



Engaging “Our Common Agenda”

February 25, 2022
Meeting Summary:

Civil Society Experts Dialogue #5, linked to UN General Assembly informal consultation:

“Enhancing international cooperation”

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 25 some 40 civil society participants discussed elements of some of the 15 OCA recommendations grouped in **Thematic Cluster #5, “Enhancing global cooperation.”** (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. Discussion focused

particularly on recommendations addressing the High-level Advisory Board, adapting the United Nations to a new era and the role of civil society at the UN. Ahead of the General Assembly meeting taking place March 10-11, this summary presents a condensed not-for-attribution overview of the comments and recommendations made at the February 25 meeting.

General observations

At a time when we are facing the most serious threat to international peace in Europe since WWII, the urgent appeal made by the Secretary-General in his Our Common Agenda report to find **new ways to reinvigorate multilateralism could not be more timely.**

We should all be prepared to support the Secretary-General in his ambition to **include the concept of the global commons** in the OCA report. In addition to **Antarctica**, the **oceans** and **outer space** as legally recognized areas of the global commons, he added **climate**, utilizing a commons perspective to upgrade ambition as a complement to the a la carte multilateralism enshrined in the Paris Agreement. **The global public goods (GPGs)** that are most critical to our modern society (**information, digital, global economy**) look different today than 75 years ago, while our understanding of them and others (Earth system, global health, global peace) has evolved. At Stockholm+50 member states will have the opportunity to take into account **new norms** as they consider some of the **future oriented governance recommendations** that the Secretary-General clearly suggests we need.

The ability of the multilateral system to address many of today's most urgent challenges depends on its understanding of global public goods and of the appropriate roles of different stakeholders in their governance. To assist in identifying and further defining global public goods, and other areas of common interest where governance improvements are most needed, the Secretary-General proposed the formation of a **High-Level Advisory Board on Global Public Goods (HLAB)** to make recommendations on how this could be achieved as a contribution to the proposed Summit of the Future in 2023.

Civil society advocates from diverse disciplines and constituencies worldwide will have the opportunity to **provide their research and expertise to the HLAB** as they gather ideas and evidence on reforms necessary to strengthen the governance of global public goods in the future.

Planning and delivering different menus of engagement options for civil society within multilateral cooperation is complex. Advocates urge the Secretary-General to reconsider the option of **appointing a Civil Society Envoy to enhance the participation of civil society** and other stakeholders across the UN system as proposed by the UNmute Civil Society campaign supported by over 50 Member States. Moreover, advocates invite Member States to also consider **establishing a World Citizens' Initiative and a UN Parliamentary Assembly** as proposed by the [We the Peoples](#) campaign.

The Secretary-General's commitment to develop a Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming is a welcome step toward fulfilling commitments to future generations and to greater transparency vis-à-vis human rights commitments.

Next steps in the OCA process should include the adoption of a General Assembly modalities resolution for the proposed Summit of the Future in 2023 that would include the inclusive participation of civil society and other stakeholders in the intergovernmental preparatory process.

Recommendations related to the OCA paragraphs included in thematic cluster #5:

High-Level Advisory Board (HLAB) & the Summit of the Future (2023)

- The HLAB Secretariat has committed to giving civil society a voice in its work and in identifying specific events that civil society actors can contribute to. Civil society advocates should be prepared to offer research and experiences that show **the value of applying a GPG lens to global challenges and have evidence** that strengthens the rationale for pursuing recommendations for addressing governance gaps, including those listed in the OCA report and others.
- **Civil society and other stakeholders should recommend experts** for participation in HLAB consultations from the Global South, youth-led organizations, indigenous populations and social movements not otherwise heard at the UN.
- Once the HLAB report is released, civil society and other stakeholders should focus on amplifying constructive recommendations in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future in 2023, as well as developing pathways to build momentum for even greater ambition at the proposed World Social Summit in 2025.

Civil Society/Stakeholder Engagement

- Support the OCA recommendation to organize an **annual civil society caucus** during UNGA's high level week by developing the annual [Global People's](#)

[Assembly \(GPA\)](#) as a model for its implementation. Building upon local, constituency and national People's Assemblies, the proposed Annual UN Civil Society Caucus would act as a primary interlocutor between civil society organizations (CSOs), international donors, private sector organizations and governments at global, national, regional & local levels.

- Support the appointment of a **Civil Society Envoy** that could help coordinate civil society focal points across the UN system and work with UN country teams to open up pathways to enhanced participation of civil society and other stakeholders. Publish an **annual state of UN-civil society engagement report** of the UN system **featuring indicators** measuring civil society participation in multilateral settings.
- Establish a **World Citizens' Initiative** that would enable people to put forward proposals on key issues of global concern for discussion and further action at the highest political level. **Any proposal** that reaches a certain threshold of **popular support would be put onto the agenda** of the UN General Assembly or Security Council.
- Establish a **UN Parliamentary Assembly under Article 22** that would allow for the inclusion of elected representatives in the agenda-setting and decision-making of the UN. The assembly would act as a representative body and watchdog connecting the people with the UN and reflecting a broad diversity of global viewpoints.