Bahá'í
International
Community

**Organization: Bahá'í International Community (BIC)**

*The BIC represents the worldwide Bahá'í community, with over eight million members from diverse backgrounds residing in every country. With 193 national affiliates in 235 territories, Bahá'í communities have been working through a network of thousands of institutions, from the grassroots to the international level, uniting diverse peoples in a common framework for action for social progress. These communities have been learning how to cultivate conditions to bring about peaceful and prosperous societies through the promotion of educational and other initiatives that empower individuals and communities to contribute to the well-being of society. Derived from insights gained from over 100,000 informal local initiatives, over 2,000 ongoing projects, and over 170 Bahá'í-inspired organizations, the BIC offers the following inputs for the Pact for the Future.*

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**Chapeau**

Humanity is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent, both in possibilities and in challenges. More than ever before, crises are shared, complex, and intersecting, transcending boundaries and increasing the need for reimagining global governance arrangements better suited to the exigencies of this moment. New forms of global cooperation, based on a bold and hopeful vision for the future, will lend a clear and consistent sense of direction and provide actionable steps forward.

Three viable paths should be pursued concurrently. First, Member States will need to **recommit** to the systems and universal aspirations already agreed to in the UN Charter as well as other international instruments. Second, the international community will need to make numerous **modifications** to our existing systems. However, recommitting to principles and technical modifications on their own are insufficient to address deeper challenges. Present conceptions of peace, development, and progress are proving their limits in providing security, sustainable growth, and well-being—current frameworks are insufficient for the world of today, let alone tomorrow. A third path is needed: an in-depth exploration into the persistent **root causes** underlying current systems and a search for creative solutions. New assumptions and approaches will need to be identified and pursued that are more reflective of humanity's interdependence and oneness.

The Summit of the Future represents an opportunity for such an exploration and to ask: what is our responsibility to future generations and how do we fulfill it? Since we have not yet reached the apex of global governance, what will need to change and how? The Pact for the Future represents collective agreement as a matter of foresight and choice rather than a reaction to untold calamity.

**Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development**

No nation has yet provided for the material well-being of its inhabitants while also respecting planetary boundaries and providing for the social and spiritual well-being of populations. A greater recommitment to overcoming extremes of wealth and poverty and other inequalities is needed. Yet numerous development theories and practices have prioritized short-term fixes, accumulation of wealth and power over justice and sustainability, and in some instances have negatively impacted the ability of local populations to define progress according to local priorities.

As the world becomes more interdependent, the material stagnation of any nation will increasingly impact the well-being of all; purely competitive approaches to development will no longer be viable. New approaches that center principles like collaboration, moderation, and equity in development practice and that take into consideration fuller dimensions of human nature and purpose—for instance, social and spiritual well-being—will need to be pursued. Lessons around more holistic approaches can be learned from every part of the world, irrespective of GDP, and will need to meaningfully engage local populations as key contributors of knowledge.

- ***Recommitment:***
    - Recommit to those aspirations articulated in the SDGs consistent with humanity's increasing interconnectedness.
- ***Modification:***
    - Identify measurements to augment GDP, for instance *per capita* carbon consumption, which could be further explored in a cycle of ECOSOC functional Commissions;
    - Conduct a comprehensive independent review of the international development system prior to, and to help guide, the articulation of the next development agenda;
    - Establish a UN resident coordinator office in every country, irrespective of GDP, promoting universality.
    - Create a global system of storehouses to which all nations contribute in proportionate measure to serve as a bulwark against crisis and shock;
- ***Responding to root causes:***
    - Establish a global taxation system on international luxury goods to augment State contributions to the UN;
    - Identify strategies and institutions to eliminate corruption and stem illicit financial flows.

**Chapter II. International peace and security**

The UN Charter highlights peace as a primary mandate. Peace is often equated with an absence of war, with the goal of ending conflict, rather than addressing the societal challenges that bring about war in the first place (prejudice, inequality, resource scarcity). While immediate conflict must be addressed, history shows that enduring peace cannot be built on the cessation of war alone. An exploration into what enabling conditions promote positive peace (gender equality, social cohesion, reducing extremes of wealth and poverty) and how to cultivate those conditions will assist in establishing stronger foundations for peaceful societies more resilient to hostility. This will require new, collaborative

approaches to peacebuilding and justice and recognize that the means to peace must be coherent with its goal.

- ***Recommitment:***
    - Recommit to the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
    - Recommit to the rule of law including the use of courts to serve as a bulwark against hostile action.
- ***Modification:***
    - Explore ways the New Agenda for Peace can be supported with a strong enforcement mechanism;
    - Designate a second Peace Year, which could encourage ECOSOC Functional Commissions to examine the intersection of their focus with positive approaches to peace.
- ***Responding to root causes:***
    - Establish a commission dedicated to promoting the enabling conditions of peace;
    - Take steps to establish an international peace force—independent from national considerations—for deployment prior to and during crises, which, as effectiveness and neutrality are proven, could assist in the necessary transition toward global disarmament.

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

Technological change is inherent to progress and has the ability to positively transform the functioning of society, bringing about a sustainable future. Yet, presently, the manner in which science and technology are being advanced, including the assumptions underlying innovation—profoundly materialistic and competitive in nature—is often adversely impacting individual behavior, collective development, and our ecosystems.

