

# The Unlock Declaration



## Building the Coalition with and for Young People and Future Generations

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At a time when children and young people face challenges and crises not of their making, we – leaders and partners of the world's most far-reaching youth-focused and youth-led movements, networks, and organizations – are committed to unlocking a better future with and for young people and future generations.


Half of the world's population is under 30 and more than a quarter are under 18 years of age, but the priorities and perspectives of young people – and our accountability to them – are too often absent from decisions that determine their futures.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on education and employment, worsening the learning crisis and further starving young people of the opportunities they need.

Our societies struggle with poverty, inequality, division, and violence, especially against girls and young women. Many institutions are outdated, broken, or closed to young people and their needs. Future generations are threatened by the planetary emergency and our collective failure to think and act for the long term.

But young people are mobilizing in the face of these threats, offering us the opportunity to support them through tough choices and bold decisions.

**We now have a chance to rejuvenate our societies and institutions by drawing on their ideas, insights, and energy.**



Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, we will support young people to deliver their priorities, working to put them at the heart of political systems, amplify their voices and include them in decision-making, and remove barriers to their participation.

We know that young people are not a homogenous group, that girls, young women, and other under-represented groups face the greatest discrimination, and that the voices of younger children are easiest to ignore.

We are therefore committed to listening to and learning from young people of all ages and backgrounds, especially those who have been left furthest behind.

We will work with young people in local communities, at a national level, and through the regional and global systems on which our shared futures depend. We believe strongly in the importance of solidarity between generations and in the imperative to increase intergenerational equity.

We are committed to defending civic freedoms and creating enabling environments for youth and child-focused civil society organizations in line with international human rights norms.

We commend the United Nations Secretary-General's commitment to young people as designers of their own future. We look forward to engaging in discussions with the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth on the recommendations put forward in *Our Common Agenda* in order jointly to transform the role of young people in the international system.

We are at a crossroads. Seizing this opportunity requires a new commitment from all of us – United Nations, international organizations, national and local governments, civil society networks, businesses, faith groups, and young people themselves - to act in a new spirit of partnership. This requires us to recognize and respect the validity of the views and actions of a new generation.

**To deliver on this shared understanding, we commit to building a coalition with and for all young people and future generations.**

The Unlock the Future coalition will be guided by and anchored in four core principles:

- We **celebrate and champion a platform of diverse young people** – with a focus on under-represented groups – to explore, create, lead, and participate in processes most formative to their futures.
- We are committed to **increasing representation for countries with young populations** and parts of the world where the majority of future generations will live.
- We commit to co-operation based on **pragmatic and practical goals** – designed for and by young people – which lead to credible and tangible results.
- We **recognize the importance of increasing accountability** to young people at all levels from the grassroots to the global.

During the coming months, we will develop our vision, strategy, and plans in collaboration with young people and with partners from across the world. Our initial priorities include:



**Advancing shared goals.** We will increase commitments to act on priorities for young people and future generations, securing gains that make a difference to their lives and to the planet.



**Fostering opportunities.** We will help young people to find opportunities for civic engagement and social action, and to develop the skills they need to lead and mobilize in the face of emerging threats and challenges.



**Voice and representation.** We will ensure that young people from all backgrounds are at the heart of decision-making processes and improve meaningful representation for all young people, including those most impacted by discrimination and inequality.



**Resourcing.** We will work collectively on increasing funding for child, youth-led, and youth-focused networks and movements, and work with funders to make funding more strategic, inclusive, and accessible.

We are committed to broadening this coalition, welcoming a wide diversity of partners, children, and young people to help shape, develop, and drive the key principles and ambitions of our shared intent.

We call on all partners to deliver on promises made, but often forgotten. To secure commitments that rise to the challenges children and young people face. To provide them with an active role at the center of our systems. And to **Unlock the Future** for and with young people and future generations.

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Executive Director, BRAC

**John May**  
Secretary General, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

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**Alex Kent**  
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**Ahmad Alhendawi**  
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**Elizabeth Cousens**  
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**Unlock  
the  
Future**



CIVICUS, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, and Save the Children contributed to this declaration and are also committed to building a coalition with and for children, young people, and future generations.