C A S I N

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The Programme on NGOs and Civil Society
Worldwide, the role of civil society has been increasing at rapid speed. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become significant and influential players and generate much interest. Created in 1986, the Programme on Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society aims at contributing towards a better understanding of NGOs and the solutions of complex and conflictive societal problems involving NGOs.

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SUMMARY

From May 29th to June 1st, 2005 representatives from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) gathered in Montreal, Canada to discuss global democracy. The conference, which was hosted by the Montreal International Forum, attracted more than 300 participants from 40 countries.

Over the course of the four days, participants attempted to identify the challenges confronting civil society and global democracy, as well as potential strategies for how to overcome them. Discussion topics ranged from the democratic deficits affecting the international and multilateral systems, to the "knowledge" and information gaps existing within civil society, and the need to increase the democratic participation of citizens and key stakeholders. Participants also called for the reform of existing international institutions and for civil society to improve its own legitimacy and transparency in order to lead by example.

More specifically, participants looked at the tools available to them to improve global democracy. With 2005 seen as a potential "breakthrough" year for civil society, participants swapped ideas and opinions in preparation for the Millennium Review Summit, the G8 Summit, and the 6th WTO Ministerial Meeting which will all take place later this year. In particular, representatives from civil society examined the Cardoso Panel recommendations which look at UN-civil society relations as well as the UN civil society consultations which are set to take place in advance of the Millennium Summit.

Participants also proposed a number of new approaches. Support for the creation of some sort of world parliament was widespread, though opinions differed over the finer details. Proposals were also put forth for the creation of new networks and information-sharing channels in order to strengthen civil society to confront challenges on local, regional, and global levels. Participants also published a list of "visions and strategies" to guide them on the way forward.

As the conference drew to a close, however, some participants expressed frustration with the lack of concrete strategies and the sometimes conflicting approaches. For some participants, the tension between reformists calling for changes to the existing system and radicals calling for a complete overhaul seemed to undermine their common goal. However, others pointed to the number of different approaches and visions as a sign of civil society's diversity and strength. Although the conference may not have ended with a single, unified vision or strategy for how to achieve global democracy, an understandably difficult task, the opportunity to meet and discuss the idea alone seemed to satisfy many. And, as participants returned to their organisations and movements, they most likely carried with them a clearer idea of the not one, but many possible paths forward.

INTRODUCTION

Global Democracy 2005 (G05)

From May 29th to June 1st, 2005, several hundred representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) from more than 40 countries gathered in Montreal to discuss the idea of global governance.[1] The "G05" conference, entitled "Civil Society Visions and Strategies", tackled a wide range of perspectives on global democracy and put forward several visions and strategies on how to get there.

Hosted by the Montreal International Forum, an alliance of individuals and organisations with the shared goal of improving the influence of civil society, this year's conference followed up on a similar conference held three years earlier in Toronto.[2] Following the surge of civil society participation in issues of global governance in the late 1990s, the Forum noted that civil society had scored some "successes" but was also faced with a backlash from those suspicious of the new actors.[3] In an effort to broaden the debate, the Forum convened the "G02" conference on global governance bringing all parties—civil society, government, and the private sector—together for dialogue.

While the G02 focussed on the identification and discussion of the general themes of global governance, organisers of this year's conference hoped to deepen the level of understanding of global democracy, and move beyond discussion of the issues to the identification of concrete visions and strategies. Given the events of recent years (September 11th, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Asian tsunami disaster, among others), G05 organisers felt that 2005 was a timely opportunity to revisit the issue and draft a new vision for the future.

Defining global democracy as the "key multi-dimensional challenge of our time", the G05 also hoped to progress beyond the mere acceptance of democracy as an idea to addressing the crisis of democracy in terms of process, policy and practice. Within the "autonomous space" of the G05 conference, participants were encouraged to think creatively and strategically about the six key themes of the conference:

1. Civil Society Engagement: Changing Territorial Priorities?
2. International Treaties and International Law: A Hierarchy of Values?
3. Global Security: Undermining Democracy?
4. Civil Society Participation: Opportunities and Responsibilities
5. Democratic Regulation of the Global Economy
6. Maintaining Cultural Diversity in Global Solidarity

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[1] For a complete list of participants, please visit: www.g05.org
[2] For more information on the Montreal International Forum or the G05 Conference, please visit www.fimcivilsociety.org and www.g05.org.
[3] These "successes" included the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the civil society campaign to support the International Criminal Court.

Key questions to be addressed during the conference included:

- How can we democratise the global political system and the global economy? What kind of multilateral system is needed for democratic global governance?

- What broad political agenda and strategic actions will strengthen the democratic forces within civil society and beyond to counter-balance the negative forms of economic and political globalisation?

- What broad political agenda and strategic actions can both advance democratisation and enhance the principles of human security, peace, justice, equity, ecological sustainability, cultural diversity, and democracy at the local, national, regional, and global levels?

- Is global democracy possible without democratic participation and processes at multiple levels (local, national, regional)?

NOTE: While this papers aims to reflect some of the perspectives of NGOs and CSOs present at the G05, it is not intended as a comprehensive summary of all of the opinions or suggestions put forth. Rather, the purpose of this paper is to examine some of the key concerns of civil society, report on the challenges and obstacles the participants identified in their pursuit of global democracy, and outline some of the paths forward into the future.

RATIONALE FOR THE G05: A "CRISIS IN DEMOCRACY"

Given the increasing concentration of power among an elite few, a growing gap between rich and poor, an increasingly militarised economy, and severely restricted public debate on issues of democracy, the current state of global politics has been characterised as a "worldwide crisis in democracy". This democratic crisis has been exacerbated by the trends of youth frequently opting out of formal political processes and media becoming increasingly absorbed into the corporate community. At present, local democracy is characterised by poor voting attendance, decreasing political party membership, and an increase in political "ritualism", action without the substance or spirit of democracy. As G05 Chair Rajesh Tandon pointed out, the re-election of both Bush and Blair despite the absence of evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq epitomises the current democratic crisis. Democracy has, in many instances, become a process of "fixing elections" rather than addressing the needs of the people.

At the international level, there is also growing scepticism toward international institutions. Some are beginning to question the United Nations' ability to fulfil its own Charter and there is growing frustration that global trade agreements are frequently more enforced and more efficient than UN agreements. Some have pointed to the inefficiency and confusion over global rules as evidence of poor governance, claiming that there are fundamental contradictions between trade agreements and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Anger is also mounting over the failure to implement the human, social, and ecological development agenda. Many fear that the Millennium Development Goals, the UN's plan for poverty reduction, will not be fulfilled on schedule. And, despite the creation of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, both institutions continue to function with inadequate funding, thus limiting their contribution to improving global governance.

Moreover, the ongoing conflict in Iraq, the humanitarian emergency in Darfur, post-tsunami rebuilding in Asia, and an ongoing HIV/AIDS emergency in Africa, all highlight the weaknesses of the international system. With the rejection of the European Constitution by France and the Netherlands, it seems as though even regional blocs are struggling with issues of governance. With the failure of the WTO trade talks in Cancun in 2003, the recent collapse of the nuclear non-proliferation talks, and the undermining of the United Nations by unilateral action in Iraq, it appears as though the democratic crisis is global.

Many believe, however, that 2005 is a year for change and new opportunities for civil society participation. As the United Nations celebrates its 60th anniversary and contemplates new forms of civil society cooperation, the G8 Summit discusses the possibility of debt cancellation for Africa in July, the UN Millennium Review Summit is scheduled to review progress on poverty reduction in September, and the World Trade Organisation plans its next round of trade talks for December, the time seems ripe for a debate over the future of the international system.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Democratic Deficits

According to research conducted by James Riker (Democracy Collaborative, University of Maryland) specially prepared for and presented at the G05, the international system suffers from four key deficits.[4] These are:

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[4] To view the entire document, please visit:
http://g05.netedit.info/docs/PromisingVisionsandStrategiestoAdvancingGlobalDemocracyJames%20Riker%20May%20 2005.pdf

1. The poor *quantity* of democratic participation due to low participation and limited awareness of relevant issues.

2. The poor *quality* of democratic participation due to ineffective institutions and processes which further limits the opportunities to enhance dialogue and improve governance.

3. *Unequal* participation due to inequalities and disparities in social structures that undermine and limit democratic participation (including race, ethnicity, gender, class, literacy, mobility, etc.)

4. A lack of *institutional capacity* for sustained action on global governance resulting from inadequate venues and opportunities for democratic participation or the identification and nurturing of emerging strategies and innovations.

In order to address these "deficits", Riker called for the reformation of existing institutions based on the principles of accountability, institutional independence, representation and public participation, subsidiarity, and transparency. After evaluating several existing and proposed international institutions (including the World Social Forum, a World Parliament, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, the G20 and the L20 initiative) for their democratic potential, Riker sets out several strategies for overcoming democratic deficits and reforming these institutions to improve their governance. He suggests that civil society focus its efforts on:

- Fostering deeper understanding among the diversity of civil society actors (labour unions, NGOs, networks, social movements, church groups, etc.) about the particular democratic roles that each plays (citizen education, public deliberation, monitoring, lobbying, etc.) and how to cooperate most effectively in order to maximise their influence

- Strengthening and expanding civil society information-sharing

- Scaling up the advocacy capacity of civil society organisations by linking into broad-based democratic networks, coalitions, and social movements

- Supporting emerging alternative institutional strategies such as the World Social Forum, a Tobin Tax to fund global social priorities, etc.

- Promoting the regulation of the global economy through the creation of binding codes for Corporate Social Responsibility, reforming the United Nations Global Compact, and the creation of anti-trust and redistributive tax mechanisms, etc.

- Developing criteria for democratic leadership selection processes for the heads of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank

- Developing more democratic alternatives to the G8, such as the G20 and the L20

- Developing criteria and mechanisms for fair negotiations among states

- Eliminating the debt of the highly-indebted poor countries (HIPCs) and making more funding available for basic needs
- Reforming the Bretton Woods institutions to increase their public accountability, openness, and transparency
- Strengthening the negotiating capacity of developing countries for fair trade in WTO
- Strengthening the mechanisms for civil society consultation with IMF, World Bank, and WTO

The Way Forward: Views from Key Speakers

According to Rajesh Tandon (GO5 Chair and Participatory Research in Asia, India), the current democratic crisis demands the articulation of a new vision. In his view, the new governance structures would reflect increased accountability to the people; rootedness, responsiveness and inclusiveness of civil society networks; and the principles of accountability, legitimacy, equality, and inter-connectedness.

