



Pact for the Future:

ISC written inputs to the zero draft as circulated by the Co-facilitators

12 February 2024

Chapeau

General comments:

The Chapeau contains important elements related to science, including the potential for advances in knowledge to deliver a better future for all and the importance of harnessing science, technology, and innovation for all humanity. However, whereas science is currently mentioned only in the Chapter 3 summary, science provides essential value across all chapters of the Pact and all issues on the multilateral agenda, as a critical tool for evidence-informed decision-making, international relations, and collective action, and thus a key tool to accelerate progress on global challenges. This should be noted in the text. Additionally, science and technology serve different yet complementary purposes, and this can be clarified in the Chapeau by highlighting the vital role of science in enabling better understanding of issues, assessment of solutions, and evidence-informed decision-making. Finally, the Chapeau would benefit from clarifying that many challenges, risks, and threats ahead are not exogenous, but stem largely from development choices: therefore, while the multilateral system must indeed be prepared to respond to crises, it also must commit to fundamental, holistic, concrete, evidence-informed changes toward sustainable transformations that reduce risks at the source.

Language proposals

- Para 3: “advances” in line 3 is unclear; recommend to specify
- Para 4: Add, “fit for the future, [committed] to address...”
- Para 5: Strengthen by adding to line 4, “to come [and that action is taken to prevent and mitigate negative impacts.]”
- Para 6, line 2: Add, “cooperate to [take preventative action, better prepare for and] manage risks and harness...”
- Para 14: Science and technology are conflated here; they have distinct but complementary purposes. Recommend lines 1-2 be amended to: “we commit to strengthening digital cooperation, [engaging more systematically with science,] and harnessing the potential [of technology] and innovation for...”

The International Science Council (ISC) is a non-governmental organization with a unique global membership that brings together more than 245 international scientific Unions and Associations, national and regional scientific organizations including Academies and Research Councils, international Federations and Societies, and Young Academies and Associations.

The vision of the ISC is to advance science as a global public good.

- Para 14, lines 4-6: “2030 Agenda, including through [engagement of scientific knowledge for evidence-informed decision-making across the multilateral agenda and through] the transfer of technology...”
- Para 17, lines 5-6: Add “to address global challenges [through evidence-informed decision-making].”
- Para 17, line 9: Add, “new ways to improve our [understanding of and] response to global shocks...” Improved understanding is essential to effective, synergistic solutions to prevention and preparedness ahead of future global shocks.

Chapter One: Sustainable Development and Financing for Development

General comments

This chapter importantly highlights the role of science in relation to climate change. Science being vital to understanding and addressing challenges across all 17 SDGs as well as financing for development, it should be mentioned in relation to multiple issues beyond climate change. Science, including social science, plays a key role in breaking deep-seated siloes in understanding and action, enabling decision-makers to address the root causes of challenges and identify synergies and trade-offs among solutions. Science also helps decision-makers assess vital transformation pathways and roadmaps, while identifying key areas for sustainable investments that maximize development and sustainability co-benefits. Member State support for engaging scientific inputs in decision-making, as well as supporting transformative approaches to sustainable development via mission-oriented science, must be key priorities. See A/RES/78/160, E/RES/2023/4, A/RES/76/213, etc. Additionally, the opening statement of para 19, in addition to articulating a shared vision for a positive future, should also refer to the need for developing a roadmap to translate this shared vision to enable implementation.

Language proposals

- Para 19, line 3: Add, “future generations [and put the world on a new development trajectory that is sustainable.]”
- Re: “providing the means of implementation” in para. 21, suggest new para. after para. 21: “We commit to implement the International Decade on Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024-2033), which is a critical opportunity to harness the essential contribution of science to realizing sustainable development in its three dimensions and to respond to the intertwined challenges of our time.” (See A/RES/77/326)
- Add new para. between paras. 24 and 25: “We stress the importance of evidence-informed decision-making to accelerate progress toward sustainable development and the critical roles of disciplinary and transdisciplinary science in identifying root causes of sustainability challenges as well as synergies and trade-offs among possible solutions.” (See A/RES/78/160: “The [GA]... reaffirms its commitment to continue promoting the use of [STI], including through evidence-based policymaking... to accelerate progress on the achievement of the [SDGs].”)
- Para 28: Add “solidarity, financing and [evidence informed] action.”
- Para 32: Specify what is meant by “the science” by adding to line 5, “in keeping with the [latest and best available] scien[tific evidence].”

Chapter Two: International Peace and Security

General comments

Chapter 2 importantly references risks and threats associated with emerging scientific and technological developments. The Pact will be strengthened by noting also the importance of engaging the scientific community to identify and assess such risks and threats (see A/RES/78/22: “The [GA]... underlines the importance of Member States engaging with experts from industry, the research community and civil society in addressing this challenge”). The chapter also should highlight the essential benefits of harnessing S&T developments to advance conditions that support peace and security and mitigate the impacts of conflict. Open and responsible science is vital to understanding the root causes of conflict; to advancing conditions that enable social stability and sustainable development in diverse contexts; to mitigating and managing impacts of complex environmental, social, and economic challenges that exacerbate risk and instability; and to anticipatory action to meet emerging security challenges related to energy, climate, health, technology, nuclear weapons, inequality, and more. Finally, international scientific collaborations can advance peaceful international relations, and the chapter can be strengthened by affirming the importance of enhancing and expanding such collaborations.

