

# **‘We the Peoples’: Civil Society, the UN and Global Governance**

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## *Proposals of the Panel of Eminent Persons on UN-Civil Society Relationships*

1. In exercising its convening power, the UN should emphasize inclusion of all constituencies relevant to the issue, recognize that the key actors are different for different issues, foster multi-stakeholder partnerships to pioneer solutions and empower a range of global policy networks to innovate and build momentum on policy options. Member States need opportunities for collective decision-making but they should signal their preparedness to engage other actors in deliberative processes.
2. The UN should embrace an array of forums, each designed to achieve a specific outcome, with participation determined accordingly. The cycle of global debate of an issue should include:
  - Interactive high-level roundtables to survey the framework of issues.
  - Global conferences to define norms and targets.
  - Multi-stakeholder partnerships to put the new norms and targets into practice.
  - Multi-stakeholder hearings to monitor compliance, review experience and revise strategies.
3. The Secretariat should innovate with networked governance, bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to identify possible policy breakthroughs on emerging global priorities. It should experiment with a Global Internet Agora to survey public opinion and raise awareness on emerging issues. The Secretary-General should initiate multi-

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stakeholder advisory forums on selected emerging issues and feed their conclusions to appropriate intergovernmental forums.

4. The UN should retain the global conference mechanism but use it sparingly—to address major emerging policy issues that need concerted global action, enhanced public understanding and resonance with global public opinion. The participation of civil society and other constituencies should be planned in collaboration with their networks.
5. The Secretariat should foster multi-constituency processes as new conduits for voice on UN priorities, redirecting resources now used for single constituency forums covering multiple issues. The UN Secretariat and the secretariats of Specialized Agencies should convene public hearings to review progress in meeting globally agreed commitments. Being technical and concerned with implementation rather than new global policies, the Secretary-General could convene them on his own authority. Proceedings should be transmitted through the Secretary-General to relevant intergovernmental forums.
6. The General Assembly should permit the carefully planned participation of other actors besides central governments in its processes. In particular, General Assembly Committees and Special Sessions should regularly invite contributions by those offering high-quality independent inputs. The participation arrangements should be made in collaboration with the relevant constituency networks. The UN Secretariat should help plan innovative interactive sessions linked to the formal meetings but outside them.
7. To mainstream partnerships, the Secretary-General should, with Member States' approval and donor support:
  - Establish a Partnership Development Unit, headed by a high-level staff member to help incubate and decentralise the partnership approach, guide the needed management shifts, ensure sound evaluations and provide support services throughout the UN.

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- Identify partnership focal points throughout all UN organs and agencies.
  - Review partnership issues in coordination forums, such as the High Level Committee on Programmes and the Chief Executives Board.
  - Ensure systematic learning from partnership efforts by creating a multistakeholder Partnership Assessment Forum, with UN staff, governments, civil society organizations and others.
  - Provide training in partnership development to governments, civil society and other constituencies, as well as to UN staff.
  - Periodically review the effectiveness of these efforts.
8. The proposed Partnership Development Unit should ensure that lessons of practice are fully internalized in operational and management approaches, conduct rigorous evaluations to learn about the full costs and development impacts of multi-sectoral partnerships and inform the debate about the institutional implications of the approach.
9. The Secretariat should strengthen its relationship with different actors in the private sector by:
- Incorporating the Global Compact under the proposed Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships (see Proposal 24).
  - Engaging with small and medium businesses and their national associations and helping build the capacity and competitiveness of micro and small businesses.
  - Strengthening the Global Compact's capacity for—and contribution to—enhancing corporate responsibility.
10. The UN Development Group (UNDG) should ensure that the rhetoric of country leadership, coordination and partnership is put into effective practice, to open space for all constituencies to contribute to UN goals.

At the country level this entails:

- Enhancing the capacity of country offices (UN Houses) to identify, convene and broker the partnerships needed to meet the main

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challenges and build consensus on country-specific goals (see Proposal 11).

- Conveying systematic messages to country staff about learning from and providing support to civil society and other actors, using the rubric of the Millennium Development Goals and other globally agreed goals as reference points.
- Ensuring that UN Houses work with Regional Commissions to inject the experience of country level actors into regional and global deliberative processes.