However, Candido Grzybowski (World Social Forum Organising Committee and IBASE, Brazil) argued that the way forward lies not in the reformation or creation of new institutions, but rather "in the streets" where the people are responsible for constructing "another world". Through initiatives like the World Social Forum, people can create the space where alternatives emerge to confront the neo-liberal ideology and create local solidarities.

Jan Aart Scholte (University of Warwick) highlighted the need to define the concept of global democracy before putting forth any visions. According to his definition, the desired democracy would involve rule by the people; decision-making power held by those affected by it; collective decision-making; equality of members; autonomy; liberty of choice; transparency of decision-making; and accountability. Regarding "global democracy", he pushed participants to think about whether that meant democracy in each country in the world, one global democracy, or any institution that could respond to problems at the global level. Scholte also urged participants to consider the full range of actors that could be involved in the creation of such institutions.

As for "entry points" for civil society, Scholte suggested that organisations could increase their involvement in citizen awareness and public education, the cornerstone of democracy. He also identified four possible strategies for change: conformism (no action); rejectionism (radical dismantling of international institutions based on the principle of subsidiarity); reformism (working within existing structures and ideologies to achieve a 'best case scenario'); and transformism (replacing western capitalist ideology with a new vision).

Heidi Hautala (Parliamentarian, Finland) cautioned those advocating the creation of new institutions to consider the difficulties involved. Using the example of the French referendum on the EU Constitution, Hautala argued that new institutions, such as the EU also involve the creation of new identities—a process which often requires lengthy periods of adjustment. Moreover, with the transfer of powers to a new level (supra-national, in the case of global democracy), responsibilities and jurisdiction of the institution can become highly complicated, thus generating confusion. As a first step toward global democracy, Hautala recommended pushing through the UN reforms. This process could also bring like-minded parliamentarians and civil society activists closer together, cementing their ties for future cooperation. Hautala also urged participants to make use of tools such as the Aarhus Convention which increases information-sharing between governments and civil society.

Lalita Ramdas (Greenpeace, India) called for participants to begin building a global democracy by first focussing on the local level. In Ramdas' opinion, true democracy begins at the individual level, then feeds into larger initiatives, as exemplified by Indian Panchayats, or local democracy committees.

CHALLENGES FACING CIVIL SOCIETY

Reforming International Institutions

The majority of participants at the GO5 were in agreement that global democracy would not be possible, or at least very difficult, without radical reforms of the existing international institutions. Despite the growing consensus on the failure of the neo-liberal model, however, one speaker pointed out that civil society's efforts to change it have also been unsuccessful to date. This failure is attributed to the fact that many of the international institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, frequently the targets of civil society criticism, only agree to engage in dialogue with 'moderate reformists'. As a result, civil society's pleas for real and/or radical change largely go unheard or ignored.

However, the dismissal of civil society concerns is also a result of an institutional "culture of expertise", which, due to complexity of the issues involved, precludes the participation of many civil society organisations. This "information" or "knowledge gap" between civil society and the institutions they seek to reform, is further exacerbated by a "culture of secrecy" within many of the international institutions. Many institutions lack transparency in their daily relations with civil society, particularly regarding information, accreditation processes, and so on. Some institutions, such as the WTO and G8, have made their summits and meetings nearly inaccessible—or highly restricted--to civil society, thus effectively eliminating the possibilities for open dialogue. There is also some suspicion within civil society that, rather than engage in dialogue with them, some

international institutions like the G8 and the World Economic Forum increasingly appear to be "co-opting the social agenda".

For many moderates, therefore, the reform of these institutions is a key first step in establishing global democracy. Benton Musslewhite (One World Now, USA) called for participants to back his effort to launch a UN Charter Review. According to Musslewhite, a Charter Review is the "quickest, easiest, and really the only legitimate means" to start the process of reformation. Under Article 109 of the UN Charter, it is possible to call a Charter Review Conference with support of two-thirds of the General Assembly, including any nine members of the Security Council. The advantage to this method, Musslewhite explained, is that none of the five permanent members can veto the calling of the Charter Review Conference, although they must all agree to the proposed changes.[5]

The results of James Riker's research also point to a number of areas for UN improvement. His findings call for a change in the size, structure, and representation of the Security Council; an enhanced role and composition of the General Assembly; and the creation of a parallel "People's Assembly" to represent civil society concerns on a permanent basis. In addition, he suggests strengthening Security Council principles and procedures for the authorisation on the use of force, stronger disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons measures, the ratification of a comprehensive test ban treaty, and the establishment of a permanent peacekeeping force and peacebuilding commission.

"Reform the UN", a joint website initiative of the World Federalist Movement (WFM) and the Institute for Global Policy (IGP) also focuses on a reformed UN as the basis for international democracy. The website, which is designed to serve as an information hub on issues pertaining to UN reform, provides up-to-date news on the 2005 UN reform process, member states' positions on UN reform, and reactions and responses of civil society.[6]

In particular, the WFM-IGP alliance calls for drastic reform of the Security Council including the possibility of abolishing the veto. WFM-IGP also supports the reform "Model B" put forward by the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change which calls for an increase in the number of elected members from 10 to 19, based on four-year renewable seats. As part of the reforms, WFM-IGP also wants greater accountability through elected members, better representation of regional issues through the creation of a "regional mode" of participation in the Council; and more inclusive negotiations and preparations in the lead up to the UN Millennium Summit in September this year.

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[5] For more information on this initiative, please visit www.oneworldnow.org.
[6] For more information, please visit: www.reformtheun.org

For more radical-minded participants at the GO5, however, merely reforming the UN is insufficient. Candido Grzybowski challenged the idea that the UN, even post-reform, could adequately address complex global issues. The organisation, based solely upon state involvement, sets low targets that often fail to address the underlying causes of problems like poverty. Instead, he argued, the UN tends to fixate on the symptoms. In order to really eradicate poverty and other global challenges, Grzybowski claimed that civil society participation needs to be front and centre.

Another group suggested that strengthening the UN might be tied to a clarified "hierarchy of values". As long as there is confusion over which agreements take priority—trade or human rights protections, the group argued, the UN cannot assert its global authority. Therefore, the group called for a clearly-stated hierarchy of values, with human rights topping the list. The suggestion was also made to use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basis for this new hierarchy to which all future international agreements would adhere, but some groups opposed the idea given that ecological rights are not included in the Declaration. A counter-suggestion of using Alliance21's "Earth Charter", seen as a more 'comprehensive' list of rights and responsibilities, was made.[7]

Another concern that emerged during the conference was that there is a possibility that the next UN Secretary General may be Polish. Given Poland's ties with the United States, some feared that the process of UN reform, particularly Security Council reform, and improving relations with civil society could become increasingly complicated as a result.

The Power of Regional Blocs

With the growth and integration of powerful regional blocs, global and regional trade agreements are playing a greater role in shaping local development agendas. For some civil society activists, this shift in territorial priorities from the local to the regional has made the struggle for global democracy increasingly complicated. Instead of focussing on the familiar national or community levels, NGOs and civil society organisations are now forced to address complex regional issues, a challenge that requires new networks, skills, and knowledge.

Referring to the growth of free trade areas in Latin America, Norma Sanchis (International Gender and Trade Network, Argentina) discussed the challenge of "market fundamentalism". Given that the new bilateral, regional, and multilateral treaties serve to reinforce the neo-liberal agenda and weaken local governments, she claims that civil society now faces a bigger hurdle than ever before. Now, she argues, there is not only inequality between the members of these new trade blocs, but also inequality of issues as trade continues to trump all other concerns (women, the environment, labour, etc.). And, despite the efforts of CSOs and NGOs to broaden the "market fundamentalist" approach to trade, there is little room for real input or participation. However, Sanchis

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[7] For more information on the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World (Alliance21) or the Earth Charter, please visit: www.alliance21.org.

also pointed out the success of efforts such as the "Campaign Against Fundamentalisms". This campaign, which focuses on the protection of human rights against all forms of fundamentalism, has had some impact on Mercosur, the South American trade bloc. As a result of persistent pressure from civil society, Sanchis said there is now movement toward a "re-launching" of Mercosur, this time with greater civil society involvement. Although the G20 group of the WTO which helped to bring down the 5th WTO Ministerial was "far from altruistic", Sanchis also hopes that the rising international influence of members like Brazil will open new doors to civil society.

Lunn Muthoni Wanyeki (African Women's Development and Communications Network—FEMNET, Kenya) also pointed to optimistic developments in Africa. Following decades of tension with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Wanyeki claimed that civil society is now coming to see the African Union (the OAU's successor) as a positive thing. In particular, civil society is slowly starting to back the AU as it proves its ability to respond in Darfur and Togo. The AU's response, in both situations, she claimed, has demonstrated the AU's ability to respond to African challenges, thus proving there has been a change of vision from that of the old organisation. According to Wanyeki, many civil society organisations also back the AU's move toward a collective African response and the articulation of African norms on human rights, including the promotion of human rights, gender equality, and a limited definition of sovereignty that permits swift responses to humanitarian crises.

In response to Wanyeki's somewhat optimistic portrait of civil society engagement with the new AU, however, Kumi Naidoo (CIVICUS, South Africa) warned that there is still much work to be done to improve the accountability and performance of regional blocs. Although the AU may have been relatively successful with Togo, he argued, it has utterly failed to deal with Zimbabwe. Moreover, within the South African Development Community (SADC), inequality between members has weakened the bloc and prevented it from achieving significant reforms, including UN Security Council reform.

However, pointing to the progress made by NGOs and civil society engaged with trade and regional blocs over the past five years, Renata Bloem (Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN—CONGO, Switzerland) felt that this was a huge achievement in such a short time.

The Local-Global Divide

As described above, the emergence of regional and global institutions has forced many NGOs and CSOs to re-think their territorial focus. For some, remaining grounded in local communities remains the priority, while others feel that civil society should become more engaged at the global level. The result, as many pointed out at the G05, is a "gap" between the two, a "local-global divide". Consequently, the topic of many discussions at the conference was how to bridge this divide and effectively link the global to the local.

In the era of "globalisation", decision-making has become extremely complex. While some organisations may focus on the "bigger picture", Heidi Hautala (Parliamentarian, Finland) argued that it is the local activists working on practical solutions to these complex problems who are the ones to bring social innovations to the table. Therefore, in her opinion, it is crucial to always connect back to the local. Besides, as she added, power is not a zero-sum game; there is space for increased participation from civil society at all levels. What is needed to improve this participation, however, is greater access to information. Once local citizens have access to information, they can be empowered and make their voices heard through tools like referenda. Hautala also suggested other methods of connecting local to global include the creation of a world parliament where local citizens elect representatives to serve in a global decision-making body or the creation of a global public policy committee consisting of parliamentarians working side by side with civil society activists. Hautala stressed that for either to succeed, however, civic education is essential.