Language proposals

- Para 51, line 3: Add, “enablers of violence, [vulnerability] and insecurity...”
- Para 89: Refer also to the need to engage and leverage science in support of peace and security. Add in line 3: “We also [commit to harnessing science and technology, including new developments, to benefit international peace and security. We further] commit...”

Chapter Three: Science, Technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation

General comments

As the leading voice of global science, the International Science Council stresses that chapter 3 contains important elements that should be retained: science for sustainable development, transdisciplinary collaboration, a strong science-policy-society interface, trust in science, and science advisory bodies. However, several issues also must be addressed. (1) Regarding contributions of STI to the SDGs (para 91), the text highlights “rapid technological change, in particular,” whereas science, specifically, is vitally important to the SDGs (See A/RES/78/160, E/RES/2023/4, A/RES/76/213, etc.). Science and technology have distinct yet complementary roles. (2) The text notes that a strong science-policy-society interface is needed “to build trust in science,” failing to acknowledge the importance of the interface to evidence-informed decision-making and ensuring “advancements in knowledge” (see Chapeau) can be integrated into policy-making. Enhancing trust in science also requires specific commitment from Member States. (3) The importance of open science must be explicit (see A/RES/78/160), e.g., by reaffirming commitment to full implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science. (4): Greater focus should be given to gender disparities in relation to science (see A/RES/78/160).

Language proposals

- Para 91, line 3: Add “recognize that [actionable, transdisciplinary scientific knowledge and] rapid...”
- Para 91, lines 4-5: Add “Agenda by [identifying root causes of challenges, assessing the range of possible solutions and their implications], improving...”
- Para 92, line 3-5: Add “in order to build trust in science [and enable scientific inputs in decision-making]” – and if possible, continue to add “[...to accelerate progress toward sustainable development across the multilateral agenda].”
- Para 92: Amend to: “optimally leverage science [as well as] technology and innovation...”
- Para 92: Add to end of para, “Scientific Advisory Board [and the intention to engage with the scientific community].” (See A/RES/78/160: “Recognizing the need to strengthen the collaboration and exchange between policymakers and scientific and technological communities...”)
- Para 93, line 2: Add, “to produce [and benefit from] new scientific...”
- Para 93: Add, “We commit to building robust scientific education systems and science advisory systems and to enhancing accessibility to science education and capacity-building programs to help close this gap between developing and developed countries.” (See A/RES/78/160).
- Para 97, line 3: Add, “accessing new [scientific knowledge] and emerging technologies...”

Chapter Four: Youth and Future Generations

General comments

This chapter contains several important elements that should be retained, including the spotlighting of the importance of education and of meaningful youth engagement in decision-making including in UN processes. However, as the International Science Council and the Global Young Academy have emphasized, science is an essential tool to support youth and future generations and this must be recognized. This chapter should explicitly acknowledge the vital importance of science to safeguarding the rights and interests of youth and future generations, including through foresight analysis and achievement of the SDGs; it should encourage increased support of education, research, and collaboration at all levels to build capacity among youth and future generations (see A/RES/78/160); and it should affirm commitment to including young and early career scientists in decision-making.

Language proposals

- Para 103, line 5: Add, “social justice, humanitarian action, [science], innovation...”

Chapter Five: Transforming Global Governance

General comments

There is a critical opportunity in Chapter 5 to advance progress toward a stronger multilateral science-policy interface to benefit all humanity. To address complex challenges and polycrises,

decision-makers must be able to mobilize authoritative and integrated knowledge taking full account of complex interactions across human and planetary systems, and leverage it to inform decision-making and steer action towards desired outcomes. Effective collective action requires fundamental changes in global governance, including for scientists to have a meaningful and structured presence. In the Pact, commitment to strengthening the science-policy interface across the UN system and in the UN General Assembly in particular, can deliver meaningful, concrete successes for Member States with cross-cutting value across all Pact chapters, all SDGs, and all issues on the multilateral agenda. Further, this chapter must acknowledge that reaching critical thresholds may not manifest in singular acute events or shocks, but rather as a set of compounding risks, disasters and slow onset processes with cascading impacts. The approach to risk must therefore be preventative and holistic, incorporating more robust monitoring and scanning for threats reaching critical levels and factors that amplify risks.

Language proposals

- Para 116, line 3: Add, “tackle the challenges [holistically], and seize...”
- Para 117: Add to the end of the para., “strengthening its work, [including to ensure evidence-informed deliberations and decision-making in the General Assembly through an enhanced science-policy interface.]”
- Para 120, lines 4-5: Add, “Council to [guide SDG implementation based on evidence-informed review of progress and] identify and address...”
- Para 131: Add new sentence to the end: “We also commit to enhancing anticipatory action for prevention and preparedness including through the use of foresight analysis.”
- Para 132: Add to the end of the para, “We encourage regular exchange with the scientific community for the purpose of horizon scanning and enabling timely action.”
- Para 134, line 3: Add “the planet and the future, [and be informed by evidence-based insights.]”
- Para 134, line 6: Add, “intense shocks [and protracted crises.]”
- Para 145, line 3: Add “international cooperation, [including international scientific cooperation,] to harness..”
- Para 147, lines 3-4: Add “exploration, [scientific study], exploitation and utilization...” (see A/RES/78/72).