



**WORLD FEDERATION OF UNITED NATIONS
ASSOCIATIONS**

**FEDERATION MONDIALE DES ASSOCIATIONS POUR
LES NATIONS UNIES**

A peoples' movement for the United Nations

The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) welcomes the establishment of the Panel of Eminent Persons on UN – Civil Society relations and the invitation from the chairman, President Cardoso to present this submission.

The information and ideas here have been based on various sources, including the outcomes of the WFUNA Plenary Assembly held in May 2003, interviews of WFUNA Executive Committee members, suggestions from United Nations Associations (UNAs), the discussion at the 2003 annual meeting for UNAs in which Aminata Traore and John Clark participated, WFUNA's "We the peoples 2003 report' on the Millennium Declaration and bi-monthly newsletter *UN Connections*.

The paper has been reviewed by the WFUNA Executive Committee.

Ambassador Donald Blinken
Secretary-General

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Summary of Recommendations

WFUNA recommends that the Panel of Eminent Persons:

- Give consideration to the debates within the emerging global civil society about the values and ethical standards that should inform UN policy decision-making, with a view to ensuring that the UN serves the needs of people everywhere.
- Propose to the UN Secretary-General that he establish a high level Global Civil Society Advocate whose task is continually to examine processes and structures that better incorporate the emerging global civil society's input.
One of its first functions could be the establishment of a Global Civil Society Dialogue before UNGA 2004, so that the agenda could be jointly prioritized by global civil society actors and governments.
- Encourage the UN and its agencies to collaborate with civil society through strategic partnerships as an integral component of the Global Development Partnership visualized in the Millennium Development Goals
- Call for the establishment of a Global Civil Society Fund, modeled on the UN Foundation, to develop the capacities of civil society organizations and networks to engage more effectively with the UN and its agencies, with priority being given to supporting civil society organizations and networking in developing countries and countries in transition.
- Recognize that the UN's relations with civil society are essentially about how people relate to each other – and how important it is for UN personnel to be equipped with the cultural and political sensitivity to reflect the inclusive, democratic and non-discriminatory values of the UN in their behavior.
- Encourage the UN and its agencies, notably in least developed countries, to provide infrastructure support for United Nations Associations (UNAs) such as an office and access to the Internet, to strengthen their capacity to reach out to civil society at the national level.
- Take note that WFUNA produces an annual report on the engagement of civil society with the Millennium Declaration and its Development Goals.
- Take note of the dialogue between WFUNA and DPI concerning the potential for UNAs to take up some of the functions of the closed UN Information Centers as an example of ways in which UN Secretariat functions could be effectively outsourced to responsible civil society organizations.
- Give priority to the inclusion of young people in all UN activities and programs that engage civil society.

1. The emerging global civil society and the UN's values

The concept of a global civil society of people who relate to one another on the basis of broadly shared values, which they hold to be 'global' in significance and reach, was not considered when the UN Charter was proclaimed in 1945, in the name of "We the Peoples" and WFUNA was created the following year with the aim of being a peoples' movement in support of the UN.

Today, there is an emerging global civil society which gives expression to a great diversity of values, ethical standards and ideas. Many people who associate themselves with the emergence of global civil society are calling for the United Nations to promote an environmentally sustainable people-centered approach to peace, security and development – implying that the traditional state-centered approach is no longer an adequate response to challenges which are transnational in scope.

At the same time, there is evidence that a growing number of civil society actors believe that fundamental religious and spiritual values should determine policy debates whereas others are seeking to secure priority for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

As clearly stated in its constitution, WFUNA's position is to promote tolerance, understanding and cooperation without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or political orientation.

The debates about the values and ethical standards that should inform policy decision-making at the UN and the role of civil society in influencing them have a significant bearing on the effectiveness of the UN in serving the needs of people everywhere. These debates impact on questions of NGO access to the UN, including accreditation status.

Mindful of its primary mandate to support the UN, WFUNA recommends that the Panel give consideration to the debates within the emerging global civil society about the values and ethical standards that should inform policy decision-making at the UN with a view to ensuring that the UN serves the needs of people everywhere.

2. Institutional renewal of the UN's relations with civil society

It is recognized by WFUNA that it is time for the institutional framework of the UN to better reflect and respond to the diversity and energy of civil society forms of organization and engagement. Indeed, the debate about the much needed reform of the United Nations is in large measure a debate about how the UN can better accommodate to the geo-political realities of globalization and the accompanying emergence of global

civil society actors and networks which are calling for action on issues which transcend national boundaries.