On a more pessimistic note, John Samuel (ActionAid, Thailand) noted that the divide between local and global civil society also exists as a result of other factors. He described the problem of the emergence of a "civil society policy community" which enjoys the privileges of access to information, awareness of the issues, linguistic abilities, mobility, and so forth but which is no longer connected to the grassroots "reality". Until the inequalities of technology are addressed, the distance between cities around the world may be shortened, but the distance from capital city to village within many countries is still enormous, thereby preventing many organisations from being able to link to the global. Samuel warned of the dangers of a seemingly elitist, jargon-based international policy community becoming more and more isolated from their constituencies at home.

NGOs vs. Social Movements?

Although few representatives from social movements were present at the G05, Aziz Choudry (GATT Watchdog, New Zealand) brought to attention the mounting tension between some social movements and their NGO counterparts. Pointing out the irony of discussing issues like "global democracy" in a conference that takes place on occupied indigenous territory, Choudry claims that, for many social movements, the focus is "action", rather than "talking". Moreover, he argued, many social movements are not interested in engaging in discussions about reforming institutions; rather, they are interested in seeing real, radical change. As a result, many radicals within popular and social movements are expressing their frustration with the lack of action and some are opting for more militant activism.

The "disconnect" between bureaucratised NGOs and street-based social movements, as Choudry described, is made even greater by some NGOs acting as "intellectual policemen". According to Choudry, reformist NGOs working on small-scale change are

increasingly defining and patrolling the parameters of "legitimate" debate and controversy, thus acting as buffers between the institutions they say they seek to change and those social movements demanding radical change. In some instances, NGOs have participated in the blacklisting of social movements by declaring certain radicals "terrorists", "communists", etc. In effect, this undermines the legitimacy of many social movements who are marginalised by the conservative and reformist forces within civil society. Consequently, social change is becoming a "professionalised industry" where fewer and fewer voices are being heard. As reformist NGOs grow in influence, Choudry also points out the risks of NGO co-optation by governments seeking to increase their own legitimacy and government use of NGOs as "cheap sub-contractors" to carry out service provision. Moreover, the expansion and growth in influence of reformist NGOs has also meant that social movements are being squeezed out of their place in civil society and that institutionalised, mainstream NGOs are more frequently being seen as "part of the problem" by those on the other side of the fence.

In an attempt to clarify the different, yet equally important, roles of social movements and NGOs, Antonio Tujan (Asia Pacific Research Network, IBON, Philippines) argued that mainstream civil society plays a "transactional role" while social movements play a "transformational role". According to Tujan, mainstream civil society exists to "fill the gaps/deficits in the political system" while social movements provide new ideas and popular representation. Therefore, he argued, there does not need to be a conflict between the two. Citing the example of the Reality of Aid network which includes both northern and southern NGOs as well as diverse social movements such as Via Campesina, Tujan claimed that these "movements of movements" are not just possible, but, in fact, highly effective. Izzat Abdul Hadi (Bisan Centre for Research and Development, Palestinian Territory) added that NGOs provide important goods to social movements (resources, training, information) while NGOs depend upon social movements for legitimacy, representation, and their ability to "mobilise". NGOs without social movements, he claimed, would be "like generals without soldiers".

Legitimacy and Accountability

Although civil society has been credited with pushing many social issues onto the agendas of international institutions, creating momentum on priority issues, diversifying the perspectives of institutions, and enhancing the transparency and accountability of these institutions, their success has not come without a price. In the past few years, there appears to be a growing backlash against civil society and calls for NGOs and CSOs to apply the same democratic and accountability criteria to their own organisations that they demand of others. At the GO5 conference, the twin topics of civil society "legitimacy" and "accountability" were frequently discussed.

As James Riker's research points out, if the guiding principles for establishing global democracy—and legitimacy—are equity, inclusion, justice, peace, respect for cultural diversity, ecological sustainability and so on, then NGOs and CSOs should take the lead

and set an example for all other sectors to follow. In order to address internal "democratic deficits" and enhance the legitimacy of civil society, Riker suggests developing more accountable, open and transparent decision-making processes within organisations and strengthening and diversifying the voices participating in and representing civil society. Echoing the suggestion that civil society should lead by example, however, some participants pointed out that the constraints of state-dependent financing and/or voluntary donation financing make this a much more difficult task.

Some G05 participants also noted that it was ironic that the G05 was discussing the concepts of global democracy and legitimacy when it had not overcome many of these challenges itself. Many participants commented on the barriers to participation in conferences such as the G05, citing language, literacy, gender, and class as persistent obstacles. Before any conference can seriously undertake discussions about global democracy, it was suggested that it would first have to address the fundamental problem of representation of the under-represented.

On the topic of accountability, many participants described the need to evaluate their performance and open up new channels for feedback. Nina Gregg (Communication Resources, USA) warned that, if civil society did not quickly develop its own measures to ensure accountability, it would be difficult to avoid government-imposed efforts. Describing the situation in the USA, Gregg claimed that the government has attempted to "discipline NGOs into conformity", and suggested that the only way to resist such attacks would be to demonstrate civil society accountability through the creation of standards, codes, etc. According to one participant, ActionAid's "ALPS" report card on NGO performance is an innovative means of evaluating NGOs by those affected by their programmes, and thus avoiding such criticism. By providing a channel for feedback for those affected by ActionAid programmes, the organisation is overcoming some of the criticisms faced by other NGOs. Other mechanisms suggested to improve civil society accountability included participatory budgeting, budget reporting, and making the minutes of all meetings publicly available.

However, Kumi Naidoo (CIVICUS, South Africa) argued that civil society need not be so obsessed with proving its accountability. Because many CSOs operate on a "perform or perish" principle, especially regarding funding, Naidoo argued that there is no need to be "so defensive". In spite of the backlash against civil society led primarily by the right-wing in the United States and the American Enterprise Institute's project "NGO-Watch", Naidoo encouraged G05 participants to continue their work. Naidoo argues that, given the current American political situation, a "liberal oligarchy" led by upper class, and characterised by a highly-commercialised media, a "1.5 party" state, no internal democracy, and no gender equality, civil society's work is "more important than ever". Although he acknowledged that there may be room for improvement within civil society, most importantly to bring in unrepresented voices and engage the public more effectively,

Naidoo maintained that legitimacy and accountability should not have to be so vigorously defended.

According to Candido Grzybowski (WSF, IBASE, Brazil) civil society can be viewed as networks formed around a particular issue or region whereas international institutions are designed to represent all sectors of society. Therefore, civil society does not need to be burdened by these concepts. Besides, Grzybowski added, the success or failure of these networks will be decided by public opinion.

Information and Learning Gaps

As described earlier, limited awareness of the issues due to a lack of information is one of the most frequently cited causes of the "local-global divide". According to many participants at the G05, limited access to information has meant that many organisations are "left in the dark" on important issues. The "digital divide" further exacerbates the problem of limited access, and in combination with the "culture of expertise" that characterises many international institutions, effectively limits civil society participation. In preparation for the UN Millennium Summit set to take place this September in New York, NGOs and CSOs are pushing hard to get organisations 'up to speed' on the important issues so that the diverse voices of civil society are heard.

According to Izzat Abdul Hadi (Bisan Centre for Research and Development, Palestinian Territory), civil society must overcome a number of obstacles in order to increase its influence. First, civil society must overcome the "knowledge deficit" by developing a sophisticated knowledge about the international financial institutions and improved internal communication mechanisms. Second, civil society must overcome its "insufficient intellectual capacity to analyse the content of international policies", perhaps through the creation of a civil society information clearinghouse. This clearinghouse would allow for the sharing of information, knowledge, and expertise so that each organisation is not faced with "reinventing the wheel" on complex global issues. Third, civil society must find a way to overcome the lack of media coverage. Through an improved relationship with the media, civil society could reach out to the public, encouraging them to become involved on important issues. Fourth, civil society must develop mechanisms to share information with the grassroots and connect back to the local in order to avoid becoming 'elitist' and disconnected from their constituencies.

In his report, Riker suggests that the passing of Freedom of Information laws is an important tool in overcoming the 'secrecy' obstacle. The passing of such laws would also foster greater transparency and accountability and increase the responsiveness of governments. A similar tool, frequently mentioned at the G05, is the Aarhus Convention. Participants claimed that the Aarhus tool is a crucial means of pressuring governments to share information and also empowers civil society by guaranteeing access to information, the right to participate and the right to chastise.

In addition to the creation of a civil society clearinghouse, participants proposed the use of the "SIMPOL" tactic. This "simultaneous policy" or common platform initiative was suggested as a means of building common awareness on a key issue and then building the necessary momentum to effect change. This tool was also seen as a way of increasing the coherence of civil society's often highly diverse visions of the future. It was also suggested that, if a World Parliament were to be created, civil society could lobby this institution for action on a "SIMPOL" topic of choice.

Capturing the Attention of the Mass Media

Many participants also noted that absence of the media at the G05 conference. Given the centrality of civic education to the achievement of global democracy, there was general consensus that civil society would need to engage the media more often in order to reach the public. Until then, many feared, the media will continue to have no awareness of, nor sympathy for civil society alternatives and perpetuate the stereotype of civil society as "disorganised" and "without feasible alternatives".

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

With this year's abundance of high-level meetings, summits, and anniversaries, 2005 appears to be a year pegged for civil society action. Beginning in June, the UN General Assembly will conduct hearings with civil society in preparation for the Millennium Review Summit opening the door for greater civil society input. Later that month, the 60th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter marks an opportunity to review the organisation as a whole and has given those seeking UN reform some impetus. The June 27-28th "Financing for Development" (FfD) High Level Dialogue in New York provided a similar focal point for those calling for a change to development financing policies. And, the use of multi-stakeholder in the FfD meetings represents a shift toward greater inclusion of all voices. The UN Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) also met at the end of June.

In July, this year's G8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland will attempt to tackle poverty, debt relief, and the special needs of Africa. Although civil society may not be invited to take part in the exclusive golf resort meetings, the social agenda of the Summit has opened up public debates around the world, potentially generating the political will for action.

The September UN Department of Information-NGO conference, set to take place September 7-9th, also represents an opportunity for civil society to push for annual, formal consultation processes within the UN. The UN Millennium Review Summit which will take place from September 10th-16th in New York will evaluate the progress made to

date on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Given that many NGOs and CSOs are actively engaged in MDG-related activities, the event allows them to voice their concerns and demands on poverty reduction strategies. The annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF will also take place in September and are a traditional rallying point for many civil society activists.

