24th April 2013


Dear Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,

We are writing on behalf of representatives of four Major Groups who all support the establishment of a UN High Commissioner or Ombudsperson for Future Generations. We look to the report on intergenerational solidarity and future generations (para 86 of 'The Future We Want') as a key tool to ensure that intergenerational equity becomes an integral part of UN policy making processes. We would like to take this opportunity to share our views on the scale of the ambition required from the report to help guide the UN and its Member States to create fair conditions for all future generations.

The call made at Rio+20 for the report shows there is a clear need to increase awareness on intergenerational justice and equity and methods to embed long-term thinking in decision-making and across governance structures and systems. We trust that the report will help to identify practical and implementable models to do this.

For sustained human and environmental wellbeing, Ombudspersons for Future Generations have proven very effective in introducing a long term perspective into policy making, linking citizens with governments, and working as a catalyst for sustainable development implementation. At the UN level, a High Level Representative for Future Generations would not be a spokesperson for youth and related issues, but would facilitate a broader discourse to identify common interests of present and future generations. Research highlights the important contributions made by national Ombudspersons or Commissioners already working in several countries: and we trust the report will reflect this.

The lack of precedent for this position at the international level should not limit ambition. A defined role, supported by a small staff can help inform UN institutions and procedures to better engage and apply long term thinking, strengthening programmes and policies to promote inclusive, sustainable human development for current and future generations.

Rather than expecting existing staff and processes to include this agenda, we are convinced that greater impact can be achieved through a designated body, with a dedicated mandate and expertise, to bring immediacy and focus. An independent, high level representative with the mandate to work with Member States will be more able to catalyse reflection and meaningful commitments that can reach beyond the short term, as well as provide early warnings about challenges and solutions for their redress.

To secure governance for the long term, the report should propose to:

- Introduce an institution which serves to protect the wellbeing of future generations at the UN level.
Highlight the value of existing institutional models at the national level which best serve to protect the wellbeing of future generations.

Finally, for a robust and constructive report, we respectfully request that a full consultation process should be held to profit from the valuable expertise and perspective of civil society on this issue.

On behalf of the undersigned organisations,

Yours sincerely

Jakob von Uexkull
Founder & Chair
World Future Council

Lalanath de Silva, Director, The Access Initiative

Anna Watson, Coordinating Group, Alliance for Future Generations
For individual members see: http://www.allianceforfuturegenerations.org/our-members/

Leida Rijnhout, Executive Director, ANPED - Northern Alliance for Sustainability

David Banisar, Senior Legal Counsel, Article 19

Ivana Savich, Executive Director, Centre for Human Rights and Development Studies

Professor Michel Prieur, President, Le Centre International de Droit Comparé de l'Environnement (CIDCE)

Carroll Muffett, President & CEO, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

Dr Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, Secretary General and CEO of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Michael Ewing, Coordinator, The Environmental Pillar

Pat Mooney, Executive Director, ETC Group

Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Vice-President, European Youth Forum

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Maria Cristina Weyland Vieira, Executive Director, Institute of Southern Minas Gerais for Studies and Nature Conservation
Dr Philip Michael, Vice-President Europe, International Society of Doctors for the Environment

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation

Juliet Duff, Chairperson, Irish Doctors Environmental Association

S. Jacob Scherr, Director, Global Strategy & Advocacy, Natural Resource Defence Council

Pedro Krupenski, Director de Desenvolvimento, Oikos - Cooperação e Desenvolvimento

Ben Vanpeperstraete, Chair, Rio+twenties

Reilly Anne Dempsey, Programme Director, Soroptimist International

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Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future

Nadine El Achy, Chair of the World Board, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts