

# OUR FUTURE AGENDA

*A vision and plan for next and future generations*



**NEXT  
GENERATION  
FELLOWS**

*We would like to dedicate this report to the memory of Nalule Joanita Sylvia, who contributed to our work as the Action Group leader on communal youth farming.*

*The front cover illustration is a vision of the future of the iconic United Nations building in New York, by the young Moroccan artist Zaynab Kriouech*

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**Disclaimer: The content of this report is the work of the Next Generation Fellows and does not represent the views of the UN Foundation.**

*Today's young people are forced to confront crises that we did not cause.*

*It is no wonder that we fear for our futures – and for the futures of our children and grandchildren.*

*But we will not be silenced. We will continue to fight without fear for a more just, resilient, and sustainable world.*

*It is time for leaders to catch up, or risk being left behind.*

*The world must act for the next generation – nearly half the world's population who are under the age of 30 – and for future generations – the 10 billion people who are yet to be born this century.*

*It is time to reimagine the United Nations and its role in the world.*

*To trust in our energy and innovation.*

*And to join forces with us as we unleash our future agenda.*

## OUR VISION

*“Young people today will have to live with the consequences of our action and inaction. For too long, the voices of youth have been sidelined in discussions about their future. This has to change now through meaningful engagement with youth.”*

[Declaration](#) on the commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations

*“Young people must also be at the table – as designers of their own future, not as recipients of decisions of elders who have, let’s be honest, failed them in so many key respects.”*

[Priorities for 2021](#), UN Secretary-General

*“Children and young women and men are critical agents of change and will find in the new [Sustainable Development Goals] a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world.”*

[2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development

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Under each of these three themes, we set out:

- **Our vision:** the future we are working towards
- **The challenge:** what needs to change and why
- **Our proposals:** immediate priorities in the wake of the pandemic and longer-term proposals
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# Acknowledgements

In commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations in 2020, the UN Secretary-General was asked “to report back before the end of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly with recommendations to advance our common agenda and to respond to current and future challenges.”

In preparing his proposals, the Secretary-General launched a broad and inclusive process of profound reflection. This included asking young thinkers, leaders, and activists to shape solutions to address challenges facing next and future generations.

We, a group of eight UN Foundation Next Generation Fellows, came together to respond to the Secretary-General’s request for young people to help shape *Our Common Agenda*.

Over the past few months, we have engaged with more than 600 young thinkers and activists, partner organizations, and decision makers to compile thoughts, ideas, and wishes into a companion for the Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* report – the culmination of which is *Our Future Agenda*. You can find out more about us and how we created this report in [Our Process](#).

**We would like to acknowledge and celebrate the individuals and organizations who have contributed to this process.**

We would like to thank the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres for his determination to offer young people opportunities to shape our futures. We are honored by the opportunity he has provided us to make a contribution.

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United Nations  
Office of the Secretary-General's  
Envoy on Youth



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# OVERVIEW

A stylized illustration in shades of blue and orange. The background features a sunburst with orange rays emanating from a dark blue circle on the right. Below the sun, there are rolling hills and two wind turbines with three blades each. In the foreground, a large, dark blue rectangular structure with a white outline is visible. The overall style is modern and graphic.

# *Introduction*

To commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, the General Assembly has invited the Secretary-General to make recommendations to “advance our common agenda and to respond to current and future challenges.”

The Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* provides a [vision](#) for how multilateralism can adapt to the threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It calls for a renewed commitment to generating the global public goods that are needed for the future of humanity and the planet, based on solidarity between nations, peoples, and generations.

**The Secretary-General has called for young people to have a seat at the table as “designers of their own future.” *Our Future Agenda* responds to this invitation.**

During 2021, eight Next Generation Fellows convened an open, inclusive, and dynamic process to generate fresh ideas and proposals with young people from across the world.

We have focused on finding solutions to the challenges facing the next generation – young people under the age of 30, who account for nearly half the world’s population.

This generation ranges from very young children, who are dependent on others for nurture and care, through people in their teens, who are in schools and universities, or already seeking work, to people in their twenties who are already shaping their economies and societies, and may be starting their own families.

As the world ages, young people are becoming an increasingly scarce resource. Countries need to work together to harness our potential, especially as most of us live in parts of the world that have historically been poorly represented in the global system.

Global institutions must live up to the principle of inclusive and equal participation, by offering a greater role to ‘young’ countries and to young people.

We have also explored the challenges facing future generations – people who are yet to be born, but whose lives will be influenced by decisions we take today.

There are fewer than 8 billion people currently alive, but more than 10 billion people are likely to be born during the rest of this century. We can no longer continue to ignore this silent majority.

We need collective action to secure the rights of the young people of the future, building on the [commitment](#) that the UN Charter makes to succeeding generations.

Throughout, we have fed proposals from young people to the Secretary-General's team so they can be considered for inclusion in *Our Common Agenda*. We are grateful to the United Nations for treating us as equal partners in this work.

**We were also asked to create a standalone report – *Our Future Agenda* – so the voices of the young people can be heard far and wide.**

Inevitably, our proposals are broad. No one young person is the same and we each have different needs and aspirations. But this is a collective effort of many partners and networks, and we believe we have covered many of the key challenges young people face.

*Our Future Agenda* calls for a **New Deal for a New Generation** – a global plan to tackle immediate and urgent priorities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and to address the longer-term need for quality education and skills development, secure and meaningful jobs and economic opportunities, and more sustainable ways of living.

We also make proposals for **Unleashing a New Generation** – mapping the transformation that will make it possible for young people to be designers of their own future and suggesting a ten point plan to rejuvenate the multilateral system.

As the United Nations looks towards completing its first hundred years as a universal platform for global cooperation, we urge leaders – whether they work in the international system, government, civil society, business, philanthropy, or elsewhere – to respond to these proposals.

We ask them to do so in dialogue with young people in their communities and at national and global levels. The UN75 consultations showed that young people are more optimistic about global cooperation than older people. We are multilateralism’s biggest cheerleaders!

