

The Challenge of Global Democracy

Report of an NGO Retreat Addressing the Democratic Deficits in International Decision Making

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*“To my mind, democracy is more compassionate,
more harmonious, more friendly than any other system.
It respects others' rights and considers others equally
as human brothers and sisters. Although you might
disagree with them, you have to respect their wishes.”*

-His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Hosted by
**Oxfam America &
Citizens for Global Solutions**

Proceedings Report by
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Proceedings

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Retreat Summary:

“Global Democracy: The Way Forward”

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Introduction

The democratic deficits in global governance have gained widespread recognition by civil society organizations around the world as an impediment to advocacy work on human rights, economic and social development, peace, and environmental protection. In recent years, progressive civil society actors have increasingly contested the legitimacy of global governance on democratic principles. They have also articulated a series of incremental reforms to the current system of global governance in previous forums.¹ Some of these proposals – such as increasing the degree of transparency in the policies and practices of intergovernmental organizations and transnational businesses – are not only desirable but also politically feasible in the short- and medium-term. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society actors are already putting a lot of energy into achieving them. But other proposals, such as those pertaining to the question of representation, are not only much less politically-feasible in the immediate future, but they also need to be contextualized within a wider understanding of what we mean when we talk of “democracy” at the global level.

This retreat’s purpose was thus to launch a deeper reflection about the nature of global democracy among a small group of key NGO leaders representing different regions of the globe and sectors of NGO civil society.

Process

Possible retreat participants were identified through a series of consultations with key thinkers and NGO representatives in the field. The retreat planners sought near-parity between Northern and Southern groups and

representation of each major region of the world. While many of the participants worked in issues of development and poverty, the group included individuals from human rights groups, environmental organizations, women’s groups and organizations concerned with global governance itself.

Each participant was asked to complete a pre-retreat questionnaire (see Pre-retreat questionnaire), answering in essay form a few questions about their diagnosis and possible solutions to the global democratic deficits, both in general terms and as it pertained to their own organizations’ missions and current programs. These essays, synthesized in the Retreat Framework on Page 7 below, confirmed that all participants were well aware of the existence of democratic deficits, thought of a wide diversity of partial solutions to these deficits, and were already working on advocating for their preferred solutions. On the other hand, no participant presented any comprehensive solution, and the sheer diversity of responses hardly allowed sketching the main characteristics of one.

On the first day of the retreat, participants split into three small groups. They were asked by the retreat facilitators to picture a world in which they were fully satisfied, as a citizen and advocate, with the legitimacy of global governance. They were asked to describe what governance in this world looked like and what about the system made it legitimate. For the sake of the exercise, participants were asked to picture this world in 2103, 100 years from now, but to dismiss concerns of political feasibility. Facilitators encouraged discussion and identification of areas of consensus and disagreement to bring back to the full group. During a plenary session at the end of the day, each small group’s rapporteur reported back to the full group, where all retreat participants worked to find areas of general consensus. On the second day of the retreat, participants were asked to survey the current global

¹ See for instance the G02 conference of the Montreal International Forum (www.fimcivilsociety.org) or the Millennium Forum (www.un.org/millennium).

political environment and think of opportunities and challenges relevant to the vision sketched the previous day. From there, they were also asked to identify some strategies that civil society could use to pursue that vision.

The present report attempts to give a broad overview of the small group and plenary discussions. It does not include all the opinions and ideas expressed during the retreat but rather highlights the main themes. It does emphasize points of apparent consensus, although it should not in any way be construed to represent the thinking of any individual retreat participant. While not all of the concerns mentioned were resolved, the participants made substantive proposals toward the realization of global democracy. The short duration of the retreat limited the number of concrete proposals that could be implemented quickly, reinforcing the need for further collaboration by civil society groups on this question.

The nature of democracy

The participants made a number of general observations about the nature of democracy. They described democratization as an endless process. There are no, and have never been, any perfect democracies. Even societies with long-established democratic traditions continue to face challenges from within. Threats such as corruption, economic and political inequality, and oppression of dissent all present problems in attempting to secure stability and popular legitimacy in many of today's national democracies.

The presence of institutionalized democracy – binding covenants, legislatures, ombudspersons and civil society organizations – provides a foundation on which democratic traditions can endure over time but must be based on democratic principles and an agreed-upon social contract. A constitution or body of laws may appear democratic, but can disguise social or economic conditions that prevent civic participation by marginalized portions of the population. Similarly, democratic but illiberal societies differ significantly from liberal democracies, enacting decisions that may be

contrary to the public interest even though they have the support of the majority.

Human rights as the foundation of global democracy

When thinking about the main elements of a democratic system of governance at the global level, participants agreed that the bedrock of such system should be a set of justiciable human rights, which would include civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two covenants that derived from it were considered the most legitimate basis from which to define global democracy, including additional rights necessary to achieve a just society over the next century.

An implication of the centrality of human rights is that building a community of national democracies is an essential building block to achieve global democracy. Some participants speculated that we might not have to wait until 2103 to see most states being governed democratically (with again the proviso that no democracy is ever perfect). Supporting democratic national governance for example through a “caucus of democracies” at the United Nations, is a strategy that can be applied in the short to medium term.

A Continuing Role for the State

Most participants considered that states should continue to play a central role in a global democracy, though the distribution of its traditional responsibilities may evolve. They strongly supported the social contract whereby citizens entrust power to the state in exchange for security and social services but also identity and representation. Over the past two decades, the social contract has been eroded as other institutions such as markets, professional associations or religious communities have taken over these traditional responsibilities of the state. But these institutions do not necessarily possess the accountability mechanisms required for the obligations of a social contract.

