



FAQ II – A High Level Representative for Future Generations: Common Concerns and Institutional Intricacies

1. What would the mandate of a High Level Representative for Future Generations look like?

Since this is a new role with no precedent, its mandate requires careful discussion. This institution would be expected to develop the international normative framework for consideration of the needs of future generations. It would offer a political space in which the needs of future generations both social and environmental, and the overriding imperative to prioritize the needs of people, present *and* future, are considered and balanced. Through identification of significant policy gaps or omissions, and providing early warning of system faults, the role would seek to address and remove conditions that encourage inequity and social exclusion. This institution would ensure that this approach is integrated across the UN organs, whilst working closely with Member States.

The proposed powers and responsibilities span international agenda-setting and leadership (including dialogue and advocacy on matters falling within the scope of the mission; and offering advice, on request, on implementation of relevant existing intergovernmental commitments); multi-stakeholder review; capacity-building for innovation at national and sub-national levels; and fostering understanding and analysis related to the mission. An initial task could be to initiate a UN-wide strategy for future generations via a General Assembly resolution, informed through wide consultation, to help UN bodies consider how procedures address future generations. This should help to build upon and complement existing references to future generations in a large number of regional and global treaties and conventions.

2. Does the title of this institution matter?

The title High Level Representative is most fitting to the institution we envision. The title High Commissioner can for example be misleading since the scale of the budget and size of the staff of both the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees would not be an appropriate comparison. These are far larger than anticipated for the office of High Level Representative for Future Generations.

3. Wouldn't this institution simply add to current bureaucracy?

This institution is specifically aimed to tackle the many isolated layers of bureaucracy, the so called silo-approach that often sees policy sectors working separately or even at odds to one another. With a mandate to actively engage in knowledge formation, mediation and providing legislative recommendations, it complements existing governance units, making their decision-making more effective and reliable. Rather than a drain on existing resources, it would bring greater coherence to the existing system, and reduce unnecessary layers and costs of bureaucracy.

4. Even if it streamlines the bureaucracy won't it be very expensive?

Current policy incoherence, the general zigzag of our policy making, ex-post rejections and corrections often lead to unintended negative consequences and wasted expense in redress. Integrated thinking and long-term horizons can help avoid this. A small office (10 people) with a multi-disciplinary staff working in cooperation with existing institutions, agencies and stakeholders is a small cost compared to the savings that would be made by more

efficient policy-making. From consideration of existing examples, an annual budget of US\$2-3 million would be sufficient.¹

5. How can you talk about future generations when we are surrounded by so many problems facing current generations?

Improving the prosperity and dignity of those living today is a pertinent precondition to protecting the opportunities of future generations. Given we already live beyond the carrying capacity of the Earth, this has to be done in an environmentally restorative way if livelihoods are to be maintained and cultivated to ensure fundamental human rights around choice and participation not only for future generations but for current generations also. Working for future generations therefore means defining and implementing sustainable solutions today, and in doing so reversing the visible downward trends in available opportunities that each person is set to inherit.

6. How would the High Level Representative for Future Generations relate to current UN organs?

A number of options are available for the institutional 'home' of this proposal. One option is for it to sit within the Secretary General's office, reporting annually to the General Assembly, or seated in the high level political forum, a universal intergovernmental institution which was decided upon at Rio+20 to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development. A High Level Representative for Future Generations could bring added value to a high level political forum through proactive liaison with other UN organs or affiliated organizations on how their norms and procedures address the needs of future generations. It could also help facilitate the engagement with the public through identification of issues, and liaison at the national level with relevant bodies, and crucially with local communities.

7. Would the High Level Representative for Future Generations have a veto?

The range of the competencies is determined by existing human rights, political goals and commitments on which his or her mandate of auditing will rest. This would ultimately be decided by Member States via a General Assembly resolution. Thus, a High Level Representative for Future Generations cannot make new rules or change existing law or have a right to veto. National sovereignty would not be infringed upon.

8. Does this idea actually work in practice?

This initiative comes from many ideas and national examples from around the world including Hungary, Wales, Canada, New Zealand and the Philippines². Many communities and traditional cultures have experience of using a moral authority, or incorporating a conscience keeper into their decision-making to ensure the consideration of past, present and future and the protection of our environment is always taken into account.

For further information please visit: www.futurejustice.org

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¹ [®]The World Bank Inspection Panel's budget is approximately US\$3.5 million per annum. This covers all operations including salaries and administrative fees.

² A compilation document of constitutions and institutions which reference future generations can be found here: <http://www.futurejustice.org/assets/Database-countries-2.1.pdf>