

On behalf of the Bahá'í International Community, and in collaboration with the Together First and UN2020 networks, we would like to cordially invite you to join one or all events in a weekly series of informal, virtual breakfast meetings for Member States, UN agencies, and Civil Society. The aim of this off-the-record space (concept note below) is to discuss and determine suggestions that respond to the April 9 [Elements Paper](#) for the declaration on the “Commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations,” especially in light of the current pandemic. These events will take place over [Zoom](#) on three consecutive Thursdays: **23 April, 30 April, and 7 May** from **8:30 - 10:00 AM EDT**.

The Elements Paper presented three distinct sections which require deeper discussion, especially considering the global governance necessary to address the ongoing crisis. This breakfast series aims to bring a variety of actors together virtually to discuss the most important points to raise under each of the topics. If preferred, participants may contribute anonymously in order to promote a frank and honest dialogue to address key issues in a constructive spirit. At the end of each discussion, a one-page un-attributed document will be produced as a substantive contribution to the process.

Your participation would be most valuable, and we hope you will be able to join us. We look forward to hearing back from you at your earliest convenience. Please [RSVP here](#).

Sincerely,

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UN75 Political Declaration Series: Unpacking the Elements Paper in Light of the Pandemic

The Elements Paper issued on 9 April by the co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations on the declaration on the “Commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations” presented three headings worthy of deeper discussion, especially in light of the ongoing pandemic. The Baha’i International Community in collaboration with the Together First and UN2020 campaigns are therefore initiating a weekly breakfast series, set to begin on 23 April to serve as an opportunity for Member States, the United Nations, and Civil Society to gather together virtually to discuss, off the record, the most salient points to be raised under each of the topics. At the end of each discussion, a one-page un-attributed document will be created as a substantive contribution to the process.

Modalities

We will meet virtually for 90 minutes on each of the three sections of the Elements Paper and will utilize interactive features to help guide the conversation towards a few concrete recommendations for inclusion under each section. We will allow participants to contribute anonymously should they choose to do so in order to promote a frank and honest dialogue to address key issues in a constructive spirit. There will be three meetings held from **8:30 - 10:00 AM EDT on April 23, April 30, and May 7.**

Themes

Meeting 1: April 23, 8:30-10:00 AM EDT Acknowledging Achievements and looking ahead

From the Elements Paper: “International cooperation and solidarity for recovery and building resilience is more important than ever” ... “the section should, like the Charter, put people at the center” ... “this section should acknowledge achievements of the UN” ... “this section should be forward-looking and note the central role of the United Nations in ensuring the future we want, where no one is left behind” ... “international cooperation is a prerequisite” ... “redouble our collective commitment to multilateralism”

The themes of this section are noble, indeed. Yet we see a splintering of the discourse where the vision laid out above is not universally shared. Moreover, while finding agreed-upon language can be difficult, seeing these elements find practical expression can be more challenging still. A few questions worthy of exploration are below:

- What opportunities to strengthen international cooperation have surfaced in the past few months? And how can we ensure that these opportunities are implemented in a way where all can benefit - especially those furthest behind?
- What does it look like to put people at the center of international endeavors? Are there examples where this has taken place, and what have we learned?
- Though many on the call are already convinced that the UN is a vital institution, how do we ensure that those who are more skeptical can find merit in the role of the UN?

- How do we balance the role of international cooperation with the varying needs and priorities of diverse domestic policies and programs in a way that is not too prescriptive yet provides the structure and coordination necessary?

Meeting 2: April 30, 8:30-10:00 AM EDT

Delivering on Commitments and Responding to Global Challenges

From the elements paper: “This section of the declaration should be laying the grounds for meaningful action” ... “concrete action points” ... “interlinkages between the action points” Agenda 2030 is “a basis for our work ... “the four challenges presented by the Secretary-General” ... “the most frequently raised issues”.

This section will likely be the most substantive in terms of practical proposals and serves as the primary vehicle to lay a plan for the future of the United Nations. The topics raised by Member States are, indeed, the most vital and urgent for the advancement of humanity, and were they appropriately addressed the world would be far better off. But many questions remain:

- The Member States have articulated and agreed on a host of global frameworks, yet their implementation is often insufficient. Is there a way to move beyond “a-la-carte multilateralism? What can be different in the years ahead that will ensure that those agreements (there are too many to list here) are fulfilled?
- In the current crisis, we see the true interconnectedness of all the systems involved in the 11 clusters listed - how do we ensure that future plans continue to reduce the false silos created between these issues, yet also benefit from the expertise developed in each?
- What are practical proposals for inclusion that would address these 11 issues?
- What are the options for a mandated process, following the UN75 September Leaders meeting, that takes forward these discussions about the need to strengthen UN machinery?

Meeting 3: May 7, 8:30-10:00 AM EDT

Building consensus and mobilizing for change

From the elements paper: “the concluding part of the declaration” ... “specify how the action points under Section 2 should be followed up to achieve the visions put forward in Section 1” ... “short, medium and long term” ... “all work must be integrated” ... “express commitment by Member States to take the declaration to their citizens”.

This section is meant to serve as the call to service for the governments of the world and its success depends upon a whole of society approach. It is relatively easy to articulate a vision of what we want and to identify the barriers before us, but to construct and implement the systems necessary to make those aspirations a reality is the most complicated step. Consensus here is both a means and an ends, yet we see the fracturing of systems around the world and an increased recognition that humanity does not currently hold the solutions in hand.

- How can we build consensus in a time of great turmoil, when few systems appear able to withstand the current shocks? Relatedly, what can we learn from those few examples which have weathered this storm with relative success?
- Mobilizing for change implies dissatisfaction with the status quo, as well as a need for something new. How can we ensure that those in positions of privilege are prepared for what this means?
- What kind of processes must be put into place to ensure both that commitments are being met, and that experimentation is permitted?
- Finally, how can we ensure that all members of society are seen as genuine partners in this process to truly 'leave no one behind'?