In December 2005, the WTO will also host its 6th Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong. Following the collapse of the trade talks in Cancun in 2003, this meeting is seen as a 'make or break it' opportunity to reform international trade. It is expected that civil society will devote much time and energy to preparing for these negotiations in order to mobilise a strong and informed mass of activists in Hong Kong.

This year has also been marked by many civil society-organised events, meetings which provide the opportunity for diverse groups to meet and discuss strategy. In January, the fifth World Social Forum took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The five-year anniversary of the WSF was seen as a crucial milestone in the development of alternative, civil society-led initiatives. In March, Social Watch launched the "Social Watch Benchmarks for the Millennium Review Summit" and produced a detailed paper outlining civil society demands for change within the UN. The G05 conference, held in Montreal in late May, also facilitated discussions on the future of civil society, outlining key visions and strategies for action. The first "White Band Action Day" was set for July 1st to mark the Global Call to Action against Poverty in advance of the G8 Summit and to build public awareness of the G8 agenda. The Global Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding, which will take place in late July in New York, will examine new opportunities for increasing and improving civil society engagement in complex humanitarian emergencies. The "Second White Band Action Day" will take place on September 10th in advance of the Millennium Review Summit, again to demonstrate the popular pressure for action on poverty. The "Third White Band Action Day" will take place on December 10th in advance of the WTO Ministerial Meetings.

For many participants at the G05, these meetings and alternative events represent important opportunities to rally, brainstorm ideas, build momentum for collective action, and reflect on their visions and strategies.

The World Social Forum

In one of the interactive sessions at the G05 conference, participants were urged to share their questions or concerns about the World Social Forum. Although Candido Grzybowski, a representative of the Organising Committee of the WSF was present to answer questions, he was not able to respond to all of the questions. The following list of questions outlines some of civil society's concerns and questions about the WSF.

1. How can the WSF maintain its complexity and its ability to address specific local issues while functioning at the global level? Is there a point where its complexity is lost in its overwhelming diversity?

2. Can the WSF continue to function as an "open space for debate", a space that takes no decisions, when there appears to be growing pressure to see concrete proposals emerge from it as well?

3. Is it possible for the WSF to function as a World Parliament?

4. Does a global culture exist to form the basis of "global governance"? If so, is this what is represented at the WSF?

5. How can the WSF extend itself to reach out to those not considered to be within civil society in order to become truly representative and inclusive? How can the WSF increase the participation from southern and, in particular, southern grassroots organisations?

6. How can civil society improve the cooperation and communication between forums, both local social forums and the WSF?

7. What space within the WSF can be made open to elected parliamentarians?

8. How can civil society address the problem of credibility at the WSF?

9. Have any of the actions proposed by participants at the WSF been implemented? Which ones and where?

10. What bridges exist between the WSF and other international institutions, like the WEF, and how can these be strengthened?

11. Is there a role for government participation in the WSF? If so, what?

12. How do the new social movements, such as the Bolivarian revolutions taking place in Central and South America, fit within the WSF?

13. How can the financing of future WSFs be secured in order to ensure that the participation in the WSF changes from elites primarily from northern countries to that total inclusion?

14. How can issue-based networks and campaigns be fostered and better supported at the WSF?

15. Does the WSF represent a new form of global governance?

In response to the many questions asked about the World Social Forum, Grzybowski concluded that the WSF process is still new. And, given that it has taken more than 30 years for the Washington Consensus to evolve, he urged participants not to be impatient with the development of alternative mechanisms for global governance. Grzybowski warned, however, that if the WSF did not soon advance beyond the level of talking about ideas and generate some concrete action, the process would die. Acknowledging the efforts to improve this year's WSF, Grzybowski agreed that the use of "thematic terrains" to foster issue-based coalitions and the effort to open the WSF to more international participants were improvements over the past. In order to keep the momentum, he argued, it would be necessary to address the WSF's financial autonomy problems and expand into new areas like the Arab countries, Africa, and China.

Despite the many questions and concerns that emerged during the discussions, it was generally agreed that the World Social Forum represented a significant step forward for civil society, and despite its shortcomings, the Forum provides inspiration to many as an example of an alternative global institution at work. According to Riker's research results, the World Social Forum as the only global institution to rank "high positive potential" on both democratic participation and democratic empowerment indicators.[8]

A World Parliament

One of the most frequently mentioned ways of overcoming the "democratic deficits" in international institutions involved the creation of some form of World Parliament. In fact, the suggestion for an elected body at the global level was supported by an overwhelming majority of G05 participants, despite differences of opinion over the finer details.

According to Andrew Strauss (Widener University School of Law, USA), one of the most vocal supporters of a global parliament, the advantages lie in the fact that it would function outside of the current international political system. Strauss proposed that the initiative could begin now by appealing to 20 or 30 "vanguard countries" to take the lead. Although this would involve bypassing the UN Charter, Strauss maintained that it was not a direct violation of it because the body would initially only fulfil an advisory role. He explained that power would then be ceded from governments gradually, and once the body had gained adequate representation and legitimacy, it could then begin to act as a decision-taking body.

Strauss envisioned the process unfolding along the lines of the International Convention on the Ban of Landmines or the International Criminal Court. The advantage of functioning outside of the UN, according to Strauss, is that no country could stop the

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[8] To view the table, please visit:
http://g05.netedit.info/docs/PromisingVisionsandStrategiestoAdvancingGlobalDemocracyJames%20Riker%20May%20 2005.pdf (page 18).

initiative, unlike the proposed UN reforms which rely on members' support. Moreover, once the body is established, Strauss believes that civil society could have considerable influence over it. Unlike the UN, he said, where civil society has to "beg for representation", this new body would allow for the transcending of national politics, and thus opening greater space for global civil society alliances and networks.

The Coalition for a World Parliament and Global Democracy, an organisation formed at the World Social Forum in Mumbai in 2004, however, explained that it does not focus on any particular path toward a world parliament or global democracy. Rather, it described its mission as "to establish an elected world parliament or assembly by advancing understanding and action among citizens, civil society, and governments" and proposed to get there by working to democratise international institutions and to improve the democratic process at all levels of society. Specifically, the Coalition is asking for a UN Charter Review and the establishment of an elected consultative body under the General Assembly using Article 22 of the Charter or the creation of a Specialised Agency through the Economic and Social Council using Article 63 of the Charter. The Coalition also endorsed Strauss' method of starting a parallel body with a small number of countries but also called for broader improvements in the "methods of democracy" at all levels. The Coalition also suggested the use of the Earth Charter as a guide to deeper and broader democracy based on human rights and responsibilities.

The World Democracy Campaign, launched by the World Citizen Foundation on May 15, 1999, during the Hague Appeal for Peace conference, encourages participants to sign the "Common Statement on World Democracy", a list of basic principles. The statement also asserts that ultimate political sovereignty lies in individuals, that collective sovereignty should be expressed through direct or representative democracy, and that basic principles, including the rule of law, subsidiarity, institutional and procedural transparency, non-violent means, and non-discrimination should form the foundations of any new global democracy institution.[9]

The World Parliament Experiment, on the other hand, represents a practical approach to global democracy. Described by Rasmus Tenbergen, the project involves an internet simulation of a future World Parliament.   Through the use of delegated voting, a combination of direct and representative democracy, the website allows each person to change any aspect of the effort, whether content, procedures, or representatives, if s/he garners sufficient support. Tenbergen explained that, as participation increases, so too does the project's power and legitimacy. If enough people were to support the effort, Tenbergen argued that it could grow into a real World Parliament.[10]

The New World Parliament organisation, in contrast, called for representatives from every parliament and national assembly around the world to gather at an inaugural meeting

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[9] For more information on this initiative, please visit: www.worldcitizen.org
[10] For more information on this initiative, please visit: www.world-parliament.org

and create a parliament for the world. Gordon Glass (2020 Vision, UK) proposed that, although the body would initially have no executive role or formal powers, it would "speak for the people of the world and harness global public opinion" and could, therefore, provide valuable guidance to other institutions such as the World Bank and the WTO. Glass added that, due to the body's "independence", it could act as a "conscience" of the world. Admitting that his proposal involved the creation of "another talking shop", Glass argued that this one will "represent the missing voice of civil society". Glass proposed that, as a first step toward creating the parliament, parliamentarians from around the world need to speak out for an inaugural meeting.[11]

In a joint effort, the World Federalist Movement (WFM) and the Institute for Global Policy (IGP) outlined their proposals for overcoming the current democratic deficits. Arguing that the problem faced by reformist strategies is that the world's most powerful national democracies are also the greatest opponents of international democracy, WFM-IGP called for the creation of entirely new democratic global structures. Their list of demands included:

1. Strengthening the UN and the General Assembly by granting them primary policy, deliberative, and decision-making powers and supporting them with corresponding authority

2. Reforming the UN Security Council to render it more effective, more democratic, and more representative of all world regions

3. Strengthening ECOSOC in order to counter-balance the growth in power and influence of the WTO and Bretton Woods institutions

4. Create a World Environment Organisation and guarantee it adequate funding in order to protect the global commons

5. Ensure the independent funding of international institutions through the use of new and innovative financial mechanisms in order to strengthen and democratise the multilateral system

6. Create parliamentary assemblies within international institutions

7. Increase the participation of global civil society in the UN General Assembly through formalised NGO consultative rights and privileges

8. Improve corporate accountability in order to ensure universal standards on human rights, labour rights, and the environment

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[11] For more information on this initiative, please visit: www.the-new-world-parliament.org

Some organisations at the G05 also proposed a World Constitution as a tool for improving global democracy. There appeared to be widespread support for the use of the "Earth Charter", a document put out by the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural, and United World, as the basis of this constitution. According to its proponents, the Charter, can be used as a call for civil society to come together and overcome the feelings of powerlessness regarding North-South inequalities, poverty, gender inequalities, and ecological problems. It can also be used to mobilise civil society across continents, helping them to share ideas and experiences. Proponents also claim that the Charter moves beyond the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter which, combined, cover the issues of individual rights, peace and development, to include "third pillar" issues, including the relationship between humankind and the biosphere.[12]

Linked to the idea of a global parliament, the Global Human Referendum organisations described its goal of holding a "field test" to prove that a global vote is possible. According to Referendum organiser Joel Marsden, the vote, which could cover a variety of issues, such as the 10 most "solvable problems" or the Millennium Declaration would directly improve global participation. However, there were comments and criticisms from G05 participants who felt that extending democracy may only serve to recreate existing inequalities and that, given that democracy has "failed to provide even the basics" for the poorest populations, extending global suffrage may not be a solution. Other participants were concerned about the logistics of such a vote and argued that it would be nearly impossible to hold a global vote until the barriers to participation had been addressed, including hunger, poverty, illiteracy, mobility, and so on.