As far as the enforcement of human rights are concerned, participants agreed that even if states are the sole actors with recognized legal personality at the international level, international laws should be binding on other actors, including transnational corporations, civil society, international agencies and supranational regional arrangements, and that states should be responsible for ensuring these actors' compliance with international law.

Accountability and the Role of Supranational Institutions

While considered important, participants agreed that the United Nations system requires substantive reforms and simplification if it is to guarantee human rights and support a global democratic community.

Key among the proposals was a more representative Security Council (with or without the veto), a stronger General Assembly and an empowered Secretary-General. There was general agreement that UN member states should be barred from serving on leadership bodies if they have a record of acting contrary to that body's mandate (an example being Libya's recent election to chair the Human Rights Commission). New bodies such as a global environmental protection agency were seen as necessary to fill institutional gaps in global governance. There was virtually universal agreement that the Bretton Woods institutions had to be more fully re-integrated into the United Nations system.

Effectively guaranteeing human rights and ensuring compliance with international law would require the creation or evolution of an international judicial regime that combines universal jurisdiction of national courts and compulsory jurisdiction of international courts. Such a regime could provide access for voices of opposition, ensure the observance of international human rights standards and promote the development of progressive global norms.

Participants agreed that this judicial regime would serve a complementary role, along with some international legislative counterpart, in

reducing the influence which national executive branches have in international decision-making. A global parliament, or in the nearer term a global assembly of national parliamentarians, would reduce the influence which national executive branches have in international decision-making. So would the emerging global judicial regime of international courts, universal jurisdiction of national courts, and reliance by national courts on judicial precedents of foreign tribunals. Both would provide additional channels for citizen participation in global public policy.

As to representation, there was no agreement as to its form at the global level. Participants recognized that a variety of arrangements could be legitimate: representation through regional groupings of states of roughly equal power, representation through states with weighted votes based on population, combined representation through states and a global parliament, or representation through a global parliament only. However, most participants did not find the current 'one state, one vote' principle legitimate due to the huge demographic differences across states.

While most participants supported the idea of these strong global mechanisms to regulate the actions of states, few were willing to entertain the idea of a global government – by which they understood a monolithic institution with centralized authority and lacking the cultural diversity and institutional checks necessary for a sound democracy. Participants preferred an international community in which individual states remained sovereign, though with increasing reliance on subsidiarity or a federal-style approach that would help define the appropriate decision-making level – often global, but as likely, more local. In the absence of a global constitution, states would remain in control of the distribution of jurisdiction over different policy matters, devolving some power upwards to supranational institutions – but also some downwards to local governments

Opportunities and Obligations for Civil Society

As part of the retreat mandate, participants discussed what steps civil society organizations needed to take to build this more democratic global governance, one which they would consider legitimate.

Participants supported civil society's continued role in influencing global decision-making, but agreed that civil society groups such as human rights groups, business associations, churches or unions should not expect to act as direct representatives of citizens' broader interests. While there was consensus that civil society's participation helped counter the dominating influence of business and governmental interests, no one among the participants advocated for civil society's role in international decision-making to be more than participatory, informing debates and empowering marginalized groups. Civil society representatives should be consulted, but would not vote on global issues themselves.

Civil society organizations have an important role to play in constantly promoting civic participation, which has been declining on some measures (e.g., voting participation) during the past decades. But some participants noted that new forms of participation were equally valuable, such as ethical consumption. Participants called for a continued use of representative democracy with more frequent elections and recalls, in parallel with the development of alternative forms of civic participation, including forums of citizens affected by particular public policies, village councils like those existing in parts of India (where one third of representatives need to be women), participation of local representatives in international negotiating forums, direct democracy using new technologies – as well as for reform of election finance.

Another critical role of civil society is promoting global citizenship, not in a legal sense, but as a strand of people's cultural identity. Participants saw globally active citizens as critical to achieving greater accountability by states and other international actors. This would be facilitated by the globalization of local issues and the re-localization of traditionally international issues and their impact on citizens' lives, jobs and families. The

globalization of the social contract is a gradual social and cultural, as well as political, process.

While fostering global citizenship, participants agreed that democracy must be revitalized at the local level as well. Attempting to homogenize a heterogeneous world is both undesirable and impractical, and global democracy requires reform of local as well as global governance. Democratization should occur at each level of society in order to improve both diversity and the quality of civic, social, and economic participation of citizens through a local-to-global chain of accountability, transparency, and representation.

In promoting more equitable participation in global decision-making, civil society faces overwhelming obstacles in countering policies like those of the government-funded Bretton Woods institutions. In response, participants suggested the need for establishing an International Civil Society Fund, complimentary to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Such an institution would provide funds to preserve public trust institutions and services, with initial support provided by progressive governments and well-known global benefactors such as Bill Gates and George Soros.

The Rights-based Approach as Unifying Strategy

Building on the identification of human rights as the foundation of global democracy, participants agreed that mainstreaming the rights-based approach across all sectors was a promising strategy to move toward global democracy. The human rights movement is of course very familiar with rights, but it has only started to embrace social, economic and cultural rights as complements to its traditional focus on civil and political rights. The development movement is experimenting with the rights-based approach. This entails shifting away from the provision of direct social services to poor and marginalized people to empowering them to claim their rights to these services from their states. The peace movement has also been exposed to questions

of rights through the debate on humanitarian wars, the responsibility to protect and the increased scrutiny over the laws of war. The environmental movement is the only one that is not relying on a rights-based approach. Some participants expressed the view that the development movement is instrumentalizing nature when it advocates for (human) rights to water, to land and the like. Others asserted that environmentalists are speaking about conservation for nature's own sake, and "nature rights" have not yet found any ground in the human rights framework (and some participants thought it ought not to). Participants agreed to think more about whether and how to bring the environment movement under the rights-based tent.

