



Human Rights 75 Roundtable

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 75:

Looking to Future Generations

26 June 2023, 11:00-13:00, Conference Room 11

CONCEPT NOTE

Context and background

In his [Call to Action for Human Rights](#), the Secretary-General emphasized that “the promises made in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were explicitly to future as well as current generations” and raised the alarm that without action, we risk breaking those promises. Among the identified long-term challenges that will affect humanity, the Secretary-General’s Our Common Agenda report mentions warming and degradation of the planet, as well as managing new technologies such as artificial intelligence and gene editing, demographic shifts towards an older population, urbanization and the evolution of social welfare provision. The report underscores that decisions made today will shape the course of the planet for centuries, and calls for the recognition and advancement of the principle of intergenerational equity. Concrete proposals include the development of long-term intergenerational thinking in decision-making, the adoption of a Declaration on Future Generations, and the appointment of a United Nations Special Envoy for Future Generations.

The 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) offers the opportunity to reflect on new human rights challenges and developments – taking forward the legacy of the UDHR to issues that were not envisaged at the moment of its adoption in 1948. The Secretary-General’s [policy brief on future generations](#) emphasizes issues relevant to the full spectrum of human rights including the right to life, the right to food, the right to housing, the right to health, the right to water and sanitation, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and the right to self-determination. The convergence of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals offers important anchoring points for the elaboration of the proposals of the Secretary-General, including a Declaration for Future Generations and other initiatives. International cooperation is key to ensure fair global access to technology and common goods, necessary to comply with duties stemming from environmental and climate change commitments, and for ensuring the universal fulfilment of human rights, particularly in developing countries.

A reflection on the human rights of future generations opens important conceptual issues, including adequate mechanisms to represent future generations and their interest in decision-making and in judicial protection, and how to include the possible impact on the human rights of future generations among the criteria for policy and decision-making. Part of the reflection on future generations has already generated action in the environmental and climate change fields, which opened the scope for an important cross-fertilization with human rights. Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic should also be taken into account to ensure preparedness for eventual public health emergencies. There is a need for a deeper understanding and reflection on these ideas from a human rights perspective, both to identify possible gaps and tensions, and to enrich the policy and practical actions with human rights-based contributions.

OHCHR is convening a roundtable, including United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and human rights experts, to discuss these issues and build a common understanding of what it means to secure the human rights of present and future generations.

Objectives

- To highlight the key importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as a living document, to frame new challenges and frontier issues and to form the basis of solutions to future challenges, including the human rights of future generations;
- To take stock of recent developments on the human rights of future generations, identify key messages and underline the value of adopting a human rights perspective in the proposals on future generations and intergenerational equity; and
- To discuss possible elements of the proposed Declaration for Future Generations from a human rights perspective, with a view to contributing to the intergovernmental process for its elaboration and the preparations for the Summit of the Future.

Date and time

26 June 2023, 11:00-13:00

Venue

United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 11, webcasted through UN Web TV.

Registration

Please register by 22 June at <http://bit.ly/hr75futuregenerations>

Contact information

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Programme *Moderator: Craig Mokhiber, Director, New York Office, OHCHR*

11:00-11:10 Opening remarks

Craig Mokhiber, Director, New York Office, OHCHR

11:10-12:10 Panel 1: Framing the human rights of future generations

Gabriela Ramos, Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO (TBC): *The UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations and its connection with Human Rights*

Ashfaq Khalfan, Director of Climate Justice, Oxfam America: *The Maastricht Principles on The Human Rights of Future Generations: an NGO/academic contribution*

Bethany Brown, UN DESA: *Ageing, human rights and future generations*

Mario Galbert, young environmental activist, member of OHCHR Youth Advisory Board

Discussion

12:10-12:50 Panel 2: Securing the human rights of future generations

Jasmina Byrne, Chief of Foresight and Policy, UNICEF: *The United Nations System Common Principles on Future Generations, its human rights connections*

Andrew David Raine, Head of Frontiers in Environmental Law Unit, UNEP: *The environment, human rights and future generations*

Magdalena Sepulveda, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: *Reflections from the Maastricht Guidelines*

Roojin Habibi, Global Health Law Consortium/University of Ottawa: *Human rights, public health emergencies and future generations*

Discussion

12:50-13:00 Closing remarks

H.E. Ms. Yoka Brandt, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations and Co-Facilitator of the intergovernmental process for a Declaration on Future Generations

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