

Europe Regional Futures Forum:

**Civil Society
Perspectives on the
Future of Multilateralism.**

Outcome Document

April 2026



Co-organisers





ABOUT

The 'Europe Regional Futures Forum: Civil Society Perspectives on the Future of Multilateralism in the context of UN80 and the Pact for the Future' was held online on 16 and 24 of April 2026 as part of the 2026 Regional Futures Forum Dialogue Series. The Forum was co-organized by the ECE-RCEM, Peace Child International, SDG Watch Europe and the Coalition for the UN We Need (C4UN), bringing together 280 representatives of civil society organizations, regional institutions, United Nations entities, academia, and experts from 25 European countries, alongside participants from 48 countries worldwide, to reflect on regional priorities related to the Pact for the Future and the broader trajectory of multilateralism, and regional priorities for sustainable development and global governance reform.

As part of the Forum, participants engaged in an interactive policy sprint session structured around four interconnected themes: sustainable development; peace, security, and conflict prevention; the Global Digital Compact and digital governance; and youth engagement and future generations. In addition to the live discussions, participants submitted 20 written contributions, creating an additional channel for sharing perspectives, recommendations, and regional experiences.

Through policy sprint discussions and facilitated consultations, the Forum addressed key challenges in SDG implementation, accountability mechanisms, civic participation, and institutional reform. The outcomes of these processes are reflected in this report.

Building on the outcomes of the 2026 Regional Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development, the dialogue explored how the commitments contained in the Pact for the Future can be translated into meaningful action within the Europe region while contributing to broader international processes, including the 2026 Global Futures Forum, the 2027 SDG Summit, the 2028 High-Level Review of the Pact for the Future, and ongoing UN80 discussions.

The Forum provided a platform for participants to:

- Share regional perspectives on the implementation of the Pact for the Future and identify opportunities and challenges within the region's context.
- Examine the interlinkages between the Pact for the Future, Agenda 2030, UN80, and broader multilateral reform processes.
- Identify priorities and recommendations to strengthen accountability, sustainable development, peace, and inclusive multilateralism.
- Contribute to a people-centred vision for the future of the United Nations and global governance beyond 2030.



This outcome document captures the main reflections, concerns, and recommendations emerging from the dialogue. It aims to inform regional and global discussions and contribute to ongoing efforts to strengthen inclusive, accountable, and effective multilateral cooperation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ECE-RCEM, Peace Child International, SDG Watch Europe and the Coalition for the UN We Need (C4UN) extend their sincere appreciation to all speakers, moderators, discussants, and participants who contributed their expertise, perspectives, and experiences to the 2026 Europe Regional Futures Forum.

We are particularly grateful to the representatives of civil society organizations, United Nations entities, regional organizations, academia, youth networks, and other stakeholders from across the Europe region whose thoughtful contributions enriched the dialogue and helped shape the reflections and recommendations presented in this publication.

We would like to offer a special word of thanks to the Executive Office of the Secretary General for their opening remarks, as well as to representatives of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the Article 109 Coalition, the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation (CMI), the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS), the EU Policy Lab, and the other individual experts, who generously contributed their time and expertise, sharing their perspectives on a range of issues during the first session of the Europe Regional Futures Forum.

This outcome document reflects a collective exchange of ideas and serves as a regional contribution to ongoing discussions on the implementation of the Pact for the Future, preparations for the 2026 Global Futures Forum, the 2027 SDG Summit, the 2028 High-Level Review of the Pact for the Future, and broader discussions on the future of multilateralism and the United Nations.

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DISCLAIMER

This is a summary of the discussions, consultations and inputs received as part of the 2026 Regional 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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Regional Consultation Outcomes

1. Which Pact for the Future Commitments Matter Most for the Region

The most critical priorities for this region centre on strengthening accountability, inclusion, and resilience within multilateral governance systems. The Pact for the Future must function not only as a political declaration, but as an operational framework capable of improving implementation and preparedness in the face of increasingly interconnected crises.

Protection of human rights and civic freedoms stands as a foundational priority. Shrinking civic space, democratic backsliding, and restrictions on civil society participation are actively undermining progress across multiple SDGs. The gap between formal commitments and meaningful implementation remains one of the most urgent governance failures to be addressed.

Youth participation and intergenerational inclusion are central for the Pact. Youth engagement must move beyond symbolic consultation and become institutionalized within governance and decision-making systems at national, regional, and international levels, with structured accountability mechanisms to future generations.

Systemic global risk, encompassing armed conflict, environmental degradation, economic instability, digital exclusion, and unregulated technological development, demands anticipatory governance. Action 54 is identified as particularly important for strengthening institutional preparedness in the face of complex, interconnected shocks.

Digital inclusion and universal connectivity are no longer peripheral concerns. Access to digital infrastructure shapes access to education, political participation, economic opportunity, and public services. Technological development is advancing substantially faster than the governance and accountability systems designed to regulate it. Alongside digitalization, we must anticipate the obstacles of the Twin Transition, including the automation of certain occupations and the exit of specific professions from the labor market, which may lead to layoffs and short-term crises.

