental disaster, or something completely different such as technological or scientific developments gone awry and unconstrained by effective ethical and regulatory frameworks.

100. First, to enable us to better anticipate and respond to such risks, it will be important for the United Nations to draw on a network of the best thinkers and data, externally and within the United Nations system, to present a **Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report** to Member States every five years. This will be supported by the planned Futures Lab, as well as by existing mechanisms across the United Nations system and beyond, such as the [annual IMF early warning exercise](#), to collect and analyse data and make sense of risk across the short-, medium- and long-term. This would also be linked to corresponding governance arrangements for such risks, as appropriate, as well as the action needed to address them.

101. Secondly, I propose to work with Member States to establish an **Emergency Platform to respond to complex global crises**. The platform would not be a new permanent or standing body or institution. It would be triggered automatically in crises of sufficient scale and magnitude, regardless of the type or nature of the crisis involved. Once activated, it would bring together leaders from Member States, the United Nations system, key country groupings, international financial institutions, regional bodies, civil society, the private sector, subject-specific industries or research bodies and other experts. The terms of reference would set out the modalities and criteria for the activation of the platform, including the scale and scope of the crisis; funding and financing; the identification of relevant actors who would form part of it; the support that it would be expected to provide; and the criteria for its deactivation. Other key components could include mechanisms for surge capacity; focal points and protocols to promote interoperability with existing crisis-specific response arrangements; regular exercises to test efficacy and identify and fill gaps; and the identification of a set of tools to make the international system crisis-ready. The platform would allow the convening role of the Secretary-General to be maximized in the face of crises with global reach.

C. Next steps

102. It is ultimately for Member States, in close consultation with other relevant stakeholders, to identify and agree on those global commons or public goods that may require renewed commitments or governance improvements. To support their deliberations, I will ask a **High-level Advisory Board** led by former Heads of State and/or Government to build on the ideas I have shared here. Notably, I will ask the Advisory Board to identify global public goods and potentially other areas of common interest where governance improvements are most needed and propose options for how this could be achieved. This would need to take into account existing institutional

and legal arrangements, gaps and emerging priorities or levels of urgency, and the need for equity and fairness in global decision-making. The Advisory Board could also take into account the proposals made throughout this report, including the repurposing of the Trusteeship Council and the creation of an Emergency Platform.

103. Once the Advisory Board has reported its findings, it will be important to hold a high-level, multi-stakeholder "**Summit of the Future**" to advance ideas for governance arrangements in the areas of international concern mentioned in this report, and potentially others, where governance arrangements are nascent or require updating. It would be preceded by preparatory events and consultations. The Summit would most appropriately be held in conjunction with the high-level week of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly and could include high-level tracks on:

