



# INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE 2024

The role of International Geneva in the UN 2.0



Le rôle de la Genève internationale dans l'ONU 2.0

# DIALOGUE INTERGENERATIONNEL 2024

## COMMUNIQUE OF THE INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE ON THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL GENEVA IN THE UN 2.0

25 APRIL 2024, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND.



UNITED NATIONS GENEVA



DIPLOMATIC CLUB OF GENEVA  
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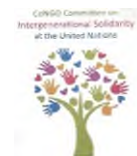
GENEVA SCHOOL OF DIPLOMACY & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



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Global Governance Innovation Network



Peace Child International  
empowering young people

NGO Committee on Ageing  
GENEVA



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**Disclaimer:** This communiqué, prepared by the Intergenerational Dialogue's Drafting Committee, may not necessarily represent the views of all panelists and partners involved in the Dialogue.

# COMMUNIQUE OF THE INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE ON THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL GENEVA IN THE UN 2.0

*The Greycells Intergenerational Dialogue 2024, held on April 25th at the Swiss Press Club in Geneva, Switzerland, brought together people from different backgrounds and generations to thoughtfully discuss the pivotal role of International Geneva's specificities and assets in shaping a future-ready United Nations.*

## 1. Introduction

The participants reaffirmed that the Geneva multilateral agenda and processes are broad, complex, and essential for any "UN 2.0" that humankind may envisage if it is to survive. Multilateralism being in crisis and transition, it should become more collaborative, integrated, networked, preventive and accountable; also, young people have a responsibility to drive change and innovation. At all stages of design and preparations, the Intergenerational Dialogue provided a civil society perspective; it also combined the insights of seasoned professionals with the ideas of younger voices as represented by its Young Discussants.

## 2. Main messages from the Panels

### Panel One: The normative role of International Geneva

#### *a. How can respect for humanitarian law and human rights survive today?*

Geneva is the cradle of humanitarian principles, and home to numerous international organizations dedicated to humanitarian law, human rights, and humanitarian assistance. But when principles and laws are violated, and one is confronted with so much hypocrisy, double standards, and unspeakable suffering, it's imperative for everyone to react, move forward, and embrace an inner transformation journey. Caux Initiatives of Change<sup>1</sup> provide a place for those in Geneva to experience and implement the Inner Development Goals (IDG) needed to accelerate transformation. **Geneva should become the epicenter of where the SDGs meet the IDGs.** The need for a new agenda for peace and a bolder UN is self-evident. **The Human Rights Council (HRC)<sup>2</sup> cannot fill the void left by a dysfunctional Security Council; however, HRC's evolution towards a more inclusive, legitimate, and effective body may hopefully lead to an "agenda to protect human rights in war", based on the principle of a human right to peace.** This possible evolution is being discussed in Geneva today.

#### *b. WTO, climate change and sustainable development: the need for new intertwined rules*

In a 2023 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)<sup>3</sup> highlighted a significant increase in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions; its impact on climate change might soon become unavoidable and irreversible. WTO's existing rules and policies don't take into sufficient account trade environmental impact; a coherent policy integrating trade and sustainable development imperatives is not there yet. Agreed international environmental rules such as carbon taxes and prohibiting environmentally destructive trade in plastics, endangered species, toxic waste and so on are needed. Most importantly, what is needed is **a cross-sector negotiation in Geneva**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iofc.ch/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/home>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/>

covering trade (WTO)<sup>4</sup>, multilateral environmental agreements (MEA-UNEP), sustainable finance and development (IMF, WB), and human rights (OHCHR). New trade rules emerging from such negotiation would need to be economically beneficial, environmentally sustainable, and socially equitable. **To achieve this objective, governments would need to accept relinquishing some of their sovereignty** and prioritize the common good over the current “give and take” approach in multilateral negotiations. Will they?

### *c. The voice of youth*

Young people feel much **anxiety** in respect of the direction the world is taking and have a role to play vis-à-vis those in charge. In the face of mass abuse, gross human rights violations, new wars, and the existential threat of climate change, it is imperative to develop new policies from a **human security** perspective. **SDG 16** is at the core of sustainable development; the UN Member States and their governments will be judged according to the extent to which they have contributed to its achievement.