Developing the rights-based approach across all sectors would multiply program linkages among civil society actors, which would in turn allow for deeper and stronger alliances.

Since the rights-based approach confirms the state's responsibility in fulfilling rights, it also transforms the relationship between states and civil society. Transnational networks of rights-based organizations could bolster the negotiating positions in international forums of any state seeking to advance human rights. Southern states have recently found the value of alliances with civil society in the trade and financial policy areas. Northern states have on their part benefited from civil society actions in the civil and political rights and in the environmental areas.

However, closer cooperation with states raises the issue of accountability of civil society organizations, often seen by outsiders as substituting themselves for states in rule-making. Participants agreed that recent criticism of civil society over accountability were not entirely unwarranted and welcomed the development of accountability standards for civil society.

The rights language could be used to counter attacks against legitimate work of civil society organizations: while businesses influence policy for profit, NGOs defend people's rights. One participant stressed the need for a sector-wide strategy to counter criticisms of lack of

accountability, contrasting with the current practice where each organization defends itself only.

By becoming the common language of all strands of civil society, the rights-based approach could also form the basis of a new communications strategy. Any progress toward the aspirations discussed during this retreat hinges on bolstered communications with the general public, especially in powerful states that have the resources necessary to implement global decisions. Participants discussed several strategies to improve communications, including funding alternative media that would broadcast transnational messages.

Reaching Consensus

During the last plenary, participants agreed on nine criteria that would legitimize global democracy proposals. At a minimum, global democracy must reflect the following principles:

- Global governance must incorporate significant elements of legally enforceable global rules and regulatory institutions.
- A centralized form of world government would not allow for the regulatory mechanisms at the regional, national and local levels of society.
- Such mechanisms would require a cosmopolitical system adhering to the principle of subsidiarity, delegating competence to those authorities who are closest to the people affected.
- Democratic global governance must be grounded in and subordinated to broadly accepted principles of human rights.
- An equitable distribution of resources would provide equal opportunities for informed civil, social and economic participation.
- Global democratic norms should foster, promote and celebrate cultural diversity in its many forms.
- Democratic global governance helps legitimize global citizenship, in which people are conscious of and act upon

civic rights and duties that relate to the global level.

- A vibrant civil society is essential for a democratic global governance, active across all spheres from local to global, but operating in a participatory rather than representative manner.
- Global democracy is not an end state but an evolving process.

Unresolved Issues

There were, of course, several critical issues on which participants did not manage to reach an agreement. The first one had to do with reconciling the desire for universal enforcement of human rights – requiring considerable international collaboration and solidarity – with a respect for diversity. The subsidiarity principle is supposed to provide guidance in this respect, by stating that decisions should be taken at the lowest efficient level. But in reality there is room for ample disagreements about what is the lowest efficient level to take a decision for any given policy question. Although experience of federal states showed that rule-making tended to be located at upper levels and implementation and spending at lower levels, participants could not formulate more precise guidelines.

Secondly, participants struggled with the concept of sovereignty. While the working hypothesis underlying most discussions was that states would remain sovereign in a global democracy, some participants wondered whether and how sovereignty should be reclaimed by the people themselves. Several participants agreed that there was a need to expand the understanding of sovereignty as something that is not lost entirely if it is given away in specific circumstances. These participants noted that recent events and tragedies required a fundamental revision of sovereignty's definition, from one based on the rights of states to one obligating states to specific human rights responsibilities.

Thirdly, participants had a contested debate about whether nature had rights, and consequently about how ecologic sustainability

could be introduced as an intrinsic component of a rights-based global democratic system.

Another critical issue that has not been entirely resolved was the difficult question of how to give power to the many in a world of huge inequalities. Some participants mused about the (lack of) compatibility between global democracy and the current global economic capitalist system. It was agreed that capitalism often presented obstacles to democratic participation and that a new economic order was essential. The suggestion was analogous to the historical transition from feudalism to capitalism, with the underlying changes expected to occur in concert with the evolution of the social contract. Essential to this new economic system, however, will be the view that certain areas of the social contract need to be restored to the public trust and protected by the state from disproportionate privatization. These include access to clean water, universal health care, education and the media. In addition, qualitative measures, such as gross national product or human development indices, should not include solely consumption and purchasing power but also as civic participation, gender equality and other quality-oriented aspects of life. Such factors will be seen as particularly important in considering structural adjustment programs through international financial institutions. Recognizing that economic control plays a large role in the democratic nature of a society, some participants called for greater localization of economies and resources. While most participants agreed upon the need for a more equitable redistribution of resources, including fair distribution of wealth, adequate access to information and education, progressive national and/or global taxation and fair pricing for essential items, they recognized that more discussion was considered necessary to reach consensus.

Next Steps

On more than one occasion, participants noted the frequent competition between which civil society organizations, whether for financial resources or in action campaigns. A distinct plea was made for civil society groups to

distinguish when the most effective actions would be to focus efforts solely on domestic institutions and policies instead of working to establish international standards or norms that states may effectively ignore. The consensus was that civil society groups need stronger coordination and, to the degree possible, an overarching framework outlining goals across sectors and at the most strategic level of governance.

