4.1 CHANGE AREA 1
Reimagining Global Governance Institutions Fit for the 21st Century and Beyond

From the São Paulo Declaration:

For International Organisations: overcome silos for an inclusive form of multilateralism that centres healthy people and a healthy planet and recognises their interdependence. Cross-cutting, transdisciplinary cooperation is imperative to merge multiple agendas and strengthen the health-environment nexus. Work towards enhanced governance through equitable influence of low-, middle-, and high-income countries and the protection of human and environmental rights.

Background: Global Governance in the Anthropocene[6]

One of the key issues with the current calls for governance reform is that they are often made without defining governance and whether that governance is good or bad. What is Planetary Health governance? What does it look like? Who can enact it?

Uncertain times, growing desires for isolationism, and stalemates in problem solving, have led the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to call for an overhaul of the multilateral system. The system in its current form has failed to effectively deal with these challenges. At the same time, the problems encompassing humanity and its environment continue to grow into more global, complex issues, including increasingly rapid global warming, pollution, and biodiversity loss (the UN Environment Programme refers to this as the Triple Planetary Crisis); the ongoing threat of pandemics and spreading of zoonotic diseases; and increasingly serious wars and global conflicts. There needs to be thorough and accelerated change to international governance institutions in order to better understand risks, work on crisis prevention, tackle the growing calamities society faces and to prevent recurrence. This change must include concrete steps that will grow and maintain a rights-based, evidence-informed, cohesive international order that governs within planetary boundaries via a precautionary approach.

Reimagining governance for Planetary Health means that we must consider how to reform the architecture of the global governance system so that institutions and their thematic priorities are more closely and effectively coordinated, in a way that overcomes the fragmentation which prevents effective and just action. The diversity, identity, objectives and interests of key actors with some theoretical or effective power at a global level should be considered as well.

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[6] As defined by National Geographic: "The Anthropocene Epoch is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth's history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems."

This section of the Roadmap offers insights on how all of society, from local community leaders to heads of state, can and should use the resources at their disposal for the betterment of planetary wellbeing, harnessing lessons in the Planetary Health education, communications, and business portions of this document. In beginning to educate and unite Planetary Health advocates on the next steps for global governance, this Roadmap aims to start a conversation on how to effectively influence and envision a new approach to multilateralism.

Defining Global Governance for Planetary Health

Everyone who wishes to contribute effective recommendations for global governance reform benefits from a basic understanding of multilateralism and international institutions. In developing a globally coordinated strategy for Planetary Health-informed governance, we must first define what this reimagining of governance would institutionally entail.

In looking at global health governance, Ilona Kickbusch[7] offers the following three definitions:

- Global health governance, which refers mainly to institutions and processes of governance which are related to an explicit health mandate, such as the WHO.
- Global governance for health, which refers mainly to institutions and processes of global governance which have a direct and indirect health impact, such as the World Trade Organization – many of these are related to the social determinants of health.[8]
- Governance for global health, which refers to institutions and mechanisms established at the national and regional level to contribute to global health governance and/ or to governance for global health – such as national global health strategies or regional strategies for global health.[9]

Understanding the difference between these definitions is essential, as they are directly tied to a reformed Planetary Health approach to governance. Using the framework Kickbusch suggests from the basic definition of the term "governance," international institutions and processes can be divided into:

- those which have a direct mandate for Planetary Health,
- those which have a direct and indirect impact on Planetary Health, and
- those established at the national and regional level to contribute to governance for Planetary Health.

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[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilona_Kickbusch
[8] The social determinants of health (SDH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies, and political systems - WHO.
[9] Kickbusch and Szabo, "A New Governance Space for Health."