Despite a near consensus on the desirability of a world parliament, therefore, most of the proposals for building one were met with cautious optimism. In response to the call for a new institution, many G05 participants spoke of the risks of replicating the same problems associated with the current global governance institutions. Unless new methods could be derived to deal with the problems of representation, low participation, information gaps, and so on, any new institution would fall prey to the same criticisms as the old institutions. During these discussions, the tension flared between those who seemed to prefer to reform existing institutions and those who believe that existing institutions are far too flawed to be repaired and the only solution involves radical action, including the creation of new institutions completely outside or parallel to existing ones.

Multi-stakeholder Forums

The Helsinki Process and the Citizen's Global Platform were frequently cited examples of an emerging opportunity for greater civil society participation. These "multi-stakeholder forums" are seen as a new mechanism for bringing governments, civil society, and the private sector together with the goal of enhancing cooperation.

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[12] For further information on the Earth Charter, please visit: www.alliance21.org

The Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy is a project of the Finnish and Tanzanian governments designed to address problem of global governance and the future of North-South relations.[13]   Based on the findings of the International Labour Organisation's World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation, the initiative strives to bring about initiatives that are both radical and that address the problems of "at risk" communities where joint mobilisation and partnership is required. As a goal-oriented partnership, the Process hopes to overcome the problems of lack of political will, financing, etc.

For some participants, this new form of cooperation represents a significant step forward. Heidi Hautala (Parliamentarian, Finland) claimed that the process is of particular importance to parliamentarians as it gives them the opportunity to forge a much-needed "local-global link". For John Evans (Trade Union Advisory to the OECD, France), the Process also allows for more participation from trade and labour unions, a sector often overlooked when it comes to consultations. Others praised the process for breaking new ground and overcoming the ideological isolation. Whereas civil society had previously been reluctant to engage with other actors outside of its ideological 'comfort zone', the Helsinki Process allows actors of all political stripes to engage in dialogue, thus fostering deeper understanding, and ideally, creating momentum for action.

Despite that many of the participants at the GO5 strongly endorsed the Helsinki Process as an example of a new form of partnership, some felt that many of the inequalities present in other institutions are also present in the Helsinki Process. As Kumi Naidoo (CIVICUS, South Africa) explained, "The problem of multi-stakeholderism is the inequalities that exist between the partners." In order to rectify this problem and enter into genuine partnership, he argued, all partners need to carefully deliberate the preconditions for participation, including honesty, equality, compatibility, and power differentials. Until this has taken place, civil society should remain wary of partnerships with more powerful partners, such as the private sector, and work to strengthen itself internally instead, he claimed.

Partnerships with Military

In the past, civil society engagement with the military has been relatively minimal at best, and often confrontational at worst. Many CSOs and NGOs have a long-standing distrust of the military and have not tended to seek out partnerships with them. However, in the new "post-September 11th" reality, many civil society organisations are beginning to re-think their practices, and some have developed new forms of cooperation.

According to Michel Chaurette (Centre canadien d'étude et de cooperation internationale, CECI, Canada), the current global political situation presents an interesting opportunity for military-civil society cooperation. However, in order to facilitate this cooperation,

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[13] For more information on the Helsinki Process, please visit: www.helsinkiprocess.fi

Chaurette suggested that all parties sign a Charter for Human Responsibilities which would outline both human rights and responsibilities and a Code of Conduct to clarify roles. Additionally, Chaurette called for further work to be done on reforming the UN and the "responsibility to protect" policy. In the meantime, however, he pointed out the examples of civil society-military cooperation on international polio vaccination campaigns, cooperation on election monitoring, and democratisation efforts as possible models to follow. Other participants suggested the creation of a collaborative rapid response team consisting of civil society and military personnel that could address the ongoing problems in conflict areas.

General Hugues de Courtivron (Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, DCAF, Switzerland) discussed the potential for civil society-military cooperation based on a broadened definition of "security". If the concept of security can be widened to include not just physical security, but also human security, and if peace can be seen as a pre-requisite for further development, then there should be an opening for cooperation, he said. Moreover, with conflicts in the future more likely to erupt intra-state than inter-state, the tradition of 'military secrecy' is no longer important, especially if all actors are working toward the shared goal of peace. Courtivron also described a new awareness within the military of the need to partner with civil society in order to move beyond just "stopping the violence" to a condition of sustainable peace. Also, he noted that with many armed forces becoming multi-nationalised, there has been a change in behaviour in how soldiers interact with foreigners. Courtivron felt that this new spirit of cooperation boded well for partnership with other actors as well. However, Courtivron also emphasised the need for safeguards to guarantee the accountability of the military to the public that have yet to be put in place in many countries. If political leaders could be held accountable for the actions of the military, he argued, there would be fewer situations like Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.

According to Lalita Ramdas (Greenpeace, India), before any form of civil-military cooperation can take place, however, there are many stereotypes to overcome. As Ramdas explained, the military has traditionally been viewed as a symbol of the authority of the state and it will take considerable time to undo civil society's distrust of it, particularly when Abu Ghraibs continue to take place. Given the military's ties to colonial violence, the task of building trust with civil society is made all the more difficult. In addition, it will also take time to change traditions and mindsets within military, particularly when the military codes of conduct involve limited free will and independent decision-making and encourage soldiers to enforce the law or kill without judgement. However, Ramdas also outlined some initiatives in India that indicate that change is possible. Through the formation of "Joint Peace Committees", civil society organisations have joined the military on their daily patrols in order to act as watchdogs in the villages. This has been fairly successful in reducing conflict and preventing abuses of authority, thus building trust between the parties and opening the door for further cooperation. With peaceful overtures being made between India and Pakistan, Ramdas also pointed

out that there is reason for optimism. But, at the same time, she suggested that action be taken to halt the international arms trade. As long as there is a commercial trade in weapons, she argued, someone will benefit from prolonging the violence.

The Cardoso Panel Recommendations

June 2004, the UN Secretary General released the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on UN-Civil Society Relations. The Panel, which was proposed as part of wider UN reform efforts, was charged with examining the relationship between the UN and other civil society actors, including parliamentarians, think tanks, and, in a break from traditional definitions of civil society, the private sector. Led by former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the report of the Panel recommended significant changes that have received mixed reviews from civil society organisations.

Included in the recommendations are plans to make the UN a more outward looking organisation, connect the global with the local, and increase the participation of NGOs in intergovernmental bodies through streamlining the accreditation process, increasing the representation of NGOs from developing countries, and strengthening the UN's institutional capacity for NGO engagement. However, many NGOs and CSOs are concerned that the proposed changes will, in fact, weaken the role of NGOs through the use of vaguely-defined "multi-constituency dialogues" which equate civil society with the private sector and through reforms which could affect the UN's Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), an institution supported by many NGOs and CSOs.

According to Thierno Kane (UNDP, USA), the need for the UN to open its doors a little wider to civil society has been made evident from protests in Seattle in 1999 and the growth of the World Social Forum. In his opinion, the Cardoso recommendations reflect a change in paradigms and the UN's realisation that "inter-governmentality" is no longer a sufficient approach to global problems. As a result, he stated that he sees this as an opportunity for civil society to play an even greater role than just "service delivery" and an opening for civil society to reclaim some of its decision-making power.

Renate Bloem (Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN, CONGO, Switzerland), however, asserted that civil society participation in the UN should not be considered a "gift", but rather, a right that is guaranteed under the Charter. Since the 1990s, the era of global conferences, she claims that civil society has played a major role in bringing "hot issues" onto the UN's agenda, and since 1996, an ECOSOC resolution has guaranteed their consultative status to continue doing so. However, beginning in 1999, with the introduction of the UN Global Compact, the UN has allowed the private sector to gain influence over civil society. The move was met with opposition from NGOs who claimed that the non-binding nature of corporate social responsibility allowed the private sector to "bluewash" their bad practices using the UN logo. The growth in influence of the private sector in the UN was further evident at the 2002 UN World Summit for Sustainable Development where the UN promoted "public-private

partnerships" (PPPs) as a means of achieving Agenda 21. At the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society, the UN moved to include NGO, civil society, and private sector participation in preparatory committees, separating the three into 22 "families". For some civil society groups, the move represented a new UN definition of civil society, one that included the private sector. As a result, the recommendations made by the Cardoso Panel to re-evaluate UN- "civil society" have some NGOs worried that the private sector will further consolidate its influence at the UN, at the expense of NGOs and CSOs.

Therefore, the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN, or CONGO, has issued two demands to be met before the Millennium Summit in September. First, CONGO wants a clarification between "for profit" and "non-profit" civil society, thus clearly distinguishing between 'traditional' civil society and the private sector. Second, the Conference wants to ensure that civil society not only maintains its existing rights under ECOSOC but also assurances for more formal mechanisms to guarantee civil society participation in future forums.

The World Federalist Movement echoed these concerns. As Lene Schumacher (WFM, USA) explained, despite some good recommendations for streamlining accreditation and increasing capacity-building, the Cardoso report should only be cautiously supported and civil society should make every effort to ensure that "no damage is done" to existing rights and practices. Schumacher went on to identify several problems with the report. First, the WFM rejected the effort to lump civil society and private sector together as "constituencies", as well as the suggestion to bring the private sector, civil society, and Indigenous issues all under the roof of the UN Partnership Office by merging the Global Compact and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. If this were to go ahead, all three actors, with very different agendas, would have to fight even harder to be heard.

Second, Schumacher pointed out the widespread concern among CSOs that the proposed reforms would weaken the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS). Third, she expressed concern that many states seem to be ignoring the Cardoso report. Apparently, the US has made it clear that it sees no reason to increase civil society participation and other states are fearful that increasing civil society's influence will diminish their own. As a result, although Brazil is trying to push the report through draft resolutions, many states are stalling by focusing on definitional problems, thus delaying civil society access to important upcoming events such as the Millennium Summit.

According to John Samuel (ActionAid, Thailand), however, the problem with the Cardoso report is that very few groups are even aware of the report. As a result of "information gap and knowledge gaps", he claimed, few organisations either are aware of the report or understand its contents. He proposed involving the media in spreading the message, both to inform other civil society groups as well as to heighten the media's own awareness of the issues. Although he supported the panel's efforts to "move beyond

statist ideas of governance", he was disappointed that member states were not willing to cede any space to other actors.

