

## Part II: Thematic Summary of Conference Tracks

### Track 1: Civil Society Engagement: Changing Territorial Priorities?

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The process of building global democracy has to relate to the shifting of territorial boundaries and decision-making processes at all levels (local, national, and global). Regional integration (through trade and political agreements) is significantly transforming traditional notions of state sovereignty and the role of governments, as well as multilateral and bilateral relations, thus having an overall affect on democracy's development from the local to the global levels.

In light of these changes, this track's over 70 participants representing various sectors and countries looked at how civil society can engage with regional blocks such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), and Mercosur, and especially in regions where the democratic deficit is high, to influence decision-making processes at all levels and make them more democratic. The coordinator of Track 1 was **Ziad Abdel Samad**, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Lebanon

The emergence of regional blocks may herald more space for democratic participation and a new role for civil society. Through regional blocks, civil society can potentially gain greater influence with actors at the regional and global levels, such as the UN, transnational corporations, and other international institutions. At the same time, regional integration may lead to a changing role for governments and affect democratic development in the national context. The role of regional blocks in bilateral and multilateral negotiations has yet to unfold.

The challenge for civil society amidst changes brought on by the pressures of modern globalization will be to contend with the democratic deficits in some regions, and to work to ensure a more democratic and participatory process globally, said Abdel Samad.

Civil society will need to think more consciously about the impact of global processes, discourse, and institutions at the local level, according to one participant. Advancing economic and social justice in the world today is complicated by the presence of five levels of government: local, state, national, regional, and global.

CSOs are trying to affect policy formed by regional inter-governmental organizations. Whether at the global or regional level, intergovernmental organizations today tend to have four shortcomings in the area of civil society:

- **Compliance deficit:** There are many good policies concerning human rights, gender equality, and other issues, but no enforcement mechanism.

- **Coherence deficit:** Various aspects of policy making within the regional entities tend to be dispersed and uncoordinated.
- **Democratic deficit:** Citizens do not have a sense that their voices are being heard by those representing their countries.
- **Accountability deficit:** The lack of accountability undermines the legitimacy of intergovernmental organizations.

## Diverse Experiences

### Euro-Med Partnership

The Euro-Med Non-Governmental Platform was formed 10 years ago as a partnership between EU countries and neighbours south of the Mediterranean, explained **Mourad Allal**, Paris coordinator for Euro-Med. For the first time, the EU presented a coherent regional integration project to its southern partners that encompassed civil society, human rights, and democracy aims. However, the project is overall an economic partnership, designed to create a free-trade zone between the EU and neighbouring Mediterranean countries.

Euro-Med brings together networks of CSOs concerned with the environment, sustainable development, gender equality, migrants, and human rights. Together, they have gained authority within governmental, civil society, and institutional circles, and have struck a chord with the public.

### Mercosur

Regional integration can strengthen the bargaining capacity of southern countries vis-à-vis more powerful countries, and lead to more balanced South-South trade, explained **Norma Sanchis** of the Latin American Gender and Trade Network in Argentina. She described how the integration of social movements is vital for the growth of effective and sustainable national and regional development programs, and for negotiating relations that are more equitable among regional partners. However, in many cases, members of regional blocks face contradictory initiatives: internal economic rivalries, political or economic asymmetries, and other tensions can weaken their potential to challenge the liberalized capitalist economic system.

The Mercosur regional integration process was initiated in 1991 by Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Chile, Bolivia, and Peru are now associated with the initiative. Although Mercosur has great potential to strengthen its negotiating power with other blocks, it is limited in practice because member states are not always capable of developing consensual policies. Furthermore, Mercosur is hampered by the scarce participation of broad sectors of civil society in negotiations. Decision making remains

centralized among governmental negotiators and corporate interests through the Economic and Social Consultative Forum.

Sanchis described how Mercosur showed its capacity to limit the expansion of Free Trade Area of the Americas negotiations and helped halt the World Trade Organization (WTO) process in Cancun, demonstrating that multilateral strategies are more viable than bilateral negotiations, especially when regional blocks are involved.

### **African Union**

After decades of disenchantment with the Organization of African Unity, African civil society now prioritizes engagement with the AU because of the institution's successful interventions in recent crises, explained **Lynn Muthoni Wanyeki**, director of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET).

In February 2005, the death of the Togo President Eyadema ignited hopes for democratization among the Togolese and other Africans. However, the military installed Eyadema's son as successor, along with constitutional amendments to legitimize the illegal succession. When the Togolese took to the streets in protest, civil rights were suspended. "In the face of dithering by the international community, the African Union response was immediate and inflexible, insisting that the original Togo Constitution must be respected," Wanyeki said. Civil rights were restored, the constitutional amendments reversed, and elections were called. The AU response reflected its new determination to act in the interests of African peoples, she underlined.

In the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, the AU has provided leadership by assuming responsibility for mediation between the Sudan government and rebel factions, and deploying peacekeepers to maintain the ceasefire and prevent widespread human rights violations, particularly those targeting women.

In 2002, the AU Summit established the Peace and Security Council, which recognized the need to engage civil society and women's organizations in efforts to promote peace, security, and stability in Africa. The Summit also endorsed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as its program of action.

### **New Avenues for Civil Society Within the Framework of Regional Blocks**

Over the course of the conference, two overarching objectives (highlighted below) emerged from this track:

**To encourage and promote regional integration among civil society organizations, in order to enhance their role and influence in regional blocks and treaties.**

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Beyond abstract goals like coalition building and networking, there is a need to develop substantive strategies, tools, and mechanisms to optimize civil society engagement in global governance. For example, leading up to the next summit of global civil society organizations, CSOs could meet at the regional level to assess information and communications technology (ICT) capabilities; at the summit, there could be a parallel forum for developing a framework for information sharing.

**To create alternative, community-based knowledge, drawing from and responding to community needs.**

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The creation of regional clearinghouses would improve discourse among regional coalitions. Many processes, networks, campaigns, and initiatives already exist. The Global Campaign Against Poverty is a good example of how mobilization can take place using existing global networks. At the same time, information and communications technologies have enabled decentralized campaigns that focus on local circumstances.

## **Regional Integration Strategies**

Coalitions for global democracy, security, and peace exist at different levels, ranging from the World Civil Society Conference (WOCSOC) to state structures such as the permanent forum for civil society, security, and peace in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. They also exist for different purposes. For example, ICTs (information and communications technologies) are transforming election systems and electoral processes, and work is being done to define democratic regional norms among different countries.

Wanyeki described how the African Union has helped strengthen the African group in the UN. African countries are now much more coordinated, negotiating and taking decisions collectively, including within G77 as the Africa Group. A collective position has also been taken with respect to the G8, the WTO, and a range of Economic Partnership Agreements currently being put in place in Africa. State ambassadors have demonstrated a willingness to submit to the AU jurisdiction in a manner that they weren't prepared to do with the Economic Commission of Africa.

It was suggested, however, that it is difficult to compare region blocks such as the AU, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Mercosur. Of the 23 regional blocks in existence, only two (NAFTA and the EU) work in an integrative manner, while the other regional blocks fail to truly foster integration. For civil society, the challenge is to tackle the proliferation of bilateral negotiations and work effectively at both the regional and global levels.

One participant explained how, with the growing influence of private corporations under neo-liberal policies, profit and non-profit entities occupy an increasing share of public space. As such, governance structures for global democracy must encompass business associations and cartels, large industrial lobbies, and transnational corporations, as well as NGOs, CSOs, and grassroots movements.

- **Foster sustained dialogue among civil society and social movement networks.**  
There is a disconnect between community and citizen movements for global justice, and global civil society rhetoric, according to one participant. At the same time, he cautioned, NGOs and CSOs must be careful not to be co-opted into the public relations strategies of global institutions seeking legitimacy by engaging in dialogue with select NGOs.

Civil society and social movement networks encourage citizen integration into global processes, such as the creation of free trade areas.

- **Democratize funding processes.**  
Funding mechanisms need to be better adapted to meet local needs. Civil society and parliamentarians should monitor aid along with regional integration, which should not be left to government alone.
- **Engage in ongoing dialogue across all levels.**  
If civil society organizations are to be actors with true weight, they must be able to make the linkage to the national and global levels. Mourad Allal called upon them to look beyond the issues specific to their region in order to find a common thread at the global level. Regional coalitions play a key role in facilitating dialogue and keeping pressure on governments at the national and global levels. Civil society regional coalitions can increase their effectiveness by working first at the regional level with NGOs and governments, then returning to the national level for discussion of issues and propositions, then once again engaging governments and institutions on the regional and global levels—this keeps the dialogue moving.
- **Engage local governments.**  
There is clearly a new role for local governments, arising from decentralization in many countries. In some countries, local governments now have direct access to funding agencies, a revolutionary development. What strategic alliances can be made between local governments and civil society?
- **Identify parliamentary areas of regional integration.**  
It would be useful to identify areas in which parliaments are regionalizing and those coalitions that offer the most opportunity to advance the global democracy agenda. (For example, the European Council may offer more opportunities for change than the NATO parliamentary assembly may.) It would also be helpful to develop civil society networks parallel to parliamentary initiatives.

As parliamentary assemblies evolve, they will begin to gain more power. Civil society must not only lobby for change through parliamentarians and existing regional structures, but should also address the knowledge gaps in policy development.

- **Develop a consultative process with various national stakeholders.**  
Civil society needs to work with other stakeholders to create a vision to address democratic governance issues.
- **Strengthen existing regional, sub-regional, and sectoral networks.**  
These networks need capacity-building programs at the institutional, organizational, and operational levels.
- **Foster civil society and democratic participation at the sub-regional level.**  
The regional arena offers different opportunities depending on the part of the world, historical background, and type of governance in place. Sometimes, the sub-regional level is an important arena where representative democracy and participatory democracy come together.
- **Reconcile local and international approaches to security and crime.**  
Prohibitive approaches to crime at the international level can differ from local approaches, which tend to favour prevention, treatment, and cure. There is a need to reconcile local approaches, which are based on citizen involvement, with international approaches, which are based on security and politics.

One participant pointed to human trafficking, weapons and arms trafficking, the illicit drug trade, and environmental degradation as criminal activities facing communities around the world that call for collaboration at all levels. He described the “war on drugs” as an extreme approach that rests on prohibition and creates corruption. He explained how the 1920s-style prohibition led to an increase in the availability and purity of illicit drugs, a decrease in prices, and the resulting corruption of the police forces, justice system, and elected officials. In contrast, the City of Vancouver, Canada, adopted a “harm reduction” approach.

## **Knowledge-Sharing Strategies**

With the process of democracy and governance increasingly being negotiated by actors beyond institutional forms of democracy, knowledge surrounding core issues is one of the biggest challenges of civil society. Unless the knowledge and communication technology gap is bridged, the language of democratic governance will increasingly be the language of law and economics.

- **Establish a regional clearinghouse of information.**  
Knowledge related to democratic governance and global organizations, and impact studies needs to be made more accessible. The clearinghouse should be institutionalized at one of the regional networks.
- **Develop awareness-building programs.**  
Greater education is needed at the national, regional, and international levels. Fora would allow stakeholders to follow the implementation of the recommendations of the various conferences.
- **Train a pool of global advocates**  
Advocates and lobbyists are needed at national, regional, and global levels.
- **Develop an effective media strategy.**  
This is key to inform the agenda of global organizations. The mainstream media currently does not tend to report on alternatives to international institutions.
- **Increase public awareness and education.**  
Creative campaigns such as the upcoming Live 8 concerts in July 2005 capture public attention and increase the sense of solidarity across continents. These free concerts, to be broadcast around the world, will carry the message for citizens to push their governments to act on issues of trade justice, debt relief, and development aid. With 2 billion viewers expected, the concerts will be an effective mobilizing tool and means of communicating alternative information on trade justice and aid.
- **Build coalitions.**  
Capacity building among community-based networks is critical: building coalitions with likeminded organizations (such as women's, environmental, and human rights networks) helps strengthen organizations.
- **Identify best practices.**  
It would be useful to comment on the different policies of various international institutions. Campaigning is needed at the local, national, and international levels: tools include fact sheets, pamphlets and brochures, and position papers.
- **Use champions.**  
Civil society will need to look among itself for champions to address these issues. For example, Wangari Maathai was elected first president of the African Union ECOSOC because civil society leaders believed she would be an effective person to mobilize resources for their case. Other champions who have access to powerful political corridors include Kumi Naidoo and Rajesh Tandon. It is important to use those who already command respect as ambassadors as advocates.