## Panel Two: Multi-disciplinarity is a routine in Geneva.

### *a. A new eco-social-environmental contract to fight inequalities.*

The UN Research Institute on Social Development (UNRISD)<sup>5</sup> is well qualified to address sensitive questions such as power, inequalities and distribution thanks to its autonomy, diversity and multi-disciplinarity. Being more deliberative and less reactive/fast-paced than New York, the Geneva environment is more conducive to independent research. At the same time, we need **carefully designed and incentivized Geneva - New York coordination processes to bring progressive technical knowledge into political processes** (this was done successfully in preparing Agenda 2030 and the SDGs). **Currently UNRISD is pioneering work on a possible eco-social contract, more ecological and inclusive than the social contract put in place post World War II, which is now clearly broken.** The challenge is to incentivize governments to move beyond current consumption-driven and unsustainable GDP growth policies towards social and solidarity economic models and social justice. **Several Geneva-based organizations (ILO<sup>6</sup>, UNCTAD<sup>7</sup>, OHCHR<sup>8</sup>, the SDG Lab<sup>9</sup>, etcetera) are already working on these issues; their work is resonating in other locations, including New York, Rome, Vienna, and Nairobi.**

### *b. Climate change and human mobility.*

Broadening the discussion on refugees beyond conflict and persecution to include **climate-driven forced displacement** was not easy and required the introduction of the concept of **human mobility**. The discussion started at COP 16 in Cancun in 2010<sup>10</sup> and led to the adoption of the Nansen Initiative in 2015<sup>11</sup>. Displacement driven by disasters and the adverse effects of climate change has devastating social and economic impacts, raises multiple protection concerns and undermines development gains. It is a cross-cutting topic that should be addressed from different angles and through a wide range of measures: humanitarian protection, disaster risk reduction and management, human rights, climate change mitigation, adaptation as well as loss and damage, environmental management, migration governance, etcetera. We need to build on existing good practices and processes to **develop specific guidance on the application of refugee law,**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wto.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unrisd.org/en>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://unctad.org/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr\\_homepage](https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.sdglab.ch/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://unfccc.int/event/cop-16>

<sup>11</sup> <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/nansen-initiative>

**complementary and temporary protection measures in the face of disaster/climate change-related cross-border displacement. Geneva is uniquely positioned for that**, as it hosts the headquarters of UNHCR and IOM, but also OHCHR and UNDRR (UN Office on Disaster Risk Reduction<sup>12</sup>) (UNDRR will host the UNFCCC’s new Santiago Network’s secretariat<sup>13</sup>, providing loss and damage assistance to developing countries vulnerable to climate change) as well as large NGOs and the Red Cross /Red Crescent Movement. The multistakeholder Platform on Disaster Displacement is also a Geneva-based process.

### ***c. The voice of youth***

As revealed by the survey **young people strongly feel they aren’t considered enough in negotiations and decisions on issues that matter so much to them, such as climate, wars and rights**. This is shocking. Youth will bear the brunt of those decisions and need to be better **educated and represented** to have an impact. Also, youth should make more and better use of new digital platforms for negotiations, while being careful about misinformation.

## **Panel Three: Geneva knows a lot about multi-stakeholder mechanisms**

### ***a. ILO tripartism***

The UN system would not function properly without civil society and private sector involvement via consultative arrangements. But the tripartite decision-making which characterizes the ILO is a peculiarity of labor relations, where collective bargaining between employers and trade unions produces legally binding agreements that complement labor legislation. **In developing new international labor standards<sup>14</sup>, in a way ILO succeeded in transforming political issues into technical ones. The so-called ‘technical’ work carried out by International Geneva has much more impact than may be expected from the Security Council in its current set-up (veto power). To some, the draft Pact of the Future<sup>15</sup> is disappointing, and lacks the kind of leading idea that may make a difference.**

A further illustration of tripartism is given by the Geneva -based **International Organization of Employers<sup>16</sup>**. However, its role in employment creation, and promotion of social justice, poverty eradication and ‘decent work’ is not sufficiently understood.

