



PARTNERSHIPS for a NEW WORLD

**Selected Excerpts
of the Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on
United Nations–Civil Society Relations**

Executive summary

Global context

Concerning the roles of civil society in governance, citizens increasingly act politically by participating directly, through civil society mechanisms, in policy debates that particularly interest them. This constitutes a broadening from representative to participatory democracy. Traditional democracy aggregates citizens by communities of neighbourhood (their electoral districts), but in participatory democracy citizens aggregate in communities of interest. And, thanks to modern information and communication technologies, these communities of interest can be global as readily as local.

Investing more in partnerships

The Panel strongly affirms multi-stakeholder partnerships for tackling both operational and policy challenges. This is not a new idea; some of today's most important global advances emanate from partnerships, and their scale and breadth are growing. Although they are no panacea, the United Nations should invest much more systematically in convening and incubating them wherever the capacities of diverse actors are needed and in making them more sincere ventures. They must be viewed as "partnerships to achieve global goals" not "United Nations partnerships", decentralized to relevant country and technical units and driven by needs, not funding opportunities. To advance this goal necessitates innovations and resources at both the country and global levels.

Proposals of the Panel

Convening role of the United Nations: fostering multi-constituency processes

Shift the focus from generalized assemblies to specific networks

42. *The United Nations needs to work with coalitions of actors with diverse but complementary capacities. This implies working with global policy networks, which are better placed to address contemporary challenges rather than conventional hierarchical organizations. They are more flexible and innovative; they generate and use information more efficiently; and they are better placed to identify and deploy needed competencies.*

Proposal 1

*In exercising its convening power, the United Nations should emphasize the inclusion of all constituencies relevant to the issue, recognize that the key actors are different for different issues and **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.*

Embrace greater flexibility in the design of United Nations forums

43. *Although the Charter of the United Nations starts with the words “We the peoples”, it is structured as a forum for central Governments — with limited provision for other actors to take part. Participation is essentially restricted to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to such forums as the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and to a fixed slate of accredited organizations; important expertise elsewhere is overlooked. The “consultative status” of these organizations implies that they can speak only when invited and are not participants in their own right.*

44. *Removing those restrictions would open the United Nations to vital contributions from other constituencies and increase their sense of ownership of global goals. The Panel recognizes that greater access carries challenges. The agenda of formal United Nations forums, especially the General Assembly, is already overloaded, and increasing the pool of participants could make the meetings more unmanageable, reducing the prospects for useful outcomes. Thus the Panel suggests a cautious approach.*

45. *The Panel proposes that different forums be used at different stages of an issue’s life cycle in the global debate. Each would have a different style of work and degree of formality, with different participants engaged for the contribution they offered and for the task at hand.*

46. *For emerging issues, the format might be small, informal, high-level round-table forums to allow real exchanges of experience and avoid entrenched positions. Participants would be world specialists, leaders of communities most directly affected and ministers or top officials from a range of countries. They would inform and be informed by global public opinion and experience.*

47. *Once an issue became familiar, a **high-profile multi-stakeholder event** — a big global conference — could be organized to build a global consensus and a sense of urgency for changes in public policy and public attitudes. Such events can be unwieldy, but they are invaluable for global norm-setting.*

48. *Translating agreed norms into changes on the ground demands strategies for concerted*

action, and multi-stakeholder action usually produces the most lasting solutions. For this the partnership approach is most effective (see sect. III).

49. Reviewing global strategies and proposing revisions is a different task, which is perhaps best achieved by bringing together policy makers, practitioners and independent specialists (such as academics and parliamentarians) to add objectivity. This calls for a more sober setting than a global conference, but wide participation is needed to ensure public accountability.

Proposal 2

The United Nations should embrace an array of forums, each designed to achieve a specific outcome, with participation determined accordingly. The cycle of global debate on an issue should include:

- Interactive high-level round tables 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

Support innovations in global governance

50. The Panel suggests that the convening of such forums be approached with flexibility and innovation, emphasizing broad participation. The strategic use of the moral authority and leadership of the United Nations can enhance its relevance.