At the end of the retreat, three priority areas of action were put forward and agreed to by all. The first was the need to put together at the earliest possible time a panel of eminent persons, drawn from civil society, to deliberate and put forward reform recommendations for the United Nations and broader international system. This panel would be seen as civil society response to the panel created by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to offer similar recommendations, but members of which were drawn almost exclusively from leadership positions in states or the existing international system.

The second proposal for immediate action was to catalog and prioritize the most important international covenants and treaties. The project would first identify those covenants to which states had become parties but not yet enacted executing legislation. Following, existing treaties would be identified as high priority for ratification campaigns. Civil society groups would work collectively at the international level, but also within their respective states to press for ratification of these treaties in the shortest time frame possible.

The third proposal was to seek funding for the creation of a "Global C-Span" which would provide greater transparency, accountability and participation in international decision-making. Formats would include both televised broadcasts where available, and radio broadcasts in lesser-developed areas. In addition to covering meeting of international financial organizations and other international bodies, civil society could provide education and political content. Contributions for such could be sought from governments, global benefactors, international media and other

business groups and civil society. One participant noted such a tool would cut down on the expenses of having to attend the various conferences in person.

The retreat ended on a very optimistic note, with participants excited about the several points of consensus across the several represented sectors and national backgrounds. Participants also agreed to disseminate the present report and propose it as a basic document of future forums such as the second conference of the Montreal International Forum in 2005. Many are looking forward to continued interaction and networking on the subject, while taking specific steps on the priority action areas.



Retreat Framework:

“Global Democracy: Clarifying the Issues”

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Introduction

This paper has been prepared as an advance briefing for an NGO retreat on the challenges of addressing democratic deficits in global governance. As expressed by the workshop organisers, Oxfam America and the World Federalist Association, the aims of the meeting are: (a) to give participants a better understanding of key concepts relevant to global democracy; (b) to disseminate this understanding to wider civil society; and (c) to use this understanding to identify some general strategies for tackling the democratic deficits.

The authors of this advance briefing have been asked to prepare a framework document based on think pieces submitted by participants ahead of the workshop. The organizers suggested that this briefing should: identify discussion questions; clarify key concepts; critically assess ideas and proposals written in the think pieces; and highlight important matters that were not raised.

This paper offers a critical review of the think pieces. It does not advance any particular line of argument or even suggest a working definition of ‘global democracy’. The issues at hand are much too controversial, and the richness and potential of the workshop lies largely in the diversity of views that participants bring to it.

The following discussion is based on our review of 17 think pieces received by 15 November. Participants were asked to discuss: the nature of democratic deficits in contemporary globalization; the changes needed to secure the legitimacy of global governance; how democratic deficits in global governance affected the programs of their organization; and what their organization does or plans to do to counter these democratic deficits.

In practice the submitted essays tended to say far more about the first two questions and relatively little concerning the second two questions. Hence our remarks below concentrate on the nature of democratic deficits and changes needed to address them. This is by no means to suggest that the workshop should drop issues of NGO policy and practice regarding global democracy. On the contrary, relative silence on these questions could imply that they need more urgently to be discussed.

The Nature of Democratic Deficits

The first question circulated to participants asked, ‘How would you describe the democratic deficits that currently afflict global governance? What is the nature of the democratic problem in contemporary globalization?’ Answers to this question prompt comment under four general headings: issues of definition; the role of the state; the democratic failings of global governance institutions; and structures of dominance in globalization. The papers also did not raise some problems that might be associated with democratic deficits in the governance of globalization.

Definitions

Before NGOs or citizens at large can effectively advance a democratisation of globalization they must have a clear conception of the problem. Successful prescriptions depend on precise definitions and explanations of the matter at hand. Clear understanding of an issue in turn depends on specific and explicit formulations of key concepts.

So, to begin with, campaigns to promote a *democratisation of globalisation* should rest on carefully considered conceptions of ‘democracy’ and ‘globality’ (or more particularly the governance of globalization). Neither of these notions is in any way straightforward or non-contentious. Each is amenable to multiple and often widely varying interpretations. Moreover,

different definitions can lead to radically different programmes of action.

Few of the submitted papers put forward explicit and specific definitions of either of these terms. What do democracy and globalization actually entail? It is not for this briefing paper to impose definitions that many workshop participants might not share. However, it seems unlikely that the retreat can come to grips with the challenges of global democracy if 'global' and 'democracy' are not defined.

One particular distinction that participants might consider is whether 'global governance' refers to (a) rules and regulatory institutions at the global level or (b) rules and regulatory institutions that apply to globalization. The second notion is wider than the first and also encompasses regional, national and local governance arrangements that apply to global circumstances. The broader conception is adopted for the rest of this framework paper.

The Role of the State

Modern governance has traditionally lain with the state. Understandably, therefore, many think pieces understood democratic deficits in the governance of globalization in terms of problems with the state. Four general points could be mentioned in this regard.

First, one or two papers stressed that global democracy could be undermined by undemocratic states. The unspoken assumption here is that democracy in a globalizing world depends largely or even wholly on democracy at the state level. By implication we get to democracy in the global sphere mainly or entirely by way of democracy in the national (and more particularly state) sphere. This assumption can of course be debated. Perhaps we should also – or instead – pursue global democracy through democracy in substate and suprastate realms.

