



UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES Coalition for Sustainability Science

<https://bridges.earth>

Professor Dr. Steven Hartman, Executive Director, [hartman@hi.is](mailto:hartman@hi.is)

## **Chapeau**

**BRIDGES** recommends the following language for the chapeau (If not fitting in the chapeau, consider this language under Chapter II or Chapter V, if more fitting):

The core importance of human rights must be emphasized as a continuing foundation for the Summit of the Future and the Pact that will be an important outcome of the summit. Inclusive participation is an extension of human rights, including full participation of youth, indigenous peoples, diverse cultures, and all age groups across living generations. Support for intergenerational and lifelong learning, and widespread integration of education for sustainability throughout all levels and forms of education in societies, formal and informal, are an obligation and a necessary means to the widely desired end of a just, equitable and sustainable earth for present and future generations. We also wish to recommend the inclusion in the pact of language explicitly acknowledging the vital importance of transdisciplinary processes, structures, and methods that enable truly inclusive co-production of knowledge, learning and societal action to achieve this outcome, with substantial support for the bridging mechanisms that connect actors and stakeholders from diverse groups and sectors, all of who we need to meet the promise of the summit of the future.

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

**Action 1:** That the Pact for the Future use language that better reflects the physical realities and the diversity of our societies.

**Action 2:** That the Pact recognize the term "sustainable development" in its originally formulated abstract sense (i.e. as an achieved/achievable goal) does not exist in the 21st century in any meaningful sense. What we see instead are countless examples of unsustainable development. It is therefore recommended that the Pact seek to refine the definition of sustainable development (in a processual sense, rather than as an unobtainable goal, as "sustainability"), which can mean, among other things: "coordinated endeavors that strengthen the capacity of human communities and societies, at all scales, to prevent harm to social and ecological systems, to nurture life and promote planetary health, multispecies wellbeing and human flourishing in ways that enable future generations to preserve and continue those identified processes and developments that demonstrably promote these ends."

**Action 3:** That the Pact acknowledge, with urgency, the reality that biodiversity, ecosystems and other earth systems are undergoing significant impairment, deterioration, degeneration, and some instances collapse. Since the Pact needs to invest in anticipation, protection, restoration, and recovery, development funds must be redirected toward community and societal projects, capabilities and infrastructures, at numerous scales, that decrease the vulnerability of socio-ecological systems at all scales. In this last connection we recommend that the pact call upon states and other funding agencies/supporting organizations to make development funds available for sustainable enterprises carried out, for example, by Low Income Development communities in partnership with heritage institutions that serve to protect and safeguard vulnerable natural and cultural heritage and/or help to renew capacity for nature-based sustainability solutions that may be needed now and increasingly in the future.

**Suggestion 4:** With education and life-long learning universally recognized as a global public good, increased investment in education/learning for sustainability, such as the ESD program led within the context of UNESCO. Other programs led from within the UNESCO Social and Human Sciences Sector, such as AI Ethics, and as well as the Futures Literacy, transdisciplinary bridging of co-produced sustainability science, education and action for global futures (UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES Coalition), and the Inclusive Policy Lab (these last three programs and work streams within the Management of Social Transformations intergovernmental programme) could be mobilized to very good effect in vital capacity-building efforts that involve strong dimensions of sustainability education and training for societal readiness and impact across sectors. The same could be said of the Man and Biosphere programme within UNESCO Natural Sciences Sector. Except for its own programme, BRIDGES does not presume to speak for any these programs and workstreams within UNESCO, but as a coalition that seeks to pridge both bottom-up community-driven sustainability initiatives and top-down policy-driven initiatives based in intergovernmental structures, we recognize the enormous potential value of better bridging existing structures and programs within the UN system, including a foreseeable UN 2.0 (see chapters III & IV below).

**Additional framing language (suggestion 5),** adapted from the BRIDGES principles, is suggested below:

1. *Contextualized and diverse approaches to sustainability and we acknowledge that persistent challenges are often complex, yielding sometimes contradictory responses. We encourage robust debate in efforts to meet these challenges.*
2. *The Earth must be understood not solely as a planetary system, nor as a reservoir of resources, but as a web of meanings and interactions that is inherently multilayered and pluralistic.*
3. *As a starting point the Pact can and perhaps must be open to a critical understanding of sustainability that emphasizes the diversity of its subjects, objects and timelines, while explicitly confirming an implacable commitment to the cardinal principles of the UN Charter, which are universality, justice, and solidarity.*
4. *BRIDGES will work to establish a world of new relationships, based on convergent understandings and co-design among all the peoples of the Earth and a fundamental respect for the integrity and rights to exist and thrive of all the constituent inhabitants of the earth, human and non-human.*
5. *The pathway that is set in motion by the Pact must be committed to an ethical approach to resource mobilization and use.*

## **Chapter II. International peace and security**

Action 1: The UN's ability to live up to its mission and mandate depends on its ability to act on the principles of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN can no longer fail in its mission to address humanitarian crises, protect peace and security, and enforce its own resolutions.

Action 2: If we want lasting peace and security, we must pay heed to embrace the rights of indigenous peoples, the rights of nature and the rights of future generations to inherit a world that is not compromised by short-term decisions, resource usage and profiteering that will impoverish the earth and the totality of human beings in the future.

