

HER TURN DECALOGUE FOR THE NEXT SECRETARY-GENERAL



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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

It is with great pride that I welcome the HER TURN Decalogue, an initiative led by GWL Voices that reflects our deep commitment to reimagining global governance through inclusion, dialogue, and accountability. At a time when the multilateral system is under significant strain, this initiative creates a meaningful space for reflection on the leadership the world urgently requires. It brings forward the voices of young people as active contributors to shaping its direction and priorities, with the invaluable collaboration of the Geneva Graduate Institute.

Intergenerational dialogue is not a symbolic gesture; it is a democratic necessity for the future of multilateralism. Listening seriously to youth demands challenges us to rethink assumptions, expand perspectives, and strengthen legitimacy in global decision-making. The HER TURN Decalogue embodies this principle by translating the concerns and aspirations of a new generation into concrete priorities for the next United Nations Secretary-General. In doing so, it reminds us of the enduring promise of the United Nations Charter—“We the Peoples”—and invites us to consider, with responsibility and hope, the world we are collectively inheriting and shaping.



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Introduction

At a critical moment for the multilateral system, the **HER TURN Decalogue** is a message from young people to the next United Nations Secretary-General. It brings together the voices, expectations, concerns, and aspirations of a generation committed to strengthening multilateralism and building a more inclusive, accountable, and effective United Nations.

Developed through dialogue, reflection, and engagement with global leaders and experts, these ten priorities represent our vision for the future of international cooperation. They are both an invitation and a challenge: to lead with courage, integrity, and purpose in a world facing unprecedented complexities. As the United Nations approaches its next chapter, we offer this Decalogue in the spirit of the Charter's opening words—"We the Peoples"—as a contribution from those who will inherit the consequences of today's decisions and help shape the world of tomorrow.



1

Champion Inclusive Representation and Intersectional Leadership

The next United Nations Secretary-General must embody the values and principles of intersectionality in a transformative and empowering manner, leading by example through:

- Emphasizing regionalization and localization;
- Including local knowledge, lived experiences, and community-based practices in UN resolutions, mechanisms, and programming;
- Working towards a common framework for diversity, inclusion, and representation in governance, including measures to advance women's representation at both UN and Member State levels;
- Promoting women's leadership at all levels of decision-making, including senior leadership positions and the office of the United Nations Secretary-General;
- Ensuring that Indigenous Peoples, youth, persons with disabilities, and historically underrepresented communities have meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

Beyond achieving gender equality, this principle recognizes that inclusive governance requires the representation of people of all backgrounds and identities. The Secretary-General should lead by example by strengthening equitable representation within the Organization, promoting regional diversity, and valuing local knowledge and community-led solutions as essential contributions to global policymaking.

A more representative United Nations is not only more legitimate, it is more effective. By ensuring that underrepresented communities are aware of and able to exercise their rights and opportunities for participation, the next Secretary-General can help fulfill the UN's promise to serve "We the Peoples" in all their diversity.

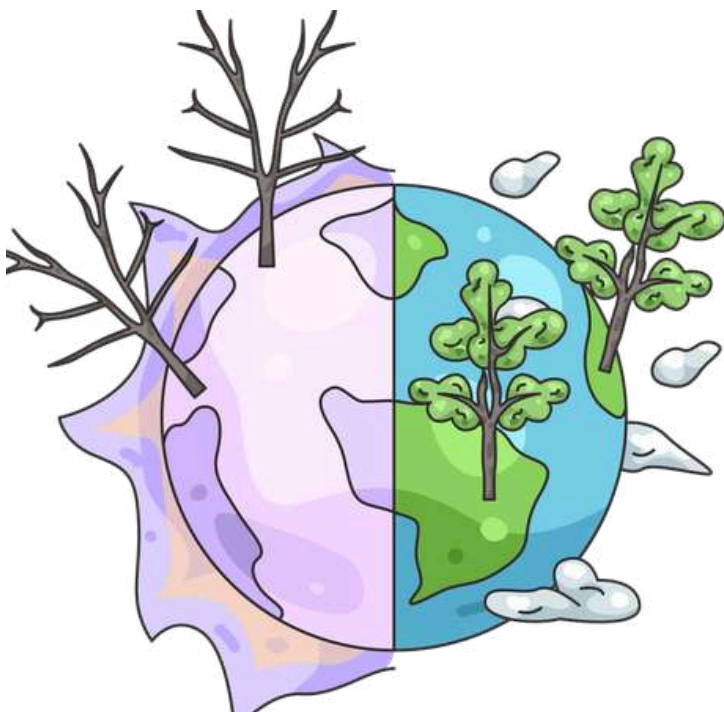


2

Strive for Context-Specific and Accountable Environmental Leadership

The next Secretary-General must advocate for context-specific and accountable environmental decision-making, recognizing that climate change is a defining global challenge with impacts across migration, economic development, peace and security, public health, and intergenerational justice.