- **Develop an advocacy model.**  
The model aims to strengthen the linkages between the CSOs, social movements, and local communities.

## **Other Strategies**

- **Secure financial resources.**  
Financial resources will be critical to moving forward the global democracy agenda.
- **Initiate a civil society review panel on official development assistance.**  
The review panel would liaise with other stakeholders such as governments and international institutions.
- **Initiate a compliance committee.**  
A compliance committee involving both governments and NGOs would have the authority to act if it is deemed that rules are not being followed.
- **Create dialogue between civil society and international institutions.**  
Governments implement policies that impact on the people, but it is important that institutions such as the African Union and UN institutions also interact with civil society.
- **Hold public consultations.**  
Should the public be involved in urban planning and development? How are public consultations financed? What is the real role of consultations and their influence on political forces? How can autonomous consultation systems be implemented? Mourad Allal of Euro-Med explained that regional formations are inter-state organizations, are not transparent, and do not involve public consultation.
- **Develop people's protocols**  
One participant suggested that people's movements provide a counterbalance to the power of corporate lobbies and the multilateral triad of the WTO, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. In places such as the Philippines, lobbying processes are underway for protecting interests such as agricultural sustainability and workers' rights through the development of people's protocols rather than confronting authorities about modifying laws.
- **Create a community endowment fund.**  
A self-financing endowment fund would support global democracy advocacy and initiatives by CSOs. There is a need to sensitize local private sectors, which particularly in the African context, would be the main source of funding for civil society projects.

- **Involve youth groups.**  
Youth groups represent untapped potential that needs to be integrated into the global civil society movement. For example, regional integration in Eastern Europe is taking place at the governmental level and among youth organizations that coordinate cross-border seminars, training, and leadership sessions.
- **Democratize internally.**  
People perceive NGOs and civil society as dominated by elites.
- **Hold a global vote.**  
A field test is needed to prove that capabilities for a global vote exist. Regional parliaments are viable, but a global vote would give people of the world a say in how the world is run.

### Key Concerns

Market economy importation or development does not necessarily guarantee the importation of civil society or democratic activity; the presence of markets does not automatically enhance democracy.

The aim of regionalism has been to counterbalance the negative effects of globalization. Some regional integration is principally economic, but there are coalitions whose focus is social, political, or institutional. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for example, is premised on regional co-operation along a broad range of economic, political, cultural, and social concerns. Some key concerns related to regional strategies for global democracy include the following:

- How can regionalism complement global governance? What is the link?
- How does one determine the appropriate strength of regional blocks for negotiation purposes?
- How do we strengthen the south–south co-operation processes through the participation of civil society?
- How do we assess the convergence potential of civil society goals with southern governmental goals and policies?
- How can regional processes converge toward a world parliament?

Some participants at G05 saw the need to proceed with caution. Existing democratic frameworks have failed to include accountability or compliance mechanisms and failed to deliver on the promise. “Before we try to create something on a global scale, can we create it on the ground?” a participant asked. **Ezra Limiri Mbogori**, the facilitator for

Track 1's report to plenary, acknowledged that there is a need to ensure that everybody is on a reasonable footing, with basic access to food and water, health, education, and democratic institutions.

One participant wondered whether the promotion of good governance also fosters compliance with human rights, social justice, and environmental protection. He pointed out that there are different outcomes depending on how one defines good governance. Export-oriented, resource-intensive economic development often tends to contribute to violations of human rights and environmental degradation, working against good governance, he said.

Discussion also focused on other issues and concerns:

- **Proliferation of African plans**  
From the G8 African Initiative, now called the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Africa Commission and its report released in March 2005, and UK Chancellor Gordon Brown's lesser-known proposal to intensify debt relief, plans for Africa abound. Are these rival plans or do they complement each other? Where does it leave civil society engagement internationally if they fail?
- **Official Development Assistance (ODA) for cities**  
In some cases, local governments are becoming attractive for ODA investment or loans from multilateral lending institutions; should civil society work to strengthen this position of local governments? While such loans can be a way to address urgent situations, caution was advised, as cities could find themselves in the same debt situations as countries.
- **French rejection of EU Constitution**  
The referendum on the EU Constitution in France was described as a "No" to the elite for producing a text without public consultation.
- **Conflicts in Africa**  
The conflicts in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have roused African civil society, who must continue to monitor the conflicts and try to alleviate these tensions. A cynical perspective is that the African Union has taken increasing responsibility for peacekeeping in Darfur because after Rwanda and Somalia, the international community is simply not interested in intervening beyond providing logistical support.
- **Diversity of regions**  
Given the region-specific issues and diversity of each region, what is the strategic role for regional blocks in terms of linking to the national and global level?

- **Bilateral and multilateral negotiations**

The more integration is social and political—not just economic—the more it challenges the tradition of establishing relationships that are strictly bilateral and allows social movements and CSOs to penetrate the arena.

Mbogori suggested that many of the strategies are well within the capacities of CSOs to pursue—structures are already in place that just require a little cultivation to bring about the emergence of regional clearinghouses. It is essential to cross-pollinate and build upon the strengths of existing movements and harness the collective influence that comes with regional integration. “I think these are strategies that are all well within our abilities despite the resource challenges that we will continue to grapple with,” he said.

## **Track 2: International Treaties/International Law: A Hierarchy of Values?**

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Building global democracy cannot be achieved when some treaties, specifically in the area of trade and finance, are enforced while others, related to human rights, labour rights, gender equity, social development, environmental protection, and peace, are not enforced. The accountability of global governance bodies, such as the WTO, must also be re-evaluated so that accompanying organizations can be established to regulate their activities and make sure they answer to all their stakeholders’ needs.

Track 2’s discussions between participants and the invited legal experts and civil society practitioners focused on strategies that would bring forth the establishment of a new, more democratic hierarchy of international laws. This new hierarchy would give precedence and legitimacy to UN rule over that of international economic institutions.

Participants called for priority for human rights and social development over the regulations of international institutions. The coordinator for Track 2 was **Kristin Dawkins**, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Blue Mountain Global Governance Network, USA.

### **Accountability**

There is a rampant lack of accountability at various levels, whereby policies are implemented without disclosure of how they came to be. Accountability is intimately tied to coherence; where policies are not coherent, accountability diminishes.

Participants discussed the example of the World Bank. It dictates that the institution should not interfere in non-economic affairs of nation-states, yet it does so profoundly. How can the institution act with such impunity and no accountability? Participants called

for an impartial organization (a high court perhaps) that would evaluate the actions of the World Bank. Further, the World Bank lends itself money, but remains unaccountable. The bank behaves like a commercial institution but is not subject to audits.

Participants suggested potential strategies:

- Compile a compendium of international financial institution (IFI) clauses that establish jurisdiction or hierarchy of social importance to the UN charters;
- Apply norms to all actors, not just states;
- Encourage UN-oriented outcomes and use review mechanisms to ensure that existing agreements are met;
- Ensure accountability of international bodies that enforce treaties;
- Make the public more aware about how IFIs use their power (e.g., they cushion many actors and activities but not the poor);
- Look at violations of fiduciary responsibility, as there could be challenges in the context of corruption;
- Put pressure on multinational corporations (for example, Phillip Morris and its subsidiaries) in order to accomplish greater goals.

## **Fundamental Conflicts**

Conflicts between humanitarian and commercial jurisdictions arise frequently and the important question is what standards dictate the hierarchy. Article 103 in the UN Charter should apply in such conflicts and elevate human rights above others.

Participants wondered whether there could be another way to give priority to human rights—would the *jus cogen* prove useful here? Customarily it includes the right to self-determination, which is generally unchallenged. But should fundamental rights protected by human rights treaties be included as well? In the restricted interpretation of the UN, it seems not.

Participants found it useful to distinguish among conflicts. There are, for example, special conflicts of interest (e.g., trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights) and broader ones where the effect is spread across society. Conflicts can also occur between individual and collective interests, and global and national interests.

Fundamental conflicts also lie in the power exerted by international institutions and powerful countries. The WTO, for instance, has completely changed the global trade system by introducing economic sanctions against grievous countries. The United States often uses this procedure to target developing countries. Furthermore, the United States increasingly promotes bilateral treaties. The phrase “this agreement does not take precedence over trade law” is becoming more and more common in environmental treaties, as is trade language.

Participants suggested potential strategies:

- Address the fundamental conflict between WTO-implemented user fees and human rights;
- Constrain the role of the UN Security Council, which is taking on the law-making role of the world (this is in conflict with its original mandate);
- Identify current key conflicts between economic and human rights provisions.

## **Compliance, Enforcement, and Legal Challenges**

Currently, the mechanisms of enforcement available for human rights and environmental infractions are weaker than those for investment and trade protection. These clearly need to be strengthened. Campaigns resulting from the most glaring contradictions could lend themselves to litigation.

Compliance is a problem. If a powerful state is found to be guilty, it can ignore its infractions. One participant suggested strengthening the mechanisms of compliance through a specific declaration by the UN that defines the responsibility of all stakeholders based on conventions that define rights.

In Canada, there is a body of comprehensive and indivisible normative law, but it is largely unapplied. One participant pointed out that, “we need to be more aggressive when human rights provisions are being violated.”

Judicial systems need to be strengthened within countries. Currently, there are judicial bodies (e.g., the Caribbean Court) designed to interpret WTO regulations. In a similar vein, the WTO provides funds to train people in interpreting its laws and how to apply them. Who is being trained in civil society?

Participants wondered which institutions could be the basis for starting legal challenges to the World Bank and the IMF. In Canada, there has been debate about the impact of international trade agreements on the power balance between provincial and federal governments. It was pointed out that virtually every country could find elements that violate some part of its constitution.

Participants explored the recurring theme of supra-nationals binding member states. For example, the World Bank has social norms and standards but does not recognize its obligations to them. One mechanism to achieve this would be to “submit the IFIs (international financial institutions) to their masters in the UN system.”

Many participants agreed that litigation should be the last resort for only the most strategic purposes, since there are enormous real and lost opportunity costs associated with legal processes. More emphasis should be placed on prevention. Civil society should

concentrate its energy to fight the battle and to carve out an area of trade law dominance (e.g., tobacco).

Civil society, for its part, needs to overcome its fear of “setting bad law.” Chances must be taken and, while a case might be lost, a constituency will be gained.

Participants discussed possible legal challenges or legal precedents of interest:

- AGOA and the United States vs. Ghana’s rice production;
- Ecuador oil exploration and the resultant genocide;
- Labour rights violations, particularly with respect to child labour;
- Water services (local authorities vs. national interests);
- National vs. sub-federal subsidies for private interests (e.g., mechanizing Florida’s citrus production, US competing with Brazil’s sugar exports);
- World Bank/International Monetary Fund accountable to charters/fiduciary responsibility to private investors in US courts;
- War in Iraq;
- Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights vs. human rights;
- The enforcement of economic, social, and cultural rights with intellectual property rights case;
- Litigation with respect to the General agreement on trade in services (“quality of service” vs. “universality of service”) and with respect to subsidies, where user fees violate human rights;
- Cultural conventions that are not WTO-compliant;
- IFI adherence to specific articles.

Participants listed potential strategies for compliance and litigation:

- Develop new mechanisms that ensure better hierarchies through the grassroots “name, shame, and blame” strategy (“Dirty Dozen” and Best Practices). For the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, select cases that conflict with their Articles of Agreement and publicize them;
- Emulate globally the European system of human rights protection, with its mechanisms of sanctions and binding resolutions and obligations;
- Give out prizes and publicize lists of “good” and “bad” companies, with high profile to those respecting human rights;
- Use assessment tools (e.g., risk and environmental) to determine the impact of legislation rather than continuing on the reactive path;
- Develop enforcement capacity using technical tools such as digital tracking, bar codes, and the use of websites for monitoring;
- Mobilize local populations and prepare national campaigns to demand new and stronger mechanisms for human rights that include reparation and compensation for abuses;

- Amend the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes rules of procedure (put rules of subsidiarity into the Rome statute);
- Explore WTO–UN ECOSOC terms of relationships;
- Create a uniform legal system which would not exempt anyone from prosecution;
- Ask the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion of hierarchy;
- Study European Court of Justice and European Court of Human Rights cases;
- Use parliamentarians to declare procedures for the creation of new law;
- Establish new overall contract/venues for human rights adjudication;
- Extend those laws that currently apply to governments to corporations as well.

