

**A READER ON SECOND ASSEMBLY  
& PARLIAMENTARY PROPOSALS**

**Editors,**

**Saul H. Mendlovitz  
Barbara Walker**

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# **A READER ON SECOND ASSEMBLY & PARLIAMENTARY PROPOSALS**

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**Published May 2003**

**by *Center for UN Reform Education***

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## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

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## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Foreword

The *Center for UN Reform Education* is very pleased to release a new publication addressing a key issue relating to the democratization of the United Nations, entitled “A Reader on Second Assembly and Parliamentary Proposals.” Proposals for UN parliamentary assemblies, peoples’ assemblies, and second assemblies are as old as the UN itself. This reader, comprising nine valuable articles and appendices, has been edited by Professor Saul H. Mendlovitz and Barbara Walker, two important writers and editors on UN reform; and members of the Center’s board.

When the *Center* began 25 years ago, discussions of a more democratic United Nations, international democracy, and global parliaments were still considered utopian. The terms “global governance,” and “democratic global governance” were not even in the lexicon. The fact that these terms are in constant and accepted use today is a reflection of an extraordinary evolution in international affairs, one to which we hope the *Center* has contributed.

In its “Universal Declaration on Democracy” of 1997, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), comprised of 144 parliaments, affirmed that “[d]emocracy must also be recognized as an international principle, applicable to international organizations and to States in their international relations...” Such a statement by a large international forum could not have been adopted even five years earlier. Since 2000, the United Nations General Assembly and the World Trade Organization have been negotiating the establishment of ‘parliamentary dimensions’ with the IPU and other parliamentarians and organizations. The Secretary-General of the IPU has contributed one of the articles in this reader.

Thus, this reader is being published at a time when the issue of discussing ‘parliamentary dimensions’ to international organizations is moving forward much faster than anyone predicted. As the authors demonstrate, however, the issues involved are very complex, controversial and challenging. Professor Mendlovitz’s introduction provides an excellent and broad overview. Barbara Walker has also prepared a selected historical timeline on second assembly proposals.

From our meetings with UN representatives, it is evident that governments are only beginning to consider the full range of issues involved in the IPU’s and other proposals. Thus, we are especially hopeful that government legal and political advisors will benefit from the reader. But, we also know that most of our colleagues in “civil society” have only given

## Foreword

scant attention to these proposals. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may have as much at stake as national governments in the development of international parliamentary institutions.

Though this reader is inclusive and far-reaching, it raises many new questions. Foremost among these are questions about the differing roles in international affairs of NGOs and parliamentarians. Many experts argue that global civil society has already become the 'parliamentary' dimension in international and intergovernmental fora. Some argue that parliamentary representatives could never bring the expertise and resources to transnational issues that major international NGOs, such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, International Committee of the Red Cross, and World Wildlife Fund, now provide. Others argue that it is paradoxical that as the reputations of parliaments and parliamentarians are diminishing worldwide, now is not the time to consider exporting this dimension to already overburdened and highly criticized international organizations.

Cynics claim that the real motivation behind these developments is precisely to replace effective international NGOs with ineffective and government-controlled parliament representatives and bodies.

I do not believe that proposals for civil society forums and parliamentary forums need be mutually exclusive. Nor do I believe that they would necessarily cancel out each other's efforts. But, to ensure that the extraordinary role and contributions of civil society are not threatened by the development of parliamentary forums, it is vital that parliamentarians not only defend the rights NGOs have established for the last fifty years, but embrace and invite NGOs to work and consult with them in any international forums they develop. This, unfortunately, has not been the case with IPU to date, which has only accredited a handful of NGOs in the last 40 years.

The reader provides excellent articles not only on the advantages, but also on the difficulties surrounding the election of a UN or global parliament. The political difficulties are enormously challenging. A 1,000-member parliament would mean that each member, in principle, should represent six to seven million people. But, many, many nations are much smaller; thus numerous nations would need to combine across political, ethnic, language, religious and other lines just to elect one representative. For these countries, the General Assembly as presently constituted is much more 'democratic'.

An issue that is not discussed in this reader, but which as a US citizen I feel obligated to consider, is how the campaigns for a global parliament

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

would be financed? Unless fair or public financing mechanisms are prescribed, the selection of 1,000 or 3,000 parliamentarians could be unduly controlled by governments and transnational business interests. On the positive side, perhaps debating and solving these issues in establishing international elections will help galvanize reforms needed at the national level. This has happened much more than is realized particularly in the field of human rights.

These and other considerations should be considered in reading these articles, and in follow-up writings. It is our hope that this reader will greatly expand and enliven the debate about proposals for UN, WTO and other international parliamentary bodies. As stated above, this debate is occurring in the larger context of international democracy and democratic global governance. Recent geo-political developments have underscored the relevance of this larger debate. The stakes could not be greater. We should be very careful before we discard proposals for international democracy that arise almost universally in our national experiments with democracy.

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### **Purpose of Publications**

This reader is the 21<sup>st</sup> publication in the *Center's* UN Reform Series. The purpose of the *Center for UN Reform Education* in publishing this reader, and all other publications in its UN Reform Series, is to encourage and stimulate a thorough discussion of various ways to improve and strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations System. The *Center* itself does not endorse particular UN reform proposals. Accordingly, the opinions expressed in this study, as well as all other *Center* publications, are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Center* itself or any of its affiliated organizations.

~ **William R. Pace**, *President, Center for UN Reform Education*

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<i>by William R. Pace</i>	iv
<b>Introduction</b>	<i>by Saul H. Mendlovitz</i>	1
<b>ARTICLES</b>		
<b>Essay I:</b>	<b>Toward Global Parliament</b> <i>by Richard Falk &amp; Andrew Strauss</i>	11
<b>Essay II:</b>	<b>A Parliamentary Dimension to International Cooperation</b> <i>by Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary-General, Inter-Parliamentary Union</i>	20
<b>Essay III:</b>	<b>The Case for a UN Parliamentary Assembly</b> <i>by Senator Douglas Roche</i>	30
<b>Essay IV:</b>	<b>Globalization, International Democracy and a World Parliament</b> <i>by Lucio Levi</i>	54
<b>Essay V:</b>	<b>Extension of Democracy to the Global Level</b> <i>by Dieter Heinrich</i>	68
<b>Essay VI:</b>	<b>A Parliament for the Planet</b> <i>by George Monbiot</i>	74
<b>Essay VII:</b>	<b>Overcoming Practical Difficulties in Creating a WPA</b> <i>by Joseph E. Schwartzberg</i>	80
<b>Essay VIII:</b>	<b>An E-Parliament to Democratize Globalization</b> <i>by Robert C. Johansen</i>	93
<b>Essay IX:</b>	<b>An Idea Whose Time Has Not Come</b> <i>by Jeffrey Laurenti</i>	119

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Appendices:

I.	<b>Towards a Conceptual Framework to Evaluate World Parliament Proposals</b> <i>by Troy Davis (Excerpted)</i>	130
II.	<b>Selected Timeline –Events, Efforts &amp; Ideas to Create Global Assemblies</b> <i>compiled by Barbara Walker</i>	136
	<b>About <i>Center for UN Reform Education</i></b>	143
	<b>Board Members</b>	143
	<b>Participating/Cooperating Organizations</b>	144
	<b>Publications List</b>	145

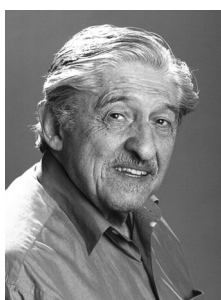


## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

# READER on Second Assembly and Parliamentary Proposals

Editors,

**Saul H. Mendlovitz & Barbara Walker**



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## READER Introduction by Saul H. Mendlovitz

### The Problem

“We the peoples of the United Nations” is the ringing opening phrase of the United Nations Charter. Yet, it is clear that the peoples of the planet have minimal participation in the UN’s two major political organs, the General Assembly and the Security Council. To be sure, each of the 191 Member States has at least one (but not more than five) representatives in the General Assembly. With the exception of the two financial organs of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, where votes are weighted according to monetary contributions, the principle of one state-one vote prevails throughout the UN System - the General Assembly, its various committees, other agencies and the Security Council. The Security Council consists of five permanent (P5) and ten rotating members, each with one voting representative (initially, the Security Council had only six rotating members --it was increased to ten in 1965).

But representation is a misleading term in this context if we are speaking of the “peoples of the world”. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council consist primarily of diplomats appointed by the executive branch of Member States. None of these appointees are chosen, let alone elected, by citizens of the Member States; none of them are even selected by parliaments, although a number of parliaments have confirmation authority. This absence (some would say failure) of election by citizens is the central focus of this work.

This volume consists of nine essays authored by individuals who (with one notable exception) are concerned with “bridging” what they identify as “the democratic deficit”. These authors share the view that the failure of elections (direct or indirect) highlights the absence of meaningful global citizen participation in the United Nations, and therefore that the organization is undemocratic. Electoral participation is viewed by them as a *sine qua non* for global democratic governance. Indeed, there is the firmly held conviction that more thoughtful decisions would result from citizen election of their representatives and increased citizen participation in deliberative processes. Furthermore, such participation would add enormously to the legitimacy of UN actions. The democratic deficit has the unfortunate consequence that the peoples of the world possess minimal identification, if any, with the United Nations, and are indifferent and

distanced from it. When there is a crisis involving one's own polity or a crisis of sufficient magnitude, as in the circumstances now taking place in Iraq (2003), individuals throughout the globe become aware of the role of the United Nations. At the same time, absent crises, there is little interest in the United Nations and a widespread feeling that individuals and groups of citizens have insignificant impact on the decision-making processes affecting the organization.

Seven contributors argue that one remedy for these deficiencies would be the establishment of a representative assembly or parliament elected (directly or indirectly) by the vote of the citizens of the world. This parliament would possess the capacity to create authoritative legislation - including enforcement structures - for the world community. This vision of a global parliament is perceived as a long-run objective. All the authors agree that most national politicians - indeed much of the general public throughout the globe - are reluctant to submit their sovereignty to a global legislative body. In order to facilitate the long-run vision seven authors advocate establishment of a Second Assembly (elected directly or indirectly by global citizens) related to the present UN General Assembly in an advisory and consulting capacity as a meaningful first step. Their essays comprehend a broad range of political processes that might be utilized for this purpose as well as some suggestions for composition and structure of a Second Assembly.

### **Civil Society Participation within the UN & throughout Global Polity**

Civil society does make itself felt within the United Nations primarily through the approved list of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) affiliated with various organs and agencies. At present there are some 2,234 NGOs registered with the United Nations. They are active contributors within the United Nations System and are persistent monitors of all open sessions of UN conferences, organs and agencies. Some 1,500 have special consultative status and may even participate in discussions and deliberations involving drafting of resolutions that lead to actual voting.

Since 1995, a few NGOs have also been meeting with members of the Security Council on specific topics including human rights, humanitarian matters, peacekeeping, and other subjects on which some NGOs have particular expertise. These meetings stem in part from an informal gathering organized by Ambassador Diego Arria of Venezuela in 1993 to discuss the Bosnia conflict. He invited Security Council members and representatives of concerned civil society to gather in the United Nations delegate

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

lounge. Two farseeing diplomats, Chilean Ambassador Juan Somavia and Portuguese Ambassador Antonio Monteiro, lobbied Security Council members to continue to meet with civil society representatives. Their efforts to institutionalize an Arria process were resisted by some of the P5. Around the same period a small number of NGOs organized the NGO Working Group on the Security Council and established a bi-weekly dialogue with Council members and high level international diplomats.

Prior to the Millennium Summit, Secretary General Kofi Annan called for a Millennium NGO Forum that took place in May 2000. As an aftermath, a World Civil Society Forum (WCSF) was convened in Geneva in 2002 and established an executive committee to plan future events. It should also be noted that one recent study argues “non-governmental organizations, united in networks are currently becoming even more powerful than individual nation states in global politics. Despite all the problems, a new source and user of power has occurred in... world politics.” (Creating Global Governance: The Role of NGOs in the United Nations, Antti Pentikainen; Finnish UN Association, 2000.)

Citizen groups throughout the world have, of course, participated in major and even radical changes in the world community. For example, the anti-apartheid movement was global, involving the active participation of transnational networks of civil society. Civil society groups were very active in obtaining an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality or threat of use of nuclear weapons (1996), promoting the landmines treaty (1997) and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (2002) (this interaction of NGOs and civil society organizations with the diplomatic community has been labeled “the new diplomacy”). Movements promoting feminism, environmental and sustainable development, arms control and disarmament, equitable treatment for indigenous peoples and other domains are notable examples of citizen participation within the United Nations and other fora.

In recent years, there has been a citizen anti-globalization movement involving many civil society groups covering a wide domain of interest with primary focus on alleged inequities produced by transnational corporations and harm done to local economies and cultures throughout the globe. For example, at the time of this writing (February 2003), over 100,000 people representing some 1,500 civil society groups met in Porto Alegre, Brazil under the rubric of the third annual World Social Forum. Simultaneously, the World Economic Forum (WEF) was holding its annual meeting in Davos. The participants were some 2,000 political, financial and industrial

elite. Civil society groups organized protest marches demanding that the conference deal more directly with poverty, mal-development, ecological concerns and economic growth in the southern tier, as well as allow their representation and voice in WEF deliberations.

These events are encouraging to those who desire citizen participation both within the United Nations and other global, political and economic processes. It is clear, nevertheless, that citizen participation is marginal to the decision-making process of the United Nations. Moreover, NGOs represent particular interest groups - national, transnational, or domain specific - and do not have elections in which the general population plays a role. It is fair to say then that the United Nations is an organization where states carry on their work through diplomacy in conjunction with the Secretary General's office and various other secretariats.

### **Brief History of Attempts for a Second Assembly & Global Parliament**

In order to appreciate the essays in this volume, it is sensible to recall briefly the history of the United Nations in terms of representation, membership in the organization and significant developments in the 57 years the organization has been in existence.

The United Nations, created as a successor to the League of Nations in October 1945, had 51 original Member States. The two defeated Axis powers, Germany and Japan, were not permitted to join, and India, Indonesia, other parts of Asia, as well as almost all Africa had not yet been decolonized. Today, there are 191 members of the United Nations which run the gambit from Nauru, population 12,391, to the Peoples Republic of China, 1.2 billion human beings. No matter what the population of the member state, it should be underscored again that the principle of one state-one vote prevails in the General Assembly, the Security Council and other agencies, albeit the five permanent members have veto power.

The concept of sovereignty - the formal authoritative basis for individual states to behave in any manner that a polity desires (frequently characterized as self-interest), so long as they do not illegally impinge upon the interest of another state - has been from its founding, and remains today, a fundamental principle of the United Nations. At the same time, the Charter of the United Nations pronounced a major, indeed radical, change, vis-a-vis the relationship of international organization and nation-state sovereignty. Under the League of Nations covenant, that organization was unable to act on matters of war and security unless there was unanimity in its Assembly. The UN Security Council voting procedure is a radical break from that

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

practice. When nine members of the Security Council vote without a veto by one of the P5, that body has the legal capacity to bind all the states of the world to deal with threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression (Article 39). At the time of Charter adoption, this was considered by many to be extraordinary arrogation of supranational authority. To be sure, this authority has been used episodically, and never against a P5 member. During the past two decades, however, this binding capacity has expanded to include egregious human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

The founding of the United Nations was widely viewed throughout the globe as a major advance in the development of international organizations heralding the possible fruitful coordination and cooperation of states in a wide variety of fields. Nevertheless, there were individuals and groups who were very critical of the Charter of the United Nations, especially for what they considered to be its inability to deal effectively and authoritatively with issues of war and peace – “the scourge of war.” Historically, these criticisms had their origin in the period following World War I and centered on the necessity of strong centralized government at the global level to maintain the peace through world institutions with binding legislative capacities and effective enforcement structures.

For example, H. G. Wells in “The Common Sense of World Peace” (1929) called for the establishment of a federal world state, as did Nicholas Murray Butler and Grenville Clark during this period. Emory Reves’ essay, “The Anatomy of Peace” (1945) strongly advocated a world federal government and was discussed throughout the globe. Eminent individuals such as Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell expressed their approval of some plan for world federalism. The World Federalist Movement (WFM), organized in 1946, called for the establishment of a world government and in 1947-48, had one million members. WFM vigorously advanced a drastic revision of the United Nations so that the organization would be more effective in the field of war prevention, disarmament and global police forcing.

Robert Maynard Hutchins organized a group directed by Giuseppe Alonzo Borgese which called for the establishment of a world federal government with nine regional supranational states as members of a much more powerful world organization (Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution, 1948). Grenville Clark and Louis Sohn, building on a volume written by Clark, *A Plan for Peace* (1951), expanded that volume into a major proposed treaty under the title, *World Peace Through World Law*



(1958). It called for a limited world government to ensure security of all states by outlawing armed conflict and establishing a world peace system.

A central feature of these proposals, as noted above, was the creation of a global parliament with, at a minimum, legislative capacity in the security domain. Whatever the units of membership, states or regions, and the domains to be covered - complete and general disarmament, global police forces, compulsory jurisdiction or, as in the Hutchins program, a world currency, global financial institutions, taxing and the like - these proposals advocated a legislature or parliament with formal authoritative capacity.

The Center for War/Peace Studies directed by Richard Hudson has been promoting over the past two decades a voting scheme, The Binding Triad. This plan calls for binding legislation emanating from the General Assembly with three differing votes, each needing some kind of majority: the present one state-one vote with a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly; some weighted voting formula based on population of various members; and a weighting based on financial assessments to the United Nations. (For an analysis of this plan and other voting schemes, see monograph 17, *Alternative Voting Systems in International Organizations*; Paul Szasz, *Center for UN Reform Education*, May 2001) As the Appendix in this volume documents, there have been various individuals and groups over the past 50 years who have advocated a second assembly or world parliament, and, indeed, continue to do so. One prominent former United Nations official, Erskine Childers, was a staunch proponent of a UN Parliamentary Assembly. (*Renewing the United Nations System*, Childers with Urquhart, Chapter XI, 1994)

### **Summary of Contents:**

In addition to the consensus (with one exception) on the democratic deficiency, the authors attend to a common set of issues, albeit with more or less emphasis. They include the following: representation, transparency and accountability within the context of democracy; decline of the capacity of the sovereign state; the impact of globalization; the expanding role of transnational civil society in various domains; relationship to the World Trade Organization (WTO); the European Parliament as a model for a global parliament; and enhancement of regional and UN authority. While the authors are very much aware of prior efforts to promote a global assembly or even world government, they do not focus on the latter. They see the establishment of a global parliament, uni or bicameral, as an ultimate goal, but as noted above recommend starting with a second assembly which,

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

like the European Parliament, would act in an advisory consulting capacity that would develop into an authoritative political organ.

***Toward Global Parliament:*** Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss envision the establishment of a transnational civil society organization made up of various interest groups which would establish a global assembly. They are careful to include the business and financial communities in the civil society universe. They offer two alternatives. First, this set of interest groups would interact with receptive states (again the “new diplomacy”), mirroring the processes of the Kyoto global warming treaty, as well as the aforementioned land mines convention and the International Criminal Court. The assembly could be created and organized by civil society without a formal treaty process. In the alternative, or concomitantly, they suggest a “single negotiating text method,” a frequent vehicle for carrying on multilateral negotiations. A political social movement would be mobilized by civil society to promote a formal treaty emanating from these negotiations. They suggest that as few as 20 ratifying states would be sufficient to formalize this assembly.

***A Parliamentary Dimension to International Cooperation:*** The International Parliamentary Union (IPU) founded in 1889 originally invited individual parliamentarians from around the globe to become members. In 1923 this practice was changed to admit only representatives of national parliaments and as recently as 2001 these regulations were strengthened to allow only parliaments themselves as members. In 2002 IPU was granted UN special observer status (comparable to that of the Vatican) with enhanced authority and participation including the unique right for the IPU to publish and distribute their documents through UN channels. It is against this backdrop that Anders Johnsson, IPU Secretary-General, advocates a parliamentary dimension and suggests a specific program for liaison between three IPU committees and United Nations officials. He pointedly rejects, at this time, a Second Assembly let alone a global parliament.

***The Case for United Nations Parliamentary Assembly:*** Douglas Roche analyzes the possibility of establishing a Second Assembly and explores two ways to achieve this goal. The first would make use of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) and its process whereby existing parliaments select other parliamentarians as the members for a new assembly. As a significant figure within IPU, Roche has a great deal of sympathy for this process and provides a full discussion of why that would be sensible. Despite the advantages he catalogs, he believes that popular legitimacy throughout the globe requires a new parliamentary assembly established by and carried



on through citizen election. Unlike Anders Johnsson, Roche is very much in favor of establishing a Second Assembly.

***Globalization, International Democracy and a World Parliament:*** Lucio Levi envisions a world parliament elected by universal suffrage of world citizens. Written within the context of WFM discussions, he accepts the long-range goal of a world federalist state. He reviews various proposals adverted to by other authors in this volume, including Global Civil Society Forum, Virtual World Parliament, WTO parliamentary assembly and a UN parliamentary assembly. He sees these initiatives as promoting a process that would lead to the establishment of a world parliament.

***Extension of Democracy to the Global Level:*** Dieter Heinrich, one of the early pioneers in the World Federalist Movement for a UN Parliamentary Assembly, argues that citizens have a “human right” to be represented in political decision-making as it affects their lives. The extension of this fundamental principle of democracy to the global level, Heinrich contends, is both a moral imperative and a matter of sound governance.

***A Parliament for the Planet:*** George Monbiot believes that many individuals and groups throughout the world, as well as political and financial elites, are indifferent or opposed to the establishment of a world parliament. The control of the economic and military structures of the world by the major industrialized states, however, not only leads to an increasing gap between the rich and poor throughout the globe, but is fermenting serious dissatisfaction that may lead to significant violence in all parts of the world. In his view, the necessity for organizing a global parliament is essential if we are to avoid the consequences of this dangerous trend. Monbiot, a political journalist, has participated in many of the world social fora of the past two decades and feels that transnational civil society networks provide the basis for initiating a movement for a global parliament.

***Overcoming Practical Difficulties in Creating a WPA:*** Joseph E. Schwartzberg, in addition to reviewing many of the problems involved in creating a world parliament, takes on the formidable task of providing one precise model of how to achieve a representative system in which all the peoples of the world would have the opportunity to vote. His “technical” solution for this issue is a major contribution. It is clear that there will have to be a detailed statement of what the units of voting and representation will be in order to achieve a global consensus for a world parliament assembly.

***An E-Parliament to Democratize Globalization:*** Robert Johansen argues that beyond a democratic deficit, the present global political system has action, resource, and vision deficits, each of which must be addressed in

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

order to deal with the major problems of the globe. In his view, the presence of 25,000 parliamentarians who have already been elected in their own societies constitute a natural base for establishing a global parliament. He believes parliamentarians are in a position to use the Internet for ongoing discussions of global political problems, and, in essence, could become a virtual or e-parliament. The parliamentarians would assume responsibility for establishing a second assembly that would initially act as a consultative group to the General Assembly. He provides a very careful discussion of the arguments against the establishment of such an e-parliament, including how to incorporate parliamentarians who are citizens of non-democratic states. Over time, the organization of this second assembly, including a citizens forum, would be organized into a political legislative body with authoritative capacity.

*An Idea Whose Time Has NOT Come:* Jeffrey Laurenti's essay confronts directly the view calling for a world parliament. Our reason for including only one such statement is twofold. First, while there is a growing movement, especially amongst European social activists, for the establishment of a world parliament, it is clear that the vast majority of political, business and financial elites either are indifferent or very much opposed to this initiative. Moreover, the vast majority of the world's people have not yet been made aware of this initiative. This volume aims at engaging individuals throughout the globe in discussion on the merits of establishing a second assembly and a world parliament. Secondly, Laurenti has written a compelling argument against the establishment of a world parliament. His analysis deals with issues of inclusivity, authority and efficiency of a world parliament. He maintains that the other authors have insufficiently explored the notion of a democratic deficit. Laurenti also makes the argument that the contemporary world is made up of differing civilizations, cultures, value systems, state organizations and state interests that are frequently incompatible and even hostile to one another. He believes that under these circumstances, it is almost impossible to achieve agreement on composition, let alone the working of such an assembly. Thus, his conclusion - an idea whose time has *not* come.

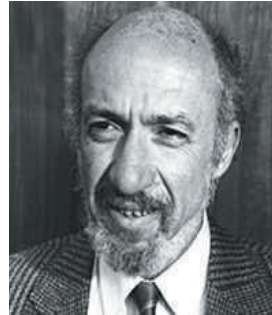
Laurenti's essay is trenchant and comprehensive. The editors believe, however, that his arguments opposing the establishment of a world parliament are adequately addressed by the other authors. Readers, of course, will make their own judgments on this matter. Our hope is that this volume will stimulate and contribute to discussion within the diplomatic community and throughout civil society globally.

## Toward Global Parliament\*

by

**Richard Falk & Andrew Strauss**

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## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

### **CHALLENGING THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT**

One crucial aspect of the rising disaffection with globalization is the lack of citizen participation in the global institutions that shape people's daily lives. This public frustration is deeper and broader than the recent street demonstrations in Seattle and Prague. Social commentators and leaders of citizens' and intergovernmental organizations are increasingly taking heed. Over the past 18 months, President Clinton has joined with the secretary-general of the United Nations, the director-general of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the president of the World Bank to call for greater citizen participation in the international order.

But to date, these parties have not clearly articulated a general vision of how best to integrate a public role into international institutions. So in the absence of a planned design, attempts to democratize the international system have been ad hoc, as citizen organizations and economic elites create their own mechanisms of influence. In domestic politics, interest-group pluralism flourishes within a parliamentary system of representation. In global politics, interest-group pluralism is growing, but no unifying parliament represents the public interest. This state of affairs cannot last in a world where the prevailing understanding of democracy does not accept the fact that unelected interest groups can speak for the citizenry as a whole. Any serious attempt to challenge the democratic deficit must therefore consider creating some type of popularly elected global body. Before globalization, such an idea would have been considered utopian. Now, the clamor of citizens to participate internationally can no longer be ignored. The only question is what form this participation will take.

### **DECISION-MAKING GOES GLOBAL**

Behind this clamor lies a profound shift in power. Thanks to trade, foreign direct investment, and capital flows, globalization is dispersing political authority throughout the international order. International governance is no longer limited to such traditional fare as defining international borders, protecting diplomats, and proscribing the use of force. Many issues of global policy that directly affect citizens are now being shaped by the international system.

Workers can lose their jobs as a result of decisions made at the WTO or within regional trade regimes. Consumers must contend with a market in which state-prescribed protections such as the European ban on hormone-fed beef can be overridden by WTO regulations. Patients who need

medicines pay prices influenced by WTO-enforced patent rules, which allow pharmaceutical companies to monopolize drug pricing. Most of the 23 million sub-Saharan Africans who have tested positive for the AIDS virus cannot afford the drugs most effective in treating their illness. They will die much sooner as a consequence.

For the half of the world's population that lives on less than \$2 a day, governmental social safety nets have been weakened by IMF decisions. The globalized economy has not meaningfully reduced poverty despite a long period of sustained growth. Economic inequality is on the rise, as is the marginalization of regions not perceived as attractive trading partners or "efficient" recipients of investment. Furthermore, environmental trends pose severe dangers that can be successfully dealt with only through global action and treaties. Against such a background, it is little wonder that people who believe they possess a democratic entitlement to participate in decisions that affect their lives are now starting to demand their say in the international system. And global civil society had thus far been their voice as they attempt to have this say.

### **CIVIL SOCIETY'S GLOBAL PRESENCE**

Civil society, made up of nonprofit organizations and voluntary associations dedicated to civic, cultural, humanitarian, and social causes, has begun to act as an independent international force. The largest and most prominent of these organizations include Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Oxfam, and the International Committee of the Red Cross; in addition, the UN now lists more than 3,000 civil society groups.

During the 1990s, these transnational forces effectively promoted treaties to limit global warming, establish an international criminal court, and outlaw antipersonnel landmines. These same actors also helped persuade the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the legality of nuclear weapons and defeat a multilateral investment agreement. More recently, civil groups mounted a drive to cancel the foreign debts of the world's poorest countries. Although these efforts remain a work in progress, civil society to date has been indispensable in furthering them.

During the early 1990s, civil society's organizations began visibly cooperating at large international conferences of states. When conservative political pressures forced an end to these conferences, civil society began to coalesce to act cohesively and independently in the international arena. For example, 8,000 individuals representing civil society organizations met in May 1999 at The Hague Appeal for Peace to shape strategy and agree

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

on a common agenda. Among those attending were such luminaries as Nobel Peace Prize winners Desmond Tutu, José Ramos-Horta, and Jody Williams. Similar smaller meetings in South Korea, Canada, Germany, and elsewhere followed.

These meetings were a prelude to the Millenium NGO Forum held at the United Nations in May 2000, to which UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan invited 1,400 individuals representing international civil society groups to present views on global issues and citizen participation in decision-making. The forum agreed to establish a permanent assembly of civil society organizations, mandated to meet at least every two to three years, before the UN General Assembly annual session. Although it is still to be realized, such a forum might earn recognition over time as an important barometer of world public opinion—and a preliminary step toward creating a global parliament. Regardless of how this specific forum develops, civil society will continue to institutionalize itself into an independent and cohesive fore within the international system.

### **THE CORPORATE MOVERS**

Through expanding trade and investment, business and banking leaders have also exercised extraordinary influence on global policy. Even in formerly exclusive arenas of state action, these private-sector actors are making a mark. For example, Secretary-General Annan has made “partnering” with the business community a major hallmark of his leadership. The United Nations has now established a formal business advisory council to formalize a permanent relationship between the corporate community and the UN.

As with citizen groups, elite business participation in the international system is becoming institutionalized. The best example is the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. In the 1980s, the WEF transformed itself from an organization devoted to humdrum management issues into a dynamic political forum. Once a year, a thousand of the world’s most powerful business executives get together with another thousand of the world’s senior policymakers to participate in a week of roundtables and presentations. The WEF also provides ongoing arenas for discussion and recommendations on shaping global policy. It is notable that Annan’s ideas about a UN partnership with the business community have been put forward and endorsed during his frequent appearances at Davos. In addition, the WEF also conducts and disseminates its own research, which not surprisingly shows a consistently neoliberal outlook. For example, it produces a well-publicized annual index ranking the relative economic



competitiveness of all countries in the world. The Davos assembly and overlapping networks of corporate elites, such as the International Chamber of Commerce, have been successful in shaping compatible global policies. Their success has come in the expansion of international trade regimes, the modest regulation of capital markets, the dominance of neoliberal market philosophy, and the supportive collaboration of most governments, especially those of rich countries.

### **PONDERING A GLOBAL PARLIAMENT**

Global civil society still cannot match the resources and power linkages of the corporate and banking communities. But many civil society groups have carved out niches within the international order from which to influence decision-making by relying on imagination and information. The evolution of these two networks—civil and business—has been largely uncoordinated, and it remains unclear how they could fit together in a functionally coherent and representative form of global governance. Neither can claim to represent citizenry as a whole. As global civil society acquires a greater international presence, its critics are already challenging its claims to represent the public interest. The charge of illegitimacy has even greater resonance when leveled at corporate and banking elites, who do not speak for organizations.

