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## **Generating Impact with the Declaration on Future Generations and Futures Thinking in Multilateralism**

*Summary Report of a two-part roundtable series in support of the Summit of the Future and Declaration on Future Generations, held on 22 and 23 October 2024*

Co-Sponsors: Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom at the UN and the Stimson Center



*This summary captures the views expressed by various participants during the discussions. It does not necessarily represent the views of the organizers or of all who participated.*

## I. Executive Summary

Two roundtables, held on 22 and 23 October 2024 and co-sponsored by the United Kingdom's Mission at the United Nations and the Stimson Center, brought together Permanent Representatives and senior representatives of UN Missions, representatives of UN Agencies, funds, and programmes, and civil society leaders. The roundtables sought to elevate dialogue and explore strategies for carrying forward and implementing the Declaration on Future Generations' principles, commitments, and actions. A central theme was the need to make use of existing tools and best practices across international organizations and countries in order to be more intentional about looking at problems and opportunities with a long-term view.

The discussions underscored the necessity of coalitions and partnerships—emphasizing that collaboration among diverse groups, particularly women, youth and marginalized communities—is essential for developing effective policies. The success of the Declaration relies heavily on Member States' commitment to establishing clear indicators and fostering accountability.

Participants identified several critical challenges to implementing the Declaration's principles, commitments, and actions, including current fragmentation of efforts across sectors and insufficient resources. Additionally, systemic inequities often prevent marginalized communities from fully participating in governance processes, undermining the inclusivity essential for the Declaration's success.

In light of these challenges, participants highlighted key priorities for advancing the Declaration. Critically, it was important to understand how the Declaration influences processes that are already ongoing, and thus, also the tools we use to deal with them (for example, how the Declaration affects debt restructuring worldwide). Engaging in strong partnerships across stakeholder groups, including through *ImPact Coalitions*, emerged as crucial to allowing meaningful policy influence. The role of an Envoy for Future Generations was discussed, including through how such partnerships could support this new role. Simplifying accountability indicators was also emphasized, as clear metrics can facilitate effective monitoring and enhance transparency.

Participants concluded that committing to intergenerational equity requires sustained dialogue and collaboration, ensuring that the Declaration's principles, commitments, and actions are taken seriously in order to safeguard the wellbeing of present and future generations.

## II. Overview of Key Themes

The two-part roundtable series, convened October 22-23, 2024 by the UK Mission to the UN and Stimson Center, sought to provide platforms for identifying practical next steps for taking forward the Declaration on Future Generation. The first roundtable convened twenty-six senior Member States representatives and focused on best practices from countries, leveraging multistakeholder partnerships and how Member States can serve as champions to strengthen the Declaration on Future Generations in the run-up to its high-level meeting in 2028. The second roundtable convened twenty-nine representatives of the UN system and civil

society and spoke more deeply to the question of inclusion and accountability, as well as about ways to use existing best practices to support a potential UN envoy and high-level forum.

Generally speaking, the meetings emphasized three interconnected themes:

1. **Best Practices and Case Studies:** Participants examined legislative and policy frameworks that successfully incorporate long-term thinking, demonstrating how future-oriented policies can be operationalized at national and international levels. Discussions centered on frameworks that could be replicated, re-interpreted, and adapted to different regional contexts, particularly where resources are constrained.
2. **Multistakeholder Collaboration:** Both roundtables emphasized that meaningful engagement across stakeholder groups is essential to restoring trust in governance systems. Participants acknowledged that governance systems often exclude key stakeholders, especially indigenous and young people, despite their critical role in shaping future policies. The *Declaration on Future Generations ImPact Coalition*—formed at the 2024 UN Civil Society Conference in Nairobi in May—was identified as a key vehicle for fostering cooperation between governments, civil society, and the UN system.
3. **Aligning National and Global Agendas:** Participants stressed that aligning national policies with global commitments—such as the *Pact for the Future*—requires political will and institutional planning that, together, support anticipatory governance, foresight, and long-term planning. Innovative solutions, such as the creation of informal networks (including the *Group of Friends for Future Generations*), were discussed as ways to ensure ongoing cooperation.

