

Asia Futures Forum Dialogue Series

Civil Society Perspectives on
the Future of Multilateralism

February to May 2026

Regional Outcome
Document



Regional partners:



ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT



Global
Call to Action
Against Poverty
People Rising to End Inequalities

GLOBAL SUMMIT WATCH



ABOUT

Jointly led by the Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development (APSD), the Asia Development Alliance (ADA), Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD) and the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), in partnership with C4UN, the 2026 Asia Futures Forum was organised as a 4-part Dialogue Series between February to May. Opening with a virtual session (recording [here](#)) on 25 February which took stock of the implementation of the Pact and progress on UN80, a second informative webinar (recording [here](#)) by Prof. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, former UN Assistant Secretary-General (2005-12), was organised on 25 March to provide a political economy perspective. This was followed by virtual consultations on 15 April in addition to inviting written contributions, which received a strong response from civil society across Asia with 40 submissions. Consolidating all the inputs received, this Outcome Document was prepared to bring people's voices and concerns grounded in the lived realities of Asia into global policy discussions. Building on the momentum and to feed into the policy discourse, a closing session (recording [here](#)) was organised on 25 May featuring [Mr. Shombi Sharp](#), Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP, and Anselmo Lee, Ambassador for Human Rights, Peace and Democracy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. Engaging more than 300 CSOs across 27 Asian and 46 non-Asian countries, the 2026 Asia Futures Forum was instrumental in mobilising civil society around the Pact Implementation and UN80 Initiative and to inform and build a coherent vision for the future of the UN.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Coordination:

Anselmo Lee, Ambassador for Human Rights, Peace and Democracy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea; Beckie Malay, Former Global Chair, GCAP; Jebilson, Research and Coordination Consultant, C4UN; Zia Ur Rehman, Secretary General/Director, ADA.

Consolidating Written Contributions

Eliane, Program Coordinator, C4UN; Alessandro Agnitti, C4UN; Laeek Siddiqui, C4UN.

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List of Speakers:

- Themba Kalua, Director, Pact for the Future Implementation, Executive Office of the Secretary General
- Nudhara, C4UN Co-chair
- Monalisa Hazarika, Research and Strategic Engagement Officer, SCRAP Weapons Project
- Lae Santiago, Advocacy and Youth Engagement Officer, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
- Anuj Bhandari, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, ARROW
- Ishaan Shah, Lead, Intergovernmental Support and Pact for the Future Follow-Up and Implementation, C4UN
- Prof. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Former UN Assistant Secretary-General (2005-12)
- Mr. Shombi Sharp, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP

DISCLAIMER

This is a summary of the discussions, consultations and inputs received as part of the 2026 Asia Futures Forum Dialogue Series. The views and opinions expressed represent the discussions held and do not necessarily represent an endorsement by C4UN.



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Introduction

Asia is a diverse and dynamic region comprising sub regions such as Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia, each with distinct political, economic, social, and environmental contexts but increasingly interconnected through regional cooperation and global governance processes. As home to a majority of the world's population and many rapidly transforming economies, the region plays a critical role in shaping the future of sustainable development, multilateralism, and global governance.

At the same time, countries across these subregions face shared challenges, including climate vulnerability, widening inequalities, development financing gaps, digital divides, and evolving security risks. In this context, the implementation of the Pact for the Future and ongoing discussions on UN80 reforms offer important opportunities for countries and stakeholders in Asia to strengthen cooperation, enhance accountability, and contribute to a more inclusive, representative, and responsive multilateral system that advances the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for present and future generations.

The Pact for the Future is being discussed and implemented in a period of deep geopolitical instability. The ongoing war in Ukraine, escalating conflicts in the Middle East involving Israel, the United States, and Iran, and rising strategic rivalry between major powers such as China and the United States—often extending to regional tensions involving allies like Japan—have significantly strained the international order. These crises have disrupted global energy markets, supply chains, and diplomatic cooperation, while also exposing the limits of existing multilateral mechanisms to prevent or resolve conflicts. At the regional level, tensions and disputes in parts of Asia, including India-Pakistan relations and periodic border tensions in Southeast Asia such as Cambodia-Thailand, further illustrate how security challenges intersect with development priorities.

In this environment of overlapping conflicts and geopolitical competition, many observers argue that the current multilateral system is underperforming or malfunctioning, with institutions such as the United Nations often constrained by geopolitical divisions among major powers. The Pact for the Future therefore emerges not only as a development and governance agenda but also as an effort to revitalize multilateral cooperation and restore confidence in collective global action.

Key commitments in the Pact relevant for advancing the SDGs in Asia

From an Asian perspective, the Pact for the Future should not be understood merely as a symbolic declaration of support. Rather, it represents an important attempt to integrate multiple, interlinked global challenges into a single framework—namely, the restoration of



development financing, the mitigation of war and geopolitical risks, the pursuit of digital justice, the meaningful participation of youth, and the revitalization of multilateralism. In a region marked by deep inequalities, rising geopolitical tensions, rapid technological transformation, and a large youth population, this integrated approach carries particular relevance and urgency.

At the same time, the 56 actions outlined in the Pact reveal a significant gap between ambition and implementation. While the overall direction is normatively sound and politically important, many of the commitments lack concrete enforcement mechanisms, clear timelines, and binding obligations. From a civil society perspective, this raises critical concerns about accountability and effectiveness. The Pact thus reflects a familiar pattern in global governance: strong political consensus at the level of principles, but limited operational capacity to translate those commitments into measurable and sustained outcomes.

A. Sustainable Development and Financing

1. First, **closing the SDG financing gap** is central. Domestic resource mobilization alone is insufficient; innovative financing, blended finance, and global taxation mechanisms must complement traditional sources. Combatting illicit financial flows at the global level must be a priority. However, current commitments on SDG financing remain insufficient to match the scale of the problem and needs, particularly for basic services such as water, sanitation, and energy.
2. Second, **reforming the international financial architecture** is critical. Many Asian developing economies suffer from high borrowing costs, limited access to concessional finance, and structural disadvantages in global financial governance. Actions 4 and 47, along with Action 48 (Reforming the International Financial Architecture), are highly relevant, for improving liquidity, reducing borrowing costs, and strengthening global financial governance.
3. Third, **accelerating SDG implementation** remains the most urgent commitment for Asia. Despite economic growth, many countries face persistent poverty, inequality, and uneven social protection systems. The Pact emphasizes scaling up investments in health, education, and social protection, but stronger localization of SDGs and last-mile delivery systems are needed to translate commitments into outcomes.
4. Fourth, **addressing debt vulnerability** is essential. Several Asian countries face rising external debt burdens, which constrain fiscal space for SDG investments. The Pact highlights debt relief and restructuring, but lacks binding mechanisms for timely and fair resolution, especially in the context of rising living costs due to global shocks. A transparent, rules-based global debt resolution framework is necessary.
5. Fifth, **reversing the decline, politicization and marketisation of ODA** is crucial. Development assistance is increasingly influenced by geopolitical interests, securitization



agendas and commercial interests. This trend undermines development effectiveness and equity, particularly for least developed and fragile countries in Asia, and requires stronger transparency and accountability mechanisms.

Overall, this cluster is foundational for SDG progress in Asia, but its effectiveness depends on stronger implementation mechanisms and political will.

B. International Peace and Security

1. First, **preventing conflicts and promoting peaceful resolution** is fundamental for SDG progress. Action 7 and related commitments (including Actions 16, 17, 19, 20, and 25) emphasize inclusive societies, justice, and human security. Asia is deeply affected by regional tensions and global geopolitical rivalries, which divert resources from development to military spending, while also contributing to inflation and fuel price shocks affecting households.
2. Second, **strengthening international law and multilateral conflict prevention mechanisms** is essential. The Pact reaffirms these principles, but enforcement remains weak, particularly in cases involving major powers, limiting effective global response.
3. Third, **conflicts and sanctions** have significant spillover effects on energy and food security and can cause pollution and environmental degradation. Many Asian countries are highly dependent on imports, making them vulnerable to price shocks caused by geopolitical crises, which directly impact everyday consumption and livelihoods.
4. Fourth, adopting **a human security approach** is increasingly important. Beyond traditional military security, issues such as food security, health, climate risks, and migration must be integrated into peace and security frameworks particularly in vulnerable regions of Asia.
5. Fifth, **the rapid increase in military expenditure** represents a major opportunity cost. Rising defense budgets reduce fiscal space for social and environmental investments, directly undermining SDG implementation, particularly investments in health, education, and social protection.
6. Sixth, **ensuring judicial independence, rule of law, and access to justice** is critical for addressing systemic inequalities and strengthening accountability.

In sum, this cluster highlights that sustainable development in Asia cannot be separated from peace and stability, yet current global governance structures remain insufficient to address escalating conflicts.

C. Science, Technology, Innovation and Digital Cooperation

1. First, **bridging the digital divide** is a key priority. Significant disparities exist within and between Asian countries in terms of internet access, digital infrastructure, and digital



literacy, limiting inclusive development. Therefore promoting inclusive digital public infrastructure is essential to ensure equitable access to services and reduce digital inequalities.

2. Second, **establishing global AI governance** is increasingly urgent. Asia is a major hub for AI development and deployment, yet regulatory frameworks remain fragmented. The Pact's Global Digital Compact provides principles but lacks enforceable standards, raising concerns around data sovereignty.
3. Third, addressing **technological inequality** is essential. Advanced economies dominate high-value segments of digital and technological ecosystems, while developing countries risk being confined to low-value roles, leading to potential technological dependency.
4. Fourth, **safeguarding human rights in the digital space** is necessary. Issues such as surveillance, data privacy, disinformation, misinformation, and platform monopolies pose growing challenges in many Asian contexts, requiring stronger governance frameworks. Addressing disinformation and misinformation and promoting digital literacy are increasingly important for safeguarding democratic participation.
5. Fifth, promoting **equitable access to digital public goods** is critical. Open-source technologies, digital public infrastructure, and knowledge sharing can help reduce inequalities and support SDG implementation, including climate adaptation efforts.

Overall, this cluster underscores that digital transformation must be governed in a way that promotes equity, accountability, and human rights, rather than exacerbating existing inequalities.

D. Youth and Future Generations

1. First, addressing **youth unemployment and underemployment** is critical. Economic growth has not translated into sufficient decent work opportunities, leading to widespread job insecurity among young people.
2. Second, **strengthening education and skills** development is vital. Rapid technological change requires continuous adaptation, and education systems must align with future labor market demands, especially digital and climate related skills.
3. Third, **enhancing youth participation in governance** is essential. Young people in Asia represent a significant demographic force but remain under represented in decision-making processes at national and global levels, requiring meaningful rather than symbolic engagement.
4. Fourth, **integrating future generations** into policymaking is a transformative commitment. This includes considering the long-term impacts of current decisions on climate, technology, and economic systems, and empowering youth as active contributors.
5. Fifth, **protecting young migrant workers** is increasingly important. Many Asian



economies rely on labor migration, yet migrant youth often face exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and limited legal protection, highlighting a governance gap.

6. Sixth, growing political frustration among youth reflects deeper governance challenges. In several Asian contexts, particularly in South Asia, dissatisfaction with corruption, lack of transparency, and exclusion from decision-making has contributed to youth-led movements and protests, signaling a **demand for more accountable and inclusive governance systems**.
7. Seventh, Digital inclusion remains uneven. While digital platforms enable engagement, many young people, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, remain offline. **Complementary non-digital approaches are necessary** to ensure inclusive participation, especially for young women and persons with disabilities.

In conclusion, this cluster highlights that youth are not merely beneficiaries but key agents of change, and their meaningful inclusion is essential for sustainable and equitable development. However, structural limitations in global governance frameworks constrain meaningful youth participation.