The WFUNA Plenary Assembly adopted a resolution in May 2003, which stated that:

“ WFUNA, as representative of civil society at the United Nations, decides: ...

- To ask the United Nations General Assembly to start a process of deep renewal of the structure of the organization, particularly the Security Council, which will allow the effective fulfillment of the aims for which the UN was created, particularly in relation to peace, democracy and human rights.
- In this process the UN and its agencies should consider the wide support they have from civil society and expand its effective channels of participation within the United Nations system.”

As a first step in managing the interface with the emerging global civil society, it is **recommended that the Panel propose to the UN Secretary-General that he establish a high level Global Civil Society Advocate whose task is to continually examine processes and structures that better incorporate the emerging global civil society’s input.**

One of its first functions could be the establishment of a Global Civil Society Dialogue before UNGA 2004, so that the agenda could be jointly prioritized by global civil society actors and governments.

3. Strategic partnerships

In the Millennium Declaration governments committed themselves to:

- Develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication.
- Give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society, in general, to contribute to the realization of the UN’s goals and programs.

UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has made it clear that there needs to be an increasing emphasis on creating strategic partnerships between all relevant actors and stakeholders to achieve the Millennium Goals.

At the global level, WFUNA has taken the initiative to produce an annual report on civil society engagement with the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. It is based on a global online survey which this year received responses from over 320 organizations in 80 countries. One of the best indicators of the level of civil society engagement with the MDGs is the extent to which new partnerships are being formed and with whom. The survey results are very positive.

- Over 80% of respondents are developing new partnerships with other civil society organizations. This is happening to the same extent in both the North and the South. Almost half the groups mention partnerships with UN agencies and programs and with governments. A third or more cite universities and foundations as partners, and more than a fifth cite aid agencies and businesses.
- Interestingly in response to a question about their links with for-profit corporations, civil society organizations place the highest value on strategic partnerships with the private sector (79%), more than on mandatory standards (59%) or access to resources (47%).

One of the important aspects of the MDGs is Goal 8, the call for a Global Development Partnership. What is entailed in this partnership? Wealthy countries are challenged to alter the unequal global trade and financial system in order to better facilitate the development of poor countries. It calls for a rules-based, predictable, and non-discriminatory global trade regime that provides for the special needs of least developed countries and land-locked and small island states. Other important aspects of the Goal include debt relief for developing countries, guaranteeing access to affordable medicines, providing quality work for youth and others requiring employment, and ensuring the effective transfer of new technologies and productive capacity from the North to the South.

Civil society's expertise, local knowledge, transnational networking capacity, flexibility, public trust and influence make it a desirable, and essential, partner for the UN, World Bank and for member governments in working to achieve Goal 8. Despite the fact that civil society is often difficult to work with—given the vast number and diversity of civil society organizations, as well as the dual roles they legitimately play as both watchdogs/critics and as partners—their role in UN activities is critical.

It is recommended that the Panel encourage the UN and its various agencies to give priority to looking for ways to collaborate with civil society through strategic partnerships as an integral component of the Global Development Partnership visualized in the Millennium Development Goals

4. Global Civil Society Fund

If the Panel recognizes the importance of strategic partnerships between civil society organizations and the UN, governments and the private sector to the UN's relevance and effectiveness, then it is essential to address the question of funding.

One of the major challenges for improving the UN's relations with the emerging global civil society is to ensure that people from developing countries and countries in transition have genuine opportunities to participate in all relevant UN policy debates, projects and activities. While the source and reliability of funding is a crucial issue for all non-profit

civil society organizations, it is particularly problematic for civil society organizations in the South.

A Global Civil Society Fund should be established to develop the capacities of civil society organizations and networks to engage more effectively in strategic partnerships with the UN and its agencies, with governments and the private sector, with priority being given to supporting civil society organizations and networking in developing countries and countries in transition. Responsibility for the management of the Fund should be vested in a Board of Directors with representatives of all stakeholders – UN, government, civil society and private sector.