Action 3: To reach its objectives, the UN must reform its decision-making processes. It should introduce disciplinary sanctions against countries that violate established international law on purpose.

Action 4: The Pact should have guidelines that protect scientists, community leaders, journalists, activists, health services providers, civil servants, educators and learners of all ages (especially the young and the most vulnerable in all societies, especially low-income nations and their constituent communities) from concerted campaigns of disinformation and intimidation. All must all their rights safeguarded with equal vigor, as reinforced locally, nationally, regionally and internationally through intergovernmental agreements, the ambitions.

Action 5: The Pact should endorse efforts to render poor countries sustainable by re-introducing the practices that were overridden and abolished by colonial governance. This would render these countries livable and reduce dangerous efforts to migrate.

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

BRIDGES makes the following suggestions for language or conceptual grounding to be introduced in the Pact:

**Suggestion 1:** In the words of Resolution 77/326 adopted by the General Assembly of the UN on 25 August 2023 (77/326) establishing the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development, 2024–2033, the UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES Coalition (hereafter BRIDGES) recommends “*Acknowledging* that humanity is exposed to complex challenges, and that the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in all its dimensions requires a more effective and inclusive approach based on synergistic cooperation of all sciences – basic and applied sciences as well as social and human sciences, including traditional knowledge – enabling the development of technology, innovation and education”.

**Suggestion 2:** (In line with—and adapted from—the humanity-centered and humanities-driven approach to sustainability adopted by the BRIDGES Coalition as a necessary new scientific development/innovation within the longer established sustainability science domain), A general conceptual framework for transformation to sustainability rooted in transdisciplinary approaches to research and education is proposed as a key element to be promoted and co-designed and implemented as an outcome of the Pact.

The challenge is to support sustainable and inclusive territorial development capable of realizing profound transformations that cannot be achieved solely through the application of technical solutions such as renewable energy, better water management, innovative building, etc. Rather, such solutions must be part of a comprehensive approach rooted in *processes* of social, economic, institutional and cultural transformation that can enable territorial stakeholders to question, critically examine, and possibly rethink not only longstanding or prevailing ideas about territorial integrity, but also their own attitudes, practices and behaviour as these may impact the territory. Such a meta-perspective requires continuous analysis and evaluation of prevailing modes of stakeholder participation in knowledge co-production as well as ongoing assessment of the fora and mechanisms that serve to bring distinct domains, traditions and communities of knowledge together (sometimes in hybrid forms). This includes technical knowledge about various systems, institutionally embedded knowledge concerning policy and governance, and scientific knowledge about how particular ecosystems, habitats and social environments function, as well as informal knowledge, knowledge embedded in communities of purpose and practice, and indigenous knowledge where any of these may be applicable.

### Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

**Suggestion 1:** BRIDGES recommends the Pact contain language that calls on States to adopt/promote through appropriate legislative or administrative means the establishment of politically independent national agencies, ministries or commissions, such as the Office of the Commissioner for the Wellbeing of Future Generations established in Wales through the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015), which can work to ensure that public works, projects, laws and regulations, offices and/or even private initiatives that are publicly funded are consistent with national priorities and intergovernmental agreements that promote a sustainable

future. In the language of UN AR 77/326, such authorities can apply “evidence-based analyses and data necessary for establishing and effectively implementing policies” that ensure sustainable pathways for present and future generations in which “no one is left behind.”

**Suggestion 2:** With support from governments and NGOs, a program modeled on the Peace Corps could be instituted following a proposed pathway for implementation that offers different life and career paths to youth other than those that may be possible in their local (especially impoverished/vulnerable) communities: e.g. sustainable development, government relations, foodways and health, new technologies, etc.

## **Chapter V. Transforming global governance**

**Action 1:** It is the hope of the BRIDGES Coalition that the Pact for the Future may be able to propose the future establishment of a new intergovernmental body that is a direct or indirect outcome of the Summit of the Future in September 2024. Such a body would optimally welcome ministerial or other high-level representatives from national agencies/commissions/ministries such as that suggested in BRIDGES’ proposed contribution to Chapter IV above, as well as academia, civil society, major groups and other stakeholders (including youth and indigenous peoples).

**Action 2:** As noted in the document [“Summit of the Future: What would it deliver?”](#), any effort in the Pact that is made toward addressing the ambition of a UN 2.0, which could draw upon and help to mobilize “upgraded expertise in innovation, data, digital, foresight, and behavioural science to enhance UN System results, help build similar Member State expertise, and accelerate shared progress towards the SDGs,” could envisage and build into possible design of a UN 2.0 the kind of intergovernmental body suggested here, as a necessary refinement that both supports the development and application of expertise and management of programs and initiatives at national level and facilitates international assessment of the state of progress equitably meeting the needs of the future and global governance of the programs and structures at local, national, regional and global levels.

**Action 3:** The multilateral system inherited from 1945 should be reformed to strictly limit the veto privilege kept by the permanent members of the Security Council. Abuses of the veto power have prevented the implementation of UN resolutions and have protected countries that are engaged in systemic violations of human rights.