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RESILIENCE WORLD NEXUS 2026

YOUTH DECLARATION

ON THE FUTURE OF RESILIENCE

Priorities and recommendations from emerging resilience leaders

Future Resilience Leaders Programme
6-7 October 2026
Church House Westminster,
London, United Kingdom

rwnsummit.com

Opening Statement

The Future Resilience Leaders cohort of the Resilience World Nexus (RWN) Summit 2026 included 35 students, researchers and early-career professionals working across climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, risk and crisis management, food systems, critical infrastructure and organisational resilience.

Throughout the Summit, participants engaged with senior executives, resilience practitioners and researchers through panel discussions, roundtables, foresight exercises and collaborative risk mapping. In its own dedicated room, the Future Resilience Leaders Programme (FRLP) facilitated opportunities for professional exchange and interdisciplinary collaboration.

During the Summit, FRLP Participants were asked whether youth participation in the resilience sector was symbolic or genuinely meaningful. The response was unanimous: **symbolic.**

This declaration seeks to contribute to changing that perception. Drawing on the cohort's perspectives and recommendations, it aims to provide Summit delegates and wider industry stakeholders with a practical framework for moving beyond symbolic representation, towards meaningful engagement and shared responsibility.

As the next generation of resilience professionals, we have a direct stake in the long-term consequences of decisions being made today. Our objective is to contribute to their development and implementation - we are not asking to be part of the conversation, we are asking to do the work.

About the Declaration

This declaration was produced by participants in the FRLP, a dedicated programme for students and early-career professionals aged 18-34 at the RWN Summit 2026.

It draws on participant survey responses and roundtable discussions, structured around five priorities identified by the cohort.

Contributors represent disciplines including climate resilience, food security, hazard management, community resilience, and organisational resilience and cyber resilience. The views expressed are those of the cohort, and do not necessarily represent their perspectives institutions.

We extend our thanks to the editors and contributors who supported the development of this declaration, and to the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY), and the Resilience World Nexus (RWN) team for their continued support and collaboration.

Our Vision for the Future of Resilience

We propose a resilience profession that plans for the conditions of an uncertain future, not the conditions of the last disaster. We identify four priorities:

From individual risk to interconnected systems. Real failures are compound: a drought becomes a food crisis because it coincides with an export ban, a fuel price spike and a weakened supply chain.
Risk assessment must account for cascading and compounding impacts across infrastructure, supply chains, communities and institutions, rather than evaluating hazards exclusively in isolation.

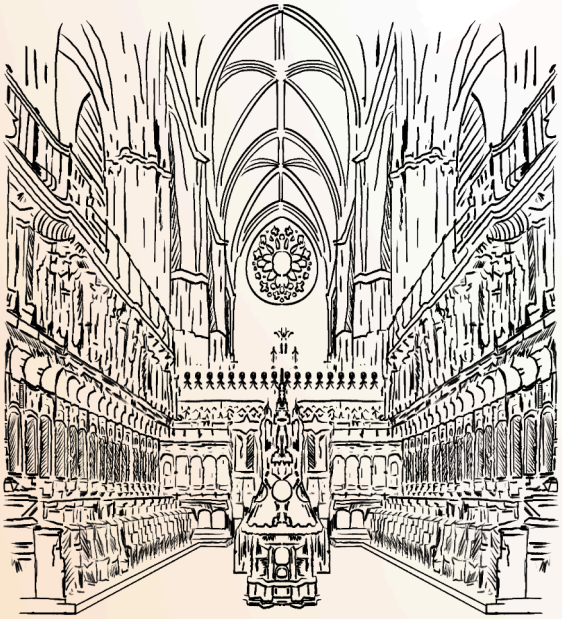
From anticipation to informed decision-making. Foresight, horizon scanning, and scenario analysis already exists in many large organisations - yet faces difficulty reaching the decisions that matter. Anticipatory capacity has to inform strategic planning and operational decisions.

From static plans to living systems. Resilience frameworks must respond to changing risk conditions, remain operational across institutional transitions, and support continuous improvement. A plan is not finished when it is written, and it has to survive changes of mandate and government.

From consultation to shared work. Early career professionals should contribute directly to assessments, projects and decision-making processes, with clearly defined responsibilities. .

