



2024 UNITED NATIONS
**CIVIL SOCIETY
CONFERENCE**
MAY 9 - 10 | NAIROBI, KENYA

2024 United Nations Civil Society Conference: Co-Chairs Reflections

On 9 and 10 May we witnessed thousands of participants from every corner of the world gather online and in Nairobi, Kenya, to discuss and debate, to assess and plan around nothing less than the future of humanity and the planet. In the weeks leading up to the conference, unprecedented rains resulted in floods that devastated communities in Nairobi and several parts of Kenya. This was also against the backdrop of ongoing humanitarian and governance crises around the world, reminding us that despite our differences, we can all agree on the need for change.

In the lead up to, and across the two days of the conference, we saw a showcase of intergenerational cooperation in action and the impact generated when we pull together energy and experiences across decades. The planning and delivery of this conference in nine weeks was a demonstration in itself, of the power of collective effort shared across sectors, geographies and experience.

We were joined in Nairobi by 2158 civil society representatives, 317 officials from Member States, International Organisations, and the UN system, 67 media representatives, and 47 volunteers, from 115 countries, with hundreds more online. They engaged in 62 off-site and online events, 38 onsite workshops on day one, more than 20 ImPACT coalitions on day two, put out 64 exhibits, engaged in media moments and creative partnership building at the intergenerational hub, and 4 plenary sessions, each filling the space to capacity.

As Kenya prepared to host this momentous conference—the first of its kind to take place in the Global South—civil society mobilized ahead of the meeting to bring to the conference the voice and agency of the broad diversity of Kenyan civil society in a local mobilization day on 8th May.

When the curtains fell on the *2024 UN Civil Society Conference in Support of the Summit of the Future*, what was evident was the passion, vibrancy, solidarity, and the dedication of civil society and stakeholders present to make a difference on the basis of multilateralism. We recognise that not every voice was present in person or online and we do not, therefore, represent all of civil society. However, with 70 percent of participants from Africa, 52 percent women, and 40 percent under the age of 35, this added a new dimension to the conversation ongoing in New York.

The first day, PACT day, focused on analyzing the five Chapters of the Pact for the Future and its annexes—sustainable development and financing for development; peace and security; science, technology and innovation and digital technology; youth and future generations; and transforming global governance. This day concluded in a plenary session where civil society presented recommendations from the workshops; and an interactive dialogue with the six co-facilitators of the Summit of the Future processes (Germany and Namibia for the Pact for the Future; Jamaica and Netherlands for the Declaration on Future Generations; and Zambia and Sweden for the Global Digital Compact). This session was moderated by the Under Secretary-General for Strategy Guy Ryder and Executive Director of Global Women Leaders, H.E. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, and sought to inform Revision 1 of the Pact for the





Future (which [came out](#) in an action-oriented format a week later) as well the Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.

Key issues discussed on the first day ranged from long standing concerns like the use of nuclear weapons, international finance, and progress in gender equality, to emerging issues like the equitable distribution of digital technology, the governance of artificial intelligence, and foresight in multilateralism.

The second day, ImPACT day, began with an interactive dialogue across stakeholder groups, and sought to create opportunities for participants working on similar issues to come together and advance plans for the coming months, concluding with a report back from 20 ImPACT Coalitions (ICs).

The ICs formed over these two days represented an opportunity to demonstrate self-organization, bringing together civil society, United Nations entities, and Member State representatives on issues as diverse as the science-policy interface, artificial intelligence, future generations, and funding community action. While acknowledging the roles and actions of other groups engaging with the UN system, these ICs are inclusive for those who wish to champion specific actions and reforms in the Summit of the Future process but do not seek to represent groups or duplicate processes.

At their core, ImPACT Coalitions bring together stakeholders working on various issues related to the Summit of the Future to create networks that support Member States who wish to champion specific reforms and proposals toward the Summit of the Future and crucially, begin the implementation process beyond. Their purpose was, and continues to be, to innovate the way civil society engages intergovernmental processes, focusing not just on what we *expect* from Member States, but on what we can *offer* Member States who wish to champion and unlock critical issues of our time that civil society and other stakeholders have mobilized around for decades. These self-organized, civil-society convened, ImPACT Coalitions will be encouraged to advance their work in accordance with their own work plans, which will be made publicly available as part of the outcome package. The list of ICs and focal points can be found [here](#), and interest in joining specific ICs can be registered [here](#).

In his closing remarks, UN Secretary-General António Guterres quoted the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas noting *“One of his key ideas is on intercommunication between civil society and the political realm in modern democracies: how it shapes decision-making; and how it is vital to creating laws and policies that are acceptable to citizens...Civil society is an essential bridge between people and their representatives – part of the glue that holds democracies together.”* This reflected a recurring theme across the two days on the role of civil society in supporting intergovernmental processes. He went on to say *“And your new ImPACT Coalitions promise a new era of engagement. These models of collaboration span ages, regions and sectors. And focus civil society’s energy and expertise for maximum impact on the challenges we face. I invite you to bring this spirit to the Action Days we are holding as the Summit of the Future begins.”*





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There will always be things we could have, and maybe should have, done differently, improved, and corrected. This we recognise, and we are thankful to those who continue to constructively engage in this process. What we are certain of, is that we cannot do the same thing we have always done and expect new results. If the Summit of the Future expects Member States to be ambitious and think differently about the way they work then we, as civil society engaging in and represented by these Member States, must be willing to do the same. On the 9th and 10th of May, thousands of participants constituting grassroots champions, activists, scholars, think tanks, Member States, UN entities, international organizations, and other stakeholders came together to engage with this new idea. That in itself, was success to us. We invite as many as find utility in doing so to take in this new initiative to advance it as we move towards September.

Moving forward, we will present the outcome of this conference, the *ImPACT for the Future Package*, on the 30th of May in New York in hybrid format. This package will constitute a Co-Chairs Summary capturing the recommendations across workshops, plenaries, and the discussions in interactive dialogues, as well as work plans from the ICs. This will be followed by a final CSO Town Hall on 31st May. While the planning committee will formally conclude its work at this stage, we will ensure that this process is built on and shared from Nairobi to New York and beyond as one of the many ways civil society will support the Summit of the Future.

As we conclude, we recall that the largest, most inclusive process of articulating the aspirations of humanity took place at the United Nations. Known as the Sustainable Development Goals, these must remain a central rallying cry for humanity and governments. Yet the years between now and 2030—the end of the SDG agenda—are few and humanity’s future is long. Questions of governance at the international level must remain central to our ongoing deliberations and this gathering in Nairobi represented one such opportunity. We are extremely thankful to our planning committee Co-chair Maher Nasser, and to all those who have enabled this conference to happen.

For more information and to get involved in the follow up to Nairobi as well as the Summit of the Future, please see the following links.

2024 UNCSC website: <https://www.un.org/en/civilsociety/2024uncsc>

Subscribe to the UN DGC Civil Society Newsletter: bit.ly/2024UNCSC_subscribeonline

Summit of the Future ad hoc accreditation: <https://indico.un.org/event/1010324/>

With gratitude,

Nudhara Yusuf

Carole Osero-Ageng'o

2024 United Nations Civil Society Conference Co-Chairs