### **Marriage to Other Movements**

There may be fruitful relationships with other movements (e.g., environmental and health) that tie in well with a move for global democracy. One participant brought up the importance of including labour rights at all levels and in the treaty system whereby labour and other fundamental rights are elevated above the regulations of international financial institutions.

Civil society appears not to have a clear strategy in terms of when and where to fight corporate battles. It was suggested that trade unions might have some helpful insights with their international agreements. The trade union movement can be a major force in human rights. Labour rights are part of human rights. It was pointed out that labour has framework agreements with corporations; the long-term goal is to elevate this into law.

Participants suggested potential strategies:

- Emulate the success of the right-to-water movement;
- Explore relationships with powerful movements like HIV/AIDS;
- Emulate the Aarhus Convention that brings together various movements to allow non-governmental organizations to initiate action. Furthermore, allow non-European nations to join the Convention and to adapt it to their regional needs.

### **Shifting the Balance of Power**

Participants looked at how the supra-national level has evolved over the last 50 years, but treaties have not changed. There is no treaty that gives multinationals or IFIs the power over human rights, yet they have often assumed that power in lieu of nation-states.

Participants discussed the critical power dimension: multinational organizations and rich countries have a vested interest in promoting a profit-oriented world that places investment and capital rights above social, health, and development concerns. “This needs to be turned around.”

Corporations “have political clout and manipulate and form the debate for their purposes.” This statement points to a gap in enforceability and the strength of law. While corporations can ensure that rules are binding on states (to the point of giving up sovereignty), human rights conventions are hardly that binding.

Participants called for a shift in the balance of resources as well: whereas there are hundreds of government officials working in international investments department, fewer than 20 are in the human rights division.

It seems that civil society often follows the agenda set by corporations and international institutions rather than setting their own. “They provide the window dressing.” Can civil society not set the agenda for corporations? There are precedents for this in Europe.

Currently there is no reciprocity between countries in the South and IFIs. In fact, IFI complaint mechanisms are modelled on the basis that countries that receive a bad mark lose their privileges.

Participants suggested potential strategies:

- Introduce a right of initiative for civil society. The European Council has changed NGO status to one that is participatory. Now, NGOs have the right to partake in debates as well as a legal process that allows them to pursue governments that don't meet human rights obligations.
- Work with the UN in setting an agenda for human rights processes and setting up bureaus.

## **The Importance of the Citizen**

A common thread in the discussion was the notion that the larger goal of global democracy can only be achieved when the problems that plague citizens at the local level are dealt with first.

Some participants thought that perhaps “we would be better off to put more effort in working at home than negotiating international treaties.” They pointed out that it is important to make sure that national environmental laws and international human rights laws are not violated by international trade agreements that have been brought to the local and regional levels. This can be achieved by building awareness and capacity at those levels. (Contact on the ground is important to promote better interaction.)

Participants felt that there is currently not enough effort made to speak the type of language and/or use the metaphors that would motivate the population and plant the notion that their rights would be respected at various levels. Furthermore, the concentration of the media means that people's right to be informed is not respected.

The question of values is crucial: one individual called for the promotion of consensus-building values. Values give strength to the issues and need to be added to the discussion of accountability and power balance.

In the environmental and human health arena, participants identified a “huge gap” between the large urbanized population and natural processes. If individuals don’t protect the river in their own neighbourhood, no international treaty will. Bringing issues back to the local level where the population demands better of their governments was seen as one way to improve the balance of power.

Participants suggested potential strategies:

- Strengthen the application of the Biodiversity Convention and the Food and Agriculture Organization’s International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources. This would allow people to retain their traditional connections and access.
- Advance public debates about local cases in order to enhance awareness at the local level; “internationalize communities.” Examples can be seen in public policy tools used in California and Washington, where public discussions move people toward a legislative solution.
- Make use of the Law Commission of Canada, a federally mandated, independent body that surveys legal developments and listens to the public that is touched by areas of law in debate.
- Build capacity and engage constituencies, including parliamentarians, the public, and sub-constituencies.
- Include the right to self-determination as a provision in the declaration for social development. Although the UN thinks it’s no longer relevant, it applies to today’s neo-colonialist world.
- Encourage participation in civil society activities at the local level.
- Inform the public of corporate activities and the activities of international financial and trade institutions since their trade issues concern the rich and the poor.
- Bring about full awareness at the micro level of international negotiations (NAFTA, WTO, etc.). Laypeople should know what these treaties entail.
- Raise awareness on employment issues. It is good to have labour standards but without a job to apply those standards to, people are faced with the bigger problem of a lack of income.

## **Loss of State Power**

One participant suggested that if decisions can be made at the local level, then they should be made there rather than moved into another sphere. At the same time, subsidiarity is not about strict borders. Few issues reside in only one arena; most are articulated at multiple levels. The state has been disempowered in its ability to fulfill

human rights obligations. The “policy space” for this has to be enlarged in order for states to regain that ability.

Participants discussed the contradiction in how international institutions are encouraged to articulate human rights dimensions, yet kept out of those areas.

One participant suggested there were linkages between all levels and the ways in which they operate. He provided the example of seeds and genetic plant material, which encompasses plant breeders’ rights and corporate interests, as well as farmer and country rights.

During the discussion of employment, “the link to the local political priority to which every politician is held accountable,” it was felt that employment is a complex issue and that decent work might simplify the issue.

It was agreed that when countries sign WTO and other agreements, they must be aware of which recourses are available to them should things go wrong with the agreement. In fact, it was pointed out that states should feel empowered enough to refuse to sign any treaty that they do not think would fully benefit them and serve their interests in a positive way.

Other points were discussed:

- Québec has recently demanded negotiations rights at the international table. This scenario is also being played out in Germany and Spain, and might provide good testing grounds for future efforts in other jurisdictions.
- Countries in the South are often excluded from negotiations of treaties that affect them. In global democracy, better integration would ensure that this is rectified.
- Before treaties are incorporated into law and implemented at the state level, there is often a long internal process.
- UN Security Council resolutions are binding for all member-states even those that were not at the negotiation table. This needs to be transformed into a consensual, democratic process.
- There is a convergence in the interests of the international business world and those at the national scene. For example, in developing countries, the informal business sector is not valued by the government.

Participants explored potential strategies:

- Focus efforts of redress at the national and state level;
- Ensure that governments become more accountable for their actions and implement laws and regulations with the interests of their citizens as their primary concern;
- Lobby governments before treaty negotiations since their decisions are usually taken before the meeting;

- Encourage countries to join to adopt a human rights declaration or resolution rather than create a global human rights charter (which is unlikely to succeed).

### **Big Bad Corporations?**

International law not only functions to rein in international corporations “gone amok.” This would suggest that everyone else is in step, when this is not always the case. A realistic look at civil society is necessary. Other participants agreed that not all corporations are bad and that some could enter into partnerships with civil society. In the health sector, there have been a few examples of “good” companies that have, for example, provided cheap drugs to populations, but in general, human rights provisions have been ignored.

Currently, the absence of rules rewards the less scrupulous. What framework will reward the just ones? Standards need to be enforced and transparency should become operative. Are there potential conflicts of interests with their business practices and human rights provisions? Are voluntary measures an avenue for corporations? This has seen success in Australia and Israel, for example. Sometimes, what makes economic sense is also logical in terms of the environment and human rights.

### **Alternative International Bodies**

The establishment of courts addressing human rights issues around the world is an important milestone. The International Criminal Court is a key one in this respect. Such universal jurisdiction is desirable and a space in international litigation needs to be found for this to happen (e.g., the Pinochet case). The International Centre for Settlement and Investment Disputes may provide a precedent in the near future if it gets standing in court on behalf of the abuses in Argentina. (On the other hand, this could make human rights negotiable even though they are absolute.)

Participants explored potential strategies:

- Establish an international civil court modelled on the International Criminal Court;
- Create a legislative assembly with popular input.

### **Summary of Successes**

- Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (in the area of health) provide an opportunity to elevate human rights provisions above trade issues.

- The Aarhus process under the UN regional sphere provides an example of what happens when environmental concerns are brought together.
- The water referendum in Uruguay in October 2004 provides an interesting example of citizen campaigning against corporate interests. They have managed to keep water in the public domain. Can this experience be repeated?
- The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control points out that the industry has a fundamental conflict of interest. The industry was not a participant in the treaty even though the treaty has significant implications on economics and trade. This model could be applied elsewhere.
- An international environmental, bio-economic, and social council is a potential body that could be created to implement what has been discussed here.
- The right to food and shelter goes against WTO rules on intellectual property rights in the seed sector. There may be an opportunity here to break apart the status quo.
- Water treaties are more comprehensive and can guide hierarchies (e.g., first in the hierarchy is the need for access to clean drinking water). Such treaties could be an opening to reconstruct hierarchy of values and laws.

### **Track 3: Global Security: Undermining Democracy?**

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Global security goes hand in hand with global democracy. Securing the basic needs and freedoms of people sets the ground for a more participatory form of governance. Over the last few years, especially since 9/11, the definition of global security has been increasingly centred on the enforcement of peace using military and police forces. This focus on “hard” security must be re-defined with an emphasis on fulfilling people’s needs to food, shelter and employment, and right to freedom of expression and association. In turn, this focus can help eliminate the vicious cycle of fear caused by not meeting these needs and rights which leads to violence, greater fear and the “need” for harder security measures. Otherwise, global security will continue hindering the development of a more democratic and rights-based global governance system.

The goal of this track was to offer a more holistic understanding of security and explore concrete and innovative ways for civil society to work with other sectors, including the military, on the issue of global security as it affects global democracy.

The coordinator of this track was Gustavo Marin, Foundation Charles Léopold Mayer for the Progress of Humankind, France.

## Discussion

“Peace will not come out of a clash of arms but out of justice lived and done by unarmed nations in the face of odds.” While it has been over 50 years since Ghandi was advocating for peace through non-violence, the notion of creating world peace without the force of military and the subsequent loss of lives has yet to make it to levels of global (and in most cases, national) governance. Weapons are still used by most nations’ militaries and are proclaimed as necessary by the governments of these nations in order to protect their citizens. It has been suggested by many that the protection of special interests of a very privileged few has replaced the protection of citizens and that, as a result, security has become a hindrance to national and global democracy, as well as to human rights around the world.

The notion that world security, in its present state, serves as an obstacle to democratic processes was a major theme in the discussions. Why and how has this happened? Perhaps more importantly, how can this situation be changed so that security and democracy complement—rather than work against—one another as vital components of civil society and of a peaceful world?

Recognizing that the subject of “why and how” was too vast to be completely addressed at this conference, the track coordinator noted several paramount events that have recently helped shape the current juxtaposition between security and democracy. Marin pointed out that in the past 50 years, societies have made huge improvements in the democratic process, citing a few key events that have stood out, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the charter of the UN, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, and the triumph of the anti-apartheid efforts advocated by Nelson Mandela in South Africa in 1994. Democratic regulations, in each of these cases, were seen as the preferred solution to the world’s problems. He went on to stress that there has been “serious backtracking” on democratic freedoms since the infamous 9/11 and that the principal challenge facing civil society is how to re-invent the ideas of democracy and conditions of human security so that such backtracking does not continue.

A participant shared her experience with increasingly rigorous security checks when passing through the United States and contended that democratic space in the United States was shrinking. She suggested that US citizens were unaware of this situation and related this to a more global phenomenon which has seen the conditioning of people to not criticize or debate military armed forces. As a result, freedoms were becoming more restricted and often accepted by many as the supposed cost of “security.”

