

Declaration of the GCAP Global Assembly 2023

New York, 21 September 2023

Call for Global Justice to achieve the SDGs

The GCAP Global Assembly 2023 meeting in New York on 20 and 21 September 2023 calls urgent attention to the multiple crises we face as humanity and priority actions needed as a result. These challenges have brought us perilously close to a critical threshold, where ongoing and deepening conflicts in all regions and multiple attacks on human rights defenders threaten our common future and violate fundamental rights of all. Many of the planetary boundaries have been breached, jeopardizing the continuity of life as we know it. This is a consequence of the irreversible impacts of climate change, accelerated biodiversity loss, rising global temperatures and unprecedented monsoon floods as well as environmental pollution.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing economic, social and environmental inequalities highlighting the persistent failures to learn from our mistakes. This is evident in our continued adherence to a development model that disregards human rights obligations of governments and relies on exploitation of people and nature. In the name of economic recovery, unjust policies are being promoted, leading to austerity measures, xenophobia, setbacks in social progress, heightened conflicts, land dispossession from communities and the exacerbation of socio-environmental conflicts for the imposition of megaprojects, monocultures and carbon markets. We denounce complicity between states and transnational corporations which promote fallacious and bogus solutions to the climate emergency.

We are deeply concerned about significant setbacks in human rights, challenging obligations contained in the Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ESCR) and the Civil and Political Rights (CPR). GCAP condemns all breaches of international human rights commitments and calls for the protection of essential citizen freedoms which are necessary for healthy and democratic societies.

We condemn authoritarian and dictatorial regimes that militarise, undermine and instrumentalise legislative and judicial bodies, using them as apparatuses of repression and intimidation against human rights defenders and civil society organisations. These measures, which seek to usurp the power of sovereign peoples, result in the closure of civic space, and systematic violations of human rights, hindering the advancement of rights, undermining democracy and the rule of law.

We believe that climate change is the paramount existential challenge, demanding immediate and resolute action that cannot be delayed. The scientific evidence on climate change is reflected in increased food insecurity and hunger, droughts and forced displacements in different parts of the world, for example, in the Himalaya region. Extreme weather events and disasters call us to be alert to work decisively in crafting effective people centered public policies worldwide. These policies are crucial for all Left Behind people, especially children, youth, women, older people, CDWD, transgender communities, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and others, have long endured high and intersecting vulnerabilities, and are particularly affected.

Conflicts and wars in all regions are creating enormous human suffering. Budgets for weapons and the military are rising. The threat of nuclear war is back again. This is a major driver of internal displacement, migration and poverty. In many countries, violence against women of all ages, children, youth and individuals with diverse sexual orientations, continues, and is on the rise.

We urge action now to end the culture of privilege and impunity that exposes people worldwide to all kinds of abuses, denying their rights and undermining democratic and public institutions tasked with ensuring peace, justice and sustainability.

In response to the Global Week to Act4SDGs, with National People's Assemblies in 40 countries, four regional People's Assemblies, the Global People's Assemblies and the UN SDG Summit, the GCAP Global Assembly featuring 40 representatives from 25 countries, calls on governments, the multilateral, intergovernmental and financial systems to take urgent action in the following areas and at the following levels:

Inequalities

- Establish a progressive, inclusive, transparent and equitable regional and global tax governance under the auspices of the United Nations, eliminating exemptions and privileges for transnational corporations ensuring they contribute their fair share to support the development of nations and their people.
- Address the structural issues responsible for persistent poverty, exclusion, inequality, and various vulnerabilities, rectifying historical injustices that have hindered the full and effective realization of human rights.
- Generate concessional financing which takes account of the historical responsibility of rich countries, for example through equitable distribution of Special Drawing Rights without increasing the levels of debt.
- Issue new SDRs with a more just distribution considering the individual requirements of countries
- Continue to establish regional and global blocs to ensure the implementation of public policies which prioritise social justice, climate justice, economic justice and fiscal justice, and which will result in the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, taking account of national and regional realities and progressive initiatives for change, strengthening their institutional and negotiation capacity through a common agenda.
- Tackle and end gendered inequalities by protecting and upholding the human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, of all people, in particular all women, girls, older and gender diverse people and persons with disabilities and eliminate discriminatory laws and policies that criminalise gender identity, expression and sexuality.
- Address the root causes of gender-based violence and prevent it by working with feminist groups to combat misogyny, patriarchy, ageism and harmful gender norms guided by the principles of intersectionality.
- End discrimination of Communities Discriminated by work and descent all over the world

