

C4UN Virtual Roundtable on OCA Report Summary

Prepared by Jeffery Huffines, C4UN Senior Advisor

Key C4UN partners and thematic experts were invited to participate in a C4UN [roundtable discussion](#) on 30 November 2021 to identify elements of an advocacy strategy in support of the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda report. Participants were asked to prioritize OCA proposals and initiatives that the coalition will want to evaluate and advance as well as identify other key proposals and campaign initiatives that are not reflected in the OCA report. Taking into account a survey that will be distributed in advance to invited partners, the results of this consultation will contribute to the program of the Global People's Forum taking place on 8 December 2021 and the C4UN regional consultations planned for early 2022, which will launch an advocacy strategy going forward as member states in the General Assembly continue their deliberations of the OCA report recommendations.

C4UN Strategic Context -- Maria Fernanda Espinosa, C4UN Co-Chair

- This roundtable is extremely important. Ten weeks have passed since the OCA report was released. Many individual organizations have taken the time to distill the main OCA proposals to identify areas of excitement and potential and areas of concern and hesitation. Member states need to hear from civil society encouragement when appropriate and critique when warranted.
- The coalition has great potential to amplify a diverse array of voices. We do not need to agree on every issue in order to create consensus on areas where we have a common purpose. The role of civil society should not be understated because we represent an integral element of international governance for ensuring that the voices of the grassroots can be heard, and to provide technical expertise and analysis on a variety of issues, but also to be a voice of conscience. Collectively we are an impactful moral voice that can help provide legitimacy to a variety of efforts. What brings us together is our quest for a stronger, revitalized, modern and effective UN.

OCA Report Overview PPT [here](#)

Nudhara Yusuf, Stimson Center & C4UN Global Youth Coordinator

- The OCA report is the start of a conversation. Across four pillars: a renewed social contract, focus on the future, protecting global commons and delivering global public goods, and an upgraded UN, the Secretary General plants the seeds of 90 recommendations to Member States and stakeholders of the UN regime complex. This conversation is further developed in the [C4UN OCA Summary Report](#).
- The slides linked above serve to (a) summarise the key recommendations under the four pillars of the OCA. (b) emphasise the need to think critically and constructively about the proposed re-definition of multilateralism to be more inclusive and networked, and what this means for civil society (c) to outline the high level tracks and summits leading from the OCA report, and (d) consider thinking beyond the OCA report as well. These themes also hope to be reflected in upcoming C4UN regional consultations on the OCA.

Thematic Highlights

Youth/Future Generations -- Rory Mondshein, C4UN Communications Associate

- It is very important to put youth at the center of our recovery efforts. We need to think about how we define the concept of youth that recognizes diverse youth constituencies from poorer countries and different socio-economic strata. The OCA report could be strengthened if we highlight the impact that COVID-19 has had on these different youth constituencies as opposed to just defining youth as a broad term. It is important to highlight the inequalities that exist within various youth constituencies to ensure an inclusive future for all.
- We will need to develop a roadmap and incentives for different sectors to create the world we want. It is important to create a UN that is better fit for purpose by ensuring that different youth constituencies are properly represented and heard.

Civil Society Engagement -- Mandeep Tiwana, CIVICUS

- There are a number of entry points for civil society. The report talks about the indivisibility of human rights. Let's try to see how the human rights pillar of the UN can be strengthened and better funded.
- The report speaks to an infodemic and calls for a code of conduct for integrity of public information. Many governments are creating disinformation by populist authoritarian political parties. What are the standards that leaders need to adopt when they are sharing information to the public that is truthful at a minimum?
- The new social contract talks about rebuilding trust. Yet if you want better social protection you need civic space. Barely 4% of the world's population has access to adequate protection of their fundamental freedoms. How can we advance our causes when civic space is so restricted and those who push for these values are being attacked? We need to raise the need for enabling environments for civil society.
- There is a call in the report to create UN civil society focal points. The SG has said that he has heard the call for a UN civil society envoy but did not propose it along the lines of the envoy for future generations. The UNmute civil society campaign supported by over 50 states has called for the appointment of a civil society envoy. We need to make a compelling case that the envoy is not going to be a bottleneck for civil society but an enabler who can help UN civil society focal points develop better practices & coordination mechanisms, drive outreach to the public, and be a champion for civil society throughout the UN system.
- The section on the upgrading of the UN has been most disappointing. How does the UN go from a state-centric model to being a people-centered model without having people being able to influence the UN's function? There is also the call for a UN citizen's initiative and a UN parliamentary assembly to consider.

