



International Federation of Social Workers IFSW

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Submission of IFSW for the Summit of the Future

Chapeau

The International Federation of Social Workers with 150 national associations and over 5 million Social Workers acknowledges and appreciates the consultation with Civil society organizations (CSOs) and we look forward to the Summit of the Future. With this distinctive professional background, knowledge and skill set, the IFSW co-led with UNRISD a unique partnership to convene [The People's Summit](#) through an inclusive process, which brought about the [People's Charter](#). The People's Global Summit, held online on 29 June – 2 July 2022, was initiated by 26 diverse global organizations representing hundreds of millions of people. The Summit gathered people from across the world, bridging movements for justice, “to create new ways to work together for sustainability and quality of life for all”. The local interpretation and manifestation of global challenges were expressed during numerous sessions.

The philosophy of co-building an eco-social world is also the basis of social workers' commitment to achieving global change and we see the Summit of the Future as part of this development. Social workers affirm support for, and their role in, realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the common Agenda and the Summit for the future through sharing knowledge and co-creating solutions for social change and social development while standing against the exploitation of people and nature and against unjust structures that allow for wealth concentration in the hands of the few.

IFSW understands the people's summit and the people's charter as a guiding approach to weave into the 'Summit of the Future' and can serve as the basis for future UN reform.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

For an eco-social friendly sustainable development, nations need a safe and holistic social contract. Across the world, we are seeing daily the failure of existing social contracts to afford the most basic of human rights to millions of people. Social workers are working within communities, governments, and the United Nations to address the impacts of complex and intersecting crises on marginalized populations with a commitment to empowerment, social justice, and self-determination. As a human rights profession and key civil society voice, social

workers provide an important role in the co-building of much-needed new eco-social contracts. We understand that sustainable development solutions must be developed with communities using a bottom-up approach that recognizes local knowledge, practices and the right to self-determination. IFSW encourages the UN to engage meaningfully at all levels towards eco-social action and contracts. This is a core ethical principal for social workers.

IFSW underlines the importance of this chapter and sees the crucial importance of a new definition of 'development'. The [IFSW policy paper on the SDG](#) defines development as "a dynamic all-inclusive process of change, within a person, groups or society pursuing/seeking well-being for both people and planet." Financing and the division of power are closely linked, therefore the responsibility of people and companies in powerful positions shall be included in this chapter.

Recommendation: Development of new eco-social contracts to be developed with communities and key stakeholder groups, including social workers.

Chapter II. International peace and security

At the global level, CSO such as IFSW shall engage more effectively with the United Nations processes to foster the creation of new eco-social contracts with a focus on peace. Larger systemic reform of UN systems is needed to better include and recognize people and communities affected by human rights violations. As a way forward, the UN needs to consider various forms of people's assemblies, drawing on IFSW's experience of co-leading the 2022 Global People's Summit, to assure that new social contracts are built on inclusive and collaborative practices of co-creation that leave no one behind.

The IFSW UN Commission would like to make a provocative proposition: The United Nations as a global organization is tasked with addressing issues that transcend national boundaries and that cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone, such as peace and security. Could it utilize part of its resources to adopt more inclusive and people-centred engagement as demonstrated by the People's Summit in the form of people's assemblies? The People's Summit provides a model of a people's assembly for communities to directly participate in discussions and assessments concerning them and an avenue to co-shape the social and physical environments they live in. There needs to be further research and work to explore people's assemblies to contribute to the design and implementation of eco-social contracts, building on models already in existence.

Recommendation: The UN look to adopt more inclusive and people-centred engagement as demonstrated by the People's Summit in the form of people's assemblies

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

There have been incredible advancements in recent years in this space, but the benefits continue to be experienced by only some sections of the global community. The SDGs will not be achieved unless there is greater investment in systems and infrastructure to ensure universal access to technologies. With this, it entrenches people into poverty as those without access are

increasingly excluded from extensive areas of social life, education and the economy. Electronic technologies have become a new tool for social work and community development, and this has been key to providing supports to people in remote areas. Without adequate infrastructure the advancements are not experienced equally and leave people and communities behind.