Now that the global system is increasingly held up to democratic standards—and often comes up short—those people who find their policy preferences rejected are unlikely to accept the system's determination as legitimate, and the democratic deficit will remain a problem. Only when citizen and business interests work together within an overarching representative body can they achieve policy accommodations that will be seen as legitimate. For the first time, a widely recognized global democratic forum could consider environmental standards and deliberate on economic justice from the perspectives of both North and South. Even an initially weak assembly could offer some democratic oversight of international organizations such as the IMF, the WTO, and the World Bank.

Unlike the United Nations, this assembly would not be constituted by states. Because its authority would come directly from the global citizenry, it could refute the claim that states are bound only by laws to which they give their consent. Henceforth, the ability to opt out of collective efforts to protect the environment, control or eliminate weapons, safeguard human rights, or otherwise protect the global community could be challenged.

In addition, the assembly could encourage compliance with established

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

international norms and standards, especially in human rights. The international system currently lacks reliable mechanisms to implement many of its laws. Organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and even the International Labor Organization attempt to hold states accountable by exposing their failures of compliance, relying on a process often referred to as the “mobilization of shame.” In exercising such oversight, a popularly elected global assembly would be more visible and credible than are existing watchdogs who expose corporate and governmental wrongdoing.

The assembly’s very existence would also help promote the peaceful resolution of international conflicts. Because elected delegates would represent individuals and society instead of states, they would not have to vote along national lines. Coalitions would likely form on other bases, such as world-view, political orientation, and interests. Compromises among such competing but nonmilitarized coalitions might eventually undermine reliance on the current war system, in which international decisions are still made by heavily armed nations that are poised to destroy one another. In due course, international relations might more closely resemble policymaking within the most democratic societies of the world.

### **ALL THOSE IN FAVOR**

In spite of its advantages, would the formation of such an assembly threaten established state and business interests so much that its creation would become politically untenable? The European Union’s experience suggests otherwise. Established by states—and with little initial authority—the transnationally elected European Parliament has now become powerful enough to help close a regional democratic deficit.

As with the early European parliament, a relatively weak assembly initially equipped with largely advisory powers could begin to address concerns about the democratic deficit while posing only a long-term threat to the realities of state power. Systematic transformation of world order that would largely affect successors would not significantly threaten those political leaders who are inclined to embrace democratic ideals. Indeed, it might even appeal to them.

Despite these humble origins, the assembly would have the potential to become an extremely important fixture of the global architecture. Upon the assembly’s inception, civil society organizations would almost certainly lobby it to issue supportive resolutions. Groups who opposed such resolutions could shun the process, but that is not likely: they would



concede the support of the world's only elected democratic body. Over time, as the assembly became the practical place for clashing interests to resolve differences, formal powers would likely follow.

Some business leaders would certainly oppose a global parliament because it would broaden popular decision-making and likely press for transnational regulations. But others are coming to believe that the democratic deficit must be closed by some sort of stakeholder accommodation. After all, many members of the managerial class who were initially hostile to such reform came to realize that the New Deal—or its social-democratic equivalent in Europe—was necessary to save capitalism. Many business leaders today similarly agree that democratization is necessary to make globalization politically acceptable throughout the world.

As the recent large street protests suggested, globalization has yet to achieve grassroots acceptance and legitimacy. To date, its main claim to popular support is not political but economic: it has either delivered or convincingly promised to deliver the economic goods to enough people to keep the antiglobalization forces from mounting an effective challenge. But economic legitimacy alone can rarely stabilize a political system for long. Market-based economic systems have historically undergone ups and downs, particularly when first forming. The financial crisis that almost triggered a world financial meltdown a few years ago will not be the last crisis to emerge out of globalization. Future economic failures are certain to generate political responses. Standing in the wings in the United States and elsewhere are politicians, ultranationalists, and an array of opportunists on both the left and the right who, if given an opening, would seek to dismantle the global system. A global parliament is therefore likely to serve as an attractive alternative to those people who, out of enlightened self-interest or even public-spiritedness, wish to see the international system become more open and democratic.

## **MAKING IT HAPPEN**

Although the raw political potential for a global assembly may exist, it is not enough. Some viable way needs to be found for this potential to be realized, and it can most likely be found in the new diplomacy. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which has been solely an affair among states, new diplomacy makes room for flexible and innovative coalitions between civil society and receptive states. The major success stories of global civil society in the 1990s—the Kyoto global warming treaty, the convention banning land mines, and the International Criminal Court—were produced in this

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

manner.

Civil society, aided by receptive states, could create the assembly without resorting to a formal treaty process. Under this approach, the assembly would not be formally sanctioned by states, so governments would probably contest its legitimacy at the outset. But this opposition could be neutralized to some extent by widespread grassroots and media endorsement. Citizens in favor could make their voices heard through popular, fair, and serious elections.

Another approach would rely on a treaty, using what is often called the “single negotiating text method.” After consultations with sympathetic parties from civil society, business, and nation-states, an organizing committee could generate the text of a proposed treaty establishing an assembly. This text could serve as the basis for negotiations. Civil society could then organize a public relations campaign and persuade states (through compromise if necessary) to sign the treaty. As in the process that ultimately led to the land mines convention, a small core group of supportive states could lead the way. But unlike that treaty, which required 40 countries to ratify it before taking effect, a relatively small number of countries (say, 20) could provide the founding basis for such an assembly. This number is only a fraction of what would be needed for the assembly to have some claim to global democratic legitimacy. But once the assembly became operational, the task of gaining additional state members would likely become easier. A concrete organization would then exist that citizens could urge their governments to join. As more states joined, pressure would grow on nonmember states to participate. The assembly would be incorporated into an evolving international constitutional order. If it gained members and influence over time, as expected, its formal powers would have to be redefined. It would also have to work out its relationship with the UN. One possibility would be to associate with the General Assembly to form a bicameral world legislature.

The pressures to democratize the international system are part of an evolutionary social process that will persist and intensify. The two dominant themes of the post—Cold War years are globalization and democratization. It is often said that the world is rapidly creating an integrated global political economy, and that national governments that are not freely elected lack political legitimacy. It is paradoxical, then, that a global debate has not emerged on resolving the contradiction between a commitment to democracy and an undemocratic global order.

This tension may be the result of political inertia or a residual belief

that ambitious world-governance proposals are utopian. But whatever the explanation, this contradiction is spurring citizen groups and business and financial elites to take direct actions to realize their aspirations. Their initiatives have created an autonomous dynamic of ad hoc democratization. As this process continues to move along with globalization, pressures for a coherent democratic system of global governance will intensify. Political leaders will find it more difficult to win citizen acquiescence to unaccountable policies that extend globalization's reach into people's lives. To all those concerned about social justice and the creation of a human global order, a democratic alternative to an ossified, state-centered system is becoming ever more compelling.

## **A Parliamentary Dimension to International Cooperation**

by

**Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary-General  
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**



**IPU Secretary-General Anders B. Johnsson** entered a four-year term of office in July 1998, which was renewed in 2001. Prior to being elected IPU Secretary-General, he occupied the posts of Deputy Secretary-General and Legal Advisor (1994-1998) and Assistant Secretary General (1991-1994). In these positions, Secretary-General Johnsson directed the development of IPU activities to promote and strengthen parliamentary democracy. Prior to his service in the IPU, he spent more than 15 years in senior positions working for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Secretary-General Johnsson is an expert on international law and organization, and parliamentary diplomacy and cooperation, subjects on which he has spoken throughout the world and authored numerous papers and articles. He holds a Bachelor of Law degree from Lund University and a Master of Comparative Law degree from New York University.

## Efforts to Close the Democracy Gap

*“We are witnessing a momentous evolution in international relations that makes it urgent to bring people closer to multilateral cooperation and international negotiating forums. Here, Parliament is confronted with a major challenge and opportunity: it’s the organ of the State that has the constitutional role to represent the people and it must now contribute much more actively to international cooperation - both directly and through its world organisation, the Inter-Parliamentary Union.”*

These words were spoken by Mr. Mélégué Maurice Traoré, then Speaker of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso, when he presented for adoption the final declaration of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments that took place in the United Nations General Assembly Hall on 1 September 2000.

That event was an important milestone in parliamentary efforts to close the democracy gap in global policy and decision-making. It was organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) with the support of its member parliaments and the United Nations. It was the result of several years of debate within parliaments and the IPU on democracy at the international level, which included the question of the creation of a parliamentary assembly at the United Nations.

The idea that the United Nations should have a parliamentary wing is not new. It was first raised in the 1920s at the time of the establishment of the League of Nations. It has subsequently cropped up at regular intervals, notably in the 1950s and 60s when some non-governmental organisations argued that the UN should become more of a “world government”. With the end of the Cold War, the new wave of democratisation and the onset of globalisation as we understand it today, the question again came to the forefront in the early 1990s.

At that time, the IPU undertook a critical appraisal of the proposals that were on the table. It came to a twofold conclusion: first that the idea was one whose time had not yet come and for which there may not be a need, and second that the first premise was only valid if parliaments and the IPU itself worked much more closely with the United Nations.

These considerations led IPU’s governing bodies to adopt a strategy that would set the organisation on the path to “*providing a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation.*” Before describing this, however, a few words

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

about the IPU may be necessary.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the international organisation that brings together the parliaments of sovereign States. It is the sole organisation that represents the legislative branch of government on a global scale. Its membership today stands at 144 national parliaments.

The IPU was created in 1889. Its mission is to strive for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative institutions. Within this broad mandate, the organisation works to strengthen the sinews of democracy throughout the world.

As part of its work to promote democracy, the IPU adopted a *Universal Declaration on Democracy* in 1997. The declaration sets out the principles of democracy along with the characteristics and practical foundations of democratic government. It affirms that democracy is a universally recognised ideal, as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community. Essentially, it aims to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual and to foster social justice.

Democracy, the declaration states, is also a form of government. As such, it is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs. Participation and accountability are key components of democratic government.

The declaration concludes by outlining some basic concepts of democracy at the international level. It affirms that democracy must also be recognised as an international principle that is applicable to international organisations and States in their international relations. In particular, the declaration states, the principles of democracy must be applied to the international management of issues of global interest and the common heritage of mankind.

It is with these convictions that the IPU has set out to provide its contribution to democracy at the global level.

This started in 1995 when the IPU convened a special session of its governing body - the Inter-Parliamentary Council - in the UN General Assembly Hall. The meeting took place on the eve of the United Nations 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. After a three-day debate, the meeting adopted a declaration in which the participants called for closer cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments and for the IPU to facilitate this process.

The declaration also called for a formal agreement between the United

Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, laying down an adequate framework for cooperation between the two organizations and enabling the IPU to contribute fully to the political work of the United Nations. This would also help the United Nations and its member States, concluded the declaration,

*“...to define a new relationship with the world organization of parliaments, mirroring at the international level the relationship which exists at the national level between government and the parliament; a timely exercise when high priority is given to democracy and good governance.”*

### **UN-IPU Cooperation Agreement**

In the days that followed, UN Member States inserted a new item on the General Assembly agenda: Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In so doing, they acted out of a conviction that the UN stood to gain a great deal from working more closely with parliaments through the IPU. At their request, the United Nations and the IPU concluded a formal agreement of cooperation the following year. The agreement underscored the complementarity of the two organisations and contained provisions for cooperation, mutual representation, and so forth.

Although the agreement did not change the status of the IPU at the United Nations - the IPU remained an organisation with ECOSOC Category I Consultative Status - it led to a significant improvement of practical cooperation between the two organisations. Of course, the IPU had worked with the United Nations ever since the latter was born and IPU's statutes clearly prescribe that it *“shares the objectives of the United Nations, supports its efforts and works in close cooperation with it.”* However, the agreement gave an important impetus to this cooperation, which now included IPU support for United Nations action in a wide variety of fields.

Our history is marked by milestones, when humanity pauses and ponders upon its future. The Millennium Summit was clearly such an occasion. When UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched the idea of using the Millennium Summit to reinvigorate the United Nations and to invite the world's people to contribute to the process, the IPU was quick to react. In almost every country in the world citizens elect members of parliament to represent them in the running of the affairs of State. What more legitimate representatives could there be to speak for the people of the world at an international summit convened for the purpose of building a



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

new United Nations?

Thus was born the idea of convening a conference of parliaments represented through their Speakers, Presidents or Presiding Officers. The meeting was prepared over eighteen months and culminated in the first ever meeting of some 150 heads of parliaments on 30 August to 1 September 2000.

The declaration that was adopted by consensus was the result of a highly participatory process. It consists of four chapters. In the first, it outlines the main challenges facing the world community, in the second it refers to the United Nations as the cornerstone of strong and effective global cooperation, in the third it describes the evolution in international relations, and in the fourth and last chapter, it outlines a strategy for providing a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation.

The declaration is noteworthy both for what it says and for what it omits. In the latter category falls the idea of a parliamentary assembly for the United Nations. There is no reference to it, not because it was not discussed during the preparatory process but because it found no proponents amongst the participants.

Instead, they proposed a three-pronged strategy based on action at the national, regional and global level. Before describing that strategy, however, it should be situated in the context of their analysis of international relations and the need to fill the gap in democracy at the international level.

Indeed, the often heated debate over globalisation has taught politicians some important lessons. One of them is that globalisation demands that greater attention be paid to the wishes of the people. That, in turn, means reinforcing the role of parliament and its members as intermediaries between the complexities of international decision-making and the day-to-day existence of the individual.

More than ever before, parliaments and their members are instrumental in helping citizens and society as a whole to understand and cope with the interconnections between globalisation and their daily lives, and to translate their concerns into national and international policy. Parliaments have a key role to play in ensuring that international cooperation and decision-making are not eventually seen as posing a threat to national or local interests, or even to democracy itself.

The claim that all politics are local is now outdated. Globalisation is having a profound impact on political, economic, social and cultural relations throughout the world. It is forcing democracies to take a close look at the inner workings of their legislatures: at how they enact laws and how



they oversee the Executive.

Members of parliament in all countries have one thing in common: they are elected to represent the people of their country; they stand for the interests and aspirations of the people who voted them into office. To do that in today's world, they have no choice but to play a much bigger part in international cooperation.

It is against this background that the Speakers at the conference called first and foremost for action at the national level. Parliaments and their members must assume significantly increased responsibility in international relations and play a much more active role on such issues at home. They must be more proactive and seek to influence - on behalf of the people - their respective countries' policy on matters dealt with at the United Nations and other international negotiating fora. In other words, they should take action before treaties and agreements are concluded and referred to them for ratification and subsequent implementation.

Being more proactive at home, they realised, implied a fresh approach to the way business was conducted in parliament. They, therefore, called for a review of parliamentary procedures with a view to enabling parliament, as an institution, to play a more active part in governmental negotiations.

The Speakers were keen to ensure that they were better informed and better able to engage their respective governments on issues under negotiation. Accordingly, they also called for mechanisms that would allow them to have a continuous dialogue with public and civil society organisations, thereby facilitating their input into the decision-making process.

At the regional level, the Speakers vowed to make better use of the existing regional parliamentary organisations and, through them, seek to influence the corresponding regional inter-governmental structures. They took a similar approach at the global level where they pledged their support for the Inter-Parliamentary Union and its consolidation as the:

*“...world organisation for inter-parliamentary cooperation and for relaying the vision and will of its members to intergovernmental organisations.”*

No sooner had the conference ended its work than heads of State and government congregated in New York for the Millennium Summit. In their declaration, they mentioned the role of parliaments in international

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

cooperation. In a chapter dealing with United Nations reform, they resolved to:

*“...strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments, through their world organisation the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in a variety of fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, democracy and gender issues.”*

Laying down markers and setting goals is one thing. Putting them into practise is another. Work started as soon as the parliamentary conference ended. The IPU unveiled a reform agenda that led in September 2002, to the adoption of a reform package designed to place the organisation in a better position to provide a parliamentary dimension to the United Nations.

The traditional IPU Statutory Conference has been transformed into an Assembly with, initially, three Standing Committees dealing respectively with issues relating to peace and security, democracy and human rights, and sustainable development, finance and trade. They will work with parliamentary rapporteurs and will focus on specific issues high on the global agenda. The reform package also foresees greater emphasis in the future on monitoring, follow-up and implementation.

In parallel, the organisation has worked to change its relationship with the United Nations. In a report to the General Assembly in June 2001, the UN Secretary-General outlined several ways in which the IPU could play a role to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments. In a long list, the suggestion that the IPU could channel towards the United Nations the views of the people, in all their diversity, occupied pride of place.

### **IPU Granted Special Observer Status**

In order to accomplish this objective, however, the IPU would require a different status at the United Nations. Based on recommendations made by the Secretary-General, in November 2002 the UN General Assembly decided to grant the IPU observer status with the additional right to distribute its official documents in the General Assembly. Many have referred to this exceptional status as a kind of “super-observer” status.

While these developments have been occurring at the United Nations, a similar debate has taken place in relation to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Soon after the wheels of the WTO began turning, a heated debate

ensued both inside the parliamentary community and far outside it about whether such an important global policy-making organisation should have a parliamentary structure associated with it and, if so, what its role, function and structure should be.

The founding of the WTO with its powers to make binding rules and adjudicate in disputes, coupled with its consolidation and expansion over time, has placed the multilateral trading system at the heart of global governance. Today, the WTO is more than a mere trade organisation. Its rules extend far beyond the traditional domain of tariffs and trade in goods, and reach deep into domestic affairs affecting areas as diverse as intellectual property, services, banking, telecommunications and government procurement. The WTO has a growing impact on health, education, employment, food safety, the environment, and the management of natural resources such as forests, fisheries and water.

As a result, the WTO has encroached on some of the traditional prerogatives of legislators. Nothing could be more natural than the debate concerning a parliamentary structure for the WTO starting in parliament.

Parliamentary involvement was established from the earliest days. Already at the ministerial meeting in Singapore in 1996, members of parliament joined a number of government delegations and held a separate informal meeting. This first gathering has been followed by others, both at subsequent ministerial meetings and as special separate events.

Those who are involved in the debate largely agree on the need for action. As more and more issues are brought into the WTO fold, the balance of power is shifting further towards the executive and away from the legislative branch of government. While many parliaments ratify trade agreements, more often than not they have little or no role to play in the negotiations themselves and are simply faced with a choice of take or leave whatever conclusion is reached. While this process may be appropriate for determining the levels of border tariffs, it loses its legitimacy when extended into other national policy spheres that require significant parliamentary debate and oversight.

The risk is that trade policy will no longer reflect the full diversity of views and opinions that are required to ensure a balanced outcome. Moreover, this lack of balance has already led citizens to question the legitimacy of the WTO. What is at stake is public confidence in an open, rules-based multilateral trading system.

The debate has seen the kind of divergence of opinion that characterises parliamentary business, especially with respect to the form that a

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

parliamentary dimension should take. The European Parliament has taken a leading role in the debate advocating the establishment of a formal parliamentary structure. The IPU, equally active, has taken the view that no new structures are desired or needed. Existing parliamentary organisations can perfectly well meet the need.

A parliament has two fundamental functions; to legislate, and to oversee the executive and hold it to account. The legislative function at the WTO is undertaken by government negotiators who are held to account in their national governments and parliaments. Providing a parliamentary dimension to the WTO that seeks to mirror the constitutional role that parliaments play at the national level does not make sense.

The debate came to a conclusion in February 2003 at a parliamentary meeting jointly organised by the IPU and the European Parliament in Geneva. Five hundred delegates from 75 countries took part in the two-day event. At the end of their deliberations they adopted by consensus a declaration in which they called for the establishment of a parliamentary dimension to the WTO. The objective: to enhance transparency and accountability of WTO activities. How? By organising parliamentary meetings on a regular basis - initially once a year - that focus exclusively on the work of the WTO.

The objective of this exercise would be to oversee and promote the effectiveness of WTO activities; maintain dialogue with government negotiators and civil society; and facilitate information exchange, sharing of experiences and capacity-building for national parliaments in matters of international trade, in particular, concerning the WTO, and to exert influence on the direction of discussions within the WTO.

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### **Building a Reciprocal Relationship**

For almost a decade now, the IPU has been at the centre of a concerted effort by parliaments, governments and the United Nations and other inter-governmental organisations to bring something new and constructive to the edifice of multilateral cooperation by designing its parliamentary dimension.

The path that has been chosen involves building a reciprocal relationship between the IPU and the multilateral institutions, starting with the United Nations; a relationship that does not alter the fact that both institutions are and should remain independent of each other.

The overall objective of this two-way relationship is to bring the voice of the people to the multilateral negotiating fora and to engage parliaments

more directly in the work of these institutions. This can be done in several practical ways, including promoting parliamentary awareness and action in support of international agreements, promoting activities by parliaments and their members to mobilise public opinion and forge national support for international action, prepare analyses and reports on parliamentary activities relevant to the work of these institutions, and provide support to parliaments with the aim of increasing their capacity to carry out, at the national level, their legislative and oversight functions with regard to matters which are subject to international cooperation.

The field of cooperation will cover a large gamut of issues relating to peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, democracy and gender issues. However, some strategic planning should take place and the IPU has invited the UN Secretary-General and Member States to join the Organisation in determining specific priority issues on which the IPU could promote parliamentary attention and support.

The IPU can also increasingly and more systematically provide a platform for the United Nations to interact directly with parliaments and their members. Finally, the IPU also believes that the Organisation can play a particularly important role in certain peace-building and peacekeeping operations since it has particular expertise in organising support from national parliaments for building and strengthening democratic structures.

All of the above may well be a far cry from international parliamentary assemblies attached to the United Nations, WTO and others. However, it is vastly more practical, useful and immediate.

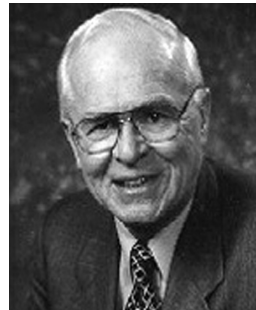
Geneva, 3 March 2003

## The Case for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly

by

**Senator Douglas Roche, O.C.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Twenty years ago, I was part of a small group of parliamentarians who held a forum at the United Nations on “The Politics of Human Survival”. This early effort at inter-parliamentary cooperation on the issues of disarmament, development and the environment brought together 55 parliamentarians from 23 countries. The keynote speaker, Saul Mendlovitz, Ira D. Wallach Professor of World Order Studies at Columbia University, shared our sense of “the possibility of enormous human catastrophe” and urged us to become a strong political movement.

The forum was the debut of Parliamentarians for World Order, which evolved into the present-day Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), an issue-oriented association of parliamentarians, who try to advance government action on the human security issues. Even at that early date, we saw the need for a UN Parliamentary Assembly, which would be consultative to the General Assembly and meet at least once a year at UN Headquarters.

The idea for United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) has no one source. It has been talked about ever since the creation of the United Nations itself. But there is, in the current political context, some movement forward on it. The achievement of the goal is so far in the distance that one can only sketch the most rudimentary outline today. Yet the essence of the idea – that the UN needs a parliamentary wing to more closely reflect the aspirations of “We the peoples of the United Nations” than are now reflected by governments themselves – is so powerful that it should be examined and worked on to further the quickly advancing processes of democracy in the world.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organization of 144 Parliaments of sovereign states founded in 1889, has become a strong proponent of the idea and now spearheads an annual meeting of parliamentarians who are otherwise attached to government delegations at the UN General Assembly.

At one of these meetings, December 4, 2001, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared:

“The parliamentary voice – the voice of the people – must be an integral component of the work of the United Nations.”

Since most of today’s challenges have a global dimension, the Secretary-General noted, “you who are schooled in the art of discussion and



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

compromise can help the nations of the world rise above their differences and work together.” Moreover, he added, “it is your unique legislative power – not least the power of your purse – that can translate international agreements into action at home, in your communities.”

The prestigious advocacy of the Secretary-General appears to have overcome the resistance of some major governments to any challenge, even an indirect one, to their control of the UN agenda. Within a year, at the 2002 IPU gathering at the UN, where 120 MPs from 34 countries and three regional assemblies engaged in dialogue with senior UN officials, the General Assembly adopted a resolution granting the IPU observer status at the UN. Even permission to “observe,” which does not confer the right to participate actively in UN debates, took years of IPU effort to achieve. The status will allow the IPU to familiarize parliamentarians with UN affairs on a regular basis. This can have significant effect in strengthening international cooperation. As Kamallesh Sharma, India’s former Ambassador to the UN, noted: “The need for cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union is more real now than it has ever been before... Parliaments and the IPU can be a bridge between the global and the local. By mobilising opinion, they can contribute to forging national support for international cooperation.”

The IPU observer status notwithstanding, the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly is still far off. But the rising tide of interest is generating a new momentum and the modalities should be studied today. I propose in this paper to look at the contemporary conditions that argue in favour of establishing a UNPA; and then to consider what a UNPA might look like and who its representatives might be.

To begin with, a parliamentary assembly implies democracy. There are possibilities and interpretations as to how, why and to what purpose a UNPA might enhance democracy. The first is to provide transparency, added legitimacy and - presumably - more effectiveness to UN operations themselves. The second would be to address more general issues of global governance that stem from perceptions and conclusions about globalisation. A third reason is linked closely to the desire by some to address a central question of international security: the role that sovereignty and sovereign states may play in preventing universal solutions to questions of basic human rights, peace and security.

The arguments below contain these assumptions in their essence. However, it is understood (perhaps reluctantly) that world federalism and the end of the state system is not in the mainstream political agenda for



a contemporary UN. The objectives of UN reform and addressing issues of international governance are reasonable and feasible in contemporary politics. Implications for a Kantian vision of world federalism can be bruited, but at this point not much more.<sup>1</sup>

A UNPA would not be a world parliament, although some supporters and detractors of a UNPA think of it as a step towards a form of world government or global federalism. World government is not a necessary criterion in discussing a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly.<sup>2</sup>

World government is not the case here. What is at issue is governance, by which is commonly understood to be the regulation of an increasingly complex and interconnected world comprising States, societies, corporations, individuals and epistemic communities.<sup>3</sup>

The question of a UNPA, then, becomes one relating to a UNPA within the UN system and a UNPA within both the growing interconnectedness of trans-national politics and existing networks of global governance. Governance, transparency, democracy, diplomacy and international norms of behaviour - how states behave when their affairs are so intertwined - these are the issues in the background when discussing the formation of a UNPA.<sup>4</sup> Specifically discussed below are those aspects of these phenomena that today seem to drive the argument for a UNPA.

## **INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND PARLIAMENTARIANS**

### **Globalization and Parliamentarians: a challenge to relevance.**

What degree of relevance and importance has parliamentary scrutiny over legislation that is increasingly being developed at the international level? The question has left domestic parliamentarians concerned they may be less effective in doing the tasks for which their legislatures were originally intended.

Leaving aside for the moment the argument that contemporary globalization is a qualitatively new factor in international relations, there remains a substantive argument that recent developments in international relations have changed the dynamics and the procedures of policy-making for some domestic political actors. Arguably, these actors, parliamentarians in particular, cannot adequately provide democratic oversight at the domestic level in the manner originally intended for domestic institutions.<sup>5</sup> Certain factors have galvanized a call by some to “democratize” the international environment through re-establishing a parliamentary presence on the international level.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

First, globalization in the post-Cold War is set opposite the removal of a strict hierarchy of claims by state to prioritize foreign policy in favour of high politics. Security by gun no longer trumps security by trade. For Western democracies and for many developing economies, trade is seen as more important than national security, or rather it is seen as national security by other means.

This elevation of trade becomes important when considering the traditional roles of various political institutions in domestic policy-making. In the name of preserving sovereignty or power (through economic well-being and competitiveness) states have chosen to pool or collect –or some would argue forego - sovereignty into multilateral regimes such as regional free-trading arrangements or the World Trade Organization (WTO).<sup>6</sup>

Placing power in international treaty arrangements and international regimes has had an impact on the balance of domestic politics. The perception is that these arrangements have strengthened the hand of the executive at the expense of the legislature. While the exact balance of this relationship varies according to domestic political-institutional arrangements in specific countries, the general trend in favour of executive powers remains a consequence of the executive's traditional discretion in handling the "high politics" foreign policy.<sup>7</sup>

A good example is the granting of "fast-track" permission by the U.S. Congress to Presidents George Bush, Clinton and George W. Bush to negotiate first CUFTA, then NAFTA and now FTAA. Here trade, typically a "low-politics" and congressional issue, was passed into the hands of the executive for negotiation, subject to a "yea or nay" scrutiny by Congress on the negotiated deal. In Canada, concern has been expressed by some parliamentarians regarding how some international arrangements replace legislation by regulation, as well as over the lack of available negotiating texts in some cases – the FTAA for example, or even the ability to vote on some treaty arrangements, such as NATO expansion.

Secondly, the complexity of these international arrangements quite often leaves experts in and out of government at an advantage over parliamentarians. Complexity and a perception that local representatives could not think beyond local problems were important arguments for seeking and granting fast-track status in the U.S. example. Many international arrangements and institutions require considerable amendments to domestic legislation and regulation. Quite simply put, parliament and individual parliamentarians can be swamped by the quantity and the complexity of

legislation as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

Thirdly, and this is the true impact of globalization as understood today, international agreements increasingly affect people at the local level. Local or domestic regulatory and legislative policy is being made at an international or trans-national level, for example: labour standards; environmental standards; redistributive or development funding; price-support mechanisms. This direct link of international policy to local policy is sometimes termed “intermestics”<sup>9</sup> – or what Anthony Giddens has called in a useful phrase, “action at distance.”<sup>10</sup>

Intermestic policy-making quite often means that local issues are lobbied and discussed at the international level as well as at – in fact concurrently with – the domestic level. Once again, this taxes the ability of parliamentarians to have complete information as well as stretching their individual resources – particularly time – as compared to both large corporate and large NGO organizations.<sup>11</sup> And as noted above, the argument is also used to keep legislators at arms length from negotiations. In the United States for example, where party discipline is a weak second to local, electoral politics, Congress was kept out of trade negotiations for fear that individual-sectoral interests would prevent any deal from occurring.

Fourthly, there is the growth of international civil society. Globalization is indiscriminate. It has benefited civic activists as well as corporations, states and individuals. The communications revolution has enabled a somewhat self-appointed “civil society” comprising trans-national issue groups and epistemic (knowledge-based) communities to interpolate themselves into intermestic policy-making. Groups that range from Amnesty International through Greenpeace through to religious organizations such as the Anglican or Catholic churches have been able to harness and coordinate international resources with increasing effectiveness. They have in essence appropriated representation, in the name of expertise and administrative efficiency, at the intermestic level, on specific issues.

The aims of many of these groups are often laudable and they can lay reasonable claim to existing within the parameters of mainstream politics in the domestic politics of many countries. Quite often too, they do represent a large body of public opinion on an issue. They can provide crucial public information or oversight functions because of their very expertise and the extent of their organizations.

However, they fail the test of democratic accountability: they are unelected and their oversight mechanisms are internal. Their probity is not in question here: it is that their function is not to represent but to present

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

– usually to one side of an issue rather than with the approved voice of the polis.