The funds can be found. The December 2002 issue of “Business Week” carried an article on “The New Face of Philanthropy” which included the following paragraph:

“Gates is giving away about \$1.2 billion a year through his foundation but is open to spending far beyond that sum annually. His major concern is effectiveness. “It’s harder in philanthropy to know you did the right thing,” says Stonesifer. “The reason there are big social inequities is because they come from deep, complex, historical pressures. There is no quick fix to these problems. Long-term solutions require thoughtful, committed programs to work.” It is that and not an objection to distributing more that determines how much the foundation gives away, she says. “Bill would be excited if we brought him another billion-dollar idea or even a \$5 billion idea.”

One of the benefits of establishing a Global Civil Society Fund would be to overcome the concerns of those governments who consider that the emerging global civil society is unbalanced, with insufficient weight given to non-Western values and perspectives. WFUNA actively supports the strengthening of civil society and NGOs in developing countries and countries in transition and building their links with the United Nations.

UN cooperation with civil society organizations in the developing South is crucial, especially concerning the implementation of the MDGs. The reach of UN resources throughout the developing world is limited. It needs the cooperation of the civil society organizations on the ground.

It is recommended that the Panel call for the establishment of a Global Civil Society Fund, modeled on the UN Foundation, to develop the capacities of civil society organizations and networks to engage more effectively in strategic partnerships with the UN and its agencies, with governments and the private sector, with priority being given to supporting civil society organizations and networking in developing countries and countries in transition.

5. Relations between UNAs and UN representatives

The relationships between WFUNA, UNAs and UN representatives are a substantial indicator of the value civil society places on openness and transparency in such relationships. WFUNA and UNAs value being included in UN led round-table consultations and dialogues which include government officials and other actors. UNAs and WFUNA appreciate the participation of UN personnel in their events. It is widely acknowledged that the personal views and inclinations of UN personnel make a great deal of difference to the quality of relations with WFUNA, UNAs and other civil society actors.

Some UNAs in Africa and Asia report that there is a tendency for confusion in the public mind about the role of the UNAs compared to the role of UN officials. It is suggested that UN officials should be briefed on the role of the local UNA and its activities when they first arrive on a posting.

It is recommended that the Panel recognize that the UN's relations with civil society are essentially about how people relate to each other – and how important it is for UN personnel to be equipped with the cultural and political sensitivity to reflect the inclusive, democratic and non-discriminatory values of the UN in their behavior.

6. Best practices at the national level

Although they have a lot in common, the range of activities covered by UNAs is very diverse in terms of how to support the relationship between the UN and civil society on the national level.

There is scope for UNAs to help to enlarge the public space for civil society discussions, including members of parliament, on the role and relevance of the UN and the importance of governments implementing the agreements and commitments that they make. The discussion about the Millennium Development Goals helps to serve this purpose which is one of the reasons why WFUNA produces an annual report on civil society engagement in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

Best practices are varied:

- The leading best practice for the majority of UNAs is the work they do in translating UN documents into local languages and publishing local newsletters on UN events and activities
- Many UNAs see that the UN is most effective at the country level when its work and focus is related to a specific population group - for example women (UNIFEM) children, (UNICEF) refugees, (UNHCR) and workers (ILO).

- Many UNAs provide educational materials and teaching programs about the UN for schools and universities and maintain pressure on educational authorities to include subjects relating to the UN on school curricula.
- The UNA-USA organized a day in June when 500 people from the UN secretariat were invited to spend a relaxing day in the country with the UNA. A Forum in Washington brought together American political leaders, UN officials and diverse representatives of civil society to debate the future of the UN.
- The UNDP in Trinidad and Tobago has set up a committee with representatives of civil society, the private and public sectors that invites project proposals for NGO capacity-building.
- UNA-Australia has annual media awards.
- In the UK, every 3 months there are “UN family” meetings, to which the UNA-UK is always invited. The UNA-UK organizes events at Parliament House to enable senior UN officials to brief members of parliament on current issues.
- The UNA-Cyprus is in constant contact with the UNFICYP (United Nations Force in Cyprus) and the UN specialized agencies in Cyprus, such as the UNHCR, the UNDP and UNOPS. Many times during the year it organizes functions like the "Festival of Peaceful Co-existence" in which UN and specialized agencies staff members are invited to participate.
- In the Czech Republic, various UN agencies are located in a newly built UN House. They organize seminars, symposiums, exhibitions and celebrate UN days. NGOs are invited to all these kinds of events.
- The UNA-Hungary provides a briefing program for everyone involved in Hungary’s support for UN peace-keeping operations.

