

C4UN Experts Dialogue (7 Feb 2022)

GA #2 Thematic Cluster: economic and social inequalities

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Thank you for the opportunity to discuss today. I'm going to speak to two key things:

1. Some outcomes of the GGI-GPD e-consultation by the Global Governance Innovation Network that speak to the first discussion questions in regards to this theme.
2. Given the large thematic presence of Youth in this first cluster of recommendations, and more generally the UN's agenda on leaving no one behind (LNOB) I'll touch on operationalising the recommendations related to youth on the OCA

First on the outcomes of the GGI-GPD e-consultation. Noting that I only scratch the surface here and we will share an outcome summary report from the consultation soon, when it comes to priorities from the OCA report, a particularly common area that kept cropping up was a renewed social contract. This was a call for a new social contract where states view themselves as part of a global system, unlike the status quo where the global system is designed to provide for states. This shift, commented discussants, in tandem with strengthening intergovernmental processes, from a theory of change perspective, is a crucial first step in being able to tackle other global challenges like managing the commons, sustainable financing, and vaccine equity. The crux of the argument was that we first need to see this fundamental cultural paradigm shift in our way of viewing the value we gain from a global system, and this would be supported by other calls in the OCA report such as a redefinition of more networked and inclusive multilateralism. The OCA then, provides some keys to catalyse this cultural shift and if we view the OCA report as a manifesto for change, we can further capitalise on the UN's role as a convenor to action on the vehicles for change the OCA report provides.

Second, on the youth agenda. It's important to note, before I go ahead, that youth and future generations are two different groups. We need to be careful to club these into one category and keep in mind that as a global citizenry, we are advocating FOR future generations and WITH youth. To this end, the PGA has placed these two agendas (although they intertwined and should always be on our minds as we approach all the recommendations of the OCA), in two separate clusters, the leaving no one behind cluster in session 1 and the future preparedness cluster for session 4.

I'd further like to make clear that as I go on to talk about youth recommendations, I find this to be an important platform to do so. We need to make sure that conversations young people have about their agendas and priorities do not get siloed off into only youth networks. It's important for groups like those on this call, across civil society, to be working with young people. This is important for sustainable systems and allows for systemic changes to evolve through generations. In other words, working with young people allows for System Knowledge Evolution.

With this in mind, drawing on the work of the Global Governance Innovation Network, Next Generation Fellows, Young Leaders Council, Coalition for the UN We Need, We the Peoples Campaign, UN75 youth and intergenerational consultations, and the GGIN Global Policy Dialogue, I wish to briefly speak to Our Common Agenda paras. 46-47 on Youth in Politics and the UN Youth Office. Working closely with, and across, these youth and intergenerational networks, three key recommendations emerge to operationalise effective engagement of, and with, young people:

1. Intentionally designing the UN Youth Office with an integration mandate to catalyse cross-fertilisation of young people's work in different fields and constituencies, including youth from civil society, NGOs, UN agencies, and youth ambassadors.
2. Mainstreaming the representation of youth in politics and global decision making through establishing a UN Youth Council under the youth office's mandate.
3. Increasing transparency and access of mechanisms to engage with young people beyond a privileged few by capitalising on existing communication and institutional channels, and translating technocratic narratives and jargon into concise action items to attain several global agendas with similar foundations such as SDGs, Paris Agreement, OCA, and the UN75 Declaration.

Of course I don't claim to speak for all youth, this is precisely the crux of my argument - all young people are different! I believe further consultative processes should, and I'm happy to report ARE, taking place to help refine the youth call to action from the OCA report. However, I can be sure of two things. (1) We need to start rethinking the way we gain value from the global system and identify indicators that will help catalyse this cultural shift (2) young people are fun to work with - so get us involved!