### III. Implementation Challenges Anticipated

Certain key challenges were identified when seeking to implement the Declaration on Future Generations. Participants underscored the complexities of fostering effective governance and ensuring meaningful engagement across diverse sectors. Roundtable participants also emphasized the importance of recognizing and strategically addressing obstacles to ensure the long-term viability of initiatives aimed at safeguarding the rights and interests of future generations:

#### *Fragmented Efforts*

One of the foremost challenges articulated during the discussions was the fragmented approach currently taken to futures thinking. Many stakeholders pointed out that a lack of coordination across strategies leads to overlapping initiatives that not only lead to resource wastage, but also have difficulty in sustaining momentum to make real progress.

Participants saw value in coordination mechanisms that also enabled cross-sectoral collaboration. Establishing formal networks or coalitions that unite various actors, including governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, can streamline efforts and create a shared

agenda ,as well as maximize the pooling of resources to tackle resource burdens collectively. Deficits in trust remain a key barrier too, requiring intentional efforts over years (rather than days and months).

### ***Resistance to Change***

Governance institutions are often resistant to change. Many participants highlighted that entrenched interests and traditional practices can hinder the adoption of innovative approaches and applications necessary for advancing the Declaration on Future Generations. This resistance is often rooted in a reluctance to depart from familiar processes, even when those processes are demonstrably ineffective, if not counterproductive.

Participants in the roundtables emphasized the importance of unpacking the levels of transformational change required. Engaging decision-makers by demonstrating successful case studies from other contexts can help to mitigate resistance. Furthermore, the active involvement of young people and marginalized communities in advocacy efforts can pressure traditional structures to adapt. By amplifying these voices, stakeholders can foster a greater sense of urgency and accountability among policymakers and at capitals, opening the door to more innovative approaches.

### ***Constrained Resources***

A recurring theme in the discussions was the lack of resources allocated to implement initiatives related to long-term planning. When budget lines seem to force a trade-off between today and tomorrow, today always takes priority. This challenge is particularly pronounced in low- and middle-income countries, where unsustainable debt, limited credit access, and high levels of vulnerability often lead to reactive, rather than long-term, investments.

Participants considered the merits of leveraging public-private partnerships, philanthropic advocacy, and international cooperation to create funding pools dedicated to specific initiatives. Additionally, developing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks can help demonstrate the impact of investments, thereby attracting further funding and support. However, securing resources requires a further framing and a strategic approach that clearly outlines the return on investment.,

### ***Unequal Participation***

Participants noted that while efforts to engage a broad range of stakeholders are commendable, systemic barriers often prevent underrepresented groups, including women, Indigenous peoples, and youth, from fully participating in governance processes. This is especially concerning with the Declaration on Future Generations, where their voices are crucial for its success.

Creating inclusive platforms that ensure diverse perspectives are heard and valued requires intentional outreach efforts. Furthermore, fostering a culture of respect and collaboration among stakeholders can help

to mitigate hierarchies and promote equitable engagement. This level footing was seen as necessary to take forward the principles of the Declaration.

Across the two roundtables, there were some commonalities and differences in the conversation of challenges and implementation:

**Commonalities:** both roundtables highlighted a mutual recognition of the need for adaptive frameworks that can accommodate the diverse political, economic, and cultural contexts of Member States. Both Member States and Civil Society/UN System stressed the importance of avoiding a "one-size-fits-all" approach, advocating for context-specific implementation of the Declaration at local levels and across different institutions.

**Differences:** accountability and transparency mechanisms for implementation represented a point of divergence. Civil society representatives underscored the necessity of grassroots monitoring to foster trust and inclusivity, while member state representatives emphasized the importance of formal government commitments and structured oversight.

