



PEACE CHILD INTERNATIONAL

– Empowering Young People to Save Life on Planet Earth –

COMMENTS ON THE ZERO DRAFT

of

THE UN DECLARATION ON FUTURE GENERATIONS

Introduction & General Points

- **Background:** *Peace Child* is a story set in a future safe, sustainable world which tells, in flashback, how the youth of today create that world. The [UN Centenary Peace Child](#) tells how the Declaration on Future Generations becomes the catalyst that inspires “We the Peoples...” to lobby for the ‘effective multilateralism’ that will allow the UN to make the changes the world needs by its centenary in 2045.
- **Change the preposition** - “*On*” to “*for*.” “*On*” suggests that the Declaration is “*about*” Future Generations. We feel it should be a promise by our generation to implement practical policies to conserve and repair the world “*for*” them.
- **Use the BOAC Framework for Policy Development:** In this commentary, we employ the BOAC framework for policy development used by Maurice Strong, Nitin Desai and their team in preparing [Agenda 21](#), the outcome document of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit - arguably the UN’s most successful Summit. Though this was devised before the current generation of Peace Child youth advisers were born, we agree that it provides a logical way to develop practical policies that address a complex challenge like preserving the Biosphere to enable Future Generations to meet their needs. The BOAC Framework is easily explained, thus:
 - **Basis for Action** – identify the problem(s) we need to solve;
 - **Objectives** – decide what we plan to achieve by addressing these problem(s);
 - **Actions** – agree the Actions we have to take to achieve those Objectives;
 - **Costs** – calculate the costs associated with taking those Actions;
- **An Opportunity Missed:** This Declaration was a chance for our generation to ask forgiveness from, and pay reparations to, generations yet to come whose chance of living full, satisfying lives has been massively reduced by the excessive consumption we’ve enjoyed in our industrialised, anthropocene age. Though many, perhaps most, citizens of this planet are aware of the price that future generations will pay for our excesses, our governments are not well-placed to apologise: admitting wrong-doing is something governments just do not do. So it may be a useful exercise – for schools, universities and think-tanks – to draft a People’s Declaration for Future Generations, and include ideas like the following:

Basis for Action – *the problems we need to solve*

Analysis of the Zero Draft Content: The Preamble and Guiding Principles outline what might, in this Framework, be called the “Basis for Action.” They make some good points: in Clauses 1 to 3, they recognise that previous UN agreements, from the UN Charter up to the 2030 Agenda have already included commitments to future generations. It also acknowledges, rightly in Clause 8, that “*changes to the global demographic landscape, if left unaddressed, will compound harm to future generations*” and it acknowledges that “*...these challenges are now more foreseeable than in the past.*” It also acknowledges the “*many religious and spiritual belief-based practices*” which seek to “*safeguard future generations.*” But these sit alongside some frankly infantile expressions of the blindingly obvious like the need for: “*...sustainable peace, prosperity and the protection of human rights*” + a rather sad request for increased funding for the UN by asserting the need for a “*more resilient and credible multilateral system...*” These obvious needs are repeated in the guiding principles with some elaboration in later Clauses; eg. clauses 14 & 15 which state that: “*... a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment must be created and maintained by addressing the pressing issues of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, as well as other environmental concerns...*” along with “*safe, secure and trustworthy technology and innovation necessary to promote digital transformation...*” One wants to scream at the page: “*But these are promises that the UN has been making for decades and failing to keep!!! Why repeat them now?*” So – the Zero Draft gets off to a bad start by setting out its stall as just another bland UN document that ticks a box, but has absolutely ZERO chance of being implemented,

Suggested Content: The Basis for Action for any Declaration for Future Generations must be that contemporary society spends little, if no, time considering the actual *needs* of Future Generations. Though the 1987 report, *Our Common Future*, stated boldly that we must pursue a policy of Sustainable Development to “*meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.*” – the most casual comparison between the state of the Planet in 1945, and the state of the planet today suggests a shocking, almost criminal, disregard for enabling future generations to meet their needs. That disregard should not offend Member States, as the current Secretary-General has repeatedly expressed it, calling for a “Red Card” to be shown to delinquent governments. But, sadly, the Secretary-General is not a Referee: he is a servant and has no power to order Member States to do anything. He can say, as he often does, that carbon emissions are moving in the “*wrong direction,*” that “*the SDGs are way off course*” and that “*Global decision-making is fixed on immediate gain, ignoring the long-term consequences of decisions — or indecision*” – but he has no power to change anything – for our own, or future generations.

The Basis for Action must therefore admit, what Sir Partha Dasgupta states so clearly in the Introduction to his *Biodiversity Review*: “*The world lacks the institutional infrastructure to protect the global commons...*” Or, as the leader of the World Federalists puts it, “*The world doesn’t have a climate change or environment problem: it has a Global Governance problem.*” That has to be the Basis for Action.