E. Transforming Global Governance

1. First, **strengthening regional organizations in Asia** is necessary. Institutions such as ASEAN and SAARC have limited capacity to mediate conflicts and enforce collective decisions, highlighting the need for stronger regional cooperation.
2. Second, **restoring trust in multilateralism** is fundamental. Growing geopolitical tensions have weakened cooperation and undermined collective responses to global challenges.
3. Third, **expanding inclusive and multi-stakeholder governance** is essential. Civil society, youth, private sector, and local actors must play a greater role in global decision-making processes, including by institutionalizing civil society participation (Action 52).
4. Fourth, addressing the **erosion of international rule of law** is critical. Selective application of international norms reduces legitimacy and effectiveness of global governance institutions, weakening accountability mechanisms.
5. Fifth, **reforming the UN Security Council** is a key priority. Its current structure limits its ability to prevent and respond to conflicts, particularly in the Global South, requiring better representation of developing countries.
6. Sixth, **strengthening civic space**, including freedom of expression and association, is essential for inclusive governance and meaningful citizen participation.

Overall, this cluster emphasizes that without structural reforms in global governance, progress on SDGs and other global agendas will remain constrained.



Main accountability gaps or implementation challenges to the Pact in Asia

The accountability challenge in Asia is not a lack of commitments but a systemic governance gap: **weak policy integration, opaque financing, insufficient monitoring and data, constrained civic space, and exclusionary implementation structures.** A core issue is the widening implementation gap between global commitments and regional delivery, where many SDG targets remain off track despite strong political endorsement. Together, these factors prevent the effective translation of global commitments into measurable, inclusive, and locally grounded outcomes, and reflect a persistent gap between high-level commitments and local realities. At a deeper level, declining public trust in institutions further undermines compliance, policy continuity, and the long-term effectiveness of these commitments.

1) Weak Policy Integration and Fragmentation of Agendas

A central accountability gap in Asia is the weak integration of Pact commitments into national policy frameworks, compounded by fragmentation between climate, development, and peace agendas. While governments formally endorse SDGs and the Pact's priorities, these are often treated as parallel or donor-driven processes rather than embedded in core national planning systems. Ministries operate in silos, leading to incoherent policies—for example, economic growth strategies may contradict climate or inequality goals. This fragmentation limits accountability because responsibilities are unclear and trade-offs remain unaddressed. Without integrated policy frameworks linking SDGs, climate action, and peacebuilding, implementation remains partial, and progress cannot be systematically measured or enforced. Civil society inputs further highlight a “localization deficit,” where global commitments are not effectively translated into sub-national planning and implementation systems.

2) Limited Transparency in Financing and Budget Accountability

Transparency gaps in SDG financing and public budgeting significantly undermine accountability in Asia. Although governments commit to sustainable development targets, budget allocations are often opaque, poorly classified, or not clearly linked to SDG outcomes. Off-budget expenditures, public-private partnerships, and development finance flows further complicate tracking. This weakens parliamentary oversight and limits civil society's ability to monitor whether resources reach the intended beneficiaries. In many cases, there is no clear mapping between national budgets and the Pact's commitments. As a result, accountability remains rhetorical rather than fiscal. Additionally, corruption and governance deficits continue to affect public service delivery and resource allocation, reducing the effectiveness of development interventions. Strengthening budget transparency, participatory budgeting, and



SDG-linked expenditure tracking is essential to ensure that commitments translate into real investments. This challenge is further exacerbated by persistent financing gaps, rising debt burdens, and limited access to predictable funding, particularly for LDCs and climate-vulnerable countries in Asia.

3) Weak Monitoring Systems and Data Gaps

A major implementation challenge lies in insufficient monitoring mechanisms connecting global commitments with national and local reporting systems, alongside limited availability of disaggregated data. Many Asian countries produce national SDG reports, but these are often not aligned with local-level data systems or independent verification processes. 'Data invisibility'- data gaps are especially severe for marginalized groups, informal economies, and conflict-affected areas. Without disaggregated data (by gender, region, income, ethnicity), inequalities remain invisible and unaddressed. Data is hardly available on critical indicators related to SDG 16+ targets, and where it is available, this is not shared with civil society and independent forums citing it as a security risk and damaging the overall integrity and dignity of the country. Citizens are not allowed to generate their own data using reliable and modern data collection tools in many Asian nations and this is again because of the so-called security risks. Furthermore, statistical capacity varies widely across countries and sub-national units. This weakens evidence-based policy making and undermines accountability, as progress cannot be accurately tracked or compared over time.

4) Shrinking or Uneven Civic Space and Participation Constraints

Accountability is further constrained by shrinking or uneven civic space across parts of Asia, limiting the role of civil society in monitoring and advocacy. Legal restrictions, administrative barriers, and political pressures in some countries reduce the ability of NGOs, media, and grassroots organizations to engage in policy processes or hold governments accountable. The space for a healthy discourse on democracy, fundamental freedoms, human rights and civic rights is restricted to the level that no parallel discourse on such issues are allowed in many Asian countries. Whereas in some countries counter discourse to highlight the fundamental freedoms and civic spaces is being criminalised. Therefore the required civic infrastructure to promote and protect rights based agendas is weak and mostly compromised in many Asian countries. Even where formal participation mechanisms exist, they are often consultative rather than influential. This weakens independent oversight and reduces transparency. Civic space disparities across the region also create uneven accountability standards. Without protected and meaningful civic participation, the Pact's emphasis on inclusive governance cannot be effectively realized. In several contexts, declining civic space and limited trust between institutions and citizens further weaken accountability and reduce



meaningful engagement. Ensuring judicial independence, timely justice delivery, and access to legal remedies remains critical, as institutional weaknesses continue to limit effective enforcement of commitments.

5) Exclusion of Marginalized Communities and Local Capacity Gaps

Limited participation of marginalized communities, combined with institutional capacity gaps at sub-national levels, represents a critical accountability failure. Vulnerable groups—such as rural populations, informal workers, women, migrants, and indigenous communities—are often excluded from decision-making processes. Empowerment of women, youth, and vulnerable groups remains insufficiently institutionalized, limiting inclusive development outcomes. At the same time, local governments frequently lack financial resources, technical expertise, and administrative capacity to implement commitments on national and global priority agendas. 65% of the SDGs targets and indicators are expected to be achieved through local governance. Weak service delivery systems, governance challenges, and corruption in basic services such as water, sanitation, and energy directly undermine outcomes at the local level. This creates a disconnect between policy design and on-the-ground realities. As a result, implementation is uneven and often fails to reach those most in need. Strengthening local governance capacity and ensuring inclusive participation are essential for translating commitments into equitable outcomes.

