



**Terre des Hommes**  
International Federation

This submission is made on behalf of :

- Child Rights Connect: <https://childrightsconnect.org/>
- Terre des hommes international Federation : <https://terredeshommes.org/>

Focal points:

- Kristen Hope, Terre des hommes : [kristen.hopeburchill@tdh.org](mailto:kristen.hopeburchill@tdh.org)
- Agnes Gracia, Child Rights Connect : [gracia@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:gracia@childrightsconnect.org)

## Chapeau

The Summit of the Future is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to anchor a robust and ambitious vision for a future of human life on planet Earth that is underpinned by dignity and fundamental rights. Given that some 4.2 billion children are expected to be born over the next 30 years, the Summit of the Future and the Pact for the Future should be informed by, and explicitly articulate the centrality of a child rights approach to sustainable development, peace, justice and prosperity for all.

When world leaders gathered at the end of 2023 to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations (UN) Secretary General [reminded](#) States that the Pact of the Future is an opportunity to reaffirm their commitments to the realization of human rights well into the twenty-first century. In addition, the UN Office for Human Rights reached out to thousands of children worldwide to inform a new vision for human rights and ultimately the Summit and Pact for the Future. Their voices, experiences and solutions can be found in the "[Children's vision for human rights](#)".

The Chapeau of the zero draft of the Pact for the Future should clearly and unequivocally articulate States obligations to protect, respect and fulfill the full spectrum of human rights for all peoples, including children. To ensure a UN system that delivers on the promise of Leaving No one Behind, **the Chapeau of the Pact for the Future should make explicit reference to 'children', all persons under 18, as a group of distinct rights holders under international law.** Without explicit mention of children in the Pact for the Future, their specific rights and unique perspectives risk being forgotten.

In addition, **children's rights must be included as a cross-cutting issue to be considered in deliberations on all thematic chapters, meaning that, children in all their diversity and their rights are considered under each chapter of the Pact for the Future.** Echoing the [Committee on the Rights of the Child](#), we

strongly recommend that the Summit and the Pact integrate a child rights perspective into all discussions and decisions, including on climate crisis, peace and security, digital compact and future generations.

Moreover, as the former Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child [emphasized](#) in February, “If the UN is truly committed to become a more inclusive multilateral platform for partnership and solidarity having people at center – as outlined in Our Common Agenda – children cannot be excluded from the process for the Summit of the Future (...). Children should be both subjects of the Summit and the resulting Pact for the Future, and active participants before, during and after the Summit”. This builds on the recommendations of the [Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Child Rights Mainstreaming](#), which reaffirms that “children’s rights are everybody’s business across all three pillars of the UN”. **The modalities of the Summit of the Future and the Pact for the Future should reflect the Guidance note’s recommendations, especially on children’s right to be heard in the UN system and put into practice mechanisms for child participation in a safe, empowering and sustained way.**

As we strive for a “people-centered” multilateral system, if the Pact for the Future fails to set out a child-centered lens and falls short in reaffirming the full spectrum of rights for children, then future of multilateralism will be failing one-third of the world’s population today and billions of children who are born in the future.

## Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

Sustainable development is impossible without the realization of human rights. Chapter I should explicitly articulate the mutually-reinforcing nature of human rights and sustainable development, particularly concerning children.

Chapter I should reference [General Comment 26 \(2023\) on children’s rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change](#), and recognize that children are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and, as rights holders, that they are entitled to protection from environmental harm and to be recognized and fully respected as environmental actors.

Moreover, Chapter I should remind States of their obligations to ensure adequate resource allocation in public budgeting for children’s rights, as per Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and guidance set out in [General Comment 19](#) (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children’s rights. Concretely, and in-line with UNICEF guidance.

Chapter 1 should include language around:

- Strengthening financing for social security and social protection to reverse underfunding for children.
- Prioritizing financing for preparedness, response and recovery for every child.
- Leveraging climate finance and the green transformation to fulfil children's rights.

## Chapter II. International peace and security

Conflict affects millions of children worldwide, subjecting them to serious physical, mental, and psychosocial harm. Our Common Agenda [Policy Brief 9](#) states that “youth are essential to identifying new solutions that will secure the breakthroughs that our world urgently needs.” Chapter II should note that this provision applies to children as well, and that children must be recognized as peacebuilders, [human rights defenders](#), and key agents of change, not solely as vulnerable victims.

Chapter II should also highlight the need to invest in long-term strategies to prevent conflict, including promoting social cohesion and building accountability mechanisms. These steps are critical to ensure that systems of exclusion and marginalization are identified and remedied, particularly addressing gender, ethnicity, disability and migration status. Such actions will create more just and equitable distribution of power, opportunity and resources within societies and creating an enabling environment for children in their full diversity to enjoy their rights.

Finally, Chapter II should also touch upon necessary reforms of international humanitarian architecture, including to embed children’s rights and their protection as essential and life-saving components across the humanitarian system, particularly in situations of armed conflict. This entails committing to scaling up evidence-based interventions that prevent violence, exploitation and abuse, and build the resilience of children and their communities to shocks, in line with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Representatives to the Secretary General on Violence Against Children (SRSG-VAC) and Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC), and other relevant HRs mechanisms. A particular emphasis is needed on providing access to justice for children in contact with the law, whether as victims, witnesses or accused.

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

As the digital environment plays an increasingly significant role across most aspects of children’s lives, the Pact for the Future should reaffirm the principles of UNCRC to guarantee child rights approach that is critical for future generations to inherit a digital world designed for the protection and promotion of their rights.

Chapter III should reflect the guidance provided to States by CRC [General Comment 25](#) (2021) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment. Specifically, echoing [a widely-endorsed submission](#) from members of the global child rights community on the Global Digital Compact, we recommend that Chapter III reinforce the core tenets of children’s rights in the digital environment and include the following key overarching principles:

- A recognition that international human rights law, including the UNCRC, applies in full in the digital environment.
- The necessity for the digital environment to be safe and age-appropriate for children, taking into account that children are not a homogenous group, respect their full range of

rights and be designed and operated with their best interests in mind, integrating privacy, safety and security by design and by default.

- Respecting and fulfilling the right of the child to be heard with regards to the digital environment, taking children’s views and the diversity of their situations into account by States in the development of laws, policies and by businesses in their activities, including in relation to the design, development, operation, and marketing of their products and services.

In addition, Chapter III of the Pact for the Future should adopt a child rights-based approach by specifying that science and technology advancements serve the realization of children’s rights and development. Specifically, building on UNICEF recommendations, Chapter III should:

- Recognise equitable digital education as a public good, in order to maximise opportunities while minimising digital divides and inequalities.
- Commit to equipping children with science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills, enabling them to actively shape sustainable futures, participate in evolving job markets and contribute to solutions to global challenges.
- Acknowledge that children face multiple risks in the digital environment such as online sexual exploitation, misinformation, harassment and hate speech, alongside additional risks posed by artificial intelligence such as discrimination and rights infringements. To prevent and respond to these risks, children should be protected and empowered as child digital citizens, through digital literacy and participation in digital policy dialogues.

#### Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

It is deeply regrettable that, despite [vocal advocacy](#) from children and civil society organisations across the world, children have only rarely received specific mention as a distinct group of stakeholders in the different Our Common Agenda Policy Brief series and they are not yet included in the title of this chapter. We welcome notable mentions of children, such as in [Policy Brief 1 on Future Generations](#), however we feel that children need to be mentioned more systematically throughout the Pact for the Future to ensure that they are not an afterthought, but central stakeholders in achieving a common vision for the future.

In order to remedy this oversight, we strongly recommend that ‘children’ be added to the title of Chapter IV, creating a revised Chapter IV heading: “Youth, children and future generations”. This addition would reinforce the rights-based approach set forth in the UNCRC , stipulating that children, as all human beings under 18, constitute a group of distinct rights holders under international law. 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.

This addition would also ensure that, when expanding spaces for meaningful engagement of youth in all UN decision-making process (including the establishment of the Youth Office) we 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 the future. This would reaffirm the recommendation from the [Policy Brief 1 on Future Generations](#) to reinforce “the meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders, in particular children and young people as current and future decision makers with the greatest affinity for future generations”.

## Chapter V. Transforming global governance

The Pact for the Future should clearly state that inclusive, equitable, and accountable multilateralism in global governance is needed for children to be recognized as partners in finding solutions to the common challenges facing humanity today, including erosion of human rights, the climate crisis, equitable pandemic response, poverty reduction, international security and the management of emerging technologies.

Chapter V should elaborate on one of the main recommendations from the [High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism](#) and request a UN-wide strategy to implement children’s rights. Children are the only group with specific human rights treaty that lacks a dedicated UN-wide strategy to ensure coherence, implement obligations and protect children’s rights across the multilateral system. Such a strategy would complement and reinforce the UNSG’s Guidance Note, by strengthening the UN’s capacity to support Member States to implement children’s rights and deliver on the 2030 Agenda. This strategy should be developed with the participation of a diverse group of children from around the world.