This requires ensuring that environmental and climate considerations are systematically integrated into all areas of UN decision-making, with solutions tailored to national and local contexts while grounded in scientific evidence. It also means strengthening accountability so that commitments translate into measurable action.



The Secretary-General should actively support locally led approaches and the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, while respecting national sovereignty. But the role also demands principled leadership: the willingness to speak clearly on the urgency of the climate crisis and to advance action that meets the needs of both present and future generations.

3

Promote Reform of the United Nations Security Council

The next Secretary-General must promote the re-structuring of the United Nations Security Council veto power to ensure a more equitable distribution of power within the international system and to strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of multilateral decision-making.

In pursuing this objective, the Secretary-General should consistently advocate for a rebalanced global governance architecture that reflects contemporary geopolitical realities and ensures fairer representation of Member States in decision-making processes. This includes addressing structural inequalities that limit the Council's credibility and its ability to respond effectively to global crises.

Such reform is essential to restoring trust in multilateralism and ensuring that global peace and security governance is grounded in fairness, transparency, and shared responsibility.



4

Prioritize Prevention as the Foundation of Peace

The next Secretary-General must be someone who recognizes prevention as the most effective and least costly form of creating and sustaining positive peace, and who understands that conflict prevention is the most effective form of peacekeeping.

This requires strengthening the UN's capacity to anticipate and address risks before they escalate, through integrated and cross-sectoral approaches that connect peace, development, humanitarian action, and human rights. The Secretary-General should promote "nexus thinking" across the system, ensuring that financing, programming, and decision-making are aligned to prevent crises rather than respond to them after they occur.



By prioritizing prevention, the UN can shift from reactive crisis management to proactive peacebuilding, delivering more sustainable and inclusive outcomes for affected populations.

5

A Global Chief Mediator for Peace

The next Secretary-General must be a global chief mediator who asks “peace where, for whom, and what does conflict mean” by backchanneling, facilitating dialogue, and finding compromises while upholding the UN Charter. This role requires proactive and discreet diplomacy, including the use of the Secretary-General’s good offices, sustained engagement with all parties to conflict, and the ability to maintain communication channels even in highly polarized contexts.

The Secretary-General should also promote a more inclusive and representative approach to peace and security governance. Countries directly affected by conflict should have a meaningful voice in decision-making processes, rather than leaving influence concentrated solely among the Permanent Five members of the Security Council. These states should also be empowered to shape and implement their own peacebuilding and recovery agendas.



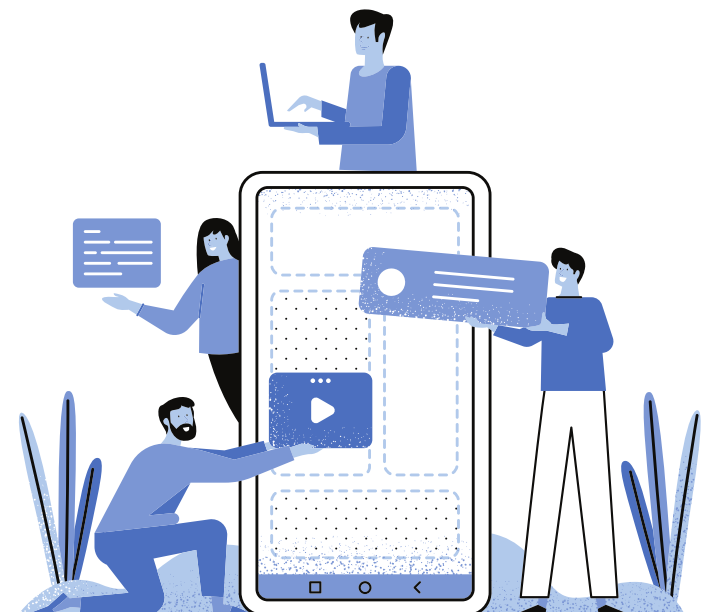
This will be done by fostering trust, creating space for negotiation, and supporting more equitable governance, the Secretary-General can help transform conflict situations into opportunities for dialogue and sustainable peace.

