



CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE UN WE NEED

TOGETHER FIRST
A GLOBAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL

COMMUNIQUE:

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As the United Nations turns 75, and the world faces great uncertainty, civil society organizations call for strengthened multilateral system

With governments and people the world over coming to terms with the threats posed by COVID-19, the World Health Organization has stepped up to play a vital role -- coordinating global policies and actions, providing reliable information, and setting standards for appropriate responses. We are reminded yet again how essential is the United Nations system and its many functional agencies and programmes.

2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. It is a time not only for celebrating the organization's many achievements, but also for taking stock and considering the challenges the system faces in the years ahead. The UN2020 Campaign, began in 2017 at a time when multilateralism was already under strain. COVID-19 and the associated financial and economic downturn globally further reinforce the need for new tools and approaches to cross-border cooperation in our hyperconnected world.

While governments prepare for a UN75 commemorative gathering of world leaders on 21 September this year, civil society networks are calling for leveraging the 75th anniversary to make the multilateral system stronger and more inclusive.

A major civil society conference, the "UN75 People's Forum for the UN We Need," originally scheduled for 23 April at UN headquarters, is now scheduled to take place 14 May 2020, through multimedia global videoconference. Coordinated by UN2020¹ and Together First², the online forum will bring together civil society and other stakeholder representatives from around the world to adopt a UN75 People's Declaration and Plan of Action.

Although consultations on the content of the Declaration and Plan of Action are ongoing, some prominent, overarching themes include:

1) The need for a formalized international process to strengthen multilateralism

2020 should be more than a birthday party. The UN75 political declaration currently under negotiation by governments should go beyond bland re-commitments to Charter principles plus recognition of previous accomplishments and already-agreed

¹ The [UN2020 Campaign](#) works in partnership with civil society, governments and the UN to generate support for using the 75th anniversary of the United Nations in 2020 as an opportunity to take stock and strengthen the UN system, in support of a people-centered multilateralism.

² The [Together First Network](#) is committed to making the best ideas for global governance a reality. By making the conversation on global governance accessible and inclusive, Together First contributes to creating a more democratic, transparent and accountable system – one that is, ultimately, more effective too.

goals. At a time when the UN-based multilateral system is widely viewed as being in need of renewal and reform, the UN75 political declaration should endorse and encourage efforts by governments seeking to strengthen international cooperation, multilateral institutions and the rule of law. It should catalyze a post-2020 longer-term review of the global governance architecture, perhaps through the creation of a new independent commission or high-level panel.

2) People-centered multilateralism and civil society participation modalities

At a time when communications innovations have allowed greater civil society capacity to contribute to global governance deliberations, governments must ensure a coherent, fair, and inclusive framework for civil society participation in the work of the UN. Civil society has demonstrated its capacity to self-organize, and to partner with governments and the UN to deliver successful outcomes across a range of global governance challenges. A system-wide review of civil society participation modalities – followed by discussion, adoption, and implementation of a few, well-designed and widely consulted proposals – should lead to a fair and more democratic approach to incorporating the voices of “We the Peoples.”

3) A better funded United Nations

The funding of the United Nations, including its various programmes and agencies, relies primarily on combinations of assessed and voluntary contributions from member states. The contributions are assessed and allocated using an arcane and opaque set of rules that have failed to generate adequate funding for the UN's work. To meet growing demands, a wide-ranging review and reform of the means for providing essential funding of the United Nations system should be mandated.

Notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, many important intergovernmental processes will mark milestones this year, including those addressing women's rights, biodiversity, human rights treaty bodies, peacebuilding, and sustainable development. Productive and successful UN75 deliberations can and should generate momentum for positive outcomes in these and other multilateral reviews – in 2020 and beyond.

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WHAT IS THE UN WE NEED?

#multilateralismmatters

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