Through solidarity between generations, we can spur reinvigorated action towards delivering the promises of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and other blueprints for the future.

This report has also been written for our own generation. It is time for young people to seize the initiative and to play an active role in writing a new chapter of international history where our needs, aspirations, and energies play a pivotal role.



**Amoding Agnes Cynthia,**  
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**Amélie J. Mariage,**  
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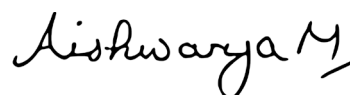
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**NEXT GENERATION FELLOWS**



# *a new deal for a new generation*

## **The Right to Learn**

*A world where we learn what we need to thrive*

- ▶ To repair the damage done by the pandemic

An emergency program to catch up learning and reach children who are furthest behind

- ▶▶ To end the learning crisis

A Blueprint to Transform Education Systems to put learners at the center and give young people the skills they need for work and life

## **The Future of Work**

*A world where we find secure and meaningful work*

- ▶ To jump start growth during the pandemic

A global jobs strategy to put young people at the heart of the economic recovery

- ▶▶ To prepare for the future of work

Action to stimulate the industries of the future, support young entrepreneurs, and give young workers a fair deal

## **Saving Our Planet**

*A world where we respect our shared home*

- ▶ To build back greener after the pandemic

Ambitious and binding commitments on climate, biodiversity, and pollution

- ▶▶ To end the planetary emergency

A green transition, environmental and intergenerational justice, and young people as designers of a sustainable future

*Making it Happen*

**New Models of Global Action**

**Smart and Equitable Investment**

**Harnessing Innovation  
and Planning for the Future**

## *Transformative Shifts*

### **Provide justice for young people**

Prevent violence • Increase access to justice • Remove discriminatory barriers • Rebuild the social contract

### **Embrace our challenge to the status quo**

End attacks against human rights defenders • Stop internet shutdowns • Promote resilience • Facilitate intergenerational dialogue

### **Give us spaces to shape the future**

Support youth-led movements • Make it easier to access funding • Invest in young peacebuilders • Make internet safety a human right

### **Make us part of decision making**

Support civic education • Address low voter turnout • Embed young people in politics • Embrace deep democracy

## *Rejuvenate Multilateralism*

- 01** Deliver the New Deal for a New Generation and update the UN Youth 2030 strategy
- 02** Create a Contract for the Future setting out obligations to future generations
- 03** Provide leadership opportunities for ‘young countries’
- 04** Establish an annual High-Level Meeting for Young People
- 05** Enhance the leadership role of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth
- 06** Create a Global Network of Youth Envoys
- 07** Create UN Futures - a joint global program with an inclusive governance model
- 08** Set up a Global Youth Investment and Partnership Platform
- 09** Value young staff in the international system
- 10** Hold regular dialogues between young staff and the Secretary-General

*unleashing  
a  
new  
generation*

# ONE



*The Right to Learn*

A world where we learn  
what we need to thrive

*The Future of Work*

A world where we find  
secure and meaningful work

*Saving Our Planet*

A world where we respect  
our shared home

*a  
new  
deal  
for a  
new  
generation*

# THE RIGHT

By committing to the 2030 Agenda, countries promised quality education to learners worldwide.

The inability to keep this promise is damaging an entire generation.

Millions of young people don't go to school. Of those that do, many fail to reach their full potential. The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this trend.

It is unacceptable that so many young people cannot even read or write – mostly those who experience other forms of discrimination.

And even if we successfully learn the basics, many of us leave education systems without the skills we need to thrive in rapidly changing economies and societies.

To respond to COVID-19, we call for an emergency program to repair the damage done by the pandemic and reach children who are furthest behind.

To end the learning crisis, we call for a Blueprint to Transform Education Systems so that learners are at the center and young people gain the skills they need for work and life.

# TO LEARN



## *A world where...*

Governments tear down barriers that  
keep children out of school

Education is always accessible and we  
are free from fear at school

Everyone can read and write with  
confidence in at least one language

We are given space to be curious,  
creative, and entrepreneurial

Our education equips us for  
the world of work

We are taught our rights and  
duties as global citizens

Our teachers get the support they need  
to help us flourish as learners

*...we learn what we need to thrive*

## *The world is failing to fulfil its education promises*

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Current trends show over 200 million children will be [out of school in 2030](#), and [more than half](#) will not learn to read and write or gain other foundational skills. Just [60% of young people](#) will complete upper secondary education in 2030.

Marginalized communities – people with [disabilities](#), [LGBTQ+](#), [indigenous peoples](#), [refugees](#), internally displaced persons, migrants, and others – are most likely to miss out.

## *Young people are not equipped for a rapidly changing world*

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Many young people feel that their education has left them [without the practical skills](#) they need to do well in job markets, especially in [growing industries](#) like the digital and green economies.

Internationally mobile students get the best jobs, but only the richest can study abroad. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) [commitment](#) to offer more scholarships to students unable to afford higher education has already been [missed](#).

## *The pandemic is exacerbating education inequalities*

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COVID-19 forced [90% of students](#) out of their schools and universities, with learners hit worst in countries that [lack](#) the electricity, the internet, and computers necessary to [switch](#) to remote learning.

Ten million children are likely [never to return](#) to school, while school closures will cost students [\\$10 trillion](#) in income during their lifetimes. Countries – especially those worst affected by the pandemic – are [cutting](#) education budgets just when money is needed to help students catch up.

## *Education systems are outdated and reinforce inequalities*

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Most education systems are outdated. Teaching methods are not based on evidence of how people learn. Curricula have their roots in frameworks from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Learners are often taught in ways that stifle their creativity.