Marin outlined the three issues for the concurrent breakout sessions:

- Changes in the relationship between military and civil society (including their respective roles in fostering democracy)
- Reform of global governance
- Local capacity building in order to facilitate citizens ensuring their own security

Panellists highlighted critical needs that would serve as focal points for discussion:

- Clarifying the definition of “security”
- Evolving from identifying “terrorists” to identifying “terrorist acts”
- Reconciliation
- Redefining military/civil society relationships
- UN reform and the potential for complementary institutions at other levels of governance
- Linkages between local and international levels of governance (as well as those in between) in facilitating security, democracy, and peace

During the discussions, participants came up with four key strategies to help ensure human security while promoting democratic processes at global level.

## **Strategic Proposal #1: Establish an International Reconciliation Commission on Terrorism**

### **Defining “Security”**

It was suggested from the outset that a clear and reinvented definition of security was needed. Several participants noted that security means different things in different parts of the world. For example, in places where violence is used to stifle the democratic participation of citizens, security tends to focus on protection against such violence. In other places, where protection from violence is virtually guaranteed, security may pertain more to liberties and freedoms such as the freedom of information and the freedom of speech—although these freedoms would surely also need to be protected in countries where the primary focus was protecting citizens from violence.

These differences in definitions of security need to be considered when looking at how it relates to democracy. One participant described how security is paramount to human existence; simply put, basic needs must be met and people must feel secure with this fulfillment if they are going to be able to live in peace. Another participant questioned the purpose of the military if such needs were being met, offering that its sole purpose once basic needs are met becomes nationalism and border protection. Ensuring human security—rather than border or nationalistic security—should be the chief function of the military. While an actual definition of security was never tabled, it seemed generally agreed that such a definition should include satisfying basic needs and should take into consideration different cultural expectations of security.

### **Terrorism**

A participant described the current “war on terrorism,” instigated by George W. Bush in response to 9/11, as an attempt to instil fear in people in order to gain support for the use

of military (armed) force. He argued that the definition of terrorism being used now narrowly—and mistakenly—focuses on the terrorist (“who’s the bad guy and how can we get rid of him?”) rather than the terrorist act. This has prompted the imposition of draconian laws against terrorism around the world that have been used to trample on democratic rights and freedoms and to justify arrests (and lengthy and unjust detentions). He suggested that the focus should be on terrorist acts, rather than groups or individuals who commit them. This shift in focus would have the obvious benefit of increasing justice (and therefore, the opportunity for democracy) by diminishing state-sanctioned terrorism, which has most recently been exhibited in Iraq by US soldiers. More attention would then be paid to societal factors that foster terrorist behaviour (including a perceived—or real—marginalization of voices that go against status quo ideals) in the hopes of preventing future terrorism, ensuring human security, and fostering global democracy.

In one discussion, it was argued that the war against terrorism is counter-productive because it seeks to destroy terrorists, rather than attend to the factors that caused the terrorist behaviour. In addition, it was proposed that the war on terrorism has economic/commercial benefits for a privileged few who will go to great lengths to sustain these benefits. Participants agreed that overcoming these forces will take the conviction and participation of many to reform ideological frameworks around terrorism. Violence, it was said, cannot be successfully countered with violence; such rebounds do nothing to prevent future terrorist acts but instead create never-ending cycles of violence.

In a similar vein, it was agreed that terrorist acts should be addressed in a similar fashion across the board—whether it is a tactic by those frustrated with their lack of visibility or by nations that claim that such behaviour is promoting a more secure world. The outlawing of terrorist acts, it was proposed, would make terrorism a matter to be handled in legal arenas (law enforcement) rather than by forceful (armed and violent) military intervention.

## **Reconciliation**

Reconciliation was seen as an indispensable component to ensuring human security, addressing terrorism (in its newly defined form), and fostering peace. It could go hand in hand with peacekeeping efforts and would facilitate a new approach to dealing with terrorism and ensuring human security without military force.

The first of the four strategic proposals came out of discussions involving reconciliation and terrorism.

**Participants recommended that an International Reconciliation Commission on Terrorism be established in order to deal with terrorist acts.**

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This commission would be composed of member states that would form a negotiating team for well-known and identifiable terrorist groups and organizations. In addition, the commission would address root causes in societies for terrorist acts and, in doing so, would be able to establish some accountability for acts without giving them legitimacy. Because it would be international in scope (and ideally democratically elected), the commission would go far in restoring a sense of justice and peace in citizens.

## **Strategic Proposal #2: Establish a New Partnership between the Military and Civil Society**

One participant launched the discussion by saying that military personnel are nothing more than citizens in uniform. He then described the changing view toward violence and military intervention in the past several decades, contending that the role of the military (as well as definitions of peace within civil society) has changed. In northern countries, military forces no longer invade other northern countries, but are used to stop violence in other countries. The definition of peace has evolved from a no-war situation to a broader mandate of stopping violence, and then helping society after such violence is stopped.

Participants discussed how conflict has evolved from a situation between states to internally within a single society, and how the military must evolve as a result. While the military has traditionally served roles of aggression—either offensively or defensively—it was agreed that it need not be relegated solely to these roles. It was believed that a new framework should be established whereby armies would play a more peacekeeping role, while maintaining their role as law upholders. This transformation would require help from civil society. Civil society could help in the training of intercultural intervention and preventive and peacekeeping measures.

In addition, it was maintained that the military must be held more directly accountable to civil society and all its members. To this end, civil society could play a watchdog role, documenting and intervening if such behaviour began to deviate from newly established roles.

Participants recognized that there might be confusion during the transformation of roles for military personnel: those who have been steeped in violence for so long may find it difficult to assume the less forceful role that is required in intervention, mediation, and prevention efforts. The United States, for example, has been quite reluctant to take on peacekeeping roles for its military.

The second strategic proposal to come out of this track addressed the reform of military roles and the relationship between military and civil society.

**Participants proposed a new partnership between civil society and the military, in order to ensure human security and foster peace on local, regional, national, and international levels.**

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It was suggested that information surrounding the transformation of the role of the military from force to peacekeeper be distributed as widely as possible, in order to garner support for the idea at an upcoming conference with the UN. As a longer-term measure, it was proposed that conference participants go back to their respective countries and increase communication between civil society and the military to promote the new role for the military.

### **Strategic Proposal #3: Make the UN More Transparent and Accountable to Citizens**

#### **A New Architecture for the UN and Complementary Regional, National, and Local Institutions**

It was pointed out that the UN is considering more charter reform and security reform issues in the next four months than it has in the past 60 years. Many participants voiced concern that the measures being proposed do not go far enough in ensuring increased democratization, accountability, transparency, and legitimacy of the UN.

There was considerable discussion surrounding reforming the UN, although there was no consensus within the group on how best to do this. A civil society vision of the UN was seen to be timely: there was general agreement that the UN needed to become more democratic in its proceedings and more transparent. It was suggested that the election of the Security Council should be democratized (more so than is currently being proposed) and that the veto power be abolished.

It was generally held that the UN should be more accountable to citizens directly rather than to nation-states. Funding—which comes from nations—was identified as a key component that could be adjusted in order to create more of a direct line of accountability between the UN and citizens. There was some concern expressed over the over-dependence of the UN on funding from the United States. With all international banking depending on the US dollar, the country has managed to survive despite high debt. It was suggested that the power of four countries to throw the US into crisis should be considered as a tactic for preventing US hegemony within the UN.

Another participant suggested that the UN could create a way for citizens to donate funds to the UN (for example, UN credit card, holding a “UN day” when citizens could contribute). While donations would be optional, it was believed that the opportunity to donate would give citizens a more direct hand in how the UN operates, lending

legitimacy and transparency to the organization. (Donations could also help alleviate the current funding shortfall.)

While UN reforms were seen as necessary, failing such transformations, it was proposed that institutions at the regional, national, and local levels be established that could complement decision making within the UN. This discussion focused primarily on increasing the role of parliamentary members: one participant pointed out that, as parliamentary figures can be involved in peacekeeping processes in ways that everyday citizens cannot be; they represent a valuable link between civil society and global governance and peacekeeping efforts. Moreover, he highlighted the ability of parliamentarians to provide an essential voice for their constituent citizens in matters of international governance. He went on to describe how networks of parliamentarians would foster communication within and between regions.

There was some discussion around the establishment of a global parliament, but no consensus was reached on whether such a parliament was in the best interests of civil society. Some voiced concern over the attainability of a global parliament, explaining that it was idealistic and therefore perhaps not the best strategy to pursue at this point in time. Others felt it was important to focus on lofty initiatives in order to advance new visions and capture people's imagination. One participant cautioned that a global parliament might turn into a sort of global party with political uniformity, not reflective of the various needs of diverse cultures and societies. Although this notion was countered by at least one participant with the emphasis that political diversity should be the focus of such a parliament, some remained hesitant and the subject was left with the general understanding that there was still much to be discussed.

The third strategic proposal incorporated this discussion about reform of international institutions and governance.

**Participants agreed that the UN needs to become more transparent and accountable to citizens.**

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It was emphasized that the UN should work toward democratization of decision-making processes, which could include reform of the election process for the Security Council and/or the abolition of the veto.

#### **Strategic Proposal #4: Focus civil society efforts on increasing democracy at local levels**

Two participants shared experiences of local efforts to ensure human security. Both experiences lent very concrete examples to the discussion around the need for linkages between different levels of governance in ensuring human security.

The first participant talked of extreme poverty in Rio de Janeiro, in an area where groups of six people (mostly women) often live together in substandard apartments. Average schooling is three to seven years, and many live on less than \$10 US a month. Stemming from indignation brought on by the release of a movie based on life in the favela (*City of God*, 2003), community members began to realize their power in unity. There are now weekly meetings to discuss tactics to fight for basic rights (health, sanitation, schooling, etc...), although sustained rallying is difficult when most people don't have their basic needs met. The barriers faced by the community are many: the federal government directs community members to the provincial government for complaints, but the provincial government will not communicate with the community. Aside from a complete lack of basic sanitation, education, and health care, drug trafficking is a major problem; violence is perpetuated by drug traffickers and many fear for their lives. The mass media has portrayed a sensationalized image of the community, which has undermined community confidence and outsider empathy.

While the community has received no help from provincial or national governments, business owners in and around the community have lent incredible support. In addition, increased use of Internet has begun to open up lines of communication with outside organizations, which has the potential to help the community.

The participant described how community trust and confidence must be rebuilt: many members are currently extremely mistrustful of any aid attempts because they have been treated so poorly for so long. In addition, many fear for their lives because of the violence perpetuated by drug trafficking.

The participant called for international support for these local efforts. It is clear that the community, surrounded by a police force that is both corrupt and often afraid to go into the neighbourhood, and abandoned by provincial and federal governments needs support from higher levels of governance. While initiatives should come from local communities that know their own situation best, support should be given by those in higher levels of governance whose voices are often more visible and who can put pressure on national and local governments.

The second participant echoed the need for local initiatives and global support for those initiatives. He described the devastating aftermath of the 1994 genocide of Rwanda and the complete breakdown of governance. The past 10 years have seen more than 107 local governments, democratically elected, that have allowed people to be more directly involved in their own security and welfare. Unlike the situation described previously, communities have been empowered by local government. The missing link in Rwanda, however, is between local and national governments. Local governments (and subsequently, community efforts) could be made stronger by support from the central government. To this end, international levels of governance can help put pressure on national governments and can create direct links for support to local governments in order to aid them in rebuilding their communities, ensuring human security, and fostering democracy.

As the last of the four strategic proposals, participants concluded from these stories and subsequent discussions that democracy can be most participatory at local levels.

**Participants proposed that civil society focus efforts on increasing democracy at local levels as well as on higher levels of governance.**

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In addition, it was recommended that local governments work hard to create safe space for discussion, questioning, and dissent so that a healthy and secure democratic state for communities can be attained. Participants agreed that, in this sense, strong local democracy would support efforts for global democracy. Lastly, it was suggested that local authorities should embrace opportunities to engage in national and global forums on democracy. They should not be afraid to use methods and ideas from these higher levels if this brings greater democracy and rights recognition to their local communities.