Potentially troubling is that these NGO movements are filling the policy oversight gap. Recent initiatives to open up procedures at the United Nations Security Council, for example, aimed at providing transparency through the inclusion of NGO groups who were allowed to witness proceedings - not through the inclusion of parliamentarians. Issue communities are being involved, but not the representatives of real communities. Parliamentarians and legislators could find themselves marginalized from processes for which they are perhaps the best able and the most qualified to manage.

These arguments naturally call attention to a need for parliamentarians to address a “democratic deficit” on the international stage through parliamentary representation in international governance regimes. No less should this be so than for the world’s pre-eminent international body, the United Nations.

However, translating this impulse into an effective United Nations Parliamentary Assembly will have to deal with some inherent tensions: the exact role and nature of the UN itself, and; whether the domestic call for a parliamentary arm for the UN will translate into a true UN parliament.

### **Globalization and the UN: New issues, New vitality**

The end of the Cold War has reinvigorated the United Nations. It has done so for a variety of reasons. First, the U.S.-Soviet stalemate that blocked much UN activity has been removed. There is greater scope for compromise and cooperation.

Secondly, the end of the Cold War has left greater scope for conflict in some regions, and greater scope for intervention in some conflicts. A primary example of this would be emergence of conflict(s) in the Balkans and the subsequent intervention by the European Union and then NATO under a UN flag. That NATO could be flagged to conduct a UN operation would have been unfathomable before 1990. There is an increased demand for a UN presence, and for the sanction of the UN when conducting collective security operations.

Thirdly, there are now many new members to the United Nations. Many of these consider themselves to belong to, or to aspire to, the great club of democracy.

But this reinvigoration comes with a price. UN operations and the UN budget are both under more scrutiny. In the United States, America’s conflicting political instincts of isolationism and liberal-internationalism

have turned paying UN dues into a hot domestic issue. America, the lone superpower in the world, feels the pressure to be a global policeman more than ever, and feels also the constraints of multilateral politics more than any other state. Satisfying American demands for accountability and, for lack of a better term, 'usability' is crucial if the UN is to survive. As American foreign policy and coalition operations have demonstrated, the United States has more inherent trust in NATO than it does in the United Nations. Without American commitment and American money the UN is much diminished.

Furthermore, a greater capability to intervene has also called for greater accountability. Contemporary peacekeeping entails entering into conflict situations rather than enforcing a pre-established cease-fire. Those who pay – often in soldiers' lives - as well as those who suffer, will demand transparency and accountability.

The events in Rwanda in 1994, for example, brought UN political and military leadership on peacekeeping into question. Canada, Belgium and France all held national investigations – with differing results. A UN panel, commissioned by the UN Secretary General and headed by former Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, concluded in 1999 that the genocide in Rwanda was the result of a "lack of political will" by the UN Security Council.<sup>12</sup> An OAU report issued the following year indicated more blame towards the United States, France and Belgium and the Catholic Church. In the case of Serbian 'ethnic cleansing' in Srebrenica, it was Dutch authorities who conducted a review as their soldiers were involved.

The diversity of reports, and the diversity of reasons such reports were commissioned, militates for exactly the sort of democratic, transparent, oversight role that a UNPA should provide. National inquiries, however worthy, serve national purposes. And differences in the UN, national and OAU reports indicate that UN scrutiny should not rely on the UN Secretariat to investigate itself.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, a UNPA would be more likely to keep the conclusions of such a report to the front of the UN's agenda, to ensure appropriate follow-up occurred to address issues of resources, administration and willpower, and to place such reports within the context and continuity of long-term UN operations and activities.

At the same time, as the global agenda of security has passed beyond narrow definitions of military security to encompass human security, common security and environmental security, it has brought the notion of a global society of individuals to the fore at the UN. There have been active attempts to bring UN reform and broad security issues together.

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

It should also be pointed out that the UN is becoming engaged in global society in new ways as well. Reform is on the agenda. For example, the United Nations has created a formal business advisory council to formalize a permanent relationship between the corporate community and the United Nations. This has come about in part because business itself, as with other NGOs, has become more institutionalised at the international level. It was through the mechanism of the annual World Economic Forum held at Davos, Switzerland, that Kofi Annan developed and articulated this reach to the business community.<sup>14</sup> If there is room for a business advisory council, then perhaps there is room for a UNPA.

### **FORMING A UN PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION**

#### **A UNPA and the UN**

The argument here is that a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly would be a creation of the United Nations. It would therefore reflect those structural biases of the United Nations that reinforce national sovereignty and the power of states.

A UNPA would be a parliamentary assembly for the United Nations. As such, it likely would be the largest - in terms of state membership - international parliamentary assembly, or if one prefers, assembly of international parliamentarians, extant in global affairs. However, as it would also be one bound by and to the affairs of the United Nations Organization (UNO), a little time and thought needs to be spent detailing what that means in international relations.

The UN was crafted cannily by its framers - in particular by its chief proponent Franklin Roosevelt - to balance the issues of might and right in international affairs. Roosevelt often used the folksy metaphor of the UN as a town hall, replete with fire and police services, in order to sell the UN politically to the American public. The town hall would be run by an assembly - here of nations rather than of small-town neighbours - but the police and fire services would retain their independence of action to respond to crises according to the agreed upon rules.

This metaphor is worth exploring. It tells us a few things about the UN. First, the town hall metaphor takes the notion of a community of like individuals coming together to agree on how to handle community issues and extends it from the domestic to the international arena. Here, the like individuals are states and the community issues are - or were originally intended as - collective security threats posed by other states or unforeseen



threats to individual member states. In other words, the UN is not designed to supersede or to replace the state. In fact, quite the opposite: the UN reinforces the role of states in the international system.

Secondly, the assembly of nations was to comprise national representatives – it was not an “assembly of Man” (as the gendered language of the day would have put it) – but an assembly of nations. It was an assembly of neighbours of equal legal standing with mutual and common interests to protect. Again, the effect of this is to strengthen the role and sovereignty of all states in the international area at the expense of competing representation from elements of what today is termed civil society.

There is an existing assembly in the United Nations, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), and it is an assembly of national representatives - an assembly of diplomats. This potentially has profound implications when it comes to choosing the existence and make up of a parliamentary assembly for the United Nations (a point made below).

Thirdly, it was designed and presented in a manner calculated not to alienate the American public. The ultimate success of the UN relies heavily on great power inclusion, and particularly never more so than today, on American tolerance and use of what the UN offers. It should not need to be emphasized that the American public is not well disposed toward ceding sovereignty or governance to international bodies as a general rule. It is safe to say that for the United States (as for many Western democracies), ceding money or sovereignty to an international organization is increasingly linked to transparency and accountability. And it is along those lines that any argument for a UNPA might be most likely to succeed.

In short, the architecture of the UN is about the collective security of States and about the duties of great powers to use their sovereign power wisely. Its design represents a 1945 understanding of States and power. Despite the wealth of topics the UN and its affiliates address, its primary functions are designed to handle war and peace issues, the very issues on which States are least likely to cede sovereignty or governance.<sup>15</sup>

The structural predisposition of the UN to reinforce its State-members notwithstanding, the creation of a UNPA might have subtle and long-term effects that would favour a more directly democratic form of governance for United Nations’ affairs: perhaps subsequently even for international affairs as a whole. These effects become apparent when considering the choices made when forming a UNPA.



## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

### **Constituting a UNPA Membership**

From what has been argued so far, it is clear that there is a role a UNPA can play in enhancing the legitimacy and the efficiency of the United Nations. However, the long-term dynamic of a UNPA could hinge on how it is selected and who its constituents are. The question on how to form a UNPA is wide open, but in reality there are only two extant models for international parliamentary activities: a parliamentary assembly comprising national parliamentarians or a parliamentary assembly that is selected independently. Which type is chosen will affect what a UNPA might potentially become.

### **A UNPA based on existing Parliamentarians**

This would be a UNPA comprising parliamentarians elected to their national assemblies. Existing models would be the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council (PACE), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Parliamentary Assembly and the much called for but not yet achieved parliamentary assembly of the World Trade Organization (WTO). These are all examples of what are called IPIs (Inter-Parliamentary Institutions).

Basing UNPA membership around existing national parliamentarians is an attractive option for several practical reasons.

First, national parliamentarians already exist. One huge hurdle to an independently chosen UNPA remains those issues regarding selection and/or election. The complexities in creating an appropriate electoral cycle, let alone an effective and universally acceptable electoral or selection body, are immediately apparent. Yet any attempt to create an independently selected UNPA must bring democratic credibility into the process or it will fail in the crucial criterion for the existence of the body. A UNPA will in all probability be extremely limited in its official scope, so its real value has to come from the moral weight – the correctness and extent of its franchise – that it can bring to bear.

By contrast, a body comprising national parliamentarians has the “stamp of approval” built-in. National parliamentarians can claim electoral legitimacy in their own right. Admittedly, the credibility of domestic franchises can be called into question, but the trend towards democracy has been strengthening rapidly. The UN itself reports that the number of democracies has nearly doubled since 1991.<sup>16</sup> Freedom House estimates that there are 86 “free countries” and 30 “partly free “countries representing

75% of states and 68% of the world's population. This is a good starting point. In the transparency that should be the hallmark of a UNPA, the eyes would be on those perceived non-democratic members to prove their case.

The second major point to rise would be that national parliamentarians also tend to have built-in expertise. They are already professional parliamentarians, in general familiar with parliamentary practices. This may seem a jejune point: but, research into recently formed democracies has indicated that one failing that led to crises has been that very lack of political experience and professionalism exhibited by and in new legislatures.<sup>17</sup>

National parliamentarians quite often also come with staff and money. They would provide a more effective bang for the buck. This relates as well to the point above regarding professionalism apart from being mere cost-saving.

One final point to consider here is that a UNPA is not only about democratizing the UN, but also about promoting and building democracy, civil society and good practices. A UNPA comprising national parliamentarians would provide an interesting proving ground and transmission belt for parliamentary practices back to the national level. This would particularly be the case where domestic condition would perhaps not provide material or political resources conducive to good democratic practice. In short, a national parliamentarian might find that being a member of the UNPA would make them better domestic MPs. They might receive assistance, professional training, informational, moral and political support - and even a measure of prestige and/or independence - that can make them more effective local representatives.

### **The Inter-Parliamentary Union and the UN**

This use of existing parliamentarians in a UN-based IPI is front-and-foremost because there exists a "ready-made" assembly desirous of the job – the International Parliamentary Union. The recent UN action conferring observer status on the IPU has sharpened its appetite. As a long-standing international parliamentary association, it comprises parliamentarians from most, if not all, UN Member States.

It has, over the years, developed expertise on global issues, and though formerly somewhat reticent to speak in a substantive manner has recently begun to speak out. At the IPU's recent conference in Marrakech, the organization, making the point that parliamentarians are the link between citizens' needs and related government policy, urged the international community "to reduce substantially the debt of the poorest countries and

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

to cancel the public debt of the heavily indebted poor countries...” It also urged states to expedite ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, and said that the United States should be among the first to “take action to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions...” Such resolutions are, of course, advocacy, not legislation itself. That parliamentarians operating on a world stage have now begun even to speak substantively on global issues, while commendable, may act as a yellow if not red light in securing the support of major governments for an even deeper role. Parliamentarians do not provide any trouble when they are decorous additions to government delegations at the UN. But when they actually try to move their governments’ positions forward, they will inevitably run into resistance. The more substantive the issue – e.g. getting the nuclear weapons states to comply with their obligations to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons – the greater the resistance.

Parliamentary associations that have struck bold positions find this opposition all the more apparent. Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) has developed through the past two decades into a feisty group pushing governments on such hot-button issues as peace and democracy, international law and human rights, sustainable development and population programs, and the empowerment of women. PGA members are knowledgeable and issue-oriented, as for example its sponsorship of the Six-Nation Initiative in 1984 to break the nuclear disarmament deadlock; this is precisely the reason that, unfortunately, it is an unlikely candidate to be the basis of a UNPA. The IPU, because of the diverse composition of its membership, and also because it is supported by legislated funds, is a more probable candidate.

As a professional organization of parliamentarians – concerned with the interests of parliamentarians, the IPU is interested not only in a UNPA but also in parliamentary assemblies and parliamentary oversight for all-important international organizations. For example, the IPU is arguing for the creation of a PA for the WTO, as stated in their final declaration from Doha, site of a WTO Ministerial Meeting, 11 November 2001:

We, the parliamentarians from the WTO members assembled at Doha restate our conviction that global trade concerns every individual and society as a whole. Therefore, parliamentary participation is necessary to ensure a better representation of citizens and we advocate a parliamentary dimension to the WTO. We, therefore, call on our respective governments participating in the 4<sup>th</sup> WTO

Ministerial Conference to add the following paragraph to its final declaration: “Transparency of the WTO should be strengthened by associating Parliaments more closely with the activities of the WTO.”<sup>18</sup>

What is not discussed, but which may be assumed, is that in the UN, an assembly of national parliamentarians – IPU based or not – might merely reinforce the nation-state objectives of UN politics. This potential outcome stems from two things: the characteristics of the United Nations and the general characteristics of inter-parliamentary associations.

The UN, as outlined above, is designed as an assembly of Nation States. It was not designed for democracy at the individual level, but rather a compromise of equal sovereign rights versus the interests of power – notably great powers – in the international arena. Furthermore, the core activities of the UN center on collective security issues: issues which are deemed “high politics” and tend to favour executive over parliamentary privileges. Democracy, then, is the democracy of states, not individuals. Individuals and society are represented by their governments.

A UNPA based on national parliamentarians may reinforce the predisposition to favour national policies because, in general, national parliamentarians have tended to act more as diplomatic representatives than as parliamentary ones. First, as Gary Levy noted in his study of parliamentary associations, many of these associations are justified domestically by: “the fact that these bodies, despite their non-governmental nature, often take on quasi-diplomatic functions as various countries use them as a platform to advance and defend particular policies or interests.”<sup>19</sup> Levy went on to emphasize that this was particularly so for matters of the “great international issues of the day.”<sup>20</sup> This was particularly the conclusion of the Canadian House of Commons, Standing Committee on House Management on the activities of the IPU:

Of all the inter-parliamentary associations the IPU groups has the closest to a diplomatic function...often they [Canadian members] will [support] ...the Canadian position even though they may not feel absolutely obliged to do so.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, national parliamentarians tend to reflect the make-up of the domestic political balance. The government, democratic and particularly when not, usually has a certain sway over who belongs to an international

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

parliamentary association. Even non-governmental members tend to be established members of the political hierarchy and supporters of the domestic political system and its political arrangements. It is hard to imagine it being otherwise.<sup>22</sup>

Thirdly, because many activities of the UN do infringe on entrenched core sovereignty issues – the high politics of security and sovereignty - national parliamentarians may think more domestically than they might on the more variegated, sectoral-regional issues of trade policy or the complexities of common security issues for which national consensuses may not exist. Simply put, the hierarchy of values is far more clear for issues of armed conflict than they are for how to prioritize international labour standards against (perhaps local, perhaps national) economic interests; how to prioritize economic growth and living standards against environmental management.

Fourthly, as is evident from the discussion on governance, national parliamentarians concerns are less with internationalism than with fortunes of their domestic legislative institutions. The inference from the democratization arguments coming out of domestic legislatures could be that there is a desire to replicate domestic, national electoral concerns rather than to reflect international, or in the case United Nations- UN, concerns.

Set against these arguments, there is evidence that the growth of international parliamentary institutions over the past few decades has led to some dissociation of national or regional affiliation by its membership. International relations literature and public policy literature contain examples of such phenomena as knowledge-based or issue-based communities and various policy networks that essentially describe a series of complex, often overlapping networks focussed around institutions and issues.

The relevant point to this discussion is that IPIs form an example of these networks or communities of transnational elites. They are potentially developing a transnational consciousness. They also often provide a public good, a gateway or transmitter to international relations used by non-elected bodies such as social movements or business organizations. Unlike other networks or communities, IPIs have direct access to the institutions of domestic and international governance. In other words they have potential to translate the domestic function of political party member and of local representative to the international level.

The IPU bid also needs to be considered differently in that it could be considered a technical professional organization for parliamentarians.

Considerable energies of the IPU are directed at transmitting and sharing parliamentary effectiveness throughout its membership. This focus will probably be at a premium given the diversity of skills and resources among individual UNPA members.

Nonetheless it remains unlikely that IPIs can effectively supplant national representation in the contemporary international field in the near future. The arguments against it are too strong because in the end they remain *national* representatives.

For these reasons, a better way to create a UNPA would be an independently selected body.

### **An independently selected UNPA: the EU option**

The other option considered for a UNPA would be to have an independently selected – i.e. a membership specifically elected to the UNPA. The model here would be the European Parliament (EP). As noted by Robert Cutler: the EP's experience lends itself as a template from which other IPIs at various stages of development can learn.<sup>23</sup> To choose this model for a UNPA has several implications.

For one: it raises an open question on criteria and method for selection. Obviously a series of decisions are required, e.g., how members are selected. Should they be selected by a universal electoral system or by nationally based systems? What would the electoral calendar be? Who would supervise elections? Would variances in election practices damage overall UNPA credibility? How many representatives should each member-state have, etc.?

These questions have no ready answers. Would the most populous states get the most parliamentary members? Or the most powerful in terms of gross national product? Would the permanent members of the Security Council be treated the same way as the small Pacific states? To address these questions is at the same time to open up the issue of paying for the UNPA. Is the world ready for an international tax? Would the richest countries be expected to carry the financial burden? Obviously, some very hard thinking is in order if the concept of a UNPA is to be advanced. This might well be a useful project for the IPU, which has much at stake in the idea, unless this very work would give credence to the arguments of the opponents of merely giving the IPU observer status at the UN on the grounds that a full-fledged UNPA with teeth in it is exactly what the IPU is seeking.

The motivation for such a detailed examination of selection and financing might come from examining a few overall aspects of an



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

independently selected body. Such a step might have potentially greater implications for the UN, for global democracy/governance and for the domestic politics of some countries than does basing the UNPA on national parliamentarians.<sup>24</sup>

Such a body would theoretically be free to sit or conduct other related duties on a full-time basis. They would at least be able to devote more time to a UNPA than would an annual weeklong gathering based on national parliamentarians. Corporate expertise and functional competence, theoretically, would be the effect: sitting bodies tend to gather work where virtual ones do not. A more permanent institutionalization could have dramatic long-term implications for the United Nations.

This is the lesson of the European Parliament: elected parliamentarians developed a moral authority – based on electoral, democratic legitimacy - and a corporate expertise that acquired a “take-off” critical mass towards developing full legislative functions. Once its legislative presence was established, its institutional performance then created *spillover*<sup>25</sup> as it gathered expertise and began to be relied on more and more in its consultative role. Over time, the EP developed further authority and a greater, more visible role.

The European parliament went from being a nominated body in 1957, a nod to European-wide democracy, to an elected body in 1979. When the European Community became the European Union, the Parliament gained powers of oversight that formalized the informal scrutiny its presence had brought to bear on Commission proposals as well as formalizing legislative cooperation with the European Council. In 1999, it was the ‘democratic’ authority, not to mention the energy and efforts, of the European Parliament that forced for the first time the mass resignation of the European Commission.<sup>26</sup> The particular dynamic of the development of the EU helped in that national governments, through the European Presidency and the European Council, seeking balance against European Commission, invested more oversight powers in the European Parliament. The existence of locally elected MEPs (Members of European Parliament) also helped national authorities to handle issues of transparency and democracy at the European level in the face of domestic criticism of the Commission and the European project as a whole. Enlargement of the European Union also created changing balances of power within and without the organization to the benefit of the EP.

In short – countering the EU’s vulnerability on the question of a “democratic deficit” has resided in the one instance in empowering the



European Parliament at the expense of the Commission. The European Parliament's own expertise aided it in gaining this authority. The counter argument that the EU is democratic because nationally elected representatives – European heads of government and ministers – meet regularly in council – seems by comparison more removed from European populace at large.<sup>27</sup>

These factors are also worth considering. The United Nations has institutional analogues to EU organizations in the Secretary-General, the UNGA and to some extent the Security Council. Institutionally, there is scope for a UNPA to offer opportunity for national governments to push for a transparency and accounting role similar to that of the original EP in order to quiesce domestic critics calling for more democratization of governance on the international stage.

Nor would such criticism be coming only from elements of the above-discussed “global civil society.” Just as it was anti-European UK Conservatives who led the EP in castigating the Commission in the name of democracy with help from the UK Conservative party and other Europhobic actors (individuals and newspapers, for example) in UK domestic politics, one could envisage UN-hostile politicians or others in the United States being elected to a UNPA or providing backing to UNPA members in similar circumstances. That such activities would be tactical and of the moment or of the issue would be less relevant in the long run than the spillover effect they would grant a UNPA.

For the paradoxical lesson drawn from the 1999 European Commission crisis is that EP activity, led by an anti-European coalition in an anti-European cause, engaged the citizenry directly with European institutions and galvanized EU activity in a positive manner. Any meaningful activity by an international assembly is good for the strength of the organization. A UNPA could do the same thing for the UN and for global governance (although hopefully without the indecorum of an anti-UN crusade from within).

### **What might a UNPA look like?**

Setting aside for the moment possible ramifications to having a UN Parliamentary Assembly, there are some purely technical issues that need to be addressed: the ‘how?’, ‘what?’, ‘when?’, ‘where?’, and to some extent, the ‘who?’ questions. Below are some initial thoughts, designed merely to stimulate some discussion towards the more prosaic, “nuts-and-bolts” aspects of a UNPA. And it must be emphasized that as with all institutional

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

design, the unintended consequences and political dynamics will create realities far different than those intended.

### **When should a UNPA convene?**

Looking at other international organizations' parliamentary assemblies, straightforward suggestions make themselves clear. A UNPA need not seat itself permanently. In the case of a UNPA comprising members of national legislators, non-permanency would be imperative.

For example, with the OSCE, an annual assembly is convened once a year. For the UN this would make sense, and should be timed to fit appropriately the UN annual cycle, notably the UNGA September session as mandated in the UN Charter. A July or August Assembly would provide input into the deliberations of the UNGA on the UN's annual agenda. Summer meetings are also almost mandatory given the dominance of the northern hemisphere's summer schedule over national and international agendas.

Should a UNPA be self-selected, restrictions on when to sit change, and possible conventions or sitting periods become more open-ended. Logic should also dictate that the more permanent a UNPA is "on the ground," the more likely is its ability to grow. This appears to be one lesson the development of the European parliament gives in comparison to other IPIs.

### **Overall design**

A UNPA will require a permanent secretariat of some kind. It will require a President or Speaker for the Assembly itself. It will require some form of internal Standing Committee on Oversight—by which is meant, of course, a committee to oversee operations; i.e. a board of internal economy, not a committee in charge of oversights.

General and specific committees suggested by imperative issues, or by institutional and programme design internal to the UN, would have to be agreed upon by the UNPA itself, once formed. Tackling these design elements in order, certain modest and straightforward initial points can be made.

A permanent backbone to the UNPA should be formed by a permanent international secretariat. The job of the secretariat would be to organize the UNPA sessions and to assist the officers of any permanent or special committees mandated by the UNPA. It could also act as a permanent Presidential Secretariat should that task evolved be one that requires a

full time presence. The Secretariat should report to a hypothetical (for our purposes here) annual session of the UNPA. It should also report on an ongoing basis to a Standing Committee for Oversight.

To head the UNPA session will require a President or Speaker of some sort. Its officers, especially the President, should be elected by the UNPA itself. The function here would be a parliamentary one: to rule on procedure and to coordinate and prioritize the overall actions and function of the UNPA when in session. Given the prominence of the UN and the potential for the President of the UNPA to become a position of some profile, consideration should be given that the putative president of a UNPA might need to play a permanent, international ambassadorial role. In short, this position might require its holder to absent himself or herself from their national, domestic legislative duties; a consideration should the UNPA be an IPI of some kind. The same might also extend to other officers of the UNPA, notably Committee Chairs.

How should the UNPA fit with the overall structure of the UN? It is difficult to imagine its primary function as other than consultative, rather than legislative. The UNGA remains the true legislature of the UN in its current design. The UNPA should report to the UNGA, as does the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Reporting to the UNGA will also keep a UNPA at arms length removed from the Secretary-General of the UN, which should enhance the credibility of both organizations. In design this would be most analogous to the European Union's example of interpolating a consultative parliament as a (limited) democratic and consultative oversight on the EU bureaucracy: both of which are ultimately accountable to the national governments through the European Council (the gathering of the European heads of government). The UNGA might wish to create under its auspices the oversight committee for a UNPA.

### **UNPA Committees**

These will take on roles emerging directly from the activities and interests of the UNPA itself. Prudence suggests that General Committees with broad mandates derived from the Charter and the activity of the UN (and its affiliates) itself be instituted. This would be consistent with other international parliamentary assembly practices. Political and Social, Economic, Human Rights, Technology and Science and International Security are obvious examples. Other worthwhile candidates could include refugee and environmental committees. A perhaps more controversial approach, in that it would look more purposely legislative, would be to

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

establish programmatic committees that imply direct oversight: a UN budget committee or one on the Security Council proper, for example.

### CONCLUSION

The one obvious conclusion from this wide-ranging discussion is that a UNPA remains at this moment schematic. Despite this, certain points become clear. There is currently a disjuncture in traditional, liberal-democratic, political decision-making between the international and the domestic level. Parliamentarians and others have recognized this disjuncture and wish to address it by having input and oversight into what is commonly termed global governance. Inter-parliamentary institutions of various types offer a good solution to this and perhaps the most prominent international organization lacking an IPI is the United Nations. A UNPA would be a good way to address both global governance and the requirement for UN reform in the contemporary age.

If there is to be a UNPA, there needs to be a recognition that choices on how it becomes institutionalized may have subtle, but important long-term effects on how much a UNPA comes to represent a UN legislature. The existence of a UNPA with permanent presence and electoral legitimacy may well find a greater role than its framers originally intended.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant is considered a starting point for political philosophers interested in providing a peaceful, liberal-constitutional world order, a collection of ideas usually known as “idealism” in international relations studies. Reduced to utmost simplicity: Kant argued that perpetual peace could only come about in a law-based international society, constitutionally bound as a federation of free (i.e. republican) states. The argument is found in Kant’s essay “Perpetual Peace.”

<sup>2</sup> It is worth remembering that those developing the UN at the end of the Second World War had to resist propaganda to the effect that the UN itself is a world government.

<sup>3</sup> The arguments developed here are deliberately not based on World Federalist literature. Although there is much excellent research in the World Federalist Movement, the idea here is to try and explore the possibilities for the UNPA that come from within the existing ideas of the dominant political mainstream, rather than using the theoretical/moral framework of world federalism as a starting point.

<sup>4</sup> Most of these issues are beyond the brief of this paper, but are well discussed in both the academic and popular press.

<sup>5</sup> David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. pp.107-113.

<sup>6</sup> It should also be noted that contemporary possibilities for multilateralism have also produced laudable examples of surrendering sovereignty to collective self-interest based on values aside from the economic, the International Criminal Court (ICC), for example.

<sup>7</sup> One must be careful not to ascribe too much to this trend. Individual political systems play a crucial role as a multiplier to this effect. Countries with a Westminster political system where the monarch is sovereign in parliament also have had to deal with Cabinet and Prime Ministerial concentration of policy making across international and purely domestic issues. This policy-making concentration often is the result of exogenous, political circumstances – e.g. large majorities - rather than the policy issues per se.

<sup>8</sup> On legislative-executive balance of power in the U.S. example, a good summary is provided in Chapter 4 of *Puzzle Palaces And Foggy Bottom: U.S. Foreign And Defense Policy-Making In The 1990's*, Eugene Brown and Donald Snow. N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> From collapsing the words “international” and “domestic.”

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> This point cannot be overstated. One of the primary advantages government and parliament have traditionally deployed when adjudicating different interests has been an informational one: government had greater resources and reach than private entities. It was a subtle exercise in power. Today, that advantage may now have been inverted.

<sup>12</sup> “The overriding failure in the response of the United Nations before and during

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

the genocide in Rwanda can be summarized as a lack of resources and a lack of will to take on the commitment which would have been necessary to prevent or to stop the genocide. UNAMIR, the main component of the United Nations presence in Rwanda, was not planned, dimensioned, deployed or instructed in a way which provided for a proactive and assertive role in dealing with a peace process in serious trouble.” *Report Of The Independent Inquiry Into The Actions Of The United Nations During The 1994 Genocide In Rwanda*, 15 December 1999. Full report available at: [www.un.org/News/ossg/rwanda\\_report.htm](http://www.un.org/News/ossg/rwanda_report.htm)

<sup>13</sup> This is not to impugn the office of the Secretary-General or the thoroughness of the Independent Inquiry’s Report. Rather it is to point out that a transparent and accountable scrutiny by a legislative arm of the UN would be free from the imbroglis of domestic politics. Nor would it be seen as the UN “umpiring its own ball game” on the international stage. A UNPA report may, indeed have come to the same conclusions as the Carlsson report, but might have carried more impact and more weight to counter criticisms from other quarters.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, “Toward Global Parliament.” *Foreign Affairs*. Jan/Feb 2001. pp.215

<sup>15</sup> For a good encapsulation of this argument, see David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*. pp 83-89.

<sup>16</sup> “With UN Help, Number of Democracies Nearly Doubled in Past Decade, Annan Reports” *UN Press Releases*. (November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> One can cite for example, problems within the legislatures of some of the former states of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: in particular the tendency of bureaucrats and politicians from the previous regimes to prove more effective in their political and administrative skills than the original democratic opposition leaders.

<sup>18</sup> *Final Declaration/Conclusions*, Inter-Parliamentary Union Parliamentary Conference, Doha, Qatar, 11 November 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Gary Levy, “Interparliamentary Associations.” *International Perspectives* (July August 1976), p.36. Although this was written some time ago, there is little evidence to assume that contemporary are any less prone to ‘fly the flag’ and to ‘hide the dirty laundry from public view’; i.e. to present a national common front while abroad. Arguably, airing of dissent while abroad, particularly on key policy issues, is still rare enough to be newsworthy.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Canada, House of Commons, Standing Committee on House Management. *A Report on Parliamentary Associations*, February 1993. (Sessional Paper) 343-8/5E. p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> One area where this is not the case, is when separatist parties claim representation in international parliamentary associations. The potential for this situation to occur exists with several Western democracies: perhaps to the credit of those societies’ tolerance. Even in such cases, quixotically, core values and issues are not normally contested by these members – i.e. the broad framework of what constitutes a

peaceful liberal democratic state remains fairly consistent; what is contested is who constitutes the nation that should be represented.

<sup>23</sup> Robin Cutler, "The Emergence of International Parliamentary Institutions: New Networks of Power in World Society."