Second, quite a few people characterized the democratic deficits in globalization with reference to a loss of national/state sovereignty. Conventional approaches have defined democracy in terms of national self-determination through a territorial state. Yet globalization has rendered unviable traditional practices of state sovereignty, namely, as the absolute, unilateral, comprehensive, supreme

authority of a national government over its territorial jurisdiction. Thus global democracy cannot be achieved through the state – or at any rate through the state alone. How far globalization has undermined the state (and hence the state as a site of global democracy) is also a matter of debate, of course. Some people argue that the loss of state capacity vis-à-vis globalization is exaggerated. Many analysts also emphasize that the decline in state power in the face of globalization has differed among states, such that G8 states have actually increased their power relative to weak states in the South.

Third, although this point was little mentioned in the think pieces, states might be failing as sites for the democratization of globalization because national democratic processes have largely ignored global governance issues. In other words, political parties and their manifestos, local and national elections, local councils, national parliaments, and the mass media might all neglect to address – or to give adequate attention to – problems of global ecology, global trade, etc. Instead, states have left global matters to largely unmonitored technocrats in ministries and independent central banks.

Fourth, states could be a problem for global democracy in terms of their collective actions. In particular, coalitions of the strong like the G8 and the G10 can exacerbate the dominance of a minority in global affairs. In addition, so-called transgovernmental networks can bring together national technocrats in collaborations on global governance issues that bypass parliaments and treaties, raising major questions about democratic process. The papers did not raise these matters, but they should perhaps be addressed in a full diagnosis of the democratic deficits in contemporary globalization.

Democratic Failings of Global Governance Agencies

Governance of globalization involves more than states, of course, and all of the think pieces in one way or another referred to the role of suprastate agencies with a global remit. The papers especially highlighted democratic problems with the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. Some also mentioned democratic problems with the UN. These democratic deficits were discussed especially in terms of voting arrangements.

The range of global governance agencies addressed in the papers was thus somewhat narrow. Only one paper mentioned the OECD, and only one other mentioned the Bank for International Settlements. None addressed specialized agencies of the UN. None addressed the substantial realm of private global governance through bodies such as the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the host of corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemes, and so on. Is it conceptually correct and strategically wise for NGOs to concentrate the great bulk of their activities concerning supranational regulation on the well-known triumvirate and the central UN organs, to the neglect of other important sites?

Likewise, the analysis of democratic problems in global governance institutions perhaps runs wider and deeper than many of the papers suggested. The distribution of state votes in these agencies is a problem, to be sure, but it is not the only problem, and maybe not even the main problem. How much more democratic would the institutions become if the voting arrangements were corrected? Do the agencies not also have problems of citizen consultation, transparency and accountability that redistributions of votes would not necessarily change?

Structures of Dominance

In addition to institutional problems at state and supranational levels, many papers also identified democratic deficits in globalization in terms of deeper structures of domination and subordination in world politics. Hence the problem of global democracy is seen not only in terms of the behaviour of actors (governments and other regulatory bodies), but also in terms of the general patterns of world order.

In this regard many papers highlighted the issue of Northern dominance in and of globalization as a major obstacle to global democracy. Sometimes this domination was conceived more specifically as the domination of the USA. However, few papers made explicit whether 'the North' related to Northern *countries*, Northern *states*, Northern *elites*, Northern *peoples*, or all of these. Country, state, nation and society are far from the same

thing. If we say that the North dominates, do we mean the geographical areas, the governments of those territories, the inhabitants of those lands, or the social structures that prevail in those countries? Without such specification the concept 'North' (or 'core', 'OECD countries', 'advanced economies' or whatever) may not tell us very much.

In contrast, several papers understood democratic deficits in global governance as a consequence of capitalism. Another paper referred to the 'anti-democratic logic of the market'. ('The market' and 'capitalism' are not necessarily the same thing, of course.) A few papers more specifically mentioned the exclusion of the poor and disadvantaged people within capitalism as a major problem for global democracy.

The two structures of dominance – by the North or by capitalism – are not the same thing, of course. Which is the main hierarchy of undemocratic power that afflicts contemporary globalization: countries or corporations; state or class? In what ways and how far are the two forms of domination causally connected with each other? Or do they operate autonomously? None of the papers addressed this arguably crucial question.

Moreover, the papers also made relatively little mention of other structures of domination that could undermine democracy in a globalizing world. For example, subordinations might also occur on lines of gender, race, and age as well as between urban and rural areas. Are such structural hierarchies of power merely a by-product of domination by the North or by capitalism? Or are they problems of democracy in their own right that need to be addressed separately?

Other Possible Issues

We can conclude this review of comments in the think pieces on global democratic deficits with a note of several other potentially important problems that the papers did not mention. One is citizen ignorance about globalization and its governance. Arguably an informed and knowledgeable citizenry is a sine qua non of democracy. 'Rule by the people' cannot operate effectively if 'the people' are inadequately aware of the issues that they face. Yet most would-be global citizens lack sufficient

information and analytical tools to make deeper sense of globalization. Schools, universities, governments and the mass media currently do not provide the required consciousness raising. To that extent we face major challenges of public education for global democracy.

Finally there are potential democratic problems within (global) civil society that present a problem for global democracy. As NGOs and other civil society associations become increasingly influential actors in global politics, they arguably need to attend to issues of public participation, transparency and accountability in their own activities. Many papers mentioned NGO and wider civil society engagement with globalization issues as an important antidote to democratic deficits, but none reflected that some civil society activities and features could perhaps also pose difficulties for global democracy.

Responses to Democratic Deficits: What Changes Are Needed to Secure the Democratic Legitimacy of Global Governance?

