



**United Nations System**  
Chief Executives Board  
for Coordination (CEB)

# High-level Committee on Programmes: Strategic narrative October 2021

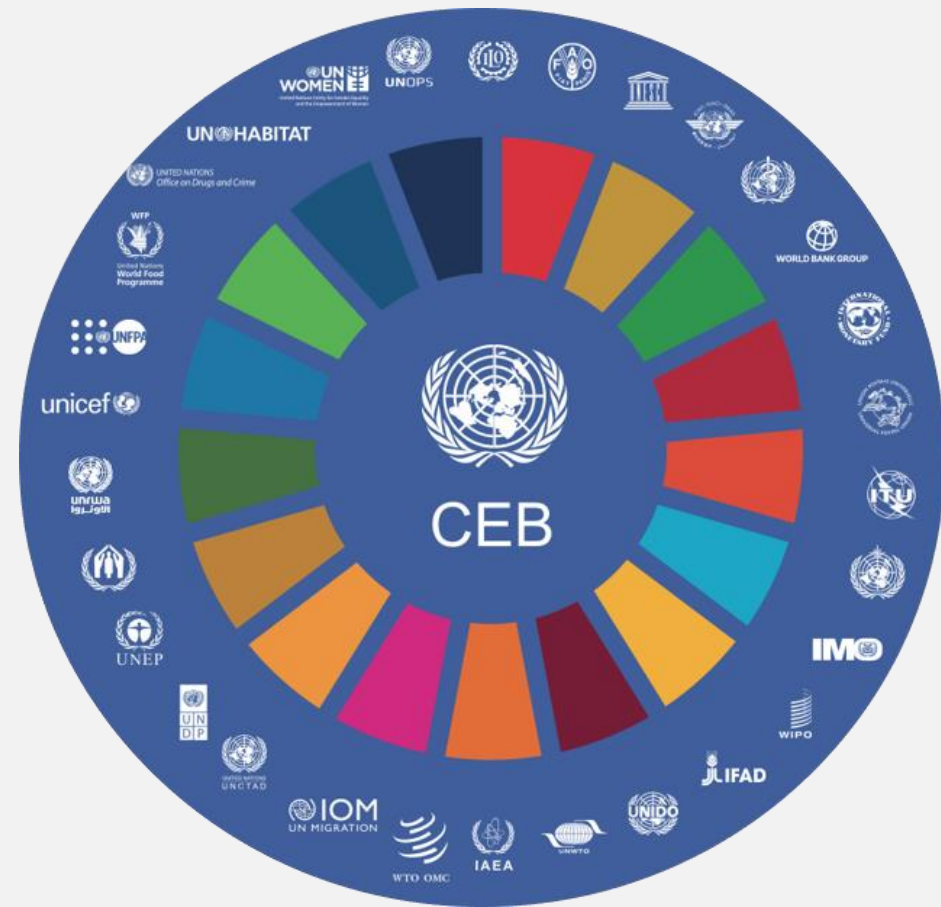
For more information, please contact the HLCP Secretary, Ms. Maaike Jansen.

## High-level Committee on Programmes:

## Strategic narrative

At its [42<sup>nd</sup> session](#) in October 2021, the [High-level Committee on Programmes](#) discussed and agreed on an integrated strategic narrative to guide its work over the coming two to three years. The strategic narrative is grounded in the objectives of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and has strong connections to key themes in the Secretary-General's [Our Common Agenda report](#). The three-part thematic framework identifies fertile ground for new initiatives while allowing the Committee sufficient flexibility to absorb new and emerging issues.

HLCP is an interagency coordination mechanism responsible to the [UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination](#) (CEB) for fostering coherence, cooperation and coordination on policy and programme dimensions of strategic issues for the UN system. A number of important themes are either not directly addressed or not singularly amplified in this strategic framing document, e.g. climate change, rapid technological change, aging societies, and alternative measurements of growth and progress. These themes reflect current megatrends that are transversal in nature and can be addressed in one or more of the framing pillars.



## Thematic Pillar 1: Duties to the Future

The concept of intergenerational equity is foundational to the United Nations. The pledge to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war is its earliest and clearest manifestation—generations living today have an obligation to succeeding generations. This moral and philosophical current has influenced some of the UN’s most notable global reflections and policy agendas—from the 1987 Brundtland Commission report to the 2012 Rio+20 conference, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although acceptance of this principle is broad and growing, there is fear and frustration that commitments to younger generations and future generations have been slow to materialize.

Inequalities experienced in the present have raised awareness of structures that perpetuate inequalities across generations. Calls for vaccine equity, a halt to the degradation of the environment and ecosystems, and debt justice are just a few recent examples suggesting that the time has come to recommit to intergenerational solidarity and address questions of equity more seriously across both geographic and generational divides. Societies across the world are demanding a reimagining of intergenerational responsibility anchored in a new social contract.