#### **Track 4: Civil Society Participation; Opportunities and Responsibilities**

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Civil society's involvement in decision-making processes is paramount for the emergence of a more democratic global system. The growing involvement of civil society activity in local, national, and global decision making brings forth a greater representation of the voices of a diversity of constituencies. This interaction includes civil society meetings with international economic institutions (the WB, IMF, and WTO) and its participation in multilateral fora (such as those of the UN, L20, and G8). Strengthening the voice and representation of civil society on global decision-making tables continues to be a priority. However, to achieve legitimacy in its call for greater global democracy, civil society must cultivate and use democratic practices within its own system.

Track 4 looked at strategies that would make civil society's participation in decision-making processes more effective in influencing policies around different strategic entry points in the multilateral system. Also, participants discussed how civil society organizations could meet the responsibility they had toward the constituencies they represent to be more transparent and coordinated in their own activities, within individual organizations or in a network of many different ones working for the same cause.

The coordinator for Track 4 was **Jagadananda** from the Centre for Youth and Social Development, CIVICUS, India.

## Making International Institutions Accountable

The accountability of IFIs—to civil society and to humanity as a whole—was a central theme in this discussion track. A key problem is a form of monetization that has transferred power from states to financial markets. Concurrently, states have been weakened by a trend toward decentralization, the emergence of China and India is transforming international relations, and new technologies are changing the nature of work.

Discussion on the politics of participation in international institutions touched on two self-evident truths: the neo-liberal model has failed, but NGO efforts to reform institutions like the World Bank and the IMF have failed as well.

One speaker noted with concern that the World Bank and the IMF divide civil society organizations into two groupings, based on whether they consider them “constructive” or “destructive.” The “destructive” groups “are the ones who in any way challenge the orthodoxy” of the major IFIs, and those groups aren’t invited into the room. Yet even those organizations that have successfully engaged with international institutions have been unable to bring about a major shift in policy.

### **Civil Society and the L20: Creating Democratic Spaces in New Global Governance Fora**

*While participants agreed that civil society is being excluded from the L20 process, they had differing opinions about how far they should cooperate with the think tanks involved. Many felt that consultation would be acceptable, whereas others worried that consulting with organizations such as the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) would imply a degree of support. They wanted to find a mechanism by which CSOs could engage in the process without actually giving it their seal of approval.*

*They asked that a meeting be arranged between CIGI or Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC) and NGOs to explore the best way forward. There is a chance for movement given that Prime Minister Paul Martin is engaged and supportive of the L20 mechanism. A representative from the Canadian Government offered to take the suggestion to FAC.*

\* Notes on self-organized workshop 10.

A participant described the “revolution of associational activity” carried out by an “astounding” number of civil society groups at the global level. “There is a stronger acknowledgement of the central and essential role of civil society in achieving good governance,” she said, and a number of civil society organizations have demonstrated the value they bring to multilateral institutions.

Yet, “we’re also living in a time where there seems to be a backlash toward both civil society and toward multilateralism,”

placing NGOs in the paradoxical position of criticizing the deep flaws in multilateral institutions they hope to bolster. “At the end of the day, she said, “we want to see multilateralism in the UN system improving.”

She described how, in their interactions with multilateral organizations, civil society organizations tend to distinguish between operational engagement and advocacy. But even the groups involved in front-line implementation have “a lot of scope to influence the way decisions are made and funds are disbursed.” She said a diversity of strategies

and roles will be needed to bring a greater degree of democracy to international institutions.

Participants debated the formation of an “L20” forum as an alternative to the “rich man’s club” of the G8. One panellist said the L20 would include developing countries like Brazil and India, and would “present a better opportunity to deal with issues like global health and terrorism.” While some participants saw merit in the proposal, most were unconvinced, noting that the world’s poorest societies would still be excluded.

### **The Cardoso Panel: A Time for Damage Control?**

There was a strong sense among panellists and participants that the recommendations of the Cardoso Panel must be carried forward, not forgotten. But the most realistic course of action for civil society might be to engage in a form of damage control, in the hopes of preserving as much of the report as possible.

The problem, said one participant, is that “the current context is not as favourable as perhaps a few years ago, when the initial thinking around the Panel came through.” Despite numerous examples of effective civil society engagement, at least one NGO based in New York has been looking for pieces of the Cardoso framework that can be implemented in the present environment.

Follow-up strategies could include the following:

- Focusing on consensus elements for more immediate implementation, particularly the items that are most meaningful to NGOs and civil society;
- Seeking to reopen the debate around Cardoso at the local and national levels;
- Attempting to dissociate the useful content of the Cardoso report from the forum in which it was generated.

### **Inside and Outside: Preparing for September**

Looking ahead to the Millennium +5 Summit in September 2005, participants discussed the level of participation to which civil society should aspire as well as the outcomes and follow-up mechanisms that should flow from the meeting.

So far, the news has not been encouraging. NGOs have had to fight for the right to be present for the Summit—not even as participants, but simply to observe and listen to member states’ comments on the issue of UN reform. With the Summit approaching, participants agreed on the value of an information clearinghouse that would enable them to share their knowledge of effective deliberative fora like the World Summit on the Information Society or the Helsinki process.

A key message from civil society is the need for states to agree on clear follow-up mechanisms, including a review process with strong civil society participation, to ensure that specific commitments at the Summit are fulfilled.

Participants proposed an “inside/outside” strategy leading up to the Summit, in which civil society advocates proceed along two parallel tracks. The “insider” track would consist of an information clearinghouse to pool the experience and expertise available to NGOs. The “outsider” track would involve creating an institutional space where citizens can debate the international institutions they want and the role of civil society organizations as “connectors” between citizens and international institutions. The first step would be for G05 participants to open debate within their own organizations, as a means of raising awareness, generating citizen involvement, and coordinating more closely around the September summit.

### **A World Parliament**

A world parliament was put forward as a model of institutional democracy that would go beyond the existing framework of the United Nations. One breakout session in this track reached wide consensus on the long-term feasibility and desirability of such a structure, though there were serious concerns about modalities, mechanisms, and representative structures. These issues could not be resolved in one afternoon, noted a participant, “but there was a very articulate, convincing presentation of a possible model and a set of starting points,” including a set of initial meetings organized by a group of “vanguard countries” in the next year.

At the closing track plenary, one participant identified a UN parliamentary assembly and a separate civil society forum as precursors to a directly elected world parliament. The two structures “would be feasible right now with the political will,” he said, and could be based on a long-term vision that places human rights at the top of a broader hierarchy of values.

### **A Hierarchy of Values**

A number of participants commented on the need for a hierarchy of values that places the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) above the current preoccupation with trade.

“If we could actually agree that what we want to defend is the fact that there are some values that are above other values, if we could agree that there should be a classification of values, that would be a step forward,” one group member suggested. “The next step is not to forget that the best leverage is at the national level,” where it would be possible to mandate that state institutions and structures work to defend the UDHR.

Another participant said discussion had emphasized the individual citizen as the source of governments' legitimacy, while demonstrating broad agreement on a hierarchy of values: "[...] human rights are fundamentally a better foundation for global, local, regional, and national governance than commercial rights." One of the track breakouts discussed the need to "deconstruct the values and interests behind our work," including the expectation that international institutions will channel citizens' voices on matters that concern them.

One participant expressed concern that the traditional human rights approach "does not include the actual world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where we're faced with very severe ecological problems and resource implications." The UDHR does nothing to address the decline of oil or the environmental crises facing the world's fisheries, water tables, forests, or climate, he said.

**"We need a vision that includes resources, and the best starting point I know is the Earth Charter." - participant**

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## **Closing the Loop on Citizen Engagement**

To be seen as legitimate, consultation and engagement processes conducted at the national and international levels must close the loop with the citizens who participate in them. Civil society organizations have a crucial role to play in this process.

At one time, it was thought that civil society could set the stage for broader citizen engagement through a strategy of "reintermediation," in which local institutions became involved in domestic political processes and institutions. But too many people felt they were "participating without power," since their involvement gave them no access to the real centres of decision making. The experience underscored the need to strengthen intermediate institutions and connect global and local issues.

More specifically, participants noted the following:

- Consultation processes often lack a feedback mechanism to let citizens know what has been done with their comments, research, or advice.
- Little is being done to link related engagement initiatives that operate in parallel at the local and global levels.

The key elements of citizen engagement—and some of the challenges that arise—are sometimes most obvious at the local level. In a review of citizen engagement exercises in Canada, Scotland, and India, participants determined that active involvement is more likely when consultation processes are transparent, less likely when the approach is overly procedural, and easier to encourage when a topic captures public attention. In Scotland, for example, debt relief emerged as an important focal point.

Strategies for increasing citizen engagement could include the following:

- Iterative drafting processes, in which stakeholder participation continues right through the stage when consultants might otherwise have withdrawn to write their report;
- Adaptation of budget tracking, report cards, and other local mechanisms to increase accountability for participatory processes at the national and global levels;
- A concerted effort to help citizens acquire the information they need to engage in meaningful consultation;
- Publication of meeting minutes and other public records of intergovernmental bodies to make them open to scrutiny.

In developing citizen-friendly processes, a good rule of thumb is to “always ask the question: ‘Who is not there?’” a participant said. “People have different barriers (to engagement), and it’s important to not just level the playing field, but to slope the playing field to enable certain groups to participate.” Participants stressed citizens’ right to engage in the issues that affect their lives, as well as the need to create critical mass for action “so that you are not crushed before you even start.”

### **Community Capacity to Engage on Global Governance**

At different stages in the track discussion, participants acknowledged the enormous importance of local, national, and subnational contexts in shaping citizens’ engagement. “The capacity to engage is vastly different in different regions,” noted a participant.

A participant from one of the “poor” countries noted that street campaigners are “struggling in the streets” in some parts of the world, knowing that their governments have granted immunity to development banks, armies, and other institutions whose objectives are at odds with the values of citizen engagement and global governance. “I don’t know whether that’s a local or a global governance issue,” he said. “It’s happening in my country, but it’s a global concern to make everyone accountable for whatever they’re doing.”

In keeping with a commitment to local empowerment, one participant questioned who had mandated a conference attended primarily by people from the industrialized north to come up with a vision for developing countries.

Participants noted that civil society engagement is often inhibited by a “culture of expertise” that has given rise to “a certain arrogance” in some of the international institutions. The problem is compounded by a level of secrecy that becomes a major impediment to consultation and engagement, as well as complex decision-making

structures that make it very difficult to mount effective lobbying campaigns from the outside.

Even when an initiative seems to be structured appropriately, a key problem is that the World Bank and the IMF consider themselves responsible to their shareholders first, rather than the people who are “affected by their policies, bad or good.”

Grassroots dissatisfaction with institutions is beginning to surface. For example, decision making has become so complicated that it’s hard for people to understand where the responsibility lies. One participant described how “There can be the most beautiful and advanced treaties and agreements at the global level, which we all hope to see in the coming years so that the free-riders will be brought on board, but nothing will actually happen unless people at the local level come up with new innovations” that change production, consumption, lifestyles, and citizens’ sense of responsibility. She identified access to information as a key factor in making institutions more accountable, and underscored the value of referenda and ballot initiatives in building citizen engagement.

Several participants cited the results of France’s referendum on the European Union Constitution as evidence that elites are out of touch with the grassroots. At least one of the track breakouts reached consensus on the need for a multistakeholder model of citizen engagement, based on success stories like the Coalition for an International Criminal Court, the work of environmental NGOs in defence of the Kyoto Protocol, the international campaign against landmines, and the indigenous peoples’ forum at the UN.

A couple of participants asked for further details to firm up these visions and strategies, as a step in reclaiming the UN for citizens and civil society. One organization called on the UN to introduce a peoples’ parliamentary assembly of sitting legislators from different countries, as well as a global civil society forum, both as advisory bodies to the General Assembly.

Participants in one track stressed that citizens are motivated by specific issues that affect their lives, not broad principles. “Telling people that this is good governance is not very interesting to them,” one of the participants noted. “It’s the issue that is interesting.” Another breakout looked at what it will take to get ordinary citizens engaged and empowered. “The overriding value was the issue of courage,” said a participant. “Courage of the individual, courage of the group, courage of the association, and the need to encourage others and each other.”