51. The formation of global coalitions of constituencies —networked governance, as it is sometimes called—enhances the authority and international stature of the actors. Often the global policy networks are multisectoral—including like-minded Governments, civil society and others—and focus on specific issues. These global policy networks have significantly influenced policy, shaped public opinion and helped to resolve disputes on such issues as debt, land mines, small arms, conflict diamonds, big dams and crimes against humanity, and involve Southern as well as Northern actors. They came together mostly outside the formal organs of the United Nations, later entering the United Nations fold once they had momentum.

52. The Panel also noted numerous examples of innovation in governance emerging from within the United Nations, lessons to be built upon system-wide. Two recent examples are the civil society bureau, parallel to the governmental bureau, at the World Summit on the Information Society and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which comprises equal numbers of representatives from Governments and organizations of indigenous peoples.

53. Since networked governance is clearly emerging as an important aspect of policy-making, the United Nations must embrace and support it more overtly if it is to remain at the forefront of global policy-making. This would entail using its leadership and convening roles to bring likely parties together—to incubate ideas and actions. This is not a new role for the United Nations. The international meeting on the marketing of breast-milk substitutes, hosted by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 1979, brought Governments, health professionals, manufacturers, consumer groups and NGOs working in the area of development together for the first time. Two years later, there was an intergovernmental code for marketing those products.

54. The Panel suggests that the Secretariat use such instruments much more frequently. It also suggests that the United Nations pioneer new communication technologies to advance such networking.

55. As with everything new and unfamiliar, there are challenges. Care is needed to avoid atomizing policy-making and losing coherence. How can one ensure, for example, that a commission on dams does not ignore wider concerns of water, energy and flood prevention in the twenty-first century? Similarly, if all issues related to indigenous peoples were

assigned to the Permanent Forum, would this reduce the ability of the greater United Nations to mainstream such concerns?

56. *New mechanisms must make the intergovernmental forums more effective.* Where they are effective, challenges can be anticipated about their own governance, accountability and possible conflicts of interest.

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

Convene public hearings on progress on global goals

61. *Poor implementation of globally agreed targets erodes public trust in multilateralism. Transparent, inclusive and honest multi-stakeholder monitoring of their implementation would restore that trust. For this, the Panel suggests public hearings such as those used sporadically by the United Nations in the past, such as the World Hearings on Development in 1994. The proposed hearings — perhaps looking at progress made towards the achievement of specific Millennium Development Goals and organized in conjunction with relevant United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies — would be technical forums, drawing on evidence from officials, parliamentarians, independent specialists, community leaders, civil society representatives and others.*

62. *The hearings would be used to study a range of geographical settings, successes and obstacles, and to determine appropriate course corrections. They would be convened and ideally chaired by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the chair and bureau of the most relevant committee of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. They should be multi-constituency processes on specific issues, not open-agenda forums with a single constituency, so as to generate a richness of debate that can come only from diversity.*

63. *The Panel believes that the relevance of major forums oriented to a single constituency — with no clear mechanism to feed into the intergovernmental process, has lessened considerably. It suggests that consideration be given to redirecting the staff time and resources demanded by such international meetings to the proposed public hearings. By narrowing the focus, broadening the participation and ensuring that they feed into mainstream United Nations processes, such events could have a much greater impact. Recasting the annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations into a public hearing format and linking it to the intergovernmental process would be an example.*

Proposal 5

The Secretariat should foster multi-constituency processes as new conduits for discussion of United Nations priorities, redirecting resources now used for single-constituency forums covering multiple issues. The Secretariat, together with other relevant bodies of the United Nations system, should convene public hearings to review progress in meeting globally agreed commitments. Being technical and concerned with implementation rather than the formulation of new global policies, such hearings could be convened by the Secretary-General on his own authority. Proceedings should be transmitted through the Secretary-General to the relevant intergovernmental forums.

Recognize the contribution others can make to General Assembly processes

64. *The plenary meetings of the General Assembly are highly formal, offering little participation to constituencies other than Member States. NGOs and others have often been allowed to contribute to the Assembly's special sessions and committees, but through informal arrangements, sometimes requiring institutional gymnastics to avoid setting precedents.*

65. *The General Assembly needs to be reformed, and a working group has been looking at ways to "revitalize" it for some time. The United Nations should welcome carefully planned inputs from civil society and others with relevant expertise to make the debates better informed and attuned to citizens' concerns. The Secretariat should use its network of contacts and convening power to ensure that this happens regularly.*

