

## **Part IV: Closing Plenary**

### **Creating a solid foundation**

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Grzybowski said the conference provided a space to explore issues and share philosophies. Over the course of the conference, he had observed a vibrant network and organic relationships within civil society that should grow beyond the event. He saw progress despite differences between and within movements, and pointed to shared values and numerous initiatives that will provide the basis for practical action.

Democracy is happening at all levels although its progress is difficult to evaluate. A solid foundation for global democracy is needed or it will crumble easily. Such a foundation must be based on openness and transparency. The challenge within the current culture is to see more than one truth and to recognize each other's ideas. Civil society is not exempt from the danger of building silos. Grzybowski also observed a lack of articulation of civil society organizations' vision and a disconnect with the public. Summarizing some of what he heard, he related discussions of the preceding days about whether or not the vision is too broad, or alternatively if it is too focused on the human rights approach. Grzybowski suggested that the ideas, visions, and strategies expressed at the conference don't necessarily reflect actions on the ground. Civil society is still viewed as disorganized and, with that view international institutions, will continue with the status quo.

Civil society has had small victories but how do these translate into tools at the international negotiation table? Furthermore, how can civil society be at that table if it can't get others on board? How can it build diversity? What is the human rights approach and what does it mean to different sectors of civil society?

Grzybowski said that much has been mulled over during the meeting but the topic of power and the definition of state, for example, had not been broached. These pressing issues need to be advanced. What does sovereignty of the people mean at different levels? The question of regionalism is also crucial.

### **Democracy at all levels**

Victoria Elias observed that although United Nations reform is important at the global level, it is less of an issue at the local level.

Coming from Eastern Europe, Elias was particularly interested in the discussions on regional blocks. "How do we continue our lobbying activities in this context?"

The discussions about trade highlighted the need for accountability, while the discussions about cultural diversity and the idea of collaboration with the military were also noteworthy.

“Democracy and participation are not favours provided to people; we all share this right,” said Elias, adding that it is also “our duty to ensure this.”

How can ideas from conferences such as this one be further disseminated and followed up at the regional level? Global democracy won’t work without national democracy—it must pervade at all levels.

### **Practical steps at home**

Rajesh Tandon was most struck by the passion for global democracy. He described how, in India, that passion is not commonly shared, and is only voiced at voting time. Even then, many are not able to exercise that right.

The presence of parliamentarians and trade unionists at the conference has opened doors to new relationships in a “monolithic world where we generally only reproduce old forms.” Although little progress was made to promote the meaning of global democracy beyond formal institutions, he suggested that this kind of understanding will come when different voices are heard with humility and when people disagree respectfully. “I take with me a new set of strategic ideas but the practical actions emerging from those will take place at home,” said Tandon.

In looking back to G02, Nigel Martin noticed that this conference attracted the same kind of people but that the agenda had advanced. “We have a focus that we didn’t have then,” he said.

Bridges were built between different constituencies and even within NGOs. That bridge building was crosscut with representation by parliamentarians, academics, scholars, and union activists. “We have opened doors with the parliamentary sector that weren’t open before.” He believed that progress was made in all sectors except the corporate.