

# Strengthening Public-Private Cooperation with Civil Society

WHITE PAPER  
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# Executive summary

Civil society has a crucial role to play in strengthening public-private cooperation to create sustainable, inclusive impact.

Developing an effective response to the crises that societies face – including geopolitical fractures, climate and nature emergencies and societal divisions – requires strong global partnerships and multistakeholder collaboration. Civil society brings inclusion to the heart of public-private cooperation, ensuring business, government and coalitions deliver meaningful impact and find solutions that reverse inequality, respect planetary boundaries and uphold civic freedoms.

As the realities of inequality have become more pronounced across interconnected systems, any meaningful, hoped-for impact in this deeply unequal world will be determined by the level of ambition business, government and other leaders are bringing to the table for the communities most proximate to the effects of the crises of today and tomorrow.

This white paper details how civil society will be critical for strengthening public-private cooperation and generating necessary disruption in:

- Addressing crises in energy, food, climate and nature: by raising ambition and mobilizing support to help the world meet the [2030 targets](#); and defining and demanding equitable solutions for sustainable transitions

- Addressing crises in the new economy and the social contract: by championing social justice, equity and inclusion for marginalized populations in public policy and corporate action; and promoting social protections and influencing policies related to work, wages and job creation
- Addressing crises related to the prevailing industry headwinds and technology futures: by championing inclusion and affordability in urban spaces and policies; driving innovative solutions in global, regional and local health systems; defining the common good and promoting equity and digital rights in the design, deployment and use of emerging technologies; and accelerating inclusive solutions for last-mile digital connectivity and digital financial inclusion
- Addressing geopolitical and humanitarian crises: by driving the local implementation of humanitarian aid and service delivery in fragile contexts; accelerating inclusive trade policies and processes; and promoting human rights, peace and values within multilateralism

Leaders looking to create an inclusive impact with civil society must focus on rebuilding trust, investigating current engagement and investing in long-term collaborations and local civic space.

# Introduction

Greater multistakeholder cooperation is needed to address the complexity of today's global crises.

## Strengthening public-private cooperation with civil society: context

“ Civil society promotes the interests of citizens, consumers, marginalized populations, workers, grassroots movements and social causes in their efforts to find collaborative solutions.

Systemic inequalities, the global economic downturn, fractured responses to the COVID-19 and climate crises, and geopolitical conflicts emphasize the need for multistakeholder cooperation that emboldens trust between leaders and people, and which addresses the various economic, social, health and environmental emergencies faced by all stakeholders.

Civil society brings inclusion to the heart of public-private cooperation, ensuring businesses, governments and coalitions deliver meaningful impact and find solutions that reverse inequality, respect planetary boundaries and uphold civic freedoms. From pushing for a more equitable future of work beyond the COVID-19 pandemic to digital inclusion for marginalized communities, civil society promotes the interests of citizens, consumers, marginalized populations, workers, grassroots movements and social causes in their efforts to find collaborative solutions. The realities of inequality have become more pronounced across interconnected systems. The success of any efforts to counter this will depend on the ambition of business, government and other leaders to find relevant solutions with the communities most proximate to current and future crises.

Despite the constraints faced by the third sector globally and the closing of civic space in several contexts, civil society organizations and leaders continue to be vital collaborators in addressing today's global and regional challenges with industry and government, acting as:

- **Mediators**, brokering trust and facilitating dialogue (e.g. unions and civil society leaders negotiating just transitions and a more equitable future of work during and beyond the pandemic)
- **Champions**, inspiring action, promoting shared societal values and advocating for marginalized and disempowered communities (e.g. environmental organizations, youth movements and climate activists driving an intergenerational movement for climate justice and nature-positive action in green transitions; organizations supporting citizens and consumers through the cost of living crisis)
- **Experts**, with in-depth sector knowledge, local expertise (and alternative wisdom), insights and/or techniques to inform policy and industry practice (e.g. Indigenous leaders providing traditional wisdom for nature-based solutions; experts providing actionable insights for responsible technology design, deployment and use)
- **Implementers**, driving front-line action to deliver positive socioeconomic change (e.g. global and local organizations accelerating progress and improving service delivery, including: vaccine access; food systems; access to shelter and affordable housing; education, skills and employment opportunities)
- **Watchdogs**, ensuring transparency and accountability, and taking advantage of impartiality and neutrality to drive reform (e.g. standard-setting organizations and groups benchmarking ESG practice; organizations monitoring greenwashing, corruption and other issues; human rights mainstreaming)

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# Addressing crises in energy, food, climate and nature with civil society

The crises affecting people and planet have compounded in 2022, with systems in the global commons at serious risk of collapse.

The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit and the 2022 Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB COP15) have been the latest milestone opportunities for the global community

to take meaningful climate and nature action, build stronger collaboration and promote global cooperation to ensure a sustainable, inclusive and resilient world for current and future generations. Greater collaboration is still needed across the following areas.

## Crises and cooperation in focus: 2023



### Climate

**Accelerating climate action**, including scaling up support for adaptation, advancing net-zero ambitions, new finance and putting COP27 commitments into action



### Nature

**Fast-tracking towards a nature-positive economy**, championing the implementation of a strong, equitable and nature-positive Global Biodiversity Framework



### Food

**Improving food security and reducing hunger in the global food crises**, while strengthening sustainable food and agriculture systems under stress due to increased prices for food, fertilizer and fuel



### Energy

**Resolving global energy shortages**, while accelerating the transition to more sustainable energy sources to meet the 2030 targets



### Oceans

**Scaling up solutions and implementing commitments**, towards a sustainable, inclusive ocean and sustainable ocean economy



### Water

**Improving water management and ensuring water security**, closing the gap between global water demand and supply by 2030

# Strengthening cooperation with civil society: energy, food, climate and nature

## 1 For raising ambition and mobilizing support to help the world meet the 2030 targets

As **champions, experts** and **watchdogs** in the official negotiation processes, together with business and other non-state observers, civil society is needed to raise ambitions and reach targets across global climate, nature and environmental objectives in 2023:

- [Advancing the Global Stocktake \(GST\)](#) from the Paris Agreement towards COP28: civil society and community leaders are taking stock of climate actions at the local level, and will be key implementing partners following the GST
- [Championing climate adaptation](#) for developing economies and marginalized communities, particularly for [farmers](#) and [Indigenous communities](#): including improving access to climate data and promoting inclusive disaster risk-reduction approaches
- Tracking and ensuring [greater accountability and effectiveness](#) of climate adaptation finance for marginalized communities and developing countries
- Raising ambitions and implementing existing financial pledges for [loss and damage funding](#)
- Building momentum for multistakeholder action on [air pollution](#) and towards a new [international agreement on plastic pollution](#)
- [Tracking contributions and progress](#) towards a nature-positive global economy, and promoting [a global goal for nature](#)
- Accelerating momentum relating to an [international fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty](#), with more than 1,800 civil society organizations

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION 100 Million Farmers

Recognized as one of the breakthrough agendas for agriculture and innovation by 40 world leaders, [100 Million Farmers](#) is a multistakeholder platform inspiring action in the transition to net-zero, nature-positive food systems by 2030. Farmer-

led civil society organizations have been at the centre of this work, helping to bring on-the-ground perspectives to businesses and governments as they partner to accelerate nature-positive food systems.

## 2 For defining and demanding equitable solutions for sustainable transitions

The shift to net zero has the potential to generate quality jobs and foster social inclusion, but it will not happen by default. Unplanned and unmanaged, the transition may exacerbate inequalities between and within countries and leave workers, communities and businesses stranded, as well as engendering resistance to change. As champions and experts, unions and civil society organizations are needed to meaningfully define just and equitable transitions in energy, nature and food to avoid “just transition washing”.

The notion of a “just transition” [originated from unions in the 1990s](#) as a framework to support workers who stood to lose their jobs as a result

of environmental protection policies. It has now evolved to refer to deliberate efforts to ensure environmental sustainability alongside quality jobs, social inclusion and poverty eradication. Through their deep connections with millions of workers across every country, unions and civil society have played critical roles in [defining a just transition](#), developing normative guidance and shaping agendas for all stakeholders aiming to implement a just transition nationally.

Most activity surrounding just transitions has focused on energy; however, similar efforts are needed for nature-positive economies and sustainable food and agriculture systems.

- WWF International has described [nature-positive just transitions](#) as those focused on transforming sectors contributing to nature loss – including food and agriculture, forestry, fisheries, infrastructure, tourism, energy and mining, manufacturing and processing, and finance – “to make them work for people, nature and the climate”
  - Launched at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit, the [Just Rural Transition secretariat](#) focuses on ensuring a just transition in food systems: “Feeding a growing population by 2030, while protecting natural systems which sustain life – as rural and indigenous communities, food production and key ecosystems come under growing stresses from climate change”
- As a **mediator**, civil society is needed to ensure equitable participation and effective dialogue in climate and nature action with communities most at risk from climate change, biodiversity loss and unsustainable food systems – including women, Indigenous peoples, local communities, youth and other marginalized communities.
- Embedding Indigenous knowledge in the conservation and restoration of nature: Indigenous peoples comprise less than 5% of the global population but have amassed knowledge that has guided them in stewarding more than [80% of the Earth’s biodiversity](#) across the generations. Investing in the rights and guardianship of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) is [increasingly understood by governments and businesses](#) to be essential in advancing effective and sustainable nature-based solutions. However, these groups have received less than 1% of climate funding, rarely have secure land rights and are often not included in partnerships and coalitions working towards nature-based solutions; this has resulted in the marginalization or dispossession of Indigenous peoples
  - Despite limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts in attention due to current shortages in energy supply, [youth climate activists](#) continue to push for broader action and dialogue on the climate emergency, inspiring a [movement for intergenerational climate justice](#)

## IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION

### Just Transition Centre

As the global union confederation representing 200 million workers in 163 countries and territories, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) established its [Just Transition Centre](#), in order to accelerate just transition processes globally. Taking advantage of ITUC’s leadership and deep connections with its members, the centre is a strategic voice for stakeholders designing context-specific just transition processes that can provide

“better and decent jobs, social protections, more training opportunities and greater job security for all workers affected by global warming and climate change policies”. In addition to documenting best practices across national contexts and making strategic recommendations in global policy dialogues, the centre facilitates social dialogue processes involving unions, communities, government and business.



2

# Addressing crises in the new economy and the social contract with civil society

As global inflation climbs, currencies plummet and economic pressures mount, societal fissures inevitably deepen and vulnerabilities build.

According to the International Monetary Fund, global growth is [expected to slow](#) from 3.2% to 2.7% in 2023. In addition to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and other crises, the global economic downturn is having disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities and emerging markets, driving millions into extreme poverty, disrupting the world of work, exacerbating

systemic inequalities and exposing the underfunding of critical social infrastructures across societies.

These issues call for a new social contract that supports strong, equitable investments in social protections, education, skills and healthcare, laying the groundwork for social mobility.

## Crises and cooperation in focus: 2023



### Equity and social justice

Safeguarding gains and addressing gaps in social justice, equity and inclusion



### Cost of living crisis

Advancing poverty-reduction policies and solutions in the current high-inflation, low-growth, high-debt global economy



### Future of work

Strengthening social protections and preparing workers for tomorrow's economy



### Global recession

Mitigating the impacts, depth and length of the global and regional economic recession

# Strengthening cooperation with civil society: the new economy and social contract.

## 1 For championing social justice, equity and inclusion for marginalized populations in public policy and corporate action

As **mediators** and mobilizers of social movements for local, national and global action: civil society leaders have disrupted social narratives on race, gender, youth and in other areas in order to promote greater visibility and increased public action for the rights of minority communities throughout history. Civil society organizations and social movements are leading stakeholders promoting inclusive, equal societies.

As **experts, implementers** and **champions** of society's most marginalized groups, civil society and community leaders are also needed to translate social justice into public and private action, bridging the perspectives of communities into public policy and corporate action. Offering

nuance, depth of expertise and implementation strategies that allow for an up-to-date and contextualized approach to equity and inclusion which cuts across these intersections, civil society organizations and grassroots movements can:

- Encourage coherence on inclusion topics
- Advise on decision-making processes and participation
- Guide leaders to be responsive and proactive during difficult discussions about equity and when conducting equity audits, in order to diagnose and resolve any issues.

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION

#### The Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality (PGLE)

[The Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality \(PGLE\)](#) is a coalition of organizations committed to using their individual and collective advocacy to accelerate LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) equality and inclusion in the workplace and in the broader communities

in which they operate. Foundational to PGLE's work is the guidance of leading LGBTI and human rights civil society organizations. Together, through PGLE, civil society and business are collaborating to create best practices and benchmarks for LGBTI inclusion, globally.



## 2 For promoting social protections and influencing policies related to work, wages and job creation

“ Engaging with consumers can help leaders and businesses take action to make the upcoming recession as short and shallow as possible.

As expert **advisers** and **watchdogs**, civil society will be critical to ensuring that people, and consumer rights, are at the heart of the collective response to the cost of living crisis. Consumer spending drives approximately 60% of global GDP, and yet the soaring costs of food, energy and housing are affecting communities across the world, changing spending habits and most significantly affecting the poorest communities. Current approaches do not appear to be stemming the crisis, facing resistance from citizens and consumers. Engaging with consumers can help leaders and businesses take action to make the upcoming recession as short and shallow as possible.

As **mediators**, unions and civil society continue to ensure workers' priorities are protected in a changing geopolitical and regulatory context. With [increased favourability](#) during the crisis, trade unions and labour organizations captured the moment

during the pandemic to [organize and broker](#) a more worker-centric response and recovery with industry and government leaders, pushing for a future of work in which all working people are valued as essential – reflected in their wages, work and benefits – for our economies to thrive.

Workers, employers and governments now face new challenges that threaten to preclude a more equitable system of work in the current crises. Trade unions have already identified the need for greater social protections, mass reskilling and a baseline wage floor. The 2022 ITUC [Global Rights Index](#) showed a sharp increase in workers' rights violations, and significant employment law changes are being touted across some of the largest economies in 2023. Through social dialogue, trade unions play an important role in translating, mediating and directly communicating workers' concerns to leaders, avoiding greater disruption and upheaval.

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION Consumers International

[Consumers International](#) is working to ensure that consumers are protected against the cost of living crisis – from helping consumers access affordable, nutritious and sustainable diets, to shaping consumer policy and creating safety protocols regarding product design. With its global programmes tackling food, energy, digital rights, digital finance and sustainable consumption, Consumers International works

with industries and governments, on behalf of consumers and consumer groups, to set the standards for fair and resource-efficient production that ensures costs are not passed on to the consumer. In 2022, Consumers International joined the UN Global Crisis Group on Food, Energy and Finance, advocating on behalf of its members for greater support for sustainable agriculture and energy production.

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION Good Work Alliance

The World Economic Forum's [Good Work Alliance](#) is a global cross-industry initiative for forward-thinking companies, with input from unions and independent experts, dedicated to using their individual and collective power to build a healthy, resilient and equitable future of work.

Providing vital insights and guidance to the Good Work Alliance and its Good Work Framework, the Forum's labour leader community plays an integral role in shaping the standards and goals of the Forum's business community as they move towards a more just future of work.

3

# Addressing crises in prevailing industry headwinds and technology futures with civil society

Rapid technological and infrastructural change brings layered intersectional challenges and unprecedented opportunities.

Industries are being forced to reassess their investment, production and innovation decisions amid worsening geopolitical conflicts, climate events, global health shocks, impending economic recession and the maturation of emerging, disruptive technologies. Rapid technological and infrastructural change brings both layered intersectional challenges and unprecedented opportunities for society. Cities are becoming the stage upon which pressing industrial and societal challenges play out (relevant

to climate change, decarbonization, anti-corruption and social policies) as local governments look to innovate in response to multiple urban challenges.

In this context, industry leaders are transforming their businesses to become agile, resilient, tech-enabled, people-centric and planet-friendly so they can deliver strong returns and play a material role in addressing global challenges with civil society and other businesses, government and stakeholders.

Crises and cooperation in focus: 2023



## Housing

Focusing on affordable housing and other urban needs



## Trusted innovation

Advancing innovative technology solutions and building trust to address complex global challenges



## ESG

Realizing stakeholder responsibility through core business and operating models



## Health

Learning lessons from the pandemic that help in the development of efficient and sustainable health systems



## Cities

Stress-testing new challenges for the cities of tomorrow and addressing major vulnerabilities



## Ethics

Adopting shared principles and safeguards for the design, deployment and use of emerging technologies, from AI and the metaverse to bioengineering and quantum computing

# Strengthening cooperation with civil society: industry transformation and technology futures

## 1 For championing inclusion and affordability in urban spaces and policies

As the cost of housing outpaces incomes, access to good-quality and affordable accommodation has been significantly affected by the global economic downturn, cost of living increases and heightened demand. An estimated 3 billion people will need access to affordable housing by 2030, according to [UN Habitat](#).

Loss of livelihoods and decreased incomes following the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis is affecting housing security. Civil society groups are providing support and advocating for community-led housing.

Civil society organizations such as [Habitat for Humanity](#) champion marginalized communities in city discussions, mediating between policy, business needs and the human element, to ensure that vulnerable groups are re-centred in public policy. Habitat for Humanity is advocating for new and more affordable cities and housing solutions.

Civil society organizations led calls championing adequate housing support for refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, particularly in overwhelmed metropolitan areas. In response, the European Commission launched the [Safe Homes Guidance](#)

in July 2022, providing targeted guidance to EU member states, regional and local authorities, and private housing providers to facilitate accommodation processes and ensure safe and appropriate housing offers. Since the introduction of the initiative, civil society [organizations](#) have helped countries with implementation, from delivering workshops to improve understanding of the guidance and apply it to the local context, to providing housing, shelter and long-term policy advice.

Civil society is also **implementing** solutions. In the United States, [20% of residents are in rent arrears](#) and 10 million are behind in mortgage payments. Working in close partnership with New America's Future of Land and Housing Program and the Rockefeller Foundation, DataKind built an open-source tool to better support those at risk of losing their homes to foreclosure or eviction. The tool helps local leaders understand where housing loss is most acute, when housing loss occurs and who is most affected. In turn, policy-makers can make data-driven decisions in directing millions of dollars in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to homes and families across each state before foreclosures and evictions happen.

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION

#### The Global Future Council (GFC) on Cities of Tomorrow

[The Global Future Council \(GFC\) on Cities of Tomorrow](#) brought together leaders across business, civil society and the public sector to tackle the challenges facing cities, ranging from inequality to climate change, while also exploring solutions to help make cities more inclusive and

sustainable. This GFC, with knowledge inputs and co-curation from civil society, produced a series of white papers, blogs and a podcast on advancing equity and sustainability. These materials are used to help inform city-planning practices.

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION

#### Partnering Against Corruption Initiative (PACI)

The World Economic Forum's [Partnering Against Corruption Initiative \(PACI\)](#) launched in 2004 as the principal CEO-led platform for global anti-corruption with approximately 90 signatories. In working to define the "G" of ESG, PACI works with a number of stakeholders including Vanguard CEOs, civil society organizations such as Transparency

International and the Tax Justice Network, and the UN. As a long-term network partner of the Business 20 (B20) Taskforce on Integrity and Compliance, PACI brings the expertise of its community to shape the B20 policy agenda, and many PACI activities directly contribute to implementing B20 policy recommendations.

## 2 For driving innovative solutions in global, regional and local health systems

“ Members of civil society can ensure that innovation in health systems is carried out fairly and inclusively.

As **implementers**, civil society responds to immediate challenges, delivering quickly and efficiently during health emergencies:

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) around the world complemented a multilateral COVID-19 response in the immediate and mid-term, as part of a whole-of-society support to national response strategies. Civil society rallied quickly to support governments and businesses in their crisis response by supporting the needs of vulnerable populations in hard-to-reach areas, providing treatment and care facilities and supporting vaccine rollout. These organizations engaged in decision-making, planning, accountability and front-line delivery, ensuring community reception, readiness and resilience.
- The world’s largest NGO, the [Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee](#) (BRAC) supported the Government of Bangladesh’s national mass vaccine initiatives by managing vaccine centres in rural and urban areas through the use of its 43,000 community health workers. Civil society organizations can bridge delivery gaps thanks to their extensive networks in remote areas and among hard-to-reach groups.

As **watchdogs** and **experts**, members of civil society can forecast system failures and prepare against future shocks:

- COVID-19 and climate change have exposed pre-existing vulnerabilities across health systems. Boosting the collective capacity to create novel and effective vaccines, expediting the registration of new and existing medicines, and enabling local manufacturing of medicines to overcome supply-chain hurdles will give societies and economies a chance to contain future pandemics before they spread, making the shift from pandemic response to endemic management.

- Civil society actors such as the Access to Medicine Foundation offer research, evaluation and tracking mechanisms to monitor pharmaceutical and other health companies’ efforts to improve access to essential health products in low- and middle-income countries to drive these changes. [Access to Medicine’s Annual Index](#) ranks organizations based on their work to address access to medicine – including in relation to strategy, governance, R&D and pricing – in turn providing local policy-makers and other stakeholders with the critical information required to enable them to engage with industry leaders. Civil society can be a proxy for transparency and better standards to future-proof the sector.

As experts and implementers, members of civil society can ensure that innovation in health systems is carried out fairly and inclusively:

- The [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#) works with private and non-government bodies to help disease and health systems function more effectively through the active sharing of knowledge, skills and technologies. Unilever and the Global Fund worked together to fight HIV and malaria in South Africa, Nigeria, India and Bangladesh through capacity-building and establishing more effective distribution networks across developing countries.
- Meanwhile, through the [United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief](#), the Global Fund and its partners were able to implement the World Health Organization (WHO)’s Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)) strategy, increasing the percentage of people receiving antiretroviral therapy from [25% in 2010](#) to [75% in 2021](#).

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION The Global Coalition of Health Systems Transformation

[The Global Coalition for Health Systems Transformation](#) brings together governments, companies, academia and experts to co-design and pilot innovative new approaches to person-centred healthcare.

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION The Global Health Equity Network

The [Global Health Equity Network](#) is a World Economic Forum initiative to shape a healthier and more inclusive healthcare system by mobilizing leaders to secure a commitment to prioritize health equity in organizational strategies.

### 3 For defining the common good and promoting equity and digital rights in the design, deployment and use of emerging technologies

As **champions** of civic participation and stakeholder inclusion, [civil society organizations can work with technology designers](#) to bring broader perspectives on the common good and collective intelligence from communities through access to a diverse range of stakeholders.

- For governments and business designing “tech for good” interventions for social impact, civil society’s established trust and direct feedback with local communities can provide a reality check on impact. With context-based insights from communities, civil society can help technology designers ensure that interventions are not designed outside of critical needs, out of context and with significant rights trade-offs.

As **experts** in digital rights, many civil society organizations can analyse digital strategies and identify harms facing underrepresented communities in the context of digital and technology systems. Governments invested in preserving the rights and liberties of the public (as well as private companies that have similar commitments with regard to their users) can benefit from civil society organizations taking on oversight and regulatory roles relating to tech issues such as surveillance, privacy and civil liberties.

- Access Now and the Electronic Frontier Foundation outline the [opportunities and risks](#) of extended reality technologies and emerging metaverse environments, providing recommendations to governments, companies and investors to build on past lessons and embed digital human rights.

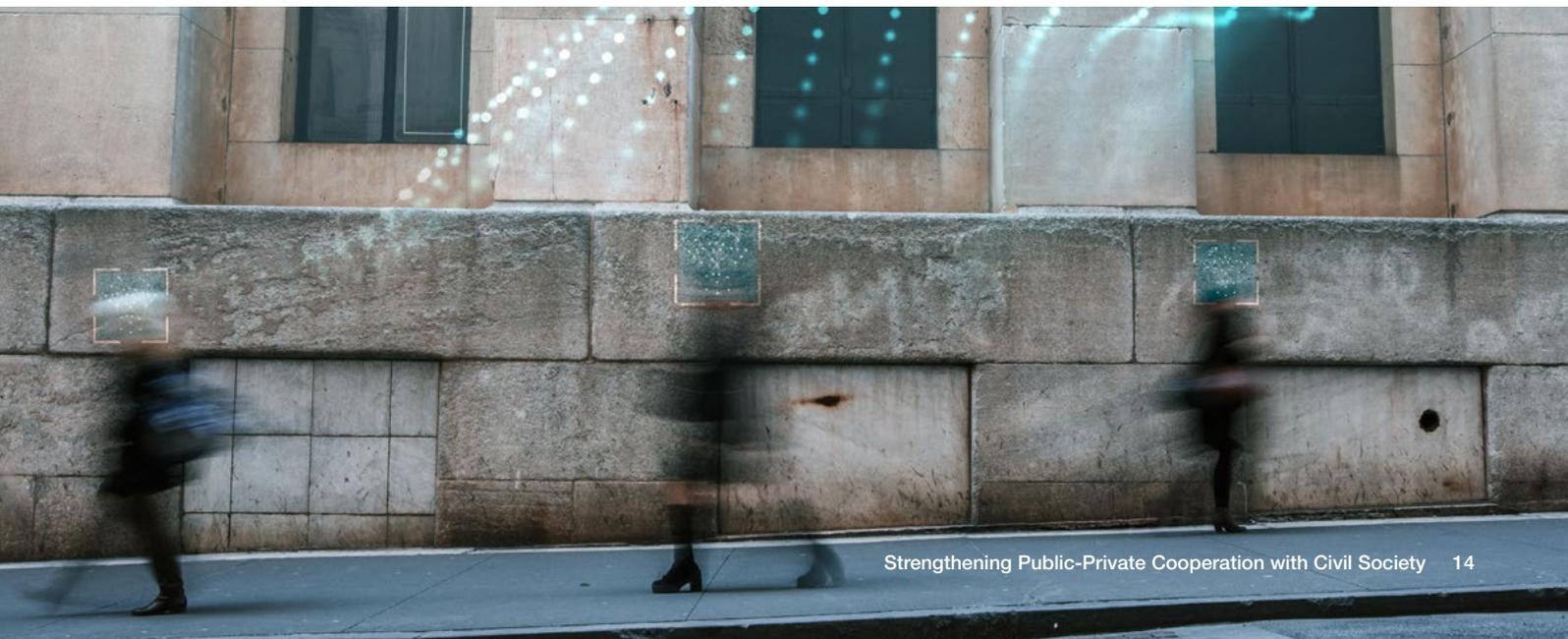
#### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION Data for Common Purpose Initiative (DCPI)

With more than 170 members across 25 countries and upwards of 80 organizations, the [Data for Common Purpose Initiative \(DCPI\)](#) is “driving the mission of orienting data policy and use cases around common purposes to unlock opportunities for individuals, the public sector and commercial enterprises”.

#### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION Global Coalition for Digital Safety

The [Global Coalition for Digital Safety](#) aims to accelerate public-private cooperation to tackle harmful content online and drive forward collaboration on programmes to enhance digital media literacy. Civil society’s contribution, as

advocates and human rights defenders, helps to ensure an open and collaborative multistakeholder coalition fighting digital harm. Together with business and the public sector, the coalition has released an action framework on advancing digital safety.



4

# Addressing geopolitical and humanitarian crises with civil society

It is critical that all stakeholders work to strengthen regional and global cooperation.

Geopolitical fracturing characterizes the current status quo, disrupting systems that bring common benefit (such as trade) and creating risks of competition and conflict where effective multilateral, multistakeholder cooperation is

needed. The war in Ukraine, and the growing geopolitical turbulence, has ushered in the most significant challenge in the post-Second World War era – as societies face compounding economic, health, technological and social crises.

Crises and cooperation in focus: 2023



## Security

Increasing collective security and mitigating geopolitical turbulence



## De-escalation

Promoting multilateral, multistakeholder cooperation to address global and regional challenges



## Trade

Shaping the future of trade and investment amid multiple crises



## Resilience

Accelerating humanitarian, peace and reconciliation efforts, and building societal resilience



## Trust

Strengthening social cohesion and trust, and reducing polarization

# Strengthening cooperation with civil society: geopolitical and humanitarian crises

## 1 For driving the local implementation of humanitarian aid and service delivery in fragile contexts

Compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing conflicts, increased waves of desert locusts, more regular cycles of flooding and extreme droughts, rising Ebola cases and knock-on effects related to high food, commodity and fuel prices due to the conflict in Ukraine, more than [14 million people](#) in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya are facing famine and starvation. As **implementers** and **watchdogs**, civil society organizations are needed to localize humanitarian action to prevent food shortages from becoming famines. In fragile and conflict-affected environments, civil society organizations are critical to ensuring effective humanitarian responses, providing basic services and mobilizing aid and support to respond to the local context.

- From emergency water trucking in Ethiopia to malnutrition treatment in Kenya, the work of the [International Rescue Committee](#) (IRC) has been key in supporting communities in East Africa to respond to a twin – water and food – crisis. In Somalia, as part of the [Building Resilient Communities](#) consortium, it has reached 280,000 Somalis to increase financial resilience among families – particularly female-led ones – through entrepreneurship training and start-up grants. The UK has since announced £22.8 million in funding towards Somalia's hunger crisis.

### IN PRACTICE: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION Humanitarian and Resilience Investing Initiative (HRI)

The [Humanitarian and Resilience Investing Initiative \(HRI\)](#) partners with donors, private investors and leading civil society actors to help strengthen fragile economies, and increase the self-reliance and resilience of communities at heightened risk of or that have suffered from forced displacement,

fragility, conflict, violence or natural disasters. Civil society partners provide a grounded perspective on HRI's work, which enables the private sector and donor governments to better understand how their investments can most benefit vulnerable communities in the world's most fragile contexts.

## 2 For accelerating inclusive trade policies and processes

Greater visibility of systemic inequalities has focused attention on the impacts of trade on the world's minority communities, underscoring the WTO's fundamental principle of non-discrimination. Governments have increasingly engaged with civil society communities and leaders to identify new solutions and opportunities [to advance inclusive trade agendas](#). As **mediators** and **experts**, civil society organizations work with trade actors to [promote more equitable access](#) to the benefits of trade within and across countries.

- Gender and procurement: fragile supply chains demonstrate the need for governments and companies to diversify their suppliers. Public procurement markets offer [opportunities to](#)

[support women-led enterprises](#), which were disproportionately affected during the pandemic in terms of unemployment and business closures. Civil society organizations such as the International Trade Centre provide [capacity-building activities](#) to promote gender-responsive public procurement.

- Through its engagement with Indigenous communities and leaders, the Canadian government has developed [provisions for Indigenous peoples in its trade agreements](#), “advancing programs and policies to enhance the ability of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous businesses to benefit from the opportunities created by international trade and investment”.

## Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD

The [Trade Union Advisory Committee \(TUAC\) to the OECD](#) represents the views of trade unions within OECD committees and as part of the annual OECD Ministerial Council Meetings. Comprised of 58 affiliated trade unions and more than 50 million

workers from OECD countries, the TUAC works closely with other global union confederations (including the ITUC and the European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]) to coordinate inputs to the G20 (through the Labour 20) and G7 processes.

## Inclusive Trade and investment Initiative

As part of the World Economic Forum's wider work on trade and investment, the [Inclusive Trade and Investment Initiative](#) seeks to improve trade outcomes for workers and under-served communities, including Indigenous peoples. Civil

society partners bring a sustainable, inclusive and equitable lens and framework for private actors and governments to build on, helping to ensure best practices in the trade and investment space.

### 3 For promoting peace, values and hope within multilateralism

As **mediators** and **leaders** promoting peace, unity and hope, civil society leaders and organizations can promote the values of cooperation and realignment towards common humanity within multilateralism.

Signifying the importance of civil society for peace and democracy, the Norwegian Nobel Committee [awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2022](#) to human rights advocate Ales Bialiatski from Belarus, the Russian human rights organization Memorial and the Ukrainian human rights organization Ukraine Center for Civil Liberties.

## Religions for Peace (RfP)

[Religions for Peace \(RfP\)](#) is an international coalition of representatives from the world's religions dedicated to promoting peace. Since its inception in 1970, the coalition has advanced effective interfaith cooperation on global, regional, national and local levels – ensuring that diverse religious leaders, communities and institutions

work together harmoniously on concrete and inclusive initiatives. RfP launched the [Multi-Religious Humanitarian Fund](#) to finance 20 multifaith projects around the world. The fund brings together individuals, organizations, businesses and nations in the shared belief that people can accomplish more together than apart.



# Conclusion

To inform leaders committed to sustainable and inclusive impact, the Forum's civil society community was asked how industry and government leaders can help accelerate meaningful impact with civil society and local communities.

Here are their four suggestions to close the gap.



## 1. Reflect on your current stakeholder engagement

Consider where you are already engaging with civil society and where it may be valuable to deepen your cooperation. Is your organization seeing impact and is it in the right areas? Understand the gaps and where you find it challenging to engage. Explore why this might be the case.

Organizations that are less familiar or new to engaging civil society might commit to taking the

initial steps to engage. Consider joining shared safe spaces for open dialogue and learning with others to build initial relationships with civil society. Undertake alternative models of connecting, e.g. through project or policy co-design. Be intersectional in your intent and embrace challenges. Find champions across the board and outside of the ordinary.



## 2. Long-term thinking is the best short-term strategy

Engaging civil society is an ongoing process, not a one-off event. Engagement is most effective when it is early, frequent and honest. Engaging civil society only during projects or funding cycles limits real impact potential. Long-term thinking requires

recognizing that not all groups are affected equally. By engaging with a broad spectrum of civil society organizations on an ongoing basis, cooperation can be rich and expansive.



## 3. Rebuild trust: actions, not words

The shocks of the pandemic, geopolitical turmoil and economic fragility have contributed to a great mistrust in global leadership, threatening the credibility of many democratic governments. Citizens, consumers and communities are looking for new practices that more effectively meet their needs.

Leaders must look to rebuild trust in processes and systems and be accountable. It is time to turn words into action, targets into results, metrics into impact.

Civil society organizations are under pressure. They face a crisis of funding, membership and longevity. Leaders can look at alternative ways to demonstrate trust. Beyond statements and project funding, instead consider how to share resources and time. Close the data divide between non-business and non-government actors. Find ways of making private-sector projects more adaptable to the social sector. Proactively building cooperation in this way inspires trust and integrity in the impact process.



## 4. Necessary disruptions: building cross-sector coalitions for civic space

Create the space for civil society to operate and collaborate. Civil society leaders all have one common request: leaders, lend your power to keep civic space open and civil society resilient.

The reality is that the rise of social movements and informal activism is a response to narrowing opportunities. Civil society is at its most

constructive, impactful and vibrant when it is allowed the freedom to operate.

Civic space can look different in different contexts. It can be online. It can be in person. It can be democratic, multireligious, multigenerational. Above all, leaders must hold this space, and offer room at the table for the voices that most need to be heard.

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