Overall, participants expressed an overwhelming consensus on the need for a new architecture for securing democratic global governance. Given the unfavourable global context characterized by the various democracy deficits noted above, the building of a legitimate democratic governance system at the global level requires a fundamental reorientation in five distinct dimensions in terms of *principles, priorities, processes, policies, and practices* – referred to here as the *5Ps*. Moreover, participants generally agreed that a multi-pronged, multi-level approach is required that addresses the specific contexts for democratic governance across a number of cross-cutting issue areas ranging from human rights to ecologically sustainable development, gender justice, and economic development and trade.

However, no clear consensus exists among participants about ultimately what vision of a democratic system of global governance is desired and achievable. Instead, the diverse perspectives presented in the various think pieces highlight the need to identify and to clarify the overarching principles that should guide and shape such a shared vision, the key strategic priorities that will have the greatest

impact in bringing about that vision, and the important process questions about how to develop it. Moreover, there is considerable divergence among participants about the most promising approaches and strategies for effective democratic reform of global institutions and the particular roles and potentials of key actors and how they work in connection (from the local to the national, regional and global levels) with one another.

Principles for Enhancing Democratic Legitimacy of Global Governance

As a first step, each of us needs to answer the fundamental question: what should be the guiding principles for ensuring the democratic legitimacy of global governance? How do we define (and balance) these principles? And how do we apply these principles to create a more democratic architecture for global governance? One participant argued that in order to do so we first need to question critically the fundamental legitimacy of existing global governance institutions, the authority by which these institutions create rules that assert pre-eminence, and the overarching principles that ultimately shape and inform these institutions' policies, practices and actions. Specifically, participants have identified a wide range of key principles, priorities, processes and questions for guiding approaches to enhance the democratic legitimacy of global governance. A summary is provided below.

Principles: *What are the key guiding principles (or values) that ensure the democratic legitimacy of global governance?*

- *Equity*
- *Inclusion (Empowerment)*
- *Justice (Human Rights)*
- *Ecologically Sustainability*

Priorities: *What are the key strategic priorities that will have the greatest impact in ensuring the democratic legitimacy of global governance?*

- *Accountability*

Here democratic legitimacy is based on whether decision-makers are accountable to stakeholders for their decisions, policies, practices and actions. The focus is on ensuring

that appropriate checks are in place so that decision-makers do not abuse their roles or hijack the institution. For example, many of the analyses expressed a fundamental concern about how to hold transnational corporations and transnational capital accountable to the broader public interest. In terms of strategy, one participant viewed the international convention for corporate accountability as a positive tool for the monitoring and enforcing of 'good' corporate conduct.

- *Institutional Independence*

The emphasis is on how to ensure the institutional independence of global governance institutions by limiting undue influence by one or more stakeholders. For example, some participants expressed concerns that transnational corporations dominate the United Nations' Global Compact, and thus limit its institutional independence and democratic legitimacy.

- *Representation and Public Participation*

The focus is on ensuring broad public participation and representation of voices and perspectives across the full continuum of stakeholders. What is the basis for legitimate representation? For instance, two participants called for a reconsideration of the prevailing forms, bases, terms, and rules of representation (e.g., one state, one vote) at the global level. Is representation at the global level the sole domain of states or not? Under what conditions, if any, do transnational corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) belong at the table as stakeholders? Several analysts highlighted the Northern bias in the present configuration of and representation within global institutions. This important perspective reinforces the need to strengthen Southern voices and the processes for participation in these institutions.

- *Subsidiarity*

The emphasis is on locating decision making at the lowest level of governance possible, in order that people can exercise their voice and influence the decisions that most affect them.

- *Transparency*

The focus is on opening up the decision-making processes of global governance institutions to public review and scrutiny. Much of the work to date is on public access to information and

representatives' public disclosure of their roles and interests.

Processes: What are the key processes (and mechanisms) that will ensure the democratic legitimacy of global governance?

- *Agenda Setting*

What processes will enable key stakeholders to have a role in shaping and setting the agenda of global governance institutions?

- *Consultation*

What processes enable meaningful expression and full consideration of diverse voices and perspectives at the global level? The emphasis on broad consultation recognizes the need to reach out beyond government to include to business and civil society, especially in multi-stakeholder processes such as the World Commission on Dams, for instance.

- *Consent in Decision-Making*

What are the mechanisms that enable broad public consensus building at the global level? Special attention is needed to reform rules to enable people to express their voice and to engage in consent (or dissent) in decision-making processes. This latter aspect highlights the importance of establishing effective mechanisms for redress, especially for disadvantaged communities.

Approaches and Strategies for Reforming and Democratizing Global Governance

What are the necessary conditions to ensure durable change that leads to democratic governance at the global level? First, there is a vital need to move beyond seeing democracy as a panacea and to think critically about the key assumptions that guide approaches to securing democracy. Is democratising the existing global governance institutions (i.e., WTO, IMF, World Bank, United Nations) sufficient to ensure that the resulting decisions lead to positive outcomes? While more democratic institutions would increase the legitimacy of decisions, they may not necessarily lead to progressive policy or political outcomes. Moreover, as previously noted, other key arenas and actors need to be targeted for democratizing as well: the market, the state, and civil society. Consequently, we need to understand the complex conditions

under which democratic legitimacy of global governance is enhanced (and also diminished) within and across these three sectors.

Several participants acknowledged the need to shift from the Westphalian paradigm of state sovereignty to new individual and collective forms of citizenship and shared governance that lead to creating and sustaining mutually reinforcing, multiple levels of democratic governance. The challenge is how to develop new forms of active global citizenship that are inclusive and empower people to participate meaningfully in the multi-faceted decisions that affect their lives.

