



COMMENTARY

on

Zero Draft of the UN Pact for the Future

Chapeau

The Chapeau should outline the goals, context and rationale of the Pact for the Future. It can set the context by referring back to Resolution 76/307, and the goals by repeating those elegantly articulated in Para (b) of the Scope Resolution 77/L.109. PCI recommends that it go further and point out that, though the UN was set up in 1945 in the name of “We the peoples...,” at the time, there was no way that it could access the views of a majority of “We the peoples...” except through their national governments. The organization therefore became fully funded by, and answerable only to, “They, the governments...”. 78 years later, the internet has changed all that. Therefore, the UN should seek to return to its founding intention and operate as a digital forum, representing all peoples living on this planet. It should be co-financed directly by them and, on occasion, be able to over-ride decisions of governments, when actions by such governments are not in the best interests of, or go against the wishes of, the vast majority of human beings alive at the time.

The Summit and Pact for the Future are intended to “fill the gaps” left by the Sustainable Development Goals, the most glaring of which is concisely captured by Sir Partha Dasgupta’s 2022 in his Biodiversity Review: *“The World lacks the institutional infrastructure to protect the Global Commons...”*

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (1): We recommend that the Chapeau include an action commitment to fill that gap, adding at the end: “–for future generations” – thereby intentionally linking the chapeau to the content of Chapters IV of the Pact.

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (2): We recommend that, to support the 21st century UN’s intention to enter the digital age and be of service to every human being alive on the planet, the Chapeau include a commitment to publish the Pact in as many of the world’s languages as possible, at the very least in the 133 languages served by Google Translate.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

The failure of member states to get close to achieving the modest targets of the SDGs, or to achieve the imperative of phasing out society’s dependence on fossil fuels, suggests that new approaches are needed to deliver Sustainability. The Pact must, therefore, acknowledge that, while it has made some progress on meeting the needs of present generations, it has massively compromised, perhaps irreversibly, the ability of future generations to meet their needs. So –

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (1): We recommend that the Chapter ONE of the Pact include a commitment to create a budget of .5% of national turn-over on measures designed to restore, conserve and sustain natural resources and infrastructure for the benefit of future generations;

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (2): We recommend that the United Nations massively increase the breadth of its income sources. Member State Governments must permit, and UN staff must mandate, “We the Peoples...” (*individuals and corporations*) to pay a portion of their income to global funds that transparently deliver sustainable development aid to the world’s poorest people. Tithes and taxes of this kind can be used to supplement funds raised via taxes on transnational fund transfers, intl. airline tickets, shipping, ocean fishing, space travel and other uses of the Global Commons.

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (3): Fossil Fuel companies have acquired immense profits from the burning of fossil fuels without paying any compensation or reparations for the damage that the burning of their product has done to the planet’s environment and climate. This Chapter of the Pact must include a commitment to tax, retrospectively, all profits made from the production, sale and use of fossil fuels to fund a just and fair transition to a fossil-free future powered by renewable energy and sustainable use of all planetary resources.

Chapter II. International peace and security

The UN was set up to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...” It’s current structure prevents it from doing so and allows the danger of nuclear omnicide, identified at the very first meeting of the UN General Assembly in January 1946, to remain. The maintenance of the veto in the hands of 5 x member states allows single governments, sometimes a single individual, some with psychopathic tendencies, to dedicate whole economies to the prosecution of wars that cause untold death and suffering to millions of people. If the Summit of the Future is to have any resonance with “We the Peoples...” and have a lasting historic impact, it must address this flaw:

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (1): We recommend that the Pact call for an Article 109 process to discuss the modalities by which –

- ONE: the Security Council may discontinue the P5 member state veto provision, or to allow a veto to be overruled by a simple majority of Member states;
- TWO: All nations in possession of nuclear weapons be required to agree to a No First Use policy and set a timetable for their elimination by – say – the centenary of its first meeting, January 10th 2046; there-after nuclear weaponry may only be stored as exhibits in museums.
- THREE: To replace the Law of Force and Violence with the Force of Law and Peaceful negotiation: the United Nations, supported by an “Emergency Peace Service,” must be enabled to suspend a Declaration of War by any Member Government for a cooling off period of 60-days during which time diplomats, supported by civil society, seek ways to avoid violence.
- FOUR: The ICJ must have the power to require UN Member state governments to abide by its rulings – and have the forces and funds at its disposal to enable it to do so;