At the global level this entails:

- Identifying and rewarding Participation Pioneers within the UN system, by establishing, with donor support, a global fund to support UN innovations in partnership development at country level.
- Identifying and disseminating lessons from innovative partnership and countries where co-operation with non-State actors is strongest.
- Assessing partnership qualities in the annual performance appraisals of Resident Coordinators and other country-level staff.
- Persuading donors to support the extra cost of being an effective networking organization, including the greater investment in coordination that this requires.

11. The Resident Coordinators and UNDG agencies at the country level should undertake the necessary restructuring, coordination and investment to enable the UN to meet the networking challenges by:

- Initially appointing local constituency engagement specialists in 30-40 countries, with facilitation skills and knowledge of civil society in the country (see Proposal 25).
- Reviewing the effectiveness of current country-level information and communications resources, redirecting them to support strategies and partnerships to achieve globally agreed goals.

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- Establishing Civil Society Advisory Groups in a pilot range of countries to guide the UN's strategy; similar advisory groups could be considered for business and other constituencies.
12. Security Council members should further strengthen their dialogue with civil society—supported by the Secretary-General—by:
- Improving the planning and effectiveness of the Arria formula meetings by lengthening lead times and covering travel costs to increase the participation of actors from the field. UN country staff should assist in identifying civil society interlocutors.
  - Ensuring that Security Council field missions meet regularly with appropriate local civil society leaders, international humanitarian NGOs and perhaps others, such as business leaders. UN HQ and field staff should facilitate these meetings.
  - Installing an experimental series of Security Council Seminars to discuss issues of emerging importance to the Council. Serviced by the Secretariat, these would include presentations by civil society and other constituencies as well as UN specialists such as Special Rapporteurs.
  - Convening independent Commissions of Inquiry after Council-mandated operations. A Global Public Policy Committee connecting national Foreign Affairs committees could serve as such a commission (Proposal 15).
13. The UN should routinely encourage national parliaments to hold debates on major matters coming up in the UN and to discuss these matters with relevant ministers. To facilitate this, relevant draft documents, including progress on the MDGs and other globally agreed goals, should be made available to parliaments when they are transmitted to governments. The Secretary-General should seek the cooperation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and parliamentary associations. Member States should regularly consult MPs on UN matters and debrief them after major UN meetings.

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14. Member States should more regularly include MPs in their delegations to major UN meetings, while taking care to avoid compromising the independence of those parliamentarians. The UN Secretariat should test opportunities for MPs to contribute as parliamentarians, including in parliamentary debates before a General Assembly session on a major topic. MPs specializing in a subject could also be invited to speak in relevant General Assembly committees and Special Sessions, particularly when these review progress towards meeting the MDGs and other agreed global goals.
15. Member States should make way for an enhanced role for parliamentarians in global governance. They should instruct the Secretariat to work with national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as appropriate, to convene one or more experimental Global Public Policy Committees (GPPC) to discuss emerging priorities on the global agenda. These committees would comprise parliamentarians from the most relevant functional committee in a globally representative range of countries. In an experimental five-year period, different organizational arrangements could be tested and, through periodic review, refined over time.
16. The Secretary-General should form a small Elected Representative Liaison Unit, based on the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, to:
  - Provide a dedicated information service for parliaments and MP associations, including a dedicated web-based information service for MPs.
  - Encourage greater attention to UN processes in national parliaments.
  - Help create more effective opportunities for MPs to take part in UN forums.
  - Organize Global Public Policy Committees, working closely with national parliaments, the IPU, specialized agencies, and other organizations as appropriate.