#### **IV. Priorities and Recommendations**

In the context of advancing the Declaration on Future Generations, the roundtables highlighted several key priorities that emerged from robust discussions among stakeholders. Participants considered innovative strategies to facilitate diverse buy-in on the Declaration, to establish streamlined accountability mechanisms, and to forge collaborative partnerships that speak especially to priorities from emerging economies and small and middle power states. The following priorities outline the critical areas for immediate action and continued dialogue:

##### ***Streamlined Indicators for Monitoring Implementation and Impact***

Another pressing priority discussed was the establishment of streamlined indicators for tracking progress related to the Declaration on Future Generations. Participants recognized that many of the commitments in the Declaration overlap with existing commitments and priorities in global agendas. A helpful first step would be, therefore, to see where indicators and processes for monitoring actions agreed to already exist, where there are gaps, and to begin to explore how one might begin to fill them. By focusing on a manageable number of indicators, Member States can more effectively report their progress, facilitate comparisons, and share best practices. Furthermore, these indicators should be introduced by robust training and capacity-building initiatives for governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders.

Additionally, participants recognized that for the Declaration to have a lasting impact, it is essential to establish frameworks that allow for ongoing assessment and adaptation of strategies over time. This could involve implementing regular reviews and impact assessments that evaluate the effectiveness of policies and initiatives, ensuring they remain responsive to the changing needs of society and the environment. Such a long-term exercise, potentially to be produced ahead of the 2028 high-level forum for the Declaration on Future Generations, requires clear milestones and timelines.

### ***Innovative Interpretations and Partnerships***

Participants noted that key to the Declaration on Future Generations' success would be that it does not get siloed or sidelined into a document only carried forward by the foresight and futures community. There is, therefore, a significant interpretation exercise that needs to take place on how the Declaration on Future Generations can support progress on existing challenges. Prominent examples include unsustainable debt, transitional justice, food security, and so forth. Such an exercise would help to streamline the Declaration as well.

The establishment of innovative partnerships also emerged as a critical priority for advancing the core objectives of the Declaration, including in promoting its principles, commitments, and actions. Recognizing that future generations' challenges are complex and multifaceted, stakeholders highlighted the importance of collaborative approaches, including through the ImPact Coalition on Future Generations that brings together diverse actors. These partnerships could encompass governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and academic institutions, creating a holistic framework for addressing pressing global issues. They must also be cross-sectoral so that, for example, themes of peace and financing, as well as climate, are thought about through long-term, sustainable, and intergenerational lenses. Such platforms would critically enable the sharing of best and existing practices, as well as lessons learnt in different geographic and cultural contexts. Here, technology and data-sharing initiatives are essential tools for progress.

### ***Setting up an Envoy on Future Generations for Success***

Participants in both roundtables took seriously a discussion on the Secretary-General's announcement to appoint a Special Envoy for Future Generations. During the civil society/UN roundtable, emphasis was put on needing to raise extrabudgetary funding for this appointment as quickly and efficiently as possible. Additionally, keeping in mind lessons learnt from previous Envoys and senior appointments, recommendations were floated with an eye to setting-up the Future Generations Envoy for success. A few recurring and key recommendations from some participants are listed below:

First, have the Future Generations Envoy work closely with both the Group of Friends, convened by Jamaica and Netherlands, and stakeholder groups, such as the ImPact Coalition on Future Generations. This will enable both intergovernmental support within the UN system, as well as resource pooling across wide stakeholder networks, given the likelihood that the actual office of the envoy will begin as rather small. Additionally, having an institutional anchor across the UN system—participants floated the idea of the UN Futures Lab serving this role—would further bolster an envoy's capacity.

Second, stakeholder groups could work to help to ensure the envoy's success by conducting some of the initial mapping and workplan coordination that an envoy would have to do once appointed. Participants pointed out that this would help an envoy get ahead of the game, when traditionally they have been forced to play catch up. For example, the mapping of effective futures thinking models exists worldwide—noting they are not always called “future” something. Rather, a food security system or a transitional justice program could represent a futures-oriented initiative; steps could be taken to identify through consultation regional priorities for the role of an envoy; and efforts should be made to suggest and provide an analytical basis for achieving key milestones that an envoy ought to achieve ahead of the high-level forum (among other measures). Such heavy-lift exercises could be conducted by civil society and other stakeholders ahead of the future envoy's appointment, to better equip and to set up the envoy for success.