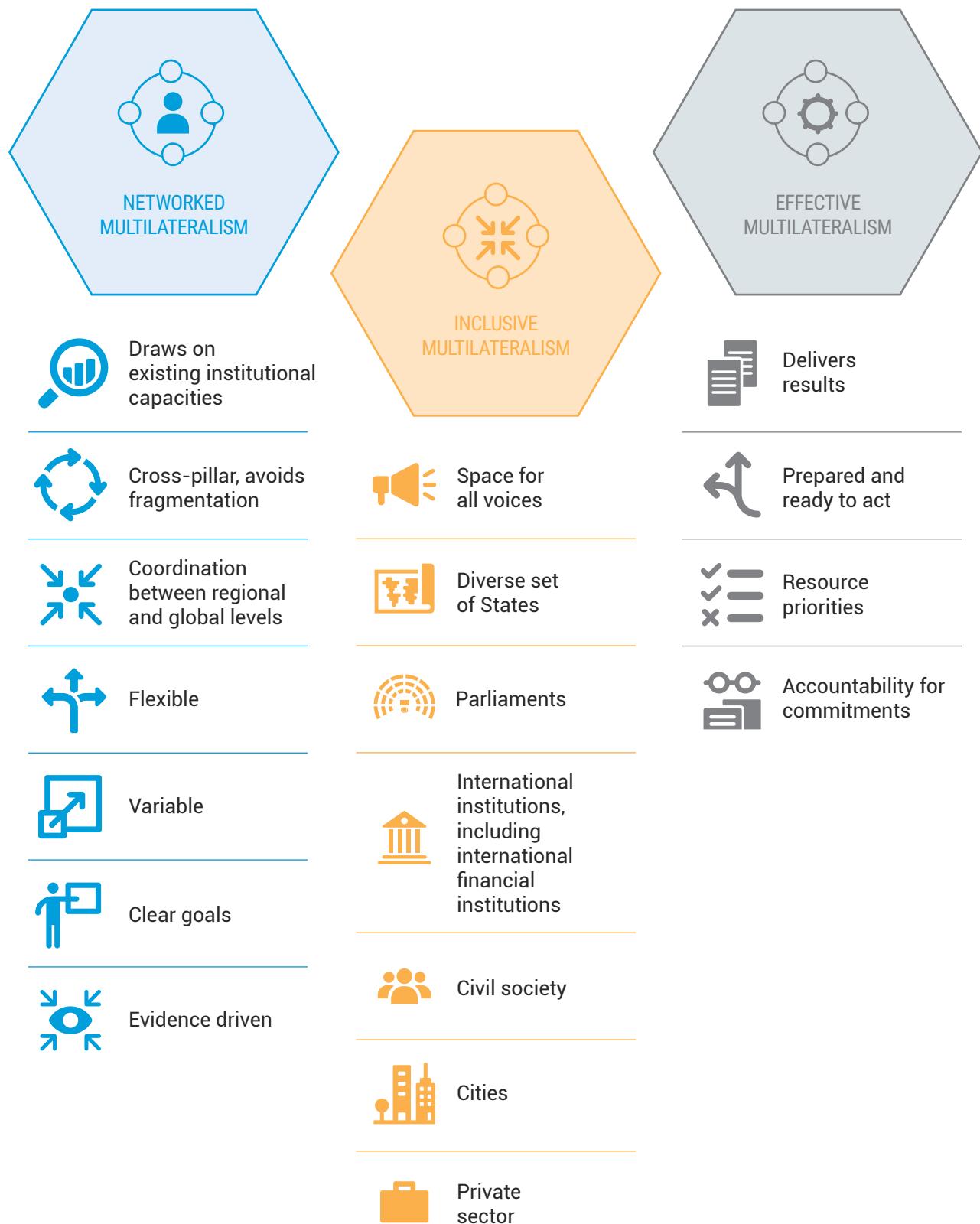
- a) Advancing governance for global public goods and other areas, as appropriate, in the light of the findings of the Advisory Board;
- b) Anticipating sustainable development and climate action beyond 2030;
- c) Peace and security, for the new agenda for peace;
- d) Digital technology, for the Global Digital Compact;
- e) Outer space, to seek agreement on the sustainable and peaceful use of outer space, move towards a global regime to coordinate space traffic and agree on principles for the future governance of outer space activities;
- f) Major risks and agreement on an Emergency Platform;
- g) Succeeding generations, for possible agreement on a Declaration on Future Generations.

104. As we work to update our systems of governance for the future, I offer the following overall **observations and parameters**. The context for collective action has evolved over the

past 75 years. When the Charter of the United Nations was developed, multilateralism meant cooperation among a small number of States. Today, a broader range of State and non-State actors are participating in global affairs as part of open, participatory, peer-driven and transparent systems, geared at solving problems by drawing on the capacities and hearing the voices of all relevant actors rather than being driven by mandates or institutions alone. **This is a form of multilateralism that is more networked, more inclusive and more effective** in addressing twenty-first century challenges. Any effort to improve our governance of the global commons and public goods and to manage risks must navigate this complexity and seek explicitly to incorporate these new approaches where they are likely to deliver better outcomes.

