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Community

Making the Most of the 2024 Summit of the Future

A High-Level UNGA77 Side Event on Thursday, 22 September 2022.

Introduction

In the wake of escalating conflicts worldwide, a global food crisis, new COVID-19 variants, irreversible climate change, and a weakened global economy, international efforts to advance human progress and global cooperation, including implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris Climate Agreement, are being undermined. In the UNGA77 High-Level Week side event, “Making the Most of the 2024 Summit of the Future,” the moderators Maria Fernanda Espinosa (President of the 73rd General Assembly and Co-Chair of the Coalition for the UN We Need) and Danilo Türk (President of the Club of Madrid and Member of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Effective Multilateralism, along with panelists Prince Albert II (Sovereign Prince of Monaco), Ibrahim Gambari (former Nigerian Foreign Minister and Co-Chair of the Albright-Gambari Commission), Christopher Lu (Representative of the United States to the United Nations for UN Management and Reform), and Natalie Samarasinghe (Global Director for Advocacy at the Open Society Foundations), sought to address how the international community can effectively address current crises and improve upon the global tools and innovative solutions put forth in the UN Secretary-General’s seminal *Our Common Agenda* report to make the most of the once-in-a-generation September 2024 Summit of the Future.

The discussion centered around ambitious and forward-thinking global governance innovations for better managing today’s most pressing global challenges, which included identifying strong linkages between the 2023 SDG Summit and 2023 Ministerial Forum as they pave the way towards the Summit of the Future. The conversation further contributed ideas for mobilizing civil society in a meaningful way, building on the multiple work streams of the Coalition for the UN We Need and Global Governance Innovation Network, including their recently initiated People’s Pact for the Future and preparations toward a (March 2023) [Global Futures Forum](#) in a hybrid format in New York.

Key Takeaways from the Session

The session’s expert panelists converged around the need for a much improved international order and governance system, capable of meeting humanity’s biggest challenges. The present moment in international affairs calls for creative, reform-minded thinking, a solutions-oriented approach, and a concerted effort by the international community to chart a way forward. Importantly, multilateralism and solidarity are fundamental to effective governance in our shared, global future; sufficient political will,

therefore, must be mobilized in favor of a more efficient United Nations and a better, more equal, and more resilient world.

In acknowledging that Member States' political will is needed to translate rhetoric into actionable solutions for change, several panelists spoke to the power that young people possess in generating political will. In seeking to further increase youth engagement—not only in local, regional, and national civic spaces but also in international forums, such as the 2024 Summit of the Future—younger generations can act as an effective force for change, by bringing fresh perspectives which will aid in devising “the future we need.” The expert participants further discussed how proposals put forth in the *Our Common Agenda*, such as a Declaration on Future Generations and New Agenda for Peace, could induce Member States to act in new ways that would facilitate a shift toward long-term policies that respond adequately to their people's needs.

The panelists further expanded on the vision behind the 2024 Summit of the Future and how it can complement and reinforce the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Several agreed that the 2023 SDG Summit and the September 2024 Summit of the Future could bolster one another in multiple practical ways. The High-Level SDG Summit—the second since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda—will be convened in September 2023 during the General Assembly's High-Level Week in New York. The expert participants shared that both the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future can complement one another in demonstrating the importance of strengthening global institutions and approaches to enhance national and sub-national capacities for delivering on the Agenda 2030 during the present Decade of Action. Additionally, both summits can, together, advance the prospects of sustainable development financing and generate multiplier effects to tackle the underlying causes of political and criminal violence, mitigate the effects of climate change, and work to reduce poverty in some of the most impoverished and conflict-prone places.

One expert participant recommended upgrading the UN Peacebuilding Commission into an empowered Peacebuilding Council, which would serve as a new principal organ of the United Nations (in place of the Trusteeship Council). A new Peacebuilding Council should be mandated to lead on policy development, coordination, resource mobilization, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in areas not directly addressed by the UN Security Council. It would focus on countries and regions in non-peacekeeping environments, monitoring as well as marshalling collective action to avert the outbreak or recurrence of deadly conflict and tracking closely the UN's system-wide efforts at sustaining peace.

