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T20 Policy Brief

Task Force 06

STRENGTHENING MULTILATERALISM AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Building High-Ambition Multilateral Commitments to Future Generations in the Pact of the Future: A Cross-Country Comparative Exploration of Innovations in Intergenerational Policymaking in Support of Effective Global Long-Term Governance

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Abstract

Placing future generations at the forefront, the UN Summit of the Future process proposes long-term governance approaches based on intergenerational fairness, solidarity and awareness of historical legacies as essential to addressing local and global challenges. The following diagnosis and recommendations draw upon the insights from think tanks and civil society organizations associated with the Future Generations Pledge network, a global community advocating for an ambitious agenda for Future Generations.

We propose a holistic assessment framework to evaluate whether regions and nations are suitable for effective long-term public governance. We conclude with recommendations and initiatives by G20 countries to advance this agenda.

We argue that fairness between and within generations is crucial for building effective collective action to navigate future transitions and move beyond recurring cycles of “neglect and crisis”. This aligns closely with Brazil 2024’s “Let’s Rethink the World” objective, focusing on equity for current and future generations. Brazil 2024’s G20 presents a critical opportunity to connect this conversation with the UN SOTF and continue through COP 16 on Biodiversity in Colombia and the G20 in South Africa in 2025 while remaining cognizant of the BRICS movement.

Keywords: Long-term governance; future generations; assessment framework; citizen engagement; intergenerational fairness.



Diagnosis of the Issue

Amid overlapping crises, misinformation, and growing mistrust in multilateralism, the Summit of the Future (SOTF)¹ aims to renew the multilateral system and produce a Pact for the Future. This includes a Declaration for Future Generations to ensure today's decisions do not negatively impact future generations' rights and livelihoods. The Declaration should accelerate reform towards long-term multilateral governance.

Debates over the climate and biodiversity crises underscore the impact of current decisions on present and future generations. Recognizing that we are causing irreversible environmental damage, judicial decisions in countries including Peru, Brazil, the US, and Germany affirm that considering future generations is a matter of justice, not merely solidarity.

Emerging technologies like quantum computing and AI can significantly influence society, business and science, for good and ill. Yet, law and policymakers often lag in regulating them effectively due to lack of long-term vision. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed global unpreparedness and poor coordination, a scenario likely to recur under short-term pressures imposed by inevitable global shocks.

Globalization's impact on cultural and linguistic diversity and the loss of traditional knowledge and customs threaten our ability to 'be ourselves' and retain what makes us

¹ The SOTF was proposed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his 'Our Common Agenda', with recommendations for a new social contract anchored in human rights, better management of critical global commons, and global public goods that deliver equitably and sustainably for all. Unfortunately, there is no mention of a new social contract in the current working documents shaping the Pact for the Future.



uniquely human. This also risks losing accumulated knowledge that underpins social, economic, and environmental innovation.

These examples highlight the need for governance that acknowledges global interconnectedness, human-environment interdependence, and the necessity of thinking and planning across multiple time horizons, including those of future generations. The slow progress toward the 2030 Agenda reveals a fundamental disconnect between long-term goals and short-term governance models.

No future-facing governance model or approach suits every country or region; it varies by context and culture. Despite successful experiences in long-term public governance worldwide, information gaps remain. Assessing where countries stand and leveraging innovative practices and insights from officials, politicians, civil society, and youth is critical to ground future conversations in proven success.

As a multilateral space addressing global welfare issues beyond North-South divides and short-term national interests, the G20 is well-positioned to develop and spread transformative long-term public governance practices. With Africa, the world's youngest and fastest-growing population, now included, the G20 has the opportunity to lead this crucial agenda.

Goals And Genesis of the Maturity Framework for Long-Term Governance

Recognizing the profound interconnection between current decisions and their lasting impact on present and future generations, the international community needs robust, foresighted governance mechanisms founded upon intergenerational engagement. Key to this goal is the assessment, development, and dissemination of innovative practices in long-term public governance for equity and sustainability.

Drawing upon the Brundtland Commission report on Sustainable Development², this policy brief seeks to nurture enduring and intergenerationally equitable systems of public governance, wherein policies are crafted to:

- Enable individuals of all demographic profiles to fulfill their needs, regardless of socio-economic status.
- Meet present needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own.