105. Multilateralism that is more **networked** draws together existing institutional capacities, overcoming fragmentation to ensure all are working together towards a common goal. It goes beyond traditional silos, such as peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian action, and enhances coordination between regional and global actors and action. Networks can be flexible, allowing for variable participation by a wide range of actors and the possibility for open coalitions or small "mini-lateral" or even "micro-lateral" groups, growing over time to include more actors. To keep a diverse set of actors aligned, the most successful networks involve clear goals, such as the climate target of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Expert bodies like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change can ensure networks are evidence driven. Networks do not, however, replace our core international institutions, which have a unique role in galvanizing diverse actors and making space for marginalized voices. With clear goals and targets, and international organizations to provide legitimacy, we can make better use of the power of networks to deliver global public goods. For my part, I will seek to enhance cooperation with regional organizations, development actors, international financial institutions and other relevant multilateral institutions (see chap. V).

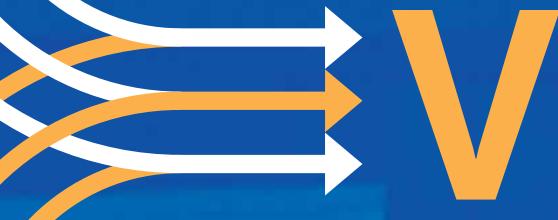
PARAMETERS FOR NETWORKED – INCLUSIVE – EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM



106. More **inclusive multilateralism** is marked by a genuine possibility for States from all regions and of all sizes to engage in collective action, notably including a stronger voice for developing countries in global decision-making. It also means inclusion of a diverse range of voices beyond States. In addition to intergovernmental organizations, this can include parliaments, subnational authorities (cities and local and regional governments), civil society, faith-based organizations, universities, researchers and experts, trade unions, the private sector and industry, and local and grass roots movements, including those led by women and young people. This vision recognizes that States remain central to our collective ability to meet global challenges and have unique responsibilities in the multilateral system, while also acknowledging that solutions increasingly depend on the private sector and non-State actors, who should therefore be part of the deliberations and accountable for their commitments. The role of **parliaments, cities and other subnational authorities** is particularly being recognized in inclusive approaches, with, for example, voluntary local reviews of Sustainable Development Goal implementation providing a model on which to build. Civil society needs to remain part and parcel of our work across sectors and in multilateral forums. In the light of its power to shift the needle significantly on many of our most critical challenges, inclusion and accountability of the **private sector** are essential. Arrangements where the private sector commits to responsible innovation and to harnessing technology fairly provide a good basis on which to build, as do business models that support inclusion, human rights and sustainable development, such

as investment funds that take into account environmental, social and governance factors.

107. Ultimately what matters is results. We need multilateralism that is more **effective** in delivering on its promises and consequently is more trusted. This means the multilateral system is prepared and ready to act or adapt in the face of present and new risks; prioritizes and resources the tasks that matter; delivers results; and can hold all actors, State and non-State, accountable for commitments made. Any conversation about improving governance of the global commons and global public goods should assess how well our current arrangements meet these criteria. Where they do not, options for better preparedness, prioritization, decision-making arrangements, resourcing, accountability and compliance would need to be considered. In particular, a balance is needed between voluntary and binding actions that is commensurate with the challenges we face. While international law is essential in delivering global public goods and I have called for a renewed commitment to its development, we also have ways to encourage mutual accountability through other frameworks, including peer-review models (such as the [universal periodic review](#)) and mechanisms for sharing good practices and transparent data gathering. Finally, key to ensuring effectiveness is that funding and financing are brought to bear in support of our collective commitments. The Economic and Social Council forum on [financing for development](#) follow-up, which seeks to review the means to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, provides a promising example.



Purposes and principles: adapting the United Nations to a new era



V. Purposes and principles: adapting the United Nations to a new era

108. In this report, I have outlined a vision for Our Common Agenda. To support this vision, the United Nations also needs to adapt. The Organization has evolved over time in response to changing needs, most recently through an ambitious reform agenda to improve its effectiveness, launched in 2017, which has begun to deliver results. The COVID-19 pandemic was an early test of these reforms, enabling the United Nations system to respond to the needs of people and Member States. Emerging from the pandemic, with the world facing important choices to support a breakthrough rather than a breakdown scenario, the United Nations must provide a platform actively to shape the future in ways that will make it worth living in, and for.