<sup>24</sup> Appended to this paper is a questionnaire on the potential make-up and scope of a proposed "United Peoples' Assembly" provided by the Action Coalition for Global Change. Although a Peoples' Assembly at the UN appears even farther off than a Parliamentary Assembly. The outline for such a discussion is attached as an example starting point for those who wish to consider these details for a UNPA. See <[www.acgc.org/upa/survey.htm](http://www.acgc.org/upa/survey.htm)

<sup>25</sup> "Spillover" is the term used by neo-functionalist integration theorists who hypothesize that transnational institutional development will occur as narrowly based institutions will be given a greater and wider role as they develop competence in solving transnational issues. This was the deliberate model of development chosen for the EU when the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established. "Take-off" and "spill-over" for the European parliament is more fully described in Robin Cutler, "The Emergence of International Parliamentary Institutions: New Networks of Power in World Society." *Who is Afraid of the State?* Gordon S. Smith and Daniel Wolfish, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> There are many serviceable accounts of the growth and functions of the European Union and its constituent parts. Recommended are: Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*. New York: Lynne Reiner, 1999; John Pinder, *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: OUP, 2001; Helen Wallace and William Wallace, eds. *Policy-Making in the European Union*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP, 1996. For a brief overview on the European Parliament in particular the authoritative section on the EP in *Encyclopaedia of the European Union* by Desmond Dinan (Oxford: OUP, 1999) is highly recommended.

<sup>27</sup> This argument is explored well in Kevin Featherstone, "Jean Monnet and the 'Democratic Deficit'", *Journal of Common Market Studies*. 32(2) 1994.



# Globalization, International Democracy and a World Parliament

by

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### **Political Dimension of Globalization & Demise of the Sovereign State**

Globalization is the word which is on everyone's lips and is arousing the disquiet that comes from the prospect of deep and inevitable change. It is the word most commonly used to designate the new era that humankind has entered as a consequence of the revolution in production, communication, information and transportation technologies.

Globalization has been studied primarily as an economic process, while its political dimension has been largely neglected. The fact that the market has become global while governments have remained national is a contradiction that highlights the most significant change brought about by globalization. In other words, globalization has produced a shift of the borders between civil society and state. This means that it has opened a new space to civil society, that is that pre-political area of social life which is the ground where individual interests assert themselves and clash, but which does not produce those mediating mechanisms between interests from which the need originates to promote the common weal. Therefore, private centers of power such as multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), criminal or terrorist organizations have taken on a global size and acquired an increasing freedom of action with regard to the regulating power of states.

Here lies the root of decline of the sovereign state that will be overcome only through the establishment of new forms of statehood at the world level. This is the condition that will allow the restoration of the pre-eminence of politics toward global civil society.

### **The Response of Governments: International Organization**

The response of governments to globalization has been to pursue international cooperation, not because it is their inclination, but because they have no other choice. The expansion of the phenomenon of international organization shows the way governments are going along to seek a solution to problems they cannot solve alone.

The weakness of international organizations lies in their decision-making procedures, which are based on the principles of unanimity and veto, and in the lack of executive powers. The most widespread definition of this way of managing globalization is the expression *global governance*. This is a formula that justifies the established world order, which is based on the principle of national sovereignty and on the dominance of multinational corporations in the world market and of the United States in world politics.

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

It is a formula that hides the illusion that a solution to the main international issues can be based on mutual consent among sovereign states. Federalism is the antithesis of the international approach. Its strength lies in the alternative goals of world government and international democracy. However distant and though they can be pursued gradually, these goals are the answer to the need to control globalization and to start the process of establishing peace among nations through law.

### **The Decline of Democracy**

When sovereign states decline, there is a parallel decline in democracy. The sharpest contradiction of our age lies in the fact that the problems on which the destiny of peoples depends, such as those of security, control of the global economy, international justice or protection of the environment, have assumed international dimensions, where democratic institutions do not exist. Democracy still stops at state borders. In consequence, democratic institutions, having lost control of the questions which determine their future, confine themselves to govern secondary aspects of political life. In substance, we must face problems of a global dimension, on which our destiny depends, while the world is still divided into independent sovereign states. The feeling widely shared by many citizens is that the most important decisions have migrated from the institutions they can control toward international centers of power, which are not submitted to any form of democratic control.

In conclusion, the decline of democracy has two aspects. On the one hand, national governments are unable to submit globalization to democratic control. On the other hand, the democratic deficit prevents international organizations from being something more than a place where sovereign states cooperate to solve global issues. It is a contradiction that can be overcome only through international democracy, i.e. through the extension of democracy to state relations.

### **The Process of Democratization in the World**

The most revolutionary objective of our age is the democratization of the United Nations, which would allow the government of the world to be removed from the control of the big powers and the other private centers of power, like multinational corporations, and put into the hands of all peoples of the world. Of course, this is a long-term objective that can only be achieved gradually.

The democratization of the UN no longer appears a distant ultimate goal after the recent extraordinary advance of democracy in Eastern Europe, the ex-Soviet Union, Asia and Latin America. Today, for the first time in history, over half of the countries of the world (120 according to the last report of Freedom House) have adopted a democratic form of government. Since the fall of fascist and communist regimes it may seem that democracy has defeated all its alternatives. But the vacuum of power left by the fall of the blocs has opened the way to the revival of nationalism, which has triggered a series of processes of disintegration of international organizations and multinational states and is threatening the new born democracies.

### **The Need for International Democracy**

Democracy, precisely because it is fragmented among many national states, too small to assure the economic development and torn apart by international conflicts, is not strong enough to prevent authoritarian degeneration of its institutions. Only democracy can submit international relations, which are still the ground of diplomatic and military clashes among nations, to popular control. As a matter of fact, democracy and independence can be reconciled only within the framework of federal institutions that must be created both at the regional and world level.

The analysis of the structures of international organizations shows that these are diplomatic machines within which governments pursue cooperation. Recently some of them have been enriched with parliamentary structures, which represent the response of national parliaments to the globalization process and the erosion of their power. In other words, they attempt to shift parliamentary control of governments at the international level. Most of them are made up of national parliamentarians, but the European Parliament, which represents the most advanced evolution of this category of international assemblies, is directly elected.

The European Parliament is the laboratory of international democracy. After its direct election it has increased its legislative powers and control powers over the Commission, understood as the potential European government. This means that the democratization of the European Union has been a mighty tool for strengthening European institutions. On the whole, the lesson we can draw from history (and utilize for UN reform) is that both the strengthening and the democratization contributed to promote European unification.

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

### **The Decline of the Political Parties**

The great revolutionary transformations marking the milestones of mankind's progress in history have never been promoted by the established powers. These powers try to rule the new scourge of events with old ideological schemes and with old institutions. Revolutionary change, which creates new institutions and higher forms of political coexistence, has always been the result of the storming into the political scene of new social forces. These forces provide a vehicle for new cultures, new values and new political institutions. While the political parties have lost their attraction and their former capability for mobilization, no longer succeeding in motivating commitment from young people, all over the world a non-governmental citizens' movement has grown. This expresses itself outside traditional channels of political representation and is a manifestation of a new dimension of political participation. It operates at all levels of political life (but more efficiently in local communities and at international level, where the limits of the established powers are more significant) in the sectors of peace, human rights, international justice, aid to development, environment, cultural goods, education, health and so on.

The decline of political parties is a consequence of the crisis of the sovereign state. Faced with the globalization of social, economic and political life, national power offers an observation-post that obscures reality as it is and prevents the mastering of it. Political parties are prisoners of the national states: like boats in a stormy sea, they find themselves in the trough of the wave, where they cannot see the horizon. Directed by powerless leaders, they depart from the real problems of humankind. Choked inside the tight limits of national states, political decision-making loses any meaningful relation with real processes. Here lies the main root of the decadence of the moral and intellectual quality of the ruling class. When, in the debate among political parties, the great goals, those which make it possible to think of the future are gone, politics deteriorates progressively in a mere power game which keeps at a distance the most dynamic and vital energies in society. Political parties represent for this reason politics without a future.

### **The Rise of the Global Civil Society Movements**

On the other hand, the global civil society movements have tried to strengthen their influence over international politics. Wherever an international summit meeting gathers, a demonstration of the anti-globalization movement follows. These are citizens who protest against

being excluded from representation within international organizations and pretend to have a say in international affairs. They are the most genuine manifestation of the world unification movement and of the necessity, largely felt by young people, to deal with the great dramas of mankind. They are at present a varied mass of small and large groups, linked by a common situation (globalization). It is a movement dragged by the current leading toward world unification, but lacking the instruments to rule this process. It is not yet aware of its institutional objectives, nor has it worked out a political strategy. It represents the future without politics.

Two different positions can be distinguished. Some NGOs have taken on the role of opposing international organizations and globalization itself, often resorting to violence, and consider the international organizations as irreformable. Other NGOs are integrated in the state system, are recognized by international organizations and behave according to a reformist attitude of mind. They participate in international conferences in an advisory capacity and sometimes exert real influence on negotiations.

The limit of these movements lies in that they have a partial and unilateral perspective: each movement usually deals with only a single problem. But to the extent that they interpret new needs and are the protagonists of a process tending to redefine actors and roles of political life, we can formulate the hypothesis that they can become the vanguard of international democracy.

### **Domestic and International Democracy**

Is it true that the process of democratization of the domestic order of states must be accomplished before we are able to start an action for the creation of a World Parliament? As was pointed out by Kant in his treatise on *Perpetual Peace*, the first condition for the formation of a World Federation is that the member states have a republican regime. In other words, without domestic democracy, an essential prerequisite of international democracy is lacking.

But the fact that the process of democratization of state regimes all over the world has not been completed does not represent an obstacle to start the process of democratization of the UN. Although in the logic of casual sequences the democratization of the different states has to precede the democratization of the UN, in history these processes do overlap.

The six Western European countries that founded the European Community did not wait for the democratization of the institutions of all the states of Europe before starting the democratization of the European

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

Community. The completion of the European unification and the democratic transformation of its institutions has become possible today, because a small group of states started the process of construction of the European unity 50 years ago.

### **The European Federation: Leading International Democracy**

There is no concealing the fact that the plan to bring globalization under democratic control is meeting with formidable opposition not only on the part of the authoritarian regimes, but primarily on the part of the government of the United States, which will not let its power be lessened by the international organizations that it belongs to, nor by the arising movement in global civil society. This shows that, to be able to promote international democracy, it is not enough that a government has a democratic regime. This is a necessary but non-sufficient condition. The United States has such heavy world strategic commitments that it is unable to promote that design.

To defeat the opposition of the United States, a center of power must emerge with the capability of supporting the plan for a world democratic order. It is reasonable to believe that Europe will play such a role. The significance of European unification lies in the overcoming of the nation-state, a form of political organization that develops strength relations with the other states. Therefore it is fairly safe to assume that the European Union does not have, and in the future the European Federation will not have, hegemonic ambitions. Although the European Union aspires to independence of the United States, its objective will not be the replacement of the United States in the role of stabilizer of world political and economic order. Europe will rather pursue a policy of co-operation with the United States, with the prospect of a joint management of the world order, open to participation of other groupings of states (the merging great regions of the world). On the other hand, Europe will hold sufficient power to relieve the United States of some of its overwhelming world responsibilities and thus have the authority to persuade it to support the democratic reform of the UN.

However, if it is to speak with a single voice, Europe must complete the process of federal unification. With a Parliament elected by universal suffrage, the European Federation can become the leading country of international democracy. Thus, it will be more inclined than any other political organization to promote this experiment in the other great regions of the world and at world level (democratization of the UN).



### **Many Competing Projects**

The process of globalization and the rise of the global civil society movements have been accompanied by a flowering of proposals addressing the question of the democratization of the UN through the creation of an assembly which would represent the world citizens. The problem to be solved is whether the traditional tool of a Parliament is appropriate to meet the exigency of popular representation at world level. I will take into consideration the most significant projects.

### **A Virtual World Parliament**

A virtual World Parliament has been proposed as an alternative to a concrete World Parliament. Of course, the Internet can help in the exchange of ideas, the dissemination of information, the preparation of meetings and so on. Moreover, it can be used as a mobilization network. It enabled a scattered mob to become the people of Seattle. But, in order to make its voice heard and to exercise a real influence on the political process, that people was obliged to materialize in the streets and squares of a city. In addition, the circulation of the images of the demonstrations organized at Seattle increased the political weight of the movement born in that city.

Likewise, the Internet cannot compensate or replace in any way the citizens' participation in the elections and the face-to-face relations which take place in a political assembly which physically gathers in a hall. The public space where an electoral campaign takes place and the representatives of the people meet, participate in public debates and take decisions is an irreplaceable aspect of democracy.

### **The Global Civil Society Forum**

The Commission on Global Governance, in the report published in 1995 on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN, proposed the creation of a permanent Global Civil Society Forum. It was conceived as the vehicle to voice the expectations emerging from the international civil society and to transmit them to the UN. More precisely it was proposed that the Forum should gather before the beginning of the annual session of the General Assembly and convey to it its claims.

This proposal reflects the impetuous growth of the global civil society movements and the necessity for building a body representing them at world level. The Millennium Forum, held from 22-26 May 2000 at the UN Building in New York, represented the dress rehearsal of such a Forum. It showed at the same time the potentialities and the limits of such initiative.

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

It is not an exaggeration to state that it represented the first babble of global democracy. Awaiting the formation of a parliamentary body and political parties at world level (are the NGOs not movements anticipating political parties?), the Forum was an assembly representing as closely as possible the peoples of the world or at least the most active part of them.

However, the limits of such an assembly must be pointed out. In the absence of international elections it is impossible to measure the degree of consent supporting the NGOs. The Forum would be lacking real democratic representation, being the expression of civil society movements and not of the will of the people, which can only come from an election based on a free competition among political parties. It can be compared to the medieval parliaments in which the orders were represented, not yet the people. And as these had the function of limiting the power of absolute sovereigns, likewise the Forum of Civil Society will limit the absolute power of the sovereign states ruling the UN. That is, as the medieval parliaments are distant forerunners of the contemporary ones, likewise the Forum of Civil Society may be an institution anticipating a World Parliament.

### **The WTO Parliamentary Assembly**

The proposal to create a WTO Parliamentary Assembly has been drawn up by the World Federalists of Canada (WFM) member organization and received support within the Canadian and European parliaments. According to this proposal, the Assembly should be composed of members of national parliaments and should have consultative powers.

The relevance of the proposal lies in the fact that it addresses the issue of the WTO's democratic deficit. Its limitation lies in its sectoral approach: it is a partial response to the challenge of international democracy. The approach which inspires this choice would entail the multiplication of one-issue assemblies; one for the IMF, one for the World Bank (WB), one for the International Labor Organization (ILO) and so on. On the other hand, the process of globalization does not involve only trade flows, but concerns many other aspects of political, economic and social life, including security, international monetary and financial issues, poverty, human rights, environment, health, education and so on.

In fact, the WTO is facing the problem of the regulation of the world market and correction of its distortions through the establishment of social and environmental standards, the creation of an anti-trust authority and so forth. These problems are different aspects of the activity of international economic organizations, but find no appropriate answer, in the absence of

the necessary powers and because of the plurality of bodies dealing with these problems. It will therefore be necessary to increase the powers of the new international economic institutions, and also to create a center to coordinate functions that are presently scattered in many institutions operating independently from each other (Group of Eight (G-8), IMF, WB, WTO, ILO, UNEP, etc.).

All this shows, in my opinion, that the problems concerning the strengthening and the democratization of the UN must be addressed together. The UN, as a whole, should be entrusted with new tasks, particularly those related with the international commercial, monetary and financial relations, and a Parliament should be constituted within the fabric of the UN system. Therefore, if the goal to be pursued is the democratization of the process of globalization, the democratization of the WTO is not enough.

The same conclusion can be reached if we consider the global civil society organizations. If it is true that the people of Seattle began to act during a meeting of the WTO in December 1999, it should be taken into account as well that in the movement born in Seattle converge a great variety of claims (peace, human rights, environment and so on), being each of a response to the various aspects of globalization. All those concerned about peace, international justice, sustainable development and protection of human rights need a democratic world order through UN reform.

### **The UN Parliamentary Assembly**

At a distance of approximately ten years from the publication of the booklet *The Case for A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly*, written by Dieter Heinrich (see Essay on p.68), it is necessary to reconsider this proposal, which has become one of the most well known and most cited world federalist programs and has received important acknowledgements from various milieux: the latest and most was the 2000 Millenium Forum. It is worth recollecting that the proposal was inspired by the example of the European Parliament, which, at beginning, was an assembly made up of members of national parliaments and endowed with consultative powers. It was conceived as a preliminary step toward creating a real World Parliament directly elected by the world citizens and endowed with legislative powers. Even though the UNPA has not been established yet, we must ask ourselves whether it is still an adequate reply to the impetuous growth of globalization and the parallel increasing influence of the global civil society movements on international politics.

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

The European federalists started a campaign for the direct election of the European Parliament when the European Customs Union was achieved (1968) and a new goal – the Economic and Monetary Union – was put on the European agenda. This objective demanded an increasing intervention of the Council of Ministers, the ultimate decision-making authority in the Community, which was pursued without corresponding parliamentary scrutiny and approval. Hence, the sharpening of the democratic deficit of the Community, which paved the way to the claim for direct election of the European Parliament and the strengthening of its powers.

Now the process of globalization has reached an analogous turning point. With the creation of the WTO the custom tariffs, which in 1946 amounted to 50% of the value of imported goods, have been reduced to less than 3%. If the present degree of world commercial integration is comparable to that of the six member states of the European Community in 1968, today the world has to face the contradiction between the increasing intervention of international organizations in the field of economy, finance, human rights, environment and so on and the democratic deficit of these organizations.

Since globalization wipes out the distinction between domestic and international politics, the extension of democracy – which has asserted itself in the vast majority of states – to international relations has become an inescapable imperative. The UNPA seems insufficient to respond to the increasing need for international democracy, because it confines itself to the mobilization of parliamentarians but does not reach the citizens and is unable to mobilize them. What is more, the growing activism of the global civil society movements proves that there is a popular pressure demanding citizens' participation in global decisions that affect individual daily life.

### **A World Parliament**

A World Parliament elected by universal suffrage by the world citizens is the simple and strong watchword that identifies the sharpest contradiction of our time, the contradiction between globalization and the lack of international democracy, and expresses at the same time the deep reasons that inspire the global civil society movements, the need for an assembly representing the will of humankind.

But we must be aware that the objective of a World Parliament is not incompatible with the four projects I have taken into consideration. In spite of the limits I have pointed out, they can be pursued as preliminary steps toward that final goal.

The historical role that the World Federalist Movement (WFM) can play is to become the reference point and the leading force of a large coalition of NGOs striving for a UN Parliament. In fact, most of the global civil society movements are striving for peace, the protection for the environment, international justice and the defense of human rights, but do not yet have a strategy for achieving these goals. The task of the WFM is to make these movements aware of the means (that is to say the institutions) which mankind needs to attain peace and international democracy and justice.

The role that the civil society movements have acquired on the international scene paves the way for new forms of political action, now termed *new diplomacy*. One of the most significant examples is the alliance between reform-oriented nations and NGOs, which generated enough critical mass to give rise to the International Criminal Court.

It is the updated version of an old scheme of action largely experimented by the European federalists. It stems from the experience of the creation of a new power in the area covered by many independent powers. The strategy of state unifications is twofold in nature. It requires the combination of two political subjects: a government-inspired current and a popular-inspired one.

Governments view political unifications in terms of cooperation among sovereign states, while federalists conceive them in terms of the creation of a new power. Governments have the power, but are opposed to use it for objectives that go beyond international cooperation. Spinelli used to say that national governments are at the same time the vehicle and the obstacle on the way towards the European Federation. The vehicle, because they hold the power; the obstacle, because they never spontaneously surrender national sovereignty. On the other hand, the federalists do not have the strength, but have an *initiating capacity*, which can be used during moments of crisis in order to move the governments to transfer their authority to supranational institutions.

The action for the construction of a World Parliament cannot be conceived otherwise. The World Parliament will be the result of the dialectical unity of the two currents mentioned above. According to two American academics, Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, who published an article in *Foreign Affairs* in 2001 entitled "Toward Global Parliament" (see Reader Essay #1), an alliance such as this could give rise to a treaty instituting a World Parliament. It could begin to exist after being ratified by a minimum number of states (20, according to the authors). But, if we consider that the European Union member states are 15 and their number

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

will double in the next future, 20 states seem to be quite few. 50% of the UN members and world population can provide the sufficient basis for the entry into force of the treaty. As Falk and Strauss write, “once the assembly became operational, the task of gaining additional state members would likely become easier. A concrete organization would then exist that citizens could urge their governments to join. As more states joined, pressure would grow on nonmember states to participate.”

In concluding, I would like to make two remarks, which would deserve a larger treatment. The first one concerns the role of political parties. The World Parliament will encourage the formation of true world political parties, which shall likely develop positive relations with the civil society movements. Secondly, I would like to emphasize the difference between Falk and Strauss’s project and the federalist one. What the authors fail to state is that, in order to democratize globalization, a global parliament is not enough. The experience of democratic regimes teaches us that no parliament can govern a country alone. A government is necessary. So the World Parliament must be seen as a crucial milestone on the way toward forming a democratic government endowed with the necessary powers to enforce the laws passed by the World Parliament.

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## READER on Second Assembly Proposals



The European Parliament which is referred to by Professor Lucio Levi on p.57 as “the laboratory of international democracy.”

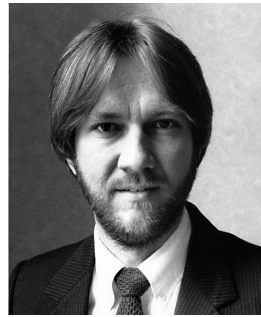


## Extension of Democracy to the Global Level

by

**Dieter Heinrich**

**Dieter Heinrich** has worked as a writer, speaker and organizer on behalf of global governance issues for more than 20 years. He is a former member of the Executive Committee of the World Federalist Movement, as well as past president of the World Federalist Movement-Canada. He has a degree in journalism and has written numerous articles and papers for the World Federalist Movement. He also has worked as a consultant on global security for Parliamentarians for Global Action in New York. He is currently serving as a member of the Council of the World Federalist Movement-Canada.



## **Introduction**

Our increasing global interdependence brings with it an increasing need to develop a new global politics based on the ideals of community. Increasingly, political decisions and actions need to be taken from a global perspective in the global interest. The UN may be the locus of such a political community, but only if it proves capable of being reformed.

The UN Charter begins with the words, “We the peoples of the United Nations . . .” In practice, the UN is a meeting place not of the peoples but of the governments — and only the executive branch of governments at that. One of the first reforms might best be to establish, finally, the citizen dimension at the UN, and give the UN back to the world’s people. This would help ensure that any expansion in the UN’s authority will be accompanied by an increase in democratic accountability. As importantly, introducing a citizen dimension to the UN may also be essential to driving the reform process itself.

## **Excluding Citizens Retards UN Reform**

The whole realm of global politics has heretofore been considered the domain of governments, who purport to act as the exclusive agents of their citizens. The estrangement of citizens from this realm has consequences for global political culture. It results in a systematic under-development among citizens of a sense of global responsibility, which is an essential foundation stone of genuine global political community. Not only does the present system fail to illicit the greatest degree of citizen initiative, it also increases the likelihood that at critical moments an unprepared, inward-looking citizenry will not support measures that their governments might be prepared to take in the global interest, whether it be providing troops to the UN, opening borders to freer trade, or increasing foreign aid.

Excluding citizens from the UN also entails the consequence of retarding any process of UN reform. If all official input to the UN, including all proposals for change, can come only through the inherently conservative structures of the foreign affairs bureaucracies of the nation-states, then change will not only come slowly, but it will be change that favours the institutional interests of those bureaucracies over the real needs of the world. The first tendency of any bureaucracy is self-preservation, including the jobs of its members. This tendency in foreign ministries will mitigate against an expansion of the UN’s role, regardless of the objective merits of proposals for doing so. This is one reason governments cannot be relied upon to undertake the reform of the UN with real commitment.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Citizens Have a Human Right to be Represented

Citizens have a human right to be represented as directly as possible in political decision-making as it effects their lives. This is a fundamental of democracy. The extension now of this principle to the global level is both a moral imperative and a matter of sound governance. Democracy is not only right — it works. It has proven, on balance, the most reliable model for the management of public affairs. This being so, there is *a priori* reason to suppose that the application of democratic principles of citizen representation and direct accountability will also produce the most satisfactory management of global affairs. This suggests that opening the United Nations to the involvement, imagination and energy of the world citizenry — not only the select who speak for the institutions of national government — would ultimately make the UN more *effective*. If effectiveness is the issue, given the scale of our global problems, we can hardly afford to pass over such a basic approach to improving our capacities to govern ourselves.

The single most appropriate and important institution for enabling citizens to be represented at the UN, as in any political community, is a *parliament*. The European Parliament of the European Union provides an important example of how a supranational parliament can develop. The experience there suggests that the first stage of a UN parliament could be a consultative Parliamentary Assembly made up of representatives chosen by the national parliaments. This would enable a UN parliamentary chamber to be created easily and inexpensively in a way which nevertheless creates a valid democratic link between the UN and the world's citizens through their representatives in the national legislatures.

A Parliamentary Assembly could be established relatively easily without UN Charter reform. The General Assembly could create it under Article 22 of the Charter as a consultative body. In creating such an assembly, it would help greatly if states would explicitly declare it to be part of a longer-term process of building a global political community. This again draws on the lesson of Europe, where the end goal of a closer union was stated at the outset. This created a context of legitimacy and an overarching rationality for the whole developmental process that followed, and which resulted in the European Parliament becoming a directly elected body. A UN Parliamentary Assembly should be founded, in other words, with a sense of destiny. In this case, the assembly becomes justified not only for what it is, but also for what it is becoming. Once established, a Parliamentary Assembly could lead the process of its own evolution by proposing appropriate ways for governments to increase its function and responsibilities on the way to

transforming it eventually into a directly elected parliament.

A Parliamentary Assembly, however, would be useful on its merits from the very beginning, even in its initial stages with only a consultative role. It would be a vital new link between the UN and national parliaments and could increase awareness and support for all aspects of United Nations activities. It would be a new source of proposals and a new source of initiative within the international system for the solution of global problems, especially problems related to the reform and strengthening of the UN where a global perspective is especially critical.

### **UNPA: Symbol of a New Kind of World Order**

Most importantly, a UNPA would become a symbol of a new kind of world order for the future. In place of today's state-centric ideology, which makes a virtue of national selfishness and exclusivity, a Parliamentary Assembly would stand for the idea of the world as an emerging democratic community of citizens who share common vital interests and values. The world depends on such a new earth- and citizen- centred perception, because it provides the essential moral basis for any real political cooperation on the critical problems of our age. A Parliamentary Assembly would help recondition some of the deep assumptions about the world, which underlie all political decision-making.

From the very beginning it would be a very different kind of "voice" within global politics. The General Assembly is composed of representatives of governments who ultimately represent institutional interests within the nation-state system. A Parliamentary Assembly would be made up of *individuals* whose mandate it would be to speak for the citizen interest. Parliamentarians are free to take positions of conscience in debate with their colleagues. We would have for the first time a body composed of officials who would be free of governmental instruction, free from the constraints of *raison d'état*, free to take a global perspective – free, among other things, to call upon the governments in the General Assembly to take action in the way they think citizens would want them to.

In establishing a UN Parliamentary Assembly, a number of issues would need to be addressed, none of them insurmountable:

### **Representation**

The founding of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CSCE in 1990 shows how easily a chamber for "we the peoples" could be established by drawing on existing parliaments of member states for representation. In the case of

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

the parliamentary assemblies of the CSCE and the early European Coal and Steel Community, the representatives were first of all sitting members of national parliaments. This approach enhances the stature of the resulting body, but comes with a cost: busy parliamentarians have limited time to meet. A UN Parliamentary Assembly might rather consider an important modification to our precedents by having national parliaments send non-parliamentarian delegates. These might be former parliamentarians, or distinguished citizens-at-large. In this way, a full-time global body could be created. Some combination of the two approaches might also be considered. On another point, travel costs and salaries of UN parliamentarians should be paid by the budget of the UN Parliamentary Assembly itself, not the national governments. This will help assure the independence of UNPA politicians and a greater equality of participation.

**Selection of Representatives.** One unique feature of a UNPA is that it could include representation from minority parties within national parliaments, and so reflect more truly the complexion of the citizenry. There may need to be measures, however, to deter a majority party of a parliament from arbitrarily choosing only its own. One approach might be to require that national parliaments elect representatives by secret ballot. In the case of one-party states, election of representatives in this way could reduce the likelihood of interference from the executive. It might also be considered so subversive a practice by non-democratic regimes that they refuse to participate, helping us with the next point.

**Representation from non-democratic countries.** It would be possible, no doubt, to have non-democratic countries excluded from participation in a UNPA through ingenious criteria only democracies could satisfy. But a case can be made for admitting parliamentarians of all countries. A parliamentary assembly with only consultative status is not yet a parliament, after all, and so the inclusion of even a large number of dubious members may be of little practical consequence in the short term. Parliamentarians, unlike diplomats, could be directly challenged to defend their views or change them. Collegial persuasion might have an educational effect on non-democratic representatives, and so hasten the spread of new ideas to non-democratic countries. The fear of this might keep some dictatorships from participating, thus solving the problem in another way.

### **Powers**

A UNPA, as a consultative body, would have no formal powers initially. Its resolutions, however, would have a moral influence on governments the

way today's General Assembly resolutions have. A more ambitious proposal would be to empower the UNPA to be able to request debate in the General Assembly on at least some of its resolutions as though they had been introduced by a member state.

### **Size and Composition**

The question of how many representatives each country should have can be addressed in various ways. The ideal would be representation by population, but this would be impractical in the beginning, especially if it meant giving a 20 percent share of the assembly to the world's largest non-democracy. Alternatively members could be apportioned on a sliding scale with ever larger increments of population needed for each additional representative from a state. The smallest countries might have one, the largest 10 to 20.

### **Financial Issues**

A more effective UN would ultimately save governments money. The cost of a UNPA should be regarded as an investment in wiser global decision-making that could help solve many global problems before they become expensive nightmares.

## A Parliament for the Planet

by

**George Monbiot**

**George Monbiot** is a political journalist and writes a weekly column for the Guardian newspaper. He is Honorary Professor at the Department of Politics in Keele and Visiting Professor at the Department of Environmental Science at the University of East London. Professor Monbiot is the author of *Captive State: the corporate takeover of Britain*, and the investigative travel books *Poisoned Arrows*, *Amazon Watershed* and *No Man's Land*. In 1995 Nelson Mandela presented him with a United Nations Global 500 Award for outstanding environmental achievement. He has received numerous other awards including the Lloyds National Screenwriting Prize for his screenplay, *The Norwegian*; a *Sony Award* for radio production; the *Sir Peter Kent Award*; and the *OneWorld National Press Award*.





### **The Permanent Crisis of Legitimacy**

When George Bush announced that he was engaged in ‘a fight to save the civilized world’, he was assuming powers and responsibilities he does not possess. Though his attack on Afghanistan was retrospectively legalized by the United Nations Security Council, it plainly offends the provisions of the UN Charter (which permits states to defend themselves against armed attack but says nothing about subsequent retaliation). But the Security Council, whose five permanent members also happen to be the world’s five biggest arms dealers, tends to do precisely as the US requests. ‘World leaders’, in other words, can define their powers as they please.