### ***b. The need for multi-stakeholder negotiations on Artificial Intelligence (AI)***

The development, use and regulation of AI requires close collaboration with the private sector, researchers, and educators. **AI can be put to good use to address development issues and assess policy impact**. It can support disaster response via social media use and identify and address gender and other bias. It offers tremendous opportunities to accelerate progress. However, it also presents significant challenges and therefore must be carefully regulated. **Managing AI requires new and better-connected multi-stakeholder mechanisms** such as the Geneva-based SDG Accelerator Lab<sup>17</sup>, which uses open science in an inclusive and transparent manner and protects the rights of citizens. The Geneva Dialogue on the Future of Education<sup>18</sup> and the Geneva

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.undrr.org/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://unfccc.int/santiago-network>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/international-labour-standards>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future-zero-draft>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ioe-emp.org/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.undp.org/acceleratorlabs>

<sup>18</sup> <https://gva-trialogue-23.sparkboard.com/>

Science and Diplomacy Accelerator (GESDA<sup>19</sup>) are other examples of multistakeholder mechanisms already in place in respect of new technologies.

### ***c. The voice of youth***

**Because of its concentration of diverse actors, Geneva offers young people many opportunities to express themselves and interact with decision makers.** AI facilitates this interaction, if properly framed and regulated via multi-stakeholder mechanisms. The ambiguity around AI was apparent in a recent conference sponsored by ILO on AI and job protection, and actively attended by young people. It clearly showed that AI constitutes both a threat and an opportunity for the future. Also, the Conference illustrated the gap existing between people making decisions on technology and people directly affected by it. This gap has been there since the industrial revolution. It can be narrowed only through dialogue. For young people, Geneva is a terrific hub of knowledge, cooperation, and engagement with different organizations. The latter are perceived as less inaccessible than initially thought. The participation of three student associations in the Dialogue shows that young people know that to make the best out of International Geneva they must get organized.

## **Panel of Conclusions: Key takeaways and messages**

- There was an elephant in the room: New York is paralyzed, the paralysis is spreading, and what can Geneva do? How can you sell positive stuff about International Geneva when New York is paralyzed?
- International Geneva is purely a Geneva construct. New York is paralyzed because the Permanent Representatives of the 193 Member States defend respective national interests and are bound by respective national social contracts. There is no general understanding of what works in the UN, but it is agreed the UN should focus on global public good and invest in development based on a concerted global framework. This framework is needed to drive change at all levels. And as young people made abundantly clear, move away from tokenism!
- The role of civil society – peace movements, feminist movements, liberal movements - in shaping multilateralism should not be underestimated.
- Multilateralism has been very resilient: the functional multilateralism of the League of Nations produced a normative framework which civilized international practices, protected vulnerable groups, and improved living conditions. Geneva is a center of international expertise but also a diplomatic city which contributes to building peace.
- International Geneva may not exist outside Geneva, but it is a reality. The distinction between Geneva as ‘technical’ and New York as ‘political’ is nonsense. The connection with field activities is important; civil society plays a major and visible role. The Geneva ecosystem is varied and rich, but vulnerable. In the digital era, Geneva should up its game; it is still hard to sell to the media and the public what is happening in Geneva.
- Young people have been actively involved in the Dialogue, and their priorities addressed, but they feel their impact and role in the multilateral system are still limited; they are not sufficiently integrated in discussions and decisions; a more inclusive and transparent governance structure is needed.
- It is crucial to engage young people in all initiatives, as well as to ensure that the voices of women and men from all generations, including older persons, are heard, and acted upon. The successful case brought by Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland <sup>20</sup> at the European Court of Human Rights underscores this point, demonstrating that older women

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<sup>19</sup> <https://gesda.global/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://en.klimasenioren.ch/>

and men can also lead effective movements that benefit everyone. Such action sets an inspiring example for all generations.

### 3. Statistics and main messages from the online anonymous survey.

#### **a. Statistics**

- i. The survey elicited 146 responses; 50% of the respondents were between 32 and 65 years old; 57% were female; they were from 32 nationalities – of which over half from the “Global North”; 38% had a background in law or international relations; 32% worked for the UN system and 13% for NGOs.
- ii. The top priority issues identified for the future of multilateral cooperation were peace (16%), the environment (14%) and poverty reduction (13%); 38% considered that issues discussed in Geneva had limited impact on peace and security discussions held in New York; 46% considered that limited media coverage of Geneva issues was due to their complexity; 63% considered that NGOs were somewhat influential in multilateral negotiations; 44% had limited knowledge of the Summit of the Future, with expectations about its impact on Multilateralism being equally balanced between positive and neutral.
- iii. For young respondents, priorities were social justice and inequalities (45%), with emphasis on technology, digital skills, and the need to make these accessible. They were rather critical of educational programs’ effectiveness in preparing youth for today’s challenges (44% not very or modestly effective); quite negative about their own impact in decision-making processes (68% a little or not much), and quite pessimistic about the value ascribed by older generations to their contributions (48% to some extent).

