



World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy

A call for International Democracy

The challenges of the 21st century are no longer local and isolated, but global and profoundly interconnected. Aside from knowing no national borders, the threats to peace, security and justice are simultaneously discrete, integrated, and interdependent. A threat to one country is a threat to all. Consequently, the international community must recognize the vital need for strengthening global cooperation among nation-states, international organizations and civil society in order to address these challenges.

Currently, the international governance system suffers from fundamental democratic deficiencies in its decision-making processes. None of the formal systems meet basic democratic or human rights principles. One-nation-one-vote bodies confer the same voting power to nations with 10,000 as 100,000,000 people. One-dollar-one-vote bodies and other structures that confer vetoes to individual states are inherently and manifestly undemocratic. Even one-nation-one-vote bodies with unanimous consensual decision-making essentially provide every member-state with the power of a veto. This often condemns the agreements to lowest common denominator language that is weak, non-binding and inadequate. None of these voting systems are acceptable in terms of international democracy

In this era of globalization and interdependence many multilateral organizations have been given mandates, competencies and responsibilities that deeply affect the daily lives and livelihoods of people across the world. Many decisions made in international institutions directly influence the national laws and jurisdictions of nation-states. As governance becomes more global, it is vital that these international institutions operate according to democratic principles and structures.

Of course, dictatorships and military governments fear international democracy, but their opposition is transitory. The great dilemma confronting the international legal order, however, is that some of the world's most powerful national democracies are the greatest opponents of international democracy.

Our call for international democracy is to address these challenges and deficits.

Steps towards International Democracy

Increasingly recognized for its expertise and vision on the issues of global governance and democratization of multilateral organizations, World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP) continues to advocate for the creation of democratic global structures accountable to and representative of not only states, but also the **citizens of the world**. Inspired by the democratic values of federalism, WFM-IGP believes that international democracy requires legal and institutional structures to underpin a responsive, accountable system of democratic global governance.

Accordingly, WFM-IGP calls for the following reforms in the current international system:



1. Primacy of the UN and the UN General Assembly

In the past decade, the UN itself has been a primary target of terrorists. Responding to this danger and the crises resulting from the titanic confrontation at the UN regarding its refusal to support the US-UK invasion of Iraq, the UN Secretary General challenged world leaders in 2003. Governments could either improve the UN's ability to respond to the threats of the 21st century by reaffirming their commitment to the UN Charter and the UN, or they could risk descending into greater chaos, with a marginalized ineffective UN. The UN was truly at an historic juncture.

In responding to this challenge, WFM-IGP is dedicated to the vision of a 'just world order through a strengthened and more democratic United Nations' and emphasizes the vital role that the UN plays; it is the center of the international legal order. The UN must be the primary body within the international system, and the UN General Assembly (UNGA), being the most democratic and representative body in the international legal order, must be the primary policy and decision making body, supported by an equivalent centrality and corresponding authority.

Consequently, WFM-IGP has raised serious objections to the trend in the 1990's to locate the 'center' of global governance at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Bank. WFM-IGP believes that centering global governance within exclusive and closed mechanisms such as the WTO, World Bank and G7/8 is disastrous. We strongly affirm the central position in the international legal order of the truly universal organization, the UNGA, as the highest deliberative and policy-making organ of the United Nations. WFM-IGP recognizes that the performance of the UNGA has often been disappointing and unsatisfactory. But, the UNGA has also been the source of many if not most of the greatest achievements in international affairs: decolonization, adoption of an extraordinary array of human rights treaties, disarmament treaties, the Law of the Sea regime, the world conferences, the founding of new world organizations, including most recently the International Criminal Court, and hundreds of other agreements. Accordingly, in emphasizing the UNGA's universal and democratic structure, we call for crucial improvements in its authority, accountability, and greater transparency in its decision-making processes.

Simultaneously, to reverse the current development of ever greater fragmentation of the international system, where international policies diverge from one international body to the other, WFM-IGP calls for the empowerment of a reformed UNGA to ensure policy coherence in international politics. As the only international body with a universal democratic scope and a broad cross-sectored mandate, the UNGA is the logical forum to resolve the differences and imbalance among parallel treaties and standards. Currently, the international system allows trade and finance to trump labor, environmental, social and human rights standards; treating them like second class rights. Trade and finance are world organizations, while human rights is a commission, and environment a voluntary 'program.' This is unacceptable and WFM-IGP finds it essential that the Assembly is given the authority to balance these inequities. Simultaneously, the UNGA mandate should extend to the coordination of overall policy within the UN system, including those of the World Bank and the IMF as well as the World Trade Organization. It is essential; however, that reforms to strengthen the UNGA ensure that it is more democratic and accountable, and that NGOs' consultative rights are simultaneously extended to the work of the Assembly.

