



Unrepresented Nations and  
Peoples Organization



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UNPO

# Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

## UNPO at a glance

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) is a democratic membership organization representing peoples' rights in international and national fora. Its Members are indigenous peoples, occupied nations, minorities and independent states or territories who have joined together to protect their human rights, to preserve their environments and to find non-violent solutions to conflicts that affect them. UNPO provides an established international forum for Members' aspirations and assists them in effective participation at the international level.



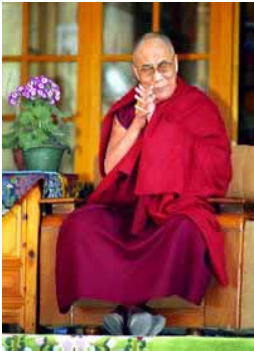
Marino Busdachin,  
UNPO General Secretary

Today, more than 60 Members, representing over 150 million people worldwide, make up the organization. While UNPO Members may differ in their goals and aspirations, they all share one condition; they are not represented in major international fora, such as the United Nations (UN). As a result, their ability to participate in the international community, and to have their concerns addressed by global bodies mandated to protect human rights and address conflict, is largely limited.

It is the Members, the peoples most affected by the shortcomings of the international system, who have created and who continue to direct the organization. In working towards their goals, they have pledged to follow the five principles that form the basis of the UNPO Charter: Non-violence, Human Rights, Self-determination and democracy, Environmental Protection and Tolerance.



Michael Van Walt Van  
Praag, co-founder of  
UNPO and former Gen-  
eral Secretary



## Historical background

On February 11, 1991, UNPO was founded at the Peace Palace, The Hague, the location of the International Court of Justice. Representatives of Armenia, Australian Aboriginals, the Cordillera, the Crimean Tatars, East Turkestan, Estonia, Georgia, the Greek Minority in Albania, Iraqi Kurdistan, Latvia, Palau, Taiwan, Tatarstan, Tibet and West-Papua convened to found an organization that would embody, promote, and affirm the value of democracy, tolerance, non-violence and the right to self-determination. They had long experienced difficulties in effectively addressing their concerns to Members of the United Nations, and were struggling to preserve their cultural identities and protect basic human rights. Therefore they decided to create UNPO, an organization that would combine their efforts and find non-violent ways to make governments listen to their concerns.

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*UNPO's Founding  
Members in front of the  
Peace Palace, The  
Hague, 1991*

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Since the founding of UNPO, and after more than a decade's worth of work in world politics, six Members, Estonia, Latvia, Armenia, Georgia, Palau and East Timor, have been admitted to the UN. Meanwhile, the struggles of oppressed nations and peoples worldwide have continued. On November 10, 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ogoni leader and UNPO Vice-Chairman of the General Assembly, was executed along with eight co-defendants. Their crime was their demand of sound environmental practices and compensation for the devastation of Ogoni territories.

This and several other incidents bear witness to the fact that the initial purpose of UNPO remains. Continuing to support the struggles and further the causes of its Members, the work undertaken by UNPO has not gone unnoticed.

*"Great changes have never happened unless there have been people prepared to stand out and take the risks. I have been inspired by the work of UNPO which gives a voice to the poor, women, minorities, and the economic and politically marginalized – these are the prophetic voices in our world we all need to hear."*

Since 1991 the non-violent methods by which UNPO achieves its goals have been recognized throughout the world. UNPO has been awarded the 1991 Tolerance Award, 1992 Social Innovation Award (The Body Shop), 1998 Petra Kelly Peace Award (Heinrich Böll Foundation) and was nominated for the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize and 1994 Right to Livelihood Award.

*"UNPO's objective is to assist its Members to achieve the greater freedom and dignity to which all peoples have a right. As a result of UNPO's existence, the awareness and understanding of problems faced by oppressed peoples everywhere have increased in the international community. At the same time, many of us feel more empowered to advance our cause through non-violent means."*

1976 Nobel  
Peace Prize

Laureate,  
Mairead Corri-  
gan Maguire, of  
Northern Ire-  
land, declared:

Statement by  
His Holiness the  
Dalai Lama on  
the first decade  
of UNPO activi-  
ties in the inter-  
national arena:

## Members of UNPO

UNPO Members vary in their needs and objectives. As it is the Members who established the organization, they decide upon its priorities. Whilst some want basic human rights and work to ensure the preservation of their cultural identity, others base their struggle on political and historical grounds and want full recognition in the form of sovereignty and self-determination. With the objective of providing a voice for minorities, indigenous peoples and nations that have no seat in the UN, UNPO assists its Members in the field of Effective Participation and Conflict Prevention



## UNPO PROGRAMS

*"The most interesting thing [about UN sessions] is the new contacts and new possibilities to be developed. When you meet with other Members, new ideas come to mind, which will be good for your issue or for someone else's. The potential of our meetings and our cooperation is higher than we are used to when working independently",*



### The Effective Participation Program

UNPO collaborates and maintains close relations with the UN in several ways, such as providing information for UN reports and participating in a range of UN seminars on relations between governments and minorities. The UNPO support program at the UN grew out of the knowledge that unrepresented nations experience difficulties in bringing their concerns before the international bodies mandated to monitor and condemn such violations. Based on a rights-approach to international relations, UNPO established a strategy for enabling Members to solicit the diplomatic power of the UN system and international human rights instruments.

