



INSIGHTS SUMMARY

UNGA80 AND NEW YORK CLIMATE WEEK 2025 SYNTHESIS



GLOBAL GOALS / WRAP-UP SESSION / 25 SEPT 2025

Top 10 Insights

1: REFORM MULTILATERALISM, DON'T ABANDON IT.

The UN is under strain and often slow, but it remains the only system setting global norms, accountability and shared standards (SDGs, Rio Conventions, UNFCCC, Guiding Principles). Reform is overdue, yet walking away would leave the world fragmented and without guardrails. Multilateralism may feel sclerotic, but it is still the backbone of collective progress.

2: SHIFT FROM MULTILATERAL TO MULTI- SECTOR GOVERNANCE.

Global governance is no longer just about states. Businesses, NGOs, indigenous groups, scientists, trade unions and youth increasingly shape both UN processes and independent coalitions. Non-state actors are creating dynamic forms of governance that can sometimes outpace formal negotiations, offering innovation, legitimacy and accountability.

3: ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON THE SDGS.

With only ~18% of goals on track and around 15% going backwards since 2015, urgency is extreme. Five years remain to 2030, but progress must also extend well beyond that date. The SDGs are victims of their own ambition and success; they need sharper focus, stronger partnerships, and integration with climate priorities if they are to deliver.

4: HARNESS SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (STI) RESPONSIBLY.

AI, biotechnology and materials science are converging to deliver breakthroughs for sustainability, from energy efficiency to medical advances. Localised innovation (e.g. low-energy AI in African languages) shows how solutions can be tailored. But risks are high, especially with AI. Guardrails, governance and ethical frameworks are urgent to channel STI towards public good.

5: DRIVE RENEWABLE ENERGY FROM BOTH TOP AND BOTTOM.

Solar and battery costs have plummeted by over 99% since the 1980s/1990s, making clean power more accessible than ever. Deployment is skyrocketing (1 GW in 2004 → 300 GW in 2023 → 600 GW in 2024). In some places, smart policy drives the shift; in others, communities adopt renewables because unreliable grids force them to do so. Markets and citizens, not politicians, are accelerating this transition.

6: REFINE FINANCE TOWARDS WHAT'S MATERIAL.

Investors are moving away from abstract climate discussions to focus on concrete priorities like reliable energy, supply chains, water and efficiency. ESG reporting has often turned into compliance overload with thousands of indicators. The painful but positive shift is towards clarity: companies zeroing in on the few issues most material to their business models and long-term resilience.

7: MOVE FROM QUIET INTEGRATION TO BOLD VALUES.

Many companies are embedding sustainability quietly (folding it into procurement, HR and R&D) as a way to keep moving without drawing political fire. But this “low-profile survival mode” cannot hold forever. A tipping point is coming when businesses must openly defend their values, accept trade-offs, and lead visibly on what the world needs.

8: PLAN A JUST TRANSITION FOR AI AND THE FUTURE OF WORK.

AI promises efficiency but will displace jobs, especially for younger generations. Frameworks like the “3 Cs” (connectors bringing local knowledge, controllers working alongside AI, combiners managing across systems) illustrate pathways for human agency. Higher education is under attack and must reinvent its role, aligning with business and public priorities to prepare people for the workforce of the future.

9: BREAK DOWN SILOS WITH INTEGRATED ACTION.

Climate cannot be tackled in isolation; it must integrate human rights, just transition, equity and living wages. Coalitions such as those advancing living wage into the Doha agenda show progress is possible. Yet behavioural barriers persist: fear of the unfamiliar (new disciplines), fear of delay (slowing urgent action), and fear of dilution (watering down agendas). Naming these fears is the first step to overcoming them.

10: MAKE SUSTAINABILITY JOYFUL AND BUILD ON TRUST.

The narrative must shift from sacrifice to aspiration – sustainable choices should feel positive, even joyful. Culture, consumer behaviour and fashion matter as much as regulation. At the same time, professional friendships and trusted networks are critical sources of resilience in contradictory times and can carry us through where systems falter.