



Global Futures Forum 2023 E-Consultation Report

Human Rights and Participation January 18-31, 2023

A note from the facilitators:

Based on the robust discussions that took place during this two week period, the report below has been developed as a reflection of the helpful contributions. Rather than a precise summary, it is a documentation of certain themes which emerged. Additionally, the paragraphs that follow represent co-facilitator proposals meant to reflect the wide array of interventions made. This report will then be used as the basis for 'roadmap' discussions to take place at the Global Futures Forum on 20 and 21 March 2023.

Co-facilitator summary proposals:

1. **Launching a 'full spectrum human rights implementation and enforcement pact'** that - in addition to governmental actors - allows, secures and endorses civil society, human rights defenders, whistleblowers, and non-governmental actors to implement and enforce human rights.

Reasoning: Endemic discrimination and systematic undermining of global human rights standards that are justified with patriarchal governance structures, and hiding behind so-called 'traditional and family values' are in many countries the root causes for the unwillingness to protect fundamental freedoms and rights of minorities, all gender groups, people with disability, children, and youth. We, therefore, ask the UN to provide a political framework, based on the UN International Bill of Human Rights that allows civil society, to better access the existing human rights bodies within the UN, and to take more responsibility when implementing and enforcing human rights locally.

2. Establishing a '**liquid human rights forum**', organized and led by civil society delegates (see other proposals for CS parliaments, envoys, councils, fora etc) to invite state representatives - not the other way around. Put CSOs in the driver's seat.

Reasoning: Over the past decade, Climate change, Migration, and Digitalization have been key triggers for many reforms within the UN and for civil society to have more access and say in the pacts and agreements. Today CS is taking more responsibilities, i.e. through the multi-stakeholder approach at the IGFs and COPs. A similar approach could be initiated to the human rights agenda of the UN with a particular 'pact' and 'liquid forum', where different stakeholders participate to implement human rights. This way human rights would stronger to be embraced by local actors, away from the state-centric role and responsibilities of governments.

3. Prevention: Protecting Human Rights Defenders: The protection of human rights defenders (HRDs), as well as environmental and socio-economic defenders, is crucial, especially for young women and girls, and systemically marginalized defenders. While the obligations to promote and protect human rights lie with the State, when the State perpetrates such violations, it prohibits the full participation of defenders in UN deliberative and decision-making processes. Protecting HRDs, should, through age-responsive and gender-transformative methodologies, must strive towards addressing the structural systems of inequalities, marginalization, discrimination, and violence, often masked by patriarchal, post-colonial and harmful political, cultural and social norms.

This can be accomplished through:

- Concrete national and policies and guidelines, in line with international obligations, to protect HRDs, and the implementation of enforcement mechanisms through the establishment of a political framework to localize the implementation of human rights.
 - Reporting and whistleblowing mechanism for reporting violations online and offline;
 - Legal assistance and support to provide access to remedy, and justice and to hold perpetrators (including state and non-state actors) accountable;
 - Protection measures to ensure the safety and security of HRDs, their families, associates, colleagues and peers, promoting best practice policies and programs that protect HRDs and their work;
 - Monitoring and governance mechanisms at an institutional level.
4. Implementation: Strengthening Civil Society and Youth Co-Leadership (based on the [Young Feminist Manifesto](#)): Across all efforts and decision-making to promote and protect human rights, and strengthen participation, civil society and youth must not only be seen as beneficiaries but as rights-holders and victims/survivors of human rights violations, and must be centered as co-leaders and valued partners. This means that across reform and change, there must also be complementary institutional and structural shifts, that dismantle the systems that have historically prevented the participation of

young people and civil society, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, marginalization, and violence, from engaging in UN human rights deliberative and decision-making processes.

This can be accomplished through:

- Transforming power dynamics, and counter-power imbalances to distribute and share power more fairly and equitably.
- Require a shift from mere youth and civil society participation and youth engagement to co-leadership, co-creation, and co-ownership.
- Substantive and meaningful participation means focusing on open and generative dialogue between all stakeholders where participants can build meaningful relationships and trust.
- Invest in, upscale and strengthen flexible, accessible, sustainable and gender-responsive funding, resourcing and capacity building that responds to the needs of HRDs.
- Transformative leadership and design of those in positions of decision-making for sustainable change that addresses the root causes of inequalities, discrimination, marginalization, and violence.
- Adopting intersectional approaches recognizing the multidimensionality of human rights and lived experience in which multiple axes of oppression intersect.
- Accountability on human rights must allow for youth and civil society to be able to contest decisions, free from prejudice, discrimination, and judgment.

