

Statement by the People's Working Group on Multistakeholderism on the draft text of the Pact for the Future

IT for Change

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A full written statement (31 July 2024) by:

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Thank you for the opportunity to share the views of our networks.

Global governance, global solidarity, global peace, ecological integrity are all at inflection points.

At the start of the post-75th planning for a multilateralism fit for the 21st century, the Secretary-General and Governments were confident that the UN could reform itself. This confidence inspired the selection of themes for Chapters 3 and 5. The initiating documents also recognized that trust in the UN was at an historic low. It is not with pleasure to convey to you that people around the world consider this text does not start to fix this trust and this draft Pact will be seen as a failure to meaningfully use the 75th to transform global governance.

The UN system is teetering on an edge. In the climate community, this governance teetering is called tipping points. They each have the potential for irreparable damage. Falling off the edge could be seen as a 'League of Nations' moment for the UN system. To avoid these catastrophes, a new people-centric, democratic, effective, non-voluntary global governance system needs to be put in place.

At the minimum four features are necessary.

Multiple crises are affecting people and the environment --- continuing and deepening wars, increasing inequalities and wealth concentration, relentless attacks on human rights, ecological destruction and climate crisis, expanding levels of gender violence and xenophobia, and food insecurity. All of these crises have at their core globalization, transnational corporations, and a damaged multilateral system. Unfortunately, the Secretary General, his high-level advisors, the heads of specialized agencies and the old colonial countries and their allies have proposed that the way to transform multilateral governance is to bring these transnational corporations and multistakeholderism under the umbrella of the UN, rather than mandating the General Assembly to regulate – and, if necessary, sanction– some of these TNCs that are the root causes of today's crises. Fortunately, the G77 and China working with social movements, CSOs, scholars, and the Peoples Working Group on Multistakeholderism have moved to

restrict multistakeholderism from being institutionalized within the UN system. Still there are 15 paragraphs in this version calling for ‘stakeholder’ or ‘multistakeholder’ actions - all these terms should be replaced by ‘peoples’, ‘citizens’, ‘CSOs’, ‘constituencies’, or ‘communities’.

Leaving it up to TNCs to uphold human rights-based ethics in the development and use of new technologies (the so-called ‘self-regulatory’ management approach) is highly problematic. TNCs autonomously determining the normative baselines for frontier technologies violates the norms and principles for data governance in the WSIS consensus and related resolutions and reinforces elite capture, denying States their legitimate public policy authority. All new technologies from nanotechnologies to AI need to have their governance anchored in a multilateral framework. In the interest of enhancing the rule of law in governing globalization and TNCs, the text should endorse the effort of the UNCHR to close the gap in cross-border liabilities used by TNCs to avoid their legal liabilities, particularly in developing countries.

Second, a transformed global governance system means these peoples, citizens, CSOs, social movements, labor unions, constituencies and communities, youth and aged, indigenous peoples need to be more welcomed into multilateralism and global governance, not excluded if any degree of trust in the UN system is to be re-established. It means upholding the integrity of social participation through legitimate representation and ensuring that private and personal interests do not override the public good, drawing on the new best practice statement by the World Health Assembly (WHA 77.2 , 1 June 2024).

What does this welcome mean? It means literally opening the exterior doors of the UN without unnecessary obstacles to real civil society organizations; It means literally opening the internal doors to negotiation processes. It means authorizing a whole range of international conferences on contemporary matters following the mold of the conferences of the nineties; it means recognizing that civil society is diverse community and each sub-community should be welcomed to engage constructively with the UN and its member States based on its own unique characteristics – each communities from scientists (and there are multiple different type of scientists) to religious leaders (and there are multiple different strains within each religious community) and from social movements (with their geographic and thematic diversity); to special communities of people representing nature (from those speaking on behalf of oceans to those behalf of the atmosphere). It means recognizing that some non-state bodies are quite different (parliamentarians, local government officials, indigenous peoples, and the private sector) but have been inappropriately ‘merged’ by the UN into the ‘civil society’ category.

The third feature is to fundamentally change the governance of money. A changed governance structure means that the universal membership of the United Nations, representing all States, needs

to have a dynamically different institutional relationship to the limited decision-making processes at the BWIs, WTO, and the Basel monetary bodies; it means that internationally adopted global goals should not be funded by voluntary means but by mandatory national payments; it means that the Intellectual Property Regime and the International Dispute Settlement panels introduce explicit flexibilities to enable developing countries to build their technological infrastructure and address domestic crises; it means that rules and practices governing international state loans, illicit transactions, need to be fixed in an open and transparent fashion; it means that a global Tax Convention, a global Accounting Convention, and a Global System of Financial Sanctions for TNCs benefiting or causing global crisis are put in place, and it means that the multilateralism system needs to find new ways to fund itself (e.g. taxing excess global profits)

The fourth feature is to put the recovery of the planet from the destruction of globalization and transnational corporations at the center of global governance. Whether one talks about climate tipping points or the multilateral system teetering, the message is that acting to shift global actions on the ecological and biological levels needs to join avoiding the scourge of war as a central point of the UN system.

The power of science, technology and innovation should be utilized to universalize access to medicines and vaccines, end global hunger, build climate resilience, and promote digital justice without being co-opted or blocked by the private commercial sector. This ecological rescue means that current conventions under negotiation including the plastics and ocean agreements need to have enforceable provisions against state and corporate actors and that operating conventions, such the UNFCCC, need to constrain the excess profits of the oil, gas, and coal industries. It means that budget for environmental affairs needs to radically go up and the institutions for environmental matters need both greater autonomy, greater recognition of the principle of common but differentiated obligations, and greater direct engagement with the international trade, finance, and monetary institutions. Finally, it means emphatically opposing an extractivist and military orientation towards the “use” of outer space.

Co-facilitators and Ambassadors do you think you can deliver these four features?

On 19-21 September the PWGM and others will be meeting to block the further expansion of corporate control of international affairs and to build its people-centered conception of a new multilateralism – a UN 3.0 that would be a more effective, democratic, caring, bottom-up, and just. If you are interested in receiving an announcement, please outreach to gonzalo.berron@tni.org.