In principle, WFM-IGP further believes that the UNGA should be given more capacity to provide oversight on peace and security matters, a right which it is empowered to exercise by article 11 of the UN Charter, but which it has not invoked sufficiently.



2. UN Security Council Reform

As the central organ in the Charter responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the UN Security Council must become more effective at fulfilling its mandate. No principle UN organ has failed in its responsibility as much as the Security Council, and there can be no doubt about the need for reform of this vital body. WFM-IGP thus welcomes the recent report by the High-level Panel appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on “Threats, Challenges and Change” and hopes that it will advance the efforts of restructuring the Security Council.

We support a more democratic Security Council with more transparent decision-making procedures, and more equitable representation of all world regions. We thus find the Panel’s suggestion for a new type of membership in the form of four-year renewable seats worth exploring. However, WFM-IGP strongly opposes any addition of new permanent members with veto power, viewing this as a retrograde step that would condemn the Council to greater inefficiency and less accountability.

Since abolition of the veto is not possible, the Panel’s proposal for limiting the use of the veto and veto abstention in cases of genocide and large-scale human rights abuses, is crucial to the Council’s legitimacy and credibility. WFM-IGP encourages international treaties that proscribe and limit improper use of the veto, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In principle, WFM-IGP advocates for greater cooperation between the Security Council and the UNGA to assure coherence, and an involvement of the broader UN membership in issues of peace and security. WFM supports the empowering of the UNGA to act when the Security Council is unwilling or blocked from addressing humanitarian or security crises, and calls for a greater use of UNGA Resolution 377 (V) of 3 November 1950. The resolution, better known as ‘Uniting for Peace’, stipulates that “if the Security Council ...fails to exercise its primary responsibility ...the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures to maintain and restore international peace and security.” By discouraging preemptive and unilateral action, invoking the ‘Uniting for Peace’ resolution transfers responsibility to the international community, and ensures multilateral action, as opposed to unilateral war. Accordingly, WFM-IGP calls on all governments to invoke this power in the UNGA more often when the Security Council fails to exercise its responsibility to address humanitarian or security crises.

3. Strengthening the UN Economic and Social Council

WFM-IGP’s response to the current composition of international organizations and the growing powers of WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions is rooted in our principles of international democracy. While many NGOs argue for the elimination of these institutions, WFM-IGP’s position is that the solution is not their elimination, but rather to strengthen other international institutions that deal with peace and security, the environment, sustainable development and human rights.

WFM-IGP thus asserts that the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) needs to be empowered to fulfill its role as envisioned in the UN Charter - to address economic and social concerns with the same authority that the Security Council holds over peace and security. WFM-IGP advocates for a strong ECOSOC capable of *coordinating* international economic matters and dealing with socio-economic threats as root causes of war and



conflict. Supporters of an ‘Economic Security Council’ could incorporate this idea, as an executive committee or other subsidiary body within ECOSOC.

4. World Environment Organization

Protecting the world environment is a critical foundation of sustainable development; indeed of human survival. Two-thirds of the earth is beyond the territorial sovereignty of UN member states; it is truly the ‘global commons’. The ocean of the world’s atmosphere is equally borderless; and its pollution, warming and disintegration are transnational threats. The international community must govern the global commons. To avoid devastating exploitation of our common, indispensable global environment, the protection and preservation of the global commons must be placed under the governance of the UN.

WFM-IGP recognizes that some political sectors are likely to have greater importance than others in the international legal order. However, we find it unacceptable that issues like trade and finance are dealt with in powerful and resourceful global institutions, while an issue like the environment is placed under a UN ‘program’ whose funding is restricted to voluntary contributions. Even though we understand states give lower priority to environmental and social issues, these issues must have equitable legal and institutional authority in order to be adequately addressed in the international legal order.

Therefore, WFM-IGP calls for the establishment of a World Environment Organization (WEO) to replace the UN Environment Programme, as the essential step towards a more equitable, effective and accountable system of global governance. As a counterbalance to the powerful finance and trade institutions, a WEO would be a designated and empowered advocate for adequate response to environmental management and sustainable development.