66. *The Panel emphasizes opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning between Member States and external constituencies. Informal meetings within the scope of the General Assembly may offer good opportunities, especially interactive processes that foster dialogue among State and non-State specialists. Furthermore, there is little logic for the United Nations to recognize civil society input into the Economic and Social Council but resist a similar input to the General Assembly committees that discuss the same subjects.*

67. *To work well, however, the speakers from civil society and other constituencies must be chosen carefully, according to the topic at hand, through a collaborative process involving the Secretariat, constituency networks and the President and Bureau of the General Assembly. The same mechanism could also help to identify others who should be allowed to observe the proceedings. This would enhance their ability to brief delegates and inform the public.*

Proposal 6

The General Assembly should permit the carefully planned participation of actors besides central Governments in its processes. In particular, the Assembly should regularly invite contributions to its committees and special sessions by those offering high-quality independent input. The participation arrangements should be made in collaboration with the relevant constituency networks. The Secretariat should help to plan innovative and interactive sessions linked to but outside the formal meetings.

III. Investing more in partnerships

Galvanize, support and incubate partnerships in operations and deliberations

68. Partnerships have featured in the project-level work of the United Nations for decades, but in recent years they have transcended individual projects in global programmes and policy-making. One factor in this growth is the goals set in the big global conferences. By the late 1990s the lack of progress became frustrating to all parties, and the greater urgency for multiparty cooperation to reach the goals made “partnership” the new mantra.

69. Evidence to support multi-stakeholder partnerships came from the local level as successes emerged, such as local Agenda 21 initiatives, in thousands of communities. A key lesson was that complex issues were solvable and difficult targets achievable if a broad range of actors contributed to all stages of the effort. This demands linking local efforts to global goals, sharing resources and fostering joint ownership of both the failures and the successes. Non-State actors, including in the private sector, no longer remain agents of programme delivery “hired” by an intergovernmental institution. They become partners in policy-making and decision-making — ensuring checks and balances in a mutually accountable and transparent way. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, explicitly linked the intergovernmental and operational processes; partnerships were accepted as part of the official outcome even though Governments did not negotiate their detailed content.

70. Despite their advantages, partnerships have inherent challenges and problems. The term itself is too easily abused and overused, making it difficult to produce a clear definition. “Partnership” implies a degree of equality among the parties that is rarely found in practice. Some developing country actors feel disadvantaged because engaging in partnerships requires access to resources, networks and information, which are more readily available to large Northern-based organizations. Furthermore, some civil society groups are suspicious of the partnership trend at the United Nations as an implementation strategy, fearing that largely voluntary initiatives substitute for effective governmental action and fearing that the strategy may open the door too widely to large corporations.

71. The role of the United Nations is increasingly as the convener, facilitator and provider of a “safe space” for actors to debate and decide on courses of action for reaching global targets. For this, the United Nations needs a new array of skills, new ways of setting priorities and new mechanisms of discourse and decision-making.

72. Getting the most from partnership opportunities calls for clear leadership, changes in institutional culture, stronger staff skills and rigorous learning from experience. The Panel therefore supports the creation of a high-level partnership unit. It emphasizes, however, that the unit should be responsible for mainstreaming partnerships and facilitating decentralization of related activities to country or specialist units throughout the system rather than brokering specific activities. The unit could assist the Secretary-General in the leadership challenges, internalize partnerships in all human resource strategies and initiate a serious stocktaking of practical experience. The Panel suggests that staff in United Nations departments and bodies be designated as partnership focal points to accelerate institutional learning.

Proposal 7

In order to mainstream partnerships, the Secretary-General should, with the approval of Member States and donor support:

- *Establish a Partnership Development Unit* headed by a high-level staff member to help incubate and decentralize the partnership approach, guide the needed management shifts, ensure sound evaluations and provide support services throughout the United Nations
- *Identify partnership focal points* throughout all United Nations organs and agencies
- *Review partnership issues in such coordination forums as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its High-Level Committee on Programmes*
- *Ensure systematic learning from partnership efforts by creating a multi-stakeholder Partnership Assessment Forum* that includes United Nations staff, Governments, civil society organizations and others
- *Provide training in partnership development to Governments, civil society and other constituencies, as well as to United Nations staff*
- *Periodically review the effectiveness of those efforts*

Build on the experience of multi-stakeholder partnerships

73. Many United Nations system agencies have emphasized multi-stakeholder partnerships in recent years. The World Bank now has more than 70 global programmes accounting for about \$1 billion a year. The World Health Organization lists 70 multi-stakeholder partnerships it engages with. This is changing the agencies. There are many positive consequences — such as harnessing new capacity for development, new private funding and the like. But there are dangers in seeing partnerships as a panacea.