Priority strategies to strengthen civil society engagement in Pact follow-up

In Asia, strengthening civil society engagement in the follow-up to the Pact for the Future requires moving beyond ad hoc consultation toward more structured, inclusive, and sustained participation. This involves embedding civil society in national and regional review processes linked to the UNESCAP's Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), Voluntary National Review (VNRs), and Voluntary Local Review (VLRs), while ensuring access to data, budget transparency, and implementation reporting.

Particular attention is needed to support marginalized groups and strengthen regional civil society platforms. From an accountability perspective, civil society must be enabled to contribute to monitoring, reporting, and evidence-based advocacy. This should include recognition of citizen-generated data, community-based monitoring, participatory research approaches, and independent shadow reporting as complementary sources of evidence for assessing Pact implementation. Overall, more institutionalized, transparent, and participatory approaches are essential for effective and accountable Pact implementation.



1) Institutionalizing civil society participation in national Pact follow-up processes

Governments should establish formal mechanisms that guarantee regular, structured, and inclusive civil society participation in Pact follow-up processes. This includes legal mandates for multi-stakeholder platforms, clear consultation timelines, and integration into national SDG coordination bodies. Institutionalization ensures continuity beyond political cycles and moves engagement from symbolic consultation to meaningful co-decision-making and shared accountability in policy design, implementation, and review processes.

2) Strengthening regional civil society platforms linked to APFSD and SDG review mechanisms

Regional civil society platforms such as APRCEM should be strengthened through formal recognition, adequate resourcing, and systematic engagement in APFSD and related SDG review processes. These platforms play a critical role in aggregating national-level inputs, facilitating peer learning, and representing diverse voices across Asia. Strengthening them enhances regional coherence, amplifies civil society influence, and bridges global commitments with regional and local realities. Regional platforms should also strengthen peer-to-peer learning exchanges, capacity-sharing, and facilitate joint accountability initiatives among civil society organizations, youth networks, indigenous peoples, and community-based organizations across Asia.

3) Supporting independent monitoring and civil society shadow reporting

Civil society should be enabled to independently track progress through shadow or parallel reporting mechanisms that complement official government reports like the case of the People's Scorecard on SDGs. This requires financial support, technical capacity building, and access to data. Independent monitoring enhances transparency, identifies policy gaps, and provides alternative evidence grounded in lived experiences, thereby strengthening accountability and ensuring that Pact commitments translate into tangible outcomes for marginalized communities. Furthermore, governments and UN entities should establish mechanisms for considering citizen-generated evidence, community scorecards, social audits, and youth-led monitoring initiatives as part of follow-up and review processes.

4) Improving access to public data and policy information

Transparent, timely, and disaggregated access to public data is essential for effective civil society engagement. Governments should adopt open data policies, publish budget and implementation information, and ensure accessibility in user-friendly formats. Improved data access allows civil society to conduct evidence-based advocacy, monitor progress, and engage constructively in policymaking, while also reducing information asymmetries that limit meaningful participation and accountability. Digital public



infrastructure, open-source technologies, recognition of citizen generated data and accessible multilingual transparency portals can further strengthen public oversight and broaden participation across diverse communities.

5) Supporting grassroots and community-based organizations

Grassroots and community-based organizations require targeted financial, technical, and institutional support to participate effectively in Pact follow-up processes. These actors bring critical knowledge of local contexts and lived realities, especially among marginalized groups. Strengthening their capacities ensures more inclusive governance, improves policy relevance, and enhances bottom-up accountability, helping bridge the gap between national commitments and local-level implementation outcomes. Particular attention should be given to youth-led organizations, women-led groups, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and other underrepresented constituencies, including through support for local accountability platforms and sub-national monitoring mechanisms.

Reflections on UN80

From an Asian civil society perspective, the relationship between UN80 reforms and the implementation of the Pact for the Future is fundamentally one of alignment between substance and structure. The Pact for the Future provides the substantive agenda and sets out the “what”, while UN80 represents the “how” by focusing on mandates, delivery mechanisms, and structural realignment. Implementation of the ambitions and commitments in the Pact depends on whether the UN system can deliver in coherent, accountable, and context-responsive ways. UN80 should therefore go beyond administrative efficiency and address systemic fragmentation, weak country-level responsiveness, and limited accountability to serve as the operational engine for Pact implementation. By prioritising equity, trust-building, representation and development delivery, the UN80 represents an opportunity to build a more inclusive, efficient, transparent, and accountable multilateral system. Pact follow-up processes offer practical insights into gaps in coordination, data, financing, and participation, which should directly inform the priorities and direction of UN80 reforms. At the same time, the implementation of the Pact represents a test case for the effectiveness of the reforms carried out under UN80.

1) Overcoming Fragmentation through System-wide Coherence

A central priority for UN80, from an Asian CSO perspective, is addressing long-standing



fragmentation across UN agencies, mandates, and funding streams. Despite repeated calls for reform, duplication and siloed approaches continue to undermine effective delivery of multilateral support for the SDGs and other commitments at the country level. The implementation of the Pact for the Future—especially its integrated approach to sustainable development, peace, and human rights—requires stronger system-wide coherence and coordination to translate political commitments in the Pact into faster support on development financing, climate resilience, digital inclusion, SDG delivery and support for countries under fiscal stress. UN80 should therefore prioritize a more integrated “One UN” by harmonizing mandates, strengthening the Resident Coordinator system, and promoting joint programming and pooled financing. Additionally, system integration and unified reporting mechanisms, such as interoperable, digitally-linked and publicly accessible platforms that integrate the SDGs, Pact, Universal Declaration on Human Rights and National Action Plans under a common accountability and evidence-based framework can empower civil society, enhance accountability, improve outcomes for people and close the gap between global policies and national-level implementation. Moreover, Pact follow-up processes can highlight where fragmentation is most acute, gaps in delivery and financing, and where coordination mechanisms need to be strengthened.

