

The Tallinn Declaration 2021 (*draft by 29th August 2021*)

A programme for institutional change

We have come from many countries, in Europe and beyond, to meet in Tallinn. Some attended our first meeting to address this issue in Feb 2020 and which started a journey which took us to Sousse, Tunisia in Sep 2020 where we heard voices from the MENA region and from Africa, and then to the online conference in the UK in Oct 2020.

Now reunited, we represent the generations of the United Nations itself for in
1945, some were here at its creation, in
2020, we marked its 75th anniversary, and in
2045, some will be here to mark its centenary.

We recognise we are living through a period in which the need for reforming how we respond to global challenges has never been so urgent, witnessing some of the most ambitious policy regimes in a generation targeting both the climate emergency and the inequalities exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.

Even so, our methods for global governance have changed little since when the UN was founded in 1945 so we ask whether these necessary policies might struggle to be realised as so many depend on improved global governance.

But is the United Nations the only forum in which the success of these policies will be judged? We have listened to more than fifty presentations, in person and online, and the overwhelming majority of solutions lie with better leadership by nations themselves, sharing responsibilities with their communities, as we show here and also in the accompanying Citizens' Action Plan.

Nevertheless, we recognise the need for institutional change within the United Nations itself and firstly address certain key constraints.

Institutional Change

The UN75 Declaration (September 21, 2020) was adopted unanimously by Heads of State and Governments of all 193 member states, setting out twelve commitments. For these, we press for more urgency in determining their parameters and timescales but we expect that within days, the UN Secretary-General will announce his programme on this so we have not examined them exhaustively in our discussions.

We hope and expect that he will support fully the introduction of both well-trying and novel public consultation fora and mechanisms, such as the Global Citizens' Assembly, to move these commitments from aspiration into reality, stressing that in order for citizen engagement to be global, it must be authentically local.

Also, we stress the need for that urgency in the delivery of six key elements of the UN75 Declaration enabling its Member States, pressed by us, to:

- Re-equip the United Nations, providing it with the infrastructure to work more closely with the peoples of all nations, across the world,
- Leave no one behind, by ensuring at all times that its participants are representative of the global population, allowing all to participate, leading their own local events,
- Build trust, by encouraging participants to set these Assemblies' agendas and to agree proposals,
- Improve digital cooperation, leveraging digital tools inclusive of all voices,
- Listen to and work with youth, activating youth as agents of change on their own terms,
- Place women and girls at the centre, so that new infrastructures are explicitly designed to positively discriminate.

Other important initiatives for which we urge wide support are set out below:

We are concerned for the protection of the Global Commons and disappointed that the Biodiversity Summit (COP15) has been further delayed.

The increased use of preventive diplomacy to encourage peaceful democratic sustainable development must be encouraged and the remit of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, too long constricted by the UN Security Council, should be strengthened.

The encouragement of mainstreaming in innovative partnership programmes is both an opportunity and an obligation for states and communities but even so, local initiatives should be encouraged to lead, not be dominated from above. This is illustrated by decades of failure by the UN, nations and concerned citizens to find sufficiently persuasive narratives with which to advocate necessary changes in our daily lives. We urge all these to strengthen their public information and education strategies before the upcoming COP26 conference.

The challenge of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) raises conflicting views for which we have had insufficient time to resolve. We fully recognise and applaud the symmetry of the interlocking nature of the SDGs and their interdependence but we see also how fear of imminent climate collapse might lead to SDGs relating to the biosphere (6,13,14,15) seen as more urgent than those relating to socio-economic issues. A brave analysis is to be welcomed.

By extension, each of us is concerned that our own nation might prove to be the obstacle to regional or even global agreement at COP26. We agree that the time when one nation for selfish reasons could hinder the progress of all has now passed. Climate Change consequences know no borders so there is no space for those who believe they can successfully follow behind. We MUST ensure we leave no one behind.