Key Human rights proposals include:

- **Double the resources of the OHCHR, improve the effectiveness of the treaty body system, increase the number of UN staff with human rights knowledge, education, and experience**, support closer cooperation between OHCHR and other UN actors in the Pact for the Future.
- **The procedures around UN human rights mechanisms, including the UPR and treaty bodies**, need to adopt an intergenerational strategy that brings children, adolescents and youth voices to the sessions and adapt participation practices, including through easy-read and child-friendly information. The UPR needs to develop a mechanism that increases visibility of specifics/similar recommendations that a country does not follow as proposed in previous rounds of the UPR.

Key Participation proposals include:

- To assist in the coordination of UN civil society focal points, establish a **Civil Society Envoy & Civil Society Advisory Council** to develop good practices on participation across the UN system, including by using existing guidance on civil society participation such as the UN Guidance Note on protection and promotion of civic space and the upcoming UN Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming.
- **World Citizens' Initiative (UNWCI), UN Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), and developing guidelines for the inputs of deliberative Global Citizens' Assemblies (GCAs).**

- Consider "an updated resolution defining how organs like the ECOSOC, the General Assembly and the Security Council relate to civil society, local and regional governments and business actors, and for the President of ECOSOC to convene a general review of arrangements for observer status or consultation in this regard."

Key issue areas that were raised during the consultation were ...

Mainstreaming human rights on all levels and sectors worldwide

The *Our Common Agenda* (OCA) report emphasizes that civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are mutually reinforcing, indivisible and universal. To enhance democratic governance and the rule of law, the mainstreaming, implementation and enforcement of human rights by Member States as duty-bearers are essential if human rights for all are to be protected. This will require that Member States live up to the many commitments they have already made as signatories of the UN Charter, International Bill of Human Rights, and the multitude of Human Rights Conventions and protocols.

Strengthening fundamental freedoms on all levels is essential, including freedom of assembly, association and speech, access to information, fair trial, and freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The realization of fundamental rights will lay the foundation to increase social and economic equality, access to healthy food and environment, to work, and peaceful exercise of one's own beliefs and other social and economic rights.

Elimination of all forms of discrimination

The elimination of all forms of discrimination was emphasized by participants that included demands for the effective remedy and enforcement of rights for youth, children, women, girls, persons with disabilities and the inclusion of caste as a protected group within human rights legislation.

Intergenerational approach and women's and girls' rights

Representing over 60% of the world's population, the importance of an intergenerational approach to the human rights and participation of children, women/girls and youth is critical. In recent years there has been an increasing mobilization of child human rights defenders not only standing up for their own rights, but for the rights of all. Children, in all their diversity, have a critical role to play in shaping an equitable and just future for current and future generations. As set out by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are a group with distinct rights, and it is important for the UN to take the necessary efforts to ensure that they are included in UN process, including in the critical discussion to take place on the framework of the SoFT. Violence against women and girls—including rape, murder, acid attacks, domestic violence, and forced marriage—is endemic across the world. Customs and traditions are important components of cultural rights. At the same time, they can also perpetuate harmful social norms and practices, such as abuse by patriarchal leaders that can put obstacles to the proper development of children and youth..

It has been 35 years since the Universal Declaration on the right to development but children and young people are yet to find themselves at the heart of the development journey. This is particularly true for children and young people residing in the Asia-Pacific region where various challenges arising from accessibility issues, infrastructural shortcomings and lack of opportunities in receiving quality health, education and employment deters them from being an active participant and beneficiary of economic, social, cultural and political development. These children and young people are being left behind and their lives significantly affected by external factors such as climate change, environmental degradation, conflict, humanitarian crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic among others.

Promoting meaningful and inclusive participation of children and young people in the development space that includes universal access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is essential. There is an increased need to involve children and young people in decision making and all stages of the development process to make opportunities, services and information accessible to children and young people in all their diversities, including girls, young women and those with disabilities. We demand for countries in the region to invest more resources into tackling gender inequality, discrimination, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, sexual and gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices to build a progressive society and ensure a conducive environment for young people to grow and develop and realize to the fullest their right to live with dignity, freedom and equal opportunity. The Global Network of Young People living with HIV (Y+ Global) shared its experience to support organizations to work more meaningfully and effectively with young people living with HIV, and ensure quality standards for adolescent participation in decision-making in climate change, biodiversity, and preservation of the ecosystems in compliance with economic interests.

We are concerned about the shrinking civic space and how this is further affecting the voices of child and young human rights defenders globally, particularly for advocates and activists who are working towards the creation of a just, equitable and fair world for all by emphasising on the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to have unrestricted access to information and services, particularly with regards to their health, and the right to have bodily autonomy and choice – all important for their well-being which is a crucial component of their right to development. We therefore demand for States to ensure the safe and meaningful space for young people to protect the voices of child and young human rights defenders so that they are able to communicate their demands and participate in the development process of their respective countries without threats, abuse and barriers to their activism.

Youth participants submitted [15 key recommendations](#) on human rights and participation. Member States are urged to include youth and adolescence in their UN delegations while Host Countries are urged to guarantee the issuing of visas. To set an example on behalf of labor rights for young people, the UN should mandate paid internships that will ensure a living wage.

Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities represent around 15% of the world population with the majority located in developing countries. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in

2008 recognizes the need to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities who in different ways are also discriminated against as a result of intersecting factors like gender, age, and poverty. Leveraging the rights of people with disability will trigger the need for more inclusion and mainstreaming of human rights throughout every society and community. The rights of peoples with disabilities illustrate the indivisible character of the current human rights regimes and system. Disability inclusion should be clearly underlined across all the 12 commitments of the OCA.

Climate justice and human rights

Several participants emphasized that climate justice is deeply intertwined with human rights, the SDGs, and climate policy ambition. SDGs post-2030 must be able to accommodate the issue of climate justice to ensure everyone deserve their own security against climate threats through interoperable policies that promote inclusion rights, reducing inequality, allowing human rights to be ensured by government through legislation or other policy instruments that realize the interlinkages between climate justice and SDGs.

Climate change is no longer a threat but a human right. Families have been hit profoundly by climate change, as have animals, biodiversity and ecosystems. When natural disasters happen, women, children and girls are most affected. This is because of the tradition of the society they live in. Yet those people most responsible for climate change mitigation and adaptation at the local level are left behind and their voices are not heard, especially vulnerable women with indigenous knowledge.

Universal access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

The consultation report also highlights the importance to ensure that health is a human right provided to all and carry out constitutional obligations to adequately resource and provide universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights that are acceptable, accessible, affordable, and of quality for all women and girls. It is important to ensure that all women, girls and young people, in all of their diversity have safe, timely and undisrupted access to full range of health information, supplies and services including sexual and reproductive health information and services such as contraceptives and safe abortion, which are essential and life-saving health services including in the context of pandemic situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic through the public health system. Member states should uphold their commitments to fully implement the sustainable development goals, underscoring the need for full realisation of Goals 3 and 5 — on health and gender equality. We strongly feel that the principles and objectives of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo International Conference on Population & Development, 1994), the Beijing Platform for action and Agenda 2030 in addition to other human rights treaties are critical to attaining the sustainable development goals and ensuring accountability.

Protecting and promoting human rights at the national & grassroots level

Participants agreed that local actions must have an impact on global decision-making. There is a need to build new alliances, partnerships and collaborations to ensure that this happens and that new voices become part of local, national and global decision-making processes.

Participants agreed that transformational change must start with the individual and impact the people we serve in our communities, villages and countries. Unless we get back to focusing on people-centered development ensuring that their rights are respected with inclusive and effective participation of the people in the actions, projects and programs being designed for them, then implementation will not take place. There were several calls for the UN member states to support CSOs and Human Right Defenders, especially those from grassroots communities, to participate, learn and build their capacity to address human rights violations and find solutions. This should include training human rights lawyers who will provide legal services when need arises in the community since most of the affected are not aware that they can get justice.

Strengthening civic space and multi-stakeholder participation modalities

Promoting and protecting human rights by enhancing civic space makes societies and the UN stronger and more resilient, building on the right to participate and freedom of expression, association and assembly. Strengthening civic space and promoting inclusive multi-stakeholder processes across the UN system is essential. A more inclusive, intergenerational, networked and effective multilateralism tied to accountable multi-stakeholder decision-making will draw together institutional capacities, overcoming fragmentation to ensure different stakeholders at different levels will work together towards common goals. It goes beyond traditional silos and avoids societal segregation, such as social classes, castes, and status, that infringe on equality. Equality is the basis for peace, security and development. It is achieved by the adherence of all governments and other stakeholders to human rights.

Improved digital cooperation for participation

In the OCA report, the Secretary-General called to mind the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an important time to take stock, rejuvenate our shared values and update our thinking on human rights, and to address frontier issues and prevent harms in the digital or technology spaces. In this context, the Secretary-General called for a global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information to end the "infodemic" of misinformation.