### **Partnerships Across Civil Society**

While some participants described the initial inroads they had made in putting forward a civil society voice in different international fora, others underscored the need for more effective collaboration among NGOs. They discussed the transformation of social movements, old and new, in ways that support international co-operation and grassroots

leadership. Civil society is still constructing itself, he said, but the sector can still play an important role in transforming large international institutions.

A number of participants stressed the potential for trade unions, the women's movement, faith-based organizations, local governments, and many other groups to strengthen themselves and each other by reaching out across sectors and areas of specialty. Some track panellists also encouraged civil society organizations to work together—at the national level, and through broad international coalitions like CIVICUS. One of the track breakouts stressed the value of the Internet as a worldwide networking tool for civil society organizations.

### **Accountability and Transparency Within Civil Society**

A large number of panellists and participants underscored the need for civil society organizations to model the behaviour they would like to see elsewhere by becoming paragons of transparency and accountability.

One of the breakout discussions in this track focused specifically on issues of civil society legitimacy and accountability. Civil society has little money or formal power, participants said, and undermines its own effectiveness whenever it fails to articulate a set of ethically based values—to the public, and to its critics. The group identified four key issues:

- How to build appropriate accountability systems, for individual NGOs and for groupings like development NGOs or advocacy groups;
- The challenges involved in building effective evaluation systems, at a time when many NGOs have separate measurement frameworks to meet their donors' requirements and their own;
- How to extend the notion of accountability and legitimacy from the local to the global level, in a way that examines international NGOs' effectiveness in responding to the grassroot groups they claim to represent;
- The extent to which accountability and legitimacy systems can be developed for multisectoral relationships.

“What emerged from this discussion was a sense that this is an important issue, that it's one on which we're not going to come up with instant solutions, that the solutions will be developed and negotiated over time, and that there is evolution in a lot of sectors around these issues,” said a participant. There was agreement that this issue “will have to be dealt with if civil society is going to continue to make a big impact on global governance.”

One participant stressed the need to engage with this issue, “not from a position of defensiveness, but from a position of strength.” Governments draw their policy mandate from their electorates, businesses can at least claim that they are accountable to shareholders, but both challenge civil society to demonstrate its mandate to comment, criticize, or participate. This dynamic exists in spite of the “perform or perish” challenge

that is a day-to-day reality for any non-profit organization. Compared to other sectors that can count on a reliable flow of funds, he noted that civil society organizations rely entirely on voluntary contributions. “There can be nothing more powerful in terms of accountability than actually having that reality to deal with.” He added that the right-wing attack on NGOs is not unexpected, and can be seen as a reflection of civil society’s growing credibility in international advocacy.

One of the track breakouts echoed this concern about the government tendency to question civil society organizations’ legitimacy as stakeholders—with the result that the private sector is represented in decisions, but affected communities are not. It is frequently suggested that citizen activism threatens to undermine democracy by bypassing formal decision-making structures, even though civil society has historically aligned itself with the most vulnerable, marginalized groups in society.

A participant encouraged civil society organizations in the United States, in particular, to work together in response to legislative and regulatory initiatives designed to control NGOs and undermine their work. “We have to monitor what’s happening in the regulatory environment and engage with those activities,” she said. At the same time, civil society organizations must “do the internal work we need to do so that we can assert our legitimacy and get the credibility we deserve.”

Social exclusion, accessible language, and the disconnect between levels of governance were all seen as key accountability issues for international NGOs. A participant said his group had developed a framework that unpacks what accountability means for a civil society organization. Key policies and procedures would cover transparent decision making, stakeholder participation in decision making, continual evaluation against goals and objectives, and a redress mechanism for stakeholders who aren’t satisfied with the organization’s performance.

Participants at one of the breakout sessions acknowledged that NGOs’ effectiveness in engaging the UN to promote global democracy will depend in part on their own ability to address issues of internal and external representation. A participant pointed out that G05 participants’ own in-depth discussion of a possible world parliament had involved a group drawn almost entirely from the industrialized north, more specifically from North America. More broadly, fair mechanisms are needed to guide the selection or election of civil society organizations to take part in multistakeholder deliberations.

## **Track 5 : How to Democratically Regulate the Global Economy?**

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The democratic deficit within the global economic system is seen in the asymmetric power and representation between states in core decision-making processes regarding trade, debt, financial transactions, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development. The lack of transparency within these processes along with the lack of

accountability of international financial institutions and their representatives to the needs and interests of various stakeholders (and not just those that privilege the North) is ever present and deepens the asymmetries that already exist. Given that civil society along with other actors oppose the current international economic system and its related policies, Track 5 looked at how civil society can intervene in and offer alternatives to regulating the global economy more democratically.

**The coordinator of Track 5 was Maria Fernanda Tuozzo** , Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Politicas (FLACSO), Japan/Argentina.

## Discussion

The global economy is running at a high human price at the local level. What should be considered a basic standard of life—including some degree of job security, health care, the freedom to associate with trade unions, and make informed decisions when voting for representatives at the local, provincial, and national levels of government—is threatened by global commercial interests anchored on self-interest and the acquisition of benefits. Examples can be seen in many different policies that have been recently undertaken and sometimes favoured by IFIs such as the IMF. Its support for the privatization of public services, has led, for example, to the privatization of the water supply in many countries thus making access to water more problematic for the poorer populations.

Participants called for a shift in understanding of the role of the economy: if it is seen as a means of creating better jobs and as way to ensure better living conditions, sustainability and greater equity. But democratic regulation of the global economy will be difficult to achieve without more active, informed democratic participation at all levels of governance (local, regional, and national as well as international levels).

Tuozzo identified four recurring themes in conference discussions:

- Increase public awareness through education and capacity building
- Re-focus on national and local levels of governance and decision making
- Transform financial institutions
- Increase discussion and co-operation among civil society organizations

These were presented as possible courses of action to deal with three overarching problems:

- A rift in knowledge and understanding among individuals and organizations of the technical details of economics;
- A lack of transparency and accountability among international financial institutions and corporations;
- The top-down nature of current economic decision making.

Participants shared concerns about the rift in knowledge and information that divides financial specialists and the public. One participant suggested that “It shouldn’t take a PhD to understand the WTO website.” Another participant questioned whether civil

society currently has the capacity to critique information provided by corporate managers, international financial institutions, and governments. If the global economy is to be reframed as a means to a better quality of life for more people rather than as an end unto itself, much will have to be demystified: terms and arguments proposed to civil society, economic scenarios that make use of perceived competitiveness among nations, technical details regarding national debts and loans, the real significance of large financial flows on the national level, etc. With this kind of information, individuals (workers, investors, and voters) and civil society organizations will be better positioned to take an active part in decisions making on economic issues.

“Don’t accept the terms of debate as they are proposed,” urged one participant. He described meeting with a Korean labour minister and asking him about the motivation behind a clampdown on labour rights. The answer was in ironic reversal of the reasoning of Thatcher’s government: companies were threatening to go to the UK. Some facts are found to be only partial truths; for example, managers pushing for longer hours told Mexican workers (who already had a 48-hour week) that German workers were increasing their hours. The actual increase in Germany was from 35 to 37 hours.

A lack of transparency and accountability in international financial institutions was seen as a core underlying problem throughout discussions. The lack of sufficient technical knowledge about economic issues among members of civil society aggravates that problem, as active participation in decision-making processes requires an understanding of the terms of debate.

There were calls to activate all levels of decision making, the local and the national as well as the global. Local political leaders must be pressured to effect positive change. One participant explained that “It’s wrong to regard the IMF and the World Bank as entities in their own right: they are guided by our governments. The Millennium Development Goals have quantified the number of resources that should go to developing countries. We have to hold our governments accountable to those objectives.” Another commented on the lack of debate on economic issues during Britain’s elections, and in Parliament. “That the WTO Marrakech agreement went through without debate is appalling.” And some participants voiced concern that strategies addressing action at the national level were neglected in favour of the global and local levels.

One participant called for “devolution to sub-state governments and local civil society. In governing global trade—investments and other economic activities—macro governance is inevitably essential, but have local governance whenever it’s possible.” The sovereign nation state as a “comprehensive supreme authority” is an anachronism in the global economy. Yet, sovereignty-based thinking persists. “You can’t bring democracy to the global economy with that kind of framework. That’s why subsidiarity is important.”

The asymmetrical nature of the relationships among different countries, cultures, and populations was brought up many times. International bodies are heavily influenced by northern interests; participants acknowledged that northern countries do not have enough of an understanding of the realities facing southern countries. Muslim nations, and

countries in the East and mid-East in general, are under-represented in organizations dealing with economic issues.

## **Debt**

The debt system should be transparent at the international level and to debtor countries. Discussions acknowledged that the democratic management of debt within the current legal system is not feasible. In Africa, for example, civil society has little practical information about national debt and loans.

Some participants suggested that debtor countries form a network in order to better position themselves in negotiations. Within individual debtor countries, a “participation barometer” should be developed to gauge the democratic role of parliaments in the management of debt, and civil society should have access to information about loan mechanisms, negotiations with international financial institutions, and the uses for the borrowed money. Citizen inspection panels and new laws could make the consent of parliament a necessary step before any loans would be accepted.

Within middle-income countries, participants felt that debt should be restructured. On the international level, a new debt framework should be set up to provide crisis prevention and resolution through ongoing debtor-creditor dialogue. G20 countries should create a secretariat of International Debt Framework.

## **International Financial Institutions**

“How,” asked a participant, “do you turn a tiger into a vegetarian?” The relationship between international organizations (such as the IMF) and the world’s poorer countries is unequal. The same representatives are active in negotiating, forming, and judging regulations that are often favourable to the privatization of public services. Poverty reduction policies fail to take into account the realities of specific countries. These policies do not carry any credibility for local populations: they are negotiated behind closed doors, without the involvement of elected government representatives, and they are most often influenced by northern interests that have little consideration of local situations.

Northern countries should be educated about the realities confronted by southern countries. One conference participant offered an example of the disregard on the part of northern governments of the work being done on the ground in developing southern countries. A summit of African countries in Ouagadoudou developed a poverty-reduction platform that prioritized job creation and the development of a social protection net. Yet when British Prime Minister Tony Blair released a report on Africa, there was no mention made of this conference.

Although there is now better representation of southern countries at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, decision-making power is still weighted toward the northern countries. Within southern countries, democracies are increasingly dependent on economies based on investments originating in northern countries. Participants discussed options for abolition (which was seen as a rather long-term process with little short-term applicability), reforms, and alternative paths. Also, many participants shared the belief that, “If we work within existing institutions, chances for effective change are very low.”

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

One participant opened the discussion by describing the corporate stage of action as “akin to holding the Olympics and doling out gold medals without the use of any referees.” The flexibility of corporations able to strategically shift locations from one state to another is an obstacle in the enforcement of corporate law. One participant pointed out that, “There is a significant problem with tax evasion and avoidance that goes against both the spirit and the letter of the law.”

Enforceable laws against tax avoidance need to be developed, agreed participants, but at which level? The argument was made for developing them at the national level: if domestic laws are strengthened, and corporations exceed those norms, the local government will be encouraged to increase the standards. The development of laws at the international level should then follow, and global governance will have to back the enforcement of these laws. One participant wondered if existing corporate laws from one nation (i.e., the United States) be imported for international use? “Unless we have a system where corporate behaviour is transparent, regulations cannot be voluntary.”

However, another participant responded to this proposal by pointing out that, for example, the existence of tobacco laws in the United States is due to its strong civil society. Although similar laws should be instated in Africa, the effects would not be similar because the mechanisms civil society uses to intervene will have to be more developed; otherwise, the laws will not be enforced. On the international stage, who, he asked, will enforce laws for oil companies, for example? The establishment of international enforcement mechanisms is therefore a key priority for future discussions and action.

Yet, one participant suggested that, given the problem of regional tax havens competing in the “race to the bottom” even within countries as small as Switzerland, local regional authorities should be involved in the development of these laws.