74. *The Panel held a special workshop on partnerships in February 2004* which elicited many useful observations.¹ The first was that multi-stakeholder partnerships should be seen not as United Nations partnerships but as partnerships formed to achieve global goals. *The United Nations should help to ensure that all needed parties are included, but should not seek to own the partnerships.* Second, decentralization is vital. Partnerships should be built not by a single central office but by the relevant technical units and country offices. Central functions should be limited to guiding, monitoring, assisting and ensuring quality. Third, the United Nations should discriminate in its partnering and not lose sight of its priority objectives, especially when facing tempting funding possibilities from the private sector.

75. The Panel's review indicates that the United Nations partnership strategy should build on the following lessons:

- *Be inclusive: involve all key actors (especially those directly affected or primary stakeholders — as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS does with AIDS-affected people) using careful stakeholder analysis*
- *Clearly define the purpose and roles: be results-focused; be clear about the contributions all are expected to make; ensure a common purpose while allowing divergences*

- *Be participatory: ensure that decision-making is clearly defined and shared, recognizing inherent power differentials*
- *Seek flexible funding: allow for changes in funding and financing based on experience; enable quick disbursements to support innovation*
- *Ensure good governance: maintain transparency, communication and mutual accountability among partners, ensuring democratic processes within the institutions and emphasizing primary stakeholders*
- *Welcome the private sector but ensure that it does not dominate*
- *Keep sight of the agency's mandate: multisectoral partnerships must help the United Nations to achieve global objectives, not divert it; donor funding can skew activities towards the most media-worthy rather than the most vital projects*
- *Maximize strategic influence: link the partnership to globally agreed priorities (Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 21) and to official processes; ensure that it has the full buy-in of the relevant United Nations agency*

Proposal 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 impact on development of multisectoral partnerships and inform the debate about the institutional implications of the approach.*

Engage the private sector as a key constituency for partnership

76. *Partnerships must engage all who are relevant or affected, often including the private sector. Although the Panel gave little attention to this sector, it recognizes that it comprises a wide variety of actors, ranging from local small enterprises and microbusinesses to large multinational companies, many of which are involved in the Global Compact. The United Nations needs to engage with all those actors, using different strategies for each. The **Commission on the Private Sector and Development of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is offering important guidance on these matters.*

Proposal 9

The Secretariat should strengthen its relationship with actors in the private sector by:

- *Incorporating the Global Compact into the proposed **Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships** (see proposal 24)*
- *Engaging with small and medium-sized businesses and their national associations and helping to build the capacity and competitiveness of microbusinesses and small enterprises*
- *Strengthening the Global Compact's capacity for and contribution to enhancing corporate responsibility*

Engage stakeholders in strategic planning, coordination and learning

82. True multi-stakeholder cooperation in such processes is still uncommon, with the United Nations remaining too inwardly focused. Even less common is ensuring that country priorities and experiences truly inform the intergovernmental agenda. The Panel suggests that working strategically with civil society and others at the country level can enhance progress in both directions. This demands a major shift in how United Nations bodies relate to other constituencies and to one another at the country level.

Proposal 10

The Development Group 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 the goals of the United Nations.

At the country level this entails:

- Enhancing the capacity of the United Nations resident coordinators' offices to identify, convene and broker the partnerships needed to meet the main 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 United Nations country-level staff work with the 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 United Nations system by establishing, with donor support, a global fund to support innovations in partnership development at the country level*
- Identifying and disseminating lessons learned from innovative partnerships and countries where cooperation 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*

93. To establish potential synergies, the review of the information strategy should be broadened to encompass the communication work of the executive committee agencies. Wider use of modern information technology could help with many routine communication activities, such as collecting press clippings and disseminating notices about United Nations days and events. A deeper partnership could also be built with United Nations associations for providing outreach and communication services in both Northern and Southern countries. This is not the time to be reducing United Nations outreach in industrialized countries, as has been the result of closing its information centres. The erosion of multilateralism makes it more crucial than ever to muster public support. The United Nations should constantly explore more cost-effective ways of

communicating, such as through partnerships with United Nations associations, and better prioritizing its messages, but it is imperative that communication with Northern and Southern audiences be expanded, not cut, and that the necessary resources be made available.