Climate/Environment -- Maja Groff, Climate Governance Commission

- There are many threads and proposals throughout the OCA report that

are highly relevant to strengthening global climate and environmental governance: these should be identified and taken as a foundation for ambitious international action. We will see more opportunities open up as the real situation on the ground deteriorates further, unfortunately, in terms of planetary science and its impact on various societies.

- The Climate Governance Commission has been consulting with various partners, including FOGGS and Common Home for Humanity, and ongoing campaigns like those for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and ecocide. How can we connect these different campaigns to package them so that they can be mutually reinforcing? We will need a range of legal and institutional levers to address our climate and ecological problems. We need to put together a shared, substantial package drawing from promising campaigns/proposals to present at Stockholm+50, UNEP assemblies, COPs, and Summit of the Future.
- For example, in terms of international environmental law, making it fit for purpose to manage the global ecological commons as mentioned in the OCA report. The calls for a Global Pact for the Environment and consolidating our international environmental law feeds into the language of the Trusteeship Council for future generations. Regarding the Emergency Platform, the proposal by FOGGS for a Global Resilience Council should be linked, to make it much more effective. For the longer-term we need to think about a global environment agency and an international court for the environment.
- On cross-cutting issues to make the UN fit for the 21st century, there is vague but promising language about a roadmap for international law that could become a rule of law reform package, including the ICJ. There is the International Anti-Corruption Court that is gaining traction with some major states. We cannot tackle climate change unless we address corruption. Raising global public funding is also extremely important because we need trillions of dollars annually to tackle climate change. The OCA proposal to move beyond GDP is also a necessary idea to take forward.
- The C4UN should be a progressive and moral voice charting this visionary kind of path for the international community.

Social Contract/2030 Agenda -- Beckie Malay, GCAP Philippines

- It is very important to look at the 2030 Agenda as a guiding post because it is still relevant for all of us today. It remains as a viable guiding framework directing the actions to be undertaken by states and governments at the national, local and regional levels.
- Governments must meet the challenge to redefine more sustainable plans apart from GDP measures for resilience against human-induced and natural climate risks and conflicts. The structural inequalities exposed by Covid need to be mitigated by the provision of universal social protection measures that will not tie the poorest countries to deeper debts and liabilities to IFIs and MDBs. Instead debt relief measures must be given to the poorest and most indebted countries plus all other means of implementation that will redistribute wealth. We have seen vaccine inequity & inequality as the most stark example of how pharmaceutical companies - supported by public funds - are profiteering greatly from the pandemic. Addressing global vaccine inequity and profiteering by big pharma is crucial to bring back countries to a level of economic relief and set them on a path of recovery.

- Protection through vaccination must be democratically distributed. The call for the lifting of the patents in the WTO must be supported. We see this as a major step for democratizing vaccine access and medical goods. Human rights are very central.

Economic/Social Inequalities -- Javier Surasky, Cepei

- There are two issues that require more attention in the inequalities debate. The first is about global policy making. As we know global decisions are taken through multilateral negotiations. However those processes imply a gross inequality of power with the final results favoring the more powerful states. In this regard, perspectives and proposals from vulnerable countries are most easily abandoned.
- The second issue is related to data. We all know that data is power and information has become one of the most valuable assets. We all need data to monitor global agendas and progress to make informed policy decisions about global problems. The trial and error strategy does not work for global problems like climate change.
- Aware of this issue, the 2030 Agenda included the target 17.18 which should have been met by 2020 to enhance capacity-building support for developing countries to increase the availability of high quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data. Its first indicator requires full disaggregation at the national level. What do you think the situation was at the end of 2020? Did the indicator show progress, stagnation or move backward? We don't know because there was no information for this indicator at the end of 2020.
- The issues of power imbalances and data inequalities are two major obstacles when implementing such principles as common but differentiated responsibilities. I want to invite you to consider these two simple but powerful issues as a part of the OCA debate.

