United Nations A/58/817

General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 June 2004

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 59
Strengthening of the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

In my report to the General Assembly entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), I stated that I would establish a panel of eminent persons to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, concurred with my intention and decided to consider the recommendations through the respective intergovernmental process.

Accordingly, in February 2003, I appointed the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations, and asked Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the former president of Brazil, to chair it. The Panel also included Bagher Asadi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Manuel Castells (Spain), Birgitta Dahl (Sweden), Peggy Dulany (United States of America), André Erdös (Hungary), Juan Mayr (Colombia), Malini Mehra (India), Kumi Naidoo (South Africa), Mary Racelis (Philippines), Prakash Ratilal (Mozambique) and Aminata Traoré (Mali).

I asked the Panel to review existing guidelines, decisions and practices that affect civil society organizations' access to and participation in United Nations deliberations and processes; to identify best practices in the United Nations system and in other international organizations with a view to identifying new and better ways to interact with non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations; to identify ways of making it easier for civil society actors from developing countries to participate fully in United Nations activities; and to review how the Secretariat is organized to facilitate, manage and evaluate the relationships of the United Nations with civil society and to learn from experience gained in different parts of the system. I also asked the Panel to consult broadly, and to submit its recommendations to me within 12 months.

I am very pleased to be able now to transmit to the Member States the report of the Panel. I warmly welcome this valuable contribution to the reform process of the United Nations. The report is very thoughtful and includes a number of interesting proposals. I am particularly pleased that the Panel has proposed a number of concrete measures to increase the participation of civil society representatives from developing countries. The report also offers many innovative ideas aimed at strengthening partnership with civil society in our humanitarian and

04-37641 (E) 160604
0437641

development work and at encouraging greater involvement of parliamentarians in the work of the United Nations. I am delighted that many of the proposals build on the solid progress that has been made at the United Nations in interacting with civil society in recent years.

I am convinced that it would be of benefit to the Organization — as the Panel suggests — to find ways to consult more regularly with civil society. I hope that Member States will carefully consider and discuss the report, which is also being reviewed in the Secretariat. I intend to come back to the General Assembly in the fall with further comments and suggestions regarding practical steps that might be taken in response to the Panel' s recommendations.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Chair and the members of the Panel for the dedication, effort and imagination that they brought to their task. Through their work, they have already made an invaluable contribution to the strengthening of the United Nations in a world that is remarkably different from the one in which the United Nations was founded.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

Transmittal letter dated 7 June 2004 from the Chair of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the privilege to submit to you the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations entitled "We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and Global Governance". Our mission was to review the guidelines and practices regarding civil society's relations with the United Nations in order to formulate recommendations for enhancing such interaction.

The rise of civil society is indeed one of the landmark events of our times. Global governance is no longer the sole domain of Governments. The growing participation and influence of non-State actors is enhancing democracy and reshaping multilateralism. Civil society organizations are also the prime movers of some of the most innovative initiatives to deal with emerging global threats.

Given this reality, the Panel believes that constructively engaging with civil society is a necessity for the United Nations, not an option. This engagement is essential to enable the Organization to better identify global priorities and to mobilize all resources to deal with the task at hand. We also see this opening up of the United Nations to a plurality of constituencies and actors not as a threat to Governments, but as a powerful way to reinvigorate the intergovernmental process itself.

The world stands today at a very delicate juncture. The United Nations needs the support of civil society more than ever before. But it will not get that support unless it is seen as championing reforms in global governance that civil society is calling for — and which are echoed in our report.

All of our proposals and recommendations emanate from the broad process of consultation and deliberation that we have conducted. From our extensive dialogue and outreach, we can assure you that there are important constituencies of support for each of the Panel's proposals. Some of our recommendations will certainly require the approval and support of Member States, while many of them relate to matters within the purview of the Secretary-General.

On behalf of the Panel, I wish to acknowledge the strong and unwavering encouragement and support that we received from you, Mr. Secretary-General. The Deputy Secretary-General also gave us precious assistance in all stages of our work. I am grateful for the valuable ideas and suggestions received from officials within the United Nations system and many Member State delegations. The support from the donor community and from civil society organizations was essential to ensure a vibrant and constructive consultation process. I want also to express my deep respect and thanks to all Panel members, who injected total commitment, enthusiasm and creativity into this important task. The competence and dedication of the Panel's secretariat enabled us to perform the daunting task of completing our work in one year.

Our confidence in the unique role of the United Nations in the promotion of democratic global governance has been greatly strengthened throughout the process of preparing the report. We trust that our proposals and recommendations will make a relevant contribution to the overall reform effort that you are leading to make the United Nations more efficient and more capable of responding to the new demands of the twenty-first century.

(*Signed*) Fernando Henrique **Cardoso**
Chair of the Panel of Eminent Persons on
United Nations–Civil Society Relations

We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and global governance

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

Contents

Executive summary

Public opinion has become a key factor influencing intergovernmental and governmental policies and actions. The involvement of a diverse range of actors, including those from civil society and the private sector, as well as local authorities and parliamentarians, is not only essential for effective action on global priorities but is also a protection against further erosion of multilateralism. This presents an opportunity as well as a challenge to the United Nations: the opportunity to harness new capacities and diverse experience to address some of the most exacting challenges the world faces today and the challenge of balancing its unique intergovernmental characteristic with being open to work with new actors in a profound way.

Over the years, the relationship of the United Nations to civil society has strengthened and multiplied. The Secretary-General's personal leadership has been a major factor in this development. However, at the same time difficulties and tensions have arisen, particularly in deliberative processes. Governments do not always welcome sharing what has traditionally been their preserve. Many increasingly challenge the numbers and motives of civil society organizations in the United Nations — questioning their representivity, legitimacy, integrity or accountability. Developing country Governments sometimes regard civil society organizations as pushing a "Northern agenda" through the back door. At the same time, many in civil society are becoming frustrated; they can speak in the United Nations but feel they are not heard and that their participation has little impact on outcomes.

Mindful of both the immense strengths of civil society and the stones in the road, the Secretary-General made clear that improving United Nations–civil society relations was an important element of his reform agenda, set out in his 2002 report on further reforms (A/57/387 and Corr.1). In February 2003, he established the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations, chaired by Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The Panel agreed at the outset that its advice should be informed by the experience of those who have sought to engage with the United Nations, on either policy or operational matters, and whether at the country, regional or global level. Hence it consulted extensively — through meetings, workshops, focus groups and via its web site.

Global context

The Panel was clear that, to be effective in its work, it had to start by analysing major global changes and challenges that affect the United Nations and multilateralism insofar as they might affect the Organization's relations with civil society and others. It is clear that the question is not How would the United Nations like to change? but Given how the world has changed, how must the United Nations evolve its civil society relations to become fully effective and remain fully relevant? Globalization, the increasing porosity of national borders, new communication technologies, the increasing power of civil society and public opinion, mounting dissatisfaction with traditional institutions of democracy, the imperative of decentralization and other factors have enormous implications for global governance:

- Concerning democracy, a clear paradox is emerging: while the substance of politics is fast globalizing (in the areas of trade, economics, environment, pandemics, terrorism, etc.), the process of politics is not; its principal institutions (elections, political parties and parliaments) remain firmly rooted at the national or local level. The weak influence of traditional democracy in matters of global governance is one reason why citizens in much of the world are urging greater democratic accountability of international organizations.

- 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.

- Concerning multilateralism, the way the multilateral agenda is shaped has changed. Previously, Governments would come together to discuss a new issue until there was a sufficient consensus for an intergovernmental resolution, which then led to action by Governments and intergovernmental organizations. Today it is increasingly likely that a civil society movement and a crescendo of public opinion will bring a new issue to global attention and that initial action on new issues will be taken through multi-constituency coalitions of Governments, civil society and others. Increasingly, multilateralism includes ongoing processes of public debate, policy dialogue and pioneering action to tackle emerging challenges.

Why strengthen United Nations–civil society engagement?

The most powerful case for reaching out beyond its constituency of central Governments and enhancing dialogue and cooperation with civil society is that doing so will make the United Nations more effective. Because of the features of global change described above and the attributes of many civil society organizations, an enhanced engagement could help the United Nations do a better job, further its global goals, become more attuned and responsive to citizens' concerns and enlist greater public support. There are trade-offs, however. The unique role of the United Nations as an intergovernmental forum is vitally important and must be protected at all costs. But today's challenges require the United Nations to be more than just an intergovernmental forum; it must engage others too. To do so risks putting more pressure on the Organization's meeting rooms and agendas, which are becoming ever more crowded; this calls for more selective and not just increased engagement.

Paradigm shifts

The Panel consolidated its contextual analysis into four main principles — or paradigms — on which the set of reforms it proposes is based:

- Become an outward-looking organization. The changing nature of multilateralism to mean multiple constituencies entails the United Nations giving more emphasis to convening and facilitating rather than "doing" and putting the issues, not the institution, at the centre.

- Embrace a plurality of constituencies. Many actors may be relevant to an issue, and new partnerships are needed to tackle global challenges.
- Connect the local with the global. The deliberative and operational spheres of the United Nations are separated by a wide gulf, which hampers both in all areas from development to security. A closer two-way connection between them is imperative so that local operational work truly helps to realize the global goals and that global deliberations are informed by local reality. Civil society is vital for both directions. Hence the country level should be the starting point for engagement in both the operational and deliberative processes.
- Help strengthen democracy for the twenty-first century. The United Nations should accept a more explicit role in strengthening global governance and tackling the democratic deficits it is prone to, emphasizing participatory democracy and deeper accountability of institutions to the global public.

The following are the proposed reform areas, building on these principles. Civil society is now so vital to the United Nations that engaging with it well is a necessity, not an option. It must also engage with others, including the private sector, parliaments and local authorities. When, as is often the case, messages relate to all these actors, the broader term "constituencies" is used. Some of the reforms proposed are measures the Secretary-General could act upon on his own authority; other measures require intergovernmental approval.

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

The convening power and moral authority of the United Nations enable it to bring often conflicting parties together to tackle global problems. Nowadays, non-State actors are often prime movers — as with issues of gender, climate change, debt, landmines and AIDS. The first step is often the creation of global policy networks (of Governments and others who share specific concerns) to promote global debate and/or to pilot activities to combat the problem directly. The United Nations has to date often played a weak role in such innovations. Since this mode is clearly becoming a major aspect of multilateralism, the United Nations must learn the skills and be more proactive, bringing together all constituencies relevant to global issues and galvanizing appropriate networks for effective results. This entails innovation in global governance and tailoring forums to the task at hand. The General Assembly should include civil society organizations more regularly in its affairs, since it no longer makes sense to restrict their involvement in the intergovernmental process to the Economic and Social Council. Big global conferences can still play an important role if used sparingly to establish global norms. More modest public hearings, also involving the full range of relevant constituencies, could be more appropriate tools for reviewing progress on agreed global goals.

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.

Focusing on the country level

Priority should be placed on engagement at the country level. This could enhance the contributions of civil society organizations and others to country strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other United Nations goals, and level the playing field between civil society organizations from North and South. This would strengthen operations, tailor them to local needs and enable ground-level realities to inform the Organization's norm-setting process. Although the rhetoric already emphasizes such an approach, the reality is often quite different. United Nations Development Group agencies may involve civil society organizations in implementation but often not in strategic planning, and weak information-sharing may hamper the formation of strong partnerships. The Panel's proposals entail strengthening the capacity of resident coordinators and other United Nations staff to maximize partnership opportunities and better prioritize their relations with all constituencies. This is vital for the world's poor and for the credibility of the United Nations, which rests on demonstrating progress with the Millennium Development Goals.

Strengthening the Security Council

The Security Council has greatly benefited of late from expanded dialogue with civil society. The nature of modern conflicts makes it more important to understand their social origins and consequences. Much interaction focuses on international non-governmental organizations. Security Council members, with support from the Secretariat, should deepen this dialogue by emphasizing the involvement of participants from conflict-affected countries and including such dialogue in Security Council field missions. The United Nations could learn much by conducting commissions of inquiry after Council-mandated operations, to draw, inter alia, on the experience of civil society organizations.

Engaging with elected representatives

More systematic engagement of parliamentarians, national parliaments and local authorities in the United Nations would strengthen global governance, confront democratic deficits in intergovernmental affairs, buttress representational democracy and connect the United Nations better with global opinion. The Panel's proposals are designed to encourage national parliaments to give more attention to United Nations matters, to evolve more appropriate engagement for those members of Parliament who come to United Nations events and to link national parliaments more directly with the international deliberative process, particularly by experimenting with global equivalents of parliamentary select committees.

In an era when decentralization is shaping the political landscape as powerfully as globalization, it is also important for the United Nations to find deeper and more systematic ways to engage with elected representatives and authorities at the local level. They and their international networks are increasingly

helping the United Nations to identify local priorities, implement solutions and build closer connections with citizens. The Secretariat should engage this constituency more, and the United Nations could promote mechanisms of decentralization and discussion of principles of local autonomy.

Tackling accreditation and access issues

Although the Panel emphasizes new forums tailored to specific needs, traditional modes of engagement — such as the accreditation of civil society organizations with defined participation rights in United Nations forums — remain important. But today this process is overly politicized, expensive and can present a barrier, especially for developing country civil society organizations, hence major reforms are proposed to emphasize technical merit. The Panel proposes joining all existing United Nations accreditation processes into a single mechanism under the authority of the General Assembly (if it is agreed to extend civil society engagement to this forum). It further proposes establishing a more thorough initial Secretariat review of applications, lessening the prominence of intergovernmental review, which tends to overpoliticize the accreditation process. Member States would retain a final say on which applicants are accredited and would also define the criteria by which applicants would be assessed. By drawing on the growing knowledge about civil society organizations that exists throughout the United Nations system (and perhaps beyond it), the Secretariat would be well-placed to advise Member States on which applicants met such criteria and which did not. The Panel suggests that by reducing the time demands of intergovernmental deliberation on applications, an existing committee of the General Assembly (perhaps the General Committee) could assume this role alongside their normal functions, discussing applications only when some Member States disagree with the proposals.