Peace and security require strengthened international law, preventive diplomacy, and accountability mechanisms. The ongoing impacts of the war in Ukraine, alongside growing militarization, weakening trust in international institutions, and rising geopolitical fragmentation, make this an area demanding urgent attention.



2. Accountability Gaps and Implementation Challenges

Fragmentation of governance systems is among the most significant structural barriers to progress. Institutions continue to operate in isolated sectoral frameworks despite the deeply interconnected nature of contemporary crises. Sustainable development governance, in particular, remains too siloed to respond effectively to the overlapping challenges of climate change, armed conflict, economic instability, digital transformation, and social inequality.

Weak implementation and enforcement mechanisms undermine the credibility of international commitments. Too many political agreements remain symbolic, failing to translate into meaningful national-level action. Poor coordination between institutions, delays in implementation, and limited accountability for non-compliance are systemic problems requiring structural solutions, not incremental improvement.

Selective application of international law and declining institutional authority are eroding the foundations of the multilateral order. Existing international legal and political systems are visibly struggling to respond to large-scale violations and escalating geopolitical tensions. Enforcement capacities of multilateral institutions are insufficient, and trust in multilateral cooperation is declining as a result.

Exclusion from decision-making both at the national and international levels affects civil society organizations, youth groups, grassroots actors, and marginalized communities most acutely, precisely those whose participation is most essential to legitimate and effective governance. Formal participation processes frequently remain consultative in structure but not in influence.

The gap between technological development and governance capacity is growing rapidly. Significant digital inequalities, gaps in digital literacy, weak AI oversight, and insufficient protection of human rights in digital spaces represent both immediate risks and long-term structural vulnerabilities.

Structural economic challenges underpin many of these failures. Economic models that prioritize short-term profit and resource extraction over sustainability and social well-being contribute directly to environmental degradation, social instability, and declining public trust in institutions.

The United Nations and its members should continue to implement the 2030 Agenda and find new ways to finance its implementation. The adoption and ratification of the United Nations Convention on Tax Cooperation (UNTC) would increase the fiscal space of countries and would provide the means to end poverty and reduce excessive inequalities in the world.



These implementation gaps are not merely technical problems. They are political and structural challenges rooted in power imbalances, unequal representation, and insufficient accountability.

3. How to Meaningfully Involve Civil Society in Pact Follow-Up

Meaningful civil society engagement is not optional; it is a prerequisite for effective implementation of the Pact for the Future:

- Institutionalized participation mechanisms must replace ad hoc consultations and informal dialogue. Civil society involvement should be embedded within formal review, monitoring, and accountability processes as a structural requirement, not a courtesy.
- Stronger vertical linkages between local, national, regional, and global governance spaces are essential. Grassroots organizations and marginalized communities hold critical expertise and lived experience that is currently excluded from the implementation processes where it is most needed.
- Improved accessibility and transparency within multilateral institutions requires simplified engagement procedures, clearer communication, stronger outreach to underrepresented communities, and more genuinely inclusive participation systems.
- Protection of civic space and democratic freedoms is a non-negotiable precondition for any meaningful participation strategy. Growing restrictions on activism, increasing pressure on civil society organizations, and shrinking space for independent engagement around the world must be directly and urgently addressed.
- Interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation is required to move beyond the narrow sectoral approaches that limit both civil society and governmental responses to interconnected challenges. Partnerships between governments, academia, civil society, youth networks, and the private sector must become standard practice.
- Civic education, peace education, digital literacy, and public awareness of multilateral governance processes are foundational investments, without which broader participation cannot be sustained.

4. What UN80 and Institutional Reform Should Deliver for the Pact

The UN80 process represents an important opportunity to strengthen institutional coordination, improve responsiveness, and rebuild trust in multilateral governance. The need is for modernization and adaptation, not replacement. Multilateral institutions remain indispensable, but governance systems must evolve to meet rapidly changing global realities.



Reform must prioritize stronger coordination across UN entities, improved anticipatory governance, and greater institutional preparedness for complex global shocks. Action 54 (on strengthening the UN system's response to complex global shocks) offers a potentially significant framework for strengthening prevention-oriented governance and institutional resilience, and its full operationalization should be a priority.

Reform processes must strengthen, not weaken, civil society participation. Institutional restructuring, budget reductions, or efficiency-driven changes must not inadvertently reduce accessibility or participation opportunities for civil society actors, a risk that must be explicitly guarded against. Civil society organizations should be able to participate on-line in meetings organized by the UN and its agencies.

Technical expertise, evidence-based policymaking, and long-term thinking must play a stronger role in political decision-making. This requires deeper integration of scientific expertise, systems thinking, and future-oriented governance approaches across the UN system.

Global inequalities in representation within international institutions remain a fundamental legitimacy challenge. More equitable participation between the Global North and Global South is not only a matter of fairness, but it is also a condition of institutional effectiveness. Ultimately, rebuilding public trust in multilateralism requires greater transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and meaningful participation. Political commitments alone are insufficient.