People with disabilities and different learning needs are shut out by inaccessible infrastructure and curricula. Both they and students from marginalized communities are [most likely](#) to be victims of violence, bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

► TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE DONE BY THE PANDEMIC

*An emergency program to catch up learning and reach children who are furthest behind*

- Safely [reopen schools](#) and other education institutions.
- In each country, implement an education recovery plan over at least the next two academic years to help make up for lost learning.
- Remove barriers that hit marginalized children hardest, including discriminatory legislation and policies, school fees, and a lack of technology and internet access.
- Meet the global [target](#) for 40 million more girls to get an education by 2026 while combating gender-based discrimination and violence, and improving access to sanitary facilities.
- Implement the [Safe to Learn](#) strategy protecting children and young people from violence and abuse in and around schools, colleges, and universities.

►► TO END THE LEARNING CRISIS

*A Blueprint to Transform Education Systems to put learners at the center and give young people the skills they need for work and life*

**Skills for learning**

- Collect and publish timely and disaggregated data to demonstrate progress in tackling the learning crisis.
- Set stretching five-year targets for increasing the number of children who can read, write, perform basic mathematics, and use basic technology.
- Offer any country that needs it evidence-based programs and materials for teaching foundational skills, translated into local languages, at zero or low cost.
- Consult with students in the design of curricula that promote the [4Cs](#): critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication.
- Provide parents, especially young parents, with resources and training so that they are able to support their children to learn outside of school, and invest in early childhood education.

**Skills for work**

- Develop a platform in each of the world's regions to forecast what skills will be needed in economies of the future.

- Give all students career advice, work experience, and opportunities to be mentored, creating a smoother path from education to the workforce.
- Teach financial literacy at all levels of education.
- Work with the private sector to train young entrepreneurs, with a focus on sustainable businesses and business sectors of the future.
- Partner with digital technology companies to provide digital and media literacy training, advancing the skills that societies will need in the future.
- Connect governments, businesses, philanthropists, and donors to create scholarships and exchange programs that increase student mobility and open doors for young people from marginalized communities.

### **Skills for life**

- Provide all children and young people with opportunities to engage with nature.
- Teach all young people [Global Citizenship Education](#) and [Education for Sustainable Development](#).
- Promote [quality youth work](#) and other opportunities that provide the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for civic engagement and social action.
- Incorporate awareness of human rights and ways to access justice systems in the education of young people.
- Introduce comprehensive sexual health education in all school curricula, increase support for the mental health of students, and tackle the root causes of teacher stress.

### **New Models of Global Action**

We ask the Secretary-General to champion the Right to Learn.

Building on the [E9 partnership](#), we call on national and international leaders to form a high-ambition coalition to provide political support for rebuilding education systems.

The leadership group should build momentum for a package to support education recovery ahead of the 2022 Global Education Meeting. We ask leaders to launch a Blueprint to Transform Education Systems at the second [SDG Summit in 2023](#).

The new [Global Education Cooperation Mechanism](#) needs to be fully operational as soon as possible so it can strengthen global and regional cooperation to transform education. Students must play an active role in this new governance mechanism.

All countries should report annually on their efforts to close the learning gap at the High-level Political Forum and SDG Summit.

### **Smart and Equitable Investment**

All governments should reverse cuts to education budgets and provide a 10% booster fund over the next two years to fund education recovery from COVID-19.

We call for a longer-term plan to close education's annual global financing gap, currently between [\\$178 and \\$193 billion](#). At least 10% of international finance should be spent on critical [global public goods](#) in education.

The most important priority for investment is to recruit, develop, and [support](#) the [70 million](#) young teachers the world needs to transform its education systems in the 2020s.

### **Harnessing Innovation and Planning for the Future**

We support the work of the [International Commission on the Futures of Education](#) to “[reimagine](#) how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet.”

We ask the International Commission to work with teachers and young people to design student-centered and holistic curricula, and make education systems more inclusive of learners from minority groups.

We call for a [compact with technology companies](#) to provide high-quality, open source EdTech tools for use in and out of the classroom, connect every school through the [Giga](#) initiative, and invest in technologies to connect learners in remote areas to the internet.



# THE FUTURE

The 2030 Agenda promised to substantially reduce the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training by 2020, but this target has been missed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that in a crisis, young workers are first to lose their jobs and the last to get back to work. So far, governments – and the international system – have done little to prevent the emergence of a ‘lockdown generation.’

Many young people risk experiencing impacts that will last throughout their lifetimes. Even if economies recover, we will enter a workforce very different from the one our parents joined a generation ago.

To respond to COVID-19, we call for a global jobs strategy to put young people at the heart of the economic recovery.

To prepare for the future of work, we call for action to stimulate the industries of the future, support young entrepreneurs, and give young workers a fair deal.

# OF WORK

## *A world where...*

We are able to comfortably shift from education  
to the world of work

We are encouraged to be innovative and  
supported to set up businesses

We find stable work in industries of the future

We are not forced to take jobs  
that destroy the planet

We are fairly compensated and able to provide  
for ourselves and our families

We feel safe at work

We do not face discrimination because we  
are young or for any other reason

*...we find secure and meaningful work*

## *Too many young workers are locked out of the labor market*

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Even before the pandemic, young people were [three times more](#) likely to be unemployed than older workers. When COVID-19 hit, [impacts](#) on employment were more than twice as bad for the young.

Even when economic opportunities are available, their quality is often [low](#). 55 million young workers [live in extreme poverty](#).

## *Young entrepreneurs face significant barriers*

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Young people are highly [entrepreneurial](#), especially in regions where they are starved of other opportunities. But we lack access to capital, training, skills, and mentorship.

Encouraging young entrepreneurs, especially young social entrepreneurs, could reduce unemployment and build [a sustainable workforce](#) that can support current and future economies.

## *Young people lack the green employment opportunities they want and need*

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Young people are increasingly conscious of the environmental impact of their work. Most find the prospect of working in oil and gas [unappealing](#).

A greener economy could [create](#) 24 million jobs by 2030, many of which would go to young workers. But G20 countries have [spent](#) nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars on new support for fossil fuels in response to COVID-19 – [much more](#) than they've spent on renewables.