Objectives – what we plan to achieve

Analysis of the Zero Draft Content: Most of the commitments expressed in Clauses 18 to 27 of the Zero Draft have little, if anything, to do with the existential threats faced by Future Generations. But, like motherhood and apple pie, they are all very desirable:

- Peace (18);
- end gender discrimination (19);
- eliminate racism & xenophobia (20);
- foster intercultural dialogue (21);
- eradicate poverty (22);
- guarantee climate justice (23);
- harness new technologies (24);
- strengthen cooperation amongst states in relation to migration (25);
- invest in quality education (26); - and –
- guarantee universal health to future generations (27);

Again, these are all promises that the UN has made many times in the past and have signally failed to uphold. There is absolutely no reason to believe why stating them again in this Declaration makes them any more likely to be achieved.

Suggested Content: ***Our Objectives should be:***

- 1) to research and articulate, in great detail with precise datasets, exactly what actions and behaviours we, the human family, are doing that “compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”
- 2) to design and construct the global infrastructure of governance that enables those compromising actions to be prohibited by force of international law;

Some of the desirable objectives included in the Zero Draft do compromise the ability of future generations to meet some of their wants, but it is more important to articulate objectives that offer solutions to the existential threats to their ability to meet their basic needs which are undermined by threats to all life on earth. These include Objectives to -

1. Abolish war and eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth by 2045;
2. End the production, sale and use of all fossil fuels by 2045;
3. Eliminate corruption, people-trafficking and other international crimes;
4. Eliminate fake news & fake science which disfigure the integrity of our civilisation;
5. Make the survival and integrity of the Biosphere the objective that takes priority over any individual nations’ or citizens’ needs or human or legal rights;

Actions – the Actions needed to achieve our Objectives

Analysis of the Zero Draft Content: Clause 36 proposes the following Actions: Appoint a Special Envoy for Future Generations **and / or** establish an annual forum on future generations and create a living compact between past, present, and future **and / or** include future generations on the General Assembly agenda **and / or** request the Secretary-General to submit an annual report on the implementation of commitments and the

embedding of long-term thinking on future generations within the UN system for consideration by the General Assembly. A simple appointment is a woefully insufficient Action to secure the safety and prosperity of Future Generations. And reports? Recall the old farming metaphor: “*You don’t grow a pig by weighing it!*” (IE. you have to feed it!) These are excuses for In-action – not Actions that have any chance of delivering on the needed objectives.

Clauses 28 to 35 do outline some specific actions, namely:

- Leverage science to future-proof decision-making (38);
- Data-sharing to create citizens who are agents of positive change (29);
- Replace GDP with multi-dimensional systems of accounting (30);
- Better prepared responses to future global shocks (31);
- Coordinate government Ministries to safeguard the interests of future generations (32);
- Develop partnerships with relevant stakeholders + intergenerational partnerships (33);
- Equip the UN to support member states to embed future generations in policy-making processes (34);
- Adopt a more future-oriented organisational culture across the UN System (35);

Most of these are feeble re-treads of earlier UN commitments: they barely touch the existential threats faced by future generations and, though some are desirable, future generations require us to be a whole lot more courageous in our Actions on their behalf.

Suggested Content: The Declaration needs to have much bolder Actions promised by UN Member Governments. In relation to the Objectives we outline above, we propose that the Declaration specifies the following Actions:

- 1) Set up a network of Think Tanks and Universities in every UN Member State to research and report, in precise scientific detail, what we are doing – and what Actions we need to take to safeguard “the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”
- 2) Armed with that information, UN Member States must contract – maybe the UN, maybe an independent committee of political, civil society and business experts – to plan and undertake the Actions identified in the research – which may include a total re-design of the global infrastructure of governance to ensure that those safeguards are enforced by international laws;
- 3) So – to address the existential threats faced by future generations, the Declaration should propose the following Actions:
 1. Set up an International Court to prosecute Crimes of Corruption supported by a Global Network of Investigators, and an international police force to bring indicted felons to trial along with prisons to secure those convicted.
 2. Take Action to reverse and end the Climate Emergency by forcing the pace of transition to a green, sustainable economies through Green Deals, Border Adjustment Mechanisms, Carbon Budgets, and an International Court of the Environment to prosecute the crime of Ecocide and prioritise the regeneration of the Biosphere in every UN Member State.
 3. Take action to extend the concept of Carbon Trading to businesses and individuals by agreeing a Global Emissions Budget, setting Personal Carbon Budgets (PCBs) – and setting up carbon trading systems managed by a UN Agency to reduce inequality & incentivise a rapid transition to a Green, sustainable Energy Economy.
 4. To eliminate fake news & fake science, set up a UN Agency, along the lines of [BBC Verify](#), tasked with verifying the truth of all news stories and scientific

assessments proposed by different governments and other authorities – and making it very clear when the exact truth cannot be verified. Every member of the human family should have access, digitally, to this Agency, and no government, business or individual should be allowed to tamper with its output.

