

## Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network: Response to the Zero Draft of the “Pact for the Future”

Please use the Table of Contents below with anchor links to easily navigate to any paragraph.

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Overall comments</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>I. Chapeau</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| Paragraph 4 - Recognizing the indispensable role of civil society                           | 2        |
| <b>II. Chapter 1: Sustainable development and financing for development</b>                 | <b>3</b> |
| Paragraph 38 - Strengthening language on the SDG financing gap                              | 3        |
| Paragraph 39 - Making concrete financial commitments to support the SDG Stimulus            | 3        |
| <b>III. Chapter 2: International Peace and Security</b>                                     | <b>4</b> |
| Paragraph 48 - Recognizing civil society in peacebuilding and sustaining peace              | 4        |
| [New Paragraph] Paragraph 50 - Adding paragraph on people-centered justice                  | 4        |
| Paragraph 51 - Supporting and retaining language on “halving violent death rates”           | 5        |
| Paragraph 52 - Strengthening protection of human rights and human rights defenders          | 5        |
| <b>IV. Chapter 3: Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation</b>            | <b>5</b> |
| Paragraph 101 - Strengthening civil society engagement in context of digital transformation | 6        |
| <b>V. Chapter 4: Youth and future generations</b>   | <b>6</b> |
| Paragraph 108 - Strengthening language around children's rights and participation           | 6        |
| <b>VI. Chapter 5: Transforming global governance</b>  | <b>7</b> |
| Paragraph 121 - Strengthening language on inclusion of stakeholders and civil society       | 7        |
| Paragraph 130 - Strengthening protection of human rights defenders and civic space          | 7        |

### **About this brief and the TAP Network:**

The following brief outlines the key recommendations and language amendments from the Transparency, Accountability & Participation (TAP) Network – a coalition of over 400 civil society organizations in over 75 countries working around SDG16+ and to ensure that the 2030 Agenda fosters open, inclusive, transparent, accountable, and participatory follow-up and review at all levels of decision-making.

For any inquiries regarding this brief, please contact the TAP Network Secretariat’s John Romano ([romano@tapnetwork2030.org](mailto:romano@tapnetwork2030.org)) and Elena Marmo ([marmo@tapnetwork2030.org](mailto:marmo@tapnetwork2030.org))

## Overall comments

Overall, while the Zero Draft shows promise in highlighting the trust deficit and need for multilateralism to regain said trust from people worldwide, significant room for improvement remains, particularly in relation to the role of civil society, the need to centre and “turbo charge” the SDGs - and SDG16 specifically - and the need for more specific and actionable political and financial commitments from Member States across the chapters.

As the TAP Network, we urge Member States to **recognize the indispensable role of civil society in ensuring that this Pact for the Future fulfills its promises, and in fostering more peaceful, just and inclusive societies at all levels.** Without stronger support for civil society, and broadening commitments to inclusion and people-centered governance in this zero draft, Member States risk not only failing to address some of the root causes of lack of trust and discontent from citizens within societies, but also risk failing to deliver on the cornerstone promise of the 2030 Agenda to “leave no one behind.”

Further, Member States must sufficiently contextualize the document within the broader multilateral system. At present, the zero draft fails to adequately “turbo charge” the 2030 Agenda as promised at the 2023 SDG Summit. For this very reason in particular, the zero draft **requires more specific and actionable political and financial commitments towards SDG16**, especially considering Secretary-General’s 2023 SDGs Progress Report notes that the SDGs are off track, and that the international community on pace to not meet any of the SDG16 targets by 2030.

As a civil society network working on the 2030 Agenda, we remain steadfast in our commitment to improving the multilateral system as a means of invigorating further actions and progress towards the 2030 Agenda. We stand ready and willing to engage in a Summit of the Future that we hope is strengthened through this resolution, and we look forward to improvements made from this Zero Draft, as outlined in our recommendations below.

## I. Chapeau

The Chapeau section of the Pact for the Future must set the tone for the document, outlining multilateral solutions for present and future challenges, with a view to restore faith and trust in public institutions. This task is only possible in partnership with civil society—people at all levels of governance must see themselves included and represented in the Pact for the Future.

### Paragraph 4 - Recognizing the indispensable role of civil society

*We recognize that challenges such as these can only be addressed through strong and sustained international cooperation. To enhance our cooperation, we need a multilateral system that is fit for the future, ready to address the political, economic, environmental and technological changes in the world, and with the agility to adapt to an uncertain future. We know that multilateral institutions – especially the Security Council and the international financial architecture – have struggled to address the scale of the challenges they face and live up to the world’s expectations of them. Too often, international commitments that are made, remain unfulfilled. To this end, all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, have a vital role in ensuring the legitimacy and accountability of governments and institutions. Engaging with civil society is a prerequisite for governments to meet their commitments to leaving no one behind, and reaching those furthest behind first, and ensuring that our collective efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda are people-centred.*

**Rationale:** Engaging with civil society is essential to ensuring that governments are responding to the needs of their citizens, and to reach local communities that civil society can often reach most effectively. Besides this and following the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 25), citizens and civil society representatives have the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and to be elected and to have access to public services.

Building on consensus developed amongst civil society within the [Rome Declaration](#) process, the language proposed is widely endorsed by civil society organizations. Further, precedent for this language comes from the 2030 Agenda itself, which refers to "other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector".

## II. Chapter 1: Sustainable development and financing for development

The Summit of the Future represents a pivotal and indispensable moment for governments and the international community to bring SDG action and implementation on track. It is therefore critical that the Pact for the Future contains concrete and specific commitments to advance the 2030 Agenda. At present, this section of the zero draft falls short in this regard. In addition to scaling up financial commitments towards SDG16+ and the 2030 Agenda, member states and the international community must also commit to reform the global financial architecture and development system. This includes comprehensive reforms to International Financial Institutions to ensure a fairer system that addresses the debt crisis faced by many countries today, fairer taxation, financial commitments to the Loss and Damage fund, and tackling illicit financial flows.

### Paragraph 38 - Strengthening language on the SDG financing gap

*We are deeply concerned by the substantial increase in the ~~estimated~~ Sustainable Development Goals financing gap and we recognize ~~that a step change is needed in the quantity and quality of development finance to meet the Goals~~ the imperative for a transformative shift in both the quantity and quality of development finance to effectively meet the ambitious targets set forth in the SDGs. We further recognize that civil society funding is a fundamental step to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.*

**Rationale:** A lack of financing and investments has thus far had devastating impacts on governments' ability to deliver people-centred results across the entire 2030 Agenda. As such, it is essential that this section reference the substantial increase in the funding gap for the SDGs. Further, providing opportunities for flexible and accessible funding for local civil society and grassroots organizations is a critical investment towards the commitment to "leave no one behind".

### Paragraph 39 - Making concrete financial commitments to support the SDG Stimulus

*We are committed to ensuring that all countries have the necessary means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including the necessary financial resources. ~~We welcome the call by the~~ We commit to domestic resource mobilization as well as additional ODA commitments to fulfill the call by the Secretary-General for an SDG Stimulus and we commit to actively supporting its development and implementation, fostering discussions at the United Nations and other relevant forums to secure the necessary financial backing. ~~and acknowledge support for its elaboration. We will continue to advance~~*

~~the Secretary-General's proposal through discussions at the United Nations as well as other relevant forums and institutions.~~

**Rationale:** Member States have already agreed to fulfill the 0.7% of GDP to ODA commitment, which can bolster this section with tangible commitments. Further, we strongly support the Secretary-General's call for an ambitious "SDGs Stimulus Plan", which calls for an additional \$500 billion per year towards sustainable development financing.

### III. Chapter 2: International Peace and Security

Language within this section reflects closely the language of SDG16 in the 2030 Agenda. The TAP Network welcomes the very concrete and specific commitment on "halving violent deaths" in paragraph 51 and strongly urges Member States to retain this language as it presents a significant commitment towards implementing SDG16 target 16.1. Similarly, Member States must look to make other commitments, building upon SDG 16 targets. Additionally, we call on Member States to commit to producing National Prevention Strategies as called for in the SG's report on a New Agenda for Peace, with a particular emphasis on the need to consult with local communities, civil society and local institutions in the creation of National Prevention Strategies and relevant peacebuilding processes.

#### Paragraph 48 - Recognizing civil society in peacebuilding and sustaining peace

*[add new para] We recognise the importance of considering the local context and the vital role civil society can play in advancing local solutions to global efforts in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. We reiterate our strong commitment to acting in collaborative partnership and will build on the successes of the 2023 CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding to further strengthen the UN's peacebuilding agenda with crucial insights from local peace actors, including women and youth. We will achieve this by harnessing the UN's convening capacity at the global level once a year and meaningfully and systematically engage with peacebuilding networks.*

**Rationale:** This proposal builds upon SDG 16 targets including around access to justice (16.3), human rights and fundamental freedoms (16.10), legal aid (16.b), civic space (16.7) and the rule of law (16.3). Additionally, we draw on the Secretary-General's report on a New Agenda for Peace, with a particular emphasis on the need to consult with local communities, civil society and local institutions in peacebuilding processes.

#### [New Paragraph] Paragraph 50 - Adding paragraph on people-centered justice

*We recognize that access to justice and people-centred justice supports trust in the rule of law, increases stability, and decreases the likelihood of violent conflict. In the absence of access to justice, people are unable to have their voice heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination, or hold decision-makers accountable. We re-commit to foster stronger people-centred justice within our societies, including by supporting access to traditional, customary and informal justice mechanisms, and to supporting fair, transparent, effective, non-discriminatory, and accountable legal aid services to promote access to justice for all. We commit to halving the global justice gap in all societies by 2030.*

**Rationale:** While paragraphs 50-55 outline the ambitions of SDG16 in general language, people-centered justice is missing from the issues covered in these paragraphs. This paragraph identifies some of the key commitments that governments need to make around improving

access to justice, and includes a concrete commitment to halving the global justice gap by 2030 - similar to the commitment made to halving global violence in paragraph 51. The Declaration of the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law and UN Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems emphasize the right of equal access to justice for all, including members of vulnerable groups. This proposed language also builds upon SDG 16 targets including around access to justice (16.3), human rights and fundamental freedoms (16.10), legal aid (16.b), civic space (16.7) and the rule of law (16.3).

#### **Paragraph 51 - Supporting and retaining language on “halving violent death rates”**

*We recommit to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals to strengthen resilience and comprehensively address underlying drivers and enablers of all forms of violence and insecurity and the consequences thereof, which is central to international peace and security. We reaffirm our commitment to significantly reducing all forms of violence and we commit to halving violent death rates in all societies by 2030.*

**Rationale:** The TAP Network welcomes the very concrete and specific commitment on “halving violent deaths” in paragraph 51 and strongly urges Member States to retain this language as it presents a significant commitment towards implementing SDG16 target 16.1.

#### **Paragraph 52 - Strengthening protection of human rights and human rights defenders**

*We reaffirm that all human rights, women’s human rights and child rights, are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing and that all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis, and that they are essential to international peace and security as necessary guarantees of inclusive societies and protection against marginalization and discrimination and condemn the persecution of human rights defenders and commit to protecting civic space in line with international human rights norms.*

**Rationale:** Obligations of all parties to armed conflict applicable under international humanitarian law and human rights law, including those contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of Children in armed conflict, as well as the Geneva Conventions of 12th August 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977, and reiterate that all parties to armed conflict must comply strictly with their obligations. Reference to the Youth Peace and Security agenda should also be sustained and expanded with follow-up commitments including re-commitment to UN Security Council Resolution 2250.

### **IV. Chapter 3: Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation**

Amidst expansive digital space for expression, civil society is restrained from operating in numerous countries, delegitimized and faced with constant threats and intimidation. Constrained civil society participation has repercussions on the performance of global governance institutions in addition to hindering the possibility of inclusive and participatory decision-making processes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promotes. There have been growing constraints on media freedoms, giving restricted space for freedom of expression and access to fact-based and accurate knowledge. We express concerns about the use of social media propagating adverse messages and the ongoing risks of dis- and misinformation.