## *Young people face discrimination in workplaces*

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Ageism is [prevalent](#) in many workplaces where young people have a greater chance of facing emotional and physical abuse.

Many young people have few legal protections, benefits, or training opportunities. In Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, [96%](#) of young workers are in [informal employment](#) and a growing number of young workers are exploited by the gig economy.

► TO JUMP START GROWTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

*A global jobs strategy to put young people at the heart of the recovery*

- Launch a Recovery Barometer that will track the impact of the pandemic [by age group](#) and help determine how to allocate recovery funds.
- Urgently develop and operationalize a global strategy for the employment of young people, finally fulfilling the commitment of [SDG 8.b](#).
- Develop job guarantee programs for first-time job seekers, providing work in crucial areas such as infrastructure, social care, and the protection of the environment.
- Provide [targeted](#) help for job seekers from vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- [Turn](#) emergency social protection measures into a safety net for all young workers, including those in informal employment.

►► TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

*Action to support the industries of the future, support young entrepreneurs, and give young workers a fair deal*

**Industries of the future**

- Develop regional strategies to build digital, resilient, and zero-carbon infrastructure in countries with growing numbers of young workers.
- Put young people at the heart of the transition to Net Zero, investing in job creation through global and national Green New Deals.
- Develop national targets and plans for creating green jobs and other jobs in the industries of the future.
- Provide training and support for young people working in fossil fuels and other carbon-intensive industries to re-skill and enter new sectors.
- Invest in a new generation of public servants with the energy, skills, and latitude to reinvent institutions for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Young entrepreneurs**

- Support young entrepreneurs by nurturing [digital innovation ecosystems](#) and providing increased [access to finance](#) for startups at all stages of development.
- Remove legal and regulatory barriers that make it hard for young people to register and set up businesses, and make it easier for young entrepreneurs to open bank accounts and access other essential financial services.

- Building on the recommendations of the [2020 World Youth Report](#), introduce incentives for young social entrepreneurs, such as tax breaks, and longer grace periods for fee payment or loan repayment.
- Create opportunities for young public servants to be more entrepreneurial, offering them opportunities to develop and implement digital and innovation strategies.
- Provide young people with opportunities to learn about entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, and create in-person or online [mentoring networks](#) for entrepreneurs.

### **A fair deal for young workers**

- Legislate, and enforce existing laws, to ensure that all employers provide young workers with dignified, well-compensated, and fulfilling work, and offer benefits that improve well-being, development, and personal growth.
- End unpaid internships and zero hour contracts, and extend social protection to informal workers so that labor market flexibility is no longer one-sided.
- Re-design digital and physical workspaces to take the opportunity provided by the pandemic to combine opportunities for remote, in-person, and hybrid working, while urgently providing young parents with support for childcare.
- Commit to fairer and more transparent processes for the recruitment, development, and retention of young public servants.
- Make it easier for young workers to migrate to countries with aging workforces, providing visas and support for digital nomads, recognizing educational credentials gained in other countries, and protecting young migrants when they are abroad.
- End sexual harassment and other forms of abuse in the workplace, employing [ethics audits](#) and other mechanisms to promote [secure working environments](#).

### **New Models of Global Action**

We ask the UN Secretary-General and the heads of the International Labour Organization, World Bank, World Trade Organization, regional development banks, and regional economic commissions to create a global jobs strategy for young people.

We insist you consult with us on the design and implementation of this strategy and provide us with avenues to hold leaders accountable if they fail to deliver results.

The promotion of jobs for young people should be a central objective of the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development; the G20, under the presidency of Indonesia in 2022; and the G7, under the presidency of Germany.

We ask central banks to give equal weight to full employment in their mandates, alongside controlling inflation. The IMF should protect labor markets when countries face unsustainable levels of debt.

### **Smart and Equitable Investment**

We want to be able to innovate on our own terms.

We ask governments to work with financial service providers to create microloans and platforms that allow us to crowdsource capital on flexible terms, and to [tailor](#) financial services for young entrepreneurs. Young people should advise on allocating funds.

We shouldn't have to pay the burden for wanting to make a positive difference. Prospective investors should establish [special funding schemes](#) for high-risk entrepreneurial ventures, such as those that involve new technologies, the green economy, and last-mile communities.

We call on multinational corporations and major businesses to invest in testing and scaling youth-led [collaborative initiatives](#) to drive social change.

### **Harnessing Innovation and Planning for the Future**

The internet will not be an 'equalizer' if it is not universally accessible.

We urge all governments to accelerate efforts to ensure the internet is a global public good, according to the principles of the [contract for the web](#).

We ask technology companies to contribute finance and expertise to advance this goal and invest in training a new generation of young workers to be digitally literate.



# SAVING

Young people are growing up amidst a planetary emergency.

Temperatures are rising, pollution kills more people than COVID-19, and we are witnessing a mass extinction event that has had no precedent for tens of millions of years.

We didn't cause this emergency but we will bear the brunt of its consequences. We grow up breathing toxic air. We witness nature disappearing around us. And we pay the price for each day that leaders fail to take action to save the climate.

Rather than expecting us to make all of the sacrifices, today's elites must end their addiction to greenwashing and finally commit to environmental and intergenerational justice.

To respond to COVID-19, we call for ambitious and binding commitments on climate, biodiversity, and pollution.

To end the planetary emergency, we call for a green transition, environmental and intergenerational justice, and the empowerment of young people as designers of the future.

# OUR PLANET

## *A world where...*

We no longer live in fear of runaway climate change and other catastrophic risks

Entire countries, cities, and ecosystems are no longer on the brink of destruction

We benefit from the social and economic dividends of green growth

We are empowered to protect the planet for living and future generations

Local communities know and assert their environmental rights

People are supported when forced to adapt to climate and environmental change

Reparations are paid for victims of environmental injustice

Our children and grandchildren inherit a healthy planet

*...we respect our shared home*

## *Climate change threatens the lives and livelihoods of billions of people*

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Most countries have failed to commit to the action needed to stabilize the climate. The UN has [warned](#) that “current levels of climate ambition are very far from putting us on a pathway that will meet our Paris Agreement goals.”