5. Take bold Actions for Peace:

- Hand all nuclear weapons over to an international authority responsible for the safe dismantling, and prohibit the possession, testing or deployment of any nuclear weapon by all UN Member States;
- Abolish War as an instrument for solving international disputes; require all UN Member Governments to take their concerns to the International Court of Justice and ensure that all Member States agree to be bound by the ICJ's decisions;
- Resurrect the Right to Protect (R2P) – so that every member of the human family has the right to have their basic needs met – by the international community if their government, or refugee status, renders that impossible by other means;
- Eliminate the P5 Member Governments' Veto in the Security Council: make all nations equal within the UN;

Costs – *the Cost of taking those Actions*

Analysis of the Zero Draft Content: The Zero Draft does not mention costs or make any request for the funding that it might require to enable future generations to meet their needs. This suggests that the authors feel that caring for the needs of future generations is a cost-free exercise, which, of course, it is not. The cost of a Special Envoy for Future Generations, or the Annual Forum (*which, amusingly, it suggests may take place every five years!*) – are not considered by the authors. The failure to even hazard a guess at the cost of enabling future generations to meet their needs – badly undermines the seriousness of the co-authors approach to this Declaration. UN Member Governments may not advance the funds to meet those costs but, as Strong and Desai did in 1992, it is vital to alert those member governments to the costs of delivering what they sign up to in September.

Suggested Content: The Declaration must assert that there are costs associated with securing the ability of Future Generations to meet their needs. The research Network proposed above would be relatively cheap: a few million dollars. Likewise, the cost of an International Corruption Court would be similar figure to the cost of the ICJ – which is about \$30m annually. Other costs would be considerably greater: the World Bank calculated some years ago that the cost of transitioning from a fossil fuel economy would be in the region of \$43 trillion dollars. It would be greater now. But – the costs of setting up the global governance infrastructure to protect the global commons could be considerably less if it harnesses the power of AI.

As the Declaration develops and refines its Action Programme through the UN Agencies tasked with implementing its provisions, the costs should be calculated and presented to UN member governments and we the peoples so that we are clear as to the scale of the reparations our greed requires us to pay to Future Generations.

ZERO DRAFT

of the

DECLARATION ON FUTURE GENERATIONS

Preamble

1. We, the Heads of State and Government representing the peoples of the world at the Summit of the Future, at the United Nations Headquarters on 22 and 23 September 2024,
2. Reaffirming our commitments in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
3. Recalling that we have repeatedly reaffirmed our obligations to future generations and our determination to safeguard their needs and interests, including, *inter alia*, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2023 SDG Political Declaration,
4. Observing that many social, cultural and religious or spiritual belief-based practices, as well as numerous national constitutions and legal systems exist, that seek to safeguard future generations and promote intergenerational solidarity and responsibility,
5. Recognizing that our decisions, actions, and inactions today, have an intergenerational multiplier effect, such that our conduct today will impact future generations exponentially, and therefore emphasizing that present generations, carry a responsibility towards future generations to act with their interests in mind,
6. Recognizing the need for intergenerational dialogue and engagement, including among the elderly, youth and children, in our decision-making in order to safeguard the interests of future generations,
7. Acknowledging that investing in building a strong foundation for sustainable peace, prosperity and the protection of human rights is the most effective way to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations,
8. Recognizing the complex and interrelated challenges and risks faced by present generations, including the projected consequential changes to the global demographic landscape, which, if left unaddressed, will compound harm to future generations, and acknowledging that these challenges are now more foreseeable than in the past,
9. Further recognizing the importance of a stronger, more resilient and credible multilateral system, underpinned by confidence and trust, for the benefit of future generations,
10. Cognizant that future generations are all those generations that do not yet exist, are yet to come and who will eventually inherit this planet.

Guiding Principles

To seize the opportunity that present generations possess to leave a better future for generations to come and to fulfil our mandate to meet the demands of the present in a way that safeguards the interests of future generations, we will adhere to the following principles:

11. The maintenance of international peace and security, and the full respect for the international rule of law, must be promoted in line with the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity,
12. The fundamental principles of human rights, encompassing political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights, and fundamental freedoms for all, and of the right to pursue and enjoy them, must be respected and observed without distinction or discrimination of any kind,
13. The rights of future generations to thrive in prosperity and achieve sustainable development must be guaranteed, including by addressing intergenerational transmission of poverty and hunger, and inequality and injustice,

14. A safe, healthy, and sustainable environment must be created and maintained by addressing the pressing issues of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, as well as other environmental concerns,
15. Safe, secure and trustworthy technology and innovation are necessary to promote digital transformation, while bridging the digital divide by ensuring equitable access to advances in new and emerging technologies,
16. The achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are required for a sustainable future,
17. A strong, efficient, effective and robust multilateral system is essential to enhance cooperation and rebuild trust among countries and other stakeholders, and create a world that is more equal, more resilient and more sustainable.