Within WFUNA there is continuing debate about the extent to which UNAs can or should act as an umbrella organization or a facilitator for NGO activities related to the UN. An analysis of the recent activity reports of UNAs shows that UNAs are cooperating with NGOs in holding events on major days on the UN Calendar, conducting Model UN conferences, campaigns such as Adopt-a Minefield, and other advocacy activities – notably in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

Case study: UNA-Tanzania

The UNA-Tanzania stands out as a great example of how effective UNAs in Africa can become once it has the necessary basic infrastructure. Thanks to UNDP, the UNA in Tanzania has its own office, open to the public, in the UN House in Dar es Salaam. Its annual core budget is about \$84,000 and it has over 180 members. The UNA-Tanzania

organizes a lot of events from this office and acts as a source of information to the public. For example:

- In January 2000, UNA Tanzania, sponsored by HIVOS of the Netherlands, led a team of 10 NGOs to lobby Parliament for the establishment of the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (now operational since July 2001).
- In March 2001, UNA-Tanzania was the facilitator for the Media Election Monitoring Project, a project funded by 12 donors, led by DANIDA, to contribute to the achievement of free and fair elections by encouraging the media to report news in a fair, balanced manner.
- In 2002, UNA-Tanzania led six NGOs in undertaking a one year project on Media Law Reform, with an objective to develop draft legislative recommendations on new legislation on media freedom and freedom of expression in Tanzania.

WFUNA recommends that the Panel encourage the UN and its agencies, particularly in least developed countries, to provide infrastructure support for UNAs (such as an office and access to the Internet) to strengthen their capacity to reach out to civil society at the national level.

7. The closure of the UN Information Centers in Europe – implications for UNAs

The Department of Public Information (DPI) is closing nine UN Information Centers (UNIC) in European countries and replacing them with a regional office in Brussels, and keeping the offices in Geneva and Vienna. WFUNA is now actively engaged in a discussion with DPI about the extent to which national UNAs could pick up some of the UNIC functions and activities.

The UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, names WFUNA explicitly in his report to the UNGA on Questions Relating to Information. The Report, (A/58/175, paragraph 35), states as follows: "Regarding its partnership with civil society organizations, the Department plans to discuss with the World Federation of United Nations Associations on how those associations will assume some of the functions currently carried out by the information centres at the national level."

There are many issues to be considered and meetings are taking place in Brussels and Geneva. Reports will be forwarded to the Panel.

It is recommended that the Panel take note of the dialogue between WFUNA and DPI concerning the potential for UNAs to take up some of the functions of the closed UN Information Centers as an example of ways in which UN Secretariat functions could be effectively outsourced to responsible civil society organizations.

8. Regional level: increasing emphasis

WFUNA sees many benefits for civil society organizing itself to engage with the UN at regional and sub-regional levels. Within WFUNA there is active consideration being given to strengthening coordination mechanisms among UNAs at the regional level. A Task Force will report on this issue to the next Executive Committee meeting in March 2004. At the same time, WFUNA is advancing various regional projects:

- An Asia/Pacific Model UN conference to be held in Beijing in mid 2004 on the theme of the Global Challenge 2015.
- In conjunction with CONGO, promoting an NGO consultation on the MDGs in Latin America in 2004, prior to which Latin American and Caribbean UNAs will hold national level workshops.
- The focus of WFUNA's attention on Africa has been establishing new UNAs and developing the ICT capacities of all UNAs in the region.
- Active consideration is being given to setting up UNAs in Arabic speaking countries where there are, as yet, very few.

9. Engaging youth

The Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has repeatedly stressed the importance of involving youth in the UN. WFUNA actively supports this.

WFUNA's 37th General Assembly saw the establishment of a new WFUNA-Youth network. It has set up a comprehensive database of UN Youth Associations (UNYAs) and UNA Youth programs, its own website and listserv. WFUNA-Youth looks forward to working closely with the Youth Council of CONGO and other youth networks associated with the UN.

The WFUNA Secretariat has circulated strategy papers to UNAs to lobby their governments to include youth representatives in their delegations to major UN conferences and events.

Many UNAs around the world conduct Model UN events and provide information about the UN to schools and universities. At the recent meeting of the WFUNA Executive Committee it was strongly recommended that teaching materials about the UN be made available for children, including Model UN programs for the classroom.

It is recommended that the Panel give priority to the inclusion of young people in all UN activities and programs that engage civil society.