The products of discovery and innovation will need to be equitably shared for humanity to flourish. Moreover the rights of individuals, communities, and nations must be safeguarded in the digital space. Greater representation in the creation, application, and diffusion of knowledge in scientific and technological inquiry will ensure that diverse perspectives are reflected in innovation and outputs—so critical to overcoming present challenges—and are not decoupled from local values. By centering morality, justice, wisdom, truth, humility, and collaboration, science will not be reduced to a product, but rather a means to alleviating humanity's ills.

- ***Recommitment:***
    - Recommit to methods of scientific inquiry: a systematic search for truth devoid of dogma, validated through observation and reason, and allowing for the reexamination of strategies and the modification of goals in light of acquired knowledge.
- ***Modification:***
    - Diversify sources of knowledge, generationally, geographically, etc., across UN research to include as wide a cross-section of humanity as possible.

    - Encourage coordination between Resident Coordinators and host governments to assist in the articulation and development of locally suited technologies;
- ***Responding to root causes:***
    - Establish citizen assemblies to increase the participation of individuals across diverse backgrounds to collectively evaluate scientific and technological needs, options, and impacts of innovation;
    - Promote citizen science, including in schools and communities worldwide, to enable children and youth to participate in and develop scientific capabilities for the betterment of their societies.

**Chapter IV. Youth and future generations**

Throughout history, youth have demonstrated themselves as protagonists of advancement. Qualities typically associated with the period of youth—curiosity, sense of justice, detachment from outworn institutions—are essential to social transformation. Yet, assumptions about this stage of life tend to categorize youth as problematic or apathetic, resulting in youth participation being relegated to "youth issues" or reduced to tokenistic representation. Youth are also often conflated with "future generations," which limits the agency of youth and risks absolving older generations of their responsibility toward those still to come. Youth have specific needs, qualities, and voices which must be heard, while future generations are the collective responsibility of all.

A future orientation is needed in decision-making to ensure a sustainable path forward for humanity. A collective articulation of how far humanity has traversed and what course we wish to continue along over the next 100 years will be essential to building a common vision, identifying concrete steps, and taking unified action. This may require sacrificing present-day comforts for some for the benefit of generations to come. Notions of progress that allow a handful to advance at a rate disproportionate to others are perpetuating today's inequalities. These notions also deny those who have amassed extreme wealth the opportunity to identify ways to benefit present and future generations. Because this future belongs to all, it will require universal participation and intergenerational collaboration.

- ***Recommitment:***
    - Implement those elements of the future we wish to bring about found in international agreements.
- ***Modification:***
    - Increase the number (quantity) and means (quality) of engagement of younger generations at all levels of decision-making, and on all issues;
    - Utilize the UN Youth Office to create annual reports on youth engagement, beginning with engagement at the UN.
- ***Responding to root causes:***
    - Establish a Future Generations Council, modeled on human rights treaty bodies (or a hybrid), composed of subject experts across diverse age ranges who can monitor and make recommendations based on the Declaration on Future Generations.

- Create participatory mechanisms that allow citizens to be involved in discussions about the future of the international order. This will raise awareness around world citizenship and increase support for multilateralism.

**Chapter V. Transforming global governance**

The existence of the UN demonstrates humanity's keen awareness that global challenges require effective international systems of cooperation. The state of the world would significantly transform were international agreements and obligations to be fully upheld and met. Yet, humanity has not yet reached the apex of global governance arrangements—unequal representation, mistrust, and deadlock persist. New forms of governance will need to be devised to match humanity's growing interconnectedness.

Unbounded state sovereignty as the basic unit of international governance is increasingly demonstrating its limits. The Summit of the Future offers Member States an opportunity to expand the conception of sovereignty—by envisioning the world generations into the future, decision-makers can appreciate that the well-being of the nation state is consistent with the well-being of humankind in its entirety, thereby alleviating the pressure to prioritize narrow national interests or political expediency and, instead, consider the whole. How humanity arrives at this broader vision will require a process of experimentation, assessment, and refinement on the part of Member States, allowing for universal participation, as well the exchange of knowledge and insights gained from experience. World leaders who take this courageous leap of imagination will not only demonstrate integrity in their actions and leave behind an enduring legacy, but will speak to the shared aspirations of all humanity and contribute to the building of trust, so critical to the security and stability of all the peoples of the world.

- ***Recommitment:***
  - Abide by the principles of the UN Charter and other international instruments.
- ***Modification:***
  - Increase participation of women in Member State delegations and UN appointments;
  - Ensure the UN's legislative and voting structures more accurately represents the peoples of the world as well as the governments that represent them;
  - Raise minimum requirements for membership on UN bodies based on human rights, sustainability, and other track records;
  - Strengthen enforcement and extend jurisdiction of world courts, particularly related to matters of peace and security;
- ***Responding to root causes:***
  - Establish an independent commission to explore the merits of different governance systems around the world, including *ad hoc* arrangements parallel to the UN (such as citizens assemblies, parliamentary networks, etc.), to be considered for implementation at the UN.
  - Host an Article 109 UN Charter reform conference by 2030; institute preparatory commissions to create opportunities for imaginative proposals.