Peace and Security

- The international community — including the United Nations, governments and civil society — should demonstrate urgent resolve to end the wars and violent conflicts that currently threaten the safety and well-being of millions of children, women and men in more than 30 countries. War is an attack on the rights of present and future generations. Development cannot take place amidst war, and peace is not sustainable without justice. We must value everyone's life equally, from the cradle to the grave
- To eradicate all forms of violence, with special emphasis on violence against women of all ages, children, youth and sexual diversity, affirming the need to promote gender equity in all spheres of life, including family and community life.
- Enforce Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security which represents a significant contribution to governments and United Nation's efforts for the realisation of lasting, sustainable peace.
- Reduce military spending by at least 3% per year (25% by 2030) and shift the funds to peace building and development.
- Support a consistent reform of international peace architecture

- Ensure that women including widows are fully involved in and have an equal say in peace and post-conflict processes.
- Promote a culture of peace and non-violence through education and teach conflict resolution in schools.
- Advocate for immediate nuclear disarmament and urge all states to fully commit to this goal by modifying their security policies and practices in order to rule out the possibility of nuclear war including any first-use of nuclear weapons.

Social protection

- Prioritise investing in public health and ensure universal health coverage as a basic human right and counter the trend towards privatization of social amenities . Large-scale and consistent investments are urgently needed to produce vaccines, implement vaccination programmes and distribute drugs, test kits and personal protective equipment.
- Ensure universal social protection floors are financed and institutionalised in all countries, and essential, quality public services are in place which guarantee access to affordable and quality essential healthcare, including maternal care; ensure income through the life course according to ILO Recommendation 202 with support for children, the unemployed, people with disabilities and older persons; people on parental leave and fair and decent pensions for all people everywhere.
- To enable all nations to establish and expand social protection floors, put in place a Global Fund for Social Protection based on solidarity principles and with civil society participation in its governance without delay.
- Ensure decent work conditions and living wages for all workers including those in the informal sector. Provide access to social protection for informal workers and acknowledge unpaid care work.
- Ensure access to quality education by providing internet connectivity to low-income families and marginalised communities, as well as scholarships for people belonging to communities like being discriminated on work and descent (CDWD).
- Ensure the implementation on UN's guiding principles on business and human rights.
- Fight against hunger by promoting food security and sovereignty, and also agroecological alternatives.

Climate Change and Environment

- Guarantee and deliver annual climate finance already established in international climate change commitments, recognising the historic responsibility of countries in the Global North to support all countries with resources to enable them to play their part in safeguarding the integrity of the planet, preserve ecosystems and protect biodiversity.
- Cease fossil fuel extraction. Eliminate and reallocate subsidies for fossil fuels and deforestation, such as industrial agricultural products. Stop building new coal stations and leave oil reserves untouched.
- Promote the adoption of renewable energy sources and facilitate technology transfer
- Foster inclusive and democratic environmental, climate, and biodiversity governance by ensuring meaningful participation of marginalised stakeholders, including refugees, migrants, indigenous peoples, children, adolescents, women and men of all ages, in decision-making and implementation. Urgently implement measures to assess and address conflict and climate change-induced migration while upholding human rights.
- Transform production and consumption patterns, as well as the polluting energy matrix, to move towards a sustainable and globally responsible society that preserves the health and well-being of all people and of nature.

- Encourage more countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region to become State Parties to the Escazú Agreement , creating national and regional conditions and capacities for its effective implementation and adopting urgent measures to protect environmental, water and land defenders.
- Stop biodiversity loss, deforestation and land degradation and ensure food and water security for all together with food sovereignty and the promotion of agroecology alternatives.
- Promote with urgency transformative and inclusive environmental education to combat socio-environmental degradation in order to comply with the Paris agreement, which calls for providing training and information to cities and communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- Protect and preserve tropical rainforests like the Amazon which have a rich biological diversity, safeguard their biodiversity and biocultural ecosystems. The largest river basin in the world is currently suffering from a drought in its rivers, causing difficulties in transportation, access to drinking water, medicine and food, resulting in increased hunger and poverty among indigenous people and riverside communities.

Financing for development

- Unconditional cancellation of public external debt payments by all lenders - bilateral, multilateral and private - for all countries in debt distress for at least the next four years, as an immediate step towards unconditional cancellation of unsustainable and illegitimate outstanding debt.
- Establish a fair, transparent, binding and multilateral framework for the prevention and resolution of debt crises under the UN, to address unsustainable and illegitimate debt.
- Keep your promises! Meet and exceed the 0.7% target for ODA. Climate funding is separate from ODA and can't be counted as ODA.
- Ensure quality aid, without compromise which includes left behind communities in design and implementation and prioritises and reaches the most marginalised communities and benefit women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities. Nothing about us without us!
- Local needs and participation are paramount to ensure inclusive development: Nothing about us, without us! Be transparent and accountable. Maintain the integrity of ODA and aid effectiveness.

Human rights and Civic Space

- Ensure transparent, accountable and inclusive governance of the digital sphere and recommit to human rights conventions in the digital age to ensure progressive and rights-first digital use.
- Ensure and protect the right to protest and eliminate restrictive NGO laws
- Do not criminalise freedom of expression under the pretext of preventing the dissemination of "fake news" or block the use of the internet and social media to prevent the dissemination of critical information.
- Uphold obligations, policies and actions which should be developed based on human rights obligations
- Protect and support victims of political violence, asylum seekers and political refugees
- Ratify and incorporate conventions on human rights defenders and against torture into national law
- Strengthen and safeguard democratic culture and values, and prevent attempts to disenfranchise people by undermining their right to vote

Global Governance

- Use the 2024 Summit of the Future and the 2025 Financing for Development Conference and the World Social Summit to strengthen multilateralism under the UN
- Raise the level of commitments to multilateralism, the mobilisation of domestic resources, the transformation of structural issues and the promotion of South-South and Triangular Cooperation.
- Implement reforms for more representative and inclusive global institutions. This includes emphasising and protecting the pivotal role of the General Assembly, Security Council reform and end the use of the veto in UN Security Council meetings.
- Strengthen mechanisms for civil society's meaningful inclusion and participation in multilateral global governance bodies and institutions, by putting in place a UN Parliamentary Assembly, a UN Global Citizens' Initiative and the office of a High Level UN Civil Society Envoy. These concrete and feasible institutional improvements will make the UN a more open and inclusive organisation.
- Introduce accountability mechanisms into G7 and G20 forums to ensure their decisions on r policies and actions can be assessed with a human rights lens.

Our commitment as GCAP

Communities around the world have a proven capacity to propose and promote their own solutions in an endogenous and self-managed manner, derived from their ancestral and traditional knowledge, wisdom and practices, taking forward their Intangible Cultural Heritage and commitment to the preservation of World Natural Heritage.

We affirm our deep commitment as GCAP to continue working with grassroots organisations, indigenous peoples, trade unions, older persons, rural women, youth, farmers, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+i, communities discriminated by work and descent (CDWD), Afro-descendants, cooperatives, development organisations, social movements, think tanks, and governments, to facilitate processes of exchange and creation of knowledge and thought, based on the demands and proposals emanating from the peoples, to be incorporated into national, regional and global development plans and public policies.

Now, more than ever, we must unite across generations, cultures, and nations, forming alliances to promote social and political dialogue. This is a crucial step in upholding civic and democratic values, working toward a peaceful world on a healthy planet, and safeguarding the rights of all people, present and future."

We as GCAP Global Assembly 2023 commit to work with civil society, to unite from the local to the global level to build a solidarity-based movement for global justice for all!