Talking Points

(10 April 2020)

For UN75 People’s Declaration and Plan of Action

“Humanity at a Crossroads: global solutions for global challenges”

Initiated in 2017, the UN2020 Campaign is focused on leveraging the UN’s 75th anniversary to take stock and strengthen the United Nations system so that it may better cope with existing and emerging global challenges, in support of a people-centered multilateralism.

Far quicker than most of us could have imagined, a world-encompassing health crisis has shaken the international order to its core. For most, if not all, a period of personal and community disruption and difficulty seems all but assured. However, like the United Nations arising from the ashes of World War II, our response to this challenge can and must lay the foundation for a better path for enlightened global governance at all levels of society.

Civil society stands ready to collaborate and share our vision with the world and its governments as they prepare for the UN75 World Leaders Summit on 21 September this year. To this end, UN2020 has undertaken a global, multi-sectoral, cross-regional dialogue to develop a coherent civil society vision for a strengthened UN system. The outcome of this dialogue will be reflected in a “UN75 People’s Declaration and Plan of Action” which will be released at the online UN75 People’s Forum on 14 May 2020.

As the Declaration and Plan of Action drafting process is ongoing, these initial talking points provide an early indication of key principles and proposals likely to be featured in the final version. We request the UN75 co-facilitators and all Member States to consider these inputs in their negotiations of an ‘elements paper’ of their political declaration.
Principles

The present moment, characterized both by a significant anniversary which has started a process of reflection and an ongoing pandemic that demonstrates unmet needs, represents a rare window for bold, coordinated action to improve our global governance system. All actors - government, international organizations, parliamentarians, civil society, and others in the public and private sectors - must work together to ensure that our global system addresses the needs and aspirations of people from all corners of the world, driven by active, equitable and deep engagement at all levels.

The United Nations has achieved much in its 75-year history to fulfil its core objectives. Its progress was enhanced by the efforts of civil society coalitions that not only advocated for significant global governance innovations but were also key actors in achieving the UN’s objectives. Civil society has been a leading contributor to articulating and applying the values and principles that underpin the UN system, including the UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international conferences in the 1990s, the Millennium Declaration, and the 2030 Agenda.

The following enabling conditions are central to lasting progress and a just international order:

- A robust and principled understanding of governance as public service that protects human rights, gender equality and empowers all - especially historically neglected communities - to become protagonists in their development.
- An ethos of global solidarity, beginning with education that is suited to current and future needs, which ensures that the advancement of one population does not come at the expense of another, and contributes to the advancement of all.
- A commitment to implement UN global agreements, such as Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, as means to achieve societal transformation.
- Sustained, transparent and accountable financing of the UN system which addresses the needs of a people-centered multilateralism.
- Inclusive, open, and fair decision making at all levels of governance informed by rigorous, disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data, that includes all stakeholders and reflects the values articulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We offer the following priority calls for action to be undertaken by the United Nations and its Member States. These recommended actions are intended to serve as a springboard for more ambitious action toward the UN’s 2045 centenary and beyond.

Proposals

1. Strengthen innovative multilateralism. Use the UN’s 75th anniversary as a catalyst for a larger intergovernmental process advancing global governance reform and innovation. We call for the
establishment of a follow-up mechanism such as an Independent Commission on Global Governance to
(1) examine the place of global governance in a multipolar yet interdependent world, (2) propose
ambitious, systemic global governance reforms, and (3) ensure financial and political support for their
implementation. The UN should lead a global consultation worldwide on future modalities of global
governance that provides space for voices from all sectors to be heard and innovative inputs adopted.

2. **System-wide strategy for expanding and enabling civic space.** To address the democratic deficit at
all levels, a strategy is needed mandating a framework to support inclusive and open mechanisms for
meaningful civil society participation in the UN and related global institutions. Examples could include a
dedicated civil society focal point at the Under-Secretary-General level; a standing civil society advisory
forum to the UN General Assembly; the creation of youth and intergenerational advisory bodies to the
UN; and a World Citizens’ Initiative modeled on the EU system, whereby a critical mass of individuals
can petition the UN to respond to pressing issues.¹

3. **Integrate emerging technologies.** Bridge the world’s deepening digital divide by promoting
universal, affordable, and secure internet access for all. Strengthen the response to ongoing threats
including by countering the spread of misinformation, increasing security to prevent harm to children and
reduce online theft, banning lethal autonomous weapons, and adopting new proposals, including those
introduced last year by the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Harness the
unprecedented capacity technology affords us for managing the global commons and for bringing “we the
peoples” together in a peaceful world.

4. **Increase global capacity to combat catastrophic risks.** In light of increasingly rapid, medium and
slow onset risks such as, for example, nuclear war, health crises, and climate change, respectively, we call
on the United Nations to strengthen those processes, address these issues, and take decisive action when
and where possible. We endorse the Secretary-General’s recent bold and necessary call for a global
ceasefire in light of the current global pandemic. Equally vital is achieving core goals of the elimination of
all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Necessary responses to the current pandemic
must include a stimulus package to fragile states and countries with weak health systems that provides
universal access to vaccines and treatment with full respect for human rights, gender equality and
inclusion. With climate change and threats to other planetary boundaries, the United Nations must
reinforce scientific and technological assessment processes, increase financing for sustainable
development, promote a circular economy, achieve full compliance with the 1.5°C target, and prohibit
fossil fuel subsidies.

¹ The complete proposals to expand and enable civic space within the UN can be found at the Together
First “Ideas Hub”: https://together1st.org/proposal