MAJOR GROUPS & OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) Position Paper on UN80 Initiative

December 15, 2025

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Context and Principles

Multilateralism is in crisis, especially in a moment in which it is needed more than ever. Humanity is facing an ecological breakdown as was never seen before. The undermining of ICC and ICJ's resolutions on the genocide in Gaza, or the sanctions placed on judges and human rights rapporteurs send a warning sign globally. Concentration of wealth and human rights violations are on the rise, deepening inequalities and eroding development. At a time when the UN should provide guidance and a pathway for peaceful and sound resolution of today's challenges, its attention is caught up on administrative and logistical discussions. We stand in solidarity with the budgetary situation of the UN, which is unfortunate and reflects the current geopolitical challenges. However, it should not deviate the focus from the structural reform that is needed and expected by the international community.

The MGoS expects that the UN reform takes place taking into consideration the need to strengthen the human rights framework, gender equality, peace, development and justice, while ensuring the safety, dignity and integrity of all. It should resist falling into the geopolitical dynamics. True reform must go beyond administrative efficiencies to address structural inequality, power asymmetry, and meaningful participation. The UN80 process cannot take place in closed doors, or guided solely by administrative and budgetary considerations. It should be an opportunity to envision the way the UN we want and need.

A key concern is how to uphold the UN Charter in a time when geopolitics are unlawfully undermining it. Another one is to promote accountability at the global level, and promote the transformations that are needed. In that sense, the democratization of the economic and financial architecture is needed, and the UN should be at the heart of that reform. In sum, while the UN80 process is addressing the budgetary crisis and the much needed solutions to it, it has to happen in the realization of the larger context and be seen as a sobering historical moment that recognizes the key role of the UN and its mandate.

CSO Participation in UN80 Initiative

The MGoS calls for a transparent and inclusive process of UN80 that ensures meaningful participation of civil society and rightsholders constituencies across the wide span of processes and discussions. We call for:

- **A dedicated consultative process/track for civil society constituency stakeholders** that is co-designed with MGoS, allowing for the equal and meaningful participation of a wide range of actors.
- This can be built on the existing best practices, such as those seen during the Agenda2030 and the Summit of the Future processes, where CSOs were closely involved. MGoS offers to co-convene this process.
- Full, equal and meaningful participation of civil society and stakeholders in every track and process, as each of the discourses has a wide-ranging impact on society
- Participation implies, *inter alia*:
    - ability to co-design, contribute to assessments and proposals;
    - timely access to relevant documents;
    - civil society representation in key structures around UN80 including but not limited to the UN80 task forces, the deliberations of 6 clusters, and work packages as standing members and contributors;
    - regular meetings with various UN80 clusters / teams working on workpakages
    - ability to add inputs in writing and in other modalities across the different moments in the timeline of each process;
    - access to discussions and ability to provide inputs orally and in writing;
    - hybrid modalities of engagement;
    - regular meetings with co-facilitators and other key actors.

In the spirit of “We the People” in the Charter, and cognizance of the limited capacity of the Secretariat vis a vis the criticality of stakes, it is imperative to centralize civil society inputs to provide the evidence base for UN80 reforms and an impact assessment. The consultative impact assessment should also resolve the traditional critique of the UN as a reactive architecture-mandates created in response to specific situations without clear entry-exit scoping-to collectively reconfigure a robust architecture balancing strategic priorities across funding, tradeoffs and impact, while operating within the confines of doing better with less.

The UN80 process must be seen as distinct and complementary to the Pact for the Future implementation effort to make the international system more effective, inclusive and fit for 21st-century challenges. In this regard, we recognize it as a relevant process that will shape the way the UN is able to carry out the planning and implementation towards this vision. As such, we commit to engage in this process, as it is part of, and a pre-condition to, implementing it.

The MGoS is the largest institutionalized space of coordination and articulation of civil society and a diversity of stakeholders, in a manner to support and uphold participation in the aspirational 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, key pillar of the United Nations. In this manner, we have engaged so far in all the conversations that have been made public, but we believe we can support in bringing about a sound and thorough involvement of different constituencies and actors that are keen in adding their voices to the discussions.