This is just the latest manifestation of the permanent crisis of legitimacy which blights every global decision-making body. Those who claim to lead the world were never granted their powers: they grabbed them. The eight middle-aged men whose G8 meetings are the ultimate repository of global power represent just 13 percent of the world’s population. They were all elected to pursue domestic imperatives: their global role is simply an unmandated by-product of their national role.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which apportion votes according to the money they receive, are governed by the countries in which they don’t operate. The UN General Assembly represents governments rather than people and, while in theory it operates on a one-country-one-vote basis, in practice a poor nation of 900 million swings less weight than a rich nation of 60 million. UN ambassadors, as appointees, are remote from the populations they are supposed to represent, but all too close to their national-security services. While some poor nations can’t afford to send delegates to World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings, rich nations are represented by huge parties of business lobbyists. Many of the WTO’s key decisions are made in secret.

There is, we are told by almost everyone, no alternative to this rule of finance and fear. We might not like the way the world is run, but even the most radical NGOs and campaigners tend to call at most for the replacement of the World Bank and IMF, while failing to address the political framework which legitimized them. There is, in other words, a widespread tacit acceptance of a model of benign dictatorship in which rich and powerful nations govern the world on behalf of everyone else.

In 1937 George Orwell observed that: ‘every revolutionary opinion draws part of its strength from a secret conviction that nothing can be changed.’ Bourgeois socialists, he charged, were prepared to demand the death of capitalism and the destruction of the British Empire only because

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

they knew that these things were unlikely to happen. 'For, apart from any other consideration, the high standard of life we enjoy in England depends upon keeping a tight hold on the Empire... in order that England may live in comparative comfort, a hundred million Indians must live on the verge of starvation – an evil state of affairs, but you acquiesce to it every time you step into a taxi or eat a plate of strawberries and cream.' The middle-class socialist, he insisted, 'is perfectly ready to accept the products of Empire and to save his soul by sneering at the people who hold the Empire together'.

Since then, empires have waxed and waned, but that basic economic formula holds true: we in the rich world live in comparative comfort only because of the inordinate power our governments wield, and the inordinate wealth which flows from that power. We acquiesce in this system every time we buy salad from a supermarket (grown with water stolen from Kenyan nomads) or step into a plane to travel to the latest climate talks. Accepting the need for global democracy means accepting the loss of our own nations' power to ensure that the world is run for our benefit. Are we ready for this, or is there lurking still some residual fear of the Yellow Peril, an age-old, long-imprinted urge towards paternalism?

### **Global Democracy meaningless without Directly Elected Assembly**

As far as I can see, there is only one means by which this crisis of legitimacy can be effectively resolved. It's a notion which most people find repugnant, but only, I believe, because they have failed to grasp both its implications and the extent of their own acceptance of the undemocratic fudge by which the world is run. Global democracy is meaningless unless ultimate oversight resides in a directly elected assembly. We need a world parliament.

If, like most people in the developed world, you abhor this idea, I invite you to examine your reaction carefully. Is it because you believe such a body might become remote and excessively powerful? Or is it really because you cannot bear the idea that a resident of Kensington would have no greater say than a resident of Kinshasa? That Sri Lankans would have the same number of representatives as Australians (and more as their population increases)? That the people of China would, collectively, be 41 times as powerful as the people of Canada? Are you really a new internationalist or are you, secretly, an old paternalist?

The key point here is that power exists at the international level whether we like it or not. The absence of an accountable forum does not prevent global decision-making taking place – merely ensures that it does not take

place democratically. It's not a question of removing further powers from nation-states or from their citizens, but of democratizing those powers which are already being wielded supranationally.

### **European Parliament essential Counterweight to unelected Commission**

I'm often told, in response to this proposal, that democracy at the European level is bad enough: why should we want to extend the principle to the rest of the world? Well, one might, perhaps with good reason, lament the existence of the European Union (which, unlike the world, is a political artifact), but the real question is whether it would be better or worse off without the European Parliament. For all its feebleness and faults, the parliament is surely an essential counterweight to the unelected Commission and the photocopy democracy of the European Council.

A more legitimate concern is that a global parliament might be readily bought or subverted. This is a real danger for any representative body, but there are plenty of lessons to be learnt from systems, like Britain's, which possess insufficient safeguards. The private funding of elections, for example, could be prohibited. Parliament could provide a small, fixed sum for every candidate: anyone who spent more than this on campaigning would be disqualified. It should be forbidden to use party whips to force representatives into line, if parties exist at all. But there's no question that, like any other assembly, we would have to keep holding a world parliament to account, by means of exposure, embarrassment and dissent.

Advocates of a world parliament have been careful so far not to be too prescriptive about the form it might take. If it is to gain popular consent and legitimacy, it's essential that the model be permitted to evolve in response to grassroots concerns, rather than being handed down from on high, like the European Parliament or the United Nations. But two irreducible essentials emerge. The first is that all of its members should be directly elected. The obvious and revolutionary implication is that it thereby bypasses national governments. One could envisage, for example, 600 constituencies, each containing some ten million people, which would, where necessary, straddle national boundaries.

The second is that the parliament's own powers must be strictly limited: both by the principle of subsidiarity (devolving power to the smallest appropriate political unit), and by restricting its capacity for executive action. We could, perhaps, see it performing like a collection of supercharged select committees, holding the executive agencies to account, producing policy reports, replacing or regenerating defunct institutions. But it would control

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

no army and it would exercise no coercive power over states. If it possessed a presidency, this would be a titular and administrative role, but would carry no power of its own. The parliament would simply become the means of forcing multilateral bodies to operate in the best interests of everyone, rather than those of just the rich and powerful.

But it's not hard to see how this modest function could transform the way the world works. Multilateral institutions like the World Bank and IMF, whose role is to police the debtors on behalf of the creditor nations, would disappear immediately. A democratic assembly would be likely to replace them with something like Keynes's "International Clearing Union", which would force creditors as well as debtors to eliminate Third World debt and redress imbalances in trade. The WTO, if it survived at all, would be forced to open its decision-making processes to democratic scrutiny. If a global parliament administered a global fund (arising, for example, from the proposed *Tobin Tax* on international financial transactions), it could ensure that the money did not become the plaything of powerful nation-states. The UN's humanitarian funding gaps would surely be plugged, and weaker nations could be given the money necessary to attend international negotiations.

Interestingly, the parliament could legitimize other internationalist proposals. As Troy Davis of the World Citizen Foundation has pointed out, without representation the legitimacy of global taxation is questionable. The absence of an international legislature undermines the authority of an international judiciary (such as the proposed criminal court). Judges presiding over the war-crimes tribunals at the Hague and in Arusha have been forced, in effect, to make up the law as they go along. The only fair and lasting means of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> (namely "contraction and convergence", which means working out how much pollution the planet can take, then allocating an equal pollution quota to everyone on earth) would surely be impossible to implement without a world parliament.

So, given that Nation-States will be reluctant to surrender their illegitimate control over global governance, how do we persuade them to make way? The answer, I think, is that we don't. We simply start without them. There are signs that this is happening, organically, already.

### World Social Forums

The "world social forums" and People's Global Action meetings which have sprung up in response to the World Economic Forum and G8 meetings have brought together campaigners from all over the world

to discuss alternative global futures. These are, of course, unelected, unrepresentative bodies. But if these gatherings could transform themselves into representative bodies, whose members are chosen democratically by populations all over the world, we could rapidly find ourselves building a world parliament in exile.

As its moral power grew and the moral power of the existing means of world governance shrank correspondingly, it's not hard to see how a legitimate representative assembly could emerge through consent rather than coercion. If it does, it will have solved the fundamental problem underpinning the development of any new body: that of public ownership. The European Parliament is perceived as both remote and boring by many of the people it represents, largely because it was imposed from above by national governments. A world parliament would belong to the people from the beginning of the process.

We have been gathering every few months in different parts of the world to search for solutions, unaware, perhaps, that the gathering itself could be the solution. A parliament – in which people parley, or talk – has already been established by the new world order's dissidents. Now we must invite the rest of the world to take part.

## Overcoming Practical Difficulties in Creating a World Parliamentary Assembly (WPA)

by

**Joseph E. Schwartzberg**



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## **Introduction**

Many world federalists and other advocates of global governance are convinced of the desirability of establishing a world parliamentary system (WPA). Whether such a body should be popularly elected or chosen by members of existing parliaments (as was done in the case of the European parliament in the early period of its existence) is, however, a matter for debate. So too is the degree of power that the assembly would be given. Some would accord the assembly no more than an advisory role (again following the model of the European parliament in its early phase), while others would confer on the assembly the power to legislate on specified issues. Among the many published and unpublished essays calling for some form of global parliament, none makes the case more eloquently or persuasively, in my opinion, than a series of articles authored, individually or jointly, by Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, eminent legal scholars at Princeton University and Widener University respectively.

Falk and Strauss demonstrate the desirability and legitimacy of what they call a “global peoples assembly.” They also indicate the legal precedents for its establishment, and discuss what it might be empowered to do. But they say virtually nothing about the mechanisms by which such an assembly might be brought into being. Nor do they deal with the practical details of how such an assembly might be constituted to ensure that it is truly, or at least reasonably, representative. Nor, finally, do they discuss viable and fair electoral procedures for choosing the people’s representatives. These same shortcomings also characterize the writing of all other advocates of a global assembly with which I am familiar. The common assumption seems to be that once enough activists are persuaded of the need for an assembly, the details will somehow be worked out to the satisfaction of enough of the global community to ensure the project’s fruition.

While it is conceivable that this assumption will prove to be valid, I would argue that the practical difficulties to be overcome in creating a global parliament are so formidable that many activists who are sympathetic to the idea in principle will withhold their support because of their conviction that the goal is incapable of achievement in their lifetime. Consequently, there is a need to demonstrate that a viable means of establishing the desired parliament does, in fact, exist. In what follows, I shall attempt to demonstrate one way by which that task might be accomplished. I do not suggest that this is the only way; rather, I put forward my ideas in the hope they will stimulate critical thought and suggestions for improvements on or alternatives to them.



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

Before proceeding, honesty demands that I note that, despite my unqualified support for establishing a WPA, I attach greater urgency to several other reforms of the present system of global governance. Specifically, these are: a) devising a more realistic and representative decision-making process in the General Assembly and empowering it to make binding decisions; b) restructuring the Security Council to make it, too, more representative; c) phasing out “permanent membership” and the veto power within the Security Council; d) setting up the International Criminal Court; e) establishing standing, all-volunteer United Nations peacekeeping and police forces; and f) reforming the United Nations fiscal system and greatly expanding the UN budget. None of these goals will be easily achieved. But, difficult as they are, they are more capable of realization than the no less desirable WPA. Moreover, their realization will help pave the way for the attainment of the latter goal.

### Assumptions

In setting forth my recommendations I have been guided by the following assumptions:

- *Areas to be represented:* All inhabited areas of the world would be eligible for representation in the WPA, provided they agree to and meet pre-established standards of fairness (see below) in electing their representatives. Dependent territories would be eligible to participate in elections on the same terms as independent states.
- *Number of Chambers:* The WPA would have only one popularly elected chamber. That chamber will form the focus of this essay. Although, based on the model of the United States, some would argue for establishing a bicameral assembly, with two popularly elected houses, one representing people in proportion to their numbers and the other equally representing nation states. The disparities in populations among members of the UN are so much greater than those of units represented in any national legislature as to make a second house analogous to the US Senate an impractical recommendation. To comprehend this point, note that California, the most populous state in the United States, has 69 times the population of Wyoming the least populous state, whereas China, the most populous member of the UN, has more than 100,000 times the population of Nauru or Tuvalu, the two least populous members (each with barely more than

10,000 inhabitants). While California has 52 seats in the House of Representatives, compared to Wyoming's one, both have two seats in the Senate. But who would argue that Nauru should have as much power in one chamber of a bicameral assembly as China?

- ***Population Size and Territorial Extent of Constituencies:*** Parliamentary constituencies would all be of similar population size, except, within limits deemed to be practicable, for political entities toward the lower end of the population spectrum (as, for example, in the US House of Representatives). Additionally, to facilitate the electoral process, territorial constituencies (with rare exceptions to be noted below) would not cross international boundaries.
- ***Size of Assembly and Population per Representative:*** To function effectively, any parliamentary Assembly must be of a manageable size. The House of Commons, perhaps the largest of all such bodies, presently has a membership of 659, more than half again as many as the 435 in the US House of Representatives. But in both the Commons and in Congress all representatives speak the same language. This condition could not be met in a global parliament and simultaneous translation would go only so far in alleviating the problem. Somewhat arbitrarily, I shall assume that the maximum size of a global parliamentary assembly would be set at 1,000. Given the world's present population total of roughly 6.1 billion persons, this means that, on average, one representative would have some 6.1 million constituents if an assembly with universal membership were already in existence. (By the year 2050 the figure might be more like 10 million.) This is far greater than in any existing or past parliament. (In the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, one legislator represents, on average, about 2 million constituents, which is probably the world record for a democratic polity.) This presents a problem in that 94 of the soon to be 192 members of the UN had fewer than 6 million inhabitants (as of the year 2000). Of these, 39 had populations below one million, while more than a third of those had populations ranging from 10,000 to 100,000. From these figures it follows that, for purposes of representation, if one tries to adhere to the one person – one vote principle, two or more political entities (whether independent states or dependencies), would sometimes have to be clubbed together in a single parliamentary constituency.

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

### **Role of an Election Commission**

To ensure that assembly elections are carried out, to the maximum possible extent, on a level playing field, it will be necessary for the UN to establish an impartial, internationally recruited, professional Election Commission (EC). The EC would have several functions:

- a) It would determine the number of seats per country or per group of countries (including dependencies) according to objective, uniformly applied population criteria.
- b) It would establish rules of fairness (see below) in respect to who may run for office, electoral practices and funding, eligibility for voting, etc.
- c) It would receive reports from all countries participating in parliamentary elections indicating what measures were in place to ensure that an election was being fairly conducted.
- d) It would have the authority to determine in advance whether fairness criteria were being met and foreclose polling where those criteria were not met.
- e) It would determine, subsequent to polling, whether elections were fairly conducted and could nullify or reschedule fraudulent elections.

### **Rules of Fairness**

The following rules are suggested and should be universally applied:

- a) The franchise would be universal and could not be abridged on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, age (eighteen years and over), property qualifications, wealth, literacy or education, previous condition of servitude, race, language, religion, place of birth, ideology, or political affiliation.
- b) The same criteria for voting would apply to eligibility to run for political office, subject only to the limitation indicated by point c).
- c) To be eligible to run for office one would have to obtain a certain minimum number of signatures to establish that one is a seriously regarded candidate. A reasonable figure might be one percent of the electorate (roughly 35,000-45,000 in an electoral constituency with a population of about 6 million inhabitants).
- d) For an election to be deemed fair, it would have to be contested (it is virtually unthinkable that a constituency of roughly 6 million persons would be without a diversity of political views).

- e) In countries or groups of countries with only one seat in the assembly, the winning candidate would have to receive an absolute majority of all votes. In elections contested by more than two candidates, this implies the use of ranked preference ballots and the instant run-off method of determining a winner.
- f) In countries allotted more than a single seat in the assembly, elections would be held on the basis of proportional representation (see below).
- g) To ensure that an election cannot be determined by a small group from among the politically empowered elite, no election would be regarded as valid if fewer than a specified percentage of the electorate cast ballots. This percentage might initially be set as low as 20% and could be increased over the course of time.
- h) A reasonable and uniform period of time for campaigning would be required between the selection of candidates and the holding of elections.
- i) Balloting by mail and electronic methods would be permissible.
- j) Elections would, as nearly as possible, be held within the same narrow time-frame, throughout the world. Results would not be declared until all ballots have been counted.
- k) Elections would be publicly and impartially financed.
- l) To ensure that candidates and elected parliamentarians could act without fear of political reprisal for expressing views unfavorable to particular regimes or political factions, countries holding parliamentary elections would first pledge to grant all such individuals immunity from punishment for whatever they may say in seeking or in holding the office of a member of parliament. Additionally, since such immunity could not be guaranteed in the event of a change of regime, all such individuals would be guaranteed the right of political asylum should the need arise.

### **Allocation of Seats (see Appendix)**

In this section of the paper we shall assume that all independent nations of the world are democratically ruled and willing to adopt the ideal system just described and that the handful of countries that still have dependent territories would also be willing to extend the system to their territories. In a later section we shall consider a more realistic scenario based on the political condition presently existing within the global community.

As noted, the average population per seat in an assembly of 1,000 seats

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

would today be approximately 6.1 million (0.1% of the world's total). Also noted was the fact that a great many of the world's nations (as well as all the world's dependencies) have populations below that figure. Further, it was argued, given the enormous population disparities among nations that it was impractical to assign one assembly seat to every nation, however small it might be and that certain territories would, therefore, have to be grouped for purposes of representation. But what should the minimum population for representation be? I would suggest at least half the average, i.e., 0.05% (roughly 3.04 million in the year 2000) and that all nations and dependent territories exceeding this minimum (Puerto Rico being the only one in the latter category) have at least one assembly seat. The upper population limit for nations with one seat would, then, logically be 0.15% of the world's total (or 9.12 million). These figures would apply both to individual nations and to regional groups whose members individually failed to meet the minimum threshold. The accompanying *Appendix* indicates 62 individual nations or territorial groups that would thus be represented by a single seat in the assembly. Collectively, they would account for a total of 317 million people, with an average per seat of slightly more than 5.1 million. In the case of the twelve groups of nations and dependencies composed entirely of political entities with populations lower than 3.05 million, the average population per seat would be only 3.4 million.

It follows that since the average population per seat for nations at the lowest end of the representation spectrum is somewhat lower than in the system as a whole, the average for the remaining states will be slightly higher, but in no case would it be more than 6.305 million (similar situation exists in the U.S. House of Representatives and many other democratically elected legislatures). The key point, however, is that the differences must not be so great as to seem unconscionable. In rough terms, countries with from 0.15% to 0.25% of the world's population would have two seats in the WPA; those with from 0.25% to 0.35% would have three seats, and so forth.

### **Proportional Representation**

Although many of the world's countries would have only one seat in the WPA or would even share a seat with others, a majority would have anywhere from two seats to as many as 213 in the case of China. In such countries, elections should be held using some version of the proportional representation method of balloting in that such a system maximizes the probability that minority views and interests will be fairly represented. It does not matter, for our purposes, whether the minority be ideological,

racial, religious, linguistic, or other. The essential point is that democratic governance should seek to ensure that all views have a reasonably good chance of being heard.

The argument against geographically delimited single-member constituencies may best be made with reference to the hypothetical case of India in which roughly 16% of the population are members of “scheduled castes” (formerly untouchable and still marginalized groups), 8% “scheduled tribes” (indigenes), 11% Muslims, and 5% other religious minorities. Although there is some overlapping among these groups their combined population comes to about 400 million. With single-member constituencies, it is conceivable that not a single member of these groups would be elected. With proportional representation, however, they should collectively be able to elect dozens of representatives to a global parliament. While the same opportunities for election would obviously not be available to the indigenous population of small countries such as Bolivia or Laos, one could be reasonably certain that indigenous parliamentarians from larger countries, such as Mexico or India, would be sympathetic to their concerns in parliamentary debates. Similar reasoning would be applicable for religious and other types of minorities.

In countries with up to ten seats or so in the WPA a single nation-wide slate of candidates (eleven seats or more), a single slate of candidates would probably confront the voters with an excessively complex set of choices. In such cases, the country should be divided into two or more broad regions in each of which a single slate of candidates would be presented. For example, in the United States, which would have a total of 44 seats, there might be five electoral regions, four with nine seats each and one with eight.

### **Launching a Global Parliamentary Assembly**

Regrettably, a great many nations in the contemporary world are far from democratic and would not soon countenance the holding of truly free elections to a WPA. Nevertheless, participation by certain minimum thresholds of willing nations and of their citizenry should be required if the deliberations of any such assembly are to be considered as representative of the will of the politically empowered global community. Moreover, the cohort of participating nations, should be widely distributed rather than, let us say, coming only from the democracies of the North Atlantic community. The Atlantic democracies have already created institutions, most notably the European Union, to give expression to their collective political agenda. To launch a “global” assembly, then, certain minima of representativeness



## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

must be met. I would suggest the following:

- a) At least 20 nations must agree to the conditions established for the WPA and provide credible evidence of their ability to fulfill those conditions.
- b) Nations from at least four (or, arguably, five) continents must be included.
- c) The participating nations must account for at least 15% of the world's population.
- d) The participating nations must account for at least 15% of the UN's budget.

One may anticipate that, once the WPA is in place, and once its utility is demonstrated, popular movements in many initially reluctant, but democratic nations will pressure more governments to participate. One may further anticipate that in countries in which democratic institutions are still weak, the example of the more established democracies will exercise a powerful force for meaningful democratic reform. If so, the period from the initial establishment of the WPA to one in which it approaches universality may prove to be much shorter than most political analysts might anticipate. However long or short that period might be, the benefits of a WPA would be substantial.

### **Representation of Future Federal Unions**

In various parts of the world, movements are afoot for the creation of federal unions among groups of neighboring nation states. This is a welcome political development. Nowhere is the prospect of such a union more promising than in Europe where the existing European Union, while still far from becoming a federation, is steadily taking on new functions, expanding its territorial scope, and gradually winning ever-greater popular acceptance. Other regions in which federal unions are being contemplated include: Central America, the area of the Arab League, and Africa south of the Sahara. Depending on whether such unions are consummated before or after the establishment of the proposed WPA, the rules relating to the minimum thresholds for launching the Assembly might have to be slightly modified. Additionally, the regional division of the unions for purposes of electing representatives through a system of proportional representation would become a matter for the new union itself to determine the Election Commission seats according to the number of seats provided.



### **What Powers would the Assembly have?**

Opinions vary widely on what powers a WPA would have. Whether it should merely be a forum for the expression of popular sentiment on a variety of issues or whether it should have meaningful legislative authority is an open question. As in the case of the European Parliament, it might be in order to begin by assigning the WPA no more than an advisory role, with the understanding that that role would be gradually expanded as the assembly broadens its membership and gains experience in debating global issues. There may even be a phase in which simple majority votes would be taken as advisory, while super-majorities, say two-thirds or three-fourths of the members present and voting, would result in binding legislation. But these complex issues are essentially beyond the scope of this paper.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper I have attempted to demonstrate that creating a World Parliamentary Assembly would be a feasible and worthwhile, even if difficult, undertaking. I have gone into considerable detail to indicate what, in my view, should be done to create such an assembly and how. I have done so, not because I believe my own formulations are the only ones that would work (I harbor no such illusions), but rather to point out the many factors that will have to be considered in whatever plan may eventually be adopted and the reasons why they are important. Too many advocates of a WPA, in my opinion, naively suppose that, once the logic of popular representation at the global level is widely accepted, everything else will fall easily into place.

Hence, they cavalierly ignore the practical problems that creating a WPA would entail. If, as noted at the outset of this paper, the proposals that I set forth stimulate further thought on the subject and result in more promising recommendations for moving the WPA project forward, I shall consider my efforts amply rewarded.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Andrew L. Strauss, "Overcoming the Dysfunction of the Bifurcated Global System: The promise of a People's Assembly," *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 9, Fall 1999, pp. 1-23; Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, "On the Creation of a Global People's Assembly: Legitimacy and the Power of Popular Sovereignty," *Stanford Journal of International Law*," vol. 36, no. 2, 2000, pp. 1-29; and Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, "Toward Global Parliament," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, no. 1, Jan/Feb 2001, pp. 212-220.

<sup>2</sup> Among the author's works are set forth are the following: Joseph E. Schwartzberg, "More on 'The Geography of Representation in the United Nations: An Alternative to the Morrill Proposal,'" *The Professional Geographer*, vol. 25, 1972, pp. 297-301; Joseph E. Schwartzberg, "Towards a More Representative and Effective Security Council" *Political Geography*, vol. 13, no. 6, Nov 1994, pp. 483-90; Joseph E. Schwartzberg, "A new Perspective on Peacekeeping: Lessons from Bosnia and Elsewhere," *Global Governance*, vol. 3, 1997, pp. 1-15; Joseph E. Schwartzberg, "Needed: A Revitalized United Nations," *Global Dialogue*, vol. 2, no. 2 Spring 2000, pp. 19-31; and Joseph E. Schwartzberg, "Entitlement Quotients as a Vehicle for United Nations Reform," *Global Governance*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Jan-Mar 2003, pp. 81-114.

<sup>3</sup> When the US Constitution was drafted, the initial difference in the number of seats in the House based on estimated population, was between Virginia with 10 and Delaware and Rhode Island with one each. Had the initial differences been anywhere near as great as that between California and Wyoming today, it is doubtful that the founding fathers would have been able to agree on the "great compromise" which led to the American bicameral system.

APPENDIX:

PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF SEATS IN A WORLD  
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

(Assumptions as given in accompanying paper)

A) Countries (including dependencies) with One or More Seats Each:

Figures indicate number of seats allocated; countries in small-face type are grouped with those listed above them for purposes of representation.

Afghanistan, 4	Denmark, 1	Kyrgyzstan, 1	Sierra Leone, 1
Albania, 1	<i>Faeroe Islands,</i>	Laos, 1	Singapore, 1
Algeria, 5	<i>Greenland, Iceland</i>	Lebanon, 1	Slovakia, 1
Angola, 2	Dominican Rp, 1	Liberia, 1	South Africa, 7
Argentina, 6	Ecuador, 2	Libya, 1	Spain, 6
Armenia, 1	Egypt, 11	Lithuania, 1	<i>Andorra</i>
Australia, 3	El Salvador, 1	Madagascar, 2	Sri Lanka, 3
Austria, 1	Eritrea, 1	Malawi, 2	Sudan, 5
Azerbaijan, 1	<i>Djibouti</i>	Malaysia, 4	Sweden, 1
Bangladesh, 20	Ethiopia, 10	<i>Brunei</i>	Switzerland, 1
Belarus, 2	Finland, 1	Mali, 2	<i>Liechtenstein</i>
Belgium, 2	France, 9	Mexico, 16	Syria, 3
<i>Luxembourg</i>	<i>Monaco, St. Pierre</i>	Moldova, 1	Taiwan, 4
Benin, 1	<i>&amp; Miquelon</i>	Morocco, 5	Tajikistan, 1
Bolivia, 1	Georgia, 1	Mozambique, 3	Tanzania, 5
Bosnia &	Germany, 13	Myanmar, 8	Thailand, 10
Herzegovina, 1	Ghana, 3	Nepal, 4	Togo, 1
Bulgaria, 2	Greece, 2 <i>Cyprus</i>	New Zealand, 1	Turkey, 10
<i>Macedonia</i>	Guatemala, 2	Nicaragua, 1	Turkmenistan, 1
Burkina Faso, 2	Guinea, 1	Niger, 2	Uganda, 4
Burundi, 1	<i>Guinea Bissau</i>	Nigeria, 20	Ukraine, 8
Cambodia, 2	Haiti, 1	Norway, 1	United Kingdom, 10
Cameroon, 3	Honduras, 1	Pakistan, 24	<i>Falkland Islands,</i>
Canada, 5	Hungry, 2	Palestine, 1	<i>Gibraltar, Guernsey,</i>
Central African	India, 159	Papua New	<i>Jersey, Isle of Man,</i>
Republic, 1	Indonesia, 33	Guinea, 5	<i>St. Helena &amp; Tristan</i>
Chad, 1	Iran, 11	Paraguay, 1	<i>da Cunha</i>
Chile, 2	Iraq, 4	Peru, 4	United States, 44
China, 213	Ireland, 1	Philippines, 13	Uruguay, 1
Colombia, 6	Israel, 1	Poland, 6	Uzbekistan, 4
Congo, Dem	Italy, 9	Portugal, 2	Venezuela, 4
Rep. of, 8	<i>Malta, San Marino</i>	Puerto Rico, 1	Vietnam, 13

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

Costa Rica, 1	<i>Vatican State</i>	Romania, 4	Yemen, 3
Cote d'Ivoire, 3	Japan, 20	Russia, 23	Yugoslavia, 2
Croatia, 1	Jordan, 1	Rwanda, 1	Zambia, 2
<i>Slovenia</i>	Kazakhstan, 2	Saudi Arabia, 4	Zimbabwe, 2
Cuba, 2	Kenya, 5	Senegal, 2	
Czech Rep., 2	Korea North, 4	<i>Gambia</i>	
	Korea South, 8		

**B) Country Groups: each of which is collectively allocated a single seat**  
(listed in alphabetical order of arbitrary **regional group** names and,  
within each group, alphabetically by constituent units)

**Africa, Central:** Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome & Principe.

**Africa, Northwest:** Cape Verde, Mauritania, Western Sahara

**Africa, Southern:** Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland.

**Asia, Inner:** Bhutan, Mongolia.

**Baltic States:** Estonia, Latvia.

**Caribbean, Northern:** Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Martinique, Monserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, Turks & Caicos Islands, Virgin Islands (U.S.).

**Caribbean, Southern:** Aruba, Barbados, Dominica, French Guiana, Grenada, Guyana, Netherlands Antilles, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad & Tobago.

**Central America:** Belize, Panama,.

**Indian Ocean Islands:** Christmas Island, Comoros, East Timor, Maldives, Mauritius, Mayotte, Reunion, Seychelles.

**Pacific Islands:** American Samoa, Christmas Island, Cocos Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Norfolk Island, Palau, Pitcairn Island, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Vanuatu Wallis & Futuna, Western Samoa.

**Persian Gulf, Eastern:** Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar.

**Persian Gulf, Western:** Oman, United Arab Emirates.

*(Unabridged Version)*

## **An E-Parliament to Democratize Globalization:**

*An Idea Whose Time Has Come*

**by**

**Robert C. Johansen**

**Robert Johansen** served as the Director of Graduate Studies of the Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame from 1987-1998 & again from 2001-2003 and has been a Senior Fellow at the Kroc Institute since 1986. He specializes in international ethics and global governance, the United Nations and the maintenance of peace and security, and peace and world order studies. His recent publications include: *U.S. Opposition to the International Criminal Court: Unfounded Fears*, Policy Brief #7, June 2001, and “Enforcing Norms and Normalizing Enforcement for Humane Governance,” in the compilation, *Principled World Politics: The Challenge of Normative International Relations*, (ed. Paul Wapner and Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, 2000). He is the founding editor-in-chief of *World Policy Journal*; Ph.D., Columbia, 1968.



~For more on subtitle: *An Idea Whose Time Has Come*<sup>1</sup> -see endnotes

**Note:** The following sections omitted from the printed version because of space limitations are included here beginning on *page 111*.

*The additional Section Headings in this unabridged PDF version are:*

- 3.2.2 Will national executive officials oppose legislators' participation?
- 3.2.3 Will opposition by recalcitrant States obstruct the e-Parliament?
- 3.3 Generating resources
- 3.3.2 Will the e-Parliament increase funds to address global problems?
- 3.4 Envisioning a global agenda to serve the human interest
- 3.4.1 Will democratizing the international system threaten national security and sovereignty?
- 3.4.3 Will the e-Parliament inspire new vision? (w/ addtl. endnotes)

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Introduction

Human beings have struggled for centuries to gain control of their own destinies, particularly to shape the political decisions that affect their lives. By the late twentieth century, nearly 60 percent of the world's people had achieved democratic governance. But now, because of interdependence and globalization, national democracies have begun to lose their grip on decisions that affect them. Throughout the world, many decisions impacting citizens of one country are made by people living outside their country or by impersonal market forces that are not accountable to anyone and that often subordinate the needs of many people to the prosperity of a few.

