

POLICY COUNCILS TOWNHALLS

FUTURE ENVISIONING EXERCISES

BRIEFING NOTE

"Governments fit for care at the heart of the social contract"

FUTURE ENVISIONING EXERCISES

The Future Envisioning Exercises, mandated by the UCLG Policy Councils, are a first step to **unfolding the Pact for the Future**. They are the common point of arrival of the present Policy Councils and Town Halls, building up on the outputs and outcomes of both processes, the UCLG World Congress and the 2023 Retreat. While, simultaneously, they are **a common point of departure**: they are a space of dialogue and co-creation in which the UCLG political leadership, together with organized civil society and partners articulated in the UCLG Town Halls, will aim to reach real and tangible conclusions through forward-looking consultations around 4 Entry Points to unfold the Pact for the Future: **Reclaiming the Commons, Redefining Finances, Regaining Trust** and **Rebuilding Governance Architecture**.

The conclusions reached will inform the deliberations of UCLG's statutory bodies, thus contributing to the political mandate of the Pact and the roadmap of our world organization. These deliberations will also inform how the Pact for the Future contributes to the UN General Assembly's revision of the 2030 Agenda at the SDG Summit, as well as to the 2023 Summit of the Future, which will build on and contribute to the Secretary General's "Our Common Agenda".

Kindly access the meeting [by clicking here](#).

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1. SETTING THE SCENE

The escalation in conflicts between countries, and within countries, is a sad reminder that current global governance architecture is being challenged. The institutions that have withstood the current world order are questioned, and the context of polycrisis has overwhelmed our sanitary, governance, and social systems. The current financial order does not work for lower-income countries that are in debt distress.

The UN Secretary General's Common Agenda calls for the need to **renew the social contract between Governments and their people and within societies**. This renewed social contract, it is argued, originates at the subnational governments.

The Common Agenda calls for an update on governance arrangements to protect the commons, delivering public goods and ushering in a new era of universal social protection (health, education, skills, decent work, housing and digital rights). All spheres of government should be involved in the protection of the interest of future generations and the new government architecture should understand and assess the future. In times of overlapping crises, all public spheres must be ready to be convened in response to complex global crises.

As mentioned by María Fernanda Espinosa, President of the 73rd UN General Assembly and member of the Drafting Committee of the Pact for the Future, at the first session of this process:

"There is a big difference between "government" and "power". Transforming governance architecture means having the power to transform and act. We have the challenge to transform bureaucracies and develop empowered and informed citizens. To reclaim power is more than a seat at the table. It means revitalizing citizenship, and developing empowered, and critical communities... not only to speak to the local power but to engage in global matters. We need to talk about how we close the gap between governments and the power to transform. We need to talk about power sharing in a genuine way, to truly democratize power.

We need a broader recognition of what democratic legitimacy entails. We will call for the development of a new culture of democratic emergency governance. We will strengthen public institutions and emphasize the need for feminist leadership and power sharing at all levels of government. Our constituency will contribute to the renewal of multilateralism through meaningful engagement in global agendas and representation in decision-making bodies.

The Future Envisioning Exercise understands the call for rebuilding the governance architecture as the need to impulse renewed impulse to well-resourced decentralization and subsidiarity and active and informed civic

participation. Promote inclusive, participatory, responsible and accountable multilevel governance leading to global action. Protect and promote all public institutions, ensure the integrity of the justice system, and ensure equal access for all citizens.

Rebuilding governance architecture calls to ensure an equal partnership between institutions and the people that local and regional governments represent, strengthening social protection systems, and building solidarity with younger generations. The renewed governance architecture that we envision requires renewed and strengthened political representation for the youth, women, and underrepresented groups. It will involve all stakeholders in the future of work, beyond legislation and job provision, acknowledging the notion of time as a currency and its lack of availability as a form of exclusion that must be addressed.