Finally, we reflected on the challenges facing the city of Narva, host for half of our visit to Estonia. The city was once a prosperous community but like many others worldwide, was crippled by superior international competition. However, if the most ambitious outcomes of COP26 are realised, the city might face an added hardship. Its major remaining income from

mining fossil fuel reserves might be completely eliminated – all for the wider good of the global community. Can we leave this city without showing concern for its peoples? We will not forget Narva. We urge the government to liaise with its citizens so that together, deploying every possible innovative stratagem to reinvent it. Narva must not become the metaphor for failure to uphold the SDG iconic commitment to ‘Leave no one behind’.

Climate Change

Enabling an ambitious outcome of the COP-26 in Glasgow: Halting and Reversing the Impacts of the Climate and Ecological Emergency:

We note that SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) remind us that:

- Measures to address climate change should be enforceable at local, national and international levels,
- The climate and ecological emergency must be integrated into all levels and aspects of education as a required and/or assessed subject,
- There must be accurate and accessible climate data,
- There must be legislation to limit and eventually ban the use of fossil fuels and any other activity with a climate impact,
- There must be recognition that the green economy will only be affordable when government ensures it can be widely introduced,
- There must be a communication strategy for every climate related initiative before regulation is enforced, to ensure awareness and time for people and companies to prepare for change,
- Culture and the performing arts can be used as an educational tool to promote sustainability and behaviour change.

Also, we reviewed the Nordic Council’s Circular Business Model, applauding its intention to encourage an innovative approach providing sustainable growth, and the mechanisms in the Toolkit (e.g., Nordic Circular Economy Playbook). We look forward to following its introduction in Nordic states and checking how it might apply to other nations.

We examined the principles of social entrepreneurship and its potential benefit to the community as exercised through ‘Impact Finance’, but much depends on changing attitudes by banks and lenders.

We welcomed the Estonian government’s plan to integrate the implementation of the SDGs at all levels, using indicators to measure its own governance.

We admired how Asian cities from different nations have joined in innovative common environment-related challenges, learning from each other, and also how nations are cooperating similarly. We urge the introduction of similar initiatives in Europe and elsewhere.

However, we are reminded of the SDG’s iconic warning ‘Leave no one behind’ and we draw attention to those in our cities forced by poverty to live in our cities’ most polluted

neighbourhoods, prone to excessive health risks and economic hardship. We have heard strong calls here for equitable environmental justice for what we see is environmental injustice. This has no place in the world we are seeking to create.

In all these cases, it is the role of government to show leadership in recognising and addressing these challenges, most of which surely are common to all. The many presentations we have listened to have led us to believe that proposals to consult the peoples has a long way to go before promise becomes delivery. Earlier, we have urged the UN's Member States to insist on institutional change within the organisation and its many agencies and programmes so now we urge these Member States themselves to look at their own capacity for institutional change.

And this is why we urge them to accept and welcome the concept of Citizens' Assemblies at all levels.

Smart Communities

We have been impressed by the manner in which the Estonian government and its communities have embraced the advantages of Smart Communities, implementing the vision and planning objectives by adopting prescriptive rules and regulations, as well as incentives that encourage public and private pursuit of agreed objectives.

We note that Smart Communities monitor progress towards achieving these goals and enforce compliance with any requirements or policies that have been established for this purpose.

We note that SDG 11 (cities, towns villages etc.) must be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Such Smart Communities are the drivers of growth and innovation in any country so it follows that sustainability and the green initiatives must take root and grow communities, first delivering economic growth, full employment and, together, a Green New Deal. Many communities have the legislative infrastructure to develop as Smart Communities, providing sufficient planning and implementation. In the Citizens Action Plan, we set out more fully the range of activities that can contribute to successful Smart Communities and a Toolkit, encouraging those in other nations to learn from Estonia's leadership.

Thanks

We thank the peoples of our host country Estonia for their warm hospitality, noting its historic journey over these last hundred years from when

In 1921, it joined the League of Nations,

In 1989, its peoples, together with Latvians and Lithuanians, participated in a mass demonstration, forming the Baltic Way human chain across the three republics, and

In 1991, it restored its independence and was admitted into the United Nations, and now,

In 2021, it is an elected member of the UN Security Council.

29th of August 2021, Tallinn, Estonia