New Agenda for Peace -- Nqobile Moyo, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

- The New Peace Agenda is very welcome because it speaks to a number of key issues that cut across all sectors. It speaks to the drivers of conflict around the globe where the dynamics of conflict and global interests are constantly changing. There is a need for more investment in peacebuilding and prevention on the part of member states and economic bodies at the continental and regional levels, in collaboration with civil society and the communities themselves.
- Another key issue is the strengthening of international foresight and capacities to identify and adapt to peace and security issues by investing in early warning and early response. Having data-based programming for early warning systems to be able to predict conflict by creating scenarios within particular spaces is important.
- There is the issue of putting women and young people at the forefront and center of peacebuilding initiatives by mainstreaming the Security Council's women, peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas at the community level.
- On financing for peace, we need to look at the role of regional economic bodies, INGOs and governments on how they collaborate and mainstream these issues into their discussions. We need robust financing that reaches the grassroots level where the conflicts are actually taking place instead of going to the administrative offices of bodies at higher levels.

- We need to reevaluate the UN system itself by creating a stronger, more inclusive and networked system. We see in the SG's report the need to revisit the role of the Resident Coordinator's office on the ground, to remove the red tape of bureaucracy and increase their capacity to respond more effectively and much quicker, and work with other stakeholders.

GA Procedural Resolution & Summit of the Future (2023) -- Richard Ponzio, Stimson Center

- The General Assembly resolution passed earlier this month by consensus with 166 co-sponsors, including countries like the US and China. The preambular sections refer to the UN75 process and GA Declaration that mandated the SG to write his report. The operative section welcomes the report and encourages the SG to “engage in a broad and inclusive consultation with all parts of the UN system and all relevant partners on his proposals in the report for follow up action.” It recognizes that there are areas where the SG has a mandate to move now on several recommendations, including on the 2030 Agenda and Paris Climate Agreement.
- However it is not entirely clear across the 90+ recommendations which ones the SG has authority to get moving on and will need the intergovernmental process to take forward. There is no reference to setting up a secretariat that would imply a more ambitious process. The report anticipates the refinement of ideas or of new ideas coming that go beyond the OCA recommendations. There is nothing about supporting consultations with civil society.
- The good news is that the PGA paragraph also calls for an inclusive intergovernmental follow-on process despite the dissent of a group of countries that included Pakistan, India, Brazil, and Russia. There is not a clear picture of what the next steps are. There is consensus that the PGA needs to show leadership.
- We should encourage ratcheting up ambition, sticking to the spirit of the fundamental proposals in the OCA report. I don't see how we are going to flesh out the repurposing of the Trusteeship Council, the G20 idea of working with ECOSOC, the declaration on future generations & the new special envoy, if the negotiation process is truncated to 8 or 9 months in 2023. We can use our time well next year if we consider the proposed PGA dialogues as a substitute for formal intergovernmental negotiations. We have to use all of our tools for full-on engagement with member states.
- Take a look at the concluding chapter of the [Beyond UN75 report](#) by Stimson Center that shares thinking on a much more ambitious process that includes five thematic committees with co-facilitators for each, and a series of prepcoms in different regions to engage civil society. This is the first time since 2005 that we have this opportunity for a serious upgrade and rethink of the UN system.

World Social Summit (2025) -- Veronique Choquette, Club de Madrid (CdM)

- Club de Madrid has put its weight behind the idea of a World Social Summit in 2025. The OCA report says that “consideration should be given to holding a World Social Summit in 2025.” Note that it is not clear where the locus of leadership should be. The CdM President had the opportunity recently to talk about next steps with the SG, Deputy SG

and head of DESA. DESA sees a role for itself in the organization of the Social Summit. We also heard from others that the ILO might be interested in organizing this given that they are already moving at full speed on social protection which is a big thematic component of what could be in the World Social Summit.