6

Ensure Accountability of Non-State Actors and Bridge the Digital Divide

The next Secretary-General must hold non-state actors accountable for their influence on human rights and protect future generations from a growing digital divide. This requires strengthening global norms and governance frameworks to ensure that technology companies, platforms, and other influential non-state actors respect human rights standards and operate with transparency and accountability.

The Secretary-General should strive for investments in equitable global access to technology and digital infrastructure, recognizing connectivity, digital literacy, and technological capacity as essential public goods. Particular attention should be given to ensuring that children, young people, and women have meaningful access to digital opportunities and are protected from the risks and inequalities associated with technological exclusion. The Secretary-General should also be held accountable for advancing efforts that safeguard future generations from the consequences of a widening digital divide.



7

Strengthen Meaningful Participation of Civil Society and Marginalized Groups

The next Secretary-General must invest meaningfully into empowering civil society, indigenous peoples, youth women, disabled under-represented groups at the UN by providing voting power to CSOs and peoples when decisions affect lived realities and promoting awareness of rights and global citizenship.

This requires moving beyond consultation toward structured and meaningful participation in global decision-making, ensuring that those most affected by UN policies have a direct voice in shaping them. The Secretary-General should also act as a global chief mediator and a special envoy for future generations, actively engaging civil society to better understand conflict dynamics and societal needs from the ground up.

By strengthening civic participation and embedding intergenerational responsibility into UN practice, the Secretary-General can help build a legacy of inclusion, ensuring that today's decisions reflect and protect the leadership role of future generations.



8

Activate Charter Mechanisms for Institutional Renewal

The next Secretary-General must invoke Article 109 of the UN Charter to resolve the power dynamics of the UNSC and ensure fairer representation.

Beyond its symbolic importance, Article 109 should be used as a practical Charter-based mechanism to trigger structured review processes on the functioning of the United Nations system, including the Security Council's decision-making architecture. The Secretary-General should use their convening power to support Member States in translating reform commitments into formal negotiation pathways.

They should also ensure that any agreed reforms are followed by effective implementation across the UN system, strengthening institutional coherence and operational capacity so that governance changes are not only declared but realized.



9

Ensure Global Digital Access, Literacy, and Protection

The next Secretary-General must invest in global digital access and literacy for youth and children to protect against trafficking and the growing global labor divide.

This requires ensuring that children and young people, particularly young women, have safe and equitable access to technology, digital infrastructure, and online spaces. The Secretary-General should promote global efforts to close digital gaps by strengthening access, skills, and protections, while addressing the risks of exploitation, trafficking, and harmful labor practices that emerge in unequal digital environments.



In doing so, the Secretary-General should also engage constructively with non-state actors, including technology companies and digital infrastructure providers, to improve governance, safeguard rights, and ensure that technological development supports inclusive and safe economic participation for future generations.

10

Embed Environmental Mainstreaming in All Decision-Making

The next Secretary-General must ensure an environmental caveat in all decision-making, guaranteeing that environmental and climate considerations are systematically integrated across the full range of UN policies, programmes, and operations.

This requires mainstreaming environmental sustainability as a core principle of governance, ensuring that decisions in peace and security, development, humanitarian response, and economic policy are assessed in terms of their environmental impact and long-term consequences. The Secretary-General should promote coherence across the UN system so that environmental priorities are not treated as a separate agenda, but as a foundational element of all action.

By embedding environmental responsibility into every level of decision-making, the United Nations can better align its work with the urgency of the climate crisis and the need to safeguard the planet for present and future generations.



Afterword

The HER TURN Decalogue stands as an important document, giving concrete expression to the conviction that the future of global governance must be designed and owned by those who will carry it forward. Its contents reflect both an urgency and a strong sense of responsibility – and convey the need, in a context of radical uncertainty, for courageous leadership and a mobilizing vision.

Peace remains the highest form of human and collective security—and it cannot be sustained without a profoundly renewed and reinvented multilateralism. The years ahead will be decisive, and in this context, the role of the next Secretary-General of the United Nations will be especially critical in guiding, mobilizing across divides and generations, and reimagining the international community's common purpose.

To advance that ambitious project, she or he will be able to rely on the engagement of the young – a generation ready to rise to the challenges before us. This generation not only calls for a seat at the table—it is fully entitled to it, as the complexities we face today and those that lie ahead will be theirs to confront and resolve. Their commitment carries a promise: to rebuild trust and restore the legitimacy of our multilateral system by fostering its necessary adaptation and greater inclusivity.



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