109. Some Member States have suggested that the United Nations is itself a global common; or at least, that it is vital to support the delivery of many global public goods, serving as a venue for collective action, norm development and international cooperation. While the United Nations alone cannot address the numerous challenges confronting us, especially in a complex and networked world, it is one of the key institutions available for solving the problems that matter most. The United Nations has a universal convening power that gives all 193 Member States an equal voice, increasingly joined by representatives from the private sector, civil society and academia, along with a unique role in safeguarding global values, ethics and norms and a global presence and technical expertise. As some spaces of decision-making become increasingly exclusive, there is a need to safeguard a space for all voices. Our Common Agenda must therefore include upgrading the United Nations, so that it is able to support global discussion, negotiation, progress, solutions and action to address our most urgent collective goals.

110. The previous chapters of this report set out a series of actions that the United Nations intends to work with Member States and others to pursue in support of the renewed social contract, stronger solidarity between generations and the delivery of global public goods. While summarizing them, I offer below additional reflections, commitments and recommendations for how the United Nations could continue to adapt and make a difference in people's lives. This recognizes that the Charter is based on enduring values and principles, but is also flexible and dynamic, allowing for adjustment to address new challenges.

A. For the Secretariat and the United Nations system

In support of the renewed social contract

111. Much of the operational and in-country work of the United Nations is geared towards supporting the social contract at national levels, as needed and requested by States. In some contexts, it is the United Nations itself that ensures delivery of vital public goods, such as humanitarian action, health, education, electricity and housing, along with security and support for the police. My proposals in chapter II for **institutions that listen better to people, participatory approaches and reducing complexity** thus equally apply to the United Nations where relevant. Building on [good models](#) from elsewhere in the system, the United Nations Secretariat will develop a policy that puts people at the centre of all its actions and takes into account the impact of intersecting personal characteristics, such as age, gender and diversity.

112. The United Nations development system reforms have positioned the Organization to offer more cohesive support to Governments. Building on

this, Member States could consider steps to bring the governance bodies and funding of development agencies closer in alignment to maximize impact, while leaving each agency its separate brand and operations. I will also encourage United Nations country teams to actively support States in renewing the social contract, particularly focusing on trust, addressing discrimination and exclusion, and measuring what matters. We will look to make every United Nations presence a centre of context-specific prevention expertise, including by better linking peace and security, human rights, climate and development work, and focusing on factors that can give rise to or exacerbate grievances. The consultations for the [seventy-fifth anniversary](#) (reaching 1.5 million people) and for Our Common Agenda (with some 500 submissions) have initiated a new era in listening, consultation and engagement with people, along with our [guidance](#) on civic space under my [Call to Action for Human Rights](#). I will encourage all parts of the United Nations system to make such consultations with people, including women and young people, regular and systematic going forward.

113. Other elements that the United Nations system will take forward as part of its own support to and reflection on the renewed social contract include reviewing our rule of law assistance, implementation of my Call to Action for Human Rights, including through a United Nations system-wide agenda for protection, and making human rights commitments a reference point in the design and delivery of United Nations programmes, development assistance and crisis prevention initiatives. I recommit to ensuring gender parity at all levels within the United Nations system by 2028. I will also support a review of the United Nations system's capacity – staffing, resources and architecture – to deliver on gender equality as a core priority across all entities.

In support of solidarity between generations

114. In chapter III, I proposed some institutional modifications at the United Nations to strengthen our solidarity with both younger and succeeding

generations. Notably, I propose to ensure that the voices of youth are more systematically integrated across the United Nations system by exploring with Member States the upgrading of the current position of Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth to an office in the Secretariat. I will also continue to listen to and support networks of young United Nations staff members, including on the need to improve our recruitment and retention of young people from diverse backgrounds, as well as to put in place a more modern and flexible environment that supports junior staff members, including young women, in advancing their careers.

115. Separately, I propose the appointment of a Special Envoy for Future Generations who would, for the first time, represent the interests of succeeding generations across the United Nations system and with Member States. The envoy would also steer initial steps by the United Nations to bolster our capacity to understand, plan and act for the long term, exemplified by the proposed Futures Lab. I hope this will allow the United Nations to become a reliable guardian for our future, acting on behalf of both current and succeeding generations as anticipated in the Charter. The Futures Lab would also significantly strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in futures analysis and foresight.