For every degree of warming, a billion people will be [exposed](#) to extreme heat that threatens life. Entire countries risk [disappearing](#) as sea levels rise. On current trends, our food and water systems will [struggle](#) to support a world of more than 9 billion people by 2050.

## *Environmental destruction exacerbates inequality and undermines the social contract*

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Climate change has been driven by the rich, while the worst impacts fall on the poor. The top 1% are [responsible](#) for twice the emissions of the poorer half of the world’s population. Climate change has [already](#) increased global inequality by 25%.

Climate is an intergenerational issue. While older elites undermine the social contract by failing to act to solve the problem, young people see their futures disappear, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

## *Biodiversity is being lost at a frightening rate*

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The Global Biodiversity Outlook [found](#) that “humanity stands at a crossroads with regard to the legacy it leaves to future generations.” Extinctions are [accelerating](#). Many ecosystems have already suffered damage that cannot be reversed.

We cannot live without the riches that the planet provides us. But while economies have grown, the stock of natural capital per person has [gone down](#) by 40%. We would need more than one and a half Earths to sustain current lifestyles.

## *Young people’s participation in environmental policymaking is limited*

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Young people [believe](#) that climate change is the most important issue of our time, but many think we live in a failed system where “the powerful have exploited their power for selfish and often short-term gain.”

The young want to be part of the solution, but face daunting obstacles when engaging in climate activism, including a lack of access, knowledge, capacities, and resources.

► TO BUILD BACK GREENER AFTER THE PANDEMIC

## *Ambitious and binding commitments on climate, biodiversity, and pollution*

- Make binding commitments at the [Glasgow climate summit](#) that put the world irrevocably on track to Net Zero emissions by 2050.
- [Make Net Zero](#) universal, credible, and inevitable by making all national commitments legally binding and translating them into carbon budgets that can be transparently monitored.
- Agree national and global Green New Deals to open up the pathway to Net Zero.
- Stop spending COVID-19 recovery funds on fossil fuels and rapidly increase the proportion spent on green investment (from [under 20%](#) today).
- Build on behavioral changes that have reduced emissions and pollution during the pandemic, including virtual working, fewer flights, and less driving.
- Agree a global biodiversity framework at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2021 to transform our relationship with nature, with ambitious goals and targets for 2030.

►► TO END THE PLANETARY EMERGENCY

## *A green transition, environmental and intergenerational justice, and young people as designers of a sustainable future*

### **A green transition**

- Phase out the use of fossil fuels [by 2050](#) through an immediate end to fossil fuel subsidies and new exploration, banning new fossil fuel boilers by 2025 and new internal combustion vehicles by 2030, and ending coal in rich countries by 2030 and everywhere by 2040.
- Make renewables the new default, as part of an “[immediate and massive expansion](#)” of clean and efficient energy technology.
- Agree a roadmap and action plan to decarbonize airlines, shipping, and heavy industry, while ending unfair subsidies that incentivize these sectors to pollute.
- Conserve [at least 30%](#) of the planet’s lands and waters by 2030, as a first step to protecting [half of the Earth](#) by 2050, in line with standards [proposed](#) by the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

### **Environmental and intergenerational justice**

- Provide [universal access](#) to low carbon electricity and other renewable fuels, starting with the third of people who lack access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy.

- Provide constitutional and other legal guarantees of the [right](#) to a healthy and sustainable environment to enable victims of climate change to take polluters to court over crimes such as [ecocide](#).
- Create a global framework to protect the rights and futures of up to [200 million](#) environmental migrants and refugees by 2050.
- Direct foreign investment into legal aid for climate advocates, including indigenous peoples whose land can be a “[line of defense](#)” in the fight for the environment.
- Support local environmental defenders who are being harassed and killed in “[startling numbers](#)”.

### **Young people as designers of a sustainable future**

- Support and listen to young climate activists, building on the [Action for Climate Empowerment](#) agenda and responding to the demands of [#FridaysForFuture](#) and other movements led by young people.
- Elect a Young Sustainability Envoy in every country for a two-year term to speak on behalf of young people in the design and implementation of national climate commitments and actions, and to work with youth climate constituencies to amplify the voice of young people in the international system.
- Implement the [NDC Youth Engagement Plan](#) to meaningfully involve young people in designing and implementing national commitments to cut emissions.
- Establish Youth in Nature Innovation Labs to support youth-led social entrepreneurship and [nature-based solutions](#), using [UNDP Accelerator Labs](#) as a framework and drawing on indigenous and local knowledge.

### **New Models for Global Action**

We ask every national, regional, and international leader to make the Glasgow Climate Summit their top priority in 2021. If they are not going to make commitments consistent with Net Zero at that summit, we ask them to make a public speech explaining why.

Shareholders, rating agencies, and insurers must highlight the massive losses businesses will face if they cling to the polluting practices of the past. We call for mandatory [carbon risk disclosure](#) for listed companies in OECD and G20 countries.

We call for the integration of climate and environmental risk in all decisions and for a joined-up approach to climate, biodiversity, pollution, and energy poverty.

Decisions about the planet must not be taken behind closed doors. We support the [Global Assembly](#) as a platform for people to explore action to end the planetary emergency. We hope a Global Assembly for children and young people can take place.

### **Smart and Equitable Investment**

We call on governments and international finance organizations to work with the private sector to triple annual clean energy investment by 2030 to around [\\$5 trillion](#), with the bulk of new finance provided by countries with high historic or current emissions. Divesting from fossil fuels and militarization will accelerate progress towards this goal.

The polluter must pay. We urge central banks, ministries of finance, and international financial institutions to price carbon at [around](#) \$100 by 2030 and design properly regulated carbon markets. We call for a tax on billionaires.