Finally, participants in both roundtables emphasized the need for voices from global majority countries to take ownership of this agenda. It is, therefore, recommended that the envoy be appointed with a strong connection to this region of the world.

**Commonalities:** a collective recognition of the need for inclusive governance structures, focusing on cross-sectoral and collective engagement, and simplifying accountability mechanisms.

**Differences:** varying perspectives emerged on accountability modalities and the nature of the partnerships required to advance priorities. Navigating these complexities will necessitate ongoing dialogue and collaboration among major stakeholder groups, ensuring that the commitment to future generations is not only upheld but effectively translated into actionable outcomes.

## V. Conclusion

The two roundtables provided unique platforms to discuss shared, and sometimes diverging, commitments to advancing the principles, commitments, and actions enshrined in the Declaration on Future Generations. A pivotal takeaway was the recognition that we must not lose momentum to advance the Declaration in effective ways. Diverse stakeholders underscored the necessity of institutional structures that facilitate meaningful and effective advancements. Critical to this approach will be initiatives that ensure that diverse perspectives are integrated into decision-making processes, fostering a more inclusive governance framework.

To advance these priorities effectively, stakeholders must cultivate innovative partnerships across sectors, integrating the expertise of governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and academic and think tank institutions. Such collaborations are vital for addressing the multifaceted challenges confronting future generations. Ultimately, the discussions emphasized the critical importance of ongoing dialogue and adaptive governance in realizing the Declaration's aspirations. Commitment to intergenerational equity demands sustained collaboration and a dynamic approach that is responsive to societal needs.

## IV. Annex

### Questions asked during Roundtables

What are some examples of success or best practices for implementing future thinking and using strategic foresight tools to do so?

How can the Future Generations ImPact Coalition and other multistakeholder and inclusive efforts be leveraged to implement futures thinking across the UN and other international policy forums?

How can Member States serve as champions of future thinking to strengthen the impact of the Declaration on Future Generations?

### Member States Roundtable Participants

**Barbara Woodward** - United Kingdom  
**Archie Young** - United Kingdom  
**Natalie Bereuter** - United Kingdom  
**Richard Ponzio** - Stimson Center  
**Nudhara Yusuf** - Stimson Center  
**Michele Griffin** - EOSG  
**Harshani Dharmadasa** - UN Foundation  
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**Lise Gregoire-van Haaren** - PR Kingdom of the Netherlands  
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**Yanique DaCosta** - Jamaica  
**Imane Benziane** - Morocco  
**Donal Cronin** - DPR Ireland  
**Petra Bollich** - Germany  
**Charlotta Schlyter** - Sweden  
**Aya Yoshida** - Japan  
**Anri Kato** - Japan  
**Devyn Wallenius** - Canada  
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**Rina Kristmoen** – Norway  
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### Civil Society and UN System Roundtable Participants

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**Chris Earney** - UN Futures Lab  
**Margaret Williams** - Pathfinders, NYU-CIC  
**Muznah Siddiqui** - UNU-CPR  
**Naiara Costa Chaves** - UNDESA  
**Julie Murray** - Save the Children

**Martin Svatek** - ChildFund Alliance  
**Angga Dwi Martha** - UNICEF  
**Irene Torres Ortega** - UNDP  
**Khamsavath Chanthavysouk** - UN Women  
**Arelys Bellorini** - World Vision  
**Quintin Chou-Lambert** - UN Office of the  
SG's Tech Envoy

**Cecilia Schirmeister** - Baha'i International  
Community  
**Graeme Simpson** – Interpeace  
**Harshani Dharmadasa** – UN Foundation  
**Bojan Francuz** – UN Foundation

List of Background Resources

[Declaration on Future Generations](#)

[Pact for the Future](#)

[Rethinking Global Cooperation: Three New Frameworks for Collective Action in an Age of Uncertainty.](#)

[The UN Needs to Embrace the F-Word](#)

[Chapter 4: The Pact for the Future and the Intergenerational Multiplier Effect](#)

[Who Could Be the Special Envoy for Future Generations?](#)