5. Independent funding of international institutions

For multilateral institutions to be effective and independent they must have stable and adequate funding. There is a fundamental need for new and innovative financial mechanisms to provide a strengthened and democratized multilateral system. At present the most powerful countries provide the vast majority of funding for international organizations, and exercise an immense and unbalanced control over the political decisions of these organizations. At the same time, international organizations that are solely dependent on funding from governments can be subject to extraordinary pressures either when governments do not fulfill their funding responsibilities, or choose to use their position as funders to influence the work of organizations. To reverse this trend, WFM calls for a mixture of state and independent funding of international organizations to ensure more fair and democratic decision-making processes, less vulnerable to economic power politics. WFM believes that independent funding for multilateral organizations would help overcome key challenges and obstacles for achieving democratic global governance.

Since the UN conference on Financing for Development in 2002, more intergovernmental attention has been given to the creation of innovative sources of finance such as environmental charges, levies and taxes applied to currency speculation, arms trade, international travel, etc. Assured of the feasibility of the global taxation of transnational currency transactions by many experts, WFM-IGP believes that it is one of the most important potential sources of finance for multilateral organizations. Accordingly, WFM-IGP joins others in calling for new and innovative funding for multilateral organizations, and hopes to prepare framework proposals with other NGOs.



6. Parliamentary Assemblies within international institutions

The parliamentary dimension is an important component of a democratic global order. For over three decades, WFM-IGP has called for the creation of formal and consultative parliamentary assemblies in international institutions. The agenda-setting and rule-making characteristics of many international organizations such as the UN and WTO directly impact national legislative responsibilities. The establishment of consultative and formal parliamentary assemblies would serve as a mechanism for increased accountability to the world's peoples and a necessary step towards addressing the democratization of these institutions.

WFM-IGP has long called for the creation of a 'consultative parliamentary assembly' in the UN. At present, almost every governmental representative to the UN represents but one ministry of government, the Foreign Ministry. As elected representatives, parliamentarians would bring an important democratic element to the UN. They would add complimentary, diverse and independent views, and broaden the debate of the delegates. A UN Parliamentary Assembly would be a decisive step towards the stronger representation of the world's 'citizens', of 'we the people' in the international system.

7. Participation of the global civil society

Governments and international organizations are increasingly recognizing the important role of civil society in developing, implementing and monitoring global public policy. WFM-IGP has been the leader in developing strategic networks of NGOs in the last two decades, most recently the UN world conferences of the 1990's, and including convening both the 1999 Hague Appeal for Peace Conference, and the ongoing Coalition for the International Criminal Court. WFM-IGP works with other NGOs in the global NGO community to safeguard arrangements for NGO rights of access, consultation and enhanced participation in international decision-making processes, particularly in the UN.

In this context, WFM is promoting a resolution that would extend *limited* formal NGO consultative rights and privileges to the UNGA. The UN General Assembly NGO Resolution was drafted and promoted by the International NGO Task Group on Legal and Institutional Matters (INTGLIM). It was written with the goal of maintaining the integrity of intergovernmental decision-making, while drawing a clear distinction between the negotiating rights of Member States and provisions for a consultation role for NGOs. The NGO Resolution calls for NGOs to be allowed to attend open meetings of the UNGA, receive documentation, have the right to make their own reports available, and to have access to delegates before and after the meetings.

In recognition of the NGOs' responsibility as partners in the global democratic community, WFM-IGP strongly advocates that all NGOs strive for the principles of transparency, accountability and representativity. Likewise, we oppose the legitimacy of NGOs established by governments, as they represent governments instead of civil society, and thus do not abide by the non-governmental criteria.

8. Corporate Accountability

While there are enormous pressures on governments to create greater investment opportunities for transnational corporations (TNCs), there is little corresponding pressure to match these opportunities with responsibilities. TNCs are largely outside the reach of existing international law, because they are neither states nor international organizations and, therefore, almost no existing international and national courts can exercise jurisdiction in cases involving transnational corporations. WFM-IGP calls for universal standards on human rights, labor rights



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and environment to be enunciated in an international convention on corporate accountability, plus institutional arrangements for the enforcement of such standards. Accordingly, we support Amnesty International in their efforts to promote the recently adopted UN Human Rights Norms for Business by the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

Join us in our call for International Democracy

More than ever before in history, citizens and civil society through their non-profit organizations, are essential partners in the development of democratic global governance. International democracy will never develop and prevail without the participation and leadership of NGOs.

Strategic NGOs and progressive groups of like-minded governments working together in partnership have shown the capacity and weight of a "superpower" in international decision-making. This is the "new diplomacy", which enables large groups of governments to successfully move forward on issues even when one or a few powerful states are in opposition. Indeed, as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court demonstrated, international alliances of NGOs can have a decisive role in influencing such processes in international politics.

Groups like the World Federalists have been active players in these processes for many years addressing issues of international rule of law and democratic global governance and we welcome interested groups to join us in our efforts.

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