Accreditation should be seen as a cooperative agreement entailing rights and responsibilities; hence measures are also suggested that could help enhance the quality of civil society contributions, especially by encouraging self-governance and self-organizing processes within civil society networks.

Determining what the proposals mean for staff, resources and management

The Panel suggests what would be needed in terms of the skills mix, financial resources, training, management and changes to the institutional culture of the United Nations in order to achieve the reforms it proposes. It suggests in particular the creation of a new high-level position in the office of the Secretary-General to help lead and manage the change process, perhaps also assuming line management responsibility for some of the units at the front line of dialogue, partnership development and engagement with different constituencies. There should be a strong emphasis on levelling the playing field between Northern and Southern civil society, for which the Panel suggests establishing a special fund to enhance Southern civil society capacity to engage in United Nations deliberative processes, operations and partnerships.

The overall strategy would have considerable resource implications, but amounting to less than 1 per cent of the operating budget of the United Nations, most of which could be found from potential savings identified by the Panel and from donor contributions.

Providing global leadership

The United Nations should use its moral leadership to urge coordinated approaches to civil society, to encourage Governments to provide a more enabling and cooperative environment for civil society and to foster debate about reforms of global governance, including deeper roles for civil society. This should emphasize principles of constituency engagement, partnership, transparency and inclusion, with a special emphasis on those who are normally underrepresented.

Future of multilateralism

Multilateralism faces many threats and challenges; it must address new global priorities while facing the erosion of power and resources. The Panel affirms the importance of multilateralism and so is pleased to make this contribution, since civil society can help the United Nations to redress those threats. The Panel is also aware of various commissions and panels on other topics, and ends with some messages that it believes are applicable to them all.

Panels have some features in common with global conferences — albeit on a much smaller scale. They can serve a useful purpose, providing they are publicly respected. This depends on their inclusiveness, the realism and courage of their proposals and the degree to which their proposals are acted upon.

Our starting paradigms also apply to the other panels and are the foundation for the continued relevance of the United Nations: (a) multilateralism no longer concerns Governments alone but is now multifaceted, involving many constituencies; the United Nations must develop new skills to service this new way of working; (b) it must become an outward-looking or network organization, catalysing the relationships needed to get strong results and not letting the traditions of its formal processes be barriers; (c) it must strengthen global governance by advocating universality, inclusion, participation and accountability at all levels; and (d) it must engage more systematically with world public opinion to become more responsive, to help shape public attitudes and to bolster support for multilateralism.

Glossary

The present glossary summarizes how the Panel uses some key terms throughout its report. There are no "correct" definitions for such terms as "civil society", and the boundaries between the actors are porous.

Constituency. Comprises three broad sectors: civil society, the private sector and the State. Central Governments are the Member States of the United Nations, collectively constituting its membership. Others actors are of growing importance to the deliberative processes, operations and communications of the United Nations. The Panel suggests that the United Nations view these actors as constituencies, or stakeholders, of the Organization's processes.

Civil society. Refers to the associations of citizens (outside their families, friends and businesses) entered into voluntarily to advance their interests, ideas and ideologies. The term does not include profit-making activity (the private sector) or governing (the public sector). Of particular relevance to the United Nations are mass organizations (such as organizations of peasants, women or retired people), trade unions, professional associations, social movements, indigenous people's organizations, religious and spiritual organizations, academe and public benefit non-governmental organizations.

State. Includes, in addition to central Governments, various related components of the State mechanism of relevance to the United Nations, especially elected representatives, including parliaments, international associations of parliamentarians, local authorities and their international associations. Only these actors have a formal representational mandate through electoral processes.

Private sector. Comprises firms, business federations, employer associations and industry lobby groups. Philanthropic foundations stemming from industrial endowments could also fit here, although some see them as part of civil society. The media are another grey area. Commercial media organizations are undoubtedly private firms. But free speech is an essential foundation of a strong civil society, and some modern communication channels, such as weblogs and alternative news services available through the Internet, have characteristics of civil society. Although the category includes small and medium-sized enterprises, some of these are supported by non-governmental organizations or are cooperatives and may also have characteristics closer to civil society.

Non-governmental organization (NGO). All organizations of relevance to the United Nations that are not central Governments and were not created by intergovernmental decision, including associations of businesses, parliamentarians and local authorities. There is considerable confusion surrounding this term in United Nations circles. Elsewhere, NGO has become shorthand for public-benefit NGOs — a type of civil society organization that is formally constituted to provide a benefit to the general public or the world at large through the provision of advocacy or services. They include organizations devoted to environment, development, human rights and peace and their international networks. They may or may not be membership-based. The Charter of the United Nations provides for consultations with NGOs.

United Nations. The collective of Member States working together in intergovernmental organs, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and their various subsidiary bodies. Civil society and other constituencies, while they are not members and do not vote, have become an essential part of the Organization through their contributions.

United Nations Secretariat. Staff organized in various departments in New York and elsewhere. Other United Nations operational bodies have their own secretariats.

United Nations system. The array of operational funds and programmes, such as the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Development Programme, whose heads are answerable to the Secretary-General, as well as technical and specialized agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which have separate governance structures and independent chief executives. The Secretary-General of the United Nations chairs the system's coordinating mechanism — the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, but neither he nor the General Assembly has formal authority over the specialized agencies.

Preface

In recent years, the United Nations has greatly expanded its relations with civil society and others beyond its membership of Governments. The big global conferences of the 1990s focused attention on the relevance of those actors to the Organization's work and also how vital the United Nations is to their aims. The numbers of organizations seeking entry into United Nations processes rose steeply in those years, and civil society came to shape many priorities on the global agenda. While this has generally been seen as a positive development, new tensions have become apparent. In particular, Member States do not always welcome sharing what they have traditionally seen as their forum with others.

Mindful of both the immense strengths of civil society and the stones in the road, the Secretary-General made it clear that improving United Nations–civil society relations was an important element of United Nations reform. In his second major reform paper, issued in September 2002 (A/57/387), he announced his intention to establish a Panel of Eminent Persons and in February 2003 appointed 12 members plus a Chairman for that purpose. He asked the Panel to assess the existing situation — including guidelines, best practices and experience elsewhere in the international community; to identify new and better ways of engaging; to consult broadly; to consider how to facilitate the participation of civil society from developing countries; to review how the Secretariat facilitates and manages its relationships; and to present proposals to him for enhancing the interaction between the United Nations and civil society, including parliamentarians and the private sector, within 12 months.

The panellists were appointed as independent experts, representing only themselves. The selection ensured balance across the geographic regions and genders, and the panel collectively has experience in politics, government, the United Nations, civil society, academe and business.

The Panel was clear that to do its job effectively it needed to consult very widely, especially with those in civil society who were interested in the work of the United Nations. Much of the Panel's work, therefore, consisted of a global programme of consultations. Most of the Panel's proposals have been unashamedly mined from those consultations, and the rich seams it found therein made its work both pleasurable and stimulating. The Panel also drew on much work published by the United Nations and others, including the excellent millennium report (A/54/2000) — which also bases its title on the opening words of the Charter.

The Panel wishes to recognize the unceasing support of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the staff of their offices. It has also greatly welcomed the valuable support and wealth of suggestions it has received from officials within the United Nations and its various agencies and many Member States delegations. The Panel warmly thanks the donors and foundations that helped to finance the consultation strategy and the many civil society organizations that helped the Panel to plan specific events; these are listed in annex III. All this assistance has helped make the Panel's task possible and ensured its relevance.

List of proposals of the Panel of Eminent Persons

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

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.

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

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.

Proposal 4. The United Nations 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.

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.

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.

Investing more in partnerships

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

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.

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

Focus on the country level

Proposal 10. The United Nations 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

Proposal 11. The resident coordinators and United Nations Development Group 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

Strengthening the Security Council — roles for civil society

Proposal 12. Security Council members should further strengthen their dialogue with civil society, with the support of 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. United Nations 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. United Nations Headquarters and field staff should facilitate the 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 United Nations 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 (see proposal 15)

Engaging with elected representatives

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 in 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 parliamentarian associations. Member States should regularly consult members of Parliament on United Nations matters and debrief them after major United Nations meetings.

Proposal 14. Member States should more regularly include members of Parliament in their delegations to major United Nations meetings, while taking care to avoid compromising their independence. The Secretariat should test opportunities for members of Parliament to contribute as parliamentarians, including in debates before a General Assembly meeting on a major topic. Members of Parliament specializing in a subject could also be invited to speak in relevant committees and special sessions of the Assembly, particularly when they are reviewing progress achieved in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed global goals.

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.

Proposal 16. The Secretary-General should form a small Elected Representatives Liaison Unit:

- To provide a dedicated information service for parliaments and associations of parliamentarians, including a dedicated web-based information service for members of parliament
- To encourage greater attention to United Nations processes in national parliaments
- To help to create more effective opportunities for members of parliament to take part in United Nations forums

- To organize global public policy committees to work closely with national parliaments, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, specialized agencies and other organizations as appropriate
- To foster debate within the United Nations system about new or improved strategies for engaging parliaments and parliamentarians

Proposal 17. The General Assembly should debate a resolution affirming and respecting local autonomy as a universal principle.

Proposal 18. The Elected Representative 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.

Streamlining and depoliticizing accreditation and access

Proposal 19. The United Nations should realign accreditation with its original purpose, namely, it should be an agreement between civil society actors and Member States based on the applicants' expertise, competence and skills. To achieve this, and to widen the access of civil society organizations beyond Economic and Social Council forums, Member States should agree to merge the current procedures at United Nations Headquarters for the Council, the Department of Public Information and conferences and their follow-up into a single United Nations accreditation process, with responsibility for accreditation assumed by an existing committee of the General Assembly.

Proposal 20. Member States should shift the task of reviewing applications to the Secretariat so as to reduce time inefficiencies and 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 various departments (therefore it would be budget-neutral). The Unit would help to set up an advisory body that would offer guidance on whether applications should be recommended or not. A designated General Assembly committee would decide on accreditation based on that guidance. The Secretariat should ensure increased use of information technologies to manage the accreditation process. The Secretary-General should encourage the United Nations agencies, country offices and others to cooperate in the system-wide effort.

Proposal 21. The Secretary-General should foster enhanced coordination and support for the accreditation process by:

- Instructing national and regional offices of the United Nations to facilitate applications
- Using the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination processes to foster closer coordination among United Nations agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions

- Ensuring wider availability of information on the rights and responsibilities related to accreditation (e.g., through booklets aimed at civil society and United Nations staff)

Proposal 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.

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.

What the proposals mean for staff, resources and management

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

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.

Proposal 26. The Secretary-General should make redressing North-South imbalances a priority in enhancing United Nations–civil society relations. He should enlist donor support for enhancing the capacity of the United Nations 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.

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.

Proposal 28. The Secretary-General and other top United Nations managers should frequently take the opportunity to convey to staff the importance they ascribe to constituency engagement and partnership. These issues should feature prominently in all human resources processes, including recruitment, promotion and annual appraisal. Staff throughout the system, including managers, should be given training in such matters.

Providing global leadership

Proposal 29. The Secretary-General should use his capacity as chairman of the United Nations 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 system to promote this aim, with periodic progress reviews.

Proposal 30. Member States should encourage, through the forums of the United Nations, 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.

I. Enhancing United Nations–civil society relations in a changing world

1. The engagement of civil society in the United Nations has been growing exponentially, and the depth and quality of the engagement has improved greatly in recent years — in no small measure because of the strong personal leadership of the Secretary-General. However, signs of strain have emerged. This strain is perhaps an inevitable conflict between two remarkably positive attributes: the unique intergovernmental nature of the United Nations and the growing importance of civil society in international debates. The Panel of Eminent Persons believes that this strain can be managed creatively in ways that strengthen both multilateralism and civil society. For this, it is essential to be precise about the aims of strengthening the engagement: to further the global goals of the United Nations, to fight injustice, to enhance human security, to foster a more inclusive and harmonious world order and to amplify Southern voices in global debates. Being explicit about these purposes can help to ease the underlying strain. It is also essential to build the case for engagement on a sound analysis of global trends and priorities.

2. Today's big issues are very different from those the world faced when the United Nations was born. Nations are no longer as unified by the imperatives of preventing future world wars, rebuilding devastated States and making colonies independent. Now the challenges range from terrorism to unilateralism and war, from pandemics and climate change to economic crisis and debt, from ethnic or sectarian tensions to international crime, and from the universality of rights to respect for diverse cultures. Also, there are four times as many Governments defining global priorities through their membership in the United Nations. The intergovernmental world has thus become more complex and diverse.

3. Globalization, new information technologies and the low cost of all forms of communication also mean that the world order has become more open and interconnected than ever before. That brings new opportunities but also new threats, as problems spill swiftly over national frontiers. This has profound implications for Governments and their work at the international level, as well as for democratic processes and the work of civil society. Governments alone cannot resolve today's global problems. A wide array of actors now jostle alongside Governments — civil society, corporations, local authorities and parliamentarians — seeking a role in defining priorities and contributing to the solutions.

4. Governments may still be the paramount authorities at the national level. But the scope of their power has been reduced and the way they work has been transformed. Most countries find it difficult to buck policy trends set by the major Powers. Many decisions affecting their people are reached in international forums beyond their direct control. Decentralization has also transferred much of their power to local and regional authorities.

5. Many argue that global change widens inequalities and heightens risks for vulnerable populations. Even the most ardent proponents of globalization now agree that it must be managed to promote inclusion. Policies favouring the powerful at the expense of the weak might serve the short-term interests of the powerful but at the long-term expense of everyone. Inclusion requires equal opportunities for nations and peoples, policies and development strategies that are equitable and decision-making processes that are democratic and participatory. It also requires respecting

citizens and their rights, celebrating cultural diversity and redefining security to embrace the notion of human security. Civil society is pivotal in all this.