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- Foster debate within the UN system about new or improved strategies for engaging MPs and parliaments.
17. The General Assembly should debate a resolution affirming and respecting local autonomy as a universal principle.
  18. The Elected Representative Unit (see Proposal 16) should liaise with local authorities and their new world association and disseminate lessons of good practice. The UN should regard United Cities and Local Governments as an advisory body on governance matters. The Secretary-General should also require UN bodies with national presence to build close contacts with local authorities and their national and regional associations. Specifically, Resident Coordinators should interact regularly with local authorities to inform them of UN programmes and processes and to encourage partnerships with them.
  19. The UN should realign accreditation with its original purpose— an agreement between civil society actors and Member States based on the applicants' expertise, competence and skills. To achieve this, Member States should agree to merge the current procedures at UN Headquarters for ECOSOC, the Department of Public Information, conferences and their follow-up into a single UN accreditation process, with responsibility for this assumed by the General Assembly.
  20. Member States should shift the task of reviewing applications to the Secretariat to reduce time inefficiencies and to increase the technical focus of the review. An Accreditation Unit should be established within the General Assembly Secretariat, incorporating staff now responsible for accreditation in different UN departments (therefore budget neutral). This Unit would help set up the advisory body to offer guidance on whether applications should be recommended or not. A designated General Assembly committee would decide on accreditation, based on this guidance. The Secretariat should ensure increased use of information technologies to manage the accreditation

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process. The S-G should encourage the UN agencies, country offices and others to cooperate in a system-wide effort.

21. The Secretary-General should foster enhanced coordination and support for the accreditation process by:
  - Instructing national and regional offices of the UN to facilitate applications.
  - Using the Chief Executives Board processes to foster closer coordination among UN agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions.
  - Ensuring wider availability of information on the rights and responsibilities related to accreditation (say, through booklets aimed at civil society and UN staff).
22. The Secretary-General should initiate a consultative review, to be finished within three years, whereupon proposals would be submitted to the General Assembly for revising the accreditation categories to align them better with today's practices and priorities.
23. The Secretariat should encourage the main constituencies the UN works with to form broad networks to help it with selection and quality assurance. But the UN should not demand this or stipulate how it is to be done. Networks would be encouraged to advise secretariats and Bureaux on the participation of their constituencies in intergovernmental processes and help monitor practices and revise strategies, perhaps evolving into recognized 'advisory groups.' The UN Secretariat should discuss with these groups possible codes of conduct and 'self-policing' mechanisms to heighten disciplines of quality, governance and balance.
24. With Member States' approval, the Secretary-General should appoint an Under-Secretary-General in charge of a new Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships. This office would be responsible for formulating and implementing the strategy for the UN's engagement

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with all constituencies beyond its formal membership of central governments. It would monitor engagements throughout the UN system and provide advice and good practice lessons. It could comprise the following:

- A Civil Society Unit, to absorb the Non-Governmental Liaison Service.
- A Partnership Development Unit, to absorb the UN Fund for International Partnerships.
- An Elected Representative Liaison Unit.
- The Global Compact Office.
- The Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

25. With Member States' approval, the Secretary-General should initiate a programme to appoint 30-40 constituency engagement specialists in UN Houses to help the UN and the wider system enhance engagement with a diversity of constituencies. He should invite contributions from bilateral donors and foundations to a trust fund to finance these appointments for a trial four-year period.

26. The Secretary-General should make redressing North-South imbalances a priority in enhancing UN-civil society relations. He should enlist donor support for enhancing UN capacity to identify and work with local actors, establishing a fund to build southern civil society capacity to participate and ensuring that country-level engagement feeds into the global deliberative processes.

27. The UN should establish a fund to enhance the capacity of civil society in developing countries to engage in UN processes and partnerships. The Secretariat should seek contributions from governments, foundations, UN sources and elsewhere. And it should establish an administration and governance structure for the fund that puts maximum emphasis on decision-making at the country level.

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28. The Secretary-General and other top UN managers should use frequent opportunities to convey to staff the importance they ascribe to constituency engagement and partnership. These issues should feature prominently in all human resource processes, including recruitment, promotion and annual appraisal. Staff throughout the system, including managers, should be given training in such matters.
29. The Secretary-General should use his capacity as chairman of the wider UN system coordination mechanism to encourage all agencies, including the Bretton Woods Institutions, to enhance their engagement with civil society and other actors and to cooperate with one another across the UN system to promote this, with periodic progress reviews.
30. Member States should encourage, through the forums of the UN, an enabling policy environment for civil society throughout the world and expanded dialogue and partnership opportunities in development processes. The Secretariat leadership, Resident Coordinators and governance specialists should use their dialogues with governments to similar effect.