UNPO assists its Members in presenting their cases to UN bodies such as: the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection on Minorities, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, as well as treaty bodies such as the Committee on Human Rights and the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.



*says Nadir Bekir, Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars.*

## National Parliaments and the EU

UNPO furthermore helps its Members to address their cases in the national parliaments (such as the Dutch Parliament, Swedish Parliament and the Italian Chamber of Deputies). In the European Parliament UNPO establishes ties with all the major political groups and maintains a network that disseminates first-hand information on the current situation of minorities and indigenous peoples. The aim is to raise awareness among members of these assemblies and to allow UNPO Members to participate in the legislative procedures.



UNPO General Secretary, Marino Busdachin and Dr. Khanbiev, Representative of Chechnya, brief Dutch media and politicians on the Chechen situation

## Technical Support and Advisory Services

UNPO provides a range of services to its Members, including strategic planning, legal advice, arranging accreditation for UN meetings and sessions, and assistance in preparation of official statements. During UN meetings, UNPO also advises Members on effective participation, and introduces Members to government delegates, NGOs and UN officials. Since 1992, the *UNPO Monitor* has provided daily reports on the proceedings of UN sessions and constitutes a valuable resource and a means by which to disseminate information.

## Briefings at the United Nations

UNPO organizes public briefings during the course of the sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), its Sub-Commission, the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), where UNPO representatives can present information and provide witnesses to government delegates, UN officials, NGOs and the press. The briefing sessions are held in Geneva.



Mr. Thach delivers an oral intervention on the situation of the Khmer Krom at the 61st session of the UNCHR, Geneva.

## Training Programs and Preparatory Seminars



UNPO training session in Geneva: Representatives preparing for the 23rd Session of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations

UNPO arranges training programs for Members to prepare them for participation in sessions of UN human rights bodies. The main objective is to familiarize delegations of indigenous peoples and minorities with the formal and informal procedures of the different UN organs. UNPO also organizes seminars to facilitate interaction between Member representatives, international experts in relevant fields and representatives of governments, multilateral organizations and NGOs, on specific topics of concern to UNPO Members. The training programs are open to representatives of any indigenous or minority community.

## Conflict Prevention Program

One of UNPO's primary goals is the early detection and warning of potential conflict. The information flow between leaders of a people or minority on the one hand, and a government on the other, is essential to the promotion of non-violent conflict resolution. Recognizing the importance of open and direct communication in preventive diplomacy, UNPO facilitates meetings between its Members and representatives of state governments, international organizations, NGOs, potential donors and the media. As per request by a Member, UNPO meets with these parties on the Members behalf.



## UNPO Conflict Prevention Network

UNPO maintains contacts for conflict prevention with the UN Secretariat, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Conflict Prevention Center, the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities and other regional and international institutions.

Following the UN Secretary-General's call to action, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) was established in 2003. Its aim is to enhance the role of civil society in developing effective action to prevent and transform violent conflict, as well as strengthening civil society ties with governments, the UN and regional organizations. The work of GPPAC, including the Dublin Action Agenda, reflects outcomes of a consensus-building process among more than 200 participants, representing civil society organizations (CSOs), governments and multilateral organizations.

GPPAC articulates common ground amongst European CSOs committed to conflict prevention and puts forward key recommendations to strengthen strategic partnerships for preventing violent conflict and building a culture of peace. Being part of this network provides UNPO with a real opportunity to have an impact.



UNPO Steering Committee Vice President, Erkin Alptekin shares his vision with representatives of the Southern Cameroons



The UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in session, Palais des Nations, Geneva

## Promoting Non-violence and Democracy

One of the main objectives of UNPO is the encouragement of non-violent methods for the resolution of conflicts. UNPO cooperates with its Members through national, regional and international instruments to put cases of oppression and injustice on the international agenda. It works to establish democratic mechanisms of government, to promote peace and rule of law and to safeguard linguistic and cultural heritages.



Naga leaders Mr. Isak Chisi Swu and Mr. Thuingaleng Muivah



H. H. The Dalai Lama, a prominent advocate of non-violence, has stated:

*"Some of the successes of past years in resolving conflicts and achieving freedom through non-violence have further convinced me of the need to increase our efforts to pursue goals through effective non-violent means. UNPO's work in promoting non-violence and in making non-violence more effective through solidarity amongst its Members is a major contribution both to the cause of freedom and justice and to the cause of peace."*

His Holiness The Dalai Lama with UNPO Representative Dr. Linnart Mäll



UNPO is bound together by the five main principles of its Covenant;

- the equal right to self-determination;
- adherence to the internationally accepted human rights standards as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments;
- adherence to the principles of democratic pluralism and rejection of totalitarianism and religious intolerance;
- promotion of non-violence and the rejection of terrorism as an instrument of policy; and
- protection of the natural environment.