In support of delivering global public goods through more networked, inclusive and effective multilateralism

116. In chapter IV, I outlined a vision for improved multilateral governance focused on protecting our global commons and delivering critical global public goods, as well as being prepared to respond to major risks. To support this, the United Nations system must adapt to play a leading role in a more networked and inclusive world, improving our collaboration and strategic engagement with other actors and forums at the global and regional levels, while also maximizing our comparative advantage in service of the people who need us most.

117. The value added of the United Nations in a **networked world** includes a number of elements which could be strengthened. First, one of the



© UN Photo/Manuel Elias

primary roles of the United Nations is as a **source of reliable data and evidence**, providing public and verified information to help the world understand risks and opportunities. To strengthen this role, I will seek to re-establish the Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board and explore better linking of knowledge centres across the United Nations system, including in its specialized agencies, to reinforce impact. I will also encourage the United Nations to become more strategic in knowledge production, delivering fewer, but more coherent and action-oriented reports each year. This will in part be achieved through the United Nations digital transformation strategy, which is directly aimed at effective knowledge production and dissemination across the system.

118. Another important role for the United Nations in a networked world is as a **convener**: serving as a place to build consensus around priorities and strategies, where actors from all sectors can make commitments and be accountable, and as a platform for collective action and delivery. Our universal nature means that in some instances we are not the most nimble, and that formalities and protocol must be observed. However, we also offer a space to bring together decision-makers with the accountability and authoritativeness associated with intergovernmental processes to support networked approaches. We must do this better, and more often. The United Nations will improve its work at different levels (country, regional and global) and across different thematic pillars (including peace and security, development, climate, human rights and humanitarian response).

We will also strengthen cooperation within the United Nations system and between the system and regional organizations, international financial institutions and others. To enhance cooperation between the United Nations and regional bodies, I will convene an annual meeting with all heads of regional organizations. I will also promote continuous active dialogue between the United Nations system, international financial institutions and regional development banks, as a complement to the Biennial Summit proposed in chapter IV.

119. The United Nations system, including the Secretariat, will also take further steps to become more **inclusive**. For certain constituencies, such as parliamentarians, the private sector, and cities and subnational authorities, which are crucial and innovative drivers of global change today, we have been asked to consider standing mechanisms for engagement and consultation, consistent with the sovereignty of Member States and provisions of the Charter on membership of the United Nations. Within the Secretariat, I will strengthen our collaboration with subnational authorities through the creation of an **Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments**. I will also explore options to enhance parliamentary inputs at the United Nations, working with our existing partners.

120. The increasing role and influence of the **private sector**, and its centrality to achieving so many of the actions outlined in this report, will also be taken into account within the United Nations system. The **business and human rights** agenda is important in this regard. I also call for a broader range of businesses, from multinational corporations to small and medium-sized corporations, to participate in the Sustainable Development Goals and climate action, including through business models that align with efforts to rethink measures of progress and prosperity. The **new strategy issued by the Global Compact Office**, promoting its 10 principles and the expansion of its network and private sector investments, is a unique vehicle to raise ambition and achieve stronger private sector engagement, accountability and partnerships.

121. Civil society organizations were present in San Francisco at the founding of the United Nations and have been an integral part of the United Nations ecosystem from the outset. As part of our consultations, civil society has called for better engagement with the United Nations system. I believe that it is essential for the United Nations to listen to, coordinate with and engage with civil society. I have heard the calls for a single, high-level entry point for civil society and will further explore options in that regard. However, I also believe that what is most needed at this time is to go beyond a consultation and advocacy role, and rather for all parts of the United Nations system directly to include civil society in their work across all the pillars of our activities. This is about a shift in mentality as well as in practice. As such, all United Nations entities will be asked to **establish a dedicated focal point for civil society**, if they have not already done so. These focal points will be expected proactively to create the space necessary for civil society actors to contribute at the country and global levels, and within United Nations meetings, networks, processes and arrangements. We will regularly map and monitor our relationships with civil society across the system to ensure that the better engagement we all seek is being achieved and sustained.