As political, economic, environmental, and military interdependence increase, ungoverned cross-border interpenetrations produce increasing levels of frustration and conflict. People in most countries yearn for more direct, effective, life-enhancing decisions by political authorities, but authorities lack the means and the will to render decisions that will more fully meet human needs. People around the world face a democratic deficit in decision making, an action deficit in addressing global problems, a resource deficit in meeting their needs and sustaining the biosphere, and a vision deficit in nurturing human solidarity.

In response to these governance deficits, this essay examines (1) the need for more democracy in global decision making, (2) a proposed structure and possible ways to create a forum of the world's democratically-elected legislators, held primarily on the Internet, to engage each other and members of civil society to attack global problems more effectively, (3) the criticisms and benefits of such a world parliamentary process, and (4) the prospects for establishing a global parliamentary forum in the near future.

### The need for global democracy

Because of environmental, economic, and security inter-dependence, the human species has now reached the point in history when a "national democracy" is becoming a contradiction in terms; the fulfillment of the democratic principle can no longer occur *within* a single nation-state, no matter how *internally* self-governing that society may be. A national government's decisions affect many people outside its borders -- people who are not represented within its deliberative bodies. In turn, its own people are affected by other societies' decisions over which they have no control and in whose deliberative bodies they are not reliably represented. If people cannot reliably influence the decisions that affect their lives, then they have lost democratic self-governance. Like taxation without representation,

globalization without democratization is tyranny. The presidents and prime ministers of the largest industrialized states, who gather in the Group of Eight meetings, for example, represent 13 percent of the world's population. They exercise an enormously powerful global role,<sup>2</sup> but that role is not mandated by most of the world's people.

No one has the power or authority to speak for the human race. Even worse, there is no focal point where humanity may speak for itself, bringing its myriad voices to focus on urgent political action. There is no center of decision making where people may join hands across national borders to advance common aspirations to govern weapons of mass destruction, curtail weapons manufacture and export, discourage terrorism, end hunger, protect the environment, or address AIDS, without facing nearly irresistible incentives and structures to advance one nation's interests at the expense of other nations. Many are called by today's pressing problems and by the cries of victims to speak for the human interest,<sup>3</sup> but few do so. Today's *democratic deficit* muffles the voices of the people of the world and prevents democratic decisions within and beyond every society on earth. Because it does, wars and terrorism will not cease, poverty will not end, ignorance will not give way to enlightenment, preventable diseases will flourish, and human potential and civilizations' promise will be denied.

Linked to the democratic deficit is an *action deficit*. Major decisions are urgently needed to address global problems, such as reliable rules to govern weapons of mass destruction, to deter crimes against humanity, and to protect the atmosphere against green house gases before more time and opportunities slip away, but such decisions are not forthcoming. The current global decision making system, in which more than 180 governments must all negotiate agreement before taking action, is too slow and cumbersome to cope with mounting problems.

The action or decision deficit is underscored by the unconscionable inaction following two decades of recommendations from groups such as the Independent Commission on International Development Issues; the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues; the World Commission on Environment and Development; the South Commission; the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance; and the Commission on Global Governance.<sup>4</sup> The issues studied by these blue-ribbon commissions were also being addressed before and after the commission reports in regular UN discussions and committee deliberations. The special commissions were created because of a recognition that the "normal channels" had failed. Yet the same inaction that flowed out of



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

normal international relations overwhelmed the special commissions as well. No significant progress has been made.

So dire has been the need for global institutional reform that a decade ago an international commission of widely respected leaders from throughout the world declared in a far-reaching (but largely ignored) statement that “a World Summit on Global Governance” should be called, “similar to the meetings in San Francisco and at Bretton Woods in the 1940s” that created the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF).<sup>5</sup> This suggestion fell on deaf governmental ears, again demonstrating the action deficit.

The international community also suffers a chronic *resource deficit* to end hunger, reduce poverty, provide primary education for all children, protect the environment, finance the UN system, and meet challenges to peacekeeping and security. Many studies have been conducted to identify ways of systematically raising revenue sufficient to meet global needs. All recommendations have failed in part because a global democratic decision making mechanism does not exist where concerned citizens and members of parliaments and congresses from many countries may focus attention for new revenue-raising measures and where legislators, who control the purse strings, have legitimacy to raise and then decide how to spend global revenues once raised.

A world characterized by no global democratic governing capacity, little global action beyond rhetoric, and few resources to address global problems -- the first three deficits -- arises from and in turn leads to a *vision deficit*. Unless people are motivated by a vision of genuine human solidarity, by a vision that brings into focus practical steps toward a world with more security and less human suffering, none of our world's most divisive problems are likely to be solved.

In short, self-governance can no longer be realized if it is confined to its traditional form of establishing democratic institutions within territorial nation-states alone. Without global democracy, life-and-death issues will become more severe and difficult to solve. The world's people *must* establish some global rule-making and accountability if democracy is not to be further undermined by interdependence and by the forces of globalization which are accountable to no one. The choice before us is stark: Are we going to adapt democracy to new conditions, or merely stand by and let our democracy and security slip from our fingers? To overcome the fourfold deficit requires a focal point of representative government at the global level, some form of world parliamentary deliberation. As the International

Commission on Global Governance, which included highly respected political leaders from throughout the world, concluded a decade ago, the world's people "need to be active in areas where government is unable or unwilling to act," because "so many of the issues requiring attention are global in scope."<sup>6</sup> The Commission suggested "an assembly of the people" as a deliberative body to complement the UN General Assembly. During the years since the Commission wrote, the Internet has rapidly changed opportunities for communication, commerce, and governance. It is now possible to bring all of the world's existing legislators together in a virtual world parliament. That possibility, harnessed to the driving needs for overcoming the democratic deficit, the action deficit, the resource deficit, and the vision deficit, now animates the campaign for creating a global forum of national legislators.

### **Toward global democracy: An e-Parliament**

Over the years, many ideas have been advanced for some form of worldwide legislative institution, in part because "any serious attempt to challenge the democratic deficit must . . . consider creating some type of popularly elected global body."<sup>7</sup> Before the onset of globalization, there was little political support for such an idea, often dismissed as an impossible dream, despite its compelling democratic logic. A new possibility has arisen within the past two years: an e-Parliament.<sup>8</sup> Whatever its strengths and weaknesses, people cannot dismiss it as an impossibility. One of its most exciting features is that the Internet has made it possible to set up an e-Parliament immediately if funds are raised to establish and manage the required web site. The other brilliant breakthrough provided by this idea is to base parliamentary deliberations on legislators who are *already elected* and enjoy democratic legitimacy. Neither idea could succeed without the other, but together they provide an unprecedented opportunity for humanity.

### **Purpose**

The long-term mission of the proposed e-Parliament is to give every person on Earth an equal vote and equal opportunity to be represented in solving problems that affect their lives. The immediate purpose of the proposed e-Parliament is to enable all those legislators throughout the world who have been democratically elected to their national legislatures to deliberate with one another, primarily over the Internet, and to engage with citizens in a joint search for effective solutions to global problems.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

The e-Parliament would provide a focal point where interested members of national legislatures could come together online, thus overcoming the existing insularity and national separation that frequently dominate proceedings in many congresses and parliaments,<sup>9</sup> including the U.S. Congress. In its first phase, the e-Parliament would provide an opportunity for members of congresses and parliaments (MPs) to communicate ideas with one another and then to develop common ground for model legislation that subsequently could be introduced simultaneously in many national legislatures. Because such legislation would already have support from those MPs who advanced the ideas in the e-Parliament, it might have a decent chance of passing in numerous legislatures within a reasonable length of time. As the e-Parliament gained experience and increased the numbers of MPs participating, it could gradually evolve into a global body with more legal authority until it might render legally binding decisions itself.

### **Structure: Linking 25,000 parliamentarians**

At the outset, the e-Parliament could link the world's 25,000 democratically-elected legislators, representing about 60 percent of the world's population, into an international forum where they can discuss how to (1) coordinate activity in their different national legislatures to address global problems more effectively and (2) bring more democratic accountability, resources, and vision to existing international institutions. Every person who holds a seat in a national or regional legislature<sup>10</sup> that is constituted through fair, open, democratic elections would be eligible to participate as a full member of the e-Parliament. Government ministers would be eligible if they are also elected members of their national parliament. Each MP would decide the nature and intensity of his or her own involvement. A virtual "House of Parliament" would be created on the e-Parliament web site, depicting a building and an approach resembling the most hallowed parliamentary bodies of the world. The name "e-Parliament" captures both its role as the first electronic, net-based parliament and its pioneering role as a forerunner of a parliament encompassing and representing all people on Earth. Because the e-Parliament would be "in session" at all hours in all time zones, legislators could spend as much or as little time speaking and listening to roundtable discussions in the e-Parliament as they desired; they could participate at times when they would not be required to be on the floor of their respective national legislatures. Of course one or more staff assistants of each MP could help to keep the MP informed of e-Parliament developments as they unfold.

The e-Parliament would need to take responsibility for ensuring that all legislatures throughout the world would have access to the web site. Any members of national parliaments who are not yet online could gain access through his or her legislature's connection. One of the first expenditures of the e-Parliament would be to support minimal computer literacy and access for all eligible MPs.

### **Listening to civil society**

To facilitate input into global deliberative processes by members of civil society, an e-Forum should also be established as part of the e-Parliament web site so that members of civil society can express their views and interact with parliamentarians in systematic, constructive ways.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the proposed gathering of members of civil society should provide a constant watchdog function for the e-Parliament to ensure that elected officials do not forget those who elected them. As has been true in recent negotiations on issues such as the creation of a permanent international court, leading nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) could provide expertise on a variety of global issues, develop proposals informed by conditions at the grass roots, and offer electoral support for MPs at work on proposals they support.

The e-Forum might poll citizens or citizens' organizations on issues before the e-Parliament and transmit the results to legislators to show the views of different parts of civil society, perhaps analyzed by category, region or electoral districts. Within reasonable procedural limits, groups of organizations could use the e-Forum to create informal networks to share information or plan common action. Interested groups might include well-known nongovernmental organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as business and professional associations, for-profit corporations, trade unions, and other organizations.

The proposed global parliamentary campus might be envisaged as having two houses or chambers: one for members of parliaments and a second for citizens in town meetings. They would not possess similar authority, particularly because the MP chamber would include only elected members who possess a law-making authority in their national legislatures and voting privileges in the e-Parliament, but each chamber would benefit from interactions with the other. MPs would obtain expert advice and electoral support from NGOs and civil society; civil society organizations and citizens would have access to law-makers through interactions of the

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

Citizens' Chamber with the Parliamentary Chamber.

### **Listening to people from non-democratic systems**

Because the guiding purpose of this endeavor is rooted in democratic values, it is desirable not only to hear from those people with democratically elected representatives, but also to listen, insofar as possible, to those who are *not* living in a democratic political system yet who deserve to be represented. However, it would not make sense to allow “legislators” who have not been chosen through democratic processes to participate as voting members in the e-Parliament. They might offer comments, as could other non-elected citizens, but when it came time to take a poll, their votes would not be included. Because those persons who sit in legislative chambers in authoritarian societies would not be eligible to participate as voting members, their ineligibility could be an incentive for closed societies to move toward democratic processes. If there is controversy over whether certain legislatures have been chosen as a result of legitimate democratic processes, the sitting members of the e-Parliament should, after impartial investigation by an e-Parliamentary committee charged with this oversight responsibility, render a decision about whether the members of the legislature in question are in fact eligible to be seated as full members. The e-Parliament could explore ways to enable citizens of closed societies, such as China, to participate in online discussions while waiting for their societies to establish a democratically elected legislature.

### **Process: Parliamentary Council and Citizens' Council**

There are many possibilities for organizing an e-Parliament. Once it is up and running, the MPs themselves will decide matters of procedure and substance in the Parliamentary Chamber.<sup>12</sup> After those MPs eligible to participate have been “seated” through secure channels of communication, they could elect an e-Parliament Council by simply using an online polling process. A Council of two or three dozen MPs might be selected without guidance about representation, or if a larger Council is desired, it could include at least one elected representative from each national parliament. Larger countries might aim to elect a representative from both the government party and the opposition. In any case, the Council would organize, oversee, and administer the e-Parliament's operations.

In parallel, a Citizens' Council of approximately two or three dozen leaders of civil society organizations, perhaps elected in an online poll of official representatives of those organizations now accredited as NGOs

by the UN Economic and Social Council, should be selected to organize, oversee, and administer the operations of the e-Forum and to facilitate communication between civil society and the Council of MPs on legislative recommendations as they are being crafted.

### **Parliamentary Committees**

The e-Parliament would function similarly to any national parliament or congress, with a system of Committees focused on major issues of global concern, such as environment and sustainable development, war and terrorism, human rights, poverty, and health issues. Non-governmental organizations and individual experts could participate in hearings before Committees, doing so online. The Committees should include members from all regions of the world and from across the political spectrum from right to left. An initial goal might be to have at least two persons involved from each parliament, one from the government side and one from the opposition. To encourage a broadly based political process as well as to benefit from nongovernmental expertise, representatives from relevant citizens' organizations should be invited to participate in Committee deliberations as advisors, much as legal experts from human rights organizations have advised government delegations participating in international human rights fora and negotiations to draft the Rome Statute.

### **Hearings and drafting dialogues**

To further democratize the deliberative process, each Committee should hold hearings on its issue, inviting people from civil society, business, government, and international organizations to express their most creative ideas and listen to others. Hearings could include roundtable discussions in which any legislator in the e-Parliament could make suggestions. A Drafting Team might be created by the Committee to draw up legislative recommendations through a process of broad consultation, both online and, where possible, in person. This Team should include professional facilitators and be guided by our best understanding of how to build common ground among people who disagree, drawing on conflict transformation skills, active listening, mutual respect, and openness to alternative points of view. Where appropriate, a single text negotiating approach could be used to elicit from the interactions a model piece of legislation on which many could agree.



## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

### **Caucuses**

As often happens in national legislatures, those legislators who are especially concerned about a particular issue might form their own caucus. Operating informally, across party lines, caucuses could expand common substantive ground among a growing number of MPs, enable like-minded legislators to identify and mobilize colleagues in other countries who might share information and coordinate action, and encourage collective action to advance proposals within an appropriate Committee. Because of their flexibility, as well as their open advocacy of positions on issues, the caucuses would also be an attractive place for civil society to connect with the legislative process by offering advice and electoral support.

### **Polling**

If and when a Drafting Team and its parent Committee felt they had a solid proposal that both addressed a major global issue and enjoyed significant support, the Committee could, in consultation with the e-Parliament Council, submit the proposal to all MPs in an online poll to gauge the level of worldwide support. Those proposals receiving broad support from MPs throughout the world could then be referred to national parliaments and governments or, in appropriate circumstances, to intergovernmental organizations, for further action.

The most desirable and principled democratic approach is to poll by following a formula in which each legislator's vote is weighted according to the percentage of the world's population that the legislator can be said to represent at the global level. To ensure that every citizen is equally represented, the weighting could be determined by dividing the total population of a particular country by the number of elected members of its national parliament. If the parliament has two houses, the total population could be divided by the total number of legislators in both houses, so each legislator from a given country would represent an equal number of constituents. Polling in the e-Parliament would be programmed to register the total number of people represented by a vote for or against a motion to determine the outcome of a vote.<sup>13</sup>

Of course this preferred, democratic formula would result in enormous variations in the collective power exercised by all legislators from a populous country, if they vote similarly, compared to the collective power of all legislators from a small country. Indian legislators, taken together, would cast approximately 17 percent of the world's votes, or 88 thousand times as many votes as cast by legislators from tiny Nauru or Tuvalu.<sup>14</sup> Political



pressures to reduce the spread, of course, could be resisted as a violation of the democratic principle and as a result of a narrow focus on national bloc voting strength rather than on acknowledging the capacity of elected MPs to render independent judgments regardless of nationality. On the other hand, some have advocated a simple cap of, say, 10 percent on the combined strength of the legislators from the most populous countries. Another approach would be to compress the scale of differences, rather than set an arbitrary cap that would apply only to a few states, while still acknowledging some proportionality among states. One could, for example, use the square roots of the population data. The overall collective strength of Indian MPs in such a case would be about 4.6 percent of the world's votes. United States legislators would together have 2.5 percent of the votes.<sup>15</sup> Of course in many cases it is unlikely that legislators from one country would all vote the same way. Once that is acknowledged, the significance of counting votes on a national basis is called into question.

### **Establishing an e-Parliament**

At the time of this writing in July 2002, a small coalition of members of civil society organizations, philanthropists, and far-sighted members of parliaments are working to create an e-Parliament without going through a formal treaty process. A broadly representative group could establish the necessary Internet facilities and, operating with a core group of MPs from throughout the world, create the mechanisms to begin deliberations. The initiative has gained impressive momentum in the less than two years since the leaders of EarthAction, itself a coalition of more than 2,000 citizens organizations with a network of nearly 1,000 parliamentarians, generated this idea.<sup>16</sup> Individual consultations with legislators from all parts of the world have demonstrated strong support, from at least those MPs contacted, in every parliament that has been approached.

No less significant, a series of pilot projects are beginning to focus on issues that require coordinated global action to achieve sustainable progress. These include action on global climate and energy policies, on accelerating the development of an AIDS vaccine, and on implementing children's right to education. Other topical groups could form around terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, the abolition of hunger, and other children's rights. These projects are demonstrating that cooperation by MPs from different legislatures can produce constructive outcomes on issues while also the groundwork for launching a full e-Parliament. Several hundred elected legislators have already indicated their desire to participate in these issue-

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

oriented efforts.<sup>17</sup>

Consultations with major providers of information technology (IT), particularly in Bangalore, India, one of the world's leading centers of IT, hold promise for creating the proposed web site. Consultations have also been held with existing networks of parliamentarians,<sup>18</sup> several UN agencies, and the European Commission to ensure that the e-Parliament initiative relates constructively to existing organizations. The e-Parliament is politically feasible in part because it can be established with only a small fraction of the MPs eventually required to give the body worldwide legitimacy. Once established, it presumably will be easier to attract additional participation whenever an issue that comes up for discussion in the global context also proves to be of interest within the national legislature of any MP that previously has been reluctant to join. It seems likely that the e-Parliament could be accepted gradually and relied upon within an evolving global constitutional framework. As the number of participants rises and as the number of democratically-elected legislatures encompasses more and more of the world's population, the e-Parliament's powers could be expanded.

### **Criticisms and benefits of an e-Parliament**

Although the e-Parliament would not be a supranational law-making body transcending separate national sovereignties, the world's people could benefit in numerous ways from establishing a global legislative forum in which they are represented by legislators whom they may vote in or out of office. On the other hand, critics question if the anticipated benefits are likely. Some argue that the e-Parliament will be elitist and will confer an undesirable global legitimacy on national legislators bound by inertia and vested interests; others fear its democratic emphasis could alter power structures and priorities too radically. Some think national legislators will not participate or take the e-Parliament seriously; others fear that it will attract them so strongly that national political processes will be transnationalized forever. Some say the e-Parliament will have insufficient power to make a real difference; others fear that it will have too much influence over national sovereignty. We next examine these questions and possible benefits that the e-Parliament can contribute to reducing the four current deficits of global governance.

**Addressing the democratic deficit and increasing accountability: Will the e-Parliament legitimize a global power elite bound by vested interests?**

Progressive critics argue, first of all, that the e-Parliament's biggest weakness is its tendency to give a global mantle of legitimacy to the same legislators who are already deeply entrenched in the habits and values that have produced our present global problems. The world's existing legislators, after all, have been largely responsible for making the world's legal systems and priorities what they are today. They sustain the obsolescent policies, unrepresentative international institutions, and legal structures that they have inherited. They represent what is wrong with today's world, the argument goes, rather than the transformations that people need. Too many of those now sitting in national parliaments are corrupted by money, by vested interests, and by the tendency of power to corrupt the power-holder. To give them global legitimacy will maintain rather than reduce the democratic deficit.

These arguments all have validity, yet they under-emphasize three factors. First, to the extent that the policies that these MPs advance now are objectionable, they will not be improved by refusing to create an e-Parliament. In the absence of global accountability legislators would be more likely to continue serving short-term vested interests with impunity.

Second, the e-Parliament will make an enormous reduction in the democratic deficit by representing fairly those millions of people now under-represented in any global context. Every individual citizen of a democratic country will be equally represented, without regard for nationality, wealth, race, or religion. The e-Parliament will be the first institution in world history to represent the peoples of the South proportionately to their population. MPs in under-represented countries indeed exist in the present system, but they are not primarily responsible for the present problems because they are under represented in decision making councils. To empower *them* is not synonymous with extending a mantle of global legitimacy to those elites that have created the present decision making gridlock. To represent all people fairly will transform politics profoundly. Indeed, equitable representation is so essential to democratic rights and freedoms that Thomas Paine, one of the revered leaders of the American Revolution, wrote that "representative government *is* freedom."<sup>19</sup>

Third, the views of both MPs and their constituents are likely to be altered, over time, simply because they are participating in a global deliberative arena. The e-Parliament will, even in its infancy, focus politics a bit more on a global agenda, thereby increasing the incentives for taking

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

global responsibilities more seriously. To discuss a global agenda encourages one to learn about global issues.

### **Will powerful global actors corrupt legislators in the e-Parliament?**

Critics also argue that, if the e-Parliament ever becomes politically significant, globally powerful actors, whether public or private, can be expected to make every effort to influence legislators through legal and illegal means. If a global process is corrupted, it could be more serious than a nationally corrupt system, because there would be only one e-Parliament, and its extent would be global.

To be sure, corruption will be a problem for the e-Parliament, just as political institutions in every land at every level face problems of influence buying and other forms of corruption. The e-Parliament would be no exception. Yet, this criticism also overlooks important counter-arguments.

First, the present international system is already riddled with corruption, manipulation, and double standards, often advanced by national governments. That reality now calls forth the e-Parliament as an antidote. Without it, in today's international system there is very little global accountability for wrongdoing, whether due to illegality, narrow selfishness, or undemocratic value priorities. There is no requirement of transparency for major decisions that affect millions or billions of people. So in comparing a world that has an e-Parliament to the existing international system without an e-Parliament, critics cannot cast many stones at the e-Parliament because, at the least, it will increase transparency and accountability. Clearly, watchdog checks and balances must be carefully established, with impartial investigations of alleged wrongdoing, drawing on the best wisdom and practices available from all parliamentary experiences throughout the world.

The e-Parliament would also contribute to transparency and accountability in other institutions related to its substantive deliberations. Because the MPs of the e-Parliament are the same MPs who now fund all intergovernmental institutions, they would be entitled to establish Committees to help empower as well as to hold those institutions accountable to their mandates and their constituents. Oversight committees might also be useful to monitor national compliance with existing UN conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child or the Biodiversity Convention. The purpose would be to aid national governments in finding ways to honor their treaty commitments. Committees could also be established to hold hearings on or help monitor the activities of transnational corporations and where appropriate to suggest a framework of rules for international economic interactions that is friendly

both to the environment and human rights.

A global mechanism could monitor some of the conduct of transnational corporations more effectively than any single national government. Although some corporate officials might oppose the e-Parliament because of its promise to empower the poor and the likelihood that it would try to hold multinational corporations accountable to acceptable standards for international conduct, many other corporate officials recognize the benefits over the long run of a stable international environment for commerce and of having standards that level the competitive playing field.<sup>20</sup> If an e-Parliament could generate legislation that would encourage a universal code of conduct for business to reduce unfair competitive advantages, it could win the support of many business people.

Finally, given the number of legislators (approximately 25,000 throughout the world), it might be difficult for influence peddlers to buy enough of them to corrupt the entire process. The spotlight of broader, global public scrutiny on each national legislator would be likely to increase with the establishment of an e-Parliament.

### **Will civil society receive sufficient influence in the e-Parliament?**

Progressive critics of the e-Parliament also voice concern that organizations representing civil society will not be sufficiently influential to move legislators out of their narrow inertia and willingness to acquiesce in the four deficits attending globalization. Yet, the demonstrated power of expert-activists from civil society in successful drives to develop the Kyoto guidelines for protecting the atmosphere against greenhouse gases, to create an antipersonnel land mine treaty, and to establish the international criminal court demonstrate the possibilities for civil society organizations to develop their influence even more carefully in the presence of a sustained, transnational legislative forum. In the three preceding examples, NGOs working with like-minded governments achieved what the world's largest military and economic power strongly opposed. If an e-Parliament had existed during these campaigns, it seems plausible that even more effective deliberations might have occurred, because some U.S. legislators would have been in close communication with legislators from the like-minded countries supporting these efforts. The confrontations between the United States and others would have been less monolithic, more nuanced, and more likely to have developed common ground.

Once an e-Parliament is established, citizens' groups would, for the first time in world history, have a focal point toward which to address

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

their expertise and moral concerns -- a deliberative center with the twin advantages of being singular and universal while organically rooted in representative processes that are local and democratic. That achievement should be an enormous benefit for every civilization participating in it. Indeed, we cannot possibly fathom, in the early 21st century, the enormity of this step that humanity is about to take.

The democratic deficit will be reduced further as the gradually expanding influence and success of the e-Parliament is propelled by knowledge that, if you do not use your voice or your vote, you will lose it. NGOs could focus more attention than ever before on the global deliberative opportunity that the e-Parliament will provide. Groups that oppose proposals introduced by the most effective NGOs could try to de-legitimize the e-Parliament by boycotting the e-Forum, but such a strategy is less likely than its alternative: to participate in the global forum to advance their views. If they shunned the process, they would concede to their opponents the opportunity to participate in shaping future legislation.

### **Will the e-Parliament reduce the democratic deficit?**

By aiming to represent all people equally, the e-Parliament will directly address the democratic deficit. The e-Parliament would also facilitate regional cooperation by enabling legislators to share experiences, ideas, and good practices with other MPs in their region. This could help address inequities and democratic deficits within regional groupings of states.

In addition, a successful e-Parliament will address a “horizontal” democratic deficit by encouraging authoritarian societies to democratize. Non-democratic societies would have incentives to democratize so they might more directly influence global decision making through full participation in the e-Parliament. As the influence of the e-Parliament increases, the political costs of nonparticipation will also increase. The e-Parliament would also aid fledgling democracies to consolidate their democratic systems of government by the increased sense of global community among democracies. Emerging democracies also should have enhanced opportunities to address pressing needs within their societies, thereby avoiding the dangerous, caustic effects of extreme political polarization.

National opinion polls show remarkable public support in many countries for multilateral cooperation and the use of international law to address global problems. To illustrate, in October, 2000, Yankelovich Partners conducted an opinion poll in the United States asking this question:



“An increasing number of important decisions are made in international institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank or the World Trade Organization. The people making the decisions are either representatives of national governments or employees of the international organizations. There have been proposals for a People’s Assembly at the United Nations, directly elected by the world’s citizens, to hold those international organizations democratically accountable to the public. Would you favor or oppose the creation of such a UN People’s Assembly?”<sup>21</sup> Fifty-seven percent favored the idea and 30 percent opposed it. Even in a powerful country already capable of representing its interests well throughout the world, a majority of the public favored the idea. Moreover, a newly-elected People’s Assembly would present a totally new cast of characters, whereas the e-Parliament would be made up of familiar names and faces whom the public already have elected to high office. For these reasons support could run even higher for the e-Parliament.

### **Empowering legislators and constituents for global action**

Although the e-Parliament would not have authority to make laws, it would be made up of legislators with high national legitimacy and a significant degree of international authority. When a large majority spoke on an issue, it would be a globally significant voice, enabling humanity to build consensus for action through a common assembly of directly-elected representatives. Yet will this happen?

### **Will enough national legislators participate to legitimize the e-Parliament?**

Skeptics doubt that the e-Parliament will attract enough members of parliaments to give it legitimacy. First, many legislators in the wealthiest, most powerful countries, like many of those in the United States Congress, simply may oppose the idea of global democratization and increased transnational parliamentary interactions because legislators in powerful countries already exercise power over a disproportionate share of the world’s material, military, and political resources. They do not want to give up their power advantages, so they might refuse to participate and try to persuade other legislators, both at home and abroad, not to take part.

Second, progressive legislators may eagerly log-on and engage in global dialogue only to discover that it is humanly impossible, given limited time, to sustain intelligent participation in the e-Parliament and still carry out necessary responsibilities in their national legislature and with local



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

constituencies. Without sufficient time to study e-Parliament issues, the process could become shallow and trivialize complicated global challenges.

Third, some legislators may want to participate and may schedule time to participate, only to discover that participating is political suicide because her or his opponents at home gain votes by condemning the time that the elected official “wastes” on the Internet while local issues go unattended. A variation of the “political suicide” problem is the notion that the e-Parliament is a body primarily for liberal internationalists or environmentalists or certain ideological points of view that other people find objectionable.

Fourth, some MPs may find time to participate but presently lack sufficient computer equipment and experience to do so, or translation problems present an insurmountable language barrier.

These arguments raise important difficulties facing the e-Parliament, but there are measures that the e-Parliament could take to minimize the negative impact of each one. The first argument -- that MPs from powerful countries oppose global democratization -- overlooks the diversity that exists among elected officials. Significantly, some members of the U.S. Congress have publicly endorsed key elements of multilateral diplomacy in recent years -- the nuclear test ban treaty, the antipersonnel land mine treaty, the Kyoto guidelines, and the international criminal court, although a majority in Congress have opposed these multilateral measures. These internationalists would presumably be most inclined to participate in an e-Parliament. But as soon as *they* participate, can their opponents, not wanting to be outdone in the line of international advocacy, be far behind?

Moreover, once legislators representing a significant portion, although still a minority, of the world's societies begin to participate in the e-Parliament, incentives will increase for MPs from other societies to join, particularly if the e-Parliament makes decisions about spending money. To be eligible to participate but to refuse to capitalize on that opportunity seems so self-defeating that it is likely that electoral dynamics will encourage more and more MPs from more and more countries to participate rather than to abdicate that right.

Second, although elected officials are extremely busy even without an e-Parliament, there probably will be enough public policy incentives and electoral benefits for speaking out in a world forum that both globally-minded and nationalist members of national parliaments will gradually add their voices to the virtual parliament. Given their own time constraints, they will often do this by drawing on more professional staff to track issues on

the global level that directly impact their ability to be successful legislators and campaigners in their domestic context.

Third, if they wisely select the global issues to which they give attention, these will be issues that require similar knowledge for their domestic legislative duties. They should be able to deflect unfair criticisms from opponents by emphasizing that they carefully calibrate their global role to advancing smart strategies that serve the interests of the constituents who elect them. For this reason, the e-Parliament should make every effort to provide services and a congenial home for people across a wide political spectrum. Fourth, the e-Parliament will have built-in resources to ensure that every legislator in every democratically elected legislature throughout the world can have access to the Internet, translation into their own language, and the software and skills to participate.

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### 3.2.2 (Hardcopy excerpt 1)

#### **Will national executive officials oppose legislators' participation?**

Skeptics also point out that *executive* officials will not be eager to see *legislative* officials gain independent voice and additional influence in international politics, so they will attempt to block participation by legislators, perhaps even of their own party.