Improved digital cooperation for participation should consider universal design in technologies to ensure digital facilities, devices, and tools are accessible and affordable. This should also benefit the dissemination of UN resolutions, reports, conventions, and declarations on human rights globally. It facilitates access to consultative bodies by human rights stakeholders by organizing forums at the local, national, regional, and international levels, this strategy allows for inclusive data collection. It can facilitate a multi-stakeholder approach to collaborate stronger between civil society and the UN by supporting civil society organizations and considering stakeholders and groups without experience at UN level, as they sometimes feel excluded,

collecting data inclusively and comprehensively; and creating a local framework by zones to facilitate the exchange of experiences.

Areas/recommendations where there seems to be consensus are ...

Participants agreed that transformative change at the United Nations is required if the organization is to become fit for purpose in the 21st century, that includes a fundamental reframing of national sovereignty as it relates to the protection and enforcement of human rights in an integrated world. Yet there was also a recognition that given increasing current geopolitical tensions, progress on piecemeal and incremental UN reforms across a raft of agendas will be necessary to build momentum until a critical mass is achieved for systemic reform.

A new social contract anchored in human rights among all stakeholders

To improve the UN human rights system and its decision-making in the implementation and enforcement of global norms and standards, participants recognized that a new social contract is required between the citizens and their governments, business, and other private and public stakeholders, as well at the UN and other international organizations. The pandemic and subsequent global food crisis as a consequence of the war in Ukraine, illustrates that private, public, local, national, and international actors and stakeholders must work together.

There is a need for transforming the UN to become more democratic and age, gender and disability-inclusive, including for civil society and other stakeholders, with strong transparency and governance structures that strengthen participation and social legitimacy.

The 2030 Agenda and human rights

At the core of the SDGs is a promise to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first. Leaving no one behind must remain the key transformative principle guiding action on current goals and targets and any framework that may follow post 2030. This pledge compels us not only to transform the lives of those who are the furthest behind but to also fight discrimination and the root causes of inequality within and among countries. The SDGs and any follow up agenda must include specific actions for people with disabilities, who are not benefiting equitably from global or national development progress.

The 2030 Agenda brings together the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental – and it is key that this holistic approach is maintained and strengthened. A more sustainable and inclusive world requires tackling multiple crises simultaneously. The SDGs and its potential successor must be more closely linked to other global and regional sustainable development frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

It is welcome that the UN Secretary General has driven a strong focus on the voices of women and youth. UN processes must consider the intersecting dimensions of people's identities and ensure diverse representation in events, meetings and consultations, including voices of children, youth and women with disabilities. This is also valid for a new/updated version of the

SDGs – intersectionality must be considered not only in eventual new targets but also their indicators and the way they are measured, as many people remain invisible to policy makers due to lack of data disaggregation.

Enhancing the participation of civil society & stakeholders at the UN

Another key condition for any Agenda 2030 update would therefore be the need to ensure an open, transparent, consultative and inclusive process that gives space to the voices of a broad range of stakeholders, but particularly those who are more likely to be excluded.

The role of civil society as an integral part of the UN ecosystem was recognised by all participants. To foster inclusion, the OCA report urges all UN entities to set up civil society focal points if they haven't done so already. To assist in the coordination of these focal points, a key proposal promoted by scores of civil society organizations and over 50 states is the establishment of a people's champion or Civil Society Envoy to develop good practices on participation across the UN system, including by using existing guidance on civil society participation such as the UN Guidance Note on protection and promotion of civic space and the upcoming UN Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming. Other proposals recommended to enhance the participation of civil society included the creation of a World Citizens' Initiative (UNWCI), UN Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), and developing guidelines for the inputs of deliberative Global Citizens' Assemblies (GCAs).

Advocates also called for an overhaul of the ECOSOC NGO Committee in light of its excessive politicization as well as severe resource deficits at UN DESA (which supports the Committee) effectively denying NGOs ECOSOC accreditation and complete access to the UN.

UN institutional reform proposals to enhance human rights protection and enforcement

OHCHR still receives less than 5% of the regular UN budget, and it is approximately one-twentieth the size of UNDP. In support of the OCA recommendation to put “human rights mechanisms on a more sustainable financial footing”, Member States should renew their pledge to double the resources of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, improve the effectiveness of the treaty body system, and to support closer cooperation between OHCHR and other UN actors in the Pact for the Future. Increasing the number of UN staff with human rights knowledge, education, and experience has the potential to improve the UN's ability to be people-centered and rights-based.

