



Summit of the Future Action Days Side Event

Room for Optimism A Precondition for Success in Challenging Times

September 21, 2024, 13:00 - 14:15
Room CR6 at the United Nations HQ in New York

Organized by: Baha'i International Community (host), Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations, Permanent Mission of Vanuatu to the United Nations, UNU Center for Policy Research, UN Futures Lab, Buddhist Tzu Chi, Citizens for Global Solutions, Climate & Sustainability, Climate Governance Commission, Club de Madrid, Coalition for the UN We Need, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, Geledes, GWL Voices, International Alliance of Women, International Environment Forum, Kenya SDGs Forum, Oxfam International, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, Plataforma CIPO, Project Starling, Stimson Center, World Federalist Movement

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Hundreds of recommendations were directed toward the Pact for the Future and its related processes, representing significant consensus around the need for change. Yet, success will be measured by how the Summit is able to prevent and respond to complex and growing risks—and it is hope and a commitment to the wellbeing of humanity, ultimately, that will sustain such efforts. We need a shared, optimistic narrative, alongside a sophisticated understanding of the challenges we face, in order to overcome inaction. This event provided an opportunity for Member State representatives, UN officials, and civil society actors to contribute to a narrative grounded in optimism. The event began with a five minute documentary film (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ak3iLMV4YY&feature=youtu.be>), specially produced for the Summit, in which representatives from various areas of the international system shared what it is from the Pact for the Future that brings them hope in the face of the very real challenges before us. Keynote speakers and attendees in the event then offered their own reflections and reasons for optimism, highlighting one or

two actions that they thought have particularly strong potential and proposing next steps to take that action forward.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- What is it about the Summit of the Future that inspires hope in you – with a specific eye towards the negotiated outcomes?
- When you are speaking to others about why you do this work, what justification do you give—especially given the challenges we see in the world today?
- In early October, after High Level Week when the dust has settled a bit, what is “step one” in ensuring that the Summit was a success?
- How can international actors contribute to a collective narrative that draws on a clear-eyed understanding of global challenges but also identifies justified reasons for optimism?
- How can optimism and hope for the future be approached not simply as positive feelings, but tools to be drawn upon in summoning the commitment and mobilizing the energies needed to address complex global challenges?

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- International actors need to be more proactive in telling the positive stories of the UN and the multilateral system, along with the many challenges.
- Communication efforts should focus more attention on prescription—evoking the world that we want to create; articulating a vision of a positive, hopeful future—versus description of the world we currently have.
- Cynicism and pessimism are often credited with more cache and sophistication than hope and optimism. It takes courage to find potential and possibility in things, and not just shortcomings and failure. We need to support one another in building a culture of expressing optimistic viewpoints, and not just feeding into the critique that is so common.
- Acknowledgement of reasons for hope can come through institutional communications channels, but should also be a conversation that is extended to more and more colleagues through informal conversations and face-to-face interactions. We all can advance such an exploration through our own communities and networks.
- Fear of change, particularly in culture and tradition, can limit optimism. Effort should therefore be made to expand grassroots conversations on how beneficial new realities can be integrated with worthwhile elements of heritage of the past.

Webpage to find more information:

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/13wElosJmae-Q0W3EvNE-aZNt3tDj05Mv/view>

- <https://www.bic.org/news/bics-room-optimism-inspires-youth-elders-uns-summit-future>