- The reaction of UN member states to the proposal will also be very important. DESA has given the signal that they will move ahead only if they see that there is at least some degree of consensus among member states that this is a good idea. Few countries would oppose social development, but the degree of support for a summit as a way of advancing social development is where there is a question mark. It is also easy to argue that we already have Agenda 2030, why do we need another summit? The counter argument is that the proposed summit could actually give a push to the Agenda 2030 and its social dimension after COVID. However some countries might debate this as a way of stalling the process.
- CdM is planning some actions with DESA in 2022 to take the temperature with some key member states whom we think could be champions for this initiative to gauge how much leadership there could be for this. We would like to get a better sense of clarity as to what kind of format that the SG and his team might envision. The OCA report refers to a different form of global deliberation. When advocating for this, CdM had in mind a summit of heads of state and government. A different form of global deliberation hints that there could be a novel approach to this summit, maybe civil society and other actors might be at the front stage together with, or instead of, member states. The report is silent on this.
- We look forward to seeing how the dialogues that the PGA is supposed to be hosting in 2022 will approach this issue. They might not talk directly about the social summit, but the way they talk about civil society engagement might give us a clue as to how this might move forward.
- Regarding our objectives until 2025, there is the need to advocate for someone to take the lead in organizing this, the thorny issue of who pays for it and what participation modalities to set up. We also think that the effort is not lost if civil society, starting with ourselves, gives some thought about the agenda of the summit and what kind of deliverables we would expect. There are some elements of the agenda here, everything having to do with social services, education, health care, decent work, social protection, and informal workers. Also the issue of inequalities on gender, race and the digital divide during the pandemic. We believe that civil society has a fundamental role to play to start shaping the discussions that lead to the creation of an agenda for the World Social Summit. Whatever happens in terms of process, these discussions are not lost.
- We're beginning to work with Southern Voice, an association of think tanks from the Global South, to produce a first issues paper. We will be convening a work session with a group of CSOs towards the end of January so we would welcome collaboration and engagement with all of you. To bring a youth perspective, we're also reaching out to universities.

Discussion

Where does the OCA add value?

- The OCA report provides a clear comprehensive vision very much aligned with the SDGs emphasizing the values of solidarity and working together. The innovative measures, futures lab, emergency platform, trusteeship council reform, universal social protection, digital compact, are all welcome.
- On governance, it is good to see an emphasis on an updated governance arrangement for a stronger, more inclusive and networked multilateralism that includes a stronger involvement of all relevant stakeholders. Consistent multistakeholder arrangements must be ensured in the implementation of all OCA proposals, including the proposed three summits, the high-level advisory board and the biennial summit with G20.

Prioritize/Sequence Key OCA proposals?

- The OCA is perfectly suited to what we do by bringing all of the pieces together. However, rather than prioritizing, we should think about sequencing proposals as a strategic priority. By putting order into chaos, we can craft the narratives that people will use as their starting points. As a diverse coalition, each CSO has its priorities quite clear, so we will need to frame and organize our proposals into thematic packages to feed into the OCA process. As we approach the People's Forum, we will need to be very clear what our focus is as a coalition.
- In terms of sequencing, the SG proposal to conduct meaningful national listening consultations to allow citizens to have a say in envisioning their country's future is an important action to take at an early stage.
- We need to be cautious about this idea of "networked multilateralism". Having multistakeholder input into the UN intergovernmental process is the best way. Otherwise, replacing the intergovernmental process with multistakeholder processes and partnerships like COVAX that prioritizes private sector engagement would result in a system that would be neither transparent, inclusive or effective.
- We need to ask ourselves challenging questions. Is it worth the energy of investing in a whole new set of proposals when we already have institutions and processes that are not fully functioning. Would it be better to encourage member states to invest more of their time, energy and resources into those processes and agendas that are already mandated so we're not reinventing the wheel?

What's missing?