What is required to create the necessary democratic infrastructure (venues and actors) for enhancing global governance? First, several participants recommended opening up decision-making processes by: putting pressure on states and existing global governance institutions to be accountable for their decisions; strengthening the U.N. by reformulating its voting and veto power structure; and reforming the WTO through advocacy for more participatory and transparent processes. Second, by reorienting the priorities and opening up the processes of these institutions, advocacy will target the specific policies and practices of key global governance institutions such as the WTO (e.g., water privatization) toward more democratic outcomes. Third, participants generally see the merits of both increasing and improving the quality of civil society organizations' participation in global decision-making. As one participant duly noted, this step is "not going to guarantee democracy in global governance," but it does provide critical input. Civil society organizations are seen as important actors to build trust for multi-stakeholder processes and solutions.

What promising examples have led to positive change for enhancing the democratic legitimacy of global governance? One participant claimed that 'the people' are the ultimate source for democratic legitimacy as was demonstrated in Seattle, Porto Alegre, and Cancun. Two participants also cited the successful transnational advocacy of civil society organizations in the cases of debt relief, the international treaty to ban land mines, and the various campaigns against large-scale dams as examples.

Assessing the Role of Key Actors in Enhancing Democratic Global Governance

What are the key actors that will enhance democratic global governance, and by what means? How do we think about the mix of actors that can contribute to and also limit the democratic legitimacy of global governance? Potential actors include various civil society organizations, states, global governance institutions, regional institutions, and other under-recognized actors such as scholars, universities, and religious institutions.

Civil Society Organizations

While the majority of participants see civil society organizations playing a pivotal role, several participants expressed concerns about whether civil society organizations can foster democracy in global governance, when these groups themselves also face similar challenges of building accountable, transparent, representative and thus democratic organizations. In addition, there needs to be greater elaboration and strategic differentiation of the specific actors (i.e., labor unions, NGOs, transnational advocacy networks, social movements) and particular roles that civil society organizations can play from an advocacy role to an active monitoring role in positively affecting the behavior of states, regional bodies, and global governance institutions. Only one person referred to the innovative work of the World Social Forum to create a global citizen-based movement for democracy and social justice.

A Democratic, Accountable State

Many view a democratic, accountable state as a necessary prerequisite for securing democracy. However, one participant argued that this means strengthening the institutional independence of the state so that it has sufficient policy space to develop and to pursue alternative development policies that are responsive to broad publics, and not elite interests. Some participants saw the state as a critical actor in facilitating an ethical form of globalization in two areas: (1) democratizing the decision-making processes of key global institutions (i.e., IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization); and (2) democratizing the global economy, for example, by promoting fair trade over free trade.

Global Governance Institutions

The existing global governance institutions are seen as essentially inter-state organizations governed by state representatives that must be made more accountable to the broader public. One participant argues for the need to build a critical mass of diverse, alternative democratic counter-institutions (e.g., International Convention on Cultural Diversity) to challenge the dominance of the WTO and World Bank. Given the perceived erosion of its institutional independence, several participants argued that the United Nations must be reformed so that it defines, monitors, and protects the “democratic rights of all people.” Some participants argued for opening these global governance institutions to civil society representatives and national parliamentarians, by ensuring access to information; promoting open and transparent decision-making; fostering broader representation; and altering the power distribution among these institutions.

Regional Institutions

Regional institutions can enhance democracy through the development, monitoring and actualization of regional treaties such as that OAS Charter that recognizes human rights, sustainable development, the environment, cultural diversity and indigenous rights. SAARC was seen as a positive force for promoting dialogue and shared initiatives for enhancing democracy in the South Asian region. At the same time, several participants suggested particular attention must focus on reforming the priorities, developing participatory processes, and reorienting the policies and practices of the regional development banks.

The Need for New Democratic Mechanisms and Participatory Processes

Participants generally expressed the need for fostering new democratic mechanisms and alternative participatory processes at the global level. Some participants see promising developments in the creation of multi-stakeholder processes for global governance institutions such as the World Commission on Dams, which actively engaged representatives from government, civil society, and the private sector through broad consultation and transparent and open deliberative processes. In addition, the idea of establishing a global parliament generated debate among some participants. Proponents argued that that is

important to find ways to engage local parliamentarians in decision-making processes on global issues. However, other participants raised important questions about the desirability, viability and achievability of this proposal for a global parliament.

Engaging Under-Recognized Actors in Democratic Global Governance

How can academia and universities be engaged as strategic actors for enhancing democratic global governance, especially at it concerns the public education of new generation of citizens and leaders? How can scholars who work on democratic theory and practice best contribute to advancing the understanding and strategic thinking of activists engaged in reforming and democratizing global governance? Two Southern observers lamented the dearth of effective models for collaboration among scholars and civil society activists for advancing advocacy that enhances democracy. One Southern activist stressed the critical need for building links to independent scholars who are able to think critically about existing and alternative global governance institutions and processes. Finally, one analyst argued that there is a vital need for creating a multidisciplinary network of scholars and civil society activists engaged in action research that improves the effectiveness of advocacy efforts for enhancing democracy.

Finally, religious institutions and organizations are under-recognized but important actors and allies for enhancing democratic governance at the global level given their moral voice and witness for justice. For example, religious organizations played a significant role in mobilizing public support for the Jubilee campaign for debt relief.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these wide ranging diagnoses of the democratic deficit and the various prescriptions for change have direct implications for informing and advancing the long-term vision and ongoing internal and external organizational strategies of civil society organizations and NGOs engaged in democratizing the principles, priorities, processes, policies, and practices of global governance institutions. By highlighting and clarifying key issues and identifying important questions, we hope to move the dialogue,

debate, and thinking about democratic global governance forward constructively within each of our organizations and as part of broader collective efforts to create meaningful links to

other organizations and networks around the globe that are committed to advancing this critical agenda.