Long-Term Resilience and Cathedral Thinking

The concept of *cathedral thinking,* as put forth by Sir Alan Duncan, emphasises investment in outcomes that may extend beyond the careers of those initiating them. Cathedral thinking – in its simplest terms – is building a structure you will never get to see the finished product of, nor enjoy its beauty in its final form. This is the work of resilience.



There is a need for long-term perspectives as building resilience is not an overnight process. This a notable opportunity where Young Leaders prove our potential; resilience building is a mission that will long surpass a one-career lifecycle. Resilience requires intergenerational work, decisions concerning infrastructure, climate adaptation, and institutional preparedness have consequences spanning generations.

Maintaining continuity requires the transfer of knowledge, skills and responsibility between generations.This is essential in a world where risks are fast outpacing our ability to understand and mitigate them. Cathedral Thinking – and the necessity of young people being involved in the decision-making of future planning – has never been more important.

Our Five Priorities

The cohort identified five priorities to structure discussions and develop practical recommendations for the resilience sector.

The priorities are as follows:

01 - Artificial Intelligence, Technology & the Future of Work

Ensuring technological adoption strengthens organisational capability, **while preserving workforce development and human judgement**.

02 - Preparing for an Uncertain Future

Integrating anticipatory analysis, systems thinking and long-term planning into organisational decision-making

03 - Climate, Adaptation & Long-Term Resilience

Strengthen investment in climate adaptation, through measurable outcomes, economic incentives and community-level risk reduction.

04 - Skills, Employment & the Resilient Workforce

Expand accessible entry routes, recognise transferable skills and strengthen collaboration between academia and industry.

05 - A Seat at a Table: Meaningful Youth Participation

Establish substantive roles for early-career professionals in resilience planning, implementation and decision-making.

01 - AI, Technology & the Future of Work

Artificial intelligence presents signfiicant opportuntiies for organisational resilience, alongside new operational and workforce vulnerabilities. Its adoption must balance efficiency and innovation with the preservation of human expertise and professional development.

Automation may reduce demand for entry-level jobs, limiting opportunties for emerging professionals to develop the practical experience and judgement required in senior positions. Organisations must consider the long-term implications of these decisions for workforce capability and institutional knowledge.

As AI and predictive technologies become more widely adopted, human judgement, contextual understanding and effective communication will remain essential - particularly when addressing complex or unprecedented risks.

Technological investment should therefore complement workforce development rather than undermine the skills required for future resilience.

Recommended Actions

- **Preserve and expand early career development opportunities alongside technolgical adoption**
- **Use AI to support, rather than replace, professional judgement and accountability.**
- **Maintain human oversight of decisions involving signficant uncertainty or high-consequence risks**
- **Assess automation against long-term workforce capability and organisational resilience, not solely operational efficiency.**
- **Weigh workforce automation as a resilience decision, not only an efficiency one**

These choice will make the wider system either more vulnerable or more resilient.

A sector that stops training people loses the judgement it will need in a crisis.
The effect is already visible.

The pathway from academic to professional work is narrowing, and graduate and entry-level roles are disappearing fastest. The resilience sector is already limited in its accessibility for new people to enter - we should not lose what little is left.

02 - Preparing for an Uncertain Future

Increasing uncertainty across climate, geopolitics, technology and economic systems requires organisations to hold longer-term and more adaptive approaches to resilience. Resilience depends on organisations holding a longer perspective than their planning cycles encourage - *cathedral thinking*: committing to work, where the benefit arrives after the people who authorised it have moved on.

Traditional risk assessments can underestimate risks outside their institutional memory. This includes high-impact, low-probability events, and the cascading consequences of interconnected systems failures. Assessing hazards independently may overlook critical dependencies across energy, communications, transport and supply chains.

Organisations should strengthen their ability to identify systemic vulnerabilities, assess interdependencies and test preparedness across complex scenarios. However, anticipatory analysis alone is insufficient. Findings from horizon scanning, foresight and scenario planning must inform strategic decisions, investment priorities and organisational preparedness.

Resilience also requires coordination across organisational functions, sectors and political or institutional transitions. Plans also need to be interoperable across mandates, so organisations that must act together are not working from incompatible assumptions, and durable across political change, so a change of government does not reset preparedness. Established interoperability principles, including those applied through the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP), provide useful approaches that could be adapted for wider organisational use.

Long-term decision making must also consider financial, operational, ethical and societal implications. Organisations must ensure that short-term priorities do not undermine future resilience.