In some cases, of course, executive opposition is likely. Yet the e-Parliament would not, in its first phase, change any of the formal constitutional separation of powers between executive and legislative officials. Members of parliaments already engage in cooperation with MPs from other countries, both as individuals and as committees. In the main, the e-Parliament would increase the ability of MPs to do their jobs. In some instances executive branch officials might encourage legislators to participate in the e-Parliament to help advance the executive branch's policies.

In any case, the negative-executive argument is not a criticism of the e-Parliament as much as it is an acknowledgment that, if the e-Parliament succeeds in finding more effective solutions to global problems, then those executive officials who oppose it are still operating with a narrow national perspective that needs to be revisited. By empowering legislators with the tools to gain a better informed, global perspective, the e-Parliament can help to redirect the power of executive officials toward serving broader human needs. Moreover, executive officials are rarely all of one mind. In many countries throughout the world, at least some executive officials see the need for more systematic and fair global accountability to enable them to do

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

their jobs well at home. In many cases, executive officials have seen the need for more global rule-making, but the absence of authoritative institutions for global accountability keeps them strait jacketed, reluctantly, in a nationalist code of conduct.

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### 3.2.3 (Hardcopy excerpt 2)

#### **Will opposition by recalcitrant states obstruct the e-Parliament?**

It is possible that global democratization might threaten those national governments that now exercise a disproportionately large amount of power globally. These governments might launch a campaign to torpedo the e-Parliament.

However, the e-Parliament will be a source of useful information, a market place for competing ideas, and a meeting ground for forming political friendships to enhance legislators' effectiveness in their home districts as well as internationally. These prospects ought not be threatening to any state's legitimate purposes. The support of national governments for the creation of the European parliament suggests that state governmental support is possible. To be sure, the diversity of the world vastly exceeds the diversity of Europe, but the pressing need for common efforts by the global community to address severe problems encourages collaboration. As the European Parliament has evolved from indirectly to directly elected and from being a talking place to being an institution with some limited powers, many observers have seen it as addressing a democratic deficit in the region.

#### **Will the e-Parliament reduce the action deficit?**

The e-Parliament would address the action deficit in several additional ways. First, as legislators would begin to play a role in global decision making, they would become better informed about global issues such as climate change, sustainable development, and peacekeeping; as a result, they would become more responsible as both global and national actors. Simply to be in dialogue with other parliamentarians around the world could gradually change perceptions of the need for action; in addition, their constituents' self-understanding of their global responsibilities could also change. They could begin to hold their representatives accountable not only for their success in managing national affairs, but also for their ability to manage inextricably related global affairs. Second, the e-Parliament would contribute to good governance through maintaining a library of examples

of good legislative practices on specific problems, thus enabling legislators to learn quickly what approaches have (and have not) worked in other countries. The e-Parliament website can contain links to information for parliamentarians on all key legislative issues.

Third, unlike existing intergovernmental organizations, where representation is usually based on national delegations casting a single vote after stating a singular national position on an issue, the e-Parliament would encourage more variegated national expressions of views on issues and the formation of more active alliances across borders among parliamentarians with common interests and political perspectives. This would more accurately reflect realities in an interdependent world and improve the ability of the global system to respond in a timely way to new problems and constituency preferences. Informal coalition building across borders to deal with common problems could prove to be an important function of the e-Parliament as cross-cutting cleavages on various issues weave the fabric of global society more closely together.

Fourth, as the e-Parliament establishes a reputation for being a responsible institution, and as participating legislators increase in numbers and gain experience in mediating differences, its informal and formal powers and actions could be expanded. Even in its first phase, if a poll of the world's legislators in the e-Parliament revealed high consensus on a proposal, this would be a major step toward "soft international law" in which compliance is expected but not legally binding. Similarly, if over time a number of suggested legislative initiatives were referred to national legislatures and implemented into law, the polls in the e-Parliament would gradually take on added significance. If the e-Parliament also succeeded in generating revenue directly for its own allocation, it would take on the formal authority of a global legislature with limited powers. It might use those revenues to encourage reluctant national legislatures to move more quickly toward harmonizing national priorities with the global norms endorsed by the rest of the world.

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### **3.3 (Hardcopy excerpt 3)**

#### **Generating resources**

Because the e-Parliament would establish an internationally more legitimate and creative global process for developing solutions to problems that face national parliaments, legislators active in the e-Parliament might exert influence to help raise funds to solve global problems.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### **Will the e-Parliament be too weak to be effective?**

Liberal internationalists and advocates of more formal world federation, in particular, criticize the proposed e-Parliament because it will not produce legally binding legislation, yet that is what the international community needs, they argue, to establish a reliable stream of revenue or to address other global problems. Again, this criticism has merit, but the criticism is really not an argument *against* an e-Parliament; it is an argument *for* immediately giving to the e-Parliament additional powers that it can only acquire gradually over time and probably should acquire only after some initial experience. Until it becomes politically feasible for an evolving e-Parliament to accumulate legally-binding authority, the proposed e-Parliament could facilitate faster movement toward legally binding agreements, ratified or legislated by existing political institutions, than other parliamentary possibilities now available.

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### **3.3.2 (Hardcopy excerpt 4)**

#### **Will the e-Parliament increase funds to address global problems?**

Several prospects exist for raising money, even in the e-Parliament's initial phase. Parliamentarians in progressive legislatures might obtain modest appropriations for the e-Parliament from their national or regional parliaments. Even a tiny percentage of several countries' national budgets would heighten those countries' profiles and immediately make the e-Parliament a serious actor. Second, funds might be raised from new sources on which MPs would agree, such as a tax on carbon dioxide emissions, a small levy on currency exchanges, or fees for using the common heritage of the high seas, the atmosphere, and space. Third, to initiate the e-Parliament, individual and corporate donors might make contributions. Some parliaments may decide to permit a tax deduction for contributions to the e-Parliament or to allow taxpayers, if they choose, to designate a small portion of their annual taxes for the e-Parliament. The e-Parliament might also at some point be able to charge for its research and information services.

Raising revenue is important not only for paying costs to run the e-Parliament web site but also because it could profoundly impact the e-Parliament's larger organizational life. If even small amounts of money in an e-Parliament budget could be allocated to meet the needs of the world's poorest citizens, to protect the environment, or to prevent armed conflict, the status of the e-Parliament would be enhanced and more MPs would

want to exercise decision making power over its budgetary allocations. Some UN agencies might look to the e-Parliament for additional financial support and become the executing agency for e-Parliament initiatives. Any of the proposed ways of generating revenue would, like a magnet, draw hesitant MPs into the e-Parliament. As more legislators participate, they might share responsibility for finding additional funding.

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### **3.4 (Hardcopy excerpt 5)**

#### **Envisioning a global agenda to serve the human interest**

To offer every person on earth the possibility of an equal voice can be an empowering vision. As the world's central legislative meeting place to craft solutions to common problems, an e-Parliament could articulate a vision depicting the benefits of human solidarity and a common planetary agenda to serve all humanity. Giving every person on earth a more direct and equal vote in global decision-making should also encourage a sense of "ownership" in peaceful resolution of conflicts to stabilize a more just world society. To serve the human interest would require both building consensus for action and maintaining checks on possible abuses of power. Conservative critics fear that a seductive global vision might detract from important national goals and undermine national sovereignty. On the other hand, liberal internationalists fear that envisioning an e-Parliament might divert attention from helping the existing UN system to become more effective. To these arguments we now turn.

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#### **3.4.1 (Hardcopy excerpt 6)**

##### **Will democratizing the international system threaten national security and sovereignty?**

Some critics fear that a wrenching, unknown disruption of international relations and national sovereignty will occur if polling or voting influence becomes proportional to population, even when the activities of the e-Parliament are not legally binding, simply because the expression of world political opinion will not be an expression of national military power, nor will it protect people from harsh military realities. As the militarily most powerful nation in the world, the United States would not have the same power in a democratic world system that it enjoys in the system known as the balance of (military) power. The one-person-one-vote approach, while impeccable democratic logic, gives too much power to the populous states,



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

critics argue, and too little power to less populous countries that have hi-tech weapons and are able to exert dominant military power.

In evaluating the security argument, it is true that to strengthen the power of the vote may weaken the power of the gun. Those with the most guns may not want to diminish military power but they cannot in good conscience oppose empowering people with the vote unless they are willing to say that military might, not voting might, makes right. The e-Parliament would not itself have authority to interfere with governments' military policies; yet it could facilitate collective action by national governments to reduce the role of and verify limits on dangerous military technologies, thereby increasing all countries' security.

Moreover, because the e-Parliament would encourage discussion among the world's people and democratically elected legislators, these interactions would be likely to contribute to peace and security because they are likely to deepen worldwide understanding, increase the legitimacy of global bargains in which all participate and have a stake in respecting, and confirm the "rules of the game" that apply to international conduct.<sup>22</sup> In addition, because mature democracies do not make war against other democracies, by encouraging the health of existing democracies and the expansion of the number of democracies throughout the world, the e-Parliament would contribute to world peace and human security.

Moreover, the present global imbalances in economic and political resources and the inequitable distribution of human rights, which generate severe tensions, could be reduced if a democratic problem-solving mechanism is constructed in which a continual process of striking planetary bargains, with high legitimacy, occurs. Under such conditions the rich and poor can develop at least some minimal identity with each other because the process of allocating resources would have far more legitimacy than the present one and common interests become more visible.

If an e-Parliament would eventually generate global revenue, it could also help reduce poverty and enhance equality of opportunity, which in turn could reduce conditions that give rise to violence and sub-cultures of hostility, intolerance, and support for terrorists.

Other critics place less emphasis on the difference between voting power and military power in the contemporary international system, but put more emphasis on the enormous gap that exists between the most populous states and the least populous countries, *regardless* of their relative military power. For a country like Denmark to have only 1/240th of the votes of India because of the relative size of their two populations seems a stunning



and politically objectionable difference. Fears about voting being related to population could be addressed through several means. First, polling at the outset will be only an expression of views; it will not be binding. Suggested legislation from the e-Parliament would still need to be passed by national legislatures, so it can hardly give rise to fears of a “tyranny of the majority.” Second, full guarantees for protecting minority and other human rights must be entrenched in the e-Parliament institution. All of the e-Parliament’s operations should be guided by a concern for transparency and minority rights, recalling that every nationality is a minority in a global mix. Early in the life of the e-Parliament, it should define limits on majority powers and protections for minority rights, establish guidelines for upholding the principle of subsidiarity, and discuss differential voting power between the most and the least populous societies. Third, fears that small-population societies will be hurt by a democratic equation might dissipate over time if polling demonstrates that issue cleavages cut across national boundaries and that participants, regardless of national population, uphold values of democracy and human rights.

Those who oppose the e-Parliament because they desire to retain national sovereignty unchanged overlook two important realities. First, the advance of technology and interdependence are already transforming sovereignty. For example, governments long ago gave up their claim to absolute sovereignty over their airspace because other countries’ orbiting satellites travel only a few score miles from any city or town in one’s country. This change did not result from global legislative initiatives or the signing of treaties, but the content of sovereignty changed nevertheless. Second, limitations on some functions of sovereignty, such as constraining the right to weapons of mass destruction, enable national governments to carry out other functions of sovereignty, such as protecting people from attack, more effectively. Sovereignty, always fluid, can be adjusted to meet human needs. The e-Parliament incorporates both of these points by facilitating, in a cooperative and predictable way, legal adjustments where needed to enable residual sovereign functions to be carried out more effectively. In any case, the e-Parliament will only make it easier to legislate globally, it will not take away the existing right of each national legislature to vote “yes” or “no” on proposed legislation.

### **Will an e-Parliament interfere with an effectively functioning UN?**

Some skeptics argue that an e-Parliament might derail parallel efforts by reform groups to create a directly elected people’s assembly,<sup>23</sup> to create

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

a third, more democratic chamber within the United Nations system, to discourage other needed UN reforms, or otherwise to detract from the work of the UN. In response, exponents of the e-Parliament point out that efforts for a directly elected people's assembly might still proceed along side of an e-Parliament initiative. If worldwide elections to create a world people's assembly can find sufficient support to establish a directly elected global assembly, so much the better. But the enormous costs and difficulties associated with that strategy make a primary focus on it problematic. Indeed, establishing an e-Parliament now would enhance realistic understanding of the merits of a global peoples' assembly and improve the possibilities for more robust global governance later on.

A similar argument applies to most concerns about possible conflicts of interest between the e-Parliament and the UN. The early creation of an effective e-Parliament is more likely to speed needed UN reforms than to hamper them. The members of the United Nations have little room to criticize the creation of an e-Parliament because they have had ample time and opportunity, especially since pro-democracy forces dismantled the Berlin Wall in 1989, to institute reforms. They have done nothing significant to reduce the gap between rich and poor or between strong and weak. For years the world has recognized that the Security Council is grossly unrepresentative and that the composition of its permanent membership category must be changed, yet nationally competitive priorities and the desire of those with disproportionate power to retain it have prevented change. Narrow, short-range, unreasonably selfish national interests have stood inflexibly against the global human interest. To be sure, the UN needs more law-making and law-enforcing capability, but few national governments are interested in giving it more authority. The UN is unlikely to achieve it until its governing procedures are more representative, because negotiating gridlock occurs when those who are disproportionately strong refuse to concede a reduction of their power, and those who are disproportionately weak refuse to grant more authority to the UN until they have a fair say in what the UN does. The prospect that an e-Parliament might represent people more democratically than does the UN will be an added incentive for the UN to make needed reforms.

Indeed, as legislators have more information about and oversight of UN operations,<sup>24</sup> they may be more inclined to provide funding for them. The UN system, in turn, would have enhanced democratic legitimacy if and when it would be supported by a global parliamentary forum. National officials seated at the UN would keep a sensitive finger on the pulse of the

collective voice expressed by the e-Parliament. UN actions are always aided by strong support from public opinion; an e-Parliament and e-Forum could articulate that opinion more authoritatively than ever before.<sup>25</sup>

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### 3.4.3 (Hardcopy excerpt 7)

#### Will the e-Parliament inspire new vision?

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the e-Parliament could help articulate and build support for a vision to serve the human interest. It could contribute to human solidarity by emphasizing that individuals are the most fundamental repository of sovereignty<sup>26</sup>-- not states -- thereby denationalizing sovereignty. To the extent that power holders, whether in national governments or in the UN, feel tension with the idea of more equitable global representation of all people, such tension is intellectually creative, normatively clarifying, and politically useful. Perhaps fairer representation of the poor in decision making processes would help reduce poverty or educate children. Even though some of the rich may not want to redress political and economic inequities, in the long run they too will benefit from poverty reduction and more equitable political representation.

The e-Parliament would not magically transform recalcitrant national governments or narrow vested interests, but it could provide the best possibility available for overcoming opposition from states that obstruct multilateral initiatives that they see as threatening their sovereignty. Because an E-Parliament will be founded on the existing members of national parliaments, it can install some democracy “from above” without being personally threatening to the prerogatives of existing legislators in their national contexts and while empowering their constituents “from below.” Meanwhile this process can gradually encourage a reformulation of ideas about sovereignty, made easier as the e-Parliament stands the test of time. Institutionalizing more global governance by basing it on the most democratic element of national government brilliantly enlists *national* democratic power structures on behalf of empowering *global* democratic power structures. This process opens vision to a positive sum game for legislators in both their national and global roles.

National support for global reform is likely to grow because, in the absence of a world parliamentary presence, members of parliaments in many countries are beginning to feel like an endangered species. They cannot do their jobs for their constituents by acting only within their own legislatures. Most national legislators (and many national legislatures) have

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

only a very limited influence on global issues that affect their constituents, because international affairs are handled by big power foreign ministries, impersonal markets, or distant, relatively closed institutions like the IMF. Because important decisions for their own societies cannot be made without involving other countries, powers have slipped away from the legislative to the executive branch of their government, especially the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, and treasury. In some countries democratic powers have slipped away from national governments altogether -- for both branches of government -- as they have been overtaken by globalization. To bring global vision and national parliamentarians together will partly redress the usurpation of legislative power that has occurred during globalization.

Because most, although not necessarily all, existing national legislators would gain important information, visibility, and influence in a successful e-Parliament, they are inclined to favor the idea. Legislators are a powerful and potentially decisive group to support the idea that is itself an unusually compelling vision: to democratize and manage globalization. Earlier efforts to democratize international relations, such as to strengthen the UN or to improve its representativeness, have faced strong resistance from national governments because they have seen the proposals as taking power *away* from national officials. But the e-Parliament can be established by a powerful national group, legislators, who see its success as a way of *gaining* a legitimate degree of power and effectiveness.

One start-up advantage of the e-Parliament initiative is that it can start relatively small and keep growing. As long as it is open to all democratically elected parliamentarians of all ideological persuasions, any successes it has are likely to attract participation by others who are eligible to "attend."

The existence of an E-Parliament and the visibility of a global agenda will probably encourage national parliaments to perform more responsibly, just as a permanent international criminal court is expected to help national courts perform their duties to enforce international humanitarian law more faithfully. If national authorities do not act responsibly, then a global spotlight might focus on the problem.

### **The prospects for an e-Parliament**

Most arguments against an e-Parliament, upon close examination, are arguments that criticize it not for what it is or for what its exponents aspire for it to be, but instead for failing to be more ideal than is feasible at the present moment. The proposed e-Parliament may not be robustly democratic enough, but it provides far more "democracy from below"

than the world has ever possessed. It would certainly not be free of vested interests, but it would provide far more democratic accountability and transparency for many vested interests, both national and international, than we have today. It does not make legally binding rules immediately, but it brings us closer to a global legislative process than anything we have ever known. The e-Parliament is not an ideal end state. It is not a final goal. But it *is* a giant step on the path toward more democratic, more just, more human-centered, more representative accountability for powerful interests and actors at every level of human society in every corner of the world. By establishing more democratic governance through an e-Parliament, we can address the democratic deficit, the action deficit, the resource deficit, and the vision deficit. Perhaps most exciting of all, the e-Parliament is do-able, and it is do-able *now*.

**Note:** Due to space limitations, the following sections were omitted from the printed version.

The additional Section Headings in this unabridged PDF version are:

- 3.2.2 Will national executive officials oppose legislators' participation?**
- 3.2.3 Will opposition by recalcitrant States obstruct the e-Parliament?**
- 3.3 Generating resources**
- 3.3.2 Will the e-Parliament increase funds to address global problems?**
- 3.4 Envisioning a global agenda to serve the human interest**
- 3.4.1 Will democratizing the international system threaten national security and sovereignty?**
- 3.4.3 Will the e-Parliament inspire new vision?\***

\*this section includes additional footnotes

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Asterisks indicate present sections that were omitted in the *Hardcopy*

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I thank Flavio Lotti, Director of Tavola della Pace (the Peace Roundtable), Sirpa Pietikäihnen, Chair of the Executive Committee of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, and Nick Dunlop and Lois Barber, Co-Directors of EarthAction, for the invitation to present an early version of this paper at a seminal meeting initiating discussions of a world parliament, co-sponsored by the three preceding organizations and by the Province of Venice, the Italian Coordination of Local Authorities for Peace, and the European Masters Programme on Democracy and Human Rights of Venice International University, meeting in Venice, Italy, March 24-26, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> They in practice manage international economic affairs through the Bretton Woods Institutions: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization.

<sup>3</sup> For an early discussion of the human interest, see Robert C. Johansen, *The National Interest and the Human Interest: An Analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 20-23, 391-93.

<sup>4</sup> See Independent Commission on International Development Issues, Willy Brandt, chair, *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980); Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, Olaf Palme, chair, *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); World Commission on Environment and Development, Gro Harlem Brundtland, chair, *Our Common Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); the Palme Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, *A World At Peace: Common Security in the Twenty-first Century* (Stockholm: The Palme Commission, 1989); the South Commission, Julius Nyerere, chair, *The Challenge to the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance, Ingvar Carlsson, chair, *Common Responsibility in the 1990's* (Stockholm: Prime Minister's Office, 1991); and the Commission on Global Governance, Ingvar Carlsson and Shridath Ramphal, co-chairs, *Our Global Neighborhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, *Report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons: Executive Summary* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> See The Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance, *Common Responsibility in the 1990's* (Stockholm: Prime Minister's Office,



1991), 45.

<sup>6</sup> Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 253.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, "Toward Global Parliament," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 80, No. 1 (January/February 2001): 212-13.

<sup>8</sup> This idea arose from Nick Dunlop and William Ury during a brainstorming session and subsequently has been elaborated in numerous deliberations involving them, Lois Barber, and the present author, as well as conversations with many others. The first public discussion of this idea with members of parliaments occurred in March 2001, in the Venice meeting described in note 1. Although the following discussion is based on those conversations, informal notes from international conference calls, and personal e-mail communications, this essay has no official authorization. Responsibility for the contents remains with the author alone.

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this essay, "parliaments" refers to all parliaments, congresses, and other national and regional legislatures. All democratically elected legislators in national and regional parliaments or congresses are referred to as "members of parliament" or simply "MPs," even though their usual titles might be "Representative," "Senator," "Congressman," or some other title.

<sup>10</sup> Members of a directly elected regional legislature, such as the European Parliament, would be eligible to participate and vote.

<sup>11</sup> The Commission on Global Governance recognized that "Some way needs to be found . . . to provide more space in global governance for people and their organizations--for civil society as distinct from governments" (*Our Global Neighborhood*, 256). They called for expanding the representation of civil society through an Annual Civil Society Forum at the United Nations.

<sup>12</sup> The following discussion reflects the thinking of many, but not all, of those most closely associated with the e-Parliament initiative. These matters remain in flux as the circle of participants in the e-Parliament initiative widens. For this section, I draw, with permission, upon unpublished documents in the author's possession: "The e-Parliament" and "e-Parliament Discussion Paper."

<sup>13</sup> In countries in the European Union, where citizens are represented in both national and the European legislatures, members of the European Parliament could, along with national legislators, be assigned an equal share of the representation of the population of a particular country.

<sup>14</sup> The problems of weighted voting are elaborated in Paul C. Szasz,



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

Alternative Voting Systems in International Organizations and the Binding Triad Proposal to Improve UN General Assembly Decision-Taking (Wayne, NJ: Center for UN Reform Education, 2001), 33-38.

<sup>15</sup> Szasz, *Alternative Voting Systems in International Organizations and the Binding Triad Proposal to Improve UN General Assembly Decision-Taking*, 33.

<sup>16</sup> The groups initiating the proposal for an e-Parliament include EarthAction, which has spearheaded the campaign, in collaboration with the Harvard Program on Negotiation, One World Now, the World Federation of United Nations Associations, and a diverse group of national legislators from all parts of the world.

<sup>17</sup> Thirty members of the U.S. Congress, including both Democrats and Republicans, have expressed interest in the e-Parliament, as have about 250 members of parliaments from around the world. More than 135 members of parliaments have signed up for the AIDS Vaccine Caucus and 112 have signed up for the Children's Rights Caucus.

<sup>18</sup> Parliamentarians Global Action, Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank.

<sup>19</sup> *Italics added.* Quoted by Louis Henkin, *The Rights of Man Today* (Boulder: Westview, 1978), 20, from Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, edited by Henry Collins (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 223.

<sup>20</sup> An example might be the decision by large chemical corporations to support the Montreal Protocol on the Depletion of the Ozone Layer (1987), which created universal standards to limit chlorofluorocarbon production in order to protect the ozone shield of the planet.

<sup>21</sup> "The E-Parliament," unpublished paper from EarthAction files, 8.

<sup>22</sup> From a survey of all empirical work on the causes of war, it is clear that norms do influence state behavior and that when major states work out rules of the game to restrict their unilateral acts, "there appears to be a great reduction in their tendency to go to war with each other." See John Vasquez, *What Do We Know About War?* (Lanham, Md: Rowman Littlefield, 2000), 361, 367.

<sup>23</sup> In their excellent article, Falk and Strauss ("Toward Global Parliament")(pages 11-19 of this Reader) make a compelling case for a directly elected people's assembly. One practical drawback of their proposal, compared to an e-Parliament, is that elections need to be held before representatives can be selected for an assembly. For the e-Parliament, elections have already been held.

<sup>24</sup> Many governments of course have far less extensive and well-financed

bureaucracies than exist in North America, Western Europe, and Japan. A global parliamentary presence would provide additional understanding for many.

<sup>25</sup> Falk and Strauss note that even a relatively weak global assembly could offer some democratic oversight to the IMF, WTO, and World Bank (“Toward Global Parliament,” 2).

<sup>26</sup> If sovereignty and citizenship are denationalized, then the fault lines over policy conflicts may change. They will not always coalesce or be coterminous with national cultures; there will be cross-cutting cleavages. Once fault lines become less national in definition, then the relatively small (yet proportional) influence of one’s nation in the global scheme of representation will not prove as worrisome. Democracy will then no longer be tethered so directly to national or cultural ties but instead to voluntary and chosen forms of solidarity that cross national borders.

## An Idea Whose Time Has *Not* Come

by

**Jeffrey Laurenti**



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## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Introduction

Perhaps the most significant and, we may hope enduring political transformation of the last quarter of the 20th century has been the spread of democratic politics worldwide. “Dictatorships of the proletariat” and dictatorships of the privileged fearful of the proletariat have alike given way to democratic regimes that allow their citizens open political debate and choice in competitive elections. Democracy still has fragile roots in many places, where disillusionment with the failure of the new political arrangements to improve living conditions is deepening, and in others it has yet to germinate. But the apparent triumph of the democratic idea has emboldened visionaries to imagine that the continuing processes of economic and social “globalization” may now warrant the introduction of elective politics at a global level to oversee international institutions and guide international policymaking.

Ardent world federalists, a small but determinedly farsighted band, sense an opportunity to make progress toward a hallowed dream of world government. Others who doubt the feasibility of the federalist enterprise nonetheless see a deepening danger of a “democratic deficit” in existing international institutions, for which the best antidote may be an infusion of oversight by democratically elected officials. Many are concerned by Washington’s seeming embrace of American supremacist doctrines and a nationalist polemic celebrating a new American imperium said to be the most unchallenged since Rome’s; they imagine that a global body of democratically elected officials can rein in Washington’s unilateralism.

But even if fantasies of American empire must collapse of their own weight and contradictions, so imaginings of a global parliament are almost certain to founder on their own internal contradictions. Particularly treacherous are the questions of a proposed parliament’s inclusivity, its authority, and its efficiency. The carefully considered proposals for realizing a global parliament advanced in five of the illuminating articles in this volume, from virtual deliberations in cyberspace among members of existing national legislatures to the ideal independently elected parliamentary assembly, all struggle to square these circles. Till these questions can be more satisfactorily answered, a worldwide parliamentary assembly will remain but a theoretical possibility.

### Inclusivity

The first issue on which world assembly proponents stumble is how to account for the large swath of humankind that continues to live in societies

where political life is not democratically organized. The National People's Congress in China and Saddam Hussein's parliament in Iraq, to take two examples, both adopt the form of parliamentarism but are empty of the content of democratic debate and choice. Are "parliamentarians" from such house-broken political systems to be part of the world assembly – and what are the consequences for the assembly's legitimacy if they are or are not? They already sit as members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), whose 144 member parliaments also embrace such geographically representative and democratically challenged polities as Belarus, Cuba, North Korea, and Sudan. The proposals to formalize a UN consultative role for the IPU, endorsed by no less distinguished a political practitioner than UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, accept a tradeoff of some democratic legitimacy for inclusiveness.

Our paper writers, however, seem to recognize that so promiscuously inclusive a body would be fatally compromised at birth in the eyes of Western publics. A punctilious concern for linguistic accuracy impels some, therefore, to propose an "international parliamentary assembly" instead of a "global" one. Such modesty befits proposals that would bring such an assembly into being (into "force" would be an overstatement) with the participation of just 20 or even 50 states.

The millennium has brought into existence a promising vehicle for separating the democratic wheat from the authoritarian chaff – the Community of Democracies. Constituted in 2000 in Warsaw, the Community has sought to define criteria for membership that would include as many states as possible (and give it the non-Western majority it would need for global credibility) and yet not outrage the human rights nongovernmental organizations that are its principal public constituencies. The Community's foreign ministers accepted the principle of restrictive criteria for participation at their Warsaw meeting, and its steering committee (ironically self-appointed, not democratically elected) elaborated those criteria and invited 118 governments that met the standards to participate in its second meeting in Seoul in November 2002. Inevitably, the organizers applied the criteria somewhat forgivingly in a few arguable cases, but vigilant human rights advocates like Freedom House and Human Rights Watch were largely satisfied that sham democracies were not invited back for the second meeting. Even counting the 21 gray-zone states invited to Seoul as observers, it is striking that the Community of Democracies barred as beyond the pale well over a quarter of the members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

But it is one thing to deny membership to a few small “rogue” dictatorships. It is quite another to exclude China, the vast majority of Arab countries, and two-thirds of Africa, and imagine that the resulting body can have a formal consultative or oversight role with United Nations agencies, be part of UN-sponsored negotiations on multilateral conventions (the real work of international legislating), or pass on the resolutions of UN political bodies. Restrictive membership disqualifies such an assembly from a formal role as a supplementary UN organ. (Indeed, even delegations from unquestionably democratic countries have dragged their feet on as modest a proposal as a UN Democracy Caucus, an informal grouping of Community of Democracy member states that would seek to coordinate their positions on human rights and democratization issues coming before UN bodies.) To maintain the democratic integrity of the proposed new body, the states participating in the Community of Democracies could ask the members of their national and even state assemblies to participate in electronic deliberations, or to convene once a year as an international parliamentary assembly, or even to summon voters to polls to choose delegates to a directly elected such assembly. But would this rump assembly actually do?

### Authority

The central conundrum facing an imagined international parliamentary assembly is the apparent impossibility of reconciling its mandate and its appeal to prospective parliamentarians. What powers would such an institution have? If it has no authority over the activities of even the scarecrow agencies of the United Nations, why should serious politicians invest serious time in it? True, the experience of existing efforts to place a parliamentary patina over international organizations, such as the North Atlantic Assembly, suggests that members of Congress and parliaments can be drawn to short, scripted gatherings if the time and especially place are right. But it is fair to say that these meetings garner little substantive interest from the press, the public, or politicians themselves.

Many advocates of an international parliament, including some of the distinguished contributors to the present volume, make no secret of their wish to create a legislative body that would make law on a global level, bypassing the irritating blockages that individual states often place in the way of desired policy initiatives. The global parliament thus becomes another route toward a global legislature after the utter failure of proposals to convert the United Nations General Assembly into such a body under so-called “binding triad” voting schemes. There is little doubt that an elected

body empowered to raise revenue and armies, chart economic policy, and enforce environmental and human rights standards would attract serious attention from the press, public, and politicians. But tellingly, none of the commentators in this collection of essays advances so ambitious a program – and with good reason. A worldwide assembly with genuine power over international decision-making and resources, and thus over national governments, would encounter strong resistance among most informed publics. In any country, the prospect that officials representing alien countries and values could gain control over vital decisions affecting “our” lives even over the unanimous opposition of “our” representatives would arouse deep concerns.