The working definition of health governance within planetary boundaries, which further strengthens the case for application of a Planetary Health lens to global governance, is as follows:

Health governance within planetary boundaries (see Figure 3) describes all institutionalised forms of social coordination that: 1) aim to develop and implement rules for ensuring health and wellbeing, and 2) aim to provide collective goods for the benefit of society without exceeding planetary boundaries.[10]

Figure 3.   Planetary Boundaries
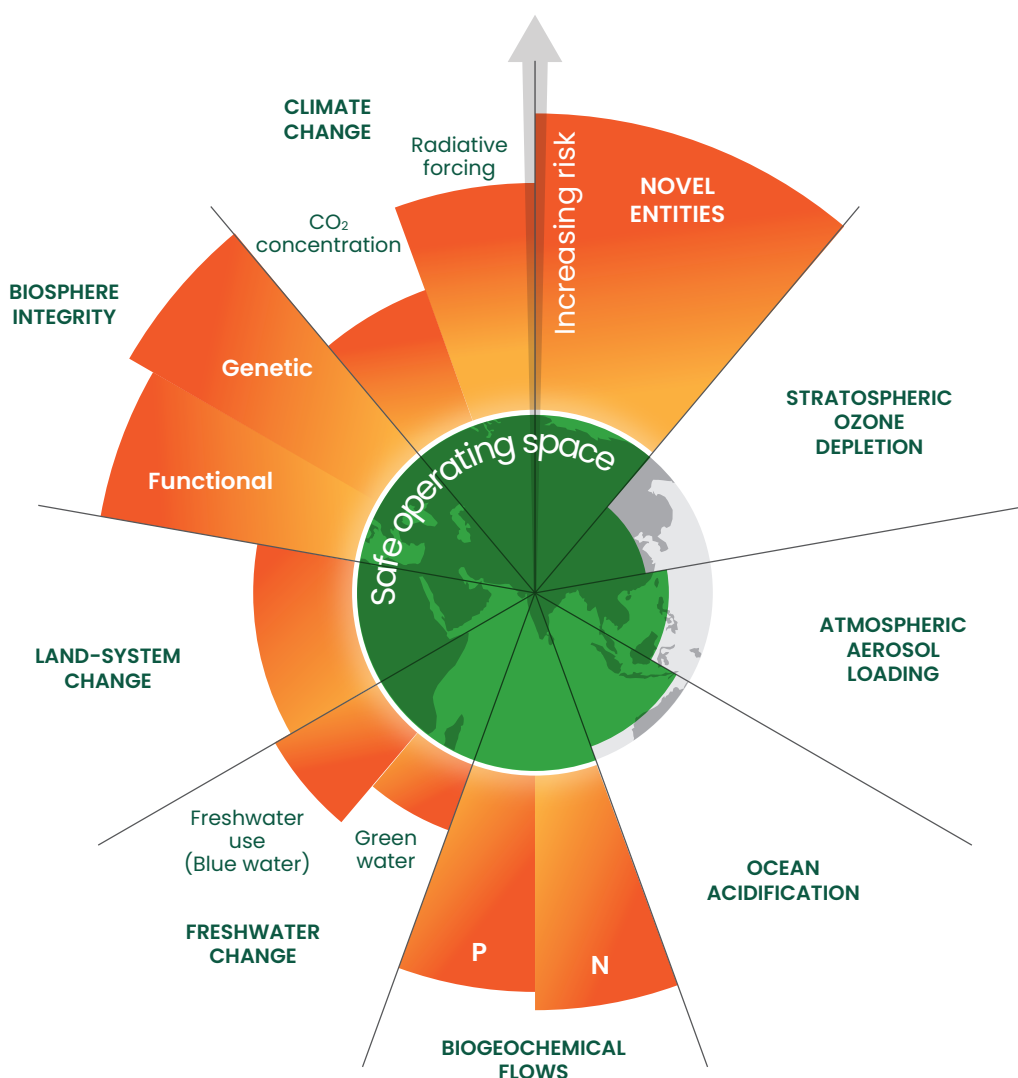
Source: Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, based on analysis in Richardson et al 2023

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[10] Baltruks et al., "Health within planetary boundaries: Open questions for policymakers, scientists, and health actors."