6. Three aspects of global trends are particularly relevant to the Panel's purpose, influencing how it has approached its task:

- Deficits of democracy in global governance
- The growing capacity and influence of non-State actors
- The rising power of global public opinion

Deficits of democracy in global governance

7. One of the key principles of representative democracy is connecting citizens to the decisions that affect them and ensuring public accountability for those decisions. This principle underlies decentralization, community empowerment and participatory development. It also underlies widely accepted elements of good governance — transparency, accountability to citizens' representatives, independent scrutiny, clear laws predictably applied and effective mechanisms to ensure checks and balances.

8. But people are participating less and voicing disenchantment with the traditional institutions of democracy. Ironically this comes just as democracy, as a mode of government, is reaching farther than ever before. Surveys reveal a low level of trust in parliamentarians in many countries, and the membership of political parties has shrunk. Many factors explain these phenomena: the links between corporate power and politics, issues of corruption and political apathy and so on. But one major factor is the perception that traditional forms of representation are less relevant in this age of globalization. Elected legislators and parliaments seem to have little impact on decisions made intergovernmentally or in the supervision and regulation of international markets. And the traditional separation of powers — having a legislative body of elected representatives to supervise and oversee the executive function — does not apply so clearly in international intergovernmental institutions.

9. Hence the disparity in modern politics. Economics, trade, communications and even culture are becoming more global. But representative democracy remains essentially national and local. Since more decisions are being reached in international forums and organizations, it is becoming more important to develop a stronger framework for global governance with democratic accountability to citizens everywhere. The emerging pillars for this framework are civil society, global roles for parliamentarians, public opinion and global media. People concerned about such issues are using new channels to express their political interests, through global civil society networks and global social movements.

10. The Panel suggests that the United Nations can make an important contribution to strengthening democracy and widening its reach by helping to connect national democratic processes with international issues and by expanding roles for civil society in deliberative processes.

Growing capacity and influence of non-State actors

11. Non-State actors are becoming more important in society and in governance. Politically active citizens now express their concerns through civil society mechanisms rather than the traditional instruments of democracy, particularly on international matters. The move to decentralize gives community organizations and local authorities a wider mandate, and the wish of Governments to form partnerships to tackle priority issues and improve services has opened new opportunities, sometimes controversially, for the private sector and civil society.

12. Support for many policy-oriented civil society organizations has soared, especially for a wide array of advocacy groups and such social movements as the World Social Forum. The many causes compete for attention, membership, contributions and support. They make up a new marketplace — not for goods and services, but for interests, ideas and ideologies.

13. New information and communication technologies add to the potential. It has become almost as easy for advocacy groups to be global as local. Traditional electoral processes group people by physical communities, by their locality. The new channels form "global communities of interest." Citizens can be much more actively involved in policy processes for the causes they care most about. They can get up-to-date information on web sites and be briefed directly by e-mail about new developments and opportunities to engage and influence ministers, legislators and newspapers. This is a radical transformation. Representative democracy, in which citizens periodically elect their representatives across the full spectrum of political issues, is now supplemented by participatory democracy, in which anyone can enter the debates that most interest them, through advocacy, protest and in other ways. Political pressure and social demands can now be more readily expressed directly to power holders.

14. The Panel has looked at these dynamics — at the interplay between the various State and non-State actors and its relevance for the United Nations. Although the main emphasis is on civil society, many of our messages apply equally to parliamentarians, firms, local authorities and other actors beyond the Governments that make up the membership of the United Nations. For want of a more elegant term, the Panel uses the word "constituencies" when emphasizing the broader scope of a message. Consultations have shown that misunderstandings often arise from imprecise or unclear definitions, hence a glossary is provided in the beginning of the present report.

Rising power of global public opinion

15. Civil society organizations, through their web sites and other channels, are informing citizens about policy choices. Global networks of activists, parliamentarians, journalists, social movement leaders and others are also influencing policy debates, especially on international issues. All this is reinforced by the impact of the mass media on current affairs — and by the diverse sources that most people can turn to for information. And all this is creating a new phenomenon — global public opinion — that is shaping the political agenda and generating a cosmopolitan set of norms and citizen demands that transcend national boundaries. Civil society and citizen action have contributed to the opening up of a

global public space for debate. In this sense, civil society is as much part of today's global governance as are Governments.

Implications of these trends for civil society

16. As civil society has become more powerful, it is being called upon to justify its new status and influence. There are critics, some motivated by a wish to preserve the status quo, others by politics. Governments may resent voices other than theirs influencing international decisions. Politicians claim a unique mandate to speak for citizens. Business leaders may begrudge intrusions into ethical questions of little direct concern to their shareholders or customers. And some civil society leaders regard others as irresponsible — perhaps little more than fronts for government or business interests.

17. Global civil society now wields real power in the name of citizens. As with other dimensions of political power, it is natural to expect more demands for accountability and integrity. Is the power well deserved? Are the most prominent voices truly authoritative? For whom do they really speak? What are the mechanisms to ensure accountability and diligence?

18. Many impressive initiatives in civil society address such matters through peer pressure, self-governance and public reporting, both nationally and globally. But this discipline is still in its infancy. While it is not the job of the United Nations to define or arbitrate civil society governance, Member States can reasonably expect the Secretariat to ensure that actors engaging in their deliberative processes meet at least some basic standards of governance and demonstrate their credentials, whether they are based on experience, expertise, membership or a base of support. It is therefore appropriate that the United Nations discuss such questions with its main civil society interlocutors and their networks.

Implications for the United Nations and intergovernmental processes

19. The growing influence of civil society in global policy does not diminish the relevance of intergovernmental processes — it enhances it. Nor does it lessen the authority of Governments within them. While civil society can help to put issues on the global agenda, only Governments have the power to decide on them. But it is true that many prominent issues of our time have been advanced and shaped by civil society, propelled by the power of public opinion. Consider gender relations, human rights, the environment, AIDS treatments, child soldiers, debt relief and landmines. Consider too the powerful synergies of like-minded groupings of State and civil society actors working together.

20. This is not about sharing power in a zero-sum game. On the contrary, the constructive engagement of civil society can strengthen intergovernmental deliberations by informing them, sensitizing them to public opinion and grass-roots realities, increasing public understanding of their decisions and enhancing their accountability. This makes such forums more relevant, reducing the democratic deficits to which they are prone. Civil society can also promote actions to advance

globally agreed priorities, advancing the causes of the United Nations and multilateralism.

21. So how is the United Nations responding? Is it seizing opportunities or is it a captive of the past? The United Nations has consistently promoted the participation of civil society in its deliberative processes, notably in the big global conferences of the 1990s. This has contributed to the emerging set of cosmopolitan values and norms, especially in the areas of human rights, gender relations, governance and the environment. The United Nations has also opened other new avenues for civil society engagement in operations and policy-making.

22. But the Panel questions whether the United Nations has been clear enough about why it has done these things. It has tended to base participation on Article 71 of its Charter, which simply states that "the Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations", not that it must make such arrangements. The clear strains in relations between the United Nations and civil society may originate partly in the lack of a clearly articulated case for enhancing such engagement today. That is why the United Nations must be more explicit in enumerating the reasons for reaching out.

Why reach out to civil society?

23. Engaging with civil society, parliaments and other actors helps the United Nations to identify global priorities, become more responsive and accountable and strengthen its support base — making it more able to tackle those challenges. It helps the United Nations to become an organization belonging to "We the peoples". There are tradeoffs, however. If the United Nations brought everyone relevant into each debate, it would have endless meetings without conclusion. And Governments would find other forums for their negotiations, as they already do in the areas of trade and economics. The Panel believes that the right balance can be found.

24. Many in civil society, business and local government have first-hand information, experience and capacity to meet the challenges faced by the international community, from local operations to global policy-making. They also have access to new resources and skills. To tap those assets, the United Nations needs to build strong partnerships — and open the doors for others, not just Governments, to contribute to its discussions. To do this, it must differentiate between the deliberative processes, which welcome diverse expertise, and the formal negotiations of agreements, which remain intergovernmental. This would ensure Governments that civil society organizations are not undermining the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations but strengthening it by making its decisions better informed. Enhancing civil society relations can also keep the United Nations in tune with global public opinion — the "second super-power" — and enhance its legitimacy.

25. In its outreach, therefore, the United Nations must be careful to prioritize those who really have the relevant attributes. Every engagement has an opportunity cost, and unless the value exceeds this cost, the intergovernmental process is weakened, not strengthened.

26. This calls for greater candour about the qualities of civil society participants. United Nations agencies in their operations are hard-headed in selecting with whom

they build partnerships, looking at track records and approaching external referees. They need a similar businesslike approach when it comes to engagement in deliberative processes. This does not mean that the United Nations should hand-pick civil society speakers. But it should set out clearer criteria and processes for selecting them — emphasizing, as the Panel suggests, disciplined networking and peer review processes of the constituencies. The United Nations has a right — and a duty — to ensure that this selection meets the tests of relevance, probity, governance and balance (discussed in section VII).

27. In summary, civil society and other constituencies are important to the United Nations because their experience and social connections can help the United Nations do a better job, improve its legitimacy, identify priorities and connect it with public opinion. Civil society can also raise new issues, focus attention on the moral and ethical dimensions of decisions in the public sphere, expand resources and skills, challenge basic assumptions and priorities and protest unfair decisions. So enhanced engagement, carefully planned, will make the United Nations more effective in its actions and in its contributions to global governance. There is a synergy here, not a contest. Opportunities for working with the United Nations strengthen civil society, and this in turn empowers the United Nations, enhancing its relevance to the issues of our times.

Paradigm shifts advocated by the Panel

28. The Panel established four paradigm shifts that would guide the United Nations in strengthening its relations with civil society and other constituencies:

- First, become an outward-looking Organization
- Second, embrace many constituencies
- Third, connect the local with the global — putting countries first
- Fourth, help to reshape democracy for the twenty-first century

Become an outward-looking organization

29. Governments alone cannot resolve today's global challenges. Effective strategies must draw on the power of public opinion, the creativity and persuasiveness of civil society, the resources and skills of the private sector and the capacities of many other constituencies. In the face of those challenges, the capacities of the United Nations are modest, with one exception: its convening power. The United Nations alone has the uncontested legitimacy to rally diverse actors and enjoy their trust. And when it does, the results can be monumental.

30. But the United Nations does not always tap this potential — for two reasons, the Panel suggests. First, its membership and history lead it to act as an organization exclusively for Governments, adopting attitudes and work styles that can deter others. While it is a given that the decisions of the United Nations are made by its members, other actors are crucial to its deliberative processes and programmes. Second, as in any large organization, there is a tendency to look inward — to its own resources, experience, work plans and structures — not outward to ask who else could offer what is needed for the challenges ahead.

31. The Panel urges Member States and the Secretariat to be outward-looking — to put the issues and needs, not the institution, at the centre of attention, and to search for those who can help to meet those needs. The United Nations should tune in more deliberately to the main currents of public opinion on global policy issues. And by engaging those who influence public attitudes, it should do more to shape public opinion. What will this take? Shifts in institutional culture, decision-making and management — akin to the shifts many leading companies have taken towards being networking organizations.

Embrace many constituencies

32. Both operational programmes and policy-making can be more effective when all parties are on board, particularly across the North-South divide. This is not just about tapping different capacities — it is about exchanging perspectives, building respect for different types of experience and knowledge and recognizing the power of diversity, the power of gender, region and culture.

33. This is not new. But the Panel urges the United Nations to recognize what is becoming a compelling way of doing business in the twenty-first century — and to offer "safe spaces" for constructive interactions across geographic, sectoral and cultural divides. The traditional intergovernmental process — with Governments negotiating a global agreement that United Nations agencies and Member States then implement — is being supplemented by a new approach in which like-minded but diverse parties come together in a joint initiative for action and policy analysis. Such "global policy networks" might include Governments, local authorities, civil society actors, firms and others. They have been responsible for many notable policy advances in recent years.

34. Charting new global possibilities through strategic alliances does not compete with traditional multilateralism — it complements, and strengthens it. But the power of this new diplomacy has yet to be fully recognized. So initiatives are often incubated outside the United Nations — although they may be brought into the United Nations fold later, as happened with the landmine issue. The Panel sees the engagement of many constituencies, with implications for adopting partnership approaches wherever possible, as a top priority for the United Nations in both its normative and operational work. This should be a major driver of the engagement of the Organization with civil society and other constituencies.

Connect the local with the global

35. From its investigations, the Panel has come to see the United Nations as having two very different personas — the norm-setter with its global deliberations and the practical fixer with its country operations. Both are important, but the Panel suggests that a two-way street should connect the two worlds. For this reason the starting point for strengthening the Organization's engagement with other actors is at the country level — in all aspects of its work. This would also do much to redress the evident and lamentable imbalance between the voices of Northern and Southern actors in international policy forums — which the Panel argues should be a priority consideration in reforming United Nations–civil society relations.

36. The typical pattern in the intergovernmental realm is to make policies at the global level and to transmit them to the national level for implementation. Engagement with civil society at the country level thus emphasizes operational

collaboration. The two-way street would have the United Nations, Governments, civil society and others work together to plan and implement effective strategies for translating global policies into programmes relevant to national contexts and to ensure that those national processes truly inform the global deliberative agenda. This means that the United Nations should recognize that it has an interest in promoting a healthy policy and legal environment for civil society — especially in developing countries.

Help to strengthen democracy for the twenty-first century

37. The Panel believes that the United Nations should accept a more explicit role in strengthening global governance and tackling the democratic deficits it is prone to. Through its influence with Governments, intergovernmental agencies, national parliaments and the media, it can help to reshape democracy to make it more relevant to today's global realities and needs. What then should be the underpinning principles? Participatory democracy is becoming more important alongside representative democracy. Legitimacy in policy-shaping does not derive solely from the ballot box. Public opinion is rightly emerging as a powerful force in shaping policies and global priorities, and intergovernmental organizations should become more accountable, transparent and responsive to citizens globally.