Recommended Actions

- **Integrate foresight and anticipatory analysis into strategic and operational decision-making**
- **Conduct regular scenario exercises to test preparedness, assumptions and decision-making**
- **Assess cascading risks, cross sector dependences and critical points of failure**
- **Develop interoperable plans that remain effective across institutional and political transitions.**
- **Incorporate financial, operational, ethical and societal considerations into resilience decisions.**
- **Establish organisational cultures that encourage challenge, constructive scrutiny, and consideration of emerging risks.**

03 - Climate, Adaptation & Long-Term Resilience

Climate change presents interconnected risks that extend beyond individual organisations, sectors and national boundaries. Effective adaptation therefore requires coordinated action and sustained investment.

Despite the growing consequences of climate-related disruption, resilience investment is frequently constrained by short-term financial priorities. Strengthening the economic case for adaptation requires clearer evidence of avoided losses, operational benefits, and wider returns on investment.

Climate resilience is directly linked to organisational continuity. Businesses depend on functioning infrastructure, reliable supply chains, stable communities and a resilient workforce. Investment in these systems supports both commerical performance, and broader societal resilience.

Current planning and investment cycles often fail to reflect the long-term consequences of infrastructure, land-use and adaptation decisions. More consistent approaches to assessing the cost of inaction would support better resource allocation.

Adaptation must also account for the distribution of risk. Measures that protect one location one location or sector should not increase vulnerability elsewhere. Community-level assessments and local capacity development are therefore essential.

Recommended Actions

- **Increase sustained investment in climate adaptation and long-term resilience**
- **Quantify the costs of inaction, avoided losses and wider economic benefits of adaptation**
- **Establish measurable, sector-specific resilience objectives to guide investment**
- **Integrate community-level vulnerability assessments into adaptation planning.**
- **Prioritise anticipatory investment and strengthen local capacity for long-term implementation.**

We will inherit what those choices produce. What matters is who bears the cost of adaptation, and whether adaptation reduces risk or simply moves it - protecting cities while leaving coastal communities and smallholder farmers exposed.
Success means people are protected before a disaster rather than helped afterwards, spending can be traced to what it achieved, institutions can still respond to the unprecedented, and adaptation is designed to be handed over - building local capacity rather than infrastructure that becomes someone else's liability.

04 - Skills, Employment & The Resilient Workforce

The resilience sector faces barriers to recruitment and professional development, particularly for early-career applicants.

Entry-level positions frequently require prior sector experience, restricting opportunities for individuals seeking to enter the profession. Unpaid internships further limit accessibility by excluding candidates unable to undertake work without financial support.

The sector also draws on a broad range of disciplines, including risk management, security, climate science, development, humanitarian affairs and business continuity. However, recruitment practices do not always recognise the transferable skills available across these fields.

Future resilience professionals will require systems thinking, interdisciplinary understanding, analytical capability, communication skills and sound professional judgement. These competencies are best developed through practical experience, structured training and collaboration.

Closer engagement between academic institutions and employers can strengthen knowledge exchange, improve professional pathways and support the application of emerging research.

Recommended Actions

- **Expand paid internships, fellowships, graduate programmes and degree apprenticeships**
- **Remove unnecessary sector-specific experience requirements from entry-level positions**
- **Prioritise demonstrated competencies and transferrable skills in recruitment**
- **Recruit across a wider range of academic and professional disciplines**
- **Establish structured partnerships between universities and employers, including research collaborations, placements and secondments.**

Sometimes, the potential of a future leader lies not in their experience, but in their willingness to learn, contribute and take on responsibility. Recognising that potential, and providing the opportunity to demonstrate it, is an investment in the future of the resilience sector.

05 - A Seat at a Table - Meaningful Youth Participation

Youth participation becomes symbolic when it happens at the end of a process. By the time a decision is presented for comment, the options have closed.

Meaningful participation requires not just representation, but opportunities to contribute, influence decisions and take responsibility for the future of resilience.

Early-career professionals should be involved from the outset of resilience initiatives, contributing to the development of priorities, assessments and solutions, rather than being consulted once decisions have already been made.

Effective participation should be built on mutual trust, shared responsibility, and the recognition that valuable expertise is not determined by seniority alone. Collaboration between emerging professionals and experienced decision-makers creates opportunities for knowledge exchange, combining fresh perspectives with institutional experience.

However, meaningful engagement must also lead to tangible outcomes. Organisations should demonstrate how contributions have informed decisions, provide constructive feedback, and establish opportunities for continued involvement.

