

10 August 2022

Submission of Democracy Without Borders to the public consultation of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism

Three Proposals

On behalf of the international civil society campaign for inclusive global governance, “We The Peoples”, which we co-convene with CIVICUS and Democracy International, we resubmit the attached letter addressed to the Board dated 12 April 2022 calling on the Board to consider and include in its final report the campaign’s three proposals:

- (1) the instrument of a **UN World Citizens’ Initiative**,
- (2) a **UN Parliamentary Assembly** and
- (3) the office of a **High-Level UN Civil Society Envoy**.

Endorsements

The campaign and the proposals have been endorsed by **over 200 civil society** alliances, organizations, groups, think tanks and networks from across the world. A full list is available at wethepeoples.org. The list includes ActionAid, Avaaz, CIVICUS, Coalition for the UN We Need, Democracy International, Forus, Global Challenges Foundation, Greenpeace, Open Society Foundations, The Nature Conservancy, Together 2030, and Together First, to name only a few. In addition, **over 130 Members of Parliament** have endorsed the campaign, too. Their names are also published at wethepeoples.org. We are presenting the proposals to the Board on behalf of these groups and elected representatives. Each of the proposals separately enjoys additional support by single-issues campaigns and coalitions.

Board questions

The Board is requesting submissions to address: (1) What are the areas of global concern where governance improvements are most needed? (2) What governance improvements could be achieved? and (3) How could the international community seek more equity, fairness, and effectiveness in multilateral decision-making?

Global concerns such as the current and potential future pandemics, the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, violent conflict, forced displacement or economic inequality, to provide just examples, are **interconnected**. While in each case there are specific multilateral frameworks for addressing them, the effectiveness of separate and siloed approaches is limited.

The governance improvements proposed here relate to the **overarching level of multilateral cooperation** represented by the core UN. They have a potential impact on all issue-specific programs, deliberations and frameworks in a UN setting. The level of accountability, representation, inclusiveness and accessibility of the UN influences the organization's actual and perceived legitimacy which in turn impacts the trust it receives and its overall effectiveness. Reducing the UN's **trust deficit** identified by the UN Secretary-General is one of the global concerns that needs to be addressed if the UN's legitimacy and thus its effectiveness is to be improved.

The UN Secretary-General's report 'Our Common Agenda' is not offering governance improvements that can adequately address this field in our view. Ad-hoc consultations with the public and particular stakeholders, in particular, alone are not sufficient. What is needed are formal, predictable, transparent and sustainable procedures which can be achieved by **establishing adequate institutions** such as those proposed.

The UN's own **UN75 report** notes that creating a UN Parliamentary Assembly and a UN World Citizens' Initiative were among the proposals most frequently mentioned in the UN75 consultations in the field of organizational reforms (p. 65f.). Further, both were among the three highest ranking proposals in terms of votes in the digital follow-up consultation in 2021 commissioned by the UN Secretary-General and carried out by Igarapé Institute.

As substantial support in the public and civil society already exists, we believe that with the endorsement of HLAB the three proposals can receive the attention they deserve at the UN and among Member States and be considered at the Summit of the Future. While the proposals reinforce each other and can be seen as a coherent package of institutional change that makes the UN more inclusive from different angles – citizens, civil society, and elected representatives – their assessment and implementation can be pursued separately. The Summit should be a launchpad for doing so. The proposal most easily achievable appears to be the High-Level UN Civil Society Envoy followed by the UN World Citizens Initiative and then a UN Parliamentary Assembly. It needs to be highlighted that necessary decisions can be taken by the General Assembly, no UN Charter amendments are required, and in the case of the envoy, it is being argued that this might even be a decision in the purview of the UN Secretary-General.

Finally, the proposed new bodies **directly represent institutional ways** for how the international community can seek more equity, fairness, and effectiveness in multilateral decision-making.

We have picked these three proposals from a range of options because we believe, if implemented, they have strong transformational potential and can help build momentum and support for further changes that can help make multilateralism more effective and inclusive.

