Webinar Series on Governance Futures: Applying Strategic Foresight

26 November, 3 December, and 17 December 2024
9:00 to 10:30 am (EDT)

United Nations Headquarters, New York
Online MS Teams

Description of the Event

The United Nations Economist Network (UNEN) sub-group on governance futures, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the UN Futures Lab/ Global Hub are organizing a Foresight Webinar Series on Governance Futures which will take place online on 26 November (9:00 to 10:30 am) (EDT), 3 December (9:00 to 10:30 am) (EDT), and 17 December 2024, (9:00 to 11:00 am) (EDT).

Earlier this year, UNEN established a Strategic Foresight working group aimed at developing a UN approach to strategic foresight to support national efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This initiative focuses on four key areas: *jobs, climate and energy, digital, and governance*. Each theme is being explored by a dedicated sub-group that will produce a policy brief. Key messages from each policy brief will inform a comprehensive UNEN paper on Foresight.

The sub-group on governance futures is analyzing which governance models will be most effective in addressing today's complex and evolving challenges, aiming to align them with the sustainable development goals beyond 2030.

The sub-group has investigated strengths, limitations, and potential drivers of change in current governance models. Some preliminary insights were presented at the "Future of Governance" side event held at the margins of the Summit of the Future.

Partnering with the UN Futures Lab/ Global Hub, the Webinar Series will apply strategic foresight to deepen the understanding of governance systems and outline pathways toward desirable futures for governance. This exercise will involve three webinars, each lasting 1.5 to 2 hours, where participants will apply foresight methodologies to explore and evaluate alternative governance models at all levels. Participants' insights will help shape this forward-looking analysis of governance for sustainable development.

Background

Governance systems have profound and wide-ranging implications for society, the environment, and the economy. How societies govern themselves plays a crucial role in determining the well-being of all people and of sustainable development. Defining the governance systems of the future requires a deep understanding of the critical drivers of change as well as of the needs and aspirations of today's society in whichever forms and modalities they are being expressed (e.g., through social media, local communities, and cities). It calls for a better understanding of different governance models and their capacities to address present and future challenges.

Governance systems at the global and national levels are at a critical juncture. Although global governance institutions have achieved many successes since they were developed after the Second World War, the growing number of issues on the international agenda, and their complexity, is outpacing their ability to cope with them. National governments around the world are also struggling to address the impact of increasingly frequent and cascading global crises, from climate change to energy, geopolitical tensions, health, and food shortages. There is a growing belief that the current governance systems at all levels have reached their limits to effectively face current and future challenges and meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations.

Governments and people need to rethink the values that should inform their social contract and how these are being interpreted and implemented, what kind of society they wish to live in and what governance system is going to deliver meaningful freedom and well-being to the largest number of people.

Strategic foresight and systems thinking approaches will be used to enable a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics shaping the future and provide insights into potential pathways/roadmap for transformational change towards a desired future and the design of forward-looking, and anticipatory policies.

As part of the effort to reimagine a more inclusive, adaptive, and responsive United Nations, the Secretary-General has identified Strategic Foresight as a critical approach to empower governments and organizations to navigate uncertainties to tackle the challenges, and complexities of today's world.

Strategic foresight is a systematic approach to anticipating and preparing for future challenges and opportunities. It involves analyzing trends, uncertainties, and emerging issues to inform decision-making and strategic planning.

By systematically analyzing (scanning the horizon) current trends, signals and uncertainties, we can identify key drivers of change that will shape governance outcomes. We can then envision/anticipate multiple future governance scenarios based on identified trends. Once a preferred scenario is established, we can outline specific steps and strategies needed to achieve it.

This Webinar Series on Governance Futures will focus on:

- Validation of signals and establishing interlinkages
- Implications' analysis, prioritization, scenarios
- Visioning and action planning

Objective

The objective of the Webinar Series on Governance Futures is to explore what type of governance systems will be needed to manage current and future challenges and support sustainable development aspirations beyond 2030.

The Webinar Series will build on the findings of a Survey which was conducted between 11 – 21 October 2024 among colleagues across the UN system who were invited to share their perspectives and vote on key drivers of change across the political, economic, social technological, legal/regulatory and environmental speheres that might shape the future of governance.

Outcome

The Webinar Series will deepen the understanding of governance systems and outline pathways toward desirable futures for governance. The findings from the foresight Webinar Series will inform the analysis of the UNEN Policy Brief on Governance Futures, which will be published in early 2025.

Proposed Programme

The programme of the webinars will be as follows:

	Workshop 1 Validation of signals and establishing interlinkages	Workshop 2 Implications' analysis, prioritization, scenarios	Workshop 3 Visioning and action planning
Date	**26 November** (9:00-10:30 AM, NY Time)	**3 December** (9:00-10:30 AM, NY Time)	**17 December** (9:00-11:00 AM, NY Time)
Agenda	1. Introduce the Futures of Governance initiative and strategic foresight as an approach to be applied for exploration 2. Understand the current state of global and national governance based on emerging drivers that shape this 3. Establish the interlinkages of these drivers, and how these can impact existing governance models' effectiveness/ability to address current and global challenges	1.Investigate the implications of these drivers and their interconnections as a foundation for scenario development. 2.Explore possible futures of global and national governance in 2040 and assess their potential consequences.	1.Align on a preferred future from the participants' perspectives. 2.Determine the necessary actions to bring that future to reality.

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