Grounded in a decade of international dialogues led by the School of International Futures (SOIF), this framework articulates essential components of effective long-term and intergenerationally fair governance ecosystems³. It includes maturity indicators across various public governance areas and features a comparative assessment tool illustrating countries maturity levels, demonstrating the practical applicability of the framework. Presented as a snapshot of qualitative assessments by a diverse cohort of practitioners as of May 2024, it aims to stimulate discussion rather than offer exhaustive conclusions.

² 1987 Brundtland Commission Report “Our Common Future”, Chapter 2, para 1.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>

³ See also CEPA strategy guidance note on Strategic Planning and Foresight _
https://unpan.un.org/sites/default/files/Events/Events%202022/Strategy%20note%20%20Ostrategic%20foresight%20Mar%202021_1.pdf



Assessing long-term public governance preparedness

Mature long-term public governance ensures that there is a systematic assessment of future risks and opportunities, ensuring intergenerational fairness and informed policymaking. Long-term and intergenerationally fair governance systems involve citizens in setting long-term goals, undertake systematic foresight⁴ to inform policy-making and implement measures that consider the welfare of future generations.

The maturity levels of essential elements for effective long-term public governance vary across time and countries. Some dimensions may be well-established in certain governmental areas but underdeveloped in others. This policy brief proposes a framework allowing regions and countries to assess their context for each element using a maturity scale (Appendix A). This assessment serves as a foundation for identifying innovations, areas for improvement, and relevant stakeholders. As a flexible and standardized framework, it facilitates the sharing of promising practices among peer countries.

An initial indicative assessment has been conducted on eleven countries and the European Union, based on discussions with country practitioners, providing an international maturity heatmap (Appendix A). Additionally, insights have been gathered from conversations with national and regional practitioners, civil society leaders, and academics involved in global communities of early adopters.

Evidence indicates that intergenerationally fair long-term governance systems commonly exhibit the following characteristics:

⁴ For the purposes of this note, foresight is defined as the “structured and systematic way of engaging with uncertainty about the future” (Maree Conway 2016).



i. Public service is prepared for the future

Governments have foresight capacity and capability, ensuring transparency regarding risks and opportunities. Three elements that need to be in place for mature foresight capability⁵.

- **Leadership recognition:** leadership acknowledges the value of foresight, allocates resources, focuses on pertinent issues, and accepts analysis outputs.
- **Skilled teams:** teams with diverse skills that blend creativity with systematic approaches, effectively communicating policy-relevant outputs.
- **Evidence-based processes:** systematic, evidence-based processes connected to academia, addressing policy questions.

ii. Citizens are involved in shaping their desired futures

While every society needs a social contract, its implicit and explicit arrangements, policies, institutions, and value systems differ across time and space. Increased efforts are needed to decolonize and decenter our knowledge and value systems, learning from communitarian visions and experiences when rethinking and designing our social and economic models⁶. Intergenerational and diverse voices shape the end goal of policies. This ensures that decisions impacting the long-term are informed by quality insights, local

⁵ See Features of effective systematic foresight in governments around the world, developed by the School of International Futures (SOIF).

⁶ Much can be learned from Indigenous People's knowledge, way of life and communitarian visions such as Ubuntu, Buen Vivir or Eco-Swaraj, where humans and nature are deeply connected, and social relations grounded in reciprocity and respect.



knowledge and evidence from people who are often best positioned to understand implications of emerging change.

To ensure that diverse views inform the renewal of social contracts that are fair and inclusive with all generations, policy should be:

- **Accessible:** designed to cater to diverse communities, needs, and cultures, incorporating the voices of Indigenous communities, as well as the poor and marginalized groups, including women and girls
- **Evidence-based:** involving of experts to address misconceptions and ensure early resolution of issues
- **Inclusive:** allowing for genuine engagement, facilitating diverse views, and exploration of trade-offs among those
- **Supported by political leadership:** political involvement in supporting and elevating at the national or regional level the vision of the communities they represent

iii. Leaders make intergenerationally fair decisions supported by future-aware government machinery

Governmental structures actively recognize and consider future implications. Certain institutions and processes, including the “machinery of government,” incentivize and reward the protection of the interests and rights of future generations. A combination of five broad categories of intervention is needed:

- **Goals:** Establishing national targets based on the societal stock rather than output, aligning with long-term societal and environmental impacts
- **Legal instruments:** legal mechanisms like constitutional requirements for long-term targets and transparent outcome monitoring



- **Institutional alignment:** institutions aligned with long-term outcomes for enforcement, monitoring, education and information dissemination
- **Adequate monitoring tools:** aligning discount rates with long-term effects and employing risk analysis for significant system changes
- **Capacity:** investing in institutional capabilities and organizational resources to address long-term issues effectively

iv. **Integration for sustainable outcomes**

It is, however, at the intersection of the three dimensions where deep governance innovation occurs. The Welsh Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015), with its associated institutions and mechanisms, is a leading example of the transformative potential of a holistic approach. It is underpinned by the National Audit body and a Future Generations Commissioner, a duty upon public bodies, and legislation about the seven well-being goals identified in a National Dialogue “Wales We Want.”

Although not exhaustive, the maturity framework for foresight capability (Appendix B) allows for in-country assessment and cross-country comparison of these dimensions together. The framework is based on the experiences of pilot countries and on the views of a global community of foresight practitioners and advocates.

Based on the analysis above, this policy brief provides a framework to enhance G20 countries' preparedness for anticipatory and long-term governance amid overlapping crises and uncertainties. This framework will facilitate the sharing of current practices and the commitment to support long-term and intergenerationally fair governance ahead of the Summit of the Future.

In this section, we set out four key recommendations for G20 countries. Due to their cross-cutting nature, these recommendations and the associated actions would positively impact the work of all the G20 Task Forces. Each recommendation is accompanied by country-level examples in Appendix C.

Recommendations

1. Support a high-ambition Declaration for Future Generations. This will ensure:

- Multilateral and national implementation instruments for intergenerationally fair policies, including appointing a UN Special Envoy for Future Generations and holding an annual Forum to review progress
- Robust accountability and oversight measures at the General Assembly, ensuring the UN itself and States make necessary progress

2. Adopt an assessment framework to help identify innovations and monitor progress. This will ensure:

- A global framework providing a common language and platform to develop understanding among countries and regions.



- Regular country-level mapping to capture changes over time, to identify gaps and priorities, and ensure stability of long-term public governance
- Identification of policy, advocacy and transformation opportunities at both country and collective levels, helping to navigate change in a consistent manner and with clear principles and values

3. Convene intergenerational and multi-stakeholder dialogues and build institutional capabilities of governments, leading to new eco-social contracts. This will ensure:

- Consideration of diverse visions about the future across countries and cultures, incorporating indigenous knowledges to build resilient and inclusive futures
- Enhanced collective capacities to assess nature and wellbeing beyond GDP, focusing on other dimensions critical for the protection of dignity and the reproduction of life
- Technical capabilities around systematic foresight, such as horizon scanning, long-term trend analysis, and scenario planning, to create anticipatory and fair policies
- Support to the localization of Sustainable Development Goals and establishment of decentralization mechanisms to promote bottom-up policymaking

4. Convene a community of legislators and constitutional courts to explore how to support the interests of future generations. This would ensure:

- A shift of mindset towards a rights-based approach to development and a strengthened role for countries in protecting the rights of future generations
- A role of auditors and public financing in supporting this transformation



Scenario Of Outcomes

There are several scenarios for ownership and use of the heatmap process for long-term governance, including:

i) **G20:** using the heatmap to lead advocacy and implementation of intergenerationally fair policies across the countries that host most of the world population. Adoption by the G20 would encourage wider use by other countries.

ii) **United Nations:** This is valuable for supporting the implementation and assessing progress of the Declaration for Future Generations, including by the potential UN Special Envoy for Future Generations. The Envoy could use it for annual international assessments to identify areas needing further UN support.

iii) **OECD:** Leveraging on its programs (including Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, Observatory for Public Sector Innovation, and Government Foresight Community), resource capability-building, and support the diffusion of good practices internationally.

iv) **Regional Bodies:** For example, the African Union, the ECLAC, the European Union, or the ASEAN could use it as a learning platform to debate long-term challenges and develop support programs for members in areas of common interest.

v) **Open model:** Guiding any city, region, or country to assess and improve their long-term public governance for better intergenerational outcomes.