Special Emissary Adelard Blackman of the Buffalo River Dene Nation participating at a UNPO seminar

All Members are required to sign and abide by the UNPO Covenant. They must affirm that they support the principle of non-violence in their people's struggle for a peaceful solution and that they apply the democratic methodology as their guiding principle.

## Fact Finding and Election Monitoring Missions

Responding to requests from Members, UNPO organizes fact-finding or diplomatic missions to Member areas. Missions are often organized in urgent response to situations where tensions threaten to escalate. Often missions travel to areas which are remote and little known to the international community. The objective of UNPO missions is to investigate and report on UNPO Member situations or to facilitate a peaceful outcome of disputes. UNPO mission reports are often the first, or among the first, in-depth coverage of these situations. Reports are broadly distributed to concerned international actors and action programs are developed as a result. UNPO also sends missions to monitor elections and referenda, especially in highly tense situations.



UNPO Election Monitoring Mission, Taiwan 2001

## The UNPO Website

The UNPO website serves as a portal for those who are unrepresented in governmental bodies worldwide and those whose causes remain commonly ignored in the mass media. On a daily basis UNPO provides information on current issues relating to its members, release in-depth reports and promotes campaigns.

Every month 30,000 distinct visitors see over 100,000 pages published on the website to keep informed about the current situation of UNPO Members. Every day more than 2,000 people, selected among media operators and international actors, receive the free UNPO e-mail newsletter. This aspect of UNPO's work is crucial in furthering the awareness and knowledge of many of the world's largely forgotten struggles.



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*The UNPO website is a valuable portal for news and information on unrepresented nations and peoples*

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## Organizational structure

### General Assembly



VII General Assembly, 24 - 26 June 2005; Opening Session, Great Hall of Justice, the Peace Palace, The Hague,

The General Assembly is the highest decision-making organ of UNPO. It convenes at least once every two years. The Assembly decides on policies and priorities for action, makes the final decision on membership applications, and elects the Steering Committee and General Secretary.

### Steering Committee



The 29th Steering Committee, 17 - 19 December 2004

The Steering Committee is a board of Member representatives from seven regions. It is mandated to manage finances and long-term planning for projects and policy voted on by the General Assembly. The Steering Committee meets every six months. UNPO Members, rather than individuals, are elected to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee elects its own Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

## Office of the General Secretary

*The Hague, the Netherlands*

The Secretariat office in The Hague is the workplace of the General Secretary, who is elected to represent the organization for a three-year term.

The Office of the General Secretary is responsible for day-to-day activities and for carrying out policies set by the General Assembly.

UNPO also maintains two co-ordination offices, in Washington DC, United States and Tartu, Estonia.



VII General Assembly, Closing Session; The Hague City Hall, the Netherlands



UNPO Secretariat members participate in a panel discussion on the Southern Cameroons, April 2005, Utrecht, the Netherlands

José Ramos-Horta, 1996 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Foreign Minister of East Timor, praises the work of UNPO:

*"I share the honor of the Nobel Peace Prize with all those that take part in the peaceful struggle for self-determination. I am inspired by knowing that the principles of non-violence, religious tolerance and the belief in the right of self-determination shared by all UNPO Members, and enshrined in the organization's covenant, can be effective. I am proud of the valuable work UNPO accomplishes and proud of my association with that work."*

Nobel Laureate José Ramos-Horta, Foreign Minister of East Timor and UNPO General Secretary, Marino Busdachin, United Nations Office at Geneva, March 2005



## Financial Resources

UNPO is funded by annual membership fees, governmental and other grants, subsidies, donations, proceeds from its activities and individual contributions. UNPO is listed as a non-profit organization in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. UNPO would not be able to succeed without the generosity of the many funders and contributors, who supported the organization upon its foundation in 1991 and many of whom have continued to do so:

- Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust (UK)
- Beoordelingscommissie Prioriteitenfonds (the Netherlands)
- Bilance (formerly Cebemo) (the Netherlands)
- Body Shop Foundation (UK)
- City of The Hague (the Netherlands)
- Embassy of South Africa (the Netherlands)
- European Human Rights Foundation
- European Commission
- European Cultural Foundation
- Evangelische Kirsche Deutschland (Germany)
- Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Ford Foundation (US)
- Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany)
- Greenville Foundation (US)
- Haella Foundation (the Netherlands)
- Heinrich Böll Foundation (Germany)
- HIVOS (the Netherlands)
- ICCO (the Netherlands)
- ICHRDD (Canada)
- ICMG Köln (Germany)
- International Campaign for Tibet
- Irahiti Foundation (US)
- Kerk in Actie (the Netherlands)
- MacArthur Foundation (US)
- McKnight Foundation (US)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
- MISEREOR (Germany)
- Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- NOVIB (the Netherlands)
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- Stichting Doen (the Netherlands)
- Stichting Grote Berg (the Netherlands)
- Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Taiwan Foundation for Democracy
- Taiwan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- Threshold Foundation (US)
- Transnational Radical Party (Italy)
- Winston Foundation for World Peace (US)
- World Council of Churches (Switzerland)
- World Gratitude Day Foundation (US)





UNPO Members



VII UNPO General Assembly  
Peace Palace, The Hague, the Netherlands  
24–26 June 2005