Andrew Strauss (Widener University School of Law, USA) stressed that, although changes to the UN are long overdue, civil society should recognise that the changes proposed by the Panel are only "reformist" and that greater change is still required. As long as the UN remains a state-centred organisation, he claimed, it cannot serve the needs of civil society. He also warned civil society of the dangers of having "too narrow a vision" by pushing only for minor reforms. Instead, Strauss called for "large and strategic" visions.

The UN Millennium Summit and the MDGs

Signed in 2000, the UN Millennium Declaration was designed to serve as the "global agenda for the 21st century". The Declaration, which asserted fundamental values such as freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility, also promoted an action-oriented agenda on the topics of peace, security, and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; protection of our common environment; human rights; democracy and good governance; protection of the vulnerable; meeting the special needs of Africa; and strengthening the UN. The "Millennium Development Goals" were then established as the targets and timelines related to these goals. For many civil society organisations, the overlap of social interests represented a new opportunity for greater UN-civil society cooperation.

This year, five years after the original summit, the UN will convene the Millennium Review Summit to examine the progress to date on the MDGs. The Summit, which will involve heads of state, will meet September 10th to16th in New York. Civil society hearings are to take place in advance of the Summit on June 23rd and 24th. According to the UN Secretary General, this two day interactive hearing with civil society will also serve as a test run of his idea to hold an annual two-day "Global Civil Society Forum" which would take place before the annual meeting of the General Assembly each year.

At the G05, participants discussed their various perspectives on the Millennium Summit and the MDGs. According to Lynn Muthoni Wanyeki (African Women's Development and Communications Network—FEMNET, South Africa), many CSOs were initially opposed to the MDGs and fairly reluctant to engage with them. However, as she explained, over time, their perspective has shifted from denouncing the MDGs as inadequate to attempting to influence their outcome as much as possible. Part of this strategy has involved broadening the definitions of poverty to ensure that all aspects are addressed under the MDGs, including gender, sexual and reproductive rights, human rights, etc. Wanyeki added that civil society now views its role as a watchdog, pressuring and monitoring government action on the MDGs and trying to increase the public's awareness of the larger, underlying causes of poverty. NGOs and CSOs are now also pushing for greater participation in the review process. Although formal civil society participation in the upcoming appears to be limited—and much less than many organisations had hoped

for—some groups suggested shifting the focus to the next Summit, the Millennium +10 Summit. Other groups responded that working to increase the channels of communication within existing systems was simply a wasted effort; until larger UN reforms have taken place, organisations would be "throwing away their time and money", as one participant stated. If the MDGs were intended to be a cooperative effort with civil society, then the UN needs to create real mechanisms to include us, he added.

Likewise, in a document released at the "Launch of the Social Watch Benchmarks for Millennium Review Summit" in March 2005, Roberto Bissio asserted that it is very important for civil society to be highly active in the lead-up to the review of the MDGs, for the coalitions established since the Millennium Summit to push for and monitor the implementation of the MDGs, and to ensure that the "military concept of security" does not prevail over concepts of human security. The document, which was cited frequently at the G05, outlined proposals and demands related to the MDGs that are supported by a broad base of civil society organisations. They include:

- Re-affirming that poverty can be eradicated and the call for commitments to do so by 2025 made by each country; a commitment to outlining Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) by 2007 by each country, and efforts made to move beyond poverty eradication to the achievement of equality and social justice.

- Outlining new development strategies involving the IFIs, not just based on increasing trade, a strategy which has not worked to date, but rather on the needs and experiences of the people.

- Establishing gender equality and equity beyond the targets outlined in the MDGs and highlighted the need to broaden the understanding of gender equality to include issues related to conflict, violence, sexual and reproductive rights, etc.

- Immediate action on climate change and an explicit recognition of the threat posed by it as well as the immediate implementation of emission reduction measures, the provision of funding to ensure success of Kyoto, and a serious exploration of the consequences of climate change and alternatives energy sources.

- An end to militarization and the proliferation of weapons as well as the end to profiting from the arms trade, real and drastic reductions in government spending on arms, the promotion of general disarmament, and a ban on all nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Added to this is a commitment to the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian aid.

- The provision of adequate financing in order to achieve the MDGs, including the increasing of aid, the cancelling of debt, and the instituting of international taxes as a funding mechanism.

- An effort to make trade fair and an end to conditions imposed by IFIs on aid and debt cancellation that determine trade policies of developing countries. Also, CSOs demand greater transparency within the global trading system, the abolition of trade-distorting subsidies by wealthy countries, and consideration of human rights in the development of trade policies.

- A real commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS and other pandemics, shown by an increase in funding and the provision of secure funding. Additionally, the creation of a global emergency service to provide accessible and freely available anti-retrovirals and a moratorium on further extension of patent protections for pharmaceuticals under the WTO's Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement.

- The promotion of corporate accountability through the creation of legally-binding international instruments which would ensure that transnational corporations' actions are consistent with globally-agreed conventions and standards (i.e. "Norms on the Responsibilities of TNCS and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights").

- The democratisation of mechanisms of international governance, including reform of ECOSOC based on representation, accountability, and common responsibility, reform of UN Security Council, the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, as well as a redefinition and restriction of their roles. Simultaneously, CSOs support a strengthening of international legal institutions, including the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

- Increased government interaction with civil society in the process of decision-making, nationally, regionally, and internationally.

Although some NGOs continue to push for the fulfilment of the MDGs and outline their demands, John Foster (North-South Institute, Canada) stated that many NGOs are also "preparing for disappointment". As a result, Foster urged civil society to think about the development of "post-Summit strategies", so that momentum on the issues is not lost together. Foster claimed that, in light of the combined failures of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the pending failure of the Kyoto Protocol, and the collapse of the European Union constitution project, governments cannot be allowed to simply "give

up" once the Millennium Summit is over. And, with the upcoming G8 Summit, Foster claimed that civil society has an important opportunity to bolster the Blair Initiative on poverty and "do everything possible to keep up the pressure" in order to ensure that the root causes of poverty, not just the MDG targets, are addressed.

Foster also announced the launch of "We, the Peoples" report, a collaborative effort of the North-South Institute and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA). The 100 page report, which was made available online during the G05, highlights the results of an online survey of civil society organisations' engagement with the eight MDG issues. The report also discusses what CSOs think about the MDGs and their governments' efforts to meet them, the obstacles standing in the way of achieving the goals, and reviews the progress that has been made over the past five years. The survery, which included more than 400 respondents, of which two-thirds are fom the South, also highlights the priority issues of CSOs, including HIV, climate change, human rights, trends in UN reform, and so on. According to the survey's results, many CSOs believe that the resources and tools exist to achieve the MDGs, but that political will is absent. In response, the report proposes the following agenda for action and change:

- Make poverty and hunger history through the complete eradication of poverty, the reduction of all inequalities, and a commitment to a future with decent work, gender equity, and empowerment of the poor.

- Justice in the global economy, including more aid, new and innovative financing mechanisms, and faster and fair debt cancellation.

- The democratising of global governance to allow for the inclusion of all parts of society—the poor and civil society—in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of development initiatives.

- A reformed and strengthened UN that ensures that human rights, labour, and environmental frameworks take priority over trade.

- Ensure health rights, including the provision of life-extending and life-saving services and treatments and adequate resources provided to defeat HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and other diseases.

- Make peace a priority by reducing global military expenditures, ending the "war on Terror", and reinforcing the UN as an institute for preventing and mediating conflict.

- Guarantee human rights and gender equality as the pre-requisites to reaching the other targets. Also, strengthen democracy and participation, ensure corporate responsibility, and provide economic, social, and cultural

security for all by broadening the definition of human rights to ensure sexual and reproductive rights, access to health services, etc.

- Protect the environment and address the "phenomenal threats" of climate change and global warming and provide the necessary protection for the vulnerable.

Foster also explained how many of these actions and demands are linked with the White Band Action campaign, a simplified version of some of the key proposals from the "We, the Peoples report," and the Trade Justice Movement.

In a background paper provided to G05 participants, several authors also commented on how civil society could take advantage of the opportunities provided in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Although limited by their failure to address structural and political aspects of poverty, the PRSPs, which are seen as an important way for civil society to engage with governments in development, do constitute an "important space and another site for development organisations to influence public policy". However, according to the authors, the extent to which CSOs have been effective in utilising this space varies from country to country. Some of the challenges which have limited civil society's participation include: the difficulty of organising and managing the diversity of civil society opinion on the PRSPs, avoiding cooptation while gaining credibility before government, donors, and other partners, and overcoming local governments' lack of interest in wider consultations.

The G8 Summit

According to some of the participants at the G05, there is a general sense that "we know what we are against" (i.e. the exclusive nature of the institution, the neo-liberal policies it advocates, and so on), but civil society has yet to clearly articulate what it supports or define a clear strategy of opposition. Peter Hajnal (University of Toronto G8 Research Centre, Canada) explained that, in part, this could be because the G8 is "not a traditional institution" meaning that it has no constitution, no secretariat, and its function is not well-defined. Although its membership is based on democracy and market economy, even these characteristics do not easily apply to all members. Because the G8 is so unique, Hajnal argued, civil society has been forced to engage with it differently.

Over the history of G7/G8, Hajnal explained that this engagement can be divided into four phases. The first, from 1975-1980 consisted of civil society and the G6 mostly ignoring each other. Between 1981 and 1994, however, civil society began to realise that the G7's agenda was slowly growing into new areas and civil society began some pre-Summit lobbying and convened several parallel/alternative summits such as "The Other Economic Summit", or TOES. From 1995 to 1997, G8 leaders began to recognise civil

society more formally, with official reference to NGOs being made at the 1995 Halifax Summit. During this time, it appeared as though the door was at least partially open to some input, most notably during the First Ministers' Meeting on the Environment. By 1998, civil society had become more sophisticated in its involvement, using the addition of Russia as a focal point for human rights and democracy campaigns. At the 1997 Summit in Birmingham, new types of demonstration such as the Jubilee "human chain" took place, pushing civil society into the media spotlight for the first time. However, since the police-protester clashes in Genoa in 2001, the G8 has entered a new phase. Now, it appears as though the Summits have retreated from the public into isolated locations like Kananaskis, Evian, and Gleneagles, effectively closing off all avenues for civil society input in the name of increased security.