Recommendation: Investment in the creation of infrastructures that support the use of digital technology as a tool for the realisation of the SDGs.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

While the United Nations recognizes the importance of partnering with civil society to support its work in achieving the SDGs and its transformative agenda, current modalities of engagement with civil society and non-governmental organizations are not sufficiently “people-centered” and obstruct the participation of social workers and communities.

Children and youth must be central to all decision making given the impacts that current policies will have on future generations. The protections and wellbeing of children is a main point of focus for social workers globally. There is no doubt, that youth is an important generation that should be involved in political work strongly and equally to the adults. Nevertheless, Social Workers are working along a whole-society approach and avoids highlighting one particular age group to not diminish the importance of all and each. We therefore propose to change this topic to a “whole-society and the nature in future”.

The UN shall establish a strong CSO system with CSO focal points on general and specific topics and for each UN headquarters that guarantees a just representation of all age and thematic groups.

IFSW encourages the UN to engage at all levels towards eco-social action and contracts, to be the key informer regarding issues unfolding on the ground and to convene partners bottom-up, promoting participatory processes that incorporate all age groups, including youth. Social workers understand that articulation between their bottom-up practice (for example their daily work with people and civil societies, operational implementation) and the more top-down agenda-setting and governmental regulatory efforts of the UN (for example policy papers, global agendas) represent a good opportunity for collaboration.

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Chapter V. Transforming Global Governance

At a global level, IFSW faces numerous challenges, including major barriers to meaningful participation in UN processes. This is partly because the profession, with its rights-based approach and own set of ethics and principles, is not well enough known and established in global or regional for a or is conflated with charity-based social interventions or other forms of solidarity in some regions of the world. It is also due to entrenched top-down UN systems that limit who has a seat at the table.

Civil society organizations (CSOs), such as professional associations, struggle to engage in meaningful and qualitative participation in UN processes to make their voices heard. The opportunities to participate in UN formal processes are restricted and are not enough for effective advocacy. For example, the Human Rights Council allows for 90-120 seconds of speaking time for CSOs with consultative status with the ECOSOC. CSO's inputs are treated as a matter of protocol and there is no engagement or feedback on the input. Moreover, the process of consultation itself is top-down, in which agenda-setting is owned by UN agencies and involves no relationship-building.

UN processes that intend to promote bottom-up engagement are often not sufficiently collaborative and "people-centered" in practice, failing to foster dialogue or partnership. CSOs need a new modality of engagement with the UN if we are to achieve new eco-social contracts.

The lessons from the sessions were consolidated by a diverse core group in the form of a People's Charter as "a living document and reference point that will grow as the world's populations share their solutions to our joint challenges, so all people can live with confidence, security, and peace in a sustainable world". As stated in the People's Charter for an Eco-Social World, this can only be achieved through co-developing reciprocity and joint ownership of positive change, co-building peace, co-living with nature, co-creating social justice, and co-realizing equality.

The process is a model for the creation of eco-social contracts and presents a way forward that could inform UN reform:

- First, it enabled a variety of actors to come out of the silos that divide communities to work together and co-ideate and co-construct policies, practices and action based on inclusion, intergenerational respect and recognition of indigenous and grassroots knowledge.
- Second, it involved transnational organizations, movements, federations and coalitions across sectors, professions, geographies and faiths bringing together fine-grained knowledge and lived experiences that were mutually recognized and valorized in view of co-constructing a vision for a new eco-social world.
- Third, the virtual opportunity of the current digital age was leveraged to invite contributions in a variety of formats including academic presentations, blogs, storytelling, panel discussions, TikTok videos, poetry and research from all over the globe, making it more inclusive.

The co-creation of new eco-social contracts must avoid repeating the failures of a top-down approach to addressing our most pressing crises. Social workers can facilitate this process to become more inclusive and participatory and explore modalities of partnership with the United Nations to ensure voices are heard and that the creation of new eco-social contracts is inclusive and sustainable for people and the planet.

Recommendation: The UN look to systemic reform and incorporate models like People's Assemblies to ensure a more inclusive and collaborative approach to addressing the most pressing social and environmental issues.