Proposals of the Panel

38. Effective engagement with civil society and other constituencies is no longer an option — it is a necessity in order for the United Nations to meet its objectives and remain relevant in the twenty-first century. For this, the United Nations needs to build an outward orientation, seeking to identify which combination of actors would help to meet the needs and evolving mechanisms to engage them. This in turn entails developing new ways of working and acquiring new internal attitudes and capacities.

39. The proposals of the Panel map out the course of such a process of change building on the best practices of the United Nations. They embody five practical principles:

- First, the United Nations should be more rigorous in identifying innovations in the system and working to make the best practices of today the normal practices of tomorrow. Many proposals have precursors in pioneering ventures somewhere in the United Nations system.
- Second, the United Nations is not starting from scratch. There is much to be proud of in its existing strategies and recent measures to enhance engagement. The Panel's proposals are largely intended to expand, deepen and protect them, not to replace them.
- Third, the main civil society partners of the United Nations — especially the networks of accredited non-governmental organizations and United Nations associations — have already done a great deal to help strengthen the outward orientation of the Organization and would be invaluable allies in helping to implement the suggested strategy.

- Fourth, the traditional intergovernmental forums are not the only way that the business of the United Nations can be conducted. Much more use should be made of new information and communication technologies.
- Fifth, opportunities are context-specific, as are the parties critical for making or breaking them.

The Panel notes and praises the impressive efforts made in these regards in recent years and stresses that its proposals are designed to supplement and build on them, not substitute for them.

40. Most of the Panel's proposals are about finding an appropriate way to work and carry on a dialogue with all relevant actors, not just civil society. The term "constituencies" is used to emphasize that the proposals have this wider reach. Although some of the proposals would need intergovernmental approval, the Secretary-General could act on some of them in his own right. Others would benefit from the cooperation of United Nations programmes, funds and agencies within the system. While some of the proposals are new, many build on successful pioneering efforts within the United Nations and the wider multilateral system. When proposals refer to the United Nations taking an action or agreeing to a change, it indicates a step requiring intergovernmental agreement. Where the Panel proposes measures that it considers can be taken by the Secretariat or Secretary-General, that is made explicit in the wording of the proposal.

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

41. The most important contribution of the United Nations has always been its convening power, bringing together Governments of countries that are at war or at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. The same applies today, except that some of the world's major players are not governmental. Few of the most pressing battles today — whether they involve hunger, poverty, illiteracy, global pandemics, terrorism, narcotics, climate change, natural disasters, environmental threats, abuse of women and children, sectarian and ethnic divides, unemployment, economic crises or inequity of wealth, power and information — can be resolved by central Governments alone. Others are needed in these battles — from civil society, the private sector, local authorities and elsewhere. Why? Because they have essential knowledge, abilities, experience and links to key constituencies.

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, landmines, 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.

Retain an option for holding big global conferences

57. The United Nations has long convened big conferences, which made unique contributions to global governance in the 1990s. Starting with the World Summit for Children, held in New York in 1990, successive conferences helped to recast old issues in a modern context — for example, bringing environment and gender into the heart of development. They also brought a large number of governmental and other actors together to shape collective strategies for tackling those issues.

58. Member States have little appetite, however, for more such events, seeing them as costly and politically unpredictable. They also see the fifth- and tenth-year anniversary conferences as repeating the same ground as the original conference, with few new results — even, in some cases, weakening previous agreements and commitments. And they resent how civil society and others use the opportunity to castigate them for failing to act on their promises.

59. The Panel believes that it would be wrong to jettison the tool; instead, it should be used sparingly and strategically. Such events have been unique in convening a wide diversity of stakeholders on controversial topics. They have

shaped public opinion and action, raised awareness among ordinary citizens and spawned many of today's networks. Emerging issues such as migration require similar multi-stakeholder deliberations, which only global conferences can offer.

60. The planning of future conferences should allow stronger roles for the major networks of civil society and other constituencies in establishing ground rules for participation, accountability and responsibility.

Proposal 4

The United Nations 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.

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.

77. Many in civil society are concerned that multinational corporations will have too much influence on the United Nations. But their constructive engagement through the Global Compact represents a way for the Organization to monitor accountability and responsibility. Fuller use could be made of the reporting mechanisms of the Compact to advance voluntary principles of corporate responsibility.

78. The Panel also reflected on United Nations engagement with elected representatives — parliamentarians and local governments (see sect. VI).

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

IV. Focusing on the country level

79. To enhance United Nations–civil society relations without in any way diminishing the importance of global dialogue, the Panel believes that the place to start is to emphasize and highlight the country level. United Nations intergovernmental processes produce global goals and norms that transcend culture and sovereignty. But to be meaningful they must be informed by realities on the ground, as viewed by the communities most affected and those working with them, and to be effectively implemented — to benefit from pooling of resources and division of labour — they require operational strategies that are owned by all stakeholders. This calls for emphasizing the country level in the operational and normative work of the United Nations and for strong local-to-global links between the two. This would also bring stronger Southern voices into global policy debates, helping to redress the usual North-South imbalance.

Engage stakeholders in strategic planning, coordination and learning

80. Locally designed strategies for implementing globally agreed goals are more effective than those imported from New York or elsewhere. They take into account local realities, cultures and priorities, they are locally owned and supported by the public, with opportunities for the involvement of elected representatives, and they are more likely to include a diversity of actors from within and outside the central Government.

81. In some countries, the operational agencies of the United Nations work closely with the Government, donors, civil society and others to analyse the poverty situation and identify priority actions needed in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This work in turn informs the strategic planning tools of the United Nations, such as reports on the Millennium Development Goals and common country assessments, and of Governments, such as poverty reduction strategy papers.[2] Collaboration enables synergies and new priorities for holistic development strategies, but it is not always employed.

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.

83. Although the Panel is aware of much progress, it heard a repeated message from developing country actors: the United Nations remains rather opaque, uncommunicative, poorly informed about local civil society dynamics and unwilling to consult or engage except to recruit implementing partners after strategies have been agreed upon. It is often seen as being rather unresponsive to national citizens, providing meagre information about its programmes and spending in the country and being uncreative in bringing the country's experience into global priority discussions.

84. There undoubtedly are countries for which the picture is more positive.[3] It may also be the case that the Panel, not having had the opportunity to examine the country-level experience in a wide range of countries, heard more about the problems than about the good news. But it is unlikely that such a common message is without substance. And some United Nations operational staff have confirmed that, while official policy favours an inclusive approach, the lack of resources and effective coordination often lead to a very different reality.

85. The regional commissions have a role in enhancing standards of partnership and civil society engagement and in feeding country experience into the global deliberative processes. This helps to level the playing field for Northern and Southern actors and possibly to ease the pressure of a large number of civil society organizations seeking access to global processes. The experience of the Economic Commission for Europe in engaging civil society in the Aarhus Convention[4] process is an interesting example to learn from.

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

Build policy and operational partnerships with all constituencies

86. Although the benefits of systematically engaging civil society and others at the country level are potentially enormous, the costs of doing so must be recognized. It takes time and specialist knowledge to identify appropriate constituencies and to engage them. Partnerships will be flimsy unless adequate investments are made to brief civil society leaders and United Nations officials and to follow up effectively.

87. The United Nations system has long forged operational relations with public-benefit non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors at the country level. Some agencies, such as UNICEF, have staff assigned to this task in their country offices. The extension of such engagement to the deliberative processes and country strategy planning is poorly developed and uneven. This engagement has recently deepened, however, thanks to the preparatory processes for the global conferences, the growth of Southern civil society organizations with strong analytical and strategic capacities and the emphasis of the United Nations on the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction strategy papers.

88. The Panel considers that it is time for a quantum leap in the engagement of the United Nations with civil society at the country level. The main obstacles appear to be lack of staff, lack of systematic contacts with national civil society organizations and misaligned communication and information strategies. The Panel's proposals address these issues.

89. Current management instructions require the four agencies whose heads comprise the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group (UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme) to work together to ensure that a good cross-section of civil society actors is engaged in the country-level analytical work that leads to the Millennium Development Goals reports and common country assessments. Those agencies are also expected to help Governments to creatively engage civil society in the poverty reduction strategy paper process. Although some resident coordinators are making noble efforts, usual practice falls short of these standards, partly because they are not priorities and partly because of insufficient staff and resources.

90. The Millennium Development Goals and other key goals demand a high level of cooperation and networking, which requires that all parties feel respected and have access to the fullest information available in order to formulate country strategies. These aims should be a top priority for country-level information strategies throughout the United Nations system. The Panel, observing that this is not the case today, suggests revising those strategies.

91. The Department of Public Information has 47 information centres in developing countries, employing 182 internationally and locally recruited staff. The information centres do an effective job of conveying information about what the United Nations is doing globally, including events and publications. But they communicate much less about the main country-level development challenges. Similarly, the programmes, funds and specialized agencies often have communication staff, but they concentrate on publicizing the positive roles their organizations play.

92. To get the biggest development impact in these resource-strapped times, the United Nations should redirect communication resources towards promoting

awareness of the major goals at the country level, the strategies for reaching them, the contributions of Governments, civil society and others and the progress made to date. Resident coordinators should be asked and given authority to lead a determined effort to pool resources for getting such messages out, using communication as a development tool to reach the Millennium Development Goals and other goals. The Panel urges consideration, within the current review of the United Nations information strategy at the country level, of reorienting the functions and priorities of information staff and enhancing cooperation with other agencies. The objective should be to put the issues, not agencies, at the centre.

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

V. Strengthening the Security Council: roles for civil society

95. The Security Council, the most politically sensitive organ of the United Nations, has greatly enhanced its informal relations with civil society in recent years, largely in response to its changing roles in the post-cold war era and the changing nature of the conflicts it addresses. The Panel suggests further progress in this area and invites the new panel commissioned by the Secretary-General on global threats to consider these ideas.

96. Today's conflicts appear to be more complex than ever. To address them adequately demands considerable on-the-ground knowledge, new tools, new skills in social and cultural analysis, the active involvement of communities and their leaders, links to vulnerable groups and bridges to mainstream development processes. Civil society organizations often have unique capacities in all those areas.

97. So far, the expanded engagement with civil society has been largely with NGOs in the areas of international humanitarian and human rights and, to lesser extent, with religious leaders. It has taken the form of more frequent "Arria formula" meetings,[6] regular meetings of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council with Council members, expanded contacts with international NGOs in national capitals and more frequent opportunities for field visits of Council members to meet with civil society. An important initiative of civil society organizations is the planning of a global conference on peace and conflict in 2005.

98. Those most involved from civil society and Member States are comfortable with this trend, agreeing that it has helped the Security Council with its tasks and that it would be inappropriate to call for formal consultative status. But other civil society actors suggest that the informal "consultations" are oriented excessively to Northern and mostly New York-based humanitarian and human rights NGOs, and tend to exclude Southern civil society. The Panel considers that both points of view are valid but not mutually exclusive. It suggests enhancing the mechanisms for exchanges with civil society, especially in field visits, emphasizing actors from the countries in question.

99. The United Nations could also introduce a new instrument that is a bit more formal. Many issues the Security Council now addresses involve a complex array of social and contextual factors and require a clearer deliberative phase, which includes gathering evidence from civil society and other constituencies, before a Council position is negotiated. For this, the Secretary-General could propose Security Council seminars open to Council members and other ambassadors interested in the subject and serviced by the Secretariat.[7] Decisions would not be taken at the seminars, and individual countries and speakers would not be named in the notes. Such seminars would be particularly useful for generic rather than country-specific issues and for discussing post-conflict situations.

100. Finally, the Security Council could institute a regular practice of convening commissions to provide independent assessments of United Nations operations under Security Council mandates, such as the one held after the Kosovo crisis. The commissions would include the participation of and take evidence from civil society specialists and would assess operations from the perspective of the citizens concerned.

Proposal 12

Security Council members should further strengthen their dialogue with civil society, with the support of 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. United Nations 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. United Nations Headquarters and field staff should facilitate the 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 United Nations 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 (see proposal 15).

VI. Engaging with elected representatives

101. The Panel is of the view that enhancing United Nations relations with actors beyond its formal membership will help to address the democracy deficits in global governance that are in evidence today, which will entail engaging more strategically with those having representational mandates, such as parliamentarians and local authorities.

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.

Ensure that parliamentarians coming to United Nations events have more strategic roles

105. Many members of parliament attend United Nations meetings, usually as members of government delegations. More purposeful debates targeted at parliamentarians held in parallel to the United Nations meetings could be explored. For example, if the General Assembly were reformed to focus on a smaller number of pressing issues, a debate among members of parliament in advance of relevant Assembly sessions might widen the policy options considered and serve as a conduit for public opinion on those topics. The members of parliament would be encouraged to follow up the debate in their national parliaments.

Proposal 14

Member States should more regularly include members of parliament in their delegations to major United Nations meetings, while taking care to avoid compromising their independence. The Secretariat should test opportunities for members of parliament to contribute as parliamentarians, including in debates before a General Assembly meeting on a major topic. Members of parliament specializing in a subject could also be invited to speak in relevant committees and special sessions of the Assembly, particularly when they are reviewing progress achieved in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed global goals.

Link parliaments with the international deliberative processes

106. Given that national parliaments are formal and powerful institutions of democracy, the Panel considers it important to link them more structurally with the international intergovernmental process and to explore international parliamentary mechanisms to do so.

107. At the national level, functional committees — sometimes called "standing" or "select" committees — are a powerful mechanism for ensuring the separation of powers. They prepare legislation and propose policies, budget allocations and accountability processes. At the national level, they take evidence from ministers, officials, civil society organizations, companies, academics and others. They are effective because of their formal status. They can subpoena witnesses, their members are selected by their parties and appointed or elected by the plenary or parliament, their composition reflects the party balance in the parliament, and they serve for several years, building up substantial expertise. Moreover, Governments and the media respect them.

