

UN Summit of the Future: The Way Ahead

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The Summit of the Future was held during 22-23 September 2024 in New York, US. It brought together representatives from Member States including Heads of State, Ministers, senior UN officials, academia, local and regional authorities, private sector, civil society, youth and other actors. The Summit of the Future is seen as a historic 'once-in-a-generation' opportunity. The idea behind it can be traced to the [Declaration on the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations \(2020\)](#). This Declaration provided the basis for deliberations on several key issues during the Summit of the Future. However, the formal proposal for the Summit was made in the UN Secretary General report titled [Our Common Agenda \(2021\)](#). The report called for a High-level Advisory Board led by former Heads of State and/ or Government to report on issues pertaining to global decision-making. The consultations and preparations for the Summit of the Future began in February 2023.

The world leaders adopted a [Pact for the Future](#) which shows commitment towards five core areas vis-à-vis Sustainable Development and Financing for Development, International Peace, Security and Crisis Prevention, Science, technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation, Transforming Global Governance and Multilateralism, and Equity and Inclusion. A total of 56 action points have been proposed to ensure that global governance and multilateral institutions are equipped to ensure resilience and sustainability for future generations.

Science, Technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation are one of the key focuses of the Pact. Weaponisation of emerging technologies, prevention of arms race in outer space, and military use of AI are chief concerns underlined in the Pact. The Pact acknowledges global disparities in science, technology and innovation, aims to bridge these through scaling up and addressing barriers to access and participation of women and girls in STEM fields. The ethical concerns pertaining to the use of new technologies are also highlighted. The Pact emphasizes the use of science in decision and policy-making to address complex challenges and greater support to developing countries to strengthen SDG-related research and innovation.

The two annexures of the Pact, the [Global Digital Compact](#) and Declaration on Future Generations are particularly significant and a welcome initiative. The Global Compact provides a global framework for digital cooperation with commitment to bridge digital divides for an inclusive, open, sustainable and secure digital future. The Compact brings forth these objectives along with the guiding principles, commitments and actions to enhance responsible, equitable governance of emerging technologies including artificial intelligence. The Compact recognizes digital public goods and digital public infrastructure as key drivers of inclusive digital transformation and innovation. Quality data and secure cross-border data flows are critical for evidence-based policy-making across SDGs. The review, follow up and monitoring of the

implementation of the Compact at national, regional and global level keeping in mind their realities and capacities is important, with greater engagement of several stakeholders.

Further annexed is the Declaration on Future Generations which commits to promote international stability, peace and security, comprehensive and targeted strategies to achieve sustainable development and economic growth, mitigate environmental challenges, ensuring disaster risk resilience. It recognizes the significance of strengthening cooperation and partnership with greater focus on gender equality and indigenous communities. The Declaration has also put forth the case for long-term anticipatory governance and the role of youth.

The Pact symbolizes a milestone and a progressive approach towards reformed multilateralism and global cooperation and fast-tracking the achievement of SDGs for the future. The Pact also reiterates the significance attached to the United Nations. Despite overall consensus, there were reservations voiced by some countries. The Pact has brought forth several action points on ongoing challenges, but the obstacles in its implementation require further attention and efforts. It is necessary to take note of ongoing geopolitical tensions which may complicate achieving the goals of the Pact.