There are certain institutions and processes which could be described as having a mandate which incorporates a Planetary Health perspective, through the focus of governing within planetary boundaries:

1. the World Health Organization, as an institution designed with the purpose of protecting and preserving human health, and subsequent instruments under the World Health Assembly, including the International Health Regulations and any agreed-upon pandemic accord;[11]

2. the United Nations Environment Programme, as a mechanism designed with the purpose of protecting and preserving the environment;[12]

3. the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (and all instruments produced as a result of its mandate), as a framework designed with the purpose of protecting and preserving the planet from increasing levels of climate change and its impacts;[13]

4. the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, as an institution designed to ensure global food security, as well as to improve levels of nutrition, agricultural productivity and sustainability, and the quality of life of rural people;[14]

5. the World Organisation for Animal Health, as an institution designed to foster global commitment to improve animal health and welfare and veterinary public health worldwide;[15]

6. the Convention on Biological Diversity (and all instruments produced as a result of its mandate), as a framework designed with the purpose of protecting and preserving the planet from increasing levels of harm to its biodiversity;[16] and

7. the United Nations Development Programme, as an institution designed with the purpose of ending poverty and building democratic, inclusive governance through the rule of law.[17]

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[11] Constitution of the World Health Organization, Article I; International Health Regulations (2005), Article II
[12] United Nations General Assembly, Resolution XXVII on Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation.
[13] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Article II.
[14] Constitution of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Article I.
[15] Organic Statutes of the Office International des Epizooties, Article IV.
[16] International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Articles of Agreement, Article I.
[17] United Nations Development Programme, Mission and Vision.

While this list is not exhaustive, these are the institutions and processes with explicit mandates to incorporate a Planetary Health perspective. Figure 4 identifies health linkages through just one of these bodies, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, looking at the intersections of all institutions mentioned above is essential in advancing global governance through a Planetary Health lens.

To strive for further interaction across platforms that govern planetary boundaries, these international bodies and instruments must aim for better harmony with bodies that have Planetary Health mandates, including, for example:

1. the United Nations Executive Office of the Secretary-General, which manages the United Nation's Chief Executive Board;[18]

2. the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues;[19]

3. the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea[20] and its subsequent Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction;[21]

4. the World Bank,[22] and

5. the World Trade Organization.[23]

Developing critical recommendations for global governance reform requires a general awareness of these bodies and documents, how they currently interact with each other, and potential ways they could further incorporate the objectives of Planetary Health. Global governance for Planetary Health should include human health governance, environmental governance, food systems governance, biodiversity governance, ocean governance, animal welfare governance, trade governance, economy governance, human rights governance, and everything which has a direct or indirect mandate to protect people and planet.