Along with the implementation of international corporate law that would be applied regardless as to a corporation’s location, proposals called for work on the national level of corporate legislation, lobbying of corporations, global governance of international corporate law, lobbying national governments to strengthening domestic law, and public education on corporate activity.

A final proposal addressing corporate responsibility called for working “toward socially responsible business practices through statutory, regulatory framework, including progressive taxation, and robust respect for labour and environmental regulations.”

## **Trade**

Discussions stemmed from an understanding of current issues at the WTO: unbalanced representation, lack of transparent and accountable decision making, a proliferation of bilateral agreements, and a disproportionate representation of northern NGOs. As well, participants doubted the practical capacity of the WTO. With a staff of 500, is it well equipped to take on the tasks at hand?

Proposals made included reinforcing communication between northern and southern NGOs and developing a common agenda, updating WTO practices to include mechanisms to ensure accountability to the public, and reframing the fundamental purpose of the economy as a means to providing jobs.

There was a call for interventions at the Hong Kong meetings scheduled for December 2005. Citing the extremely high numbers of unofficial strikes that occur in China every year, one participant proposed more discussion with Chinese authorities about the lack of labour rights in that country. He explained that, although companies were quite interested in a conference on the rights of migratory workers that would have brought together Chinese officials, trade unions representatives, and foreign investors, the authorities cancelled it at the last minute.

Discussion turned to how bilateral free trade agreements have produced serious costs in terms of job losses. One participant suggested, “Hit the system where it is weakest: make providing jobs an explicit policy objective.” Alternative trade models should be explored.

One participant suggested that the goal should be to have an effective multilateral institution to deal with international trade, rather than shifting, regional, or bilateral coalitions.

## **Sustainable Development**

The issues of terrorism and climate change have become competing agendas, suggested one participant. Further, increases in oil prices and stress on water supplies (in California, for example) have hit in successive waves.

But in developing countries in particular, economic growth takes precedence over environmental concerns. Although sustainable development has important social and economic implications, concern over debt has overshadowed the issue.

Some participants agreed that, although a transformation of the United Nations Environment Programme might present potential, it would still not be able to compete with the WTO without a significant increase in resources. They also agreed on the necessity of including civil society organizations in the building of agendas within international organizations.

The issue of sustainable development should be demystified. Discussion participants agreed that sustainable development has not been included in development agendas due to a lack of understanding. If a single definition of sustainable development is difficult to articulate, it should at least be possible to recognize that the consumption and production practices of the northern countries are unsustainable.

While there was consensus that the public should have access to sustainable development agreements that have been signed by governments and syndicates, there was some disagreement as to how much more development of expertise or how much concept building had to be done to further this cause. The argument was made that there is enough of a specialized knowledge base in this field among members of civil society already. If progress is not being made, participants attributed it to the fact that those involved in the debate are often in the position of defending the interests of their respective nation-states.

On the international level, participants called for lobbying to set a deadline for the meeting of the eighth of the Millennium Development Objectives, and including sustainable development on the Security Council agenda. They suggested that regional NGOs should be strengthened and should be able to make use of international courts in cases where arbitration is needed.

The breakout session discussions called for transparency, accountability, greater public participation, and public access to understandings signed by governments and syndicates.

## **Financial Flows**

Does civil society currently have the capacity to understand and critique capital flow? In the opinion of one participant, "There are several markets that are totally obscure, only specialists understand them. We have to get at the heart of the system, which is Wall Street and London." In the financial capitals of the world, there are organizations of closed groups of 50 or 60 people who are key decision makers within capital markets, pointed out one audience member, and these groups are free to evade public scrutiny.

One participant discussed the myth that large financial flows are essential to a state's economic wellbeing. What is the real value of the loans going out to developing countries? When the sum total of all development aid is compared to the amount of capital flowing out of developing countries, it turns out that capital flight overshadows capital inflow. It was argued that the problem of national debts is not so much a problem of longer or shorter repayment schemes, but of the "dubious analytical work" behind the

basic premise for the loans. “Is it true that developing countries need a lot of loans? There must be a move to stop capital flight out of these countries.”

Participants argued that the incentive structure at international financial institutions does not encourage poverty reduction; in fact, individuals are more likely to make gains in taking advantage of economic volatility. “The more volatile the situation, the bigger the bonus.” Could an incentive structure be practically linked to poverty reduction? There was a suggestion that the World Bank should situate its offices in some of the poorer regions. Within the World Bank, there is a “ratchet effect”: the incentives encourage the continuation of rightwing policy making, and there is no means of access for leftwing policy makers.

Participants called for public knowledge of the connection between parent corporations and their subsidiaries. They agreed that more understanding of corporate activity—for example, the use of proxy voting—would help individuals make ethical investment decisions.

## **Summary**

More information must flow to more individuals and civil society organizations if the global economy is to be democratically regulated. As the global economy is seen as an end unto itself, in terms of policy making and practical effects, there is a top-down dynamic that has a negative impact on communities and individuals. For that to be righted, the flow of decision making must be redirected: from local governments and civil society organizations, to regional bodies, to national bodies and parliaments, to global organizations.

Increased networking among civil society organizations was considered essential to the creation of alternative initiatives. With increased access to information about corporate activity and international financial agreements, civil society would be in a position to press for greater accountability from these groups.

Increased transparency should bring about greater accountability. Capacity building on the part of civil society organizations and more successful networking between northern and southern NGOs and debtor countries should lead to systemic change.

Economic change on a global is feasible: it is technically, organizationally, and politically possible. There is, according to one participant, “a growing alternative global movement, and a growing sense that self-interests are tied up in global interests, even in elite circles.” But, he warned, neo-liberal concepts and sovereignty-based thinking are proving to have a lot of staying power, global capital is heavily concentrated, state and supra-state organizations do not have sufficient capacity to bring about significant change. “You need more than a core of civil society activists.” Finally, the democratization process must be fundamentally intercultural.

Maria Fernanda Tuozzo summarized the two final proposals:

**Proposal 1: Enhance capacity building at national and local civil society and parliamentary levels to increase involvement and oversight capacities.**

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This would help with the following:

- Trade negotiations;
- Macro-economic policies and decision making (including contracting of debt and international loans);
- Government positioning regarding international financial design and local standards of financial regulation.

**Proposal 2: Maintain and complement civil society strategies and demands through calls for systemic change and through reforms of the current established international economic system to better articulate proposals that challenge the dominant neo-liberal paradigm.**

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These would include action toward the following:

- Creation and support of alternative initiatives or institutions that perform similar functions to those of IFIs;
- Expansion of pressures for the inclusion of sustainable development and environmental issues in the Security Council agenda
- Expansion of campaigns and demands to modify the shareholding structures to make IFIs more equal, transparent, and accountable
- Support of greater co-operation for the establishment of international corporate laws to increase accountability
- Expansion and support for initiatives that endorse alternative models of trade

## **Track 6: Cultural Diversity—Maintaining Cultural Diversity in Global Solidarity?**

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Building global democracy requires that diverse constituencies have equal access to decision-making processes and the capacity to be heard and participate fully. However, globalization favours cultural homogenization and endangers the diversity of cultures worldwide. The sacrifice of identities and languages emerging from these cultural reference points to commercial interests deepens the inequalities between people and societies and invigorates the democratic deficit by empowering those who have

historically put in place the structures upholding these inequalities—the media, private companies and Western governments.

Track 6 was devoted to discussions on how civil society, diverse in the communities it represents, can maintain this diversity of cultures within its own organizations while remaining united against the homogenization that has come with globalization.

**Seán Ó Siochrú**, CRIS Campaign, Ireland, was the coordinator for Track 6.

## **The Threat to Cultural Diversity**

The commercially driven process of cultural globalization through media differs from previous forms of colonialism because of its for-profit dynamics. This gives it the power to challenge cultural identity and the sustainability of cultural diversity among, for instance, indigenous peoples, immigrant groups, and linguistic groups. Further, it can lead to the misrepresentation in mainstream media of women, immigrants, linguistic and cultural minorities, poor and marginalized groups, and others.

During the discussion about media concentration and the profound influence of television, one participant gave the example of the sudden interest in and knowledge of Islam throughout the world following the attacks on the USA in 2001, and the impact this has had.

Participants pointed out that the context created by globalization is not entirely negative. It opens the possibility of accountability and helps civil society to challenge inequalities in some global issues. It also gives rise to local forms of social power, from which successful forms—not only of resistance, but of counter-hegemonic strategies—might be developed. New communication and information technologies allow civil society to become an actor and to promote democratic global governance.

These challenges call for civil society's "appropriation" of media (in the sense of gaining control over governance in the public interest), the democratization of global governance, and the establishment of a human rights approach to identity and cultural diversity issues.

Participants agreed that the issue of cultural diversity is a central concern at all levels, and must not be treated as an "add-on." Different peoples' needs and interests must be taken into account effectively, and that will not occur if peoples' cultural diversity is not recognized as an asset, an inalienable right, and the basis for any sustainable democratic gain. For culture to be sustainable, it should therefore be higher up on the agenda of international NGOs active in governance issues, the present Forum included. It needs to be articulated from the international to the national to the local level, and vice versa, and the language used should be understandable at the local level.

Local and global initiatives are being implemented in media and culture, and must be reinforced in order to defend and invigorate cultural diversity, particularly with regard to media culture.

In governance issues relating to cultural diversity, participants called for more attention to development at the regional level (e.g., African Union, regional trade agreements, etc.). A worldwide NGO network in cultural diversity and cultural affairs should be developed.

Participants were reminded of the important work done by the World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD) established jointly by UNESCO and the United Nations in December 1992. The Commission prepared a policy-oriented report on the interactions between culture and development entitled *Our Creative Diversity*.

### **Cultural Sustainability, Especially in Relation to Indigenous Cultures**

Is culture a renewable resource, participants wondered? If depleted, will it take more than one generation to regenerate? Some argued that culture is indeed a renewable resource, because people are strong—yet others were less optimistic.

Youth play a critical role in cultural sustainability and renewal. On the one hand, it is important that they are exposed to and take on the “cultural memory” of their communities; on the other, the community’s culture must be transformed into the language of youth. They have a major role to play in the evolution of sustainable culture. It is also important, participants said, to help youths recognize and respect others’ ways of seeing things and, more generally, to attract them to culture. They have to be involved in all discussions regarding culture. Women, especially in traditional cultures, can be key players as they pass on traditions, arts and crafts, and other aspects of cultural heritage to children.

Participants were reminded that culture is something that children have in them, not something they learn in school. Not only do children have a name, a language, values, inherited traditions and images, and learned behaviours long before they enter the school system, but they also have creativity and imagination. “They *are* culture, they do not go to school to be cultivated. Culture is inherent.”

Information and communication flows within and outside communities are essential to cultural sustainability. However, one participant pointed out that the sustainability of Indigenous cultures requires that a part of that knowledge be maintained within the community itself and not shared. Cultures are dynamic, and cultural transformation should not be a forced process. Each cultural community, in order to survive, has to seek a balance between change and tradition, between openness and protecting its cultural identity.

It was suggested that cultures, in particular indigenous cultures, are not commodities for the tourist trade. When preserving threatened cultures (especially when doing so from the outside), there is a danger of turning these cultures and their members into folkloric commodities for visitors to gape at. Yet one participant argued that tourist appeal can become a central condition for cultural survival. She felt that cultural preservation efforts must be forward looking, not exclusively focused on the past. In that sense, tourism can have both positive and negative effects on culture.

Global and regional agreements concerning cultural diversity must be translated into languages and forms that indigenous communities can understand. Indigenous communities must also have the right to participate at all levels in their design and implementation. Participants called for ways to promote the dialogue among community, regional, and international organizations regarding cultural sustainability, and to commit local communities to vigorous participation in all development efforts. UNESCO can play an important role in ensuring cultural diversity. The vision should be to develop and promote a binding convention on cultural diversity to monitor, measure, and protect it. However, if some of the key players do not support the convention, or if UNESCO only comes up with a declaration with no binding power, the situation will not improve. An organization is also needed to monitor the effects of globalization on culture and to measure the impacts of trade agreements on culture. The commodification of culture must not be allowed—culture should not be included in trade negotiations.

