



## Human Rights Watch

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### Human Rights Watch Submission for the Zero Draft for the Pact for the Future

Human Rights Watch welcomes the opportunity to provide this written input for the preparation of the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future, an outcome document to be adopted during the upcoming [Summit of the Future](#), as outlined by the United Nations General Assembly [Decision 77/568](#) and [Resolution 76/307](#).

Human Rights Watch is a nonprofit, nongovernmental human rights organization that investigates, documents, and exposes human rights abuses in some 100 countries around the world. Our work involves research and advocacy that touches on each of the five elements included within the scope of the Summit of the Future and their corresponding chapters within the Pact for the Future.

This submission specifically focuses on providing recommendations regarding the **Chapeau, Chapter I** (“Sustainable development and financing for development”) and **Chapter IV** (“Youth and future generations”).

#### Recommendations for the Chapeau of the Pact for the Future

More than halfway to the deadline for the [2030 Agenda](#), progress on the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) has [stalled or even reversed](#). For instance, more than half of the world’s population, about four billion people, continue to lack access to any form of social protection ([SGD No. 1.3](#)).

Meanwhile, multiple intersecting crises threaten the realization of human rights worldwide, from pandemics and conflicts to climate change, high levels of economic inequality, and technological disruption. At the same time, there is growing momentum and high-level consensus of the need for transformative reforms to put human rights and environmental sustainability at the core of international and domestic economic systems.

The Summit of the Future is an opportunity for governments to put these calls into action and set an agenda that directs attention, resources and policies toward the realization of economic, social, and cultural rights amid these ecological, economic, and social transitions and transformations. Accordingly, we recommend that the Chapeau of the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future:

- Reaffirm the universal and inalienable nature of all human rights, and the centrality of the realization of human rights to the Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined by General Assembly [Resolution 70/1](#).
- Reaffirm states’ commitments to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([General Assembly Resolution 217 A](#)) and to meeting their obligations under all human rights instruments to which they are parties.

- Reaffirm states' commitments to international assistance and cooperation toward facilitating the full realization of all human rights worldwide, as recognized by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- Affirm the need for comprehensive and inclusive consultation with relevant stakeholders in designing and implementing the Pact for the Future, while ensuring that those participating or consulted, including entities such as some corporations that may have disproportionate access to political power, wealth and influence, do not undermine respect for human rights and the rule of law.

### **Recommendations for Chapter I of the Pact for the Future**

The 17 SDGs articulate a global plan of action intended to drive shared economic prosperity and social well-being while protecting the environment. However, having steadily declined for decades leading up to the SDGs' adoption by General Assembly [Resolution 70/1](#) in 2015, global between-country income inequality has [rapidly increased](#) in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, wealth and income inequalities within countries have [grown unabated](#) over this period, continuing a decades-long trend.

Reducing within and between-country inequalities ([SDG No. 10](#)) is deeply and inherently interconnected with many of the other SDGs, including ending poverty ([SDG No. 1](#)) and hunger ([SDG No. 2](#)), ensuring the availability and accessibility of essential social services like health care ([SDG No. 3](#)), education ([SDG No. 4](#)), and water ([SDG No. 6](#)), and achieving gender equality ([SDG No. 5](#)). All of these measures are critical to realize the rights of billions of people. For example, governments' provision of social assistance, education, and health care, in particular, have [caused](#) most of the reduction in global poverty over the past 30 years.

The lack of significant progress in implementing the SDGs [should be a warning](#) that the current approaches taken by many governments, and the international financial institutions that support them, is not delivering for many people. To boost the implementation of existing commitments to sustainable development and financing for development, we recommend that Chapter I of the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future:

- Reaffirm states' human rights obligations to undertake steps, both individually and through international assistance and cooperation, to dedicate the maximum of their available resources towards the progressive realization and non-retrogression of economic, social, and cultural rights.
- Affirm states' commitments to centering human rights in their economic decision-making, both domestically and through international assistance and cooperation, as required under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in particular, by avoiding enacting or demanding cuts in social spending that harm human rights.
- To better ensure and help measure the dedication of resources towards the achievement of each goal, affirm the need for, and encourage states' commitment to specific and measurable targets of public spending on social services (e.g., health care, education, care and support services) and social protection, leading to the protection of rights.
- In response to the UN Secretary-General's [proposal](#) for a transformed [international financial architecture](#), affirm states' commitments to aligning their voting and decision-making within international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other international and regional bodies with human rights.
- Affirm states' commitments to ensuring universal access to quality public services that are aligned with human rights.

- Affirm states' human rights obligations to enact law and policies that impose [public service obligations](#) on any private entities involved in the delivery of goods and services essential for human rights as articulated by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- Include a specific commitment to universal social protection and tangible progress on human rights aligned social protection floors by 2030 ([SDG 1.3](#)). Programs that embrace universality, such as universal child benefits or universal old age pensions, are not only rights-aligned, but also more effective in reaching those most at risk of poverty. The right to social security includes the guarantee of income protection throughout one's life and should be designed for the long term, including for future generations.
- Include minimum spending benchmarks for universal social protection. Affirm countries' ability to finance universal social protection, even those with lower incomes.
- Affirm states' commitments to regulating corporate conduct to ensure respect for human rights and be consistent with international human rights standards, and holding corporate actors to account if they commit or enable human rights abuses at home or abroad, including through the enactment of appropriate domestic legislation.
- Affirm the rights of all individuals and peoples to the right to development. This includes the rights of people to participate in national development practices, including through the exercise of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and discussions of the fulfillment of their right to development, and establish indicators based in international human rights standards that measure the existence and enforcement of laws that protect freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and provide for freedom of information, including the ability to monitor budgets, revenue, and expenditures.

#### **Recommendations for Chapter IV of the Pact for the Future**

The Pact for the Future is an opportunity to chart an economic course towards a more rights-realizing world for youth and future generations by making clear commitments to developing a new eco-social contract that is aligned with human rights. In line with what Human Rights Watch has previously [proposed](#) as part of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development's [work on this issue](#), we recommend that Chapter IV of the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future:

- Address realizing rights to the maximum available resources consistent with international human rights standards, in the context of the climate crisis and limited resources. The Chapter could articulate a vision for eradicating poverty in a [post-growth](#) context as part of a [human rights economy](#), concepts that are being developed by the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- Affirm the need for a just transition to a decarbonized economy, including specific commitments to, and indicators to measure progress towards, limiting future climate-related devastation on people and communities and a fair and inclusive phasing out of fossil fuels.