2) Operationalizing the Peace-Human Rights-Development (PHD) Nexus

UN80 reforms should reinforce the Peace-Human Rights-Development (PHD) Nexus as a core operational principle, not merely a rhetorical commitment. In Asia, where conflict risks, inequality, and governance challenges intersect, fragmented approaches often fail to address root causes. The Pact for the Future emphasizes integrated responses, but implementation remains uneven due to institutional divides within the UN system. UN80 should therefore promote cross-pillar collaboration, integrated analysis, and joint accountability frameworks through collaboration between the UN agencies and regional organizations like ASEAN. For example, in the case of Action 54 of the Pact, the UN80 should map UN entities which hold crisis-response mandates and identify where coordination gaps exist to strengthen the UN’s ability to respond to complex global shocks. Civil society engagement in Pact follow-up can provide evidence of where nexus approaches succeed or fail, offering practical guidance for embedding this integration into UN80 reform priorities and institutional design.

3) Strengthening Transparency, Accountability, Participation, and Data-Driven Approaches

From a civil society perspective, UN80 must enhance transparency, accountability, and meaningful participation, particularly at the regional, national and sub-national levels. Pact follow-up processes such as the 2028 High-level Review of the Pact, Voluntary



National Reviews and regional forums offer valuable feedback on gaps in inclusivity, transparency, data access, regional representation and accountability. UN80 should be guided by and must institutionalize these lessons by embedding participatory monitoring mechanisms and strengthening field-level responsiveness across the UN system. Any restructuring of civil society engagement mechanisms as part of UN80 must expand rather than narrow access, particularly for human rights defenders, youth, Southern-based and grassroots organisations. Along with making all data, assessments, policy frameworks and other information publicly available in interoperable formats, UN80 must strengthen data-driven governance in the UN, including the capacity to validate and integrate grassroots qualitative data and indigenous and local knowledge into global metrics and governance.

4) Enhancing Regional Engagement, Representation and Relevance

In Asia, engagement with UN processes often remains limited, uneven, or overly centralized. Strengthening platforms such as United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and establishing regional and sub-regional mechanisms of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), is critical to ensuring regional relevance and coordinated action. At the same time, regional organisations in Asia should have a more direct and accountable link to the UN General Assembly, helping to strengthen coordination and regional follow-up. Better representation of developing countries in Asia, including among the staff of the UN, will strengthen the legitimacy and effective implementation of the Pact. By prioritizing decentralisation, dismantling bureaucratic silos and partnering with and empowering local government and non-government stakeholders, UN80 can tailor global mandates to hyper-local contexts, thereby increasing their relevance. Strengthening monitoring frameworks, peer review processes and other follow-up mechanisms as part of UN80 can ensure that Member States translate the Pact's commitments into measurable actions at the national level.

Key messages from Asia to the UN system /Member States

From an Asian civil society perspective, the central message to the UN system and Member States is that multilateral commitments must translate into tangible improvements in people's lives. The Pact for the Future provides a comprehensive agenda, but its credibility and legitimacy will depend on accountable implementation at national and local levels across diverse Asian contexts particularly in ways that respond to the everyday realities of communities most affected by inequality, climate change impacts, conflict, and economic insecurity. To that end, Member States must increase staff capacity in the UN missions to enable better and timely responses to the needs of the countries. When adopting resolutions, Member States need to seriously consider what can be realistically achieved to strengthen global governance.



At the same time, the UN80 initiative offers an opportunity to reform institutional structures, but risks becoming a narrow efficiency exercise if not grounded in development realities, human rights, and meaningful public participation. The level of staff reductions as part of UN80 is a matter of concern as it impedes the capacity of the UN to deliver. As geopolitical tensions, inequality, and climate risks intensify, Asia calls for a more accountable, inclusive, and regionally responsive multilateral system that prioritizes trust-building, people-centered outcomes, and meaningful engagement with civil society and local communities.

5 Key Messages from Asia

1) Implementation should prioritize real outcomes for people and communities

Asian civil society stresses that success must be measured by tangible improvements in livelihoods, reduction in inequality, climate resilience, and social protection rather than the production of declarations or reports. Without measurable impacts at community level and stronger accountability mechanisms, global commitments risk losing legitimacy and failing to address the everyday realities of vulnerable populations across the region.

2) Closing the SDG financing gap must be a global priority

Asia emphasizes that debt distress, limited fiscal space, and inadequate international financing remain central barriers to SDG progress. Addressing these challenges requires reform of the international financial architecture, expanded concessional finance, and fair burden-sharing, ensuring that developing countries can invest in climate action, social protection, digital inclusion, and equitable development.

3) Civic space and stakeholder participation are essential for effective multilateralism

Meaningful implementation depends on open civic space and inclusive participation. Civil society, grassroots organizations, youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, women, and marginalized communities must be recognized as core actors in implementation, monitoring, and accountability rather than treated as token participants. Restrictions on participation undermine transparency and weaken trust, ultimately limiting the effectiveness and legitimacy of multilateral processes in Asia.

4) The UN system should strengthen partnerships and regional engagement in Asia

The UN must strengthen its comparative advantages, including its convening power, normative role, and regional presence by improving coordination at regional and country levels, reducing fragmentation, and deepening partnerships with local actors. A more



field-responsive and regionally and locally-grounded and integrated approach will enable the UN to better support implementation of the Pact and respond to the diverse development challenges across Asia.

5) The 2026 Secretary-General selection should emphasize transparent and inclusive leadership

Asian civil society calls for a transparent, merit-based selection process that prioritizes candidates committed to multilateral reform, Global South representation, and accountability. The candidates taking part in the ongoing selection process must publish vision statements, disclose their priorities and engage with civil society in a structured manner. The next Secretary-General should continue to actively engage civil society and youth after the selection, and demonstrate the political leadership necessary to navigate growing geopolitical tensions and help restore public trust in multilateralism and the UN system.

Expectations from the next SG

a. Leadership:

- Act as a trusted global convener, prioritizing dialogue, inclusiveness, and institutional credibility, while bridging divides between Member States, civil society, and communities.
- Act as an advocate for the poor, marginal and vulnerable people, fostering social cohesion and inclusion.
- Transparency about what matters most - and why - to enhance alignment, execution, and trust.
- Responsive to the needs and concerns of people and takes bolder and more concrete actions.
- Take strong positions on politically contentious issues guided by the UN Charter and international law.

b. Reform:

- Deliver accountable, measurable and inclusive multilateral reform within 3 years by ensuring that global commitments like the Pact translate into measurable results on the ground, with strong transparency, meaningful participation of civil society and marginalized groups, and a clear focus on equity, climate justice, and sustainable development.
- Bold leadership in democratizing global governance and restoring trust in multilateralism, particularly by ensuring greater representation of developing countries in global decision-making, including in international financial institutions.