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (2): We recommend that the United Nations re-define itself as a “Security Organisation” – guaranteeing to “We the Peoples...” personal and global security from the accumulation of threats to our survival that science brings to our attention. Under an Article 109 process, UN Member Governments must sign up to a Hippocratic Oath to its peoples to ensure their security and do them no harm...” Failure by any member state to achieve that Security for its citizens must trigger international action along the lines of the Right to Protect (R2P);

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

This is the area where the biggest changes have happened since 1945, and the SDGs barely mentioned it. The UN has been quick to adapt to digital technology in its operations, going paperless back in the 1980s. But, as the Recommendation above on reaching out in more languages shows, it has been slow to take advantage of new technologies to democratize itself. So, in the Pact, we urge the Secretariat to do the following:

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (1): Quickly operationalize the concept that “Digital Access is a Human Right.” Bridge the digital divide through community-based, free, internet-linked computers in every community. Back this up with a Digital Bill of Rights – to protect individuals and ethnic groups from online abuse and harms; extend the European regulations on GDPR to all nations and develop globally-agreed penalties for breaches of such regulation. Also continue to monitor and regulate the growth of AI to ensure it remains at the service of humanity, not vice versa.

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (2): Create a register of Global Citizens so that anyone interested in the state of the planet can register and get a UN-blue membership card. The register should, initially, be a digital UNIC: a way for the UN to communicate via a quarterly newsletter with every citizen of the planet – in their language and idiom. Once established, with a billion + members, it can start to record data about individuals, their needs and views – so that the UN can begin to operate, genuinely, in the name of “We the Peoples...” Also – it can gather data from emergency situations, and arrange conditional and unconditional cash transfers for those in greatest need – operationalizing the idea of R2P digitally. Finally, the Register may be used as a Democratic backstop to advise and guide governments who cannot reach agreement on key policy decisions.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

Like Chapter III, this chapter addresses a gap not considered seriously enough since it made the commitment, at the Rio Earth Summit, not to ‘compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.’ The inclusion of a chapter in the Pact on how to meet that commitment to people who do not exist yet is a bold move, worthy of great praise. But it needs to be a whole lot bolder and more radical if it is to have any chance of achieving its worthy goal.

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (1): We recommend that every member state of the UN appoint a Minister responsible for Future Generations or the 7th Generation. Only in this way will a UN Envoy for future generations, if one is appointed, have a wealth of strategies and policies derived from all the world’s cultures and traditions to inform his/her guidance to member state institutions.

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (2): Many of the things required to safeguard Future Generations are required to safeguard our own: achievement of the SDGs; elimination of nuclear weapons; resolution of the climate emergency by systemic carbon-pricing; an end to the P5 member states’ veto; education, health and shelter for all, greater pandemic preparedness etc. We recommend incentivizing these actions to member states by requiring them to include an endorsement by the UN Envoy, and Member State ministers, with responsibility for Future Generations.

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (3): Prioritise Education for Sustainability in all schools and colleges: youth and sustainability experts have been calling for this since 1992. It is bad enough that governments have not done nearly enough to achieve sustainable development; far worse is that they have failed to educate Future Generations about the challenge of sustainability, and survival, that will be the defining feature of their lifetimes. UN Member States must mandate all students to study, and be assessed in, the science and politics of Sustainability: it must have a solutions focus, and be taught at all grade levels from primary to tertiary, increasing in detail and complexity every year.

Chapter V. Transforming global governance

This is what the Pact has to do: to fill the gap in global governance identified by Dasgupta. It can only do this by inspired collective leadership from the senior member states of the UN working together. Therefore -

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (1): We recommend that the UN Secretary-General convene a meeting of the Heads of State of the P5 Members to discuss -

- How – IF? – to achieve the global governance the world requires to preserve the Global Commons.
- How the member states can move from an imperial mindset – which has been a factor in the past or present of all P5 members – to one where they respect the right of all nations to be autonomous.
- How – IF? – after 78 years, they can achieve the UN’s founding concern and eliminate Nuclear Weapons;
– *and* –
- How – IF? – they would be prepared to surrender their Veto powers and join the community of nations as equals, rather than overlords;

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (2): We recommend that the UN Secretary-General convene a meeting of the Heads of State of the BRICS and G20 Member States + representative members of indigenous peoples, to discuss the views of the P5 members expressed on these issues – and then add their own views.

– *and finally* –

Concise, Concrete & Action-oriented Recommendation (1): We recommend that the UN Secretary-General convene a meeting of the Heads of State of all General Assembly Members to and seek consensus on these issues.