As a result, civil society is now faced with the challenge of finding new entry points. Some participants hypothesised that the Make Poverty History campaign, which aims to mobilise the general public, represents a new way of overcoming the G8's isolationism.[14] Through the use of flashy celebrity television promotions, the Make Poverty History campaign appears to be generating widespread interest, and not just among protesters. Together with Sir Bob Geldof's "Live8" music concerts set to take place on July 2nd in cities around the world, the US-led "The One" campaign on poverty, the Global Call to Action on Poverty affiliated "White Band" campaign, and countless similar efforts, there is a popular buzz surrounding the issues of trade justice, debt cancellation, and increased foreign aid as well as growing pressure on G8 leaders to tackle them.[15]

The "L-20" Initiative

The "L-20" Initiative, described to G05 participants by Sarah Taylor (representative of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), was presented as a new opportunity for increased civil society input into international affairs. Although the L-20 does not yet exist, it has been strongly endorsed by the Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin, and it is expected to be implemented in the coming years. The L-20 leadership initiative, which would consist of the group of 20 countries that participates in the G20 Finance Ministers' Meetings, has also received the support of the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

The purpose of L-20, according to Taylor, is to address pressing global issues and would be designed more to build consensus on these issues rather than take decisions. The L-20 would also strive to be more informal than the G8 Summits which have been criticised as "scripted responses" to issues rather than real dialogue. Membership of the L-20 would consist of the G8, the EU countries, and 11 others. Additionally, by opening up the membership to 12 more countries, the L-20 would be more formally inclusive than the G8 which only extends invitations to other countries on an ad hoc or informal basis.

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[14] For more information on the Make Poverty History campaign, please visit: www.makepovertyhistory.org
[15] For more information on "The One" campaign, please visit www.theone.org For more information on the "White Band /Global Call to Action against Poverty" (GCAP) campaign, please visit: www.whiteband.org

In theory, the L-20 meeting would likely focus on one global issue where it is deemed that gaps exist but members' interests intersect, such as global public health or terrorism. Although the meeting would take place behind closed doors and present no "deliverables", its organisers believe that its strength lies in its informality.

According to Taylor, the L-20 would also allow for civil society to participate as part of the academic and public policy community involved in the generating of ideas. Because the meeting would be 'topic-driven', civil society could assist in the identification, definition, and advocating of issues to be discussed at the meeting. Taylor also envisioned civil society playing a role in the monitoring and tracking of commitments made by L-20 members, a new "non-conflictive form of interaction".

Participants at the G05 conference, however, responded to Taylor's presentation with scepticism. Troy Davis (Democracy Consultant, France) said it sounded like the L-20 was "just another top-down initiative". Rather than representing a real paradigm shift, it seemed to him that the L-20 proposed only minor concessions. In his opinion, a real step forward would have looked more like an elected General Assembly within the UN, a Global Social Contract, or a World Parliament of some form.

Jayne Stoyles (World Federalist Movement, Canada) expressed her concern that the membership of the L-20 would still be rather exclusive. As a result, she argued, the L-20 could remain a target for civil society protest, even if the institution claims it will not take any decisions. Others suggested that there would likely attract a lot of interest from non-G8 members keen to increase their influence by joining the L-20 but that G8 members might not be so keen on diminishing their own influence. And, with many countries still left outside of the initiative, many echoed Stoyle's concerns over exclusion.

Fergus Watt (World Federalist Movement, Canada) further criticised the proposal. If the initiative is not going to take decisions or produce outputs of any kind, then Watt questioned how civil society would be able to play a monitoring role. Watt also added his concern that, if there were to be a role for civil society input, the L-20 would have to ensure that representation came from southern CSOs as well, and not just "large New York based NGOs".

In the general discussion that followed, several G05 participants stated their suspicions that the L-20's focus on social issues would be "just another attempt to co-opt civil society concerns" in order to increase the legitimacy of another exclusive international institution.

G05 VISIONS AND STRATEGIES

The following section summarises the "visions and strategies" that emanated from the final sessions of the G05 Conference.[16] The written proposals were drafted by the Track facilitators and intended to reflect the diversity of discussions, while providing additional detail on certain issues/strategies.

Track 1: Civil Society Engagement: Changing Territorial Priorities?

First Proposal:
To encourage and promote regional integration among civil society in order to enhance and empower the role of civil society in accompanying and influencing the whole process of regionalisation and emergence of regional blocs and treaties.

This proposal aims at guaranteeing that new emerging regional entities will be established and developed based on a comprehensive approach, which is not limited only to the economic aspects but also tackles the political, social, and cultural. The proposal will also aim at ensuring a wider participation of civil society, as a third sector, along with states and market actors in the processes of emerging new territorial regionalisation.

Regional integration and cooperation could be a means to empower civil society organisations through raising their awareness and building their capacities. It could increase the opportunities for building regional coalitions and networks and creating effective structures and social movements, with local, national, and sub-regional ties. Moreover, it could also contribute to making the voices of civil society organisations louder and its activities more efficient and effective.

Finally, this should lead to the adoption of a Civil Society Charter or a protocol, which reflects their values, missions, and strategies. Accordingly, regional integration will improve the negotiation skills and capacities of civil society organisations.

Second Proposal:
To create alternative, community-based knowledge which is drawn from and answers to the community's needs; to share, transfer, and use this knowledge.

This proposal will be based on a process of generating content to be used and improved by civil society organisations, and thus through which to empower the positions undertaken by these organisations.

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[16] The proposals are taken directly from the final document handed to participants on June 1st, 2005.

There is a tremendous need to reach progressive knowledge and be able to communicate it and use it efficiently and effectively. This could be realised through establishing regional clearinghouses and functional portals linked to various levels of mobilisation; locally, nationally, sub-regionally, and globally. This process reflects the importance of widening public access to information and making the use of the Internet and information technologies affordable.

<u>Track 2: International Law and Treaties A Hierarchy of Values?</u>

1. **Fundamental Conflicts**: There are numerous conflicts between contemporary legal regimes. For example, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food clothing, housing and medical care..." and yet,

- The WTO requires countries to provide patents for pharmaceutical drugs and penalises those that provide free or below-cost medicines for HIV-AIDS and other epidemics
- The World Bank the IMF obligate debtor countries to pay down debt before investing in health care while trade liberalisation has reduced their available tariff revenues

2. **Legal Mandates and Institutional Relationships**: Article 103 of the UN Charter states, "In the event of a conflict between the obligations of the Members of the UN under the present Charter and their obligations under any other international agreement, their obligations under the present Charter shall prevail..." and yet,

- The World Bank and the IMF have exceeded the mandates of their founding documents and, despite being "specialised agencies" of the UN, there is no mechanism to ensure their accountability to the UN
- The founding documents of the WTO call for "coherence" with the World Bank and the IMF but fail to make reference to the UN system

3. **Sovereignty and Subsidiarity**: Local communities and the local environment are directly affected by global problems and possess the resources essential for the solutions, and yet,

- World Bank and IMF conditionalities violate the fundamental democratic principles of national sovereignty and the rights of citizens to self-determination
- The WTO can require national governments to change national and local laws that subsidise generic medicines, finance public services, encourage the employment of women, assist local entrepreneurs, favour locally produced foods, promote indigenous languages, support local artists, invest in community-based economic development, regulate environmental practices, or otherwise interfere with a foreign company's "right" to trade

4. **Compliance and Enforcement**: Trade agreements and human rights treaties co-exist in the multilateral system alongside other legal regimes promoting labour rights, industrial development, foreign investment, environmental protection, disarmament, and other values embraced by the international community, and yet,

- UN treaties lack effective mechanisms for compliance
- WTO rules are backed by a binding dispute settlement body armed with trade sanctions

5. **Corporate Accountability**: Corporate influence in the multilateral system has driven the current globalisation agenda, dismantling national regulations while promoting investors' rights. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is the first UN treaty to limit corporate access to its procedures and set regulatory standards for an industry.

6. **Jurisdiction and International Courts**: The role of the International Court of Justice is limited to settling legal disputes brought by governments or advisory opinions issued at the request of UN agencies. Other petitioners may approach the Permanent Court of Arbitration or the World Bank's International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Recently, the ICSID accepted an *amicus curiae* petition filed by Argentine citizens in a dispute filed by the world's largest transnational water company, which, despite not meeting its contracted goals for expanding service in Buenos Aires and doubling the cost of water service since 1997, is demanding compensation for business losses resulting from the government's decree freezing all utilities rates and suspending the charge for new connections during the financial crisis. The citizens' petition requests public access to all matters before the ICSID, consistent with Argentina's constitution and that the right to health and other international human rights law be taken into account.

Conclusion: Human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and other norms promoting social development should take priority over the rules protecting corporations, investors, and other financial interests. This shift in priorities will require legal intervention backed by civil society actions to build sufficient political will.

Track 3: Global Security: Undermining Democracy?

The Power of Local Communities in Remodelling Global Governance
Recognising that democracy can be most participatory in neighbourhoods and local communities, progressive civil society should structure its efforts to include local territories as well as national, regional, and global levels. Local authorities should work to provide a critical political space that will allow the involvement of civil society and other actors in a healthy, secure local democracy. Local democracies, as one brick in human governance, can play an important role in ensuring that other bricks and/or levels of governance consistently observe democratic norms and rights. In doing so, this can enhance rather than undermine security. Efforts at global democracy can be supported by a strong local democracy as such.   Local authorities should also not dismiss

participating in global forums alongside national authorities or independently incorporating global norms in their jurisdictions that further democracy and rights.

Moving past Fear with Justice—An International Reconciliation Commission on Terrorism

The international community should distinguish between acts of terrorism and those individuals or groups who commit them as part of a n overall strategy. It is acts of terrorism that should be declared illegal and addressed as such. In committing to restoring to citizens a sense of justice and peace, an international reconciliation commission should be established to address the root causes, social divisions, and other factors that may lead groups or individuals to commit terrorist (illegal) acts, and may serve to establish some level of accountability for the past acts without providing legitimacy to them.

Changing Global Governance Beyond UN Reforms

While not reaching consensus on specific proposals, we feel strongly that UN reform efforts, particularly of the General Assembly and Security Council, should defer toward increasing democratic accountability whenever possible, either through increasing the role or legitimacy of elected Security Council members or empowering the General Assembly's oversight aspects in UN decision-making. Failure to move the UN in this direction, however, should only encourage civil society as well as local, national, and regional authorities (particularly parliamentarians) to complement international decision-making with more democratic or parliamentary institutions.

Partnering Civil Society and the Military to Ensure Peace in a World of Diversity The conventional antagonism between progressive civil society and national militaries needs to be replaced with a new framework. We propose that each, as partners, can work for the benefit of their fellow citizens, their respective states, the global community and each other.

Military forces have historically served in roles of belligerence, either offensive or defensive, but we should not assume they must retain this role alone. Civil society should take the initiative of building a partnership with the military to protect the social security of the world's peoples. The military's strength as a protector and potential to uphold the fundamental rule of law (including international norms) should be deepened and strengthened. In recognising the deepening interdependence between our societies, we believe it is important to reform the military system and provide the necessary training to also incorporate and develop skills in preventative and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Likewise, civil society should responsibly partner with political and military officials to better secure the social, educational, and political well-being of citizens. In addition to providing a venue for engaged citizens, civil society groups can provide civilian oversight, expertise, capacity and training for other actors on political and social issues.

