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## Engaging “Our Common Agenda”

February 7, 2022  
Meeting Summary:

Civil Society Experts Dialogue #1, linked to UN General Assembly informal consultation:

### **“Accelerating and scaling up the SDGs, leaving no-one behind”**

#### **Introduction**

From February 10 to March 8 2022, the UN General Assembly will hold five two-day informal consultations, to allow Member States and others to further consider the recommendations from the Secretary-General’s Our Common Agenda (OCA) report, and the means for their implementation.

To support the OCA process, the Coalition for the UN We Need (C4UN) is hosting a series of civil society Experts Dialogues linked to these five General Assembly meetings. On February 7 over three dozen civil society experts discussed the 13 OCA recommendations grouped in Thematic Cluster #1, *“Accelerating and scaling up the SDGs, leaving no-one behind.”* (A breakdown of all the OCA recommendations as they have been grouped into five thematic clusters is [here](#).)

Participants at the meeting were asked to identify those OCA recommendations that should be prioritized, what’s missing in the report, and next steps. Ahead of the General Assembly meeting taking place February 10-11, this summary presents a condensed not-for-attribution overview of the comments and recommendations made at the February 7 meeting.

## General observations

As the world falls further behind on the delivery of Agenda 2030, the **need for a Social Summit** (as proposed by the OCA report for 2025) has grown more acute. The pandemic has accelerated disruptions in the delivery of social services and led to social polarization, growing inequalities and challenges to international cooperation at a time when the challenges we face are more transnational than ever.

The pace of digitalization has brought technology to the center of many debates. Digitalization can serve as a catalyst to fulfilling the SDGs by **increasing access to essential social services**. But this requires **tackling the digital divide**. Otherwise it can become yet another factor exacerbating inequalities.

We are in the midst of a cultural shift in thinking about global governance, seeing it less as the sum of interactions among sovereign states, and more as **an integrated multi-layer system of global networks**. “Networked multilateralism” makes sense.

The OCA makes several recommendations regarding the role of youth and for **taking account of the needs and interests of future generations**. But they are not synonymous. Future generations are what/whom we “advocate for”. **Youth should be those that we “advocate with.”**

To address the alarming rise of economic inequality within and between countries, the **application of human rights standards** should guide our assessments of how best to improve governance. This **includes the international financial institutions**. In the absence of proper review mechanisms and procedures for remedy to adjudicate legal complaints in international organizations, the **General Assembly should ask the International Court of Justice for advice on how to do so**.

**Civil society involvement** is often an important element of progress in multilateral processes designed to strengthen the rule of law and global governance. These more **inclusive processes ensure greater transparency** and that the concerns of citizens at the grassroots will be addressed.

## **Further recommendations that relate to the OCA paragraphs included in thematic cluster #1:**

### **World Social Summit (2025)**

- Participants spoke of the importance of renewing the social contract at all levels of governance based on the principles of trust, inclusion, protection and participation. Advocates supported the call for a World Social Summit in 2025 that will accelerate the SDGs and leave no one behind, with human dignity, decent work, rights and jobs at the core of its agenda. The proposed summit should focus on solutions, promote universal protection systems, help national governments in post-COVID recovery, look beyond GDP, and launch new alliances and partnerships to make it all possible.
- New instruments for the design, financing and implementation of inclusive policies and programmes to improve access to nutrition, health, education, decent work and social protection for all should be devised.
- Next steps include mobilizing political will and national champions among member states, supporting the intergovernmental process, harnessing the vision and mission of civil society, and engaging the private sector. Civil society must be active in contributing to setting the agenda of the WSS.

### **Youth**

- The UN Youth Office should be designed with a mandate to integrate and catalyze the cross-fertilization of young people's work in different fields and constituencies, including youth from civil society, NGOs, UN agencies and youth ambassadors. A UN Youth Council should be established under the Youth Office to mainstream the representation of youth in politics and global decision-making. To increase transparency and access at the UN, translating technocratic narratives and utilizing existing communication and institutional channels to reach a greater diversity of youth constituencies at all levels will be essential. It is crucial to create systems of knowledge and representation that change and evolve with generations.
- Participants addressed the importance of addressing the digital divide to reach young people left behind in countries and regions suffering from poverty and conflict. Youth constituencies, particularly at the grassroots level, must be given equal access to funding and training by UN agencies at national, regional and global levels.
- Examples of meaningful youth engagement by the organizers of Stockholm+50 and the Youth, Peace and Security Working Group to advance the work of young peacebuilders were highlighted.