The G20 is crucial in preparing for and responding to future challenges. Along with other international governance bodies, the G20 applies critical pressure to ensure nations balance immediate needs with long-term challenges. This framework can facilitate open dialogue and knowledge sharing to prepare the world for the future.

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Appendix A

Example of a heatmap of long-term governance maturity based on the three elements required for effective long-term public governance, based on an initial assessment of the maturity of 11 countries and the European Commission, including Australia, Brazil, UK, US, and South Africa. Numbers are included rather than the names as the research is still in progress, so this is an illustrative table.

Maturity of application of 4 elements needed for effective long term public governance			
Maturity of intergenerational engagement of citizens in national policy	Maturity of foresight capability	Maturity of intergenerational machinery of government	Maturity of integration citizen engagement, systematic use of foresight and machinery of government to recognise intergenerational issues in national policies
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

Below are the assessment criteria to build the heatmap:

Assessment	Explanation
Not known	No information is available at the time of writing.
No evident adoption	This rating indicates that regions or nations have not established formal mechanisms.
Some trials started	Regions or nations are trialing their approach to long-term governance.
Established in some areas	Elements of the foresight ecosystem are established in one or more of their government departments but not in all departments.
Widespread adoption	Some nations will have widespread adoptions when many or most government departments have established a foresight ecosystem.
Leading practice	Aspects of the foresight ecosystem are established and deliver real and significant impact.



Appendix B

There are three frameworks, one for each foresight capability, machinery of government, and citizen engagement. Maturity is needed in all three areas for good intergenerational outcomes. The user assesses their current situation for each of the characteristics - this provides clarity of any changes needed to improve the maturity of their foresight capabilities further.

Characteristic	Intergenerational engagement: level of maturity			
	1	2	3	4
Real engagement	Token consultation with no evidence that views are considered	Consultation	Full and regular engagement	Co design of long term strategies
Established structures for engagement, such as youth councils	No use of intergenerational led structures for engagement	Ad hoc creation of structures such as youth councils	Established structures such as youth councils with feedback loops	Co creating, symbiotic relationship

Characteristic	Systematic foresight: level of maturity			
	1	2	3	4
National long term strategy in place	No long term strategies	Strategies look out 5 to 10 years	25+ year strategies in some areas of policy	25+ year national strategy on key social economic and environmental issues
There is dedicated funding	None dedicated to	Ad hoc funding as	Some departments	Established ongoing funding

Characteristic	Machinery of government: level of maturity			
	1	2	3	4
Long term thinking is valued by leaders	Focus is solely on responding to immediate issues	Leaders provide support to individual foresight	Small group of leaders championing wider	Established cohort and community of senior leaders
Legal requirement or social expectation to consider long term implications for all policies	No requirement	Ad hoc consideration	Legal requirement for some areas of policy	All policy include an assessment of the long term implications in the regulatory impacts statement
Cross party long term oversight	No cross party activity on intergenerational issues	Informal cross party engagements on long term issues	Cross party futures committee	Experienced cross party group supported by experts supporting nationally agreed long term strategy
Independent oversight ensuring accountability on intergenerational outcomes	No independent oversight			Independent organisations that is well funded with strong voice
Risk analysis replaces cost benefit analysis when appropriate in policy analysis	Only use BCA to assess policy proposals	Some trials in use of risk analysis	Risk analysis used regularly in some departments	Deep expertise in BCA and risk analysis ensures that the right approach is used for issues needing system level change
Intergenerational approach underpins discount rates	Discount rates not used	Standard market returns used as basis for discount rates	Market returns adjusted for length of investment	Adjusted to reflect nature of investment and social value of time
National progress assessed according to stock not flows	Traditional GDP for the nation	GDP and commitment to some international standards	National progress assessed against living standards framework	National adoption and monitoring on wellbeing and SDG
Accounting standards require assessment of long term risks using systematic foresight	No foresight expectation	Some organisations incorporate foresight in their risk assessment and reporting	Limited number of organisations required to assess risks using foresight	All large organisations required to use foresight tools to assess key long term risks
Institutions designed to deal with shocks	Minimum resource to deal with today's issues, no practice drills or established approaches to prioritise resources	Occasional practice drills, with established structures for crisis management. No additional resources for crisis	Some organisations are well prepared and resources for crisis	Regular event practices, established approaches and governance to manage resources between agencies. Investment in critical assets to respond to events



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