Upcoming negotiations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Mandate Implementation Review:
Regarding the negotiation process announced, we suggest that negotiation sessions are open to the participation of civil society through ECOSOC-accredited NGOs, and that spaces

are provided for interventions from them, borrowing the good practices from the HLPF political declaration negotiations. We also encourage active coordination and conversations between Member States and the co-facilitators, and as much as possible, we have shared spaces where Member States and civil society actors can participate together, to allow us to share our views directly with Member States.

CSO architecture in the UN

Reforms/alignments undertaken under UN80 initiative must guarantee and expand existing spaces for civil society constituencies and rightsholders; this includes:

- Adopting and expanding self-organised, universal and equitable civil society engagement models across various UN avenues, building on the MGoS model
- Developing clear system-wide guidance for a rights-based approach to civil society participation across all UN agencies at national, regional and global levels
- Expanding the space for civil society to access UN processes.
    - While ad hoc engagement of civil society has taken/takes place in some General Assembly processes (such as Stockholm+50 International Meeting, Summit of the Future), it must be expanded in its entirety and systematically
    - Similarly, provisions must be developed towards civil society participation in Security Council mechanisms, in addition to the “invitation-only” model for select debates and the monthly CSO briefing with the President
- Recognizing civil society as key partners in implementation of various UN frameworks at national, regional and global levels
- Rightsholders are the best “experts” and lived reality is the best “expertise”, growingly acknowledged in the traditional scientific methods. UN entities must enhance their partnerships with universal constituencies representing rightsholders, including women, children and youth, older persons, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and non-traditional knowledge streams, going beyond traditional think tanks and policy institutions.

Ensuring this would require that various UN80 workstreams explicitly integrate “civil society” as a cross-cutting issue.

Strengthening regional to global coordination

Strengthening regional-to-global engagement offers a practical pathway to maximizing impact, enhancing engagement, and lowering costs while improving the overall quality of inputs into UN processes. Regional engagement is closer to on-the-ground realities, and more efficient at capacitating countries with variant development levels, and avoids forcing artificial commonalities at the global level.

The role of the Resident Coordinators within the regional processes should be enhanced through a triangulated model of engagement that links regional issues, multilateral discussions, and the UN’s performative scope. Regional mechanisms can also help address global consultation fatigue - for example, UNCTs could submit reports alongside VNRs to reduce duplication of work.

Another key gap is the lack of systematic integration of regional inputs and outcomes into the design of the global processes in New York and Geneva; including better connecting

regional thematic processes and committees to the respective global processes (eg, ECE forestry committee with UN Forests Forum; ESCAP's committee on FfD with the FfD Follow-up Forum and FfD-4 implementation, etc.), including RFSDs inputs to meaningfully inform the HLPF.

Budget Considerations (Workstream 1)

While we recognize that the proposed programme budget is largely an administrative exercise, we underline that its real impact must be assessed not only through staffing figures but through the articulation and preservation of essential functions - particularly those related to civil society engagement, human rights andgender equality. These functions must be retained regardless of staff cuts.

We further caution that the full consequences of deep budget reductions on programmatic delivery may only become visible over time. A monitoring process of impact must accompany the budget reductions.

The proposed programme budget of 2026 provides a detailed picture about proposed staff cuts and efficiency gains but it does map impact assessment of these cuts, including on a programmatic level. This includes:

- Access of civil society to the UN processes: we do not want a scenario where in accreditation or in-person participation of CSOs to process is restricted by the budget cuts
- Human-rights based programming
- Intergovernmental transparency

We therefore urge Member States and the Secretariat to ensure that long-term mandate implementation and equitable and meaningful participation are not inadvertently undermined by short-term efficiencies.