18.

Commitments

Guided by these principles, we hereby pledge to:

18. Promote peaceful, inclusive and just societies while taking into account inequalities within and between nations and the special needs of developing countries, as well as those of systemically marginalized communities and groups in vulnerable situations,
19. Implement policies to eliminate gender discrimination in all its forms and promote women's empowerment by providing equitable economic and leadership opportunities for all women and girls, as appropriate, in all spheres of society,
20. Eliminate all forms of persistent historical and structural inequalities, including racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and all other forms of discrimination,
21. Honor and promote cultural diversity, foster intercultural dialogue to ensure tolerance, preserve ecosystems and communities, protect territorial rights, languages, knowledge systems and traditions, while safeguarding spiritual and ancestral beliefs of Indigenous Peoples and ensuring their full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making processes,
22. Undertake comprehensive and targeted strategies to achieve sustainable development, global resilience and to eradicate poverty, including extreme poverty, in all its forms and dimensions, to meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs,
23. Guarantee climate justice by prioritizing urgent action on climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, desertification, water scarcity, and other environmental challenges to safeguard vulnerable communities and ensure a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment,
24. Harness the benefits of new and emerging technologies and mitigate the associated risks in a constructive and safe manner through effective and equitable governance at the global and regional levels, including through building capacity and promoting the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms to eliminate the digital and innovation divide, as outlined in the Pact for the Future and the annexed Global Digital Compact,
25. Strengthen cooperation among states in their response to demographic trends and realities, including on safe, orderly and regular migration between countries of origin, transit and destination, to ensure that the interests of both present and future generations across all regions will be fully safeguarded,
26. Invest in inclusive, equitable and quality education for current generations, as well as opportunities for lifelong learning, allowing for the intergenerational acquisition and transfer of knowledge and skills to advance the prospects of future generations,
27. Guarantee the rights of future generations to the highest standard of health, through universal healthcare, to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all throughout the life course.

We will implement, institutionalize and monitor the above commitments in national, regional and global policy-making by:

28. Leveraging science, data and strategic foresight to ensure long-term thinking and planning, develop and implement sustainable practices and the institutional reforms necessary to future-proof decision-making while making governance more anticipatory, adaptive and responsive to future risks and challenges,
29. Ensuring that knowledge and data are widely shared and build transparent, inclusive, effective and practical accessibility to information, while promoting critical thinking and life-skills to create generations of citizens that are agents of positive change and transformation,
30. Transforming our systems of national and global accounting by promoting the use of future impact assessments, developing stronger anticipatory risk analysis and elaborating a multidimensional approach to take account of indices beyond GDP,
31. Investing in capacity to better prepare for and respond to future global shocks by avoiding and mitigating risks by using forecasting and foresight, while ensuring that the most vulnerable groups and countries do not bear disproportionate costs and burdens of mitigation, restoration and resilience building,
32. Undertaking a cross-sectoral approach that involves the coordination of government Ministries and agencies, including at the local government levels, in the development, assessment and implementation of policies that safeguard the interests of future generations,
33. Developing partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, academia, the scientific and technological community and the private sector, as well as intergenerational partnerships, to share best practices and develop innovative, long-term and forward-thinking ideas in order to respect, protect and fulfil the needs, interests and rights of future generations,
34. Equipping the multilateral system, including the United Nations, to support Member States in their efforts to embed future generations and long-term thinking in policy-making processes by fostering and facilitating greater use of foresight, science and data, and raising awareness of and advising on the likely intergenerational or future impacts of policies and programmes,
35. Adopting a more future-oriented organizational culture and ways of working across the United Nations system to facilitate science-based sustainable decision-making by developing diverse capabilities, including foresight and futures literacy, and systematically promoting long-term and intergenerational thinking at all levels.
36. Recognizing the important advisory and advocacy role of the United Nations with respect to future generations, we:

Encourage the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy for Future Generations;

[and/or]

Decide to establish a facilitative, inclusive annual forum or high-level meeting on future generations that will review this Declaration every [five years] to reaffirm and update the responsibility of present generations to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations, creating a living compact between past, present, and future;

[and/or]

Include the question of future generations as an agenda item of the General Assembly;

[and/or]

Request the Secretary-General to submit an annual report on the implementation of commitments and the embedding of long-term thinking in the interest of future generations within the United Nations system for consideration by the General Assembly.