108. A frequent weakness of such committees is that their purview is national policy while the topics they address are global. The Panel thus proposes experimental global public policy committees to test ways of bringing a global dimension to the mechanism.[8]

109. Such committees should comprise up to 30 parliaments and be regionally representative. An initial approach might be to invite countries serving on the General Committee of the General Assembly to participate. This would ensure that all regions and the five permanent members of the Security Council were included. Rotation of membership is desirable, perhaps with five-year terms. Parliaments would be invited through their speakers to select two to four members to represent the party balance in the parliament. The first global public policy committee could be convened for three to four days to enable substantial debate and time for hearing evidence from internationally relevant specialists from civil society, academia, governmental agencies, the private sector and others.

110. The Secretariat — with the relevant specialized agency and in consultation with IPU and other specialist organizations — would propose the agenda for initial meetings and could help to service them. In time, the global public policy committees would develop its own mechanism to set agendas relevant to the global

deliberative processes. The funding and secretariat functions of the committees would come as much as possible from the participating parliaments, but the Secretariat should explore donor support for the participation of members of parliament from developing countries.

111. As with their national counterparts, the global public policy committees would forward policy proposals and scrutinize progress on past agreements (by intergovernmental organizations and Governments). They would submit reports to the Secretary-General and heads of relevant specialized agencies for transmission to their intergovernmental forums. They would also issue press statements to widen public understanding of the issues, and members would report to their national parliaments.

112. The approach permits incremental change guided by periodic reviews. The initial global public policy committees might be informal and advisory, with a somewhat ad hoc group of countries. Later they might be more formal, eventually leading to globally representative committees on all global priorities, with the right to submit policy recommendations and progress audits to the United Nations and Member States.

113. The global public policy committees would fill a gap in public engagement in global processes now that the age of the big United Nations conferences is largely over. They would help to connect national democracy with global processes, closing democratic deficits in global governance. They would also provide global platforms for the most qualified politicians and conduits for the experience, expertise and policy advice of the most qualified civil society actors. Their profile would make them global agenda-setters and educators.

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, and endeavour to connect parliaments, for example to encourage coordinated debates.

115. The Panel recognizes that some of its proposals are untested, particularly the global public policy committee mechanism, and so it suggests a five-year experimental period to test different mechanisms, guided by periodic reviews. The proposed Elected Representatives Liaison Unit would guide this process, disseminating lessons learned from innovations throughout the system and fostering system-wide debate about strategy in this area. The Unit should also monitor relevant proposals from within and outside the United Nations, ensuring that the United Nations is apprised of ideas that appear to be gaining currency.

116. The Panel recognizes that the United Nations has a special relationship with IPU, hence it suggests that its proposals be seen as opportunities to build on that relationship. In particular, the proposed global public policy committees, while convened by the United Nations, could offer IPU partnership opportunities. IPU has repositioned itself in recent years as an organization of parliaments rather than of parliamentarians. But not all parliaments accept that they are represented by IPU, and some are still not members of the organization. Where parliaments prefer their contacts with the United Nations to be brokered through IPU, the United Nations should respect this preference. It is suggested that when a parliament has been so instructed by its presiding officer, the United Nations work through IPU to achieve the above strategy, although it is stressed that the integrity of the global public policy committee mechanism will be assured only if all parliaments are engaged in an equivalent way.

Proposal 16

The Secretary-General should form a small Elected Representatives Liaison Unit:

- To provide a dedicated information service for parliaments and associations of parliamentarians, including a dedicated web-based information service for members of parliament
- To encourage greater attention to United Nations processes in national parliaments
- To help to create more effective opportunities for members of parliament to take part in United Nations forums
- To organize global public policy committees to work closely with national parliaments, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, specialized agencies and other organizations as appropriate
- To foster debate within the United Nations system about new or improved strategies for engaging parliaments and parliamentarians

Recognize the special contributions of local authorities and others

117. Local authorities have been playing a growing role in both United Nations policy debates and in achieving global goals; they are a key constituency for the United Nations, but they are not non-governmental. A particular area of growth has been the networking among cities and towns across regions and countries focused on specific issues. In the area of climate change and the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,[9] coordinated decisions and actions by cities have challenged the position of Member States opposed to the Protocol. Because local authorities are elected, their policy positions carry weight and are indicators of public sentiment. As a result of its consultations with mayors, the Panel proposes that the General Assembly be urged to adopt a resolution affirming and respecting the principle of local autonomy to underscore the growing importance of this constituency.

Proposal 17

The General Assembly should debate a resolution affirming and respecting local autonomy as a universal principle.

118. Efforts have been made to include local authorities in various processes, such as those of the Commission on Sustainable Development (through the major groups concept adopted by Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992) and of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (through the partners concept introduced by the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held in Istanbul in 1996). The latter created an advisory body of local governments to advise the Executive Director and, through that office, the Commission on Human Settlements. In May 2004 a new world association of local authorities was launched — United Cities and Local Governments. Given the representiveness of that body, which unifies previous international associations, the Panel considers this will be an important conduit for representing people at the local level in the system of global governance. Thus, the Panel suggests that the United Nations explore with this body ways in which they can engage most productively with each other and that the United Nations consider it as an advisory body to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly on matters of international governance, not only urban development issues, because local 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.

VII. Streamlining and depoliticizing accreditation and access

120. The Panel's broad proposal is to establish diverse forums for United Nations engagement with civil society and others tailored to specific tasks and to put less emphasis on the selection of a fixed slate of actors to bring into the formal intergovernmental process. It is recognized, however, that the involvement of civil society organizations in formal processes will remain important and that this should be addressed through an accreditation process. In the present section the Panel considers how the existing process could be improved. For this, the Panel reviewed existing accreditation procedures for the United Nations and its various agencies. It also sought the views of United Nations staff and various constituencies.

121. There are clearly defined mechanisms for civil society actors to seek and obtain consultative status to gain access to United Nations facilities and meetings. As the number of civil society organizations interested in the United Nations have grown, many within and outside the Organization consider that the application of these mechanisms has become uneven, partly because of the sheer workload and partly to limit the access of organizations considered by some Governments to be politically unhelpful. Since the first words of the Charter, "We the peoples", make the Organization's inclusive purpose clear, and since the United Nations is the global institution that embodies the values of free expression and assembly, it is inappropriate that the happenstance of workloads or government surmises about political motives should determine who has access. If the mechanism of consultative status is to be continued — and the bulk of evidence heard by the Panel suggests that it should — it should rest on clear and transparent merit. The applications of civil society organizations should be accepted or rejected according to experience and connections to constituencies important to the United Nations. In other words, the selection process should be technical rather than political.

122. The Panel urges Member States to recognize formally what has been an emerging pattern. As civil society actors have become more diverse and skilled in new areas, they have become relevant to intergovernmental forums beyond the Economic and Social Council — the organ assigned by Article 71 of the Charter to be responsible for arrangements for non-governmental participation. In particular, as argued earlier, civil society organizations and other constituencies have long demonstrated expertise and competence relevant to committees and special sessions

of the General Assembly and to areas of the United Nations work beyond the economic and social fields. The Panel suggests that the Assembly now recognize this by agreeing to provide a measured role for civil society in its affairs (see proposal 6) and to assume authority for accreditation.

Introduce a single General Assembly accreditation process based on merit

123. The Panel certainly appreciates concerns raised by some Member States about the number of civil society organizations seeking to take part in United Nations meetings, the pressure on meeting facilities and the erosion of time available for intergovernmental dialogue and the perception that some interventions by civil society organizations are offensive. But using the accreditation process to restrict access of civil society organizations either wholesale, by slowing the application process, or selectively, by arbitrary political judgements, is not a good way to address such concerns.

124. The Panel observed that the existing mechanisms for accreditation — especially those of the Economic and Social Council, the major gateway for the entry of civil society into the United Nations[10] and thus the Panel's priority — are problematic for non-State actors, the United Nations and Governments for the following reasons:

- They are often driven by political concerns of Member States rather than the expertise and inputs the actors may offer
- They vary greatly across the United Nations system, and so are confusing and time-consuming for all
- They are often costly (in time and money) and are disconnected rather than streamlined through information technology links (without system-wide information-sharing)
- They are not transparent or responsive, from the review of applications to the final decision-making stage.

125. The Panel recognizes that decisions on accreditation are made by Member States. We see accreditation as an "agreement" between Member States and those accredited — a confirmation that the latter agree to make their expertise available and act in good faith, with an assurance that their views and expertise will be respected and used in governmental efforts in pursuit of the aims of the United Nations.

126. The Panel's proposals in this area are based on the following principles:

- Achieving cost- and time-effectiveness, streamlining where possible and practicable
- Broadening and deepening civil society participation in the United Nations
- Fostering civil society contributions to a coherent global development effort
- Focusing accreditation more on technical than on political considerations
- Increasing overall transparency, accountability and predictability of the process

• Encouraging the effective use of information technology

127. The Panel believes it is essential to depoliticize the accreditation process. Accreditation decisions made for political rather than technical reasons effectively reduce the access of the United Nations to independent expertise and knowledge. The Panel is also concerned about the growing phenomenon of accrediting non-governmental organizations that are sponsored and controlled by Governments. Not independent, these "government-organized NGOs" reflect their Government's position. The speaking opportunities they use in United Nations forums would be better used by others — in keeping with the original principle of accreditation.

128. There is a strong case for streamlining accreditation at United Nations Headquarters and reconsidering which organ grants accreditation. The Panel sees little merit in keeping separate the regular accreditation processes of the Economic and Social Council and the Department of Public Information and having separate processes for each global conference. This is time-consuming and duplicative. Our recommendations for reform in this area are far-reaching and may take considerable time for intergovernmental discussion and implementation. In this period, the existing accreditation mechanisms should be retained, but those responsible for them are urged to internalize the foregoing principles to the fullest extent possible.

Proposal 19

The United Nations should realign accreditation with its original purpose namely, it should be an agreement between civil society actors and Member States based on the applicants' expertise, competence and skills. To achieve this, and to widen the access of civil society organizations beyond Economic and Social Council forums, Member States should agree to merge the current procedures at United Nations Headquarters for the Council, the Department of Public Information and conferences and their follow-up into a single United Nations accreditation process, with responsibility for accreditation assumed by an existing committee of the General Assembly.

Ensure an efficient Secretariat review of applications and swift decision-making

129. Accreditation now hinges on a review of applications by the Economic and Social Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. The secretariat ensures that the necessary paperwork is complete for all applications considered, and in practice few who pass this hurdle fail to get accreditation. Since intergovernmental meetings are costly and reviewing each application takes time, the process is very expensive. The Committee usually meets for five full weeks a year at a cost averaging $3.7 million, not including the cost of the secretariat unit that supports it. This averages $26,000 per accredited applicant.[11] Although some 20 applications a year are deferred (some by as much as two or three years), on average only 4 applications a year are declined. Given that the main purpose of the process, in practice, is to determine which applicants are unsuitable, the true cost of the current mechanism amounts to nearly $1 million per rejection.

130. The United Nations has much more efficient precedents — when secretariats receive applications, review them for technical merit and provide Member States with lists of recommended and not-recommended applicants (for example, accreditation for global conferences and some specialized agencies). This is faster, more merit-based and more transparent, since secretariats have to explain their recommendations on specific applicants. This approach works well for big conferences, where accreditation typically takes no more than 1 to 5 per cent of the time spent for intergovernmental discussion.

131. The Panel proposes eight steps for granting accreditation at Headquarters:

- Step 1. Member States set the criteria for accreditation and oversee the implementation of these criteria by means of regular reports from the Secretariat.
- Step 2. The General Assembly secretariat would form an Accreditation Unit to receive applications, follow up to ensure applicants have submitted all required materials and review the applicants' relevance to and competence for contributing to United Nations processes.
- Step 3. The Accreditation Unit would routinely seek guidance from an advisory body in determining whether an applicant should be recommended or not. That body would, in the first instance, comprise United Nations staff with constituency specialization, such as civil society organization focal points. Its roles and mechanisms would be determined in consultation with all relevant constituencies. In time it might be expanded to include people from outside the United Nations who could help it to do a better job. It would thus offer checks and balances to the review process.
- Step 4. The Accreditation Unit would maintain regular contacts with the permanent missions of Member States to the United Nations through designated officers. Those contacts would help to identify and resolve potential concerns and questions about applicants and illuminate their potential contributions to the United Nations.
- Step 5. The Accreditation Unit would present an annotated list of applications received that year to the General Assembly at its regular session, showing those recommended and not recommended and the reasons. The list would be made public and disseminated both as an official document of the General Assembly and through electronic media.
- Step 6. An appropriate existing committee (perhaps the General Committee) would be designated by the General Assembly to decide on the recommendations that had been submitted. Decisions could be made on a no-objection basis,[12] a voting basis[13] or a combination of the two. The committee would be required to make a decision on the recommended and not-recommended lists at the session at which the lists were submitted. If an objection led to a deferral, the question should be resolved within a fixed period, say six months, after which a vote would be taken to avoid further postponement and subsequent bottlenecks in the process.
- Step 7. The work of the General Assembly committee and the Accreditation Unit would be conducted as transparently as possible, and records of the governmental debate would be posted on the United Nations web site.

- Step 8. The Accreditation Unit would monitor the accredited organizations to see how active they were in United Nations processes. This would include a range of operational, analytical and informational activities, as well as participation in intergovernmental meetings.

132. These arrangements will require new skills. The staff of the Accreditation Unit and other civil society focal points at the United Nations will need appropriate training, especially on duties, rights and responsibilities.