National governments are organizing silos, and it is high time to redefine sovereignty and develop shared sovereignty. We will need to build a more representative multilateral system beyond Westphalian models, to ensure a renewed governance that builds trust between each other and protects our commons. We need not only a seat at the table but to redesign the table.

The Pact for the Future of UCLG is understood as a tool to unleash dialogue, and multilevel governance, catalyzing the translation of the “Power of We”, the power of local and regional governments to transform, into reality.

The exercise on the transformation of the global governance architecture is also an exercise in ensuring the delivery of public global goods, on how to rebuild trust between communities and the institutions that represent them, and on how the global financial architecture will need to be transformed to finance the global goals.

The work of the Future Envisioning Exercises, and in particular of the exercise on renewing governance, is to inform global processes, influence the ongoing conversation on UN Reform, not only within the UN walls but also the broader array of actors, indigenous peoples, to retool governance architecture.

2. KEY FACTS AND CHALLENGES

Delivering change at the speed and scale required by the SDGs demands a transformation of public institutions, and demands renewed commitments from political leaders. The transformation of global architecture governance calls for the development of a new legislative environment that considers all stakeholders and that includes dialogue with civil society, it calls for transforming the decision-making table

It requires bold decisions, the transfer of resources from one sector to another, the creation of a new regulatory environment, the development of the next generation of public services, the establishment of caring systems, the appropriate deployment of new technologies and the guaranteeing of digital rights, the advancement of longer-term holistic perspectives, the mobilizing of a wide range of actors and the capacity to advance disruptive change while strengthening trust and social cohesion.

As it stands, it is national governments that decide how to allocate power and responsibilities. An important guiding principle is subsidiarity that holds that functions which are performed effectively by subordinate or local government belong more properly to them than to a higher level of government.

The renewed governance architecture needs to also enable governments to be more trustworthy and to increase trust between public institutions and citizens. Understanding the drivers of trust is a complex endeavor, however, there is a general consensus that trust in public institutions is contingent on the perceived competence of the institutions as well as their values and their communications; communities need to see that their governments are responsive to their needs .

The renewal of governance needs to address the continued erosion of human rights, prompted by the growth of inequalities both within and between countries, propelled by the COVID-19 pandemic. Growing poverty, and massive loss of jobs and income requires renewed decision-making mechanisms, involving all stakeholders in ensuring the goals are met.

Some of the challenges that the renewed governance architecture needs to address are, as follows:

- Government censorship and limits to freedom of expression are a human violation that continuously erodes the relationship between communities and institution.
- Tied to this, the proliferation of fake news is also a factor in the growing crisis of trust, which is tied to the eroding relationship between communities and their governments.

- • In spite of the efforts of the multilateral system, wars remain and tensions continue to grow, which calls into question the legitimacy of the multilateral system in building peace.
- • Human rights violations occur at the digital level, and technology is often seen as a barrier to the enjoyment of full human rights for all people.

3. GENERAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the new essentials, rights and public services that our collective must protect, strengthen and promote in alliance with the whole of society?
- What support and transformations should we demand from the international system to ensure that the multilateralism of the future enables the success of our shared strategy?
- When addressing the renewed structure of governance, what is the purpose of the decision-making table? What does the new power structure look like?
- How can local and regional governments, and other stakeholders, be better involved in decisions at the international level to prevent the escalation of tensions into violence?

4. AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

UCLG World Secretariat

INTERACTIVE CONSULTATION

UCLG World Secretariat

ENTRY POINT

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5. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- UCLG, KNOW (2022). 09. Commoning. *Pathways to urban and territorial equality: Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies*. GOLD VI. <https://www.goldvi.uclg.org/en/democratizing>
- UCLG Town Halls (2022). “Trust and Government Policy Paper”. https://decidim-uclg.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/decidim/attachment/file/4288/TH_PP_Trust_Government.pdf

- UCLG (2022). The Pact for the Future of Humanity
https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclgpactforthe_future.pdf
- UN (2022) Secretary-General's Report on "Our Common Agenda"
<https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/>