Annex About WFUNA

One year after the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, United Nations Associations (UNAs) from 16 member states formed the World Federation of United Nations Associations. The constitution proclaimed that

WHEREAS THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS, THROUGH THEIR GOVERNMENTS, HAVE DECLARED THAT THEY ARE DETERMINED.....

WE, THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS IN OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES.....

Have resolved to combine our efforts to form an association of the peoples....to be known as the WORLD FEDERATION OF UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS.

As stated in Article 1 of the Constitution, its objectives are

- (a) To be a peoples' movement for the United Nations;*
- (b) To co-ordinate and further the activities of its Members and to promote the establishment of new United Nations Associations;*
- (c) To co-operate, where appropriate, with other organizations whose objects include the support of the United Nations and its development;*
- (d) To promote tolerance, understanding, solidarity and co-operation among men, women and children throughout the world without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or political orientation;*
- (e) To contribute to the removal of obstacles to peace, to work for justice, security and disarmament, and to promote the development of peaceful co-existence and co-operation among nations;*
- (f) To strive for the recognition of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world and for the recognition of the responsibilities and duties which those rights involve for individuals, groups and States;*
- (g) To promote economic development, enhancement of social progress and better standards of life;*
- (h) To promote research, information and education about the goals of the Charter of the United Nations and the work of the United Nations system.*

The values reflected in these objectives have had a formative influence on how people from all over the world, who have cared about the UN Charter and its purposes, have related to each other and to the UN.

For more than 50 years, these values have helped to define some of the basic parameters of the emerging global civil society of people who are today seeking to relate with each other and to the UN in an ever greater diversity of ways and means. New information and communication technologies have had a profound impact on these ways and means of relating, as have other developments, such as the availability of air travel, university education and simultaneous language translation.

WFUNA, like the UN, is based on the nation-state system. The organizational structure of WFUNA is hierarchical and formal, and was intended to complement that of the UN. WFUNA's member United Nations Associations (UNAs) are established as national entities in over 100 member states of the UN. Each one is required to meet certain specific conditions to be accepted as a member of WFUNA, including certification from the government that it has been set up in conformity with its laws. UNA members of WFUNA are uniquely entitled to use the UN logo on their letterhead.

The UNAs themselves may be composed of people from all walks of life, including members of parliament, academics, diplomats and civil servants, NGO representatives, business people, journalists and students.

The formal relationship between a UNA and the national government varies considerably from one country to the next. For example the Nordic UNAs are funded by their governments but treated as non-governmental organizations – they tend to have substantial secretariats and an extensive membership base. Many OECD governments that used to subsidize the UNA in their country no longer do so. In some recent cases, governments have stopped funding the UNA as a mark of protest at the policy positions that the UNA has advocated with respect to issues of human rights, peace and security. In developing countries, some UNAs are closely linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the majority of UNAs are separate from the Government. Many are maintained by people who volunteer their time and energy, with minimal, if any paid secretariat support staff.

WFUNA plays a distinctive role in facilitating the participation of UNA members in UN activities. WFUNA enjoys consultative status with ECOSOC and is affiliated with the DPI.

Inspired by Kofi Annan's commitment to make "the United Nations a more effective instrument in the hands of the world's people", WFUNA created a bi-monthly newsletter '*UN Connections*' in March 2002 which now reaches over 6000 people in over 100 countries. Every issue contains information about

- civil society partnerships with the UN which are focused on implementing the Millennium Declaration and its four themes – freedom from want, freedom from fear, sustainable future and institutional renewal;

- activities of United Nations Associations
- how the emerging global civil society networks.

So far, 30 issues have been produced and are available on www.wfuna.org in English, French and Spanish.

WFUNA produces an annual report on the engagement of civil society with the Millennium Declaration and its Development Goals which provides a useful tool for mobilizing civil society support for the UN as well as for its goals.

WFUNA is aware that over the last decade, many new civil society movements, coalitions and networks have been formed that have a very different kind of corporate culture. They tend to be less bureaucratic, more organic, dynamic and results-oriented. There is a real challenge for the UN – and for those organizations like WFUNA that support its purposes and principles – to adapt their own institutional processes to relate more effectively to these new dynamics.

WFUNA recognizes that for relations between the United Nations and civil society to become more effective and productive, it is essential for all participants to be open to new ideas in a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to make changes together for the benefit of all humanity.