



**AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**



Föderation der Schweizer Psychologinnen und Psychologen
Fédération Suisse des Psychologues
Federazione Svizzera delle Psicologhe e degli Psicologi

American Psychological Association, European Federation of Psychologists' Associations, Federation of Swiss Psychologists

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Introduction to organizations

APA is the leading scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States (US), comprising a membership of more than 146,000 clinicians, researchers, educators, practitioners, consultants, and students across the US and around the world. APA holds special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is associated with the Department of Global Communications (DGC). APA has active teams of volunteer psychologists advocating at the United Nations (UN) in New York and Geneva, the latter in collaboration with the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) and the Federation of Swiss Psychologists (FSP).

EFPA is the umbrella organization in Europe for national psychologists' associations and currently comprises associations from 37 European countries, including all 27 member countries of the European Union. EFPA has a long tradition of developing psychology (by enhancing scientific and professional standards), contributing to society (by using psychological knowledge and competences in support in particular of the UN sustainable development goals) and serving psychologists (by advancing, promoting and protecting the profession of psychologists at the national and European levels). EFPA sets a European standard of education, professional training and competence in psychology, [EuroPsy](#).

FSP is the umbrella organization of Switzerland's psychologists. It represents 44 affiliated associations and brings together more than 10,000 psychologists from all fields of specialization, from psychotherapy to occupational and organizational psychology. FSP is committed to ensuring that the psychological services of its members meet the highest standards of quality. As a member of EFPA, it is active at the European and international level.

APA, EFPA, and FSP together encompass nearly half a million psychologists globally. We promote the advancement, communication, and application of psychological science and knowledge to benefit society and improve lives. Psychology is the science of the mind and of behavior. Psychology provides scientifically founded means to evaluate, improve and promote quality of life, including health and wellbeing, across the range of human activity and functioning. Psychological research yields critical evidence relevant to the challenges of the Sustainable Development Agenda and related UN action plans (APA, 2023).

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide input on the Pact for the Future. Our comments will focus on the Chapeau and Chapters 1-4.

Chapeau

We strongly support a chapeau that reaffirms the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Agenda 2030, and the three pillars of the UN. With regard to poverty in particular, we would like to highlight that poverty is both physically and psychologically harmful (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019), associated with higher rates of mental illness (Patel & Kleinman, 2003) and other negative psychological outcomes (Haushofer, 2013). Additionally, psychological science indicates the importance of understanding the cognitive and emotional effects of financial scarcity: We all have limited “mental bandwidth,” or brainpower, which restricts how much we can focus on at any one time. When we don’t have enough of something, such as money, worrying about this scarcity takes up most of our bandwidth, reducing our ability to focus on other tasks (Shah, Mullainathan, & Shafir, 2012, Haushofer, 2013). These kinds of findings have implications for poverty alleviation interventions that take into account human factors (World Bank Group, 2015).

Psychology can make concrete and impactful contributions to the eradication of poverty in all its forms, based on the applications of psychological research to policies designed to:

1. Reduce stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination and penalization of persons living in poverty (Inglis et al, 2022);
2. Explain and increase awareness of the impact of deprivation on individuals and communities (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2012); and
3. Prevent and mitigate the harmful effects of poverty (World Bank Group, 2015).

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

We appreciate Member States’ chapter following up on the SDG Summit, building on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, with a particular focus on climate and environmental processes. Extreme weather events can damage health, homes, and communities, resulting in serious mental health implications that last long beyond the events that caused them (Clayton et al, 2017), with particular risks for young people (Clayton et al, 2023). Climate change can also contribute to long-term economic stress, social instability, and loss of control, all of which undermine mental health and wellbeing (Berry et al., 2018). These impacts and stresses disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities (Environmental Protection Agency, 2021), exacerbating societal inequalities and injustice (Chapman et al, 2018).

Climate change is a great challenge of our era, but the world has been slow to act. Psychological science suggests approaches to effectively motivate more sustainable behaviors and engage the public and decision-makers in actionable solutions:

1. Communicate through dialogue via local, trusted messengers (Maibach, 2019);
2. Emphasize accessible, actionable, relevant solutions that foster efficacy and empowerment (Feldman & Hart, 2016);
3. Build a shared vision for action and a set of social norms that guide behavior (Santos & Feygina, 2017); and
4. Foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders including individuals, communities, governmental organizations, NGOs, scientists, and business groups (Nachbaur et al., 2017).

Chapter II. International peace and security

Psychological approaches deepen explanations for the role of identity, ideology, and distribution of resources, and of the factors leading to marginalization, radicalization, and extremism that fuel conflict.

Psychology can make concrete contributions to understanding root causes and means to prevent and address conflict through the application of research findings to:

1. Explain the origin and manifestations of identity-based conflict (e.g., Allport, 1954, Tajfel, 1979) and the important role of inequitable distribution of resources (Sherif and Sherif, 1954);
2. Transfer and share evidence-based techniques underlying success in conflict resolution including tension reduction, common social change projects, dialogue, and mediation (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006); and
3. Suggest means to scale up successful conflict prevention and resolution to contribute to international peace and security (UN Department of Political Affairs, 2018).

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

As a discipline, psychology embraces all aspects of the human experience — from the biological bases of behavior, to political negotiations, to learning and cognition, to care for the aging, and much more (APA, 2023). We strongly support increasing access to science, including psychological science: Aligned with the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, APA’s resolution on psychology and human rights specifies that psychologists must “advance equal access to the benefits of psychological science and practice” (APA, 2021).

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

Psychological science has generated a large body of research on child development including individual and social needs for healthy development as well as factors that hinder psychological growth and harm individuals. Multiple facets of poverty harm child development through negative impacts on brain development, language learning, and mental and physical health (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Psychological research shows that whereas education supports academic development, it can also serve to develop personal and social skills and create fundamental pathways to equity (Smith-Adcock et al, 2019).

The field of psychology can make contributions to a better future for youth through the application of research findings that:

1. Underscore the noxious effects of poverty on child development and document the means for poverty eradication (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019)
2. Document the importance of equitable access to education, especially education that prevents and counters gender inequality (Clark et al., 2020); and
3. Demonstrate that school systems can contribute to the prevention of negative mental health outcomes and be a source of non-stigmatizing services to enhance mental health, wellbeing, resilience, emotional regulation, and life outcomes of children and adolescents (National Association of School Psychologists, nd).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may provide any further information to support the development of the Pact for the Future.

References available upon request