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- Champion a mandatory, adequately resourced, and equitable multilateral development and climate finance architecture, one that delivers real and additional resources to communities and not to financial intermediaries. Concretely, the SG should use the full moral and institutional authority of his / her office to publicly advocate for: binding international commitments on climate finance additionality; a UN-led mechanism for fair and timely sovereign debt resolution; progressive international tax cooperation anchored in a UN framework convention; and reform of multilateral development bank mandates to prioritize development outcomes over credit ratings.
 - Willing to name structural injustices, including the roles of major creditor nations and private financial actors, and champion reforms that are genuinely transformative and not merely technocratic.
 - Strengthen participatory processes at all levels, including by integrating key civil society movements in decision-making processes building on the outcomes of the UN Civil Society Conference in Nairobi in 2024.

c. Accountability:

- Advance multilevel, cross-sectoral governance guided by a comprehensive outcome-oriented Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system to drive policy coherence and common action.
- Commission an evaluation of all existing UN programmes worldwide, engaging and consulting with all key stakeholders - NGOs and others - across the various regions.
- Make implementation accountability the organizing principle of UN leadership. This means publishing a clear Pact implementation compact for the UN system, linking UN80 reform to measurable country-level improvements, and protecting meaningful space for civil society and youth to assess progress.
- Ensure real accountability of Member States in implementing global commitments, especially the SDGs and human rights obligations through transparent, evidence-based monitoring and follow-up mechanisms. In that context, stronger collaboration with regional institutions should be promoted.

d. Institutional:

- Appoint a Special Envoy for Children in Street Situations to help ensure these children are a permanent fixture on the global human rights agenda.
- Finalize and operationalize Action 54 of the Pact to anticipate and respond to complex global shocks by finalizing the standard operating procedures, bringing them to the UNGA for approval and resourcing, and embedding them as permanent features of the UN system's architecture.

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- Formally propose the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly as a subsidiary body under Article 22 of the Charter.

e. Digital:

- Officially codify and champion the principle of Algorithmic Stewardship within international law by leading the creation of a binding multilateral framework that governs AI as a benevolent, highly regulated Digital Public Good. This framework must legally prevent AI from becoming a proprietary tool that deepens global economic inequality or environmental extraction and instead must democratize decision-making and protect human cognitive liberty.
- Raise awareness on cyber crimes.

Vision for the future of Multilateralism

Asian civil society calls for stronger, more inclusive, responsive, corruption-free and adaptive multilateralism that is responsive to people's real needs and is able to address global problems collectively. Multilateralism must address the three pillars of sustainable development - economic, political/peace, and environmental sustainability - and focus on addressing the root causes rather than managing symptoms. Ensuring national development plans feed into global agendas and vice versa is critical. The gap between commitments and implementation must be closed, particularly on financing and capacity strengthening of less-resourced countries.

The future of global governance will be judged by whether it helps countries and communities manage climate risk, inequality, debt, technology disruption, and exclusion in ways that are fair, participatory, and effective. Therefore, multilateralism should have a clear focus on people, equity, climate justice, conservation of nature and its resources, and an integrated approach to peace, development, and human rights.

Trust is increasingly becoming the central currency of global governance. The future of multilateralism will depend less on creating new agreements and more on demonstrating that existing commitments can change real conditions on the ground. The multilateral system should function as an instrument of equity, sustainability, and human dignity and not as an arena for major-power negotiation that leave developing countries and communities without voice or recourse. The UN was built for a different era with post-World War II power structures, slower economies, and fewer global actors. The world today is more fragmented, faster, and more contested, thus requiring the UN to adapt and reform.



We envision the future of multilateralism to be,

- Accountable, where actors committing violations of international law and international humanitarian law (IHL) are held to account with the UN serving as a platform for transparency.
- Combine universal principles with regional responsiveness.
- People-centered, results- and impact-driven, shifting from process-heavy systems to people-powered outcomes, improving lives at the grassroots level.
- Representative, where developing regions like Asia have a stronger voice in decision-making and multilateral institutions are more democratic.
- More networked, shifting from state-centric diplomacy to multi-actor governance and/or cooperative network models involving governments, civil society, youth, and private sector actors.
- Participatory, which treats civil society, youth, cities, scientists and affected communities as governance actors and not as peripheral stakeholders.
- Coordinated in its response to corruption and other transnational challenges.
- Transparent, by embedding open data, independent monitoring and an easy-to-understand public dashboard which summarizes the ongoing work and key gaps.
- Empowering, one which strengthens civil society movements, builds CSO capacity on multilateral mechanisms, engages the Global South, promotes regional collaboration, and gives greater roles and recognition for civil society, creative professionals and other relevant stakeholders.
- Trust-centered, moving beyond state-centric approaches to incorporate meaningful, structured participation from civil society, youth, women, local communities, and other actors to build, sustain, and institutionalize trust across all levels of decision-making.
- Radically Inclusive, where global governance is no longer a pyramid with world leaders at the top and the people at the bottom, but rather as a circular, dynamic and living ecosystem where global decisions are truly connected to local realities and in which local voices and community-level data directly shape global decisions.
- Polycentric, where digital governance is no longer defined solely by state diplomats but instead functions as a highly decentralized, interconnected network of local Data Trusts, municipal climate boards, and youth-led civic-tech hubs that can decentralise intelligence and empower everyday citizens with decipherable data.
- Upholding international law, intergenerational equity and peaceful settlement of disputes, including by strengthening the International Court of Justice.
- Humane based on fair economics and a fair economy for all.
- Embracing innovation and digital cooperation while ensuring no one is left behind and grounded in human rights and equity rather than corporate interests.
- Genuinely institutionalizing intergenerational thinking through foresight mechanisms and future generations commissioners.

- Structurally prepared for complex global shocks through pre-agreed, well-resourced, civil-society-inclusive, protocols designed, tested, and funded systems.
- A multi-tiered federation based on supranational democracy and subsidiarity principle, where rule of law replaces rule of force.

Proposals for the post-2030 development agenda

In addition to the existing SDGs and its targets, civil society from across Asia propose to include the following goals and targets in the post-2030 development agenda. Only the information gathered through the consultations has been consolidated and organised here, hence there are some sections which have more information than others. The following is not an exhaustive list but a starting point to be expanded upon.

a. Social Protection Systems:

A post-2030 goal must enshrine social protection not as a poverty reduction tool but as a fundamental right, with measurable targets, dedicated financing, and civil society accountability mechanisms.

Goal: Universal Social Protection Floors by 2040

- Legal guarantees for universal and rights-based social protection systems
- Special focus on informal and gig economy workers, women, youth, and marginalised communities
- Minimum spending benchmarks (e.g., a defined percentage of GDP allocation) for social protection systems
- Integration of shock-responsive systems to address climate disasters, pandemics, economic and other crises
- Use of digital and inclusive delivery systems to ensure transparency and reach

b. Digital Space:

1. Goal: Universal and Democratic Digital Public Infrastructure for Inclusive Development and Data Justice for All

Target: By 2035, ensure all countries have access to interoperable, inclusive and rights-based digital public infrastructure that guarantees affordable meaningful connectivity, including universal digital identity, access to digital payments, interoperable public services, algorithmic transparency in high-impact public systems and data governance frameworks, to support inclusive economic growth, public service delivery and accessible digital participation for women, rural populations, persons with disabilities, migrants, and linguistic minorities.



Indicators:

- Percentage of population with digital ID
- Access to interoperable digital payments
- Adoption of digital governance frameworks by governments
- Availability of cross-border digital cooperation mechanisms

2.Goal: Digital Sovereignty and Safety for All Children.

Target: By 2035, ensure all children have access to a safe, data-protected digital environment.

3. Address potential crises emerging from AI by implementing technology regulation.

c. Environment

Goal: Universal Access to decipherable and verifiable Environmental Intelligence and Cognitive Liberty.

Target: By 2040, ensure that everyone has unfettered access to open-source, localised Digital Public Goods such as ethical, non-extractive generative AI agents that can translate complex multilateral climate data, geospatial hazard maps, and national sustainability policies into citizens' native languages and cultural contexts without subjecting these to algorithmic bias or corporate manipulation.

Indicators:

- Percentage of municipal governments providing machine-readable climate data.
- Availability of AI tools trained on local (not just Global North) datasets.

d. Others:

1.Target: Strengthen Trust in Governance Systems

Description: By 2040, all countries establish measurable frameworks to assess and improve public trust, institutional transparency, and citizen participation, supported by open data systems and independent monitoring mechanisms.

2.Target: Establish a Standing Global Protection Mechanism by 2035.

Description: All citizens in vulnerable or fragile states have access to an international Legal Safety Net when national systems fail (bridging universal jurisdiction and Responsibility to Protect).



3. Target: Establishment of the UN Envoy for Future Generations and the establishment of representatives for future generations at local and national levels worldwide

4. Identify and bring back out-of-school children by digitally integrating education data

Top actionable recommendations from the Asia Futures Forum

The Asia Futures Forum (AFF) provides a critical opportunity to translate the Pact for the Future into concrete, accountable, and regionally grounded action. From an Asian civil society perspective, the priority is not the creation of new commitments but ensuring that existing pledges are translated into clear implementation pathways that lead to measurable improvements in people's lives. This requires stronger institutional linkages between regional and national processes, inclusive participation, and transparent monitoring systems.

Discussions also highlighted that meaningful participation depends on addressing structural barriers, particularly youth unemployment and access to education and skills development, which participants identified as foundational for inclusive governance and policy engagement. The AFF can serve as a catalytic platform by aligning governments, the UN system, and civil society around shared accountability frameworks that strengthen public trust and institutional legitimacy. Ultimately, its added value lies in bridging global commitments with local implementation realities across diverse Asian contexts.

Key Actionable Recommendations

1) Establish an Asia-Pacific Pact Follow-up Platform

A formal, regionally anchored follow-up platform linked to APFSD should be established to ensure continuity, coherence, and accountability in Pact implementation. It must include structured and institutionalized participation of civil society, youth, and marginalized communities, enabling regular dialogue, independent monitoring, and multi-stakeholder review across countries in Asia and the Pacific. Participants also emphasized that youth participation mechanisms within regional and UN-led processes should be supported by adequate technical capacity-building opportunities and sustainable funding to ensure meaningful engagement rather than tokenistic representation.

2) Strengthen Regional and Sub-regional and National Accountability Ecosystems

ESCAP and UN country teams should enhance accountability systems and improve coordination across UN entities by supporting disaggregated data collection, capacity



building for stakeholders, and accessible monitoring tools, open data systems, and digital accountability platforms. Strengthened data ecosystems and institutional capacities are essential for tracking progress, identifying gaps, and ensuring that no groups—especially marginalized communities—are left behind.

3) Integrate Pact Commitments into National SDG Frameworks

Governments should embed Pact commitments into national SDG strategies, financing strategies, public budgeting systems, and Voluntary National Review processes from 2026 to 2030. This integration must include clear timelines, measurable indicators, and transparent reporting and independent review mechanisms. Aligning global commitments with domestic planning frameworks is essential to move from political endorsement to actionable implementation.

4) Ensure Transparent and Inclusive Leadership Selection

Member States should ensure that the 2026 Secretary-General selection process remains transparent, merit-based, and inclusive, including meaningful engagement with civil society and youth. The next Secretary-General should demonstrate a strong commitment to accountable multilateralism, implementation of the Pact for the Future, and rebuilding public trust in the UN system.

5) Ensure Protected Space for Civil Society Monitoring

Governments and the UN must guarantee safe, predictable, and enabling environments for civil society to independently monitor Pact implementation. This includes supporting shadow reporting, people's scorecards, and participatory evaluation processes. Without protected civic space and meaningful participation, accountability mechanisms risk becoming procedural rather than genuinely transformative.