This is widely assumed to be an American objection, but in fact the resistance to coercive power in the hands of outsiders runs deep in most parts of the world. Federal polities even among kindred peoples have often broken down under the relatively trivial strains of conflicting identities – recall not only the dissolution of the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav federations, but Canada’s near-death experience of Québec’s intended secession. When the ethnic and cultural differences are far more profound, it becomes far harder for like-minded nationals to accept dictates from a body dominated by “aliens.” Muslim populations will rebel at legislation imposed by Western liberals mandating gay-rights protections. Rabble-rousing Indian politicians will rail against the imagined control over India’s economic assets that such an international assembly would give manipulative Americans, just as rabble-rousing American politicians will rail against the opportunity such an assembly would give to the rascalish representatives of India’s billion impoverished people to raid Americans’ pocketbooks.

The fundamental reality is that the much-invoked “international community” is yet in only a germinal stage--so new and fragile that reactionary ideologists still deny it exists at all. Exist it does, as we see in the cross-national political coalition-building among nongovernmental organizations that has prodded states into major policy initiatives. Exist it does, as we have seen in the marshalling of governments behind collective measures to pressure or coerce particularly flagrant abusers of human rights to mend their ways or get out of the way. But this emerging consciousness among informed publics of an “international community” has not yet translated into strong affective attachments. The international community is invoked as a rallying cry of altruism, not a war cry to summon people into life-or-death struggles. And it cannot withstand the stresses that a global legislative assembly would place on people’s tolerance of a mandatory



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

regime dominated by people unlike themselves.

There is, of course, the counter-factual example of the European Union, where enormous progress has felicitously been made toward a federal system. One of the most remarkable transformations of the past half-century has been the development of a sense of shared political community across Western Europe – initially nurtured by fear of Soviet intentions, then by economic self-interest, and now culminating in a growing array of federal institutions. True, Danes and Dutchmen may be wary of the Mediterranean olive belt reaching into their pockets; Germans may grumble that Italians seem too relaxed about blocking unwelcome immigrants who then rush north of the Alps. Yet all corners of the European Union see themselves as sharing enough of a common identity to transfer real governmental authority, from Schengen to Maastricht, to a European political community.

Curiously, the movement toward Europe-wide immigration, currency, economic and now even security policies has been achieved with little impetus from the showcase parliament in Strasbourg, and voter interest and turnout in Euro-parliament elections is notoriously low. Despite their experience in building a relatively tightly knit European community, Europeans are no more ready than Americans to extend the principle of collective decision-making across continental lines. They will not allow binding international rules on migration of people to be made by political bodies where Arab, African, and South Asian representatives can outvote them. In short, an empowered global parliament is as much a non-starter for the Europeans, who have become the pace-setters leading the development of the international community during America's self-isolation by cantankerous conservatives, as it is for the United States. The North-South divide on economic and social issues is a very profound and fundamental fault line, and it cannot be overcome by the waving of a parliamentary magic wand.

So once we acknowledge the reality that, as far as the eye can see, there will be no global law-making function for a proposed parliamentary assembly, what functions can it have? And who should take it seriously? Meetings of national parliamentarians under the aegis of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, proposed for the eve of the annual session of the UN General Assembly, can facilitate consciousness-raising among parliamentarians in capitals about the United Nations. And there is almost always some marginal value to be gained from such gatherings, on the assumption that every additional exposure to people of different backgrounds and perspectives broadens one's own. Secretary-General Annan apparently believes that the United

Nations itself can benefit from national legislators' rehearsing the debates that their nations' delegates to the General Assembly will re-hash later in the fall--but presumably the Secretariat's interest lies above all in winning the hearts and minds of legislative appropriators so they may loosen the purse strings for contributions to UN programs.

Even for so modest a proposal as an Inter-Parliamentary Union assembly at the United Nations still depends on getting serious politicians to make time for them. The most committed politicians with a shared interest in globalist causes have indeed made time for them, through such pioneering groups as Parliamentarians for Global Action; but their very self-selection makes them unrepresentative of their parliaments. The difficulty for advocates of a world parliamentary assembly is how to reach beyond these like-minded legislators and interest the broader range of political practitioners who have little patience for "globaloney." For hortatory declarations, a parliamentarian can just as easily issue a press release as sit through lengthy debates about a text that few state authorities will ever read, much less implement. She or he certainly does not need to go the trouble and expense of waging a campaign before a disengaged electorate to win election to a powerless international parliamentary assembly.

As it is, many of the pronouncements tediously negotiated and adopted in the UN General Assembly every year regularly disappear without a trace outside the walls of UN headquarters, especially those written on Assembly agenda items that are recycled annually for years and decades on end. Even where there can be consequences in the real world, as is usually the case with treaty negotiations that will result in legal obligations on ratifying states to implement agreed provisions, it is not clear that the additional layer of an international parliamentary debate will strengthen the negotiation process.

### **Efficiency**

Advocates of investing the energies of citizen groups and sympathetic governments in a campaign for an international parliamentary assembly have an additional burden of persuasion. They need to convince informed publics that creation of such a body would yield significantly better outcomes in building agreement on international policy than the existing system allows--particularly if the assembly is to be a directly elected body. Just as the mantra of "democracy" does not make elected judges more capable of impartially dispensing justice than appointed judges, so the skill sets needed for effective international negotiation may not be the same as those that win politicians election to legislative bodies.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

Ironically, the diplomats whom nations send as their delegates to the United Nations and other international organizations are far more likely to perceive common global interests than would politicians who seek election back home by sharpening differences with their opponents. Right-wing American critics of the U.S. State Department are on to something when they fulminate that Foreign Service officers are too sympathetic to people from different cultures and too willing to try to understand how others see issues: Diplomatic training does inculcate an internationalist culture and world-view, does encourage compromise and conflict resolution, and does favor consensus-building over polarization.

To be sure, diplomats cannot press beyond what their governments are prepared to consider, but behind the scenes they are often advocates within their governments for compromises that can reconcile national interests and preferences with broader international goals. Moreover, in contrast to most elected politicians, nearly all delegates at the headquarters of the United Nations and UN specialized agencies (remarkably, even American ones) are able to speak at least one language other than their home country's. Diplomats from developing and developed countries alike, and those at the United Nations in particular, tend to share a common international culture and values, reinforced at the UN by working in a common institution that operates by democratic parliamentary rules. Because they come from this shared liberal internationalist culture, it is no coincidence that in many smaller developing countries that are making the transition to democracy, it is former UN representatives or World Bank officials who are most often the successful candidates to break with the nation's authoritarian past.

It is hard to see what policy issues would be resolved differently if an international parliamentary assembly were in place to add, like a Greek chorus, its comment to the debates and negotiations unfolding in UN fora. Yes, one could have some American voices in such an assembly speak out for the Kyoto Protocol or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, mirroring the large minority of the U.S. Congress that supports them (and, it should be remembered, the U.S. diplomats who had negotiated both texts and the Clinton administration that signed them). But their presence in such an assembly would not alter the opposition of the officials in charge of U.S. policy in the executive branch and Congress in 2003. Having American or Russian or Chinese voices in an international assembly expressing support for an international landmines ban would not change their governments' political judgment on the utility of the Ottawa convention.

Perhaps a few American globo-parliamentarians might have been willing

to stand up for the international criminal court after domestic sources of opposition mobilized ferociously against it in 1998, but they would surely not have tempered the frenzy that broke out against the court in Washington circles after the Rome treaty conference. (Even previously supportive members of the U.S. Congress quickly calculated that the political dynamic in 1998 had rendered the Rome statute such a hopeless cause that they should not waste their limited political capital on it, and they only began to emerge from their bunkers when ICC opponents overplayed their hand in the first two years of the Bush administration.) Having an elected global parliament debate international responses to the Palestinian-Israeli crisis could not possibly leave the United States any more isolated on the issue than it is in the General Assembly and Security Council today. Indeed, the pressures on U.S. policymakers to pursue a course different from its allies and the UN community generally come precisely from elected officials in the Congress, exquisitely attuned as they are to relevant constituency opinion. Presumably the same constituency interests would guide elected globo-parliamentarians.

What democratic deficit? There is good reason to suppose that the public audience for debates on international policy is in fact quite small. Candidates for the U.S. Congress who begin their campaigns under any illusion that they can gain traction by speaking out on international concerns quickly discover that they will be wasting their breath and their advertising dollars. It is no exaggeration to say that most of the general public is supremely disengaged in international issues. The shrinking news hole for international reporting in mainstream American media is almost certainly more a consequence than cause of this public disengagement, and surveys consistently find that Americans say they want to read or hear more about local news and less about distant international stories. The more the overseas news item deals with a “political” issue, the less likely it will generate public interest.

There are, of course, niche electorates that can be galvanized on a foreign-policy issue. These are, however, more often focused on a single regional issue relevant to the voters’ ethnic identity (e.g., Armenians, Cubans, Greeks, and Jews) than on global-issue orientation. Moreover, even those who do have a more global view of international affairs might shock enthusiasts for a global parliament with their attitude toward liberal internationalist causes. There are, after all, far more retired military officers in the U.S. electorate than people who have made their career defending human rights.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

Given the general level of disengagement in “foreign” affairs, elections of representatives to a global parliamentary assembly could draw voters to the polls in numbers comparable, say, to those who turn out for American school board and fire district elections. As with school board elections, the tiny minority of citizens who care deeply about a very particular aspect of international affairs would likely turn out at disproportionately high rates. In the United States, the constituencies that provide much of the electoral muscle for internationally minded candidates of the Democratic Party – notably lower-income voters, unionized workers, and racial minorities – would almost surely abstain in massive numbers from elections to a distant global assembly. This would be true even if that assembly were a body empowered to adopt international law and impose it on states without their ratification; a high-minded international assembly would not be addressing their pressing problems.

Thus, an unanticipated consequence of “democratizing” the international policy debate by election of a global assembly might be its capture by intensely passionate niche interests in the electorate. While this might be a particular risk in the United States, given its historically outsized military and its richness in ethnic constituencies with hearts elsewhere, cross-national surveys of public opinion consistently find that the general public in most countries shows the same shallow interest in and lack of passion for international causes as do Americans. Hence the question posed above as to the “efficiency” of the proposals – would a global parliamentary scheme yield enough of an improvement to international policymaking as to be worth the costs of a new institution, the foregone campaigns for more tangible reform of the United Nations that are sidelined in favor of a misguided quest for a toothless assembly or a quixotic legislature, and the possibility of more contentiousness and paralysis in international bodies if we rely on politicians elected from narrow but passionate constituencies rather than diplomatically trained international affairs professionals (accountable to their elected officials at home, to be sure) to debate and negotiate the tough issues facing the world community.

It is appropriate to conclude by questioning, in this same pragmatic vein, the assumption that undergirds the quest for some sort of global parliament: Just how serious is the alleged “democratic deficit” in our jerrybuilt mechanisms of international governance? In the world’s democratic polities, positions on international issues reflect elected leaders’ judgments of where they can satisfy domestic as well as external constituencies, of the loyalty they enjoy from their base constituencies that might allow them the

running room to strike deals on international issues, and the tradeoffs they must make among domestic constituencies and partner countries. There is probably more interest in the merits of international policy in national capitals--the foreign ministries, legislatures, and national press--than there is in the same countries' publics at large. When citizen groups mobilize in democratic states, the alleged democratic "deficit" on international issues can disappear.

Thus it may be far more productive to concentrate reformers' energies on opening up the closed doors of international agencies where policy has been dominated by well-connected private interests, on restructuring the relationship of the specialized agencies to a recast UN Economic and Social Council, and on revitalizing fossilized structures like the permanent core of the Security Council than on a campaign for a global parliament. The spirit of "international community" is visibly spreading and deepening, and over time may ripen into a shared sense of political community. Until it does, we do well to let the dog of a global parliament lie.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Appendix I:

#### **A Conceptual Framework to Evaluate World Parliament Proposals (excerpted)**

by Troy Davis

*President/CEO, the World Citizen Foundation*

**The following is an excerpt from a paper by Troy Davis suggesting ways to evaluate various proposals for a world parliament.**

#### **Introduction**

After a lull of about 50 years, proposals for global bodies representing the people are, once again more frequent subject of open discussion and action. These varied approaches to involve the people directly in the decision-making that affects their lives are meant to provide an independent and countervailing voice to the dozens of global inter-governmental institutions existing today; institutions that are created by and used as tools of the executive branches of their constituent governments; UN organizations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the OECD. Basic to reforming the global political architecture is the realization of a global decision-making body or World Parliament (WP).

#### **Proposals for Basic Design Principles**

The following are a set of principles of design that may seem obvious, but need to be stated. One simple example is that only peaceful means will be used to establish a WP. Our basic principles must attempt to encompass all of human behavior and to cover potential future scenarios.

We would want to avoid, and would disavow, any violent actions undertaken as a pretext of establishing a WP, such as those from a lone terrorist, any terrorist groups, or any nation or group of nations seeking global hegemony.

Following are the *basic principles* we suggest in order to design sustainable and legitimate global bodies representing the people:

1. Ultimate political sovereignty resides in the people and any institutional sovereignty is derived from them. Therefore, public bodies must yield if the people decide on institutional change.



## **Appendix I: *Troy Davis, Excerpts***

2. The collective sovereignty of the people must be expressed through direct or representative democracy. The degree or extent of direct versus representative will depend on the scale of the body and the mix of checks and balances.
3. The rule of law must be implemented as developed and approved, as opposed to the rule by specific individuals such as monarchs or dictators; this prevents arbitrariness and puts the rule of law above special interests.
4. Implementation of the subsidiarity principle, which means that local decisions are taken at a local level, and, concomitantly, that the World Parliament addresses only global problems. This principle is a constitutional principle of the European Union and is a refinement of a principle of federalism. The local levels will be defined and agreed upon as the WP develops.
5. The transparency principle: complete institutional and procedural transparency is needed, as this is the only way to create the necessary trust and to prevent corruption.
6. Use of peaceful means to build such an entity.
7. Non-discrimination in accordance with Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
8. Universal participation or inclusivity in the WP, to create a sense of ownership by the people. No person or persons should be excluded from participation in or knowledge of proceedings.

The origin of every single one of these principles is derived from the philosophical and pragmatic recognition that in today's world, only a global body that is respected and trusted by the people will have the necessary moral authority to enforce its decisions. In order to earn the trust and participation of the world's people, each of the above eight (8) principles must be implemented.

### **A New Paradigm**

We need to learn to use the paradigm of democratic rule and the new technologies to build a robust and trusted global political system.

Global risks can be greatly diminished if the present dominance of international decision-making by the executive branches of national governments can be replaced by legislative decisions. Since it would be awkward, if not impossible, to have 200 parliaments decide independently and try to reconcile, the logical solution is a global parliament to set the

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

broad framework and address global issues.

A WP would have the breadth to deal with global crises, as it could provide a permanent forum for discussion of common problems, instead of today's shuttle diplomacy. The representatives of the richly varied cultures of our global society will be chosen by the world's citizens, and not by their national governments. They will be able to form a community themselves, and, in regular interpersonal contact, lead the way for us to a world that celebrates this variety; a world of peace, freedom and justice.

A World Parliament, which can be defined as a global institutional forum for permanent political dialogue, is the missing tool required to promote a "Dialogue of Civilizations." The scenario of a global "clash of civilizations" is, unfortunately, not remote and it can only be avoided through a conscious effort at expanding the political dialogue between cultures. Prince Hassan of Jordan realized this when he called for a World Cultural Parliament in London, "to help the global fight against terrorism" (BBC, 25 October 2001).

A World Parliament has the potential to generate true enthusiasm among millions of people, and to become the most closely watched and respected political body on the planet. The mere launching of the project is likely to boost world confidence, excite the attention of youth, and restore a measure of hope by providing a neutral place for dialogue and equal access to the concerns, priorities and grievances of all.

The premises that led to the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court are the same arguments that lead us to say we need to create a World Parliament as a permanent dialogue forum to replace costly and more fallible ad hoc international negotiations. To succeed, the WP must become the most trusted human political institution in history, so that its decisions are respected through the strength of an almost irresistible force of global public opinion.

### **Indicators of Evaluation for WP Proposals**

#### ***What are the advantages of a WP compared to the present world situation?***

A WP is the embodiment of a permanent "deep dialogue." It is the institutionalization of that political dialogue. Democracy is founded on a "talk" paradigm rather than a "fight" paradigm. We believe that most people will agree that differences and issues can best be dealt with through honest dialogue. Dialogue takes time and profound dialogue requires more time. By facilitating a permanent forum of men and women from all cultures

**Appendix I: Troy Davis, Excerpts**

and language groups, we believe that it can and will arrive at intelligent, fair, and practical solutions to global problems. The traditional method of international diplomacy has not delivered the desired results of peace and justice. Too many voices have been and continue to be marginalized, excluding their input into decisions that deeply affect the daily fabric of their lives.

*What are the problems to avoid?*

- a. Those that sometimes occur in national parliaments
  - i. Top-down
  - ii. Far away from citizens, no sense of ownership
  - iii. Perceived as corrupt
  - iv. Not independent: perceived as instruments of executive or financial powers
- b. Those inherent to the scale
  - i. An escalation of the problems of national parliaments
  - ii. An exacerbation of language and cultural differences
  - iii. Could be viewed as a threat by national governments
- c. Those inherent in the lack of precedent
  - i. Resistance to new ideas - particularly visionary ones
  - ii. How can we actually begin?
  - iii. Differences of opinion on basic structure and operation
- d. Lessons: only existing concrete example -the European Parliament
  - i. Citizens do not emotionally connect – do not have a sense of ownership
  - ii. Created in top-down way by governments, not inclusive of public opinion
  - iii. Genesis in a succession of inter-governmental treaties rather than an innovative constitutional beginning

**Examples of some questions to be asked of a World Parliament-type body that can be used to create a useful evaluation framework:**

**External relationship factors:**

How representative is it?

How accountable is it to the people of the world?

## **READER on Second Assembly Proposals**

How well does it succeed in creating (actual and practical rather than formal and theoretical) accountability to itself from other global bodies?

How independent of existing institutions is it?

How does it communicate with the peoples of the world?

How does it maintain the trust of the citizens of the world?

How close is it to the people? What is the accessibility factor?

How efficiently does it impact global public opinion and do its decisions get carried out on the ground?

### **Endogenous dynamic factors:**

How quickly can it respond to change? How can it avoid institutional crystallization?

How can we build into it a corrective and evolutionary mechanism to improve its performance?

### **Endogenous structural factors:**

How transparent is it?

How well does it succeed in creating an environment of dialogue and trust among the representatives?

How well does it embody itself the basic principles that it seeks to defend?

How inclusive is it of the world's population, of different political points of view, etc.?

### **Process factors:**

How practical is it to establish?

How quickly can it be established?

How much public support can it be expected to muster in the process of its establishment?

What might it cost to be established and what is the cost versus benefit ratio?

How should location be established (fixed, rotating, floating seat)?

How can the process of its creation avoid being tainted by the historical baggage of existing institutions?

Not all of those factors are equally important, so we must weigh them accordingly.

Finally, we can also **list issues** to consider for the actual process of creation of a World Parliament:

## **Appendix I: *Troy Davis, Excerpts***

1. What are all the possible scenarios by which it can be created?
2. Which among these are the ones that best suit the principles and conditions previously decided upon?
3. Do we need a World Constitution, and if so, how do we create it?
4. What are the roadmaps and signposts that could lead to a WP?
5. What are the pros and cons of each scenario according to our evaluation scheme?
6. Is it necessary to obtain the “authorization” of nation-states, or is the expressed wish of the people enough?

### **Next steps**

To begin, we must define who “we” are. Then, we need to develop a suggested methodology for evaluation and invite comments and critiques from the broadest possible sources. Once we have refined our methodology, we should make an inventory of existing proposals for world parliament or similar bodies, dissect them into their constituent components, analyze each component in turn, and keep those that fit the criteria we choose. We should also rank how well each component fulfills the evaluation criteria. The last part of this first step is to construct a functional group of “ideal” proposals from the best components to define our first WP.

In the end, we urge prudence and evaluation of each specific idea. We need to create an intellectually rigorous framework for discussion, to push for as broad a debate as possible, and to evaluate all proposals employing a “grid” of criteria upon which we could agree beforehand. Such a debate would respond to the demands of anti-globalization protesters to democratize supranational decision-making. Many national governments frequently use the rhetoric of democracy as a defining value. Multi-nationals share the same rhetoric (see the latest report of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.) The debate we recommend is a practical way to build a bridge between the Davos and the Porto Alegre crowds, between business and labor, between rich and poor countries and populations, and to shift from a dialogue of the deaf to one of hope.

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

### Appendix II:

#### Selected Timeline of Efforts to Create Global Assemblies

Compiled by Barbara Walker

The following is a selective chronology of some of the better known and lesser known events which was prepared with the help of: Lucille Greene, San Francisco, CA; Hannah Newcombe, Dundas, Ontario, Canada; Victoria Clarke of the World Federalist Movement International Secretariat, New York, NY; and Robert Wheeler, New York, NY.

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1889

The international organization of Parliamentarians of sovereign states, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the world's oldest international parliamentary organization, was established. It was later changed to an association of national parliaments.

1920s

The idea of a People's Assembly was proposed in the 1920's to be part of the League of Nations, but was rejected.

1938

Clarence Streit's book "Union Now" that advocated a federation of major democracies was published.

1945

Ernest Bevin, U.K. Foreign Secretary, said in the British House of Commons that, "There should be a study of a house directly elected by the people of the world to whom the nations are accountable."

1948

Robert Maynard Hutchins & G.A. Borgese, published a "Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution."

## Appendix II: Chronology

1949

90 U.S. Congressmen introduced a Sense of Congress Resolution in favor of U.S. support of a World Federation.<sup>1</sup> In late July, 19 U.S. Senators sponsored a resolution identical to the one introduced in the House.

1950s

A “People’s Congress” process was initiated in the late 1950’s by Rodriguez Brent, Maurice Cosyn, and Jacques Savary in France. A body was to be elected in a series of progressive, cumulative transnational elections.<sup>2</sup>

1951

A Parliamentary Conference on World Government was organized in London<sup>3</sup> by the Parliamentary Association for World Government, with the cooperation of the Association for World Peace and the World Movement for World Federal Government.

1958

“World Peace Through World Law” a book by Grenville Clark and Louis Sohn set forth a comprehensive plan, proposing a revision of the United Nations Charter.<sup>4</sup>

1960s

“Constitution of the Federation of Earth (CFE) and its House of Peoples” was developed by Philip and Margaret Isely in a movement called World Constitution and Parliament Association (WCPA).<sup>5</sup>

1975

From 1975 to 1995 ten “World Citizen Assemblies” were held around world, ending where they began, in San Francisco.

1977

A non-governmental world constituent assembly amended the “Constitution of the Federation of Earth” (CFE) in Innsbruck, Austria.<sup>6</sup>



## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

1978

A “Peoples’ Assembly for the UN” was held for five weeks, concurrent with the first UN Special Session on Disarmament.<sup>7</sup>

1978-79

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) was established by concerned parliamentarians from around the world to take joint action on global problems which could not be solved by any one government or parliament alone.<sup>8</sup>

1980s

The Swedish People’s Parliament Model: In the early 1980’s, the Swedish Peace Council and Swedish UN Association organized a Swedish People’s Parliament on Disarmament. Participants were NGOs from labor unions, churches, women’s groups and professional groups.<sup>9</sup>

1988-95

The International Network for a UN Second Assembly (INFUSA) and the Association of World Citizens collaborated on a series of annual conferences held in New York, San Francisco and Vienna.<sup>10</sup>

During this period Harold Stassen, a U.S. signatory to the UN Charter, added an annual “We the People” assembly of accredited NGOs to his UN reform draft charter.

1992

A UN Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) was proposed by Dieter Heinrich, then President of World Federalists of Canada. Heinrich envisioned a second UN Assembly that would initially be appointed by national parliaments or legislatures.<sup>11</sup>

1994

Erskine Childers, a retired Senior Advisor to UN Director-General for Development and International Cooperation, with Brian Urquhart, the retired Under Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, advocated

## Appendix II: Chronology

a UN Parliamentary Assembly in their book, “Renewing the UN System.”

**1995**

The first “United People’s Assembly” was organized in San Francisco by the Action Coalition for Global Change on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN. The goal was to show how such a body could fulfill the “We the Peoples” mandate of the UN Charter.<sup>12</sup>

During the same year the Commission on Global Governance, a group of eminent persons, proposed the establishment of an annual World Civil Society Forum to be held before the regular sessions of the UN General Assembly.

**1998**

A “Pilot Peoples’ Assembly” was held in San Francisco in response to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s call for a “Millennium Peoples’ Assembly (MPA) parallel to the UN General Assembly.”<sup>13</sup>

**1999**

A “Founding Convention” for a permanent global “Peoples’ Assembly” was organized by 30 “delegations” from peoples’ assemblies around the world that attended the Hague Appeal for Peace.

**2000**

Increased cooperation between the UN and the IPU was called for in the UN General Assembly Millennium Declaration which urged, “further cooperation between the UN and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and gender issues.”

The first “Global Peoples’ Assembly” was held in Samoa. About 150 people from 50 countries, cities and supporting organizations around the world met to lay the

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

groundwork for a permanent organization.

**2001**

An Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Council report on cooperation between the IPU and the UN, called for strengthening the relationship between the IPU and the General Assembly to allow the IPU to bring a parliamentary dimension to the United Nations and permit the United Nations to cooperate with parliaments through IPU.<sup>14</sup>

A Fourth Assembly of the People's UN was held in Perugia, Italy, and a World Citizen's Assembly in Lille, France.<sup>15</sup>

**2002**

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) was granted special observer status by the United Nations General Assembly with the right to distribute IPU documents.

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> They stated "It is the sense of Congress that it should be a fundamental objective of the foreign policy of the United States to support and strengthen the United Nations and to seek its development into world federation open to all nations...."

<sup>2</sup> That is, each election (or round) added two additional delegates and two alternates to the pre-existing body. In each election, 10,000 voters cast ballots by mail. The voters were either registered world citizens, or members of global-minded organizations, or citizens of mundialized communities. Different voters to take part each time - the same person cannot vote again in successive elections. There have been eight elections so far in 1969, 1971-72, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1983-84, and 1987, with the two people receiving the most votes in each election becoming delegates, with the next two as alternates. Those elected came from Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, Spain, Switzerland, USA, and Yugoslavia (the voters came from 87 different countries).

The People's Congress (PC) is an unofficial body, and because the delegates are widely scattered geographically and lack funding, they rarely meet. A meeting in Geneva, in May 1990, was attended by over half of the delegates and alternates.

<sup>3</sup> Half of the 80 members who attended were from the United Kingdom; the others from South Africa, Lebanon, USA, Canada, Jamaica, Scandinavia, Italy, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Iceland, Austria, Pakistan, India and Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup> The revision included a 551 member General Assembly apportioned partly on

## Appendix II: *Chronology*

the basis of population (the four largest states having 30 representatives, eight next largest having 15 representatives each, etc. with the representatives to be elected by popular vote after three years).

<sup>5</sup> A dozen draft World Constitutions produced previously were carefully reviewed and synthesized into a comprehensive document, the Constitution of the Federation of Earth (CFE).

<sup>6</sup> Since 1997 several sessions of a Provisional World Parliament have been convened. Other world constituent assemblies would consider additional amendments to the CFE. For the most part it has been a non-governmental initiative. The CFE's tri-cameral architecture contains a House of Peoples, a House of Nations and a House of Counselors. The House of Peoples would be directly elected in 1,000 equal-population voting districts.

<sup>7</sup> This network of about 100 organizations campaigns for a "Second Assembly", sometimes also called "We The People" Assembly. The original proposal was formulated by Jeffrey Segall, member of the Medical Association of World Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (WPPNW) in London. The North American collaborator of Jeffrey Segall is Harry Lerner based in New York, also a physician and active in peace and world federalist organizations.

The International Network for a UN Second Assembly (INFUSA) proposes that a Second Assembly at the UN be formed under the provision of the UN Charter (Article 22), which states that the UN General Assembly can create subsidiary organs to help in its work. As a subsidiary organ, the Second Assembly would only have the power to make recommendations to the General Assembly. The fact that the Second Assembly could be formed without a formal revision of the UN Charter is an advantage, since revision requires a 2/3 majority in the General Assembly and ratification by all five permanent members of the Security Council. The original proposal was that NGOs be represented in the Second Assembly. Each nation's apportionment of delegates would be proportional to the square root of each nation's population. Details of how the delegates would be selected were to be decided by each Member State. Later versions of the proposal no longer specify that the delegates should be from NGOs; they could be popularly elected, appointed by national legislatures, appointed by cabinets from any constituencies or simply prominent individuals.

Each year since 1985, INFUSA has presented its proposal to the UN General Assembly and to UN Member States. INFUSA has also proposed that a UN Expert Group should be established to study its proposal in detail. INFUSA was later incorporated into the Campaign for a More Democratic UN (CAMDUN).

<sup>8</sup> The PGA's actions include: the Five-Continent (Six Nation) Peace Initiative by the national leaders of India, Argentina, Mexico, Sweden, Tanzania and Greece; and the convening of the Amendment Conference of the Partial Test Ban Treaty to change it into a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. PGA is an association of 1,300 individual parliamentarians working under the political direction of a 15-

## READER on Second Assembly Proposals

member Board. The leadership also includes a 33-member International Council representing all the regions of the world.

<sup>9</sup> The process of decision making was as follows: the NGOs were asked to submit resolutions or “bills” for the People’s Parliament; these were then circulated to all the NGOs for consideration; finally the Parliament debated the proposed resolutions, and voted on those which their respective NGOs had supported; and the ones adopted were then forwarded to the Swedish government.

<sup>10</sup> The initial meeting took place during the Third UN Special Session on Disarmament in 1989. A “parallel assembly” was held in October 1989 in New York, and again in October 1990 in New York.

<sup>11</sup> In democratic countries, at least, this would differ from government appointees, because opposition parties would have a voice in the selection. Heinrich believes that the process of parliamentary appointment of delegates to the UNPA would give this model more credibility and acceptability than other parliamentary proposals. Eventually, it was visualized that the Second Assembly would be elected directly by the people.

<sup>12</sup> By 1997 ten preparatory “peoples’ assemblies” under the name of “Second Assembly” or “We The People Assembly”, through a network of about 100 organizations appeared in cities like Perugia, Italy; Sao Paolo, Brazil; Wellington, New Zealand; and Los Angeles, California.

<sup>13</sup> A “Millennium Peoples’ Assembly Network” (MPAN) evolved at the annual UN NGO meetings in New York to “coordinate” the expanding movement, especially in relation to MPA in the year 2000.

<sup>14</sup> The IPU suggested the following areas in which it can play a role in strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments:

(a) Channel to the United Nations the views of the people, in all their diversity, as expressed in parliamentary debates and discussions at IPU;

(b) Promote parliamentary awareness and action in support of international agreements reached at the United Nations and through United Nations programmes;

(c) Further international agreements by promoting activities by parliaments and their members to mobilize public opinion and forge national support for international action;

(d) Prepare analyses and reports on parliamentary activities relevant to the work of the United Nations, particularly in areas where IPU has a particular expertise;

(e) Provide support for parliaments with the aim of increasing their capacity to carry out, at the national level, their legislative and oversight functions with regard to matters that are subject to international cooperation at the United Nations.

<sup>15</sup> The World Assembly was a culmination of a large number of international workshops setting priorities and strategies for change. The Assembly also amended the Charter of Human Responsibilities, seen as the indispensable complement to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.