Track 4: The Vital Role of Civil Society in Global Governance

Visions:

1. "Reclaiming the UN by the People's Civil Society"—a UN that enables and empowers people's participation in governance and promotes mediating space through inclusive participatory processes and democratisation.

2. Bridging the local-national-global divide by utilising established CSO movements along with the active engagement of the media, parliamentarians, and local government

3. Building up a stronger civil society movement grounded on principles of accountability and transparency

Strategies:

1. Ensure follow-up of Cardoso Panel recommendations through multi-stakeholder national and regional consultations and advocacy processes with national governments and regional forums

2. Use pre-existing forums such as the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to legitimise institutional space in international financial institutions (IFIs) and multilateral institutions to engage with civil society organisations on a more sustained basis in order to bring a culture of accountability

3. Create neutral and credible institutional space for citizens (such as public consultations) along with appropriate policy frameworks for access to information

4. Build up the capacity of "ordinary citizens" through mechanisms such as institutional report cards, expenditure tracking, budget monitoring, etc. at local, national, and global levels to bring about a culture of accountability in institutions of global governance

5. Increase partnership and inter-sectoral engagement between local governments, civil society organisations, and parliamentarians across regional and hemispheric boundaries (i.e. the Helsinki Process)

6. Strengthen legitimacy, accountability, and capacity of civil society organisations by developing appropriate standards, systems, norms and self-regulating practices to promote stronger domain accountability

Track 5: How to Democratically Regulate the Global Economy?

1. **Ground transformations by increasing public awareness, education, and capacity building**. Global economic institutions and economic decision-making both at national and local levels remains highly un-transparent and responsible officials remain unaccountable. Inadequate scrutiny stems from the technical nature of economic decision-making and the lack of capacity of citizens and citizen associations to engage with these issues. Public awareness and expertise in these areas is needed so that the capacity of civil groups and congress/parliaments can challenge un-transparent and un-accountable institutions and practices. These might expand awareness in northern and southern circles of existing illegitimate debt, increase awareness of peoples' rights to exercise control, generate pressure for ethical investment.

2. **Refocus on national and local levels for more effective changes**. National and local levels remain crucial to challenge unequal structures and increase the capacities of social groups and parliaments to oversee government decisions on key issues such as trade negotiations and macro-economic policy making.

3. **Transform Financial Institutions**. Although there is a lack of consensus on how to address this issue, the track emphasised the relevance of keeping continued action and of seeking complimentary strategies to debilitate the power of these institutions. These strategies may encompass initiatives such as the creation or support of alternative initiatives and institutions that perform a similar function and role to those IFIs and maintaining pressure to include the sustainable development agenda in the Security Council.

4. **Increase the articulation and cooperation of civil society initiatives and proposals to provide a more coherent set of policies able to challenge neo-liberalism**. Alternative initiatives are various but remain un-coordinated. Articulation could increase the cooperation and dialogue leading to mechanisms capable of preventing tax evasion by transnational corporations, such as an institution of International Corporate Law to increase accountability and support for the development of different models of trade.

Track 6: Cultural Diversity in Global Solidarity

1. **Call for support for the UNESCO Convention and related processes.**
The track calls on all organisations involved in GO5 to use their networks and resources to bring pressure to bear, especially on national governments, to ensure a positive outcome of the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity. There are a number of key points that must be lobbied for, and a short note on these will be provided by INCD and CRIS Campaign after this meeting. INCD also offers to act as a coordination point for

those at this meeting, to build an informal network of communication between those willing to sign up. Both INCD and CRIS will offer to support this, with lobby material, target groups and so forth.

Issues specifically mentioned were the need to ensure that the Convention has a binding effect and to make an effort to deepen aspects relating to linguistic diversity. More focused lobby demands will follow.

2. **Support media appropriate by people, as a means of invigorating ongoing cultural diversity from the bottom up.**

Media play a central and growing role in relation to the evolution of culture, in both negative and positive ways. The global media and communication dynamic now is commercially-driven, and this is having a serious impact on cultural diversity, with the imposition of "for-profit" cultural forms. "For-people" culture would take a rights-based approach, asserting communication rights, and a key part of this is the right to a space in which people and communities can appropriate their own media, to amplify their own cultural forms, and voices between themselves and with others.

This action is around supporting governance structures that will bring this about, from global to regional and national levels. These include, for instance:

- Legal recognition at all levels for the right of people to appropriate their own media
- Recognition of the radio spectrum as a common public good
- Funding support for local people to access the media and build their own media, for technical tools and capacity building, as part of universal access
- Efforts to improve the representation of minorities in mainstream media

3. **A Linguistic Diversity Audit**

International NGOs should practice linguistic diversity in their own activities. As a start, the group called on all those present at the FIM to examine their current linguistic diversity and write a report on it.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Final Words from Participants

In the final plenary of the G05, participants responded to the visions and strategies put forward in the six thematic tracks. Expressing his frustration with the "vagueness" of the proposals and their inability to convey the complexity of the discussions, Warren Allmand (World Federalist Movement, Canada) stated that he was no longer clear on the "entire purpose of the conference". If civil society was simply going to put forth "platitudes", then perhaps it would be better, according to Allmand, not to release the strategies for public scrutiny. If the G05 were to publish the visions and strategies as they stood, Allmand feared that civil society would undermine its own credibility.

Echoing these sentiments, Gordon Glass (2020 Vision, UK) commented that the G05 forum had left him with "no sense of what to do tomorrow" (i.e. in the short term). Glass added that it was disappointing to see that the business community has a clearly defined vision while civil society does not. As a result of too much focus on reformism of international institutions, participants were continuing to fiddle "while Rome burns".

In an effort to identify a concrete pathway forward, Nigel Martin (Montreal International Forum, Canada) commented on the need to shift gears. According to Martin, most of representatives at the G05 are active at the global level, but discussions during the forum seem to indicate a shift toward the local, therefore, it is essential to bridge this divide using skills development and new networks. In response, Richard Burqhart (Coalition for a World Parliament and Global Democracy, USA) argued that "there are already enough people working on the local--you need someone working on the development of a new, alternative vision, a new global order."

Acknowledging the frustration over how to achieve global democracy—and other civil society goals, Melanie Oliviero (Government Accountability Project, USA) noted that there is still a bond due to shared goals. Moreover, she said, civil society's strength lies in its diverse approaches to the various issues. To this, Simon Burrell (One World Trust, UK) added, "We can't expect a clear vision to emerge after just four days, especially given the diversity of people and perspectives involved." Burrell also suggested that civil society organisations demonstrate the anger and frustration that exists at the local level nationally, in an attempt to bring parties into deeper understanding of each other and thus, to bridge the local-global divide.

In response to the criticisms that civil society lacks a "clear vision", Renata Bloem (CONGO, Switzerland) pushed for all G05 participants to endorse a "rights-based approach" as a global vision. Part of this vision, she claimed, could also involve greater use of multi-stakeholder forums. However, Sean O'Siochru (CRIS Campaign, Ireland) warned that, in order for the vision to be 'complete', civil society can no longer consider

culture as a "variable to be added". He also lamented the poor attendance at G05 culture-related discussions and warned of the danger of looking on civil society's vision and realising that "culture was something that should have been considered all along".

At a more general level, Zaki Hasan (ActionAid, Bangladesh) stated his concerns that the G05 was attempting to set a civil society-wide vision. In his opinion, the problem of doing so lies in that the G05 overemphasised the role of "institutionalised civil society" and offered no real suggestions of how to better connect with street movements. Moreover, he argued, it was "undemocratic" for the G05 to attempt to set an agenda that only had the mandate of mostly northern countries as there were so few representatives from developing countries, and least developed countries in particular.

Final Words from Key Speakers

Charged with the task of summarising the G05 conference, key speakers attempted to draw conclusions from the highly complex and wide-ranging topics and discussions.

Candido Grzybowski (WSF, IBASE, Brazil) warned of the dangers of fragmentation and spoke of the inevitable tension between "universality" and "diversity", a tension that need not be resolved in order to address the challenges that lie ahead. He also urged civil society leaders to be "more generous and broad thinking" in their visions of the future and encouraged all participants to move past the restricted and reformist thinking that underlies the "rights-based approach" and the Cardoso recommendations.

Victoria Elias (Centre ECO-Accord, Russia) suggested that, rather than trying to solve the problem of global democracy in a single conference, participants could view the G05 as an opportunity to re-establish contacts and think about new ideas. She also reiterated the need for UN reform, and commended some of the ideas suggested, but also noted that a "concrete recipe" has yet to be established. As a reminder, Elias also told participants to remember that democracy and participation is not a favour; rather, it is a right, but also a duty, and urged all participants to look to their own actions as a first step toward global democracy.

Rajesh Tandon (MIF, India) concluded that some of his expectations were met and some not, although he noted that this was mostly due to the nature of the issues. For Tandon, the presence of parliamentarians and their growing interest in global democracy is cause for optimism, particularly at a time when democracy has been, for so many people, reduced to the act of voting once every four or five years. Tandon also closed by reiterating that a "single vision" risks becoming imperialistic. In its place, Tandon advocated for practical action at the local level, action that allows each participant to tailor their participation to their contexts, and allows for respectful disagreement.

CONCLUSION: Which way from here?

Judging from the discussions and debates at the G05 conference, it would seem that the road to global democracy is still relatively long and bumpy. Although many civil society organisations are united by the shared goal of global democracy, there is little consensus on how to get there.

Amid frustration and exasperation, however, it can still be said that progress is being made on many fronts. In the short term, civil society organisations have grasped onto the tools available to them and are making use of the Cardoso Panel recommendations and the Millennium Review Summit consultations to open up the doors for greater participation in the future.

Many groups are also gearing up for the UN Millennium Summit and the G8 Summit with the hope that increased public awareness and pressure will force governments to take concrete action to eradicate poverty. In the medium term, civil society is also working to address its own perceived shortcomings: knowledge and information gaps, internal divisions and inequalities, a 'local-global' divide, among others.

Networks are forming and mechanisms are slowly evolving to create a strengthened civil society able to confront a wide variety of challenges at all levels (local, national, regional, and global). And, although the debates continue to rage over how to get there, civil society seems to have a clear enough vision for the long term: a reformed, strengthened, and more democratic UN, more accountable international institutions, an elected people's assembly, and a world with greater prosperity, participation, and equality.