



The Summit of the Future

Program on The Fraternal Economy of Integral and Sustainable Development



At the very heart of Pope Francis' messages in the past decade has been the urgent need for a strengthened multilateralism to address the growing ecological and social crises of our age. As Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'*:

Interdependence obliges us to think of *one world with a common plan*. Yet the same ingenuity which has brought about enormous technological progress has so far proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave environmental and social problems worldwide. (164)

Through his encyclicals, exhortations, and speeches, Pope Francis repeatedly returns to the need for a *new multilateralism*, signifying stronger institutions for global peace, cooperation, and sustainable development (see Annex for excerpts). In *Fratelli Tutti*, the Pope speaks of “more effective world organizations, equipped with the power to provide for the global common good, the elimination of hunger and poverty and the sure defence of fundamental human rights.” (172).

In *Laudato Deum* he returns to this topic with great urgency:

Our world has become so multipolar and at the same time so complex that a different framework for effective cooperation is required. It is not enough to think only of balances of power but also of the need to provide a response to new problems and to react with global mechanisms to the environmental, public health, cultural and social challenges, especially in order to consolidate respect for the most elementary human rights, social rights and the protection of our common home. It is a matter of establishing global and effective rules that can permit “providing for” this

global safeguarding. (42)

In his recent message to COP28 Pope Francis again calls for more effective multilateral institutions:

Yet a world completely connected, like ours today, should not be un-connected by those who govern it, with international negotiations that “cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good” (Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 169). We find ourselves facing firm and even inflexible positions calculated to protect income and business interests, at times justifying this on the basis of what was done in the past, and periodically shifting the responsibility to others. Yet the task to which we are called today is not about yesterday, but about tomorrow: a tomorrow that, whether we like it or not, will belong to everyone or else to no one.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has similarly expressed the urgency of strengthening multilateralism, especially in his 2021 report to the General Assembly, *Our Common Agenda*, wherein the UN Secretary General notes that:

[O]ur challenges are interconnected, across borders and all other divides. These challenges can only be addressed by an equally interconnected response, through reinvigorated multilateralism and the United Nations at the centre of our efforts.

Specifically, the Secretary General advocates reform of the multilateral system “anchored within the United Nations,” declaring that “Effective multilateralism depends on an effective United Nations, one able to adapt to global challenges while living up to the purposes and principles of its Charter.” “In this spirit,” writes the Secretary-General, “I propose a **Summit of the Future** to forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like, and what we can do today to secure it.”

The Summit of the Future (SOTF) will take place at the United Nations on September 22-23. Around the world, governments, scholars, and civil society, are putting forward their visions and recommendations towards a new global consensus. Our meeting of The Fraternal Economy on March 4-5, hosted by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in conjunction with the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) will look forward to the Summit of the Future. Our aim is to take up Pope Francis’ call for “one world with a common plan,” and the UN Secretary-General’s call for “a new global consensus on what our future should look like, and what we can do today to secure it.” Specifically, we will discuss ethical principles and specific reforms in the five major areas of the SOTF agenda: (1) sustainable development and financing for development; (2) international peace and security; (3) science, technology, and innovation; (4) youth and future generations; and (5) global governance.

The SDSN is preparing a Statement on the Summit of the Future. The March 4-5 session will

consider the SDSN draft statement together with the great body of Catholic Social Teachings on multilateralism, including Pope Francis's profound recent messages, *Pacem in Terris* (Pope John XXIII, 1963), *Populorum Progresio* (Pope Paul VI, 1967), and Pope Benedict XVI's speech to the UN General Assembly (2008). We will also discuss UN Secretary-General Guterres's report on Our Common Agenda (2021), and the recent report of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, *A Breakthrough for People and Planet* (2022).