6) Expand Subnational Implementation and Local Reviews

Member States should scale up voluntary local reviews and subnational monitoring mechanisms to localize Pact implementation. Empowering local governments, communities, and grassroots organizations strengthens local ownership and improves policy relevance, responsiveness, and accountability. Bringing implementation closer to the ground ensures that commitments translate into tangible outcomes in people's everyday lives.

Priority actions to transform global institutions to make them more representative and responsive to the people in Asia

Transforming global governance under Chapter 5 of the Pact for the Future requires moving beyond incremental institutional adjustments toward systemic reforms that reflect Asia's demographic weight, development diversity, and evolving geopolitical role.



From an Asian civil society perspective, “representation” must mean not only increased state voice in global institutions, but also meaningful inclusion of peoples, communities, and non-state actors in shaping decisions. “Responsiveness” must be measured by whether global institutions deliver equitable outcomes in finance, technology, peace, and sustainable development. This transformation therefore requires rebalancing power, strengthening accountability, and embedding participatory mechanisms that connect global decision-making with regional realities and local lived experiences.

Reforms should make the UN system more humane by enabling it to shift from promises to delivery of people-centered action. Human rights, peace, gender equality, climate justice, social inclusion and the SDG commitments must guide any global governance reform. Rebuilding trust through fair policies and equal participation must be treated as a core governance objective. Development grants and social protection investments should be accessible to local NGOs, indigenous organizations and local governments. Weak implementation, follow-through and the gap between commitment and delivery have dented trust. Hence, reforms must prioritise execution capacity, results, and accountability systems through better coordination across agencies, streamlined mandates, and stronger monitoring of outcomes rather than inputs.

The high levels of conflict are a cause of concern for civil society in Asia and therefore call on global governance to prioritise peace. Early warning systems must be established to prevent and better respond to conflicts and climate crises. The International Court of Justice, as the principal judicial organ of the UN, plays an indispensable role in the pacific settlement of disputes and its July 2025 Advisory Opinion on Climate Change, also welcomed by the General Assembly with 141 votes in favour, must be implemented by all Member States. Global trade and investment systems must be aligned with sustainable development and equity goals. Well-being, sustainability, and equity-based measures must be adopted to move beyond GDP in global decision-making.

1) Strengthening Asia’s Representation in Global Decision-Making

Asia’s growing economic and demographic significance must be reflected in global governance structures, including the UN Security Council and international financial institutions. This requires expanding representation in leadership positions and increasing the voice and voting power of developing countries in decision-making bodies, while ensuring that smaller and vulnerable countries in Asia are not marginalized within regional and global processes. Transparency and procedural fairness should be strengthened to build long-term legitimacy.

2) Expanding Transparency, Accountability, and Civil Society Participation

Multilateral institutions must enhance transparency and accountability by opening decision-making processes to public scrutiny and addressing the shrinking space for civil



society by establishing formal, funded, and outcome-influencing civil society participation mechanisms. This includes formal mechanisms for inclusive stakeholder consultations, independent and citizen monitoring, access to information, and funding for civil society participation to ensure that policies are responsive to people's needs and that global commitments are subject to meaningful oversight. The participation of people most affected by decisions, especially women, youth, workers, migrants and climate-vulnerable communities, must be institutionalised.

3) Reforming Global Financial Architecture

For many Asian countries, “responsiveness” means faster, fairer access to concessional finance, climate finance, liquidity support and debt relief. Therefore, reforms should include restructuring quotas, improving access to concessional finance, expand access to climate funding tailored to the needs of vulnerable countries, policies that prioritizes Child-Rights Budgeting over austerity, and comprehensive debt solutions, including by establishing a UN-led sovereign debt resolution mechanism, so that financial governance better supports equitable development and macroeconomic stability across the region. Moreover, negotiations on the UN framework convention on international tax cooperation must be concluded soon to address illicit financial flows.

4) Advancing Inclusive Digital and AI Governance

Global cooperation on digital governance and emerging technologies, particularly related to AI, digital public infrastructure, cross-border data and cyber governance, must be fair, inclusive and should ensure equitable participation of Asian countries and stakeholders. Rules and standards should reflect diverse development contexts, prevent digital inequality, prioritize technology transfer and access to open-source AI tools, and safeguard human rights, enabling Asia to shape global norms while benefiting from inclusive and people-centered digital transformation.

5) Strengthening Global-Regional Linkages and Multi-Level Governance

Effective transformation requires stronger alignment between global institutions and regional cooperation platforms such as ASEAN, ASEAN+3, SAARC, APEC and other Asia-Pacific mechanisms. Strengthening the role of regional organizations and local authorities, promoting subsidiarity and decentralisation, strengthening regional cooperation platforms, and enhancing coordination and policy coherence can ensure that regional priorities inform global agendas, while global frameworks are implemented effectively at national and local levels through inclusive, multi-level governance systems. ESCAP and regional follow-up mechanisms should have a stronger role in translating global commitments into practical action, including by expanding the mandate and resources of ESCAP as part of Pact implementation.

6) Accelerate reform of the Security Council

A more representative Security Council should expand the voice of developing countries that prioritize peace and human security over geopolitical rivalry. Among others, the reforms should focus on expanding non-permanent representation, reforming veto use and improving transparency, accountability and working methods.

7) Leverage technology and Digital Platforms

Implement data-driven and decentralised governance to improve the responsiveness of the UN, including by transitioning to polycentric governance models that formally recognizes and integrates grassroots data into policymaking. Global institutions must recognize, fund, and utilize community-led data gathering (such as participatory assessments) on par with state-level statistics to guide policy. Priority actions must include establishing legal frameworks for Community Data Trusts within UN structures, ensuring that communities retain sovereignty over locally collected data. Secondly, the UN must leverage technology and digital platforms to facilitate inclusive, real-time engagement between global institutions and Asian populations, including by implementing a virtual assembly model to ensure the "peoples of the United Nations" (not just governments) have a voice. Measurable mechanisms that strengthen the relationship between global institutions, Member States, and citizens must be prioritised.



Regional partners:



GLOBAL SUMMIT WATCH