122. Within the Secretariat, the **United Nations Office for Partnerships** will support these relationships, ensuring that we have in place the necessary administrative, legal and digital instruments to allow our partners to access information and to participate in the work of the United Nations. We will in particular build on the possibilities for greater inclusion that we have seen during COVID-19, with digital solutions and hybrid meetings allowing more diverse actors to participate without limitations because of visas, funding and travel. Ensuring inclusive virtual meetings means taking into consideration and proactively seeking to address issues such as access to the Internet, language barriers, time zones and safety.

123. To make the United Nations **more effective**, we will develop new capabilities that promote agility, integration and cohesion across the system. This

will be part of a wider transformation towards a **United Nations "2.0"**, a new version that is able to offer relevant and system-wide solutions to the challenges of the twenty-first century. I will accelerate this transformation through a "**quintet of change**", a set of cross-cutting agendas that underpin many of the initiatives proposed in this report. The quintet capabilities include data, analytics and communications; innovation and digital transformation; strategic foresight; behavioural science; and performance and results orientation. Driven by the [Secretary-General's Data Strategy](#), better **data, analysis and communications** capabilities will enable us to turn information more easily into insight, transform our decision-making, optimize our services and make the Organization a better communicator. Further investing in **innovation and digital transformation** will reshape our way of working, helping us to reach more people in need and better serve them. Strengthening **strategic foresight**, through initiatives like the Futures Lab, will enable anticipatory action and the design of more forward-looking policies and programmes. The systematic application of **behavioural science** will increase our effectiveness in policy, programme and mandate delivery. It will also allow us to simplify bureaucratic processes. **Performance and results orientation** will ensure that the Organization is focused on impact, learning and continuous improvement.

124. Finally, for the Organization to be effective, it is crucial that Member States' **financial obligations** be met in full and on time. The underlying reasons for the recent financial crisis of the United Nations are not fully resolved. I have made several proposals to Member States in this regard, ranging from increasing our existing liquidity reserves to creating a new reserve for our peacekeeping operations and addressing the structural impediments in the management of our budgets. As part of recent reforms, the United Nations has also made significant investments in improving transparency in its financial reporting and budgeting. However, efforts to focus more on results and improve mandate delivery have been undermined by the

unpredictability and timing of our cash inflows. If the vision that Member States articulated in the seventy-fifth anniversary declaration, and on which I have elaborated in this report on Our Common Agenda, is to become a reality we must solve the financial crisis and secure more sustainable funding for the Organization. The United Nations system can make better use of available resources, including by **repurposing existing funds** and adopting less rigid budgetary procedures. The United Nations system will also explore ways to better harmonize budgeting and funding requests, ensuring that the different executive boards of agencies, funds and programmes work together and communicate. We will focus on improving how we formulate and execute budgets to keep the Organization nimble and dynamic and able to respond to volatile situations and new emergencies. Ongoing efforts to ensure transparency for Member States in the budget process must not come at the expense of the ability of the United Nations to use resources efficiently and effectively; the focus should be on programme delivery and results rather than financing. We must allow managers to manage, and hold them accountable for the results. In addition to these steps, I invite Member States to consider examining the mechanisms for reviewing the budget, with support from the Secretariat as necessary. Together, we can identify ways to improve the budget process, **especially in how we formulate and communicate the results that we hope to and do accomplish**, looking holistically at what makes sense, what works well and what needs to be improved.

B. For Member States' consideration

125. Any decisions regarding the principal intergovernmental organs and other bodies of the United Nations are for Member States. However, there are various needs that have been identified throughout this report, notably in conjunction with the interests of succeeding generations, and the governance of the global commons and the delivery

of global public goods through networked, inclusive and effective multilateralism. The activities of the **Trusteeship Council** have been suspended since 1994. Previous commissions and secretaries-general, along with some Member States, have proposed a repurposing of the Council to enhance the governance of the global commons. Building on these ideas, and as part of the follow-up to Our Common Agenda, I invite States to consider making the Council available as a multi-stakeholder body to tackle emerging challenges and, especially, to serve as a deliberative forum to act on behalf of succeeding generations. Among other tasks, it could issue advice and guidance with respect to long-term governance of the global commons, delivery of global public goods and managing global public risks.