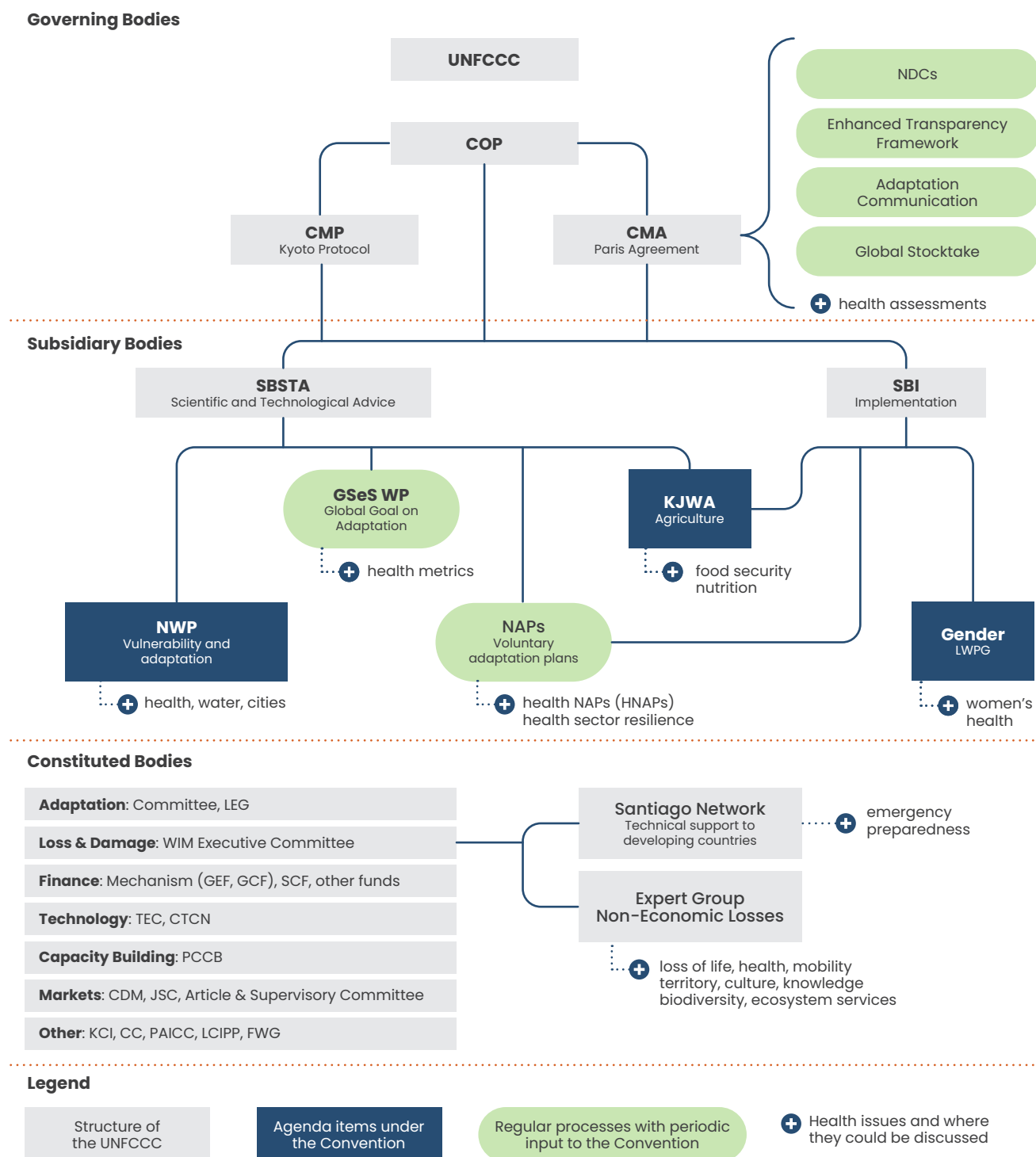[18] Charter on the United Nations, Article LVII.

[19] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Resolution MM/XX on the Establishment of a United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

[20] United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article I.

[21] Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, Article II.

[22] International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Articles of Agreement, Article I.

[23] Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, Articles II and III.

Figure 4.   UNFCCC through a Health Lens

Governing Bodies

UNFCCC

COP

CMP
Kyoto Protocol

CMA
Paris Agreement

NDCs

Enhanced Transparency Framework

Adaptation Communication

Global Stocktake

➕ health assessments

Subsidiary Bodies

SBSTA
Scientific and Technological Advice

SBI
Implementation

GSeS WP
Global Goal on Adaptation

KJWA
Agriculture

➕ health metrics

➕ food security nutrition

NWP
Vulnerability and adaptation

NAPs
Voluntary adaptation plans

Gender
LWPG

➕ health, water, cities

➕ health NAPs (HNAPs) health sector resilience

➕ women's health

Constituted Bodies

Adaptation: Committee, LEG

Loss & Damage: WIM Executive Committee

Finance: Mechanism (GEF, GCF), SCF, other funds

Technology: TEC, CTCN

Capacity Building: PCCB

Markets: CDM, JSC, Article & Supervisory Committee

Other: KCI, CC, PAICC, LCIPP, FWG

Santiago Network
Technical support to developing countries

➕ emergency preparedness

Expert Group
Non-Economic Losses

➕ loss of life, health, mobility territory, culture, knowledge biodiversity, ecosystem services

Legend

Structure of the UNFCCC

Agenda items under the Convention

Regular processes with periodic input to the Convention

➕ Health issues and where they could be discussed

Source: Originally published by Willetts, E., et al. in "Health in the global environmental agenda: A policy guide."