The focus on intergenerational equity casts policy-makers’ attention over a longer period and invites efforts to identify and implement effective solutions that will have long-term, sustainable, meaningful outcomes that will outlive present generations. HLCP’s existing workstreams on inequalities and strategic foresight position the Committee well to support the elaboration and operationalization of the concept of intergenerational equity within the UN system. With its whole-of-system perspective, HLCP can help develop both the tools and a culture that foster long-term thinking required to deliver these new commitments.

**“ The time has come to recommit to intergenerational solidarity and to reimagine intergenerational responsibility. ”**

## Thematic Pillar 1: Duties to the Future

### HLCP initiatives

- Exploring and unpacking the concept of “intergenerational equity” as a first step towards developing future analytical products (to be discussed at HLCP’s 43<sup>rd</sup> session in March/April 2022)
- Developing an analytical paper on age-specific inequalities and the intergenerational benefits of universal social protection

### Select related initiatives

- [Stockholm+50](#): a healthy planet for the prosperity of all - our responsibility, our opportunity (June 2022)
- [Human Rights Call to Action](#) track on Rights of Future Generations
- [Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection](#)
- Proposed UN Futures Lab, including future impact assessments of policies and programmes (Our Common Agenda)
- Proposed Summit of the Future to be held in September 2023, including a high-level track for a possible “Declaration on Future Generations”(Our Common Agenda)



## Thematic Pillar 2: New Global Public Goods

Global public goods are provisions that benefit the global community or humanity as a whole, as opposed to only residents of a specific nation or State, for example healthy oceans, the reduction of risks of infectious disease, peace, international civil aviation regulation, and a stable financial architecture. Overall welfare is maximized when these goods are sustained and protected, but this requires collaboration across borders, differentiated investments, and well-functioning global institutions that can invest in and regulate global public goods. Investing in the multilateral system's capacity to identify, deliver, and protect new global public goods will pay a trust dividend, shoring up confidence in the global system and its capacity to respond to the evolving needs and interests of individuals and communities across the world.

An important test of the multilateral system in the coming decade will be whether it can legitimize certain new global public goods, marshal support for them, and provide the collaborative platforms to sustain them. It remains an open question how the multilateral system will pivot to nurture and strengthen global cooperative arrangements and develop accountability mechanisms that support these goals.

Past HLCP initiatives have encouraged integrated approaches that strengthen the multilateral system's ability to deliver global public goods. At its [41<sup>st</sup> session](#), HLCP concluded that its future work on multilateralism must continue to be strategic and support efforts to rebuild trust in global institutions. The theme of new global public goods concentrates this ambition. Against this backdrop, HLCP identified international data governance as a priority issue to be examined over the coming period.

**“ Welfare is maximized when  
global public goods are sustained  
and protected. ”**

## Thematic Pillar 2: New Global Public Goods

### HLCP initiatives

- Scanning processes related to international data governance as a contribution to the UN system's understanding of and promotion of coherence among ongoing efforts in that space (a proposal for the approach is to be considered at HLCP's 43<sup>rd</sup> session in March/April 2022)

### Select related initiatives

- The CEB-endorsed System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics ([CEB/2020/1/Add.1](#)) and the Secretary-General's [Data Strategy](#) both commit to providing open UN system data in recognition of its value as a global public good.
- Our Common Agenda seeks not only to recognize new categories of global public goods but also to make their resilience the object of renewed collective multilateral cooperation. A high-level advisory board has launched to support this vision.
- To protect the online space and strengthen its governance, Our Common Agenda also proposes a Global Digital Compact to be agreed at the Summit of the Future.



## Thematic Pillar 3: Networked and Inclusive Governance

Since its founding, the UN has been premised on a representation of “we the peoples,” but has frequently fallen short on that promise. The transformational potential that might have been harnessed through deeper partnerships with civil society, non-State actors, and the private sector remains largely eclipsed by traditional State-centric approaches to multilateralism and development. The result is sluggish progress on the global development objectives and enduring representational deficits.

The challenge is finding new ways of working that leverage the comparative advantage of allied actors. Rather than building new institutions, existing ones could be transformed into more networked entities, building on established blueprints, such as the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement. This will mean multiplying bridges and redoubling efforts to actively access information, opinions, and insights from a wide range of communities and nurture cooperative arrangements with them.

HLCP is a good example of a system contributing to a ‘hub and spokes’ model of global governance, its greatest asset being its breadth of representation: it is a forum that boasts the participation of all UN system entities including the Bretton Woods institutions and, through them, a substantial network of partners. HLCP is thus well placed to help move the UN system in the direction of a more inclusive and networked multilateral system.

**“ Rather than building new institutions, existing ones could be transformed into more networked entities. ”**

## Thematic Pillar 3: Networked and Inclusive Governance

### HLCP initiatives

- Analysing and learning from the variety of community stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches used in different UN system entities

### Select related initiatives

- Our Common Agenda stresses the need to place more emphasis on listening to, consulting and engaging with people around the world, and includes proposals such as establishing dedicated focal points for civil society engagement within UN system entities and an Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments



