



Foundation for Global
Governance and Sustainability

Pushing the Agenda – advocating for

**A NEW NARRATIVE
OF HOPE AND RESILIENCE**
for human dignity and well-being

UN75+25 Proposal (I)
zero draft
August 2020

UN 2100 Initiative

In the period April to July 2020 [FOGGS](#) convened a series of online brainstorming sessions on the UN system's performance in response to the COVID-19 global emergency. The sessions were held under the Chatham House Rule and participants included country representatives to the United Nations, other country and regional organization officials, current and former international civil servants, academic experts and civil society organizers. This UN75+25 Proposal is based on ideas exchanged during the brainstorming sessions, as reflected in the papers produced after the sessions under the [UN2100 Initiative](#) of FOGGS. The "zero draft" format has been adopted for this proposal to make clear that this is an initial presentation meant to stimulate dialogue. Subsequent iterations of the proposal will incorporate contributions from individuals and groups through the ongoing dialogue.

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PUSHING THE AGENDA - ADVOCATING FOR

A New Narrative of Hope and Resilience *for human dignity and well-being*

The post-World War II world governance system, with the United Nations at its centre, is this year celebrating a major anniversary. In its first 75 years of existence, it has been guided by a vision of peace, development and human rights for all. The vision has been adjusted in the process, for example in recent years qualifying development as “sustainable development” and putting emphasis on free trade and liberal economics after the end of the Cold War. Although this vision has served the world well overall, it is becoming increasingly obvious that it is no longer sufficient to carry humanity through the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Need for a new narrative

The current convergence of crises, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the economic and social crises that it has triggered, combined with the ongoing climate crisis, has cast a dark shadow over individuals and societies alike. The news has not been good for a while, with fast increasing inequalities, job and even food insecurities, tensions over migration, dramatic anger at race and gender violence. The virus attack seems to have been the straw that broke the proverbial camel’s back. In these circumstances the world needs a unifying vision of a better future and a framework of values, principles and rules for action to inspire mutually supportive global responses to the converging crises of our times. Such a vision can also counter the worst instincts of selfishness and self-preservation that surface in difficult times, often exacerbated by xenophobic, intolerant and belligerent leaders and activists.

Building on what is already there...

Building on 75 years of experience, with its successes and its failures, the UN can relaunch itself, thus also giving substance to its own call to “build back better” from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a great opportunity to promote a new narrative that engages people’s imagination and motivates for action for the next quarter-century. This has to be a narrative of hope despite pervasive insecurities, of resilience despite natural and human-made crises, of ethical behaviour and solidarity despite the ruthlessness of political and economic leaders, and of human well-being despite often worsening living and working conditions. It should be pointing to a new beginning after the crises, with investment in universal healthcare and a new economy, a new respect for the natural world, and adequate responses to the other interconnected global challenges. There is a basis to build on, including the 2030 Agenda and the UN’s solid body of norms for human rights, peace and security, development and the environment to shine a bright light on the world. The UN Secretary-General and other senior UN system officials should be advocates for unity and hope for humanity, pointing to the imperative of creating a better world that does away with the structural realities of racism and sexism and guarantees human dignity and well-being, while also recognizing our intrinsic, complicated and vital relationship with our planet.

...and more

Extreme emphasis on efficiency and profit maximisation has been exacerbating inequalities leaving vulnerable populations in precarious situations, while creating great threats to the environment and the viability of whole species. The pros and cons of globalised and just-in-time supply chains need to be reassessed and rebalanced. The debt burden on developing countries, absorbing big parts of their income for its servicing, needs to be relieved to allow them fiscal space to defend the lives and livelihoods of their populations against COVID-19. In addition to immediate measures of assistance, a new approach to running the global economy needs to be urgently introduced, one that moves beyond unfettered capitalism, corporate profit and stock value maximisation, tycoons and oligarchs, and GDP growth to ensuring the well-being and dignity of all individuals, as well as the resilience of communities, while respecting planetary boundaries. The UN system and the UN Secretary-General should not shy away from promoting this either, despite the expected powerful pushback.

In fact, a resilient and equitable economic system characterized by fair incomes and fair taxation should be treated as a “basic infrastructure” or precondition for achieving the common good. The notion of work can be rethought, not only in the face of the pandemic but also with rapidly advancing digitization and our overly exploitative relationship with ‘nature’. Health should also be declared and treated as the common good that it is. Actually, we need the recognition of a range of global ‘goods’ in addition to the economy and health – peace, food, water, housing, clean environment, and respect for the diversity of different identities. The world’s innovative ideas and resources should be focused on creating an international legal and moral framework for governing globalization and ensuring the well-being of each and every human being.

Let us also not forget in the narrative of the future the central place that cyberspace should occupy. It is a common infrastructure and vital space for humanity, needing enforceable rules for universal, affordable and safe access, public regulation of its management and human rights guarantees. The COVID-19 experience showed beyond doubt the importance of the internet and social media for life and livelihood support and resilience. This virtual space is for all intents and purposes a global commons or public square, where people from all over the world meet to socialise and work, even more so when they cannot move around physically. Not everybody in the world has access to it as of now, not even in the developed countries, and that digital divide with its race, gender, and class undertones has to be bridged with affordable access to the necessary infrastructures and technologies. Action is needed also at the global level to ensure that this public space is safe for all users, its use and its management are regulated through clear rules, all human rights are respected, and actual cyber-policing and public complaint recourse mechanisms are in place. The UN system should not shy away from addressing all this either.

The way forward

The UN should reclaim intellectual and moral leadership in mounting comprehensive responses to global challenges by ending silo thinking and adopting a holistic, systems approach and a positive vision that addresses issues from health to economics, food, jobs, trade, to cyberspace and outer space. More bold talking and advice to national leaders is needed on the part of the UN to encourage clear collective thinking and effective action. A new narrative with an ethical foundation needs to be reflected in a new architecture of global governance, one that moves to institutionalize properly the vision of the UN Charter. The UN Secretary-General and other leading UN figures should boldly stick their necks out and say things as they are – even if major powers or other interests may want to keep these truths off the collective global agenda. If they did so they would have the support of most of organised civil society and eventually of most citizens the world over. The latter in any case should not wait hoping for the best but should self-organise and demand leadership and action. FOGGS is ready to continue the work it has been doing on a [Grand Narrative](#) for a fair and inclusive globalisation as part of this effort.

**UN2100
Initiative**

Innovative and practical ideas towards a modern, more effective, ethical and people-centered United Nations.

For more on this FOGGS initiative see [here](#)