More on the proposals

(1) A **UN World Citizens' Initiative**, or UNWCI, is an instrument that can allow citizens to put forward their own proposed resolutions for deliberation and decision-making of the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly. The UNWCI is a formal framework for this procedure. The proposal is based on the example of the existing European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). The functioning of an individual initiative under a UNWCI procedure would follow three steps: (1) Registration, (2) collection of support and (3) submission and response. Only such initiatives

would be officially registered that are endorsed by a representative global group of citizens. If a registered proposal receives a given threshold of global support of individual citizens within a given time, it would then be considered by the UN. Legally, the instrument can be set up by the UN General Assembly based on Article 22 of the UN Charter.

Recommended study: Organ, James, and Ben Murphy. 2019. A Voice for Global Citizens: A UN World Citizens' Initiative. Democracy Without Borders, Democracy International, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. https://www.worldcitizensinitiative.org/files/unwci_study.pdf.

(2) A **UN Parliamentary Assembly**, or UNPA, serves as a formal standing body that brings together representatives of political groups in national parliaments of UN member states, members directly elected for this purpose, if applicable, as well as members of regional parliaments in order to deliberate on issues of global concern and make recommendations. The UNPA can be vested with parliamentary oversight functions. Work will be done primarily in portfolio committees in addition to less frequent plenary meetings and should be based on transnational political groups formed by its members. A UNPA draws on the examples of numerous existing international parliamentary institutions across the world's regions, for instance the European Parliament, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly or the Pan-African Parliament. Legally, the body can be set up by the UN General Assembly based on Article 22 of the UN Charter. A UNPA is a long-standing proposal with its own a track record of support, including from the late Boutros Boutros-Ghali, which is mentioned in the recommended study.

Recommended study: Brauer, Maja, and Andreas Bummel. 2020. A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly: A Policy Review of Democracy Without Borders. Berlin: Democracy Without Borders. https://www.democracywithoutborders.org/files/DWB_UNPA_Policy_Review.pdf.

(3) A **High-Level UN Civil Society Envoy**, or Envoy, is an office set up within the UN Secretariat headed by an appointed senior staff position either at Under Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General level to be designated as a civil society focal point for the UN. The purpose of setting up the Envoy is to increase the UN's limited capacity to engage with civil society and to facilitate UN-civil society interaction. The Envoy will conduct regular consultations and proactively seek out the views of particular stakeholders including through field visits. At a systemic level, the Envoy will continuously assess the processes for civil society engagement across the UN system and identify best practices, inconsistencies and deficiencies with a view of simplifying them, implementing improvements and raising standards. The 'Unmute Civil Society' coalition, convened by Costa Rica and Denmark together with civil society groups, has been pushing for the proposal and includes over 60 Member States.

Recommended paper: Together First. 2020. "The Case for a UN Civil Society Champion." <https://together1st.org/storage/Cde7cqLsDdv3WWRWhIAJCyN23UI6ikZyg3NEaYVL.pdf>.

Annex

- Letter addressed to the Board dated 12 April 2022
- Civil society statement 'We The Peoples – for inclusive global governance', April 2021
- Parliamentary statement for inclusive global governance, January 2022

To the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism
Co-Chairs Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Stefan Löfven

12 April 2022

Dear Ms Sirleaf and Mr Löfven,
Dear Distinguished Advisory Board Members,

Re: Proposals for more inclusive global governance

We congratulate you on your appointment to the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism and wish you much success in your deliberations on potential recommendations for more effective multilateral arrangements.

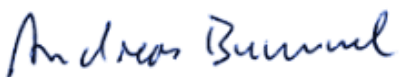
We are writing as co-convenors of the international civil society statement for inclusive global governance which is endorsed by 209 groups and 132 Members of Parliament from across the world. We kindly request you to consider endorsing the three proposals put forward by this campaign going by the name of "We The Peoples": the creation of (1) the instrument of a **UN World Citizens' Initiative**, (2) a **UN Parliamentary Assembly** and (3) the office of a high-level **UN Civil Society Envoy**. Please find attached the civil society statement as well as a complementary parliamentary statement with lists of endorsements.

