

PRESS RELEASE

23 April 2021

International Day of Multilateralism: Civil Society Groups Call for a More Democratic UN

THE HAGUE - On the occasion of the International Day for Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace on 24 April, a group of over 80 civil society organisations calls for a more inclusive and democratic UN.

"The responses of governments to the pandemic and its global impact have created a greater imperative to our long-standing call for improved global governance based on democratic principles. Interconnectivity and mutual dependence as well as supra-national issues such as climate change, health, poverty and human rights demonstrate the inadequacy of a nation-state orientated model and the need for global co-operation with accountability based on democratic principles and the voice of the peoples of the world. Future generations will wonder why it took so long for this truth to be recognised but we can do something about it now starting with today", said Keith Best, Co-Executive Chair of the World Federalist Movement/Institute for Global Policy (WFM/IGP). WFM/IGP is among those who have endorsed a joint statement "for more inclusive global governance".

Under the header "We the Peoples," a reference to the first words of the United Nations Charter Preamble, this new campaign is calling on the UN to implement three specific reforms aimed at giving people, elected representatives and civil society a stronger voice in global governance.

The statement first calls for a **World Citizens' Initiative** which enables citizens to put items on the agenda of the UN General Assembly or the UN Security Council if proposals reach a certain threshold of popular support.

Further, the campaign promotes the creation of a **UN Parliamentary Assembly** composed of elected representatives to act as a watchdog and "connecting the people with the UN and reflecting a broad diversity of global viewpoints".

Finally, the document recommends setting up a **UN Civil Society Envoy** "to champion the implementation of a broader strategy for opening up the UN to people's participation and civil society voices".

The campaign is spearheaded by CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Democracy International and Democracy Without Borders.

The document points out that the proposed changes “will enhance the legitimacy of global governance and facilitate its transformational potential”.

“These three initiatives have game changing potential to overcome blockages in the UN system. If implemented in earnest they will enable the UN to respond more effectively and with greater inclusivity to global challenges such as discrimination, inequality, conflict and climate change.” explained Lysa John, Secretary-General of CIVICUS.

“Strengthening and revitalizing multilateralism requires to allow for more input and participation beyond member states. This is what our three proposals will achieve”, said Andreas Bummel, Executive Director of Democracy Without Borders.

A resolution adopted by the UN-General Assembly on the occasion of the UN’s 75th anniversary in 2020 tasked UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to compile a report on furthering a “common agenda” which includes upgrading the UN and boosting partnerships.

“It is of the utmost importance that we use this opportunity to make the UN fit-for-purpose. We are calling on UN Secretary-General Guterres to usher the UN into a new, more participatory era,” said Bruno Kaufmann, Board Member of Democracy International.

On this day of International Multilateralism, in the midst of a global pandemic, it is all the more clear that good global governance is more important than ever. The highest global governing body, the UN, must therefore adopt the aims that would make the UN more democratic, more inclusive, and more closely representative to the regular people.

The statement and the list of signatories is published at wethepeoples.org.