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PACT FOR THE FUTURE: THE NEED TO OVERCOME COMPETITION AND DIVISION

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At the Summit of the Future, held on September 22, 2024, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, heads of states adopted the Pact for the Future. The document was prepared and negotiated through a year-long process involving not only governments but also civil society.

The idea for the Summit of the Future was proposed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his September 2021 report, *Our Common Agenda*, which was based on the *Declaration on the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations* adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2020. Subsequently, the General Assembly passed Resolution A/RES/76/307 in 2022, deciding to hold the Summit of the Future in 2024 and adopt an action-oriented document entitled *Pact for the Future*.

The Pact for the Future consists of five chapters:

- 1) Sustainable development and financing for development,
- 2) International peace and security,
- 3) Science, technology, innovation, and digital cooperation,
- 4) Youth and future generations, and
- 5) Transforming global governance.

As evident from its chapter structure, the vision outlined in the Pact is not limited to development issues. Instead, it addresses a broader and more comprehensive range of topics. In the preamble, leaders stress the importance of cooperation and solidarity, emphasising that “our challenges are deeply interconnected and far exceed the capacity of any single State alone. They can only be addressed collectively, through strong and

sustained international cooperation guided by trust and solidarity for the benefit of all and harnessing the power of those who can contribute from all sectors and generations.”

While cooperation and solidarity are needed to solve these complex and interconnected issues, the Pact for the Future approaches each issue as a separate concern rather than adopting a cross-cutting framework. The document lacks concrete proposals for resolving these problems or achieving the solidarity and cooperation it calls for. Moreover, the current geopolitical environment—dominated by competition and division—poses a significant obstacle to meaningful cooperation among states. The Pact for the Future does not sufficiently address how to overcome these divisions or foster more effective collaboration in such a fractured international landscape.

Since the adoption of the *Declaration on the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations* in 2020, which also emphasised the importance of cooperation and solidarity, many issues highlighted in the declaration have not improved but have instead worsened. CO2 emissions, the main driver of global warming and climate change, reached a record high in 2023. In addition, Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict intensified in 2023.

This raises the critical question of how issues of competition and division can be overcome. In this regard, the concept of an "Economy for the Common Good," as proposed by Christian Felber, offers a significant perspective. In his book *Change Everything: Creating an Economy for the Common Good*, Felber writes: “In regard to our friendships and everyday relationships, we thrive when we live in accordance with human values: the building of trust, honesty, esteem, respect, empathy, cooperation, mutual help and sharing. The ‘free’ market economy is based on the rules of the systematic pursuit of profit and competition. These pursuits promote egoism, greed, avarice, envy, ruthlessness and irresponsibility.” The passage highlights the contrast between human relationships, which thrive on values, and the economic system, which operates on profit and competition. The same logic can be applied to international relations, which similarly depend on trust, cooperation, and mutual respect but are often undermined by competitive and self-serving dynamics.

Felber argues that this great contradiction is not due to humanity’s inherent flaws, but to the rules of the economic world, which foster weaknesses rather than human virtues. As he observes, neither the UN Charter nor the constitutions or laws of most countries advocate for selfishness or unchecked ambition. The United Nations does not encourage the pursuit of profits or competition; rather, it promotes human values that are equally relevant to international relations.

However, in a market-based economy, the maximum pursuit of profit and competition (i.e., the exclusion of others) is recommended, and the rules of such an economic system divide not only individuals but also society. It is a fact that the economic system on which we depend, with its basic rules of profit-seeking and competition, is

inconsistent with human values and conceals the nature of the various problems we face today.

Felber's proposal for an "Economy for the Common Good," which he positions as a "third way" between capitalism and communism, offers a potential framework and practical tools to address these contradictions. By prioritising cooperation and shared human values over competition, this approach may provide a pathway to overcoming the divisions and conflicts that underlie many of the crises we are facing today.

The opinions articulated above represent the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network or any of its members.

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ABOUT APLN

The **Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (APLN)** is a Seoul-based organisation and network of political, military, diplomatic leaders, and experts from across the Asia-Pacific region, working to address global security challenges, with a particular focus on reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons risks. The mission of APLN is to inform and stimulate debate, influence action, and propose policy recommendations designed to address regional security threats, with an emphasis on nuclear and other WMD (weapon of mass destruction) threats, and to do everything possible to achieve a world in which nuclear weapons and other WMDs are contained, diminished, and eventually eliminated.



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