



Alana Institute

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This submission engages in a dialogue with the previously submitted proposal by Child Rights Connect, emphasizing the critical importance of centering children within the scope of the Summit of the Future and the negotiations surrounding the Pact of the Future.

Children, constituting one-third of the global population, wield substantial influence over both the present and the future. Decisions made within the framework of the Summit of the Future will undoubtedly impact their lives in profound ways. As highlighted by the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism<sup>1</sup>, children are unique in possessing a human rights treaty without a dedicated United Nations-wide strategy and the Summit must consider how to globally safeguard children's rights to food, health, and education. This needs to be done considering that 75% of children reside in the Global South<sup>2</sup>. Reference is made to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most widely-ratified human rights treaty. This article emphasizes the **child's right to be heard and have their views considered on all matters affecting them**. Member States play a pivotal role in upholding this right, particularly in the context of a Summit that holds the potential to reshape the lives of children globally.

Furthermore, the Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Child Rights Mainstreaming underscores that "children's rights are everybody's business across all three pillars of the UN" and stresses that "all entities must be mindful of the implications for children of any action taken." Also, the Guidance Note sets out specific recommendations on how to strengthen a child rights-based approach in the work of the United Nations – ensuring a coherent approach on integrating child rights across all pillars, and in all entities and at all levels. It encompasses UN system actions both in external advocacy, policies, and programs, as well as internal operational policies and practices.

Grounded on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its purpose is to ensure a UN system that is fully inclusive in the delivery of its mandate, including upholding all rights of all people, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and ensuring global peace and security. Its guiding principles are: (i) Child rights are human rights; (ii) Child rights are everybody's business across all three pillars of the UN; (iii) Children are distinct rights holders with a specific set of rights; (iv) Child rights are indivisible, interdependent and interconnected; (v) **All UN action should give primary consideration to the best interests of the child**; (vi) All UN action should promote equality and non-discrimination; (vii) UN action should promote and include meaningful child participation; (viii) The UN should promote

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<sup>1</sup> HLAB report. Available at: <<https://highleveladvisoryboard.org/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Children from African countries, Latin America, and the Caribbean, China, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Iran, Indonesia, and Philippines together represent 3/4 of the total number of children in the world according to Unicef's data. Available at: <<https://data.unicef.org/how-many/how-many-children-are-in-the-world/>>.

accountability and redress for child rights violations. This reiterates the collective responsibility to ensure that the rights of children are acknowledged and protected throughout the multilateral system and the scope of the Summit of the Future, which is very aligned with the Statement of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Human Rights Day 2023 on how children should be recognized and involved as key actors in the Summit of the Future<sup>3</sup>.

We call on Member States to **ensure that the scope and elements of the SoF ensure that current and future operations across the three UN pillars are underpinned by human rights, including children's rights**. To ensure a UN system that delivers on children's rights, we recommend to:

## Chapeau

**Ensure that human rights, with an explicit reference to children's rights, and Leaving No One Behind are included as a cross-cutting issues to be considered in deliberations on all thematic clusters**. Such cross-cutting issues must ensure **that children in all their diversity and their rights are considered under each cluster**. As mentioned in the Interim People's Pact for the Future "Adopting intersectional and intergenerational approaches that recognize the importance of human rights across all policy domains is essential if human rights are to be protected for all".

## Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

Under the cluster on Sustainable Development and Financing, we encourage Member States to ensure that children and their rights continue to be a key part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and that they are at the core of discussions to shape the post-2030 Agenda and the World Social Summit in 2025.

## Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

We call on Member States to ensure a Global Digital Compact that upholds consistent global standards with the protection of children's rights as a core and guiding principle. This would convey a recognition of how new technologies play a role in most aspects of our lives, especially the lives of children, as one in three internet users is a child, and, since the COVID-19 pandemic, children's development, relationships, education, and play are increasingly mediated by digital technologies. **Regulating and enforcing businesses' responsibility to respect children's rights**, and prevent and remedy abuse, including through providing children with a high level of privacy, safety, and security by design and default, is urgent for ensuring children's rights in the digital environment. Key recommendations on how to ensure a child rights approach in the Global Digital Compact can be found [here](#). To guarantee policy coherence within the UN system, General Comment No. 25 from the Committee on the Rights of the Child should also be used as a reference.

## Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

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<sup>3</sup> Statement of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Human Rights Day 2023. Available at: [https://mcusercontent.com/478e05da372d2b7611f1d1740/files/034250b6-e612-8ead-4fd3-9d032a2a0abe/CRC\\_Statement\\_on\\_HR\\_Day\\_2023\\_final.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/478e05da372d2b7611f1d1740/files/034250b6-e612-8ead-4fd3-9d032a2a0abe/CRC_Statement_on_HR_Day_2023_final.pdf)".

We note that the UN lacks a definition of youth and therefore, there is an overlap between the children and youth demographic. When expanding spaces for meaningful engagement of youth in all UN decision-making processes, including the establishment of the Youth Office, there is a need to ensure these mechanisms have the necessary expertise on child rights, child participation, and child safeguarding given the overlap between children and youth. Young people are uniquely placed to support children's meaningful participation through peer-to-peer methods. Intergenerational approaches to research are increasingly showing how youth-led research methods can provide a fruitful approach to enabling children to meaningfully take part in discussions about 'difficult questions' that adults may often assume are too complex for children.

Member States, UN agencies, and civil society organizations have placed strong emphasis on future generations and youth participation and are committed to opportunities for meaningful youth engagement, which is commendable. This has, nevertheless, shed light on the gap that children are not being considered as key stakeholders in this process. As set out in the UNCRC, children, all human beings under 18, constitute a group of distinct rights holders under international law and they must be recognized as such. Children should not be subsumed in other, different groups such as "youth" or "future generations". These terms are not defined by international law and describe a separate demographic with different (sometimes overlapping) rights. The Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Child Rights Mainstreaming highlighted the same assuring that **children should therefore be explicitly mentioned**, and their specific rights expressly reflected, in all relevant UN strategies, plans, documents and communications, and not be subsumed in other, different groups such as "youth" or "young people".

As the international community works to strengthen the multilateral system to ensure that youth have the deserved space to contribute to decision-making, the same efforts should be made for children. **Children should, therefore, be explicitly mentioned, and their specific rights expressly reflected in SoF deliberations.**

Therefore, **we strongly recommend including "children" in the title of Chapter IV alongside youth and future generations.** Considering that they are already affected by the challenges of this moment, today's children must be adequately represented in the scope of the Summit of the Future.