Recommended Actions

- **Involve early-career professionals from the outset of planning and decision-making processes**
- **Establish meaningful roles within live projects, assessments and advisory groups, with clear responsibilities.**
- **Provide feedback demonstrating how contributions have influenced decisions and outcomes.**
- **Create regular opportunities for generational exchange and direct engagement with senior leaders and decision-makers.**
- **Develop mentorship and collaborative working arrangements that support mutual learning, professional development and knowledge transfer.**

Ultimately, meaningful participation begins with the willingness to give emerging professionals a genuine opportunity to contribute - someone willing to recognise their potential, trust their capabilities and give them the responsibility to prove themselves.

We also recognise what we have to bring. Age alone is not a qualification. We want to be in the room because of what we know, which means training, mentorship and work that develops credible expertise. Organisations should treat us as partners who know things, not as a constituency to be heard. One event a year is not enough to change how decisions are made. The exchange has to be regular.

What We Want Decision-Makers to Hear

Five key actions for decision-makers to strengthen resilience and invest in the next generation:

1. **AI, Technology & The Future of Work - Prioritise People Alongside Technology**

Use AI to strengthen, not replace, human capability. Protect entry-level opportunities, invest in workforce development, and retain human judgement in critical decisions.

2. **Preparing for an Uncertain Future - Turn Foresight into Action**

Embed anticipatory analysis into decision-making. Assess cascading risks, test preparedness through regular exercises and ensure long-term risks inform investment and operational priorities.

3. **Climate, Adaptation & Long-Term Resilience - Invest Before Disasters Occur**

Prioritise anticipatory investment over reactive expenditure. Measure the costs of inaction, demonstrate returns on adaptation and direct resources towards reducing community-level vulnerabilities.

4. **Skills, Employment & the Resilient Workforce - Give Future Leaders an Opportunity**

Create paid entry-level pathways, recruit for transferable skills and remove unnecessary experience requirements. Give emerging professionals meaningful responsibilities and the opportunity to demonstrate their potential.

5. **Meaningful Youth Participation - Move Beyond Symbolic Representation**

Include emerging professionals in decisions from the outset. Give them defined roles, genuine responsibility and direct access to decision-makers. Demonstrate how their contributions influence outcomes.

Further Recommendations from the Cohort

Beyond the five core priorities, participants proposed further measures that organisations can adopt to strengthen resilience planning, investment and accountability.

1. **Publish your anticipatory-to-reactive spend ratio**. Many organisations state that anticipatory action is part of their approach. A stated priority and a funded one are not the same, and there is currently little to differentiate the two from the outside. Publishing the ratio turns a claim into a number, and therefore a metric that can be improved year on year, especially within a corporate setting.

2. **Open accessibility for risk data.** A large amount of risk modelling and vulnerability data sits inside organisations and consultancies, inaccessible to the communities it describes. By committing to publishing the data behind major resilience strategies, local researchers can build on this work, further supporting the communities, and linking back to the moral obligation organizations should hold.

3. **Measure and report what resilience spending achieves.** If organisations can show what each pound of resilience investment protected and generated, more investment follows. Moreover, greenwashing and gesturing becomes harder when countered with concrete numbers.

4. **Invest in the young workforce**. To ensure the work of resilience is continued, young professionals must be welcomed into the industry – and in a financially viable manner. **End unpaid internships.**

5. **Hire for capability.** Widen recruitment beyond the backgrounds the profession has traditionally drawn on. The summit highlighted the breadth of expertise needed for true and holistic resilience, and diversity in hiring provides the groundwork for interdisciplinary work.

6. **Treat young people as partners**. Bring young professionals in at the ground floor, allowing us to provide a genuine and influential contribution. Give young people roles with weight, and work with us to improve inclusion in the workforce as a mutually beneficial relationship.

Contributors & Acknowledgements

This declaration was developed through the collective contributions of participants in the Future Resilience Leaders Programme at the Resilience World Nexus Summit 2026.

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We extend our thanks to all Future Resilience Leaders Programme participants whose perspectives, discussions and contributions informed the development of this declaration.

Resilience is not achieved through plans alone, but through the ability of institutions to adapt, learn and sustain progress across generations.

The organisations represented at this Summit are shaping the future of resilience. As the next generation of professionals who will carry this work forward, we ask to be involved in shaping those decisions today, not simply implementing them tomorrow.











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