133. Deepening the use of information technology is also crucial. The Accreditation Unit should maintain a database with up-to-date information on applicants and the status of their application. This should be linked to other parts of the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, to enable them to contribute to periodic activity reviews. The database would require a significant investment and would take some time to be adopted universally. Eventually, however, it would yield significant gains in efficiency and effectiveness across the system.

Proposal 20

Member States should shift the task of reviewing applications to the Secretariat so as to reduce time inefficiencies and 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 various departments (therefore it would be budget-neutral). The Unit would help to set up an advisory body that would offer guidance on whether applications should be recommended or not. A designated General Assembly committee would decide on accreditation based on that guidance. The Secretariat should ensure increased use of information technologies to manage the accreditation process. The Secretary-General should encourage the United Nations agencies, country offices and others to cooperate in the system-wide effort.

Consider ways of strengthening and broadening accreditation

134. During its consultations, the Panel heard a strong desire for system-wide coordination and greater support from United Nations country and regional offices in the process. The Panel agrees that those offices should be more supportive in assisting applicants by following up on the process and keeping the information flow intact. There should also be stronger coordination of accreditation and monitoring by the United Nations system through linked databases, more frequent exchange of experience and meetings of relevant staff.

135. System-wide coordination is also relevant in the context of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Many civil society actors strongly argue that those bodies lack proper participatory and consultative mechanisms and call upon them to emulate the more open engagement of the United Nations. The inequalities inherent in globalization — and in the roles of civil society in tackling the many concerns — make it timely and necessary to

share more information on civil society among all parts of the United Nations system.

136. It would be helpful to enhance understanding among civil society organizations and others about the accreditation process and the associated rights and responsibilities. Booklets that clearly detail the rules, codes and norms of expected behaviour, produced without delay or high cost, should be disseminated widely.

137. The Panel is of the view that it is wrong to maintain long lists of accredited organizations that show no active engagement with any type of United Nations work — whether in intergovernmental processes or in the field. We suggest that the United Nations remind these actors that their accreditation may be terminated. The periodic reviews and monitoring of contributions of accredited organizations should be more consistent, and those that are inactive for, say, four years should be routinely de-accredited.

Proposal 21

The Secretary-General should foster enhanced coordination and support for the accreditation process by:

- Instructing national and regional offices of the United Nations to facilitate applications
- Using the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination processes to foster closer coordination among United Nations agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions
- Ensuring wider availability of information on the rights and responsibilities related to accreditation (e.g., through booklets aimed at civil society and United Nations staff).

138. The Economic and Social Council categories of NGO status (General, Special and Roster) have been used for quite a long time, with minor changes having been made as a result of a review in 1996. There may be good grounds for revising them somewhat, but reaching agreement on how to do so would be difficult. As the accreditation process is being revised, a consultation process should be started for possible new categories:

- Network partners: transnational networks and caucuses that include a significant number of organizations either active on a given issue or from a particular constituency. They are already facilitators, working with United Nations secretariats to coordinate the engagement of their constituencies on a specific issue. To gain a higher accreditation status, they should have a clear leadership and governance structure and a clearly defined composition, and should encompass a sizeable proportion of a particular constituency (such as gender, environment, human rights or indigenous peoples organizations). Formally recognizing networks and accrediting them as such would provide an incentive for self-organizing and enhanced coordination. If adopted as a category, network partners would have the greatest right to speak, distribute

statements and interact with bureaux and substantive secretariats in influencing agendas.

- Consultative partners: a merging of the Economic and Social Council categories, including international, regional or national actors, focusing on advocacy, research or representation of particular sectors. Their participation in a given United Nations body would be decided by substantive secretariats and bureaux of those bodies, according to their expertise and competence in the relevant field.
- Programme support partners: constituency organizations supporting United Nations programmes, such as those currently engaged in operational field projects.

Proposal 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.

Address who should have access

139. The Panel recognizes that the main scope of its proposals should be changes within the United Nations to enhance its relations with civil society and other constituencies. But the full potential of engagement will be realized only if there is also significant strengthening of civil society. Indeed, the strength of the continuing partnership of the United Nations with civil society will depend to an extent on the Organization's ability to show that its partners offer the sound experience, expertise, outreach or representation needed to enhance its processes and conform to reasonable standards of integrity and governance. Although it is not for the United Nations to organize civil society or define mechanisms to test and address matters of governance, it is important to make clear the Organization's bottom line to its civil society organization interlocutors.

140. The deepening of United Nations civil society relations has not been without controversy. While many Member States support the trend, some argue that the doors have been opened too widely — that many civil society organizations in United Nations forums have weak public bases or unclear mechanisms of accountability and that they consume too much time in intergovernmental forums. The Panel looked into these issues. Its conclusion is that there are only very few occasions of crowding — either in debating time or in seating. The chairs and bureaux of those forums could address crowding by deciding on a portion of time to be allocated to civil society and planning how best to use the time in consultation with relevant civil society networks. There are indeed issues of civil society governance to be addressed (see below), and as the United Nations expands its engagement, the Secretariat should become more careful about how it builds partnerships and with whom. The rights so entailed must be associated with

broadened responsibilities, and this puts an obligation on both the United Nations and its civil society organization partners to ensure high standards.

141. In its practices for engaging civil society, the United Nations should focus on the attributes offered by specific actors and should recognize that they change over time. These qualities — for different roles of civil society — should be clearly defined through ongoing discussions with those the United Nations already works closely with. They should include standards of governance, such as those for transparency and accountability. Guidance can also be drawn from other sectors — for example, the peer review processes used in academia for appointments and selecting papers for publication.

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.

143. The participation of civil society organizations in the United Nations tends to display familiar imbalances. The organizations represented tend to be headquartered in the global North; those from the South tend to be active largely in the major cities, with unclear accountability to the grass roots. Speakers are largely male, Northern and Anglo-Saxon. And the voices of vulnerable groups are underrepresented. The United Nations cannot enforce better balance, but it can encourage it, especially by monitoring current representation and discussing these matters frankly with the relevant networks.

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

Access to United Nations compounds

144. Security concerns have recently heightened restrictions at United Nations facilities. Although security is undeniably paramount, the Panel finds that much frustration among civil society organizations could be avoided if new restrictions were explained in advance and implemented politely. The facility managers and security staff should consult on access issues with those who often visit the United Nations before making changes. This would enable them to explain expected changes, receive feedback and request help in disseminating the new rules and procedures.

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.

Charging for facilities

146. Because of budget constraints, the United Nations has charged for the use of space for side events at intergovernmental meetings in New York since the late 1990s. Some contest this practice, arguing that it amounts to the United Nations becoming "commercialized". United Nations management argues that the budget limitations require it and that the charges are uniform, even for Member States. Three main issues are at stake. First, through their contributions to the United Nations, the Member States, and through them their citizens, have already "paid" for the services that they expect from the United Nations. Second, the events that incur charges are often organized for the purpose of supporting the United Nations and informing its decision-making process: charging to receive this contribution is not sensible. Third, the charging process lacks transparency, with no itemized, clear and consistent list of costs. The Panel feels that the United Nations should discontinue this practice, and in the near term provide better information about those charges to the public.

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 to the annual meetings of sponsoring agencies and to the annual session of the United Nations Communications Group. If the Service were to become the core of this new Unit, the Organization could lose a valuable semi-autonomous mechanism. But the Service faces chronic funding instability and uncertainty for its core and special activities, and its ability to provide system-wide guidance on civil society affairs could be enhanced by locating it in the Secretariat.

153. The Panel recognizes and endorses the important and unique work being done by the Non-Governmental Liaison Service and is of the view that this work would provide a solid pillar for the new office, which in turn should give it a firmer resource base and allow it to share its experiences and approaches with the other units in the Office and the United Nations system more widely. The Service would provide the new office with a resource base and a track record of credible work with the United Nations system and the NGO community. It is recognized, however, that the balance is sensitive and that the devil lies in the details. The Panel thus advises that the decision be taken in consultation with the Service's sponsors once the other details of the new office's structure are agreed. In the meantime the Panel urges the Service's United Nations sponsors to maintain their best efforts to fund it.

154. If the Non-Governmental Liaison Service is incorporated into it, the new Civil Society Unit must be given a considerable degree of autonomy. This could best be achieved by having its strategy and work programme guided by a management or steering committee comprising the existing principal sponsors of the Non-Governmental Liaison Service plus a comparable number of its primary civil society clients. A similar governance model could be considered for other units in the Office.

155. The Panel suggests that the Civil Society Unit — in addition to existing functions of the Non-Governmental Liaison Service and generic functions of the Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships — would:

- Promote predictable and rules-based treatment of civil society organizations by all United Nations bodies by performing an ombudsman role for civil society organizations that had grievances
- Develop guidelines on issues affecting the participation of civil society organizations in United Nations meetings, working with Member States, civil society organizations and United Nations secretariats
- Manage the civil society component of the proposed trust fund

- Prepare and disseminate an annual report on progress in civil society engagement, on highlights and best practices, on key elements in the global dynamics of civil society and on conclusions about further ways to improve the engagement
- Organize a global meeting of the country-level civil society or constituency engagement specialists every two years
- Help field staff to encourage Governments to improve the policy environment for civil society (including revising relevant laws) and to consult and engage more systematically with civil society on national development goals

156. The Panel is of the view that some civil society constituencies deserve greater attention by the United Nations because of their explicit representational roles or wide memberships. No new structures are proposed for them, but it is suggested that they explore secondments from those constituencies to provide focal points in the Civil Society Unit, including

- Trade unions. These vital civil society actors should be involved in all matters that relate to labour policy, social safety nets and employment. The Panel suggests regular high-level meetings between United Nations officials and union leaders, facilitated by the Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other relevant United Nations organizations
- Religious and spiritual groups. These groups provide powerful community leadership, shape public opinion, provide advice on ethical matters, facilitate reconciliation between conflicting communities and identify the needs of vulnerable groups. These are important functions, but other types of civil society organizations also perform them. So rather than engaging with them separately or in a special way, the Panel suggests ensuring that they are included alongside other actors when relevant

Units for other functions

157. The Partnership Development Unit would provide management advice, staff guidance, operational support and knowledge management for the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships and perform the functions described in section III above. It would probably absorb the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships. The Elected Representatives Liaison Unit would provide services to engage with parliaments and parliamentarians as well as with local authorities (details of its specific tasks are set out in section VI).

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

158. As mentioned in section IV, the Panel urges the Secretary-General to appoint constituency engagement (or civil society) specialists at the country level, starting with 30 to 40 priority countries. They might be chosen to reflect the size of the United Nations country programme and relevant civil society organization capacities. They would have expertise primarily in the facilitation and bridge-building aspects of partnerships, although it is expected that they would be familiar with civil society and perhaps other actors in the country. Reporting to resident coordinators, they would advance the United Nations strategy for engaging with civil society and others and advise United Nations system staff.

159. The specialists would enhance the Organization's knowledge about the dynamics and opportunities in civil society and other constituencies and facilitate high-quality partnerships and dialogue. They would coordinate engagement at the country level, ensure that national actors were appropriately involved in global and regional processes and maximize national contributions to and support for meeting the Millennium Development Goals and other goals of the United Nations. They would also help to improve the policy environment for civil society organizations in the country. Their functions, to be agreed by the United Nations Development Group in consultation with the Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships, would likely include:

- Working closely with constituency networks to identify their interests and concerns regarding the United Nations and devise more effective engagements at the country level
- Developing information outreach systems of relevance to civil society organizations and others
- Encouraging transparency and responsiveness by United Nations agencies in the country
- Advising United Nations staff on the selection of appropriate partners for strategic planning and partnerships, especially for Millennium Development Goal reports and poverty reduction strategy papers
- Encouraging coherence and information-sharing across the United Nations system in all matters relating to civil society and other constituencies

- Working with the regional commissions and Headquarters to design and organize consultative events feeding into the global deliberative processes
- Working with other staff to encourage Governments to provide an enabling policy environment for civil society and to consult more regularly with all constituencies

160. Because the specialists would be locally recruited, the budgetary implications need not be prohibitive. And since they would help to strengthen constituency contributions to the Millennium Development Goals and the poverty reduction strategy paper processes, significant donor contributions are likely for an experimental four-year period.

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.

Address North-South imbalances

161. Throughout its work and in the present report, the Panel has been mindful of the imbalances in the voices currently speaking for civil society in most United Nations processes, which conflict with their ability to reflect the concerns of all citizens. In particular, civil society speakers come largely from the global North or their organizations are headquartered there; speakers are largely male; most civil society organizations (both Northern and Southern) have unclear accountability to the grass roots; and the voices of vulnerable groups are underrepresented. Many of the Panel's proposals, as set out below, are designed to address those imbalances.

162. As with other issues of civil society governance, there is a limit to what the United Nations can do to address such deficiencies. It could monitor them through a process similar to that used in reports issued by the Commission on Human Rights that show the gender balance of speakers from Member States and civil society at its meetings. It could also discuss them regularly with constituency networks to urge strengthening selection and peer review processes. A flexible approach is vital. Many international civil society organizations emphasize that they are systematically devolving authority to Southern offices and partners, that being based in the North does not necessarily mean they do not represent Southern grass-roots perspectives and that their staff is globally diverse.

163. The Secretariat and the staff of specialized agencies, particularly those with a field presence, can also help to strengthen the ability of Southern constituencies to engage effectively with the United Nations. Progress in that regard requires putting more emphasis on participation at the national and regional levels in the Organization's deliberative processes. If that effort were successful, many civil

society organizations would feel less left out when they do not travel to New York or Geneva to contribute to deliberative processes that are important to them.

Proposal 26

The Secretary-General should make redressing North-South imbalances a priority in enhancing United Nations–civil society relations. He should enlist donor support for enhancing the capacity of the United Nations 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.