We are currently facing diverse humanitarian crises in the world including wars, displacement, migration, social conflict among others that have a significant impact on younger generations. The procedures around UN human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and treaty bodies, need to adopt an intergenerational strategy that brings children, adolescents and youth voices to the sessions and adapt participation practices, including through easy-read and child-friendly information. Another participant proposed that the UPR needs to develop a mechanism that increases visibility of specifics/similar recommendations that a country does not follow as proposed in previous rounds of the UPR.

Areas where there seems to still be disagreement among those in the conversation are ...

Of the many recommendations made about human rights and participation during the consultation, the challenge is not so much one of disagreement but of policy coherence and priority in terms of our collective advocacy going forward. Suggested recommendations covered the entire spectrum of human rights norms, implementation and decision-making at the local, national, regional and global levels.¹

On participation modalities, there were those who cautioned against the appointment of a civil society envoy within the secretariat as it could reinforce a top-down hierarchical approach to decision-making. Others proposed the establishment of a CSO Advisory Council from various regions selected by the UN secretariat from candidates nominated by the CSO community. Regional CSO advisory councils were also recommended to provide guidance and support in partnership with Regional Economic Commissions who carry out UN actions to localize implementation at the national level. Others pointed out these proposals are not mutually exclusive but could be mutually reinforcing. As another participant advised, the devil is in the details and it would be crucial that civil society be an important stakeholder in the appointment process of any future CSO envoy or CSO advisory councils.

At the Global Futures Forum, we should plan to further explore the following recommendations:

In the lead up to the GFF, participants were asked to help develop key civil society recommendations (on the what) to promote human rights and strategies for their enforcement & implementation (on the how). At the GFF, participants are invited to prioritize key CSO proposals that both critique and implement key OCA recommendations related to human rights and participation, including proposals not considered by the OCA, with a particular focus on accelerating the SDGs as the UN marks the mid-way point in the implementation of the 2023 Agenda at the SDG Summit in September.

Prioritize key CSO principles & proposals related to the following OCA recommendations:

- Invite EOSG to further explore options for "a single, high-level entry point for civil society" in the context of the appointment of UN civil society focal points. (paragraph 121)
- Update the modalities of the UPR by the Human Rights Council. (paragraph 33)
 - This should be broadened to ensure wide participation across various groupings such as age, gender, and disability and including Treaty Bodies in addition to the UPR.

¹ See list of submissions below.

- “... find ways to put the human rights mechanisms on a more sustainable financial footing, including through more flexibility for the United Nations to allocate funding...” (paragraph 129)
- Consider an "annual civil society caucus in conjunction with the General Assembly's high-level week." (paragraph 130)
- Consider "an updated resolution defining how organs like the ECOSOC, the General Assembly and the Security Council relate to civil society, local and regional governments and business actors, and for the President of ECOSOC to convene a general review of arrangements for observer status or consultation in this regard." (paragraph 130)
- Promote & protect civic space at the UN through the full implementation of the Secretary-General's [Call to Action for Human Rights](#) and the [UN Guidance Note on Protecting and Promoting Civic Space](#) and the upcoming UN Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming. (paragraph 33)
- Develop a global code of conduct to promote integrity in public information. (paragraph 26)

Individuals who we would recommend to speak at the global futures forum are:

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Maithili Pai, m.pai@ishr.ch, International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), NY

GFF E-Consultation Human Rights & Participation Submissions

Bakare, Adewale. "Policy Brief - Implementing the People-centred United Nations 2.0 System: Quintet of Change for Collective Action and Effective Multilateralism." Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development, Abuja, Nigeria, 2022.

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Fay Y. Parris, Esq., Michael A. Eastridge, Esq. "UN Initiatives to Address Caste Discrimination & The Intersectionality of Gender Based Violence & Violence based upon Caste." Global Justice Advocates, PLLC <https://c4unwn.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/UN-Futures-Forum-Advocacy-Statement-FINAL.pdf>

Background information

GFF Human Rights E-Consultation Introduction & Background, January 2023.

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Summary of Week 1 Key Recommendations, January 2023.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CMzIMasrTo-ShLbWYRq9K3m06ucGaErNmOsEHYDAZJU/edit?pli=1>

Global Futures Forum 2023 e-consultations on a People's Pact for the Future, Human Rights and Participation - Youth Recommendations, February 2023

<https://c4unwn.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/GFF-Human-Rights-Track-Youth-Recommendations.pdf>