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June Zeitlin has served as the Executive Director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) since 1999. She brings more than twenty-five years of experience as a lawyer and advocate for women's rights. Prior to joining WEDO, she held various positions at the Ford Foundation, including the Director of the Governance and Civil Society program, Deputy Director of the Rights and Social Justice Program, program officer for women's rights and Director, Gender and Institutional Change Project. She has had a diverse public service career, working at the National Women's Law Center; New York City government, directing legislative relations at the Office of Management and Budget and the Human Resources Administration; and the federal government, working at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the U.S. Congress, including as a legislative assistant to the late Representative Bella Abzug. Her e-mail is wedo@wedo.org.

Keynote Speakers

Aziz Ali Mohammed is Honorary Advisor to the G-24 Chairman and also G-24 Deputy for Pakistan. He served on the International Monetary Fund staff from 1961 through 1990 in several departments, the last being Director of External Relations. He was later appointed Alternate Director on the IMF Executive Board for the Middle East constituency and served through 1992. He served as the first Director of the G-24 Secretariat from 1996 through 1998. Since retirement, Mr. Mohammed has done consultancy work for the World Bank Group, the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNDP and the Arab Monetary Fund.

Dawn Calabia is Deputy Director of the United Nations Information Office, the Washington Liaison office for the Secretary General. UNIC works to promote the agenda and concerns of the United Nations with the US government, the NGO community, and the public. Ms. Calabia previously served as Senior External Relations Officer for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In that capacity she handled government and nongovernmental relations with the US, UNHCR's largest donor and resettler of refugees. She also served as Director of Refugee Policy and Program Development for the US Catholic Conference Migration and Refugee Services, one of oldest American service organizations for refugees and asylum seekers. Prior to that, Ms. Calabia served on Capitol Hill as a staffer on the House International Relations Committee and earlier, as the senior legislative assistant to Rep. Solarz(D-NY). A founder of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, an advocacy NGO housed at the International Rescue Committee, Ms. Calabia has led numerous factfinding missions to Central America, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa. She is a graduate of St. John's University, NY (BA) and has a Masters degree from Fordham University, NY (MSW).

Dr. Kim R. Holmes was sworn in as Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Organization Affairs on November 21, 2002. Dr. Holmes previously served as Vice President and Director of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies at The Heritage Foundation, and before that, as Director of Foreign and Defense Policy Studies and Senior Policy Analyst for national security affairs at Heritage. He was previously a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Dr. Holmes holds Ph.D. (1982) and M.A. (1977) degrees in history from Georgetown University. He is the co-editor of various foreign policy books and author of numerous scholarly articles.

Pre-retreat Questionnaire

Please respond to the questions below from the perspective of your organization's approach to resolving the international democratic deficit in a 1-2 page essay. Several provocative statements are written below. You do not need to address any of them in your essay. They are provided solely to stimulate your thinking in more creative and critical directions.

1. How would you describe the democratic deficits that currently afflict global governance? What is the nature of the democratic problem in contemporary globalization?
2. What changes are needed to secure the democratic legitimacy of global governance?
3. How, if at all, do democratic deficits in global governance affect the programs of your organization?
4. What does your organization do - or plan to do - to counter these democratic deficits?

Provocative Statements

Democracy is when NGOs are at the negotiating table – not just in the lobby.

90% of global public policies should really be devolved back to states or even sub-state entities. If that were the case, the democratic deficits at the global level would not matter that much.

The atomization of power among a large number of global actors such as civil society organizations, businesses, intergovernmental organizations, national and even local governments is itself a form of democracy. Everyone's power is checked by everyone else's. Increased transparency, accountability and participation for all global actors would reinforce these checks and balances and would go a long way in creating a better world.

Transparency, accountability and participation are not going to prevent a Cold War between the United States and China from emerging in the middle of this century. They are not going to put an end to the war on terrorism. And with a new Cold War and a permanent war on terror, it is hard to imagine a better world.

The one-state, one-vote principle is non-sense. At the very least, small states should have their voting right scrapped.

Votes should be allocated according to states' ranking in the Human Development Index.

Voting distributions do not matter much. The one time the votes of non-permanent Security Council members seemed to matter – for the resolution on the Iraq war – the US and France bought them.

Like everyone, I have a stake in the result of the US Presidential elections. I should be entitled to vote. [Quote by a German journalist]

In the Internet era, direct democracy should be the goal from the local to the global levels.

Global democracy is an oxymoron. The ability to flee a political system is the ultimate check to despotism. A global political system – whatever shape it takes – would remove that ultimate check.

Global democracy is primarily about transferring power from North to South. Any arrangement that falls short of that is a distraction from the struggle.

Southern states need relatively more representation in the Bretton Woods institutions... but we Belgians should of course preserve our Executive Director at the IMF.

Americans do not need global democracy. The US constitution and the Bill of Rights are all we need. The rest of the world has its own arrangements, and inter-state diplomacy is the appropriate bridge between different national political systems.

The UN is more legitimate than the Bretton Woods institutions only to the extent that it is less effective.

Global democracy cannot be achieved when rogue states continue to threaten the free world.

Governments that fail to protect the civil, political and economic rights of their citizens have failed to meet the most basic prerequisite of sovereignty, and should not be allowed at the table

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