



Statement at the Opening of Action Day 2 ahead of the Summit of the Future

21 September 2024

Excellencies, Secretary General, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, friends. It is a great honour to speak here today as we face the future. My name is Oli Henman, and together with Rashima Kwatra, I am one of the Co-Chairs of the Major Groups & other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism, a self-organised space which connects across very diverse stakeholder groups on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This mechanism has been working together since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, recognised under mandate by the General Assembly. Its 21 constituencies are thematic and regional in nature. These constituencies represent millions of diverse people from around the globe.

We have engaged over many months in dialogue with the Co-Facilitators of the key documents of the Summit of the Future. We are grateful for this regular engagement, including at the Nairobi CSO Conference.

Over the Action Days, we are witnessing the energy and dynamism of civil society, our collaboration with a wide range of partners and fresh ideas from so many diverse groups.

We are glad to be here together during the Action Days but our voice must also be heard at the Summit itself. We cannot be excluded from the opportunity to shape our common future and insist on our meaningful inclusion in all UN processes.

In terms of the Pact for the Future and what comes next, I have some key insights based on our shared positions and I am glad that many other colleagues are here to share their views as well.



MAJOR GROUPS & OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Firstly, the Pact for the Future must demonstrate the UN's values to champion a democratic and rights-based multilateral system, ensuring meaningful participation of all stakeholders.

We appreciate the mention of ECOSOC accredited NGOs and also the specific call for meaningful inclusion of 'relevant stakeholders'. However we are very concerned at recent attempts to create additional barriers for accreditation. While we called for greater collaboration with civil society, we do not see it in the revised text.

We welcome the continued dialogue with member states and we commit to engage with a wide range of delegations going forward to ensure a strong exchange of ideas.

Secondly, on Human Rights, we are glad to see recommitment to shared principles on the universality of rights, everyone's rights must be guaranteed, in particular those who face discrimination. Human rights must be safeguarded for all, including women, youth, LGBTI, Indigenous Peoples, older persons and persons with disabilities. While in recent years we have witnessed populism and inflammatory language from political leaders, which has led to an 'us' and 'them' culture, erosion of rights, the rollback of hard-fought equalities and massive violations in situations of conflict.

In order to guarantee these rights, the UN's own structures for protection and enhancement of rights must be strengthened. We call for accelerating support for the Human Rights Pillar of the UN and forging clearer links at the country level with Resident Coordinator teams.

Thirdly, we are pleased to see renewed commitments for financing to deliver real change. It is essential that adequate financing is agreed to deliver the SDGs - and in particular we are glad to see the reference to targeting programmes to support those who are being left behind.

We believe that the Pact provides one step along the way but note that crucial discussions on financing will be taking place next year at the Financing for Development Forum. We welcome efforts to reform the International Financial Architecture to ensure a more equitable international financial system. This must



MAJOR GROUPS & OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

include the move towards a UN Tax Convention and action to rectify the deeply unjust debt situation facing many countries, whereby interest rate payments overwhelm the ability to deliver essential services of health, education and social protection.

Fourthly It is essential that this pact sets out a renewed vision that is built on equity, fairness and trust. We must step back from the brink of catastrophic wars and conflict and instead direct our energy and resources to a re-investment in social protection.

We therefore look forward to the World Social Summit in 2025 as a key moment to reset our priorities and ensure recommitment to people centered development, to accessible and affordable public services and social protection for all.

The Pact's recognition of the need to protect wildlife and ecosystems is a positive step, but we must accelerate efforts to restore biodiversity for the health of our planet and future generations.

Finally - climate change imperils us all. We are therefore glad to see the commitment to accelerating action on climate change and scaling up finance for adaptation and prevention of loss and damage. However, these commitments are not compatible with new fossil fuel exploration and we therefore urge all governments to halt any new oil, gas or coal exploration.

The future is in all of our hands. We have it in our collective power to re-shape the world now, for our children and their children. It is essential that we do not go home empty-handed.

When I go back home to see my young boys and hear the optimism in their voices, I want to be able to say that yes, the world is listening and change is coming. We cannot contemplate failure!