### Paragraph 101 - Strengthening civil society engagement in context of digital transformation

*We call upon the United Nations system to support the efforts of developing countries to develop and strengthen their national science, technology and innovation ecosystems. To facilitate these efforts, we welcome the Secretary-General's vision to work towards a UN 2.0 to increase the effectiveness of the Organization through enhancing capabilities in data analytics, digital transformation, strategic foresight, and results orientation, and urge that this be mirrored by an exemplary approach to transparent decision-making and engagement of all stakeholders and civil society to serve as a model for governments at all levels.*

**Rationale:** Constrained civil society participation has repercussions on the performance of global governance institutions in addition to hindering the possibility of inclusive and participatory decision-making processes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promotes. Recognition for a committed and strong partnership to take action as stated in the previous Rome Civil Society Declaration SDG16+ in 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023 is urgently needed in the Pact for the Future and Global Digital Compact Annex.

## V. Chapter 4: Youth and future generations

As a whole, this section fails to adequately situate itself within the broader landscape of child rights and the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. As per UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 1, children are all human beings under 18 years of age and, as such, constitute a group of distinct rights holders under international law. Children require specific support and attention and should not be subsumed in other groupings such as 'youth' or 'future generations.' These terms are not defined by international law and describe a separate demographic with different (sometimes overlapping) rights.

### Paragraph 108 - Strengthening language around childrens' rights and participation

*We commit to funded meaningful child and youth engagement in all United Nations intergovernmental bodies, and processes at the global, regional and national levels by creating inclusive and safe consultative mechanisms, spaces and platforms for engagement, both in person and online, including by providing free and equitable access to the internet, the necessary technology, and the digital skills development children need in order to safely navigate the digital space, as well as facilitate children's access to age-appropriate and gender-responsive information, and build their capacity to gain the requisite skills, knowledge, leadership capabilities and confidence to share their views. We welcome the progress at the United Nations to promote the meaningful engagement of youth, including through the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office.*

**Rationale:** Engaging with civil society is a prerequisite for governments to meet their commitments to leaving no one behind, and reaching those furthest behind first, and ensuring that our collective efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda are people-centred. Besides this and following the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 25), citizens and civil society representatives have the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and to be elected and to have access to public services.

## VI. Chapter 5: Transforming global governance

Within this section, the TAP Network membership is concerned that the role of civil society in ensuring innovations in development, service delivery to the excluded, and transparency, accountability and participation in public affairs is not acknowledged. With a view to transform global governance, Member States must consider the role of transparency in governance to support the needs and fundamental rights of the people and combat corruption. We urge that the Pact for the Future should include pathways to enhanced people's participation in the work of the UN beyond state centric ways of working. Notably, we support the strengthening of the human rights pillar of the UN with a view to defending civic space and addressing reprisals against civil society actors for engaging with the UN.

### Paragraph 121 - Strengthening language on inclusion of stakeholders and civil society

*We commit to facilitating more structured and inclusive engagement of civil society, including but not limited to non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, together with major groups, the private sector, youth, local governments and other relevant stakeholders and regional organizations, in the activities of the Council and its functional and regional commissions. We recognize the role of stakeholders and civil society in ensuring innovations in development, service delivery to the excluded, and transparency, accountability and participation in public affairs. We commit to enabling effective and meaningful partnerships with civil society. We will take steps towards granting formal status and a stronger mandate to the Council's youth forum to enhance youth engagement throughout the Council's cycle.*

**Rationale:** The reference to "organizations in consultative status with the ECOSOC" in paragraph 121 is problematic, due to the inherently flawed and exclusionary nature of the ECOSOC NGO accreditation process. This paragraph may have been intended to provide an impetus to "open" up to civil society more widely, but this reference undercuts that intention. There exists agreed language related to civil society within the 2030 Agenda—which names "other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector".

### Paragraph 130 - Strengthening protection of human rights defenders and civic space

*We also resolve to further strengthen the United Nations human rights system with the aim of ensuring effective enjoyment by all of all human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development. We reaffirm that the international community must treat all human rights in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis. We further resolve to end reprisals and intimidation of individuals and groups for engaging with the United Nations and condemn the persecution of human rights defenders and commit to protecting civic space in line with international human rights norms.*

**Rationale:** Engaging with civil society is a prerequisite for governments to meet their commitments to leaving no one behind, and reaching those furthest behind first, and ensuring that our collective efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda are people-centred. Besides this and following the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 25), citizens and civil society representatives have the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and to be elected and to have access to public services.