94. To enhance country-level relationships, it would be useful to form civil society advisory groups in a range of countries, initially as an experiment. The resident coordinator and senior staff of the United Nations system could meet at least once a year with the civil society leadership that is of relevance to the United Nations to elicit feedback on successes and failures and to refine the engagement strategy.⁵ If those prove to be effective, parallel advisory groups might be established with the private sector and perhaps other constituencies.

Proposal 11

The **resident coordinators and UNDG agencies** at the country level should undertake the necessary restructuring, coordination and investment to enable the United Nations to meet the networking challenges by:

- Initially appointing local constituency engagement specialists in 30 to 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 communication resources, redirecting them to support strategies and partnerships to achieve globally agreed goals
- Establishing **civil society advisory groups** as a pilot project in a range of countries to guide United Nations strategy; **similar advisory groups could be considered for business and other constituencies**

VI. Engaging with elected representatives

Engage parliamentarians more systematically in the work of the United Nations

102. The Panel suggests that enhanced United Nations-parliamentarian relations could contribute greatly to closing the democracy deficit in global governance. It proposes a four-pronged strategy:

- Take United Nations issues to national parliaments more systematically
- Ensure that parliamentarians coming to United Nations events have more strategic roles at those events
- **Link parliaments themselves with the international deliberative processes**
- **Provide an institutional home in the United Nations for engaging parliamentarians**

Take United Nations issues to national parliaments more systematically

103. National parliaments are the most important arenas for policy debate, legislation, financing public programmes and holding Governments to account. International affairs are an important aspect of Governments' executive power but are usually a weak aspect of parliamentary processes. Governments frequently agree to major global commitments following scant if any discussion in their national parliaments. And there is little parliamentary scrutiny of whether the Government is honouring or ignoring those commitments. So global goals of immense import, such as the Millennium Development Goals, are subject to little attention in most parliaments, greatly

reducing their potency.

104. The Panel proposes that the United Nations systematically encourage national parliaments to devote much more attention to intergovernmental processes, particularly scrutinizing government management of United Nations affairs and follow-up actions to honour global agreements. Different avenues should be tested with the help of the *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and associations of parliamentarians*. Progress depends on the provision of parliaments with all documents on upcoming United Nations matters when they are sent to Member States, which is the practice of the European Commission. The speakers of parliaments would decide, according to their laws and procedures, how to use the documents, including which parliamentary committee to refer them to.

Proposal 13

The United Nations should routinely encourage national parliaments to hold debates on major matters coming up in the United Nations and to discuss those matters with the relevant ministers. Relevant documents, including those on progress achieved on the Millennium Development Goals 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 and associations of parliamentarians*. Member States should regularly consult members of parliament on United Nations matters and debrief them after major United Nations meetings.

Proposal 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 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.

Provide an institutional home in the United Nations for engaging parliamentarians

114. To advance the foregoing strategies, the Panel suggests that it is timely for the United Nations to create a *modest Elected Representatives Liaison Unit* (see below and sect. VIII), akin to the well-respected *Non-Governmental Liaison Service*. The Unit would ideally serve a liaison function for the organizations of the United Nations system as well as the United Nations itself. It would have direct contact with parliaments, but would emphasize a “wholesaling” approach to reaching parliamentarians, working through IPU and associations of parliamentarians. The Unit’s functions would include an information service for members of parliament, making available as early as possible draft documents from the intergovernmental process and progress reports on global commitments. This would entail a *dedicated web site for members of parliament on matters related to the United Nations*. It

would suggest topics for parliamentary debate, linked to the intergovernmental agenda

governments run both urban towns and rural villages.

119. The Panel is of the view that establishing an *Elected Representatives Liaison Unit* would help the United Nations to engage with that sector (see also proposal 24). The Unit could work closely with UN-Habitat and other United Nations agencies whose work relates to local governments. The Unit would collect and disseminate information about the efforts of local governments to implement globally agreed goals, highlight and disseminate best practices their work has generated, periodically report on the contributions of local authorities to United Nations processes and support country-level dialogue between local and central government authorities.