- In addition to the three proposed summits that are mostly social, and the Stockholm+50 summit next year covering the environment, we will also need something on peace, economics and partnerships as we approach 2030.
- There is a missing gap in the report on proposals improving participation and inclusion of citizens, civil society and parliamentarians. This picks up on the question of whether we want to promote proposals that are not already in the OCA report. It is discouraging that the proposal of the UN civil society envoy was not picked up by the SG even though it has the support of 50 member states through the UNmute campaign.

- Do we have the strength to push new proposals into this process that do not yet have member state support? On the other hand, as civil society, do we really want to leave it entirely to the UN to determine the agenda? We will have to make difficult decisions about supporting proposals that are not in the OCA report.
- There is a disconnect between the UN75 initiative and action going on at the international and community levels. Our primary goal should be to connect the UN to the people and connect the people to the UN. We need to bring the UN agenda down to the grassroots level so that it is community driven while identifying strategic opportunities to connect grassroots efforts to the broader global agenda.
- Sustainable finance is missing with regard to a reinvigorated multilateralism and UN reform. The process of UN reform must be incentivized through innovative global finance within the context of the proposed Global Green New Deal to deliver public goods. There is also a gap between funding already allocated to UN programs such as peacebuilding that never reaches the communities it is intended to serve.

Next steps?

- For both the Summit of the Future (2023) and World Social Summit (2025), we will need to identify UN secretariat support & member state champions, secure funding, and develop elements of a programmatic agenda and summit deliverables working with civil society & think tanks through continued discussions and issue papers.
- In addition to sequencing, framing and organizing the OCA recommendations, we will also need to integrate and combine proposals that are not in the report into thematic packages. We will need to find member states who can bring in new proposals into the OCA process and we have to work with the secretariat and the SG to do the same. We will need to work with civil society constituencies at the national level to push member states.
- Whether we have PGA thematic dialogues, more organized intergovernmental negotiations tracks, or a high-level advisory board, civil society should have its inputs. There may not be enough time for the SG to appoint a high-level advisory board. However, if there are thematic dialogues with thematic coordinators among member states with proper input from more stakeholders, these initial dialogues next year could lead to a proper pre-summit negotiation process beginning in 2023.

Wrap-up -- Maria Fernanda Espinosa, C4UN Co-Chair

- We have heard about the importance of intergenerational justice, the centrality of human rights, how to govern our ecological global commons, the need for a Global Green New Deal, the new Agenda for Peace centered on prevention & sustaining peace, and enhancing the role of women in the peace agenda. We have heard about this idea of nested multiple crises centered on inequalities having concrete painful impacts on climate justice, global health and human rights. We have had a stark reminder of the critical disconnect between data, policy, practice and power to achieve the SDGs and other related UN commitments.
- Our coalition should be a powerful, moral voice for an upgraded, more transparent and accountable UN. What we have ahead of us is to further develop our strategy and

tactics. We need a mapping exercise of our commonalities to become a clearinghouse of related campaigns and initiatives. The idea of a shared narrative and a shared strategy is extremely important. This leads us to capitalize on our diversity, constituencies, and influence hubs. We also need to address those proposals critical for civil society that are not a part of the OCA and go beyond it.

- The other critical issue is what are the procedural implications of the GA resolution on the OCA. What is the role of the SG, what are the issues that are under the responsibility of the secretariat? What is the responsibility of the PGA? How will this inclusive intergovernmental process take shape? On the side of civil society, how will we influence the consecutive summits and participate meaningfully. We listened very carefully to the words of caution about the risks of multistakeholderism, of these already made phrases of inclusive and networked multilateralism, to be careful about how we give it content.
- There was the reminder on how to make our voices heard, how to have a true transformative impact in the reform process of the UN. Who are our allies among governments in the GA and within the secretariat? How can we map our areas of influence in our collective power? In some areas we can only aim for an incremental approach, in other areas a package approach, and in yet other areas a profound transformative approach. There is the brilliant idea of not prioritizing but sequencing our approach.
- We have a huge menu ahead of us and a lot of homework to do collectively. This first roundtable will be one of many others to come because that is the way we are going to put our collective voice and power together, to have a true impact as we reshape the UN and make it closer to the people.