5. Key Messages to the UN System and Member States

- 1. Multilateralism remains essential, but must become more representative and responsive.** Despite growing geopolitical fragmentation and declining public trust, there is no viable alternative to multilateral cooperation. The UN system must improve its inclusiveness, transparency, and responsiveness in order to maintain legitimacy and address contemporary global crises effectively. In line with Action 39 abolish the vetoes in the UN Security Council. In line with Action 48 increase the voice of the global South in the IMF and the World Bank.
- 2. Civil society participation must move beyond symbolic consultation.** Civil society organizations, grassroots actors, youth groups, women, and marginalized communities must be meaningfully integrated into decision-making and implementation processes. This requires institutionalized engagement pathways and stronger accountability mechanisms — not periodic consultations.
- 3. Sustainable development, peace, climate resilience, human rights, and digital governance must be addressed together.** Current governance systems are too fragmented to respond to interconnected crises.

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4. **The UN system must strengthen anticipatory governance and preparedness for global shocks.** Institutions remain too reactive and insufficiently coordinated to address the complexity of armed conflict, climate crises, technological disruption, and economic instability.
 5. **The next Secretary-General should prioritize implementation of the Pact for the Future, accountability, and trust-building.** Effective leadership must be committed to implementing the Pact for the Future, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and improving institutional preparedness. Meaningful engagement of youth, women, and actors from the Global South must be a defining feature, not an afterthought.

6. Actionable Recommendations

1. **Institutionalize civil society participation within Pact follow-up mechanisms.** This requires structured review processes, mandatory consultation points, stronger feedback loops between local and global governance levels, and meaningful inclusion of grassroots actors and youth representatives.
2. **Strengthen accountability, monitoring, and implementation systems of the Pact.** Transparent reporting procedures, stronger compliance frameworks, improved use of data and evidence-based policymaking, and better coordination across UN entities and governance institutions are all required.
3. **Operationalize Action 54 and strengthen anticipatory governance systems.** Clearer institutional coordination, finalized operational procedures, and stronger preparedness systems are needed to respond to complex and interconnected global shocks.
4. **Expand universal digital inclusion and strengthen ethical governance of emerging technologies.** Improving connectivity, digital literacy, AI governance frameworks grounded in human rights, and protections against misinformation and digital harms are all priorities.
5. **Strengthen peacebuilding, preventive diplomacy, and disarmament efforts.** Conflict prevention, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and social justice must be integrated into broader governance and security frameworks — not treated as separate tracks.

7. Transforming Global Institutions

1. **Ensure more equitable representation within global governance institutions.** Stronger inclusion of Global South perspectives, youth representatives, grassroots organizations, indigenous communities, and marginalized groups is required across UN processes and decision-making structures.

2. Strengthen transparency, accountability, and accessibility within the UN system.

Simpler participation procedures, improved communication with civil society, and consultations that meaningfully influence decisions are the minimum standard.

3. Shift from reactive crisis management to prevention-oriented governance. Stronger institutional preparedness for interconnected global shocks, improved coordination across UN entities, and full operationalization of Action 54 are the foundation of this shift.

4. Promote integrated, cross-sectoral policymaking. Sustainable development, peacebuilding, climate action, digital governance, and social protection must no longer be addressed through isolated institutional silos.

5. Rebuild trust between institutions and communities through meaningful participation and implementation. Global institutions must demonstrate responsiveness through stronger implementation capacities, inclusive governance systems, and policies grounded in human rights, social justice, and long-term resilience.

8. The Next Secretary-General

The next Secretary-General must bring a genuine commitment to multilateral cooperation, institutional reform, and meaningful civil society engagement. Effective leadership will require concrete prioritization of Pact for the Future implementation, stronger accountability mechanisms, and improved institutional preparedness for complex global challenges.

The credibility of the Executive Office of the Secretary General will depend on the capacity to rebuild trust between institutions and communities through transparency, inclusiveness, and responsiveness. Stronger engagement with youth, grassroots organizations, marginalized communities, and actors from the Global South is essential, as is a commitment to feminist leadership, human rights protections, and prevention-oriented governance approaches.

Conclusion

The European Futures Forum consultations reflect both significant concern and continued commitment regarding the future of multilateral governance. Geopolitical fragmentation, shrinking civic space, implementation gaps, growing inequalities, and declining public trust are serious and well-documented challenges. At the same time, the case for strengthening multilateral cooperation, improving accountability systems, and expanding meaningful participation is clear and urgent.

The challenges facing sustainable development, peacebuilding, digital governance, climate resilience, and youth inclusion are deeply interconnected. They cannot be addressed through isolated policy approaches or fragmented governance structures.



The future effectiveness of multilateral governance will depend not only on political commitments but on implementation capacity, institutional legitimacy, accountability, and the ability to rebuild trust between institutions and the communities they serve. The work of this Forum represents one contribution toward that goal.



Co-organisers