Proposal 18

The *Elected Representatives Liaison Unit* (see proposal 16) should liaise with local authorities and their new world association and disseminate lessons of good practice. The United Nations should regard *United Cities and Local Governments* as an advisory body on governance matters. The Secretary-General should require United Nations bodies with a 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 United Nations programmes and processes and to encourage partnerships with them.

Address who should have access

142. However well-resourced the United Nations becomes for engaging with civil society, it should resist hand-picking civil society organization actors, especially for deliberative processes. It is clearly in the interest of the United Nations to have fewer, more compelling and more professional presentations by non-State actors in its forums. This indicates the *need for effective civil society networks*. The United Nations should not organize them or press them to speak with a single voice. But it can define categories of relevant actors, such as the major groups concept used by the Commission for Sustainable Development. The United Nations should therefore offer incentives for aggregation, without requiring it. This could be done by publicizing and rewarding good practices, particularly with extra speaking time.

Proposal 23

The Secretariat should *encourage the main constituencies that the United Nations works with to form broad networks* to help it with selection and quality assurance. But the United Nations should not demand this or stipulate how it is to be done. Such networks would be encouraged to advise secretariats and bureaux on the participation of their constituencies in intergovernmental processes and to help monitor practices and revise strategies, perhaps leading to their evolution into recognized advisory groups. The Secretariat should discuss with those groups possible codes of conduct and self-policing mechanisms to heighten disciplines of quality, governance and balance.

Ease the physical access of civil society to United Nations facilities

Allocation of working space to civil society organizations

145. A well-appreciated practice of some secretariats is to allocate working space to civil society organizations and other constituencies attending annual commission meetings — usually a small *meeting room with computers and Internet connections*. The Panel urges extending this practice to all meetings in which external

constituencies have a major presence, including functional commissions, United Nations agencies and conference preparatory processes.

VIII What the proposals mean for staff, resources and management

Set up an office for coordinating constituency engagement and partnerships

147. The Panel's proposals go much further than enhancing United Nations–civil society relations. Not only do they entail engagement with a wider range of actors — the full spectrum of constituencies of relevance to the objectives of the United Nations — they also demand very different ways of working in both the operational and deliberative processes of the Organization. This will require determined leadership by the Secretary-General and other United Nations managers. The Panel believes that they will need the help of a **modest, high-level office to provide strategic guidance, offer an observatory function from within and outside the United Nations and guide the change processes in organizational structures and culture.**

148. The Panel therefore proposes establishing a **new office in New York**, reporting to the top leadership, **headed by an Under-Secretary-General. This Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships** would play a broad advocacy role, provide strategic guidance, offer consultancy services to the United Nations on constituency matters and achieve a critical mass by bringing under one roof the relevant functions, existing and new, to maximize synergies and ensure coherence. Although the final composition of the Office depends on further consultations and fine-tuning of the details, it should streamline existing offices for constituency engagement of the United Nations under a common umbrella. The Panel suggests that it might comprise the following:

- A **Civil Society Unit** (new, based on the Non-Governmental Liaison Service)
- A **Partnership Development Unit** (based on the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships)
- An **Elected Representatives Liaison Unit** (new)
- The Global Compact Office (existing)
- The secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (existing)

149. Although the civil society and constituency engagement specialists throughout the system would report to principals within their offices, they would collaborate with the foregoing units and receive guidance and support from them. The head of the Office would work with relevant counterparts to evolve a **well-functioning network management approach, facilitating the system-wide network of staff whose primary responsibility is engaging constituencies.**

150. The Office would have a number of system-wide tasks:

- Providing advice and guidance to senior management of the United Nations system as well as to constituent organizations on new means of and opportunities for enhancing engagement
- Analysing systematically the global dynamics of constituencies relevant to the United Nations
- Identifying innovations in constituency engagement and participatory practices inside and outside the United Nations system and disseminating lessons of good practice system-wide

- *Providing services to foster networking and experience exchanges system-wide*
- *Organizing public hearings with other United Nations departments and agencies*
- *Managing the proposed trust fund for constituency engagement*
- *Reviewing and regularly reporting on participation in intergovernmental processes to increase transparency and identify trends and new opportunities*

Civil Society Unit

151. *The Civil Society Unit would provide services, networking and guidance to staff throughout the system working most closely with civil society. It would advocate appropriate civil society involvement in United Nations processes and events, and it would lead initiatives in this field. To be credible to civil society, the head of the Unit should be someone who has held senior posts in civil society.*