Establish a fund to enhance civil society capacity and partnerships

164. In its global deliberative processes, the United Nations benefits enormously from the participation of civil society actors having profound in-country and grass-roots experience of the issues, particularly when they work with underrepresented groups. But such groups can rarely finance their own participation. Moreover, their impact will be much less than that of experienced international civil society organization activists unless they are well-briefed about the deliberative process, the roles they can play and how to draw policy messages from their practical experience.

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 underrepresented 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.

Address the management training and other human resources development needs

168. Progress will be elusive unless civil society relations are at the heart of management throughout the United Nations. The Panel therefore emphasizes the importance of:

- Sending clear messages to managers about the need to take these matters seriously
- Including looking outward, engaging relevant constituencies and forging partnerships as routine elements of staff appraisal; the World Bank's "partnership indicator" for staff evaluations could be a model
- Making a greater effort to recruit staff with constituency experience
- Exchanging staff with civil society and other constituencies
- Conducting new or revised training programmes to provide relevant skills and sensitization, including training by the Staff College for senior managers and by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research for government delegates

- Including civil society organization leaders and others in high-profile United Nations occasions and senior staff retreats

169. Implementing these recommendations will demand strong leadership from chief executives of the United Nations system to emphasize that working with civil society and others is an essential ingredient of the Organization's business today.

Proposal 28

The Secretary-General and other top managers should frequently take the opportunity to convey to staff the importance they ascribe to constituency engagement and partnership. These issues should feature prominently in all human resources processes, including recruitment, promotion and annual appraisal. Staff throughout the system, including managers, should be given training in such matters.

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.

IX. Providing global leadership

Offer leadership within the wider United Nations system

173. In addition to being the chief executive of the United Nations and its funds and programmes, the Secretary-General is also Chairman of the Chief Executives Board of the wider United Nations system. In this capacity he has the opportunity to encourage agencies to seriously address civil society and partnership matters, develop coordination and high common standards, ensure that those issues feature prominently in the intergovernmental processes and encourage Governments throughout the world to give greater recognition to their importance.

174. There are rich opportunities for raising standards of disclosure and participation across the United Nations system, sharing or coordinating accreditation systems and civil society organization databases, cooperating to enhance contributions to the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction strategies, increasing the involvement of parliamentarians in international affairs and promoting greater citizen support for multilateralism.

Proposal 29

The Secretary-General should use his capacity as chairman of the United Nations 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 system to promote this aim, with periodic progress reviews.

Encourage Governments to allow civil society to flourish

175. Many of the Panel's proposals will be fully realizable only if civil society everywhere is given the chance to flourish and is respected by domestic Governments as interlocutors and partners. Member States should affirm the high value of partnerships and multi-constituency engagement at home as well as within the United Nations. This would give practical expression to the freedom of expression, association and assembly that is at the heart of the human rights framework. Priorities include:

- Discussing civil society freedoms in United Nations forums and at the highest-level meetings between the Secretariat and Governments and encouraging appropriate reforms
- Including those issues in all programmes of good governance and legal reform
- Promoting consultations with non-State actors in any governmental deliberative process in which the United Nations is party (including poverty reduction strategy papers and Millennium Development Goal reports)

- Urging full transparency for all United Nations–supported government programmes and public hearings so that those directly affected can voice their concerns and views
- Encouraging Governments to consult with civil society and others and to develop partnerships and include them in their delegations sent to United Nations forums
- Strengthening the roles of national parliaments and local authorities in intergovernmental processes

Proposal 30

Member States should encourage, through the forums of the United Nations, 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.

Use international leadership to strengthen global governance

176. The Panel's consultations revealed a widespread concern that the United Nations had lost authority and influence with other intergovernmental forums, especially the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Group of Eight. But most who express this concern believe that the United Nations has a pivotal role and could regain its position. Through assertive use of the moral leadership and convening power of the Secretary-General, the Organization could champion a new vision of global governance throughout the international system, based on principles of inclusion, participation, responsiveness, transparency and equity. If it were to foster wide debate about such reforms — including those proposed by the recent report of the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization,[15] by the new panel on global threats and by the Panel of Eminent Persons — it could make a welcome contribution to shaping the framework of global governance needed in the twenty-first century. It would also be widely celebrated and supported by civil society and others throughout the world.

X. Future of multilateralism

177. The proposals in the present report have implications reaching much wider than the relations of the United Nations with civil society. They have a bearing on the processes of global governance and the future of multilateralism. The years following the Rwanda genocide and the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 have seen world powers lurching between unilateral and multilateral options. Similarly, responses to global threats ranging from the East Asian crisis and third world debt to the AIDS pandemic and climate change have been a patchwork of unilateral and multilateral actions.

178. Just when more issues demand global responses than ever before, the haphazard processes of global governance seem to generate as many contradictions as complementarities. To offer guidance on such dilemmas, various panels and commissions have been established in recent years. They differ widely in scope and process but have many things in common. The Panel concludes its report, therefore, with three lessons learned in the process of preparing it that it believes are pertinent to all such bodies.

There are important gaps in global governance

179. The expanded use of panels and commissions comes, perhaps not coincidentally, just when the era of global conferences is largely over. Although they have very different roles (panels are advisory, whereas conferences are negotiating forums of global governance), they do have common features. Both focus on specific challenges in a clear time frame, they are regionally balanced, they include all relevant types of actors, and they report to the United Nations system. All those attributes are now universally recognized as essential to global progress. Yet there is now a real shortage of forums that display them. If panels are to be used increasingly and to command widespread respect, it will be important to engage the various constituencies in selecting their members and to actively pursue their proposals.

180. The United Nations should invest in broader ongoing processes that have similar features, particularly the Panel's proposals for global public policy committees and public hearings. The Panel suggests that it would be appropriate to schedule the first public hearing just before the General Assembly review of the Millennium Development Goals in 2005.

181. Panels and commissions may help in this regard, but public support for them will depend on their inclusiveness, the realism and courage of their proposals and the degree to which their proposals are acted upon. The Panel is confident that its widespread and intensive consultation process has enabled thousands of people to contribute to the present report and hence that there will be considerable support for its proposals. It is also confident that the stock of proposals constitutes a bold yet pragmatic reform agenda the adoption of which would greatly strengthen the impact of and public support for the United Nations. The Panel earnestly hopes that its proposals will be energetically discussed and acted upon by Member States and the management of the Secretariat and other United Nations bodies.

182. The Panel suggests that the report be discussed in at least three secretariat bodies — the Senior Management Group of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Group and the Chief Executives Board, with progress reviews on commitments at appropriate intervals. It would suggest that the proposed Office of Constituency Engagement and Partnerships monitor those matters as well as the Organization's relations with all external constituencies and that it report regularly to the Secretary-General. It also suggests that informal discussions of the proposals be held with Member States in the coming months to prepare the way for a debate on items requiring intergovernmental approval at the next session of the General Assembly.

The same paradigm shifts are relevant to all the various panels

183. The same imperatives that have provided the foundation for the Panel's thinking are also highly pertinent to the other commissions and panels and contain common messages about the future of global governance and the United Nations. In particular, it is clear that the face of multilateralism is changing: it is being increasingly shaped by ad hoc coalitions geared to specific goals comprising parties that are like-minded on that issue but that may differ widely on others. The old notion of multilateralism was in fact "omni-governmentalism", in which all Governments first agreed on a policy and then moved to implement it.

184. Today's notion is multilateral in the true sense of the term. It embraces many parties from different sides, or constituencies, relevant to the issue in many ways. Some forums are ad hoc and not universal, but they comprise like-minded actors who work together to gain support for their case. The United Nations was not designed to service such multilateralism, but this is how the world often does business today. So the United Nations needs to internalize it to stay relevant.

185. The United Nations must become a more outward-looking, or networking, organization. It should explicitly convene and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships and global policy networks, reaching to constituencies beyond Member States and being sure to maintain a fair North-South balance. The traditions of its formal intergovernmental processes can be barriers to this objective. But partnerships and policy networks will have a stronger results orientation and provide a surer connection between the Organization's local actions and its global values, especially in making progress on the Millennium Development Goals. Moving on this goal is necessary for the survival of the United Nations. Public support will dwindle unless the United Nations can demonstrate that it can make a clear and positive difference.

186. The United Nations must also do more to strengthen global governance and tackle democratic deficits. This work should be guided by principles of inclusion — ensuring equitable outcomes, participation — involving people in decisions that affect them, and responsiveness — listening to peoples' concerns and being answerable to them.

187. The United Nations must also engage more systematically with world public opinion in order to be able to read the signals and to influence it. This will entail more systematic interaction with prominent shapers of opinion, including influential leaders in civil society, politics and the media. Moving in this direction could help the United Nations system to promote alliances that would advance its goals and win support for multilateralism.

Notes

[1] This discussion draws on the Panel's partnership study and international workshop held at the Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, held in Tarrytown, United States of America, in February 2004. Full details are available on the Panel's web site (http://www.un.org/reform/panel.htm) and will soon be published as a monograph of the Panel.

[2] For example, UNDP has supported civil society organizations in their efforts to help shape poverty strategies in countries including Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Burundi, China, India, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Malawi, Nicaragua, Suriname, Uganda and Yemen. This has included facilitating policy dialogue between civil society and the Government in the framework of poverty reduction strategy papers.

[3] For example, civil society organizations have been involved in preparing Millennium Development Goals reports and in monitoring progress in Albania, Bulgaria, the Philippines, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and elsewhere.

[4] The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

[5] UNDP already has civil society organization advisory committees in Botswana, as well as globally.

[6] These are informal meetings called and hosted by one of the members of the Security Council with one or more NGO or other experts, but with no minutes. The purpose is to provide briefings on an issue of upcoming importance to the Council. The meetings are named after the Ambassador of Venezuela to the United Nations, Diego Arria, who pioneered the approach.

[7] At the World Bank, similar dictates led the Board of Executive Directors to institute board seminars dealing with upcoming issues that are new, sensitive or highly complex. They include all executive directors and feature presentations from staff and other specialists. No decisions are made in the seminars, and the purely internal notes do not name speakers. The seminars help the deliberations because executive directors can test positions informally, learn from one another and the experts and inform their capitals about positions that are likely to arise.

[8] Consider agriculture — although trade, migration, health, the environment and other topics would apply equally. Agriculture committees in parliaments around the world hear the views and experiences of diverse stakeholders. They make policy recommendations to agriculture ministers, but on many topics — such as farm subsidies or genetically modified crops — individual Governments cannot sensibly determine policy in isolation of global trends, hence their utility is limited. A global public policy committee on agriculture would bring together members of parliament from the equivalent committees in a range of countries. Similar processes could be established over time in other sectors.

[9] FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1, decision 1/CP.3, annex.

[10] Economic and Social Council accreditation provides civil society with opportunities to attend the meetings of all functional commissions, which handle a wide range of issues, from sustainable development to human rights. It is also used as a basis for most conference accreditation and for allowing entry into conference follow-up processes.

[11] Figures assume that the NGO Committee costs $73,644 per half-day for meetings and documentation. During the biennium 2001-2002, 282 NGOs were approved for accreditation by the Committee.

[12] No-objection basis: if a Government objects to placing an applicant on either the recommended or not-recommended list and if the objection is seconded, the applicant is removed from the list. The rest of the lists are approved by consensus. The General Assembly committee would review the contested cases within no more than four months. Representatives of the organizations should be allowed to attend the meeting in which their case is reviewed. A decision on those cases would be made at the special review meeting.

[13] Voting basis: if one or more Governments object to a Secretariat proposal and the objection is seconded, a vote is taken immediately. A majority is required to reverse the Secretariat's recommendation.

[14] The UNDP Partnership Facility funded about 40 initiatives involving innovative partnerships with civil society organizations and other actors.

[15] *A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All*, World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2004, ISBN 92-2-115426-2.

Annex I

Terms of reference and composition of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations

Terms of reference

The Panel will undertake an assessment of relations between the United Nations and civil society with the objective of formulating proposals for submission to the Secretary-General for enhancing interaction between the Organization and civil society, including parliamentarians and the private sector. The Panel will:

- Review existing guidelines, decisions and practices regarding civil society organizations' access to and participation in United Nations deliberations and processes
- Identify best practices in the United Nations system and in other international organizations with a view to identifying new and better ways of interacting with non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations
- Examine the ways in which the participation of civil society actors from developing countries can be facilitated
- Review how the Secretariat is organized to facilitate, manage, share experiences and evaluate the relationships of the United Nations with civil society

The Panel will consult broadly and will submit its proposals to the Secretary-General within 12 months.

Membership

Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Chair), Brazil. Born in Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Cardoso is a distinguished Brazilian sociologist and politician and was President of Brazil from 1995 to 2002. As an opponent of Brazil's military dictators, he lived in exile from 1964 to 1968. Upon his return home he was arrested, banned from teaching and had his political and civil rights suspended. Mr. Cardoso was elected to the Brazilian Senate from the state of São Paulo in 1986 and two years later helped to found the centrist Social Democratic Party. He served as foreign minister in 1992-1993. An inflation-fighting supporter of free-market reforms, he became economy minister in 1993 and was credited with turning the troubled Brazilian economy around. He was elected President in 1994, moving to reduce government involvement in the economy and to attract foreign investment to Brazil. Mr. Cardoso served two terms as Brazil's president, stepping down after the 2002 elections. In December 2002, the United Nations Development Programme bestowed on him its Mahbub ul Haq Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Development. In his book *Dependency and Development*, written in the 1970s, Mr. Cardoso was an early proponent of partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector.

Bagher Asadi, Islamic Republic of Iran. Mr. Asadi has represented his country in a number of key positions at the United Nations, including the chairmanship of the Group of 77 in New York in 2001. He obtained his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Tehran and later received a master's degree in economics from the University of Colorado (United States of America), with a concentration in economic development. He joined the Foreign Ministry in 1982 and was assigned to the Department of International Affairs. He served as chargé d'affaires at the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Office at Geneva from 1988 to 1990 and served as adviser to the Foreign Minister between 1992 and 1996. At the United Nations in New York, he was co-chairman of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests for the period from 1997 to 2000.