126. Beyond the Trusteeship Council, I took note of calls from **Member States for reforms of the three principal organs of the United Nations in the seventy-fifth anniversary declaration**, in particular their commitments to instil new life into the discussions on the reform of the Security Council and to continue the work to revitalize the General Assembly and to strengthen the Economic and Social Council. With regard to any decisions by Member States to adapt the intergovernmental organs to the needs and realities of today, I stand ready to provide the necessary support. Below are some of the ideas that have emerged from our consultations on the seventy-fifth anniversary and Our Common Agenda, grouped here for the consideration of Member States.

127. After decades of debate, the majority of Member States now acknowledge that the **Security Council** could be made more representative of the twenty-first century, such as through enlargement, including better representation for Africa, as well as more systematic arrangements for more voices at the table. In addition to the intergovernmental negotiations continuing with renewed urgency, suggestions have been made to strengthen the inclusiveness and legitimacy of the Council by systematically consulting with a broader range of actors, including regional

organizations; considering public commitments to exercise restraint in the use of the veto; and expanding the use of informal mechanisms, such as Arria-formula meetings, to advance sensitive issues. Reinforced action on prevention to ensure that the threats we face today do not fester and deteriorate would mean that the Council, charged with managing and resolving potential and actual threats to international peace and security, avoids seeing its agenda expand exponentially. The United Nations system needs to be able to address the cross-cutting issues of security, climate change, health, development, gender equality and human rights from a prevention perspective with greater effectiveness and accountability, for example through expanding the role of the **Peacebuilding Commission** to more settings. The proposed emergency platform for convening the key actors to respond to a complex global crisis could be another element of this.

128. Member States' efforts to revitalize the work of the **General Assembly** and streamline its resolutions, reporting requirements and committees have been welcomed. It has also been suggested that States could strengthen the high-level week of the Assembly, using it as an opportunity to take decisions and make commitments at the level of Heads of State and Government. Similarly, the **Economic and Social Council** was established in the Charter as the principal United Nations body coordinating the economic and social work of the Organization. While we are now in a different era, various proposals have been made to reinforce the role and profile of the Council, including by bringing the G20 and its processes into a closer relationship with the Council. In my view, the Biennial Summit put forward in chapter IV would be an important step forward in better coordination of global economic governance. In addition, the **high-level political forum** has emerged as the primary global gathering for sustainable development. It provides an inclusive platform for monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while promoting peer learning and expanding the global movement for the Sustainable Development

Goals. I invite all Governments, sectors, partners and alliances to engage at the high-level political forum each year to increase ambition, accelerate implementation efforts and build connections across issues that are essential for effective multilateralism.

129. The consultations as part of Our Common Agenda have called for fuller use of the **human rights treaty monitoring system**, including the universal periodic review, treaty bodies and special procedures, to solve pressing social, economic and political challenges. As indicated in my Call to Action for Human Rights, I am ready to work

with States to find ways to put the human rights mechanisms on a more sustainable financial footing, including through more flexibility for the United Nations to allocate funding, and to better link them with other processes to maximize their impact and assist States parties with compliance. More transparency has also been called for in terms of human rights commitments undertaken by prospective candidates for membership of the **Human Rights Council**, in line with the criteria adopted by Member States in General Assembly resolution 60/251 by which the Council was created.



© UN Photo

130. Finally, echoing calls made to the United Nations system, we have received suggestions on how to increase opportunities for engagement by **civil society and other stakeholders** across all the intergovernmental organs. These have included an annual civil society caucus in conjunction with the General Assembly's high-level week, as well as calls for an [updated resolution](#) defining how organs like the Economic and Social Council, the

General Assembly and the Security Council relate to civil society, local and regional governments and business actors, and for the President of the Economic and Social Council to convene a general review of arrangements for observer status or consultation in this regard. I encourage Member States to give serious consideration to these ideas, in keeping with our quest for a multilateralism that is more networked, inclusive and effective.