How Planetary Health Can Inform Global Governance

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were designed as a framework to drive integrated approaches to sustainable development, were also intended to promote global governance informed by Planetary Health. As they have been a guiding framework since 2015, Planetary Health advocates that global governance must also ensure familiarity with each of the 17 Goals, how they function in relation to one another, and amongst UN Member States, and how the reporting mechanisms work. Figures 5 and 6 outline the SDGs and how they are intended to guide sustainable development for the biosphere, society, and the economy, all of which are lenses through which the concept of Planetary Health can further inform international institutions and processes.

The SDGs are due to be completed in 2030. Due to growing global challenges that require interdisciplinary approaches, governments and multilateral organisations have started to debate how successor arrangements to the SDGs might be developed in a way that better pursues governance for sustainable development.[24] As 2030 approaches and the sun begins to set on the SDGs, it is crucial to ensure international institutions and processes continue to move forward cohesively, instead of returning to the pre-SDG era of fragmented global sustainability governance.

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Global governance for Planetary Health requires a greater cross pollination between governing bodies to break down silos and avoid further fragmentation of the international order. Recognising and further identifying the root causes of global crises, including independent interests of nation states and competition between institutions, is needed to fix the delayed progress of the SDG framework and the failure to achieve their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals. Despite good intentions, the Millennium Development Goals and the SDGs have systematically missed targets. This should not be ignored - it is important that the world does better in future.

The 2024 United Nations Summit of the Future's preparatory process posits that we already have the "what" in the form of many existing agreements and commitments, starting with the United Nations Charter and including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 2030 Agenda (including the SDGs), the 2015 Paris Agreement, the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and many others. The Summit of the Future will look at the "how" – how do we cooperate better to deliver on our common aspirations and goals? How do we better meet the needs of the present while also preparing for the challenges of the future? Ensuring that a Planetary Health perspective continues to be considered, especially in global discussions around economic policymaking, must be a common short, medium and long-term goal.

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[24] Arora-Jonsson, "The sustainable development goals: A universalist promise for the future."

Figure 5.   The Sustainable Development Goals

Figure 6.   The SDG "Wedding Cake"

Source: Originally published by the Stockholm Resilience Centre.

But we need to be realistic. Global governance is fragmented; the governance structures of its constituent parts are poorly harmonised and highly siloed. The Executive Boards of development banks and UN agencies, programmes and funds share no functional coordination mechanism. The development and humanitarian systems continue to debate the humanitarian, conflict, development continuum or nexus,[25] and the United Nations General Assembly often faces challenges in reaching consensus on issues of global significance that surround the UN system governance architecture.[26]

Although reforms have been regularly enacted since the inception of the United Nations, many of these institutions rose out of the ashes of the Second World War and were built to address and fit into a twentieth century global order; with different complexities and arguably less challenge than today's world. While the framework of the SDGs (Figure 7) aspired to promote a more dynamic, interconnected governance structure towards human wellbeing across multilateral institutions, the increase in number of international treaties and related agencies, programmes, funds and international and regional organisations has accelerated the phenomenon of fragmentation in the global governance arena. There is also a sense of frustration at the number of agencies, programmes and funds that require funding, hosting, and coordinating.

Emerging crises often overlap between fields, requiring an interdisciplinary approach to governance. Unresolved overlaps, fissures, an often-limited level of ambition and commensurate availability of resources among conventions and mandates means that fragmentation remains a key challenge. This leaves diplomatic capabilities overstretched and hinders the possibility of a sufficient, ambitious and coordinated international response that reaps effective and just actions for communities.

> " ... even more worrying is the fact that some agencies, especially the ones relating to the economy, are making decisions that are promoting unsustainable development and harming human health and the environment.

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[25] Dubois, "The Triple Nexus: Threat or Opportunity for the Humanitarian Principles."
[26] Goodwin, "Power Politics and the United Nations."