Cultural sustainability has to be seen as local as possible—or there will not be any sustainability. “All communities should have the opportunity to make choices.” Participants suggested that when communities are informed about options and consequences, they can develop realistic strategies that will safeguard their interests and respond to their needs.

Generally speaking, participants agreed, it is very difficult to mobilize people around culture, as it is not seen or treated as a political issue. However, Québec is doing better than most other countries and provinces.

## **Linguistic Diversity**

At the current rate, half of the 6700 languages that exist today will have disappeared by the end of the century: many of the threatened languages are spoken in the poorest countries. Yet language diversity is essential to cultural diversity. To lose one’s language is to lose one’s identity. In that sense—and because people can only participate in the social, political, and economic activities of their region and their country if they understand the language spoken—linguistic diversity is a fundamental condition of democracy.

The domination of English is obvious in every region of the world, participants agreed. Two thirds of the world’s population learns English (for various reasons), yet it is the mother tongue of only a fraction of these people. The English used for international

dialogue has a limited vocabulary of only 1500 words, which prompted one participant to ask if English could be the language that is threatened.

One participant suggested exploring the possibility of using a neutral international language (such as Esperanto) for wider communication, in order to protect linguistic diversity from the linguicidal effects of hegemonic languages. However, others pointed out that the adoption of such an international language is an improbable proposition, given the stronghold of the English language, and that the neutrality of Esperanto is debatable, given that it is a Western creation. Participants concluded that the domination of English is not necessarily a bad thing. For one thing, as some pointed out, iconic figures such as the Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela speak English. In addition, one main language of communication allows for increased citizen participation in civil society and government, as well as in development.

Participants discussed how language diversity can be a source of inconvenience, making communications between groups difficult. One member of the group suggested that it is essential to get the stories and language of the minorities and the least powerful.

Beyond language differences, there are also differences in communication styles. Sometimes, stories are needed to make a point, although discourses and abstracts are the prevailing mode of communications. Having to learn two languages in school can also handicap some children and thus compromise their academic achievements.

International and national NGOs should practise linguistic diversity in their own activities. As a start, the group called on all those present—

- To examine their current linguistic diversity and report on it;
- To create spaces for linguistic minorities in national, regional, or global civil society organizations' fora (such the World Social Forum and national and regional counterparts);
- To draft, implement, and promote codes of conduct in the area of linguistic diversity;
- To enhance the sections on linguistic diversity in the UNESCO Convention; and
- To help UNESCO exert leadership in the area of linguistic diversity, with the creation of a global charter.

It would be useful to gather and disseminate best practices for linguistic diversity. For example, community media and Internet are excellent means to breathe new life into minority and endangered languages. Community radios could give air time to minority languages. Some participants suggested that a holistic approach to community development, focusing on its culture in the broadest sense as well as on its linguistic repertoire, is most likely to help endangered languages.

The most important element in any minority-language group is young people: their use of the language and their desire to pass it on to the next generation determines whether the language survives. Education has a key role here. The education system must find ways

to teach multiple languages without sacrificing quality for quantity. Revisiting education policies from the point of view of linguistic diversity could strongly increase the likelihood of achieving the second goal (universal access to education) of the Millennium Development Goals.

Civil society also has a part to play. Participants pointed to Québec where, from a declining language, French has been made the language of culture and economic success. Civil society should appropriately address current threats to cultural diversity and reaffirm commitment to linguistic diversity. For example, civil society can play a role in ensuring that local knowledge, customs, and languages are valued over those from elsewhere. Pressure should be put by civil society on governments at national and regional levels to adopt linguistic and cultural policies and legal frameworks to protect and promote linguistic diversity, with a special regard to basic education.

Language policies constitute one of the main dangers for language diversity, as they can allow the imposition of a language at the national level. As language is a path to power, language policy should facilitate the participation of the population in a democratic way.

One participant stressed that linguistic and cultural diversity should not be confused. While some Aboriginal peoples in Canada have lost their language and speak only English or French, they nevertheless have retained their Aboriginal culture and values. Once traditional cultures and values are revived, then languages can be revived.

Participants concluded that linguistic diversity even has implications in terms of human sustainability, as language barriers can prevent some marginalized groups from understanding various socio-cultural and health issues.

### **The Role of the Media, Especially “Pro-People” Media**

Community media, especially community radio, help civil society to appropriate media and communication. In Colombia, for example, there has been a successful push to consolidate community radio, in light of a changing political culture and the recognition of social diversity in the country. The program of Community of Citizens Radios promotes the direct expression of groups of citizens through local mass media. It succeeded in bringing together the very diverse players of the country’s civil society, through a community radio that has been broadcasting successfully for 10 years. Over the years, it has extended its reach and now covers close to half the Colombian territory, despite serious economic, political, and military problems. Most citizens have access to it, even in areas of extreme poverty.

Underlining the central role played by community radios in making information accessible to all, a participant denounced the closing down of CKAC (the first francophone radio station in Canada dedicated to news) after it was bought by one of the country’s largest radio stations.

To respect cultural identity and protect cultural diversity, participants called for not only a “for-the-people” but also a “by-the-people” approach to counterbalance the mainstream media-driven global culture. They also saw a need for global and national legal and regulatory recognition of community radio and community media as a common good. Funding should be provided for local people to access media, as well as for technical tools and capacity building. They pointed out that the key problem with community radio is that of copyright (where compliance is extremely complex and expensive), and that copyright laws should be demystified.

A number of suggestions were made by participants:

- Improve representation of minorities in mainstream media (including television) through networking.
- Develop horizontal networks between individuals and communities.
- Promote children and adult education on media literacy.
- Explore civil society proposals for a communication rights approach, in support of cultural identity and the protection of cultural diversity.
- Pressure governments and civil society in the discussion of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Products and Cultural Expressions.
- Clarify civil society demands for accountability in the World Trade Organization and its intellectual property agreement, as well as bilateral commercial treaties affecting cultural diversity.
- Make culture freely available for all use, and restrict only to maximize the diversity of cultural forms.
- Prevent an excessive concentration of media.
- Increase communications among socio-cultural groups, including existing local and community radios.

### **Pros and Cons of Globalization for Culture and Cultural Diversity**

In closing, participants discussed how globalization has the potential to increase freedom for everyone—depending of whose vision defines globalization. Film industries, for example, have access to markets without restrictions. However, how do artists in developing countries access major distribution systems?

Participants agreed that globalization poses dangers to culture:

- It can increase the income gap, an area in which the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization bear a great responsibility by imposing the neo-liberal model;
- Smaller cultural industries may not have access to subsidies;
- Free trade regulations make it difficult (and sometimes impossible) for governments of developing countries to provide subsidies for culture in their countries;

- Cultural agreements do not necessarily foster cultural diversity depending on their focus;
- When driven by profit, culture becomes a commodity. If treated like a product, it will become homogenized.

### **Three key recommendations:**

1. Create a lobby network among G05 participants for the UNESCO Convention and related processes.
2. Support appropriation of the media by the people at all levels—"the democratisation of the media sphere"—as a means to energize ongoing cultural diversity from the ground up. (This includes community media and media education activities in schools.)
3. Enable G05 organizations to launch concrete initiatives to ensure linguistic diversity in their own midst (through a linguistic diversity audit, for example). "NGOs should practise what they preach."

## **Twelve Most Relevant Civil Society Proposals for Building Global Democracy**

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### **Track 1: Civil Society Engagement; Changing Territorial Priorities**

1. Regional integration should recognize cultural and social issues beyond the political and economic; it could, in fact, empower civil society. To help meet that end, a civil society charter or protocol should be developed.
2. Information clearinghouses or portals reflecting the information needs of all levels of civil society could provide links to information at local, national, sub-regional, and global levels. This will help meet the challenge of creating alternative community-based knowledge.

### **Track 2: International Treaties, International Law; A Hierarchy of Values?**

3. Although Article 25 of the Declaration of Human Rights guarantees a minimum standard of living, the regulations of the IMF and the World Bank (both of which have far over-reached their original mandates) lead to regular, ground-level contradictions of those standards. The issues of trade, debt, and human rights should be considered in concert.

4. Sovereignty (the nation's power as decision maker on behalf of its people) and subsidiarity (decision making that can occur at many levels) are both key. For example, while decisions about global warming should be made on the global level, in cases where industries have caused water contamination, local government should have power to decide whether to pursue legal action.

### **Track 3: Global Security—Undermining Democracy?**

5. Legal intervention is necessary to counteract the push to eliminate or deregulate controls on environmental and human rights issues that have been associated with globalization. Civil society will have to become involved to provide the political will to carry out this intervention. When citizens take on their own security, it becomes a lever for governance. Local authorities and governments should involve civil society in security issues and maintain guard over all levels of democratic process.
6. An international reconciliation commission should look into the root causes of terrorism. We must distinguish the terrorist act from the reasoning of men and women who are pushed to these acts. We must not leave the military aside when discussing peace.

### **Track 4: Civil Society Participation; Opportunities and Responsibilities**

7. Global governance is not about global institutions, it is about civil society. The UN could be reclaimed, and the culture of unaccountability broken, if the local and the global were bridged by a strong civil society that was itself grounded in accountability.
8. If we want to reclaim the UN, we must insure that recommendations are followed up on through all national governments and fora. Better and more communication (new spaces for public consultations, capacity building for civil society organizations, and “report cards” on all levels of governance, among other things) could forward the drive for accountability.

### **Track 5: How to Democratically Regulate the Global Economy?**

9. There's a need for more education among civil societies. Without it, local civil societies are unable to push for accountability on the part of nationals and financial institutions. More information is needed for individual investors in order to make ethical investments and for middle-range decision makers who make policy decisions.
10. Existing IFIs must be transformed. Since significant reform will be slow (or, given the nature of the goals of these institutions, unlikely), in the meanwhile, complementary strategies and alternatives to existing IFIs must be created, including the creation of alternative institutions that have a similar purpose to IFIs.

## **Track 6: How to Maintain Cultural Diversity in Global Solidarity?**

11. Cultural agreements should be equal to or more powerful than trade agreements. The UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity must be supported through lobbying and networking.
12. There is a need for local, rights-based media, and more media education in school systems. Media is becoming less and less diverse, and more and more controlled at the international level. At present, the legal recognition of peoples' rights to use their media is not clearly recognized. This should be righted at all levels, and the radio spectrum should be recognized as a common public good.

There was also a suggestion in Track 6 that a linguistic diversity audit be conducted. NGOs should practise what they preach when it comes to linguistic diversity. They should be taking the lead in promoting diversity. Specifically, the Forum International de Montréal should report on its linguistic practices.

## **Discussion**

The facilitator opened the discussion to the floor, beginning with the suggestion that two themes had emerged:

- Life and all its aspects should be weighted above profit.
- The necessity of working within the box of existing global institutions while thinking outside the box.

A participant acknowledged the recurring call for a rights-based approach and an emphasis on local and global action. Common goals must back work on institutional transformation. However, participants voiced concern about the generality of the conclusions that had been presented, and felt that they would undermine the group's credibility if they were published. The facilitator, acknowledging that many would agree with this, reiterated that the objective was to provide a general overview and identify reoccurring themes. Responding to the criticism of lack of vision, an audience member underlined that the identification of the need for a rights-based approach was in itself a vision. The observation was made that an overall goal, a vision of "where do we want to go from here," had to be established: goals and objectives should be culled from the conference reports to develop a framework that could be used in subsequent fora.

Over the last three years, among people working at the global level there is increased interest in working on strengthening democracy at the local level. Strategies are needed to meet this task. Yet a participant from the private sector saw a lack of vision and strategy building at the conference, and other participants agreed. "What is the new vision that

will replace the neo-liberal order? We should develop the blueprints for the new world order and then develop it at the local level.”

There was a response to the emphasis on local action seen in various tracks. “I didn’t come here to work on local democracy. Global democracy is being stifled by the five bullies in the UN.... Let’s accept the challenge of dealing with the five bullies.”

The democratic deficit at the conference, another suggested, was comparable to the global democratic deficit. If the sovereign rights of individuals, the primacy of the principle of one-person-one-vote could be brought to bear at a conference, it could also be instilled at the international level.