VI

Moving forward



VI. Moving forward

131. The purpose of Our Common Agenda is to keep delivering on the promise of the Charter of the United Nations. This report has provided a vision of solidarity and international cooperation that puts us on a path towards a breakthrough for a greener, safer and better future, and walks us back from the cusp of breakdown. This vision builds on and responds to the [declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations](#), in which Member States made 12 critical commitments: to leave no one behind; to protect our planet; to promote peace and prevent conflict; to abide by international law and ensure justice; to place women and girls at the centre; to build trust; to improve digital cooperation; to upgrade the United Nations; to ensure sustainable financing; to boost

partnerships; to listen to and work with youth; and to be prepared for future crises, including but not limited to public health crises. They also underlined that the United Nations should be at the centre of the effort to deliver on these commitments, noting that there is no other organization with its legitimacy, convening power and normative impact. Our Common Agenda is intended to advance the 12 themes of the declaration through actions that are urgent, transformative and fill critical gaps. It reinforces the need for robust action on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, along with other critical commitments on climate and human rights. I look forward to working with Member States and other stakeholders to act on the ideas reflected in the report.

Annex: Process for consultations on Our Common Agenda

1. In the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution 75/1), Member States tasked me to report before the end of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly with recommendations to advance Our Common Agenda and to respond to current and future challenges. In response, in addition to involving the United Nations system as a whole, I embarked upon a process of reflection, consisting of four tracks engaging a broad array of stakeholders, including Member States, prominent thought leaders, young people and civil society. The process built on the year-long anniversary global listening exercise, when over 1.5 million people from all 193 Member States took part in an online survey. Polling firms also conducted surveys in 70 countries. These consultations showed significant public support for international cooperation and a desire for more networked, inclusive and effective multilateralism in the future.

2. Engagement with Member States began with a letter to all permanent representatives and observers on 8 October 2020 laying out the process and inviting them to share their views. On 15 December 2020, the President of the General Assembly convened an informal encounter at which I shared some initial reflections and listened to views from the floor. In 2021, the United Nations Foundation, a key partner in this exercise, convened a series of breakfast dialogues with Member States organized around the 12 themes of the seventy-fifth anniversary declaration. On 8 July 2021, I again participated in an informal dialogue with the Assembly to share and hear more ideas.

3. To enrich the reflection process, I invited a geographically diverse, gender-balanced group of thought leaders to contribute their ideas on one

or more of the 12 themes from the declaration. I issued a similar invitation to several high-level groups of experts, practitioners and former leaders. In response, we received many insightful papers, videos and presentations and heard directly from some thought leaders in the breakfast dialogues and elsewhere.

4. In line with my determination that young people should be the designers of their own futures, I provided young thinkers and leaders with dedicated opportunities to contribute. A group of next generation fellows hosted by the United Nations Foundation built on the consultations on the seventy-fifth anniversary with young people, with guidance from my Envoy on Youth, convening a series of action groups on thematic priorities through a “big brainstorm” and holding national conversations with young people who had not previously engaged with the United Nations. The fellows worked intensively with youth-led networks and organizations from across the world and held intergenerational dialogues with policymakers. Their work informed my recommendations on young people and future generations. They have also set out their own vision, ideas and proposals in a report entitled [“Our future agenda”](#).

5. In keeping with the vision of more networked and inclusive multilateralism, and in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations, I also consulted widely with “we the peoples” of our world, including civil society, parliamentarians, think tanks, the private sector, subnational leaders and city networks, underrepresented groups and other non-government partners. This was supported by the United Nations Foundation and the Igarapé Institute, along with a network of global partners from all regions, including the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (South

Africa), Southern Voice (a network of 50 think tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America) and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore. Every effort was made to ensure that the reflection process included a wide range of voices from all regions, including through an experimental digital consultation exercise overseen by the Igarapé Institute, which

generated more than 520 proposals from over 1,750 participants, including from organizations with several million members, in 147 countries and in six languages.

6. The rich array of perspectives and inputs received greatly enhanced the ideas laid out in the report of Our Common Agenda and I am enormously grateful to all those who contributed.