



HELSENKI  
process

## Track One: Global Problem-solving

### **The Role of Parliamentarians:**

**- Proposals to Better Involve Parliamentarians in Providing Legitimacy to International Institutions /Strengthening Compliance with International Agreements**

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## **Parliaments, Parties and Politics: Toward Responsible Global Governance.**

### **Introduction:**

“Force is the monopoly of the Great Powers, for all the good it does them. But Great Powers enjoy no monopoly over ideas.” 1.

It would be naïve and foolish to believe there is growing universal interest to better involve parliamentarians to strengthen the legitimacy of international institutions and to oversee international agreements. Some on the political right harbour no such views. “The UN, in its current form, is weak, ineffectual and unfixable.... Its days as an effective presence for world peace are gone, never to return. Better to scrap it and start over.” 2. Even a liberal-internationalist like Bill Graham, once Canada’s Foreign and now Defence Minister, rejects the necessity of national parliamentary approval (never mind oversight) of international agreements. “The House isn’t always sitting. The government has to be able to enter into international affairs, and to be able to conduct the affairs of Canada without always having to go to the House for permission.” 3.

Nevertheless, there is growing interest and support for the general idea that parliamentarians could and should play some sort of bigger role in overseeing international institutions and agreements. In some countries elected representatives already have a formal role in approving and monitoring international agreements. 4.

The challenge now is to build on interest among some parliamentarians, win over at least some skeptics, create opportunities for meaningful roles at the international level and re-enforce the will and capacities of elected representatives to take up