Manuel Castells, Spain. Dr. Castells is currently research professor of information society at the Open University of Catalonia (Barcelona); Wallis Annenberg Chair professor of communication technology and society at the University of Southern California (Los Angeles, United States of America); emeritus professor of city and regional planning and of sociology at the University of California (Berkeley); and a regular visiting professor at the Massachussets Institute of Technology (Cambridge, United States). He has served as adviser to several Governments and as a consultant to several United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. the International Labour Organizations, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the Secretariat. He has published 21 books, including the trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*. He studied law and economics at the Universities of Barcelona and Paris, and received his doctorates in sociology and the human sciences from the University of Paris Rene Descartes-Sorbonne.

Birgitta Dahl, Sweden. Ms. Dahl served as member of the Swedish Parliament for 33 years (1969-2002) and was its Speaker from 1994 to 2002. During her parliamentary service, Ms. Dahl was active in numerous committees, working on a range of issues such as education, social insurance, physical planning and local governments, energy and energy saving and on social aspects of housing. She has held government positions as Minister of Energy (1982-1986), Minister of Environment and Energy (1986-1990) and Minister of Environment (1990-1991). She has served the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development and has been a senior adviser to the Global Environment Facility since 1997. Ms. Dahl has a degree in history and political sciences from the University of Uppsala, with a specialization in African and South African affairs. She has published numerous articles and contributed to books on democracy and human rights, peace and international cooperation, equality between men and women, rights of children, education and science, as well as environment and sustainable development.

Peggy Dulany, United States of America. Ms. Dulany is founder and Chair of the Synergos Institute. Her career has included heading a Boston-area public high school programme for dropouts for six years; consulting with the United Nations and the Ford Foundation on health care and family planning; and consulting with the National Endowment for the Arts on non-profit management and planning. She was Senior Vice-President of the New York City Partnership for five years, where she headed the youth employment and education programmes. Ms. Dulany is an honour

graduate of Radcliffe College and holds a doctorate in education from Harvard University. She is also Chair of Peradventures, a business development company for Latin America and Southern Africa.

André Erdös, Hungary. Mr. Erdös is currently Ambassador of Hungary to France and was his country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 1997 until early 2002, and also from 1990 to 1994. He has served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary since 1965, including as Deputy State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1994, addressing matters relating to the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and disarmament. Mr. Erdös also served as Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1994 and as a member of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, including as Chairman in 1998. He was Vice-President of the Review and Extension Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995. Mr. Erdös was special assistant to Imre Hollai of Hungary, President of the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Juan Mayr, Colombia. Mr. Mayr is a crusading environmentalist and a self-taught photographer. Between 1993 and 1996, Mr. Mayr was elected Vice-President of the World Conservation Union. In August 1998, Colombian president Andres Pastrana Arango appointed him Minister of the Environment. In addition to his national activities, in February 1999 he was elected President of the Extraordinary Session of the Convention on Biological Diversity until January 2000. In recognition for his work, Mr. Mayr won the Dunning Award for the Conservation of Tropical Forests in Latin America in 1990. In 1998, Prince Bernardo of Holland gave him the Golden Ark Prize, and in 1999, the King of Spain honoured him with the Orden al Mérito Civil en el Grado de Caballero, a degree of knighthood.

Malini Mehra, India. Ms. Mehra is the founder and director of the Centre for Social Markets, an independent non-profit organization with offices in India and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, dedicated to making markets work for the "triple bottom line" — people, planet and profit. Her professional background includes work with Oxfam, Friends of the Earth, the United Nations and other multilateral agencies and philanthropies. Ms. Mehra is one of the authors of the United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report 2002* and served as an adviser on human rights for the 2000 report.

Kumi Naidoo, South Africa. Mr. Naidoo is Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer of Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation, an international alliance of more than 500 organizations and individuals from 100 countries dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world. Mr. Naidoo joined Civicus in September 1998. Previously he was the founding Executive Director of the South African National Non-Governmental Organization Coalition, the umbrella agency for the NGO community in South Africa. Mr. Naidoo has a doctorate of philosophy from Oxford University.

Mary Racelis, Philippines. Ms. Racelis is deeply involved in teaching and research activities focusing on urbanization, urban poverty, sociology and development issues. She has served in a managerial capacity in several international development agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation. She was formerly Regional Director of the UNICEF office for the East and Southern Africa region. Ms. Racelis has published extensively on issues pertaining to Filipino culture and social development, urbanization, poverty, housing

policy, informal settlers and people's participation, values, social structure, social change and social planning.

Prakash Ratilal, Mozambique. Mr. Ratilal was Governor of the Bank of Mozambique from 1981 to 1986. He was later appointed the Mozambican Government Emergency Coordinator for the department that coordinates donor and United Nations assistance linked to emergency response in Mozambique. He has a strong background in development policy and finance. Mr. Ratilal currently works in Maputo as Managing Director of ACE Consoltores — an independent consulting firm that provides technical advice to bilateral donors, the World Bank and the United Nations in the strategic planning and evaluation of their development programmes. Mr. Ratilal has published extensively on bilateral development programmes and poverty reduction.

Aminata Traoré, Mali. Ms. Traoré, former Minister of Culture and Tourism of Mali, is an author, community leader and manager of cultural events and enterprises with a doctorate in social psychology. As an international consultant, her work has focused on social development and the social cost of globalization, women's issues, environment and the role of culture as the basis for human reconstruction when access to essential goods is problematic. From 1988 to 1992, Ms. Traoré was the Regional Director for the PROWEVESS Programme (Promotion of the Role of Women in Water, Environmental and Sanitation Services), under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme. Ms. Traoré is a member of the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization.

Panel secretariat

John Clark (project director)
Zehra Aydin
Miguel Darcy de Oliveira
Tarcisio Costa
Roselaure Charles (administration)

Interns

Emilio Dauvin
Martha Wirtenberger
Harald Friedl

Annex II

Programme of work of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations and list of consultation meetings

Programme of work

The Panel held three meetings: June 2003 in New York, December 2003 in Geneva and March 2004 in New York. It received input from a range of activities including:

Broad consultations

Survey (June-December 2003). A brief survey was disseminated to members of civil society and the private sector, parliamentarians and others to gather views on experiences with the United Nations, including lessons learned, barriers to meaningful exchange or partnership and ideas for overcoming the barriers.

Regional and other consultation meetings (July 2003-January 2004). Three regional consultations were organized in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A subregional consultation was organized in Francophone Africa. One or more panel members took part in consultation meetings organized on the margins of existing regional and international meetings that involved a large number of civil society actors.

Targeted consultations

Interviews with individuals or organizations (July 2003-January 2004). Panel members and the Panel secretariat conducted in-depth interviews with individuals and organizations with particular expertise in United Nations–civil society relations. The findings were fed into the ongoing collection of ideas for building the proposals.

Small meetings with sector stakeholders (August 2003-January 2004). Meetings with small groups from specific sectors were organized for more in-depth exploration of ideas. The list of sectors included parliaments, local authorities, the private sector and foundations. Panel members took the lead in setting up these consultations, with assistance from networks and the Panel secretariat.

Multi-stakeholder workshop (February 2004). The workshop was organized to look at the issue of partnerships and their implications for United Nations–civil society relationships.

Commissioned papers

The Panel commissioned papers on the issue of partnerships and their implications for governance at the United Nations.

List of consultation meetings held

Meetings held in 2004

1-2 April: briefing at European Conference on Conflict Prevention (Dublin)

8 March: Save the Children Federation of the United States (New York)

25 and 26 February: consultation with Francophone African non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Bamako)

10-12 February: workshop on partnerships and United Nations–civil society relationships (New York)

9 February: consultation with religion-based NGOs (New York)

29 January: Non-Governmental Organization Committee of the Department of Public Information (New York)

27 January: consultation with speakers of parliaments (Geneva)

22 January: meetings with the Centre for the Study of Global Governance and the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics (London)

19 January: workshop and briefing at the World Social Forum (Mumbai, India)

18 January: International Alliance of Advocacy NGOs (Mumbai)

11 January: meeting with the Human Rights Caucus of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (New York)

Meetings held in 2003

17 December: briefing to the Economic and Social Council NGO Committee (New York)

16 and 17 December: consultation meeting with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization NGOs/NGO Liaison Committee (Paris)

15 December: consultation meeting with Geneva-based NGOs (Geneva); consultation meeting with Geneva-based United Nations civil society focal points (Geneva)

13 December: consultation meeting with NGOs (Berlin)

10 December: consultation of local authorities in the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities network (Geneva); briefing and consultation with the United Nations Children's Fund national committees (Geneva)

9 December: consultation meeting with trade union representatives (Geneva)

8 December: briefing and consultation with the World Civil Society Forum network (Geneva)

5 December: briefing with the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations General Assembly (Geneva); consultation workshop at the Commonwealth Civil Society Forum (Abuja)

2 December: consultation meeting with constituency representatives at the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Milan, Italy)

28 and 29 November: consultation meeting with the representatives of civil society attending the meetings of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization (Rome)

25 and 26 November: African regional consultation meeting (Johannesburg, South Africa)

17 November: consultation with United Kingdom-based NGOs, local authorities and parliamentarians (London)

13 November: Department of Public Information NGO workshop on communications (New York)

11 November: consultation meeting with leaders from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development network (Washington, D.C.)

6 November: meeting with International Peace Academy (New York)

5 November: consultation with foundation leaders (New York)

4 November: consultation meeting at the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives World Congress (Athens)

26 October: consultation with Iranian civil society representatives (Tehran)

22 and 23 October: Asian regional consultation meeting (Bangkok)

11 October: consultation meeting at the Assembly of the People's United Nations (Perugia, Italy)

10 October: consultation with Washington-based civil society organizations (Washington, D.C.)

8 October: consultation with human rights NGOs (Geneva)

23 September: consultation with civil society representatives (Edinburgh, United Kingdom)

18 September: briefing to High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System (Rome)

16 September: consultation with participants of the World Conservation Union World Parks Conference (Durban, South Africa)

14 September: briefing and consultations at the World Trade Organization meeting (Cancun, Mexico)

10 September: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung–organized consultation (New York); workshop with African NGO participants at the Department of Public Information NGO Conference

9 September: consultation with New York–based United Nations NGO/civil society focal points (New York); consultation with New York–based NGOs, including chairs of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations committees and the Department of Public Information NGO conference executive committee members (New York)

8 and 9 September: briefing and consultation at the International Civil Society Forum (Ulaanbaatar)

8 September: Department of Public Information NGO Conference (plenary presentation by Chairman; workshop discussion) (New York)

7 September: briefing at the annual meeting of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (New York)

5 September: consultation meeting with Executive Committee of the International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People (New York)

2 September: Latin American Regional Consultation Meeting (Rio de Janeiro)

26 August: national consultation on the case of Colombia (Santa Fé de Bogota)

18 August: consultation and briefing at the Southern African Development Community Civil Society Forum (Dar es Salaam)

12 August: meeting with the parliamentarians for global action secretariat (New York)

22 July: international seminar on global governance, Friederich Ebert Stiftung (New York)

15 July: meeting with the International Federation of Settlement and Neighbourhood Centres (New York)

10 July: consultation and briefing at the Symi Symposium (Cos Island, Greece)

9 July: meeting with the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights (New York)

8 July: consultation with the Scandinavian United Nations Association delegation (New York)

27 June: workshop at United Nations Association of the United States of America National Forum (Washington, D.C.)

18 June: consultation with the United Nations Interdepartmental Working Group on NGOs (New York)

13 and 14 June: consultation with the Forum for Civic Diplomacy Network (Lima)

4 June: Non-Governmental Liaison Service Conference: Civil Society Conference on Global Change (Geneva)

13 May: briefing with the Economic and Social Council NGO Committee (New York)

8 May: Department of Public Information NGO briefing (New York)

In addition, from May 2003 to April 2004 there were numerous meetings with representatives of Member States, including a series of meetings between the Chairman and small groups of permanent representatives. The Chairman and other members of the Panel also met with government representatives in capitals, and the Panel has had the chance to engage with the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee of the Economic and Social Council on three occasions and also to have bilateral meetings with many staff in Member State delegations to the United Nations.

Annex III

Acknowledgements and list of donors

Acknowledgements

The Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations cannot overstate the thanks it owes to all those who so generously gave of their time and ideas, nor overestimate the value it puts on this consultative process. Most of the Panel's proposals have been unashamedly mined from it, and the rich seams it found therein made the Panel's work both pleasurable and stimulating. The following partners helped to organize or provided meeting space for the Panel's consultation meetings:

- Assembly of People's United Nations
- Baha'i International Community
- Centre for Social Markets
- Centre Amadou Hampâté
- CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
- Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations
- Ecologic–Institute for International and European Environmental Policy
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- Forum of Citizen Diplomacy
- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- Heinrich Böll Foundation
- International Civil Society Forum
- International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives
- International Council on Social Welfare
- International Partners Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- International Society for Human Rights
- IUCN–World Conservation Union
- One World Trust
- Southern African Development Community
- Synergos Institute
- Tanzanian Council for Social Development
- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

- World Business Council for Sustainable Development
- World Civil Society Forum
- World Social Forum

The Panel also wishes to recognize the welcome and valuable support of and the wealth of suggestions offered by officials within the United Nations, the specialized agencies, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service and many delegations of Member States. In particular, the unceasing support of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the staff of their offices has helped make the Panel's task possible and has ensured its relevance.

List of donors and other funding sources

The Panel's work, and particularly its widespread consultation process, was made possible by generous grants from a range of bilateral donors and foundations. Among others, financial support was offered by:

- The Government of Canada
- The Government of Finland
- The Government of Norway
- The Government of South Africa
- The Government of Sweden
- The Government of UK (DFID)
- The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- The Ford Foundation
- The Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- The Rockefeller Foundation
- The United Nations Foundation