Mandate Review Implementation (Workstream 2)

MGoS key recommendations submitted to IAHWG on Mandate Implementation Review highlights that CSOs are not just observers, we actively participate in shaping UN mandates through: a) Drafting annotated proposals and zero drafts; 2) Convening cross-regional coalitions; 3) Briefing UN Missions and Member States; and 4) Framing priorities through lived experience and technical expertise.

We focus on justice, equity, dignity and accountability to be embedded in every stage of the UN mandate life-cycle-design, implementation, monitoring, and review- ensuring that no one is left behind.

Six Key Proposals include:

1. Mandate Co-Creation
2. Equity and Inclusion Audits
3. Accessibility Standards
4. Budget Transparency
5. Mandate Mapping & Digital Registry
6. Early Warning & Sunset Triggers

We caution that the process of considering how efficiencies can be made within mandate creation attention be paid to ensure that this does not lead to the unintended consequence of reducing mandates on issues which have often not been prioritised or resourced by the UN and member states – these may require specific and concerted efforts across different parts of the UN system to make progress.
We call for the protection of civic space through safe participation protocols, and commitment to our engagement in drafting spaces. Last but not least for future mandates not to undermine progress on SDGs.

Structures and Programmes (Workstream 3)
The multidimensionality of crises confronting humanity require an efficient, proactive and responsive UN to address the current and emergent challenges. WS3 proposals cannot be coherently conceptualized without a holistic impact assessment of their effects on Peace & Security, Humanitarian, Development and Human Rights domains across national, regional and global levels and attention to disproportionate implications for different segments.

UN@80 in general and WS3 particularly does not:

- Include a normative assessment on the ambition of the Charter, and what complementary normative principles have emerged (based on the collective normative gains over the last 80 years) to strengthen the collective code
- Include any introspection on WHY the UN's performance across domains has stagnated/reversed, and causes for this, , and how to prevent further reversals in the future? It is of concern that g. MSs in the SC may wish to manage and hold the institution hostage to their foreign policy priorities
- Include an assessment of interest groups with conflicting interests across the pillars of the UN with Corporates involved in:
    - ➢ Profiting from conflicts/wars/catastrophes (Peace & Security)
    - ➢ Involved in IFFs (asset stealth, tax evasion, profit shifting, trade mispricing) and creating underdevelopment; involved in environmental processes (fossil fuel companies) (Development)
    - ➢ Documented violations of rights in so many dimensions (Human Rights)

All of which constitute flagrant violations of the aspirations of the Charter and the normative frameworks to which they are bound.

- Include an assessment of exogenous factors with performative contradictions to the UN by different actors (including MS, IOs, Blocks)
- Include an accountability mechanism for actors/factors/interests violating the collective aspirations of the Charter, the institution, the people and the planet.

Any merger, sunset, or streamlining must include explicit safeguards for transparency, human rights integration, and civil society participation.

- All the proposals, including UNDP/UNOPS, UNFPA/UNWomen, UNAIDS sunset, must not compromise the strategic scope of the mandates. They must be grounded in evidence-based assessments reckoning potential trade-offs, fragmentation and dilution, factoring rightholder concerns and must reinforce gender equality mandates
- The reconfigurations must also factor the mandates' ability to address new challenges such as AI governance, Outer space affairs, IFFs tracking and so on

- The proposals must focus on purposeful reforms enhancing the systems' overall ability for coherence, efficiency and responsiveness based on historical/institutional lessons and best practices that can be scaled up

Conclusion

In conclusion, MGOS reiterates that the UN80 must be not seen as a narrow and short term cost-saving and efficiency exercise, but as an opportunity to realign the UN with its founding principles and values at a time of profound and interconnected crisis. Ensuring that reforms advance human rights, gender equality, peace, intergenerational justice and inclusive development is not optional - it is the foundation of a credible multilateral system in which 'we the people' believe and are supportive of Civil society constituencies and rightsholders must be fully integrated as equal partners in shaping mandates, informing decisions and monitoring implementation. The MGoS reaffirms its commitment to engaging across all workstreams to ensure that the multilateral system emerges from this moment not diminished, but strengthened and more capable of meeting the needs of present and future generations across the life course

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