#### **b. Main messages**

In addition to statistics, the survey elicited a great number of substantive comments, as summarized below.

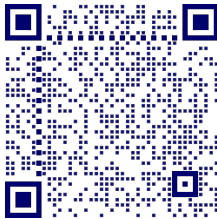
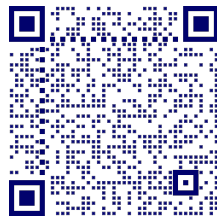
- i. Even if Geneva topics figure in the draft Pact for the Future, Geneva processes “are not fully taken into account”, particularly regarding SDGs potential.
- ii. To make matters worse, “coherence and coordination between Geneva and NY Missions are rarely systematically implemented: capitals, deliberately or not, don’t have a comprehensive monitoring and vision of the linkages between Geneva and NY issues”. And yet all UN areas of work matter equally because “a common identity as one human family is key, and the UN can play a role in helping shape this common identity for all.”
- iii. Focusing on the differences between Geneva and New York topics is largely “artificial” and even “naïve”, as demonstrated by existing linkages between work done in Geneva and issues addressed by the Security Council regarding root causes of conflicts, and namely poverty, development, human rights violations, and inequalities.
- iv. The neutrality of Switzerland as host country, and particularly its support to humanitarian aid by UN entities and the ICRC, are acknowledged. Geneva also benefits “from its network of diverse, close, and accessible institutions. [In Geneva] there is an atmosphere of seriousness and trust that doesn’t exist in New York”.
- v. Regarding the role of non-State actors, “we should take into account the supremacy of political and economic groups which have a tough voice in propaganda, in the media, in finance and in the academic world.” NGOs in Geneva are not universally representative: “many in the Global South who have no voice in Geneva are not included” and there is a need to “give voice also to smaller NGOs and youth, not only big organizations”.

- vi. Expectations about the Summit of the Future are modest and realistic: “convening the Summit is already an achievement in these times of darkness for the values of multilateral cooperation. But in the absence of binding results, member States, particularly the superpowers, will not deviate from their usual interests and violations of international rules and principles.” Regarding reform,” we need to break the deadlock around the Security Council- blatant violations are happening and denouncing them gets vetoed. This makes the UN seem very ineffective. We need to have a global system of checks and balances that leads us to peace and rule of law.” The UN needs a major shake-up to engage public interest and re-insert itself in the management of global affairs. Its increasing irrelevance and marginalization by member states is deeply dangerous for the world, and especially for future generations.”
- vii. The views of Youth: Positions such as ‘youth advisor’ or ‘youth representative’ often appear to be tokenistic and ineffective. Young people simply need to be put in position to make an impact without having to be differentiated as a ‘youth leader or youth envoy’. Some comments refer to the “unbelievable number of barriers for Global South youth, especially those in Africa”. On issues of concern, “mental health and well-being are at the core”; “our future depends on the planet’s environment”. There is also concern about AI and access to technology “in order to avoid more inequalities, for instance in medicine or education”. UN work should be better known among youth, and young people’s work in UN entities should be “remunerated and valued” but internships are deemed very useful.

## 4. The Youth Contest for the Greycells International Geneva Prize

This prize gave the opportunity to young people under 32 to express their priorities and opinions on the role of International Geneva and the future of multilateralism. The prize for multimedia (offered by the Geneva Diplomatic Club<sup>21</sup>) was awarded to **Ms. Jade Wirth and** the prize for written text (offered by Greycells) to **Mr. Yannis Bonnet. A special prize was awarded to Ms. Kiersten Natalie Bolanos**, 12 years old, for being the youngest participant and for her poem on International Geneva.

### ANNEXES:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme of the Intergenerational Dialogue held on April 25th, 2024. <a href="https://bit.ly/Greycells_Intergenerational_Dialogue_2024_Programme">https://bit.ly/Greycells_Intergenerational_Dialogue_2024_Programme</a></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background Information, Concept Note, Report on the Results of the Survey, Synthesis of the Comments of Respondents to the Survey, and list of Partners. <a href="https://greycells.ch/dialogue-intergenerationnel-2024/">https://greycells.ch/dialogue-intergenerationnel-2024/</a></li> </ul>	

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.clubdiplomatie.ch/en/>