Figure 7.   The Sustainable Development Goals and Their Interlinkages Among Different Global Functions
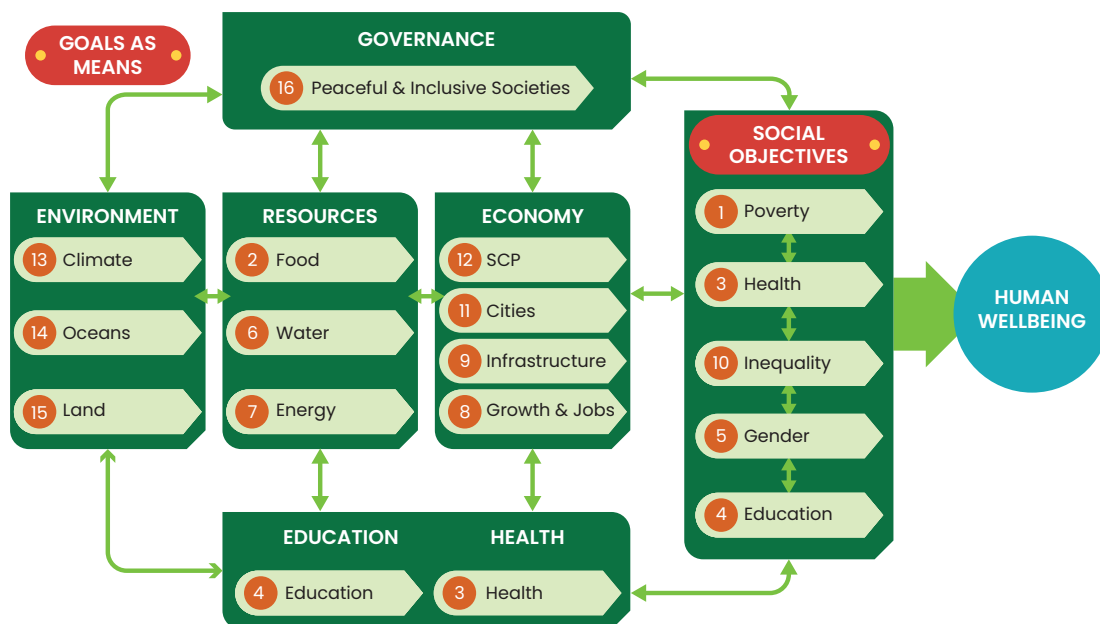
Source: Originally published by Elder, M., Bengtsson, M., and Akenji, L. in "An Optimistic Analysis of the Means of Implementation for Sustainable Development Goals: Thinking about Goals as Means." 2016.

Regime interaction is the process by which leaders in global governance take stock of overlapping efforts on issues and frameworks targeting multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional crises, and collaboratively work to avoid fragmentation by ensuring cohesive and coherent governance across international processes and institutions.[27] A crucial component of Planetary Health, by definition, is broadening the understanding of "health" and using that expanded definition to leverage change for the sake of natural systems.[28] As such, Planetary Health proponents must promote interaction across thematic priorities and legal regimes with relevant international organisations and agreements so that they can function cohesively and provide the governance we need. The Planetary Health community must develop and put forward fresh arguments for why and how the broad range of relevant governance mandates should be better harmonised. This can be used as a basis to respond to the United Nations Secretary-General's observation that "multilateral governance, designed in simpler, slower times, is not adequate to today's complex, interconnected, rapidly changing world."[29] This work can and must contribute to the larger conversation on the future of global governance in a post-SDG world.

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[27] Young, "Regime Interaction in International Law: Facing Fragmentation."

[28] Whitmee et al., "Safeguarding Human Health in the Anthropocene Epoch."

[29] Stewart, "The International Order Isn't Ready for the Climate Crisis."

We need to recognise that the political bandwidth for reform is limited. Instead of building or reforming organisations and government structures by crafting new ones, we must learn how to use the available system to break down silos and fill in the cracks between these institutions, determining what is needed, considering the planetary boundaries we must work within. Planetary Health advocates must lay out clear and coherent proposals for governance which prioritises health and the environment, as well as track and flag areas of continued fragmentation in global governance, in the hope that the concept of Planetary Health can help leaders to intervene through regime interaction.