152. *An important question is whether the Unit should absorb the current activities, staff and institutional resources of the Non-Governmental Liaison Service. The Service is highly respected inside and outside the United Nations — largely because of its inter-agency mandate and its role as a trusted interface between the United Nations system and civil society, its semi-autonomous character and its high professional standards. With some of the flexibility and mobility of civil society organizations, it reports* *Wrandslff& ECg,βw6Soors,flng lbes*

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Proposal 24

With the approval of Member States, 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 United Nations engagement with all constituencies beyond the formal membership of central Governments. It would monitor engagements throughout the United Nations system and provide advice and lessons of good practice. It could comprise the following:

- A **Civil Society Unit**, to absorb the Non-Governmental Liaison Service
- A **Partnership Development Unit**, to absorb the **United Nations Fund for International Partnerships**
- An **Elected Representatives Liaison Unit**
- The Global Compact Office
- The secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Appoint constituency engagement specialists in offices of resident coordinators

Proposal 25

With the approval of Member States, the Secretary-General should initiate a programme to appoint 30 to 40 constituency engagement specialists in offices of resident coordinators to help the United Nations 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 those appointments for a trial period of four years.

Establish a fund to enhance civil society capacity and partnerships

165. The Panel therefore proposes the establishment of a dedicated fund for civil society engagement. Its modalities could be based on those used by the Non-Governmental Liaison Service when **financing Southern civil society participation in United Nations processes**. It should have a core annual budget rather than a project approach to mobilizing resources for each different event. The purposes of the fund would be:

- **To help civil society and other constituencies from Southern countries and countries with economies in transition to participate in major deliberative activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies**
- To provide briefings and training in advance of their participation in major United Nations meetings
- To support networking and self-governance mechanisms of relevance to the United Nations
- To strengthen the capacity of under-represented groups to engage with the United Nations, especially women, indigenous peoples, disabled people and the poor
- To enhance constituency engagement in poverty reduction strategy paper and Millennium Development Goal processes and national activities contributing to global partnerships

- To help strengthen Government–civil society organization dialogue and partnerships

166. In practice this would be combined with the global fund to promote partnerships (see proposal 10). Global allocations would be made by the Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships, which would have overall responsibility, in consultation with relevant constituency specialists at Headquarters. But tranches for in-country allocation could be transferred to one of the United Nations Development Group agencies to administer. It is anticipated that the bulk of the funds would be channelled through the resident coordinators, under a competitive mechanism that would invite them to apply for two-year funding tranches. The United Nations Development Group and the Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships would apportion the funds for applications considered to have the most merit.

167. Resources for the fund could come from Governments, foundations, international civil society organizations and the United Nations itself. Consideration could also be given to establishing a decision-making process comprising people from civil society, government, private sector and United Nations backgrounds —either to make the funding decisions or to review decisions annually. Experience could be drawn from existing trust funds and the UNDP Partnership Facility.¹⁴

Proposal 27

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

Ensure that the budget requirements for the overall strategy are met

170. The Panel estimates that the total annual budget for all the measures proposed would be some \$4 million in core funding, of which about \$3 million could be met by savings through, say, the proposed changes in the accreditation process. The Panel foresees that extrabudgetary funds of about \$40 million could be raised for three years, and further envisages that several donors would contribute to many of the proposed activities, including the global public policy committees, country-level constituency specialists, various hearings and consultative processes and the fund for building civil society capacity and partnerships. The Panel suggests opening a trust fund for constituency engagement and partnerships, to be managed by the Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships, with project accounts for the different initiatives proposed. The Panel suggests that the Secretary-General, or the Under-Secretary-General heading the new office, hold a donor conference to launch the trust fund.

171. Although the sums are sizeable, the core budget is a fraction of 1 per cent of the United Nations operating budget. The Panel is of the view that unless resources of this magnitude are realized, it will be difficult for the United Nations to persuade civil society, the international community and others that it is serious about enhancing its engagement.

172. The Panel believes that the links between its proposals and the implementation of global goals should encourage donors to contribute to the process. It also recommends innovative approaches to financing, such as raising 10 per cent of the total from constituency sources, including the private sector, local governments of major cities and large NGOs.