We are convinced that the legitimacy of multilateral arrangements needs to be improved significantly for them to become more effective. Our three proposals represent institutional ways to achieve this.

Please note that the parliamentary statement suggests that the proposed 2023 Summit of the Future shall "enact these global governance innovations to help give humanity a better chance to meet the challenges of the century ahead".

We are happy to discuss these ideas at your convenience.

Yours sincerely



Andreas Bummel
Democracy Without Borders,
Executive Director



Mandeep Tiwana
CIVICUS, Chief Programmes
Officer & Head of New York Office



Bruno Kaufmann
Democracy International,
Board Member



International civil society statement

We the Peoples – for inclusive global governance

The biggest challenges facing humanity such as pandemics, the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, violent conflict, forced displacement, discrimination and inequality are global and cross-cutting in nature. With each passing day, they become more pressing. International collaboration and global governance need to improve significantly and become more accountable to those affected most: the world's citizens.

On the occasion of the UN's 75th anniversary, heads of state and government committed to making global governance more inclusive. The UN Secretary-General promised to promote a new model based on full, inclusive and equal participation in global institutions. We agree. It is time to give people a stronger voice in global affairs and at the UN.

We call on the UN and member states to implement three specific institutional changes to strengthen the inclusive and democratic character of the UN:

- 1** The creation of the instrument of a **World Citizens' Initiative** which enables people to put forward proposals on key issues of global concern for discussion and further action at the highest political level. Any proposal that reaches a certain threshold of popular support should be put onto the agenda of the UN General Assembly or Security Council.
- 2** The creation of a **UN Parliamentary Assembly** which allows for the inclusion of elected representatives in the agenda-setting and decision-making of the UN. The assembly will act as a representative body and watchdog connecting the people with the UN and reflecting a broad diversity of global viewpoints.
- 3** Setting up the office of a **UN Civil Society Envoy** to enable greater participation, spur inclusive convenings and drive the UN's outreach to the public and civil society organisations. This envoy should champion the implementation of a broader strategy for opening up the UN to people's participation and civil society voices.

These new tools will help the UN and member states to tackle global challenges more effectively. They will enhance the legitimacy of global governance and facilitate its transformational potential.

Tangible changes in the UN's functioning are urgently needed to realize the promise of the Preamble of the UN Charter which begins with the words, "We the Peoples of the United Nations".

Launched on 23 April 2021

wethepeoples.org



#WeThePeoples

Parliamentary statement for inclusive global governance

We, the undersigned members of parliament from around the world, welcome the UN Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda" that, among other things, highlights the need for greater participation and inclusion of people, civil society, parliamentarians and other stakeholders in the work of the UN. We believe, however, that ad hoc consultations and existing mechanisms are not sufficient to satisfy this need. Moreover, we are convinced that the UN is overdue to implement institutional changes that strengthen its democratic and participatory character.

For this reason, we endorse the civil society statement for inclusive global governance and join the call on the UN and governments of Member States to advance three specific proposals, the creation of (1) the mechanism of a UN World Citizens' Initiative, which enables people to put forward proposals on key issues of global concern; (2) a UN Parliamentary Assembly, which provides for the inclusion of elected representatives; and (3) a high-level UN Civil Society Envoy, to enable greater participation of civil society representatives.

We encourage Member States to establish a "Group of Friends for Inclusive Global Governance" that works to advance these proposals in collaboration with parliamentarians, civil society and experts.

Our planet and the 7.8 billion people who live upon it face grave challenges. We urgently require less talk and more decisive action. We call for the 2023 "Summit of the Future" proposed by the UN Secretary-General to enact these global governance innovations to help give humanity a better chance to meet the challenges of the century ahead. We call for an inclusive and transparent multi-stakeholder process in preparation of the Summit that deliberates on these and other relevant proposals.

*The statement was published on 26 January 2022.
Please endorse online at wethepeoples.org/mpstatement/*

The "We The Peoples" campaign for inclusive global governance was jointly initiated by CIVICUS, Democracy Without Borders and Democracy International and is supported by 200 groups, networks and organizations from across the world.