It can be argued that a key problem is that some governments are still not sufficiently prioritising health or the environment. They still hold the belief that the economy and national security continue to be areas of highest priorities. Thus, health and environment communities need to find more persuasive arguments for why governments should raise the priority levels of health and environment. For example, how can more effort on health and the environment create jobs or reduce security threats? If governments were more motivated on health and the environment, then existing governance frameworks would be more effective.

Acknowledging Geopolitical Uncertainties

Geopolitics is as integral to the international order now, as it was when these institutions were created. The influence of geopolitics must not be underestimated. Simply disregarding opposing interests is detrimental to the mission of Planetary Health. Understanding and accepting the reality of geopolitical dynamics must be a basis upon which progress towards strong global governance for Planetary Health is made. While advocacy for Planetary Health is critical, governance does not occur in the absolute or a vacuum, and thus we cannot advocate for Planetary Health-informed governance without acknowledging the influences and relationships of these surrounding interests and politics.

A new worldview of governance, seen through the lens of "planetary politics," requires a paradigm shift in our global governance architecture - to one which recognises the need to govern within and to respect and nurture planetary boundaries. Current geopolitically fuelled notions of global governance are driven by short term economic and social dynamics, with decision makers often unwilling to make dramatic changes due to the instability they fear may follow. This is a key issue with which the Planetary Health community must grapple, in no small part because of its negative ramifications for social equity. Ideally the Planetary Health community will become the coordination and advocacy locus for individuals and organisations across institutions and processes.

> "
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In acknowledging the need for robust, but smart and sustainable development, which does not hinder social wellbeing and consequently alienate those in power from their constituents, Planetary Health advocates must identify issues and entry points where they can work in concert with governing bodies to bring about equally agile changes to policy and practice.[30] Given that favour is often shown to industry and those with lobbying power at these multilateral fora, an awareness of the current geopolitical landscape is critical in determining how to diplomatically navigate this terrain. Navigating planetary politics, and the potential political repercussions towards governance, is an essential prerequisite to empathise and collaborate with leaders to bring about constructive decision making.

A Rights-Based, Values-Based Approach

Planetary Health is grounded in values-based learning, including trust, responsibility, and community.[31] Good governance must enforce values and rely on networks. Governance for Planetary Health should be no different. Identifying common values is key for connecting with people across the globe, policymakers included, and thus it is important to develop a robust Planetary Health communications strategy.[32] As much of international diplomacy and governance exists in the halls of the United Nations, multilateral development banks and intergovernmental bodies and key elements of Planetary Health governance work at all levels, this work must include translating governance instruments, decisions and actions into local implementation and ensuring that the public understands why and how these decisions are made.

The term governance has been used in this document as something "other;" an external mechanism concerning institutions, processes, and mandates. However, we must also acknowledge that "governance" means the governance of ourselves, including sustainable consumption and lifestyles. Education on governance means that we can govern ourselves as individuals and can collaborate with each other, other beings, and non-living things across the world. That means we as sentient human beings are capable of compassion, we can act for everyone; we can care, we can be inclusive without discrimination, and we can be humble, realising that we must work collaboratively to answer our current challenges. But we must also be vocal when we need to be, prepared to stand up for what is right and just as we call for urgent action. When we act within these capabilities, we can support our societies and systems to deliver governance that can improve the wellbeing of all living and non-living things throughout the world.

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[30] For example: advancing public health initiatives, protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, implementing nature-based solutions, investing in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture practices, carbon pricing, green infrastructure, technological innovation, educational and community empowerment policies, fostering circular economy practices.

[31] Mahmood, "A National Planetary Health Strategy Could Help the 12th Malaysia Plan Make Lasting Systemic Change."

[32] See Communication and Advocacy Section of Roadmap.

We should also aim for this rights-based, values-based approach at the global level. Good governance, effectively crafted and exercised, has the potential to turn Planetary Health from an abstract goal to an everyday component of individual life: the responsibility of advocating for Planetary Health approaches to global governance rests on our shoulders, and we must work together to bring about productive change for both people and planet. In gauging and showing respect for the often-confusing range of factors that make up the current governance architecture, advocates for stronger Planetary Health-informed governance can apply evidence, research and stories to the creation of campaigns that speak to those in power and compel them to bring about the changes we all wish to see.

This persuasive force comes from the use of hard evidence and science to promote different ways of governing for Planetary Health. Stories and examples from real life that show the negative consequences of a lack of Planetary Health governance can be enormously compelling.[33] Bringing alternative governance strategies and their benefits or consequences to life, particularly through demonstrative projects, can also be powerful. As laid out in the next chapter of the Roadmap, we must move forward with a clear understanding of how to approach policymakers and government officials as people, who can be persuaded to believe and be motivated by these values. We must be prepared with a knowledge of political processes and a recognition of where critical change is possible. In this way we can influence leaders to sound their own calls for a Planetary Health approach to our multilateral order and governing institutions.

This Planetary Health community must work out how to articulate Planetary Health to these international institutions and processes, which must incorporate horizontal, vertical, top-down and bottom-up approaches. We must understand that the term "Planetary Health" does not have to be stated in global governance instruments to move the concept forward. Rather, Planetary Health prioritises ways of thinking and highlights opportunities to shift global governance drivers and processes. This diplomatic approach to Planetary Health must encourage transformative action, which emboldens leaders to pursue a form of global governance that calls for both technical solutions and sustainable behaviour; allowing for comprehensive societal change.[34]

Transformative change, which encourages a mentality of placing science, values, and the rights of people and planet at the forefront of decision making, can further define the best paths forward for stronger global governance, informed by the vision that Planetary Health attempts to convey.

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[33] Murphy-Hollies and Bortolotti, "Stories as Evidence."

[34] Wabnitz et al., "Planetary health—transformative education regarding the climate and sustainability crises for health professionals."

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There is a need for transboundary solutions that ensure health and wellbeing for all and future generations, by combating issues such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

Governance for Planetary Health Can Unite the International Order

As the world starts the process of putting into place successor arrangements to the SDGs, the international governance machine is already starting to seek the next framework to catalyse social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing. There is a need for transboundary solutions that ensure health and wellbeing for all and future generations, by combating issues such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

To advocate for improved governance in the global arena, the following action plan is proposed to the Planetary Health community.[35]

1. Identify the locus for governance coordination within the Planetary Health Movement and ensure that the coordinating entity and the following process are adequately resourced.

2. Thereafter, or concurrently, research institutions around the planet should work together, and with multilateral system stakeholders to:

    a. Broadly prioritise where greater regulatory cohesion and coherence of global governance instruments, processes and methodologies is possible to contribute better to Planetary Health.

    b. Determine the institutions and processes that are relevant to these priorities.

    c. Gather the relevant information regarding the institutions and processes responsible for these priorities.

    d. Identify the transformative changes required.

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[35] Adapted from Yusoff, "Rethinking Governance for the Challenges of the 21st Century: Creating a Culture of Accountability and Good Governance for Sustainable Planetary Health."

e. Examine and gather evidence on how these transformative changes would impact current global processes and institutions (opportunities and risk analysis across perceptions, knowledge, interests and political influence).

f. Define messaging that acknowledges and understands the surrounding perceptual, knowledge and political environment and interests.

g. Share the transformative change with all global governance institutions impacted by the messaging, to prevent fragmentation across fora and bring these institutions together.

h. Ensure that the proposed transformative changes are given due consideration by stakeholders to the United Nations-led global process leading to the successor arrangements to the 2030 Agenda.

Planetary Health offers a way forward past 2030. Through this action plan, advocates for Planetary Health can best represent themselves on the global stage, rallying efforts to reimagine global governance more coherently and cohesively for the 21st Century and beyond. The 2024 Summit of the Future presents a key opportunity to galvanise momentum for a concrete governance strategy for Planetary Health for the short- medium- and long-term.[36]

Additional references and resources can be found in the online document repository [here](#).

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[36] Adapted from Yusoff, "Rethinking Governance for the Challenges of the 21st Century: Creating a Culture of Accountability and Good Governance for Sustainable Planetary Health."