We welcome the use of border adjustment taxes that stop pollution being exported across borders and raise [revenue](#) that can be reinvested into renewable energy.

All governments must provide transparent data on green finance to tackle corruption and make sure it delivers results and reaches the most vulnerable.

### **Harnessing Innovation and Planning for the Future**

We are witnessing a promising [collapse](#) in the price of renewable energy and clean technologies, but now must make them the default in every country and every sector.

We ask the Secretary-General to convene the global partnerships, networks, and alliances that have the greatest potential to accelerate the race to Net Zero yearly. All of these partnerships should allocate resources to supporting young entrepreneurs.



# TWO




## **Transformative shifts**

Provide justice for young people  
Embrace our challenge to the status quo  
Give us spaces to shape the future  
Make us part of decision making

## **Rejuvenate multilateralism**

Reimagine international institutions  
Amplify young voices  
Strengthen global leadership  
Deliver with greater ambition  
Change the way we work

# *unleashing a new generation*



Young people are fighting for change across the world, but even though we make up half of the world's population, we are under-represented and under-valued in the places where decisions are made and power lies.

We have few and constrained opportunities to work through formal institutions to shape the policies that directly affect our lives.

Young women and girls, and young people from marginalized groups, face entrenched discrimination and the highest barriers to participation.

In response, many of us have designed our own models of engagement, building a better world as activists in our communities and societies. But when we protest peacefully, we are ignored, belittled, or repressed – often violently.

It is no wonder that many young people are deeply disillusioned with those in power and some are losing hope for the future.

**Four transformative shifts are needed if the world's leaders are to keep their promise to listen to and work with young people.**

We must move:

- From inequality, discrimination, and violence to justice for young people
- From expecting compliance to embracing our challenge to the status quo
- From controlling our destinies to giving us spaces to shape the future
- From leaving us on the sidelines to making us part of decision making

# *Provide justice for young people*

We live in a world of unacceptable inequality.

This inequality has powerful intergenerational dimensions. Young people experience disproportionate levels of violence. We face political, social, and economic exclusion. Institutions frequently discriminate against us and sometimes actively abuse our human rights.

Young people deserve to live in peaceful, just, and inclusive societies that have their best interests at heart.

## *We call on all countries to*

→ Provide young people with access to [justice](#) when they are victims of crime or when they have legal problems with money, debt, housing, public services, or in our families, taking justice out of the courtroom and into the communities in which they live.

→ Urgently implement inclusive and evidence-based programs to prevent and respond to interrelated violence against [children](#), [young adults](#), [women](#), and members of the [LGBTQ+ community](#). Governments must stop the police and other justice actors from abusing us and do more to fight “[the devastating effects of corruption](#)”.

→ Make institutions more responsive to young people and more accountable for their actions. We endorse the Secretary-General’s [call](#) for a reimagined social contract that will “enable young people to live in dignity.” But a new social contract will only be durable if our institutions are more deserving of trust.

→ Legislate to remove [discriminatory barriers](#) that stop young women and people from LGBTQ+, indigenous, disabled, and otherwise marginalized communities from participating, and implement measures to [remedy](#) social and structural discrimination.

# *Embrace our challenge to the status quo*

It is not our job to agree with you.

Greta Thunberg stood up and told the world's leaders that they are failing us. Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head when she spoke up for the right of girls to learn. When she regained consciousness, she refused to be silenced.

In public, you hail these young women for their resistance and for their leadership. But when the world is not watching, young activists are often treated as a threat, rather than valued for their potential to transform societies.

Too many young activists are victims of emotional and physical abuse. We should not be penalized for speaking out and defending our rights. The pandemic cannot be an excuse for [silencing us](#).

## *We call on all countries to*

- [End attacks](#) against young human rights defenders, justice defenders, journalists, and other young people who have mobilized to build a better world. All countries must fulfil their [obligations](#) to protect and support young activists.
- End internet shutdowns by governments during times of protest and crisis. Online civic space is fundamental to our freedom. It is unacceptable that the number, length, and severity of shutdowns [continue to grow](#).
- Create space for intergenerational dialogue. The Deputy Secretary-General [spoke to us](#) about the need for a genuine exchange of views between young people and those from other generations. We agree that people of all ages have important perspectives and we must listen and speak to each other.
- Facilitate [partnerships](#) between civil society, local healthcare institutions, schools, and universities to help young people be physically safe and mentally resilient when demonstrating; create safe spaces for young activists to work together; and provide access to counselling to deal with trauma.



# Give us spaces to shape the future

Young people drive social movements that are pushing for change around the world, leading efforts on climate, violence, racial injustice, gender equality, and democracy.

But we need safe spaces to convene, set an agenda for the future, and mobilize for its implementation.

These spaces must be both online and in the real world, especially as the internet is still inaccessible for many people. We are determined to unleash the power of grassroots communities while also building connections between young people across borders.

We want leaders from the authority generation to meet us where we are, rather than always expecting us to be guests on your platforms. Communication shouldn't be a one-way street.

## *We call on all countries to*

- Make it [easier](#) for young people from organizations without formal registration or without a big administrative team to access funding from public, private, and philanthropic sources. Funders should harness digital tracking tools to monitor and evaluate grants in a less time-consuming way.
- Support youth councils, student unions, youth-led organizations and networks, youth clubs, and other inclusive spaces for young people, providing resources to ensure these spaces remain open and accessible regardless of socioeconomic background.
- Legislate to enshrine internet safety as a [human right](#) and meaningfully [involve](#) young people in conversations about internet governance so that they can safely express themselves online.
- Build on the recommendation in the [independent progress review on youth, peace and security](#), and direct \$3.7 billion towards funding and training young peacebuilders by 2025 – an investment of \$1 per young person.

# *Make us part of decision making*

Nothing about us, without us.

We are half the world's population and there are few major decisions that don't affect us or our futures in one way or another.

Too few young people vote and we account for just [2%](#) of the world's parliamentarians, with young women even more poorly represented.

We seldom influence candidate selection and are not in the room when priorities are set. [Few](#) parliaments even have a committee or parliamentary body that focuses on young people.

## *We call on all countries to*


→ Address trends of [low voter turnout](#) amongst young people by making voter registration easier and encouraging education and work places to give people time off on polling days. We believe the voting age should be 16 in all countries.

→ At international conferences, ensure that young people are always part of national delegations. We believe 35% of delegates should be under 35 and should be [trained](#) so they can make themselves heard at major gatherings.

→ Support [civic education programs](#) to help young people understand how societies make decisions, build awareness of how they can engage with their governments, and inform them of their rights and ways to defend them.

→ Commit to fair representation of young people in parliaments and cabinets. Age restrictions on running for office should never be higher than the age at which people can vote.

→ Embrace [citizens' assemblies](#) and [deep democracy](#) deliberative models to allow young people to participate in discussions about policies that will impact their futures. Parliaments and government buildings should show they're accessible by organizing town hall events and open days.



We feel disconnected from the United Nations and other international organizations. If we want to fit in, we are expected to have skills that diplomats have developed over long careers. Despite the commitment to being multilingual, day-to-day business is conducted in English, excluding many people.

We are seldom in the room when big decisions are made about global issues. At best, we are offered tokenistic opportunities to sit on panels whilst leaders speak over us. But how can one young person on a panel represent the views of roughly half the world's population?

After we speak, our ideas are rarely acted upon by decision-makers and we lack avenues to continue to influence and hold leaders accountable.

And as young staff members, we are confronted by old-fashioned, hierarchical organizations that often lack the culture, the technologies and tools, and the commitment to inclusion and diversity needed to harness the energy of a new generation of international public servants.

**But young people believe in the transformative potential of the international system. We present a ten point plan to rejuvenate multilateralism so it meets the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.**

We must:

- Reimagine international institutions as a platform for next and future generation
- Amplify the voices of ‘young countries’ and young people
- Strengthen global leadership for and with young people
- Deliver with the same ambition as the Child Survival Revolution that [saved](#) millions of lives in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Change working practices to value young public servants in the international system

# Rejuvenate Multilateralism

*Amplify the voices of 'young countries' and young people*

03

Provide leadership opportunities within the international system for countries with large populations of young people and where the majority of future generations will be born.

04

Establish an intergenerational High-Level Meeting for Young People during the week of the high-level General Debate for the opening of UNGA, to make commitments and propose resolutions to the UN General Assembly.

*Reimagine international institutions as a platform for the future*

01

Make delivering the New Deal for a New Generation a central mission for the international system, while updating the UN [Youth 2030](#) strategy and the 2030 Agenda to reflect proposals from *Our Common Agenda* and *Our Future Agenda*.

02

Create a Contract for the Future, setting out the world's obligations to the roughly 10 billion people yet to be born this century and for generations to come.

*The Contract for the Future could be launched at [Stockholm+50](#) which, in 2022, will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first major summit on the environment.*

*All countries should send three young delegates to this meeting, which would also be attended by leaders and ministers. Both the ECOSOC Youth Forum and High-Level Meeting for Young People should be hosted in a hybrid fashion to democratize multilateral conversations.*

## *Strengthen global leadership for young people*

**05** Maintain and enhance the leadership role of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, providing her and her successors with the resources and political support needed to make the UN a home for the world's young people.

**06** Ask the Secretary-General to work with leaders of other international and regional organizations to create a network of Youth Envoys to represent young people across the multilateral system.

## *Change the way we work*

**09** Include younger people in the UN's Senior Leadership Talent Pool, provide greater opportunities for younger staff members across the international system, and end unpaid internships within all international organizations and NGOs.

**10** Hold an annual interactive dialogue between young staff and the Secretary-General, leaders from other international organizations, and Permanent Representatives to the UN.

*The Global Network of Youth Envoys could be supported by a group of young ministers, mayors, and other national leaders.*

*Across the international system, organizations should establish minimum quality standards for promoting employment opportunities and increasing diversity, especially for disadvantaged young people.*

## *Deliver with greater ambition*

**07** Create UN Futures: a global program that brings together international organizations from within the UN family and beyond, with an inclusive governance model that provides a leadership role for young people.

**08** Set up a [Global Youth Investment and Partnership Platform](#) to catalyze solutions for and with young people, and to act as a partnership of partnerships that will reduce fragmentation and increase impact.

*This new entity would draw on the model of UNAIDS. It will coordinate efforts to deliver for young people, empower young people as global leaders, and promote intergenerational cooperation. It must be properly resourced.*



# THREE

An abstract graphic design on a dark blue background. In the top left, a sunburst of orange and yellow rays emanates from a dark blue circle. A stylized, light blue building with a vertical zig-zag line on its left side and a series of horizontal, rounded rectangular bands on its right side is positioned in the center. The background features faint, light blue geometric patterns, including a grid and a maze-like structure.

# *A Message to a New Generation*

*Our mission – to empower young people as designers of the future – does not end here.*

*In our communities, countries, and on the global stage, we must continue to fight for space at the decision-making table. There are billions of us. It is time for us to step up, speak out, and start building the world we want.*

## **We must fulfil our responsibilities to each other and to the planet**

As half of the world's population, the way we act has profound consequences. So let us be kind, condemn discrimination, abhor violence, uphold peace, and respect dialogue and democracy. We must turn away from a trajectory of chaos and inequity and treat our shared home with respect.

## **We must work with our elders**

Many of us are disappointed by our inheritance. We are asked to fix problems we did not create. But older generations also bear a burden and many of them have made sacrifices on our behalf. We can only build a better world through intergenerational cooperation, being positively disruptive, and by offering today's leaders our creativity in designing far-sighted solutions.

## **We must hold our leaders accountable**

Helping out does not mean turning a blind eye to inaction – or to the destruction that is caused by some of today's elites. The decisions that leaders make, or avoid making, will ricochet through our lives. We must be alert and call out mistakes. And those who have been given a platform must amplify the voices of young people who are belittled or ignored.

## **We must be champions for future generations**

The moral imperative to protect the interests of future generations falls on everyone, regardless of their age. But we have a special stake in the future. Some of us will live to see the end of this century and our children and grandchildren will live far into the one that follows. So let us speak for the future, make sure our actions do not doom generations to come. Let us build an inheritance that we will be proud to pass on.

The background features a light blue, hand-drawn style pattern of wavy, concentric lines. Scattered throughout are small, faint symbols including asterisks, crosses, and circles, some of which are enclosed within the wavy lines.

# ***our process***

As Next Generation Fellows, we have been convenors of an inclusive process drawing on the energy and ideas of networks of young people from across the world for the Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* report and our companion report, *Our Future Agenda*.

We researched, generated, and refined proposals through a collective and participatory methodology, building momentum for this report in four phases.

## Discovery (December-January)

### Recruitment and exploring key themes and early proposals

The Next Generation Fellows were confirmed in January 2021.

We were nominated by BRAC, Girl Up, Restless Development, and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, and interviewed by a panel at the UN Foundation.

We range in age from 18 to 30 years old and come from six different regions of the world. We have diverse experiences and expertise, which you can find out about [here](#).

We released a [challenge paper](#) in January to kick-start our conversations with other young people. This drew on contributions from young people at the [UN75 Town Hall](#) and for the ['The Future We Want, the UN We Need'](#) essay competition, [desk research](#) by the UN Foundation, and our own experiences and insights.

## Development (February-April)

### Crowd-sourcing proposals through an open and inclusive process

In February, we held a ['Big Brainstorm'](#). Over two weeks, this series of virtual events provided a platform for young leaders, thinkers, and activists. They were invited to lead Action Groups, conduct research, and engage in open space discussions to identify creative and actionable solutions to the most pressing issues facing next and future generations.

At the final 'Big Pitch', 20 Action Groups, bringing together young people from over 40 countries, presented their ideas in front of academics, policymakers, and other young people from across the world.

The ECOSOC Youth Forum in April presented another opportunity to reach out to young people. We organized a side-event on a ['Common Agenda for Young Women Leaders'](#), which was an intergenerational dialogue between Next Generation Fellows, the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of Grenada and the African Union, and Assistant Secretary-General Anita Bhatia. We also undertook a digital survey for ECOSOC Youth Forum participants to feedback their thoughts and suggestions.

We deepened understanding of key themes through smaller-scale conversations with young experts, including Global Focal Points to the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, and young people engaged in the implementation of the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda.

## **Deliberation (May-June)**

### **Refining and prioritizing proposals with global youth, partner organizations, and thematic experts**

In early May, we began to turn our ideas into proposals for policymakers, producing an [interim paper](#) outlining ideas for further discussion.

The proposals were stress tested by representatives from partner organizations. We brought together over 20 organizations for a [Partners' Forum](#), where people had the chance to join breakout rooms and discuss proposals within each of our key themes.

To fulfil our promise to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General that we would consult outside established networks, we reached out to young people who have not previously engaged with the UN through a series of [national conversations](#). We organized these in ten countries (Canada, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tunisia) with the help of [Future Leaders Connect](#).

Throughout June, we continued to consult with thematic experts through a series of roundtables co-hosted with partners. We had discussions on the themes of education, justice, activism, and the future of public service.

## **Dialogue (Throughout)**

### **Ensuring our proposals are heard**

Throughout the process, we have presented at events and met with senior policymakers. These conversations are the foundation for turning our proposals into reality.

In March, we organized a brainstorming session with Assistant Secretary-General Volker Türk where we shared outcomes from the Big Brainstorm. He gave us feedback and urged us to reach out to 'unusual suspects' – those who had never previously engaged with the UN.

In April, we presented our proposals to member states at a 'Networked Breakfast Dialogue' hosted by the UN Foundation. Alongside the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, and Natasha Mwansa of Women Deliver, we urged states to embed young people into their decision-making processes and invest in their future. We then held a brainstorm with the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth who helped us to develop our proposals and shared how the multilateral system could better help her office.



Our dialogue with the [Deputy Secretary-General](#) of the United Nations in June signaled that the highest levels of UN leadership are listening to our work, laying the foundations for a series of decision-maker dialogues over the summer.

We have spoken to senior leaders at the African Development Bank, the Ambassador of the upcoming Stockholm+50 conference, the Welsh Future Generations Commissioner, the Deputy Executive Director at UNEP, and others. We also hosted a series of ‘Breakfast Dialogues on Next and Future Generations’ inviting Member States to hear our proposals. We were grateful to have shared the stage with Martha Phiri, Roman Krznaric, Jayathma Wickramanayake, and some brilliant young leaders.

The events we have presented at include the PyeongChang Peace Forum; the Stimson Center event on European Perspectives of the UN75 Declaration; a dialogue with the UN Food Systems youth network; an IPI-intergenerational Dialogue on Youth, Peace and Climate Action; the AGM of the Inter Agency Network on Youth Development; a New Shape Forum by the Global Challenges Foundation; the annual Girl Up Leadership Summit; and others.

We will continue to host and join dialogues with leaders from the UN system and beyond to share our proposals and secure their championship.



In line with his call for young people to be the designers of their own futures, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres asked a group of Next Generation Fellows to work with the world's young leaders, activists, and thinkers to contribute to *Our Common Agenda* – his vision for the future of international cooperation.

As well as helping shape the Secretary-General's recommendations on renewed intergenerational solidarity, the Next Generation Fellows have set out their vision and plan for next and future generations in *Our Future Agenda*.

As young people confront crises they did not cause, *Our Future Agenda* calls for a new deal for a new generation and a rejuvenated multilateral system that is able to deliver its promise to listen to and work with young people.