The panelists also discussed prioritizing actions in support of Future Generations, especially at a time when there are other competing, persistent global challenges. The General Assembly's decision, in September, to establish the UN's first-ever Youth Office represents a historic resolution, further reinforcing broader efforts on behalf of the Future Generations. Emphasizing the critical role that civil society plays in shaping international decision-making about present and future generations, the expert participants underscored the importance of a proposed People's Pact for the Future and forthcoming (March 2023) Global Futures Forum. Both initiatives offer creative ways for diverse civil society actors to make their voices heard, in support of a reformed and improved United Nation that delivers for the people. Another related proposal introduced the idea of a new civil society office at the UN, to ensure that

ideas put forth by civil society are taken into consideration, while contributing to a more networked, inclusive, and effective global governance system.

Recognizing the need to reconcile people's urgent development needs with the well-being of the planet represented a common thread emphasized by the panelists, pointing to how the present climate crisis was only exacerbating wars, pandemics, disease, and famine. In failing to act urgently in response to the climate crisis, greater hardships will only continue as manifested in extreme weather events, most recently in Pakistan, where ravaging floods have killed over a thousand people. It is a moral and practical imperative that UN Member States act in ways that live up to their Paris Climate Agreement commitments toward reducing the effects of climate change. In connection with this accord, several participants suggested the need for a new framework to protect both biodiversity and the global commons, as a new instrument in favor of leaving behind a viable planet for subsequent generations.

Notable Quotes from the High-Level UNGA77 Side Event:

H.S.H Prince Albert II, Sovereign Prince of Monaco:

"This [the Summit of the Future] cannot be another summit where world leaders point at one another and make vague promises. Multilateralism and solidarity are key. We must mobilize all of our political will and unite in favor of a more efficient United Nations and a better, more equal world. Now is the time of action."

Ibrahim Gambari, Chief of Staff to the President of Nigeria and former Foreign Minister, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Co-Chair of the Albright-Gambari Commission:

"In light of the difficulties in achieving a more representative Security Council, an empowered Peacebuilding Council would allow more capable UN Member States to contribute directly to the UN's primary purpose of maintaining international peace and security. It should be entrusted with a conflict prevention mandate operationalized through a new "Peacebuilding Audit" tool, modeled on the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) instrument for tracking the human rights situation of all UN Member States."

Maria Fernanda Espinosa, President of the 73rd General Assembly of the United Nations and Co-chair of the Coalition for the UN We Need:

"We are all here because we care about the United Nations. Our responsibility is to make sure these summits deliver and to counter the summit fatigue we all feel."

Danilo Türk, President of Club de Madrid and Member of the UN Secretary-General's HighLevel Panel on Effective Multilateralism:

"How does one create political will? It has to be generated gradually. Involving young people with more energy and creative ideas is a way to generate that political will."

Christopher Lu, Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform:

"How do we operationalize innovative solutions put forth, and how do we make change? How do we turbocharge progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals?"

Natalie Samarasinghe, Global Director, Advocacy, Open Society Foundations:

“The UN has yet to scratch the surface on civil society engagement. We need to have a civil society office at the UN. It’s not enough to feel like we’re having our voices heard; we need to know that we’re being listened to. We have to ensure that all civil society voices are being heard, especially in the Global South, so that conversations at the United Nations are not a one-sided affair.”

Daniel Perell, Representative of the Baha’i International Community to the United Nations, New York:

“Humanity must establish an international order capable of meeting contemporary challenges; the question then is how? Will it be through a reform of the current system? Will it be through the creation of an entirely new system? Will it be after further catastrophes befall humanity? Will it be through an act of collective volition?”

Augusto Lopez-Carlos, Executive Director and Chair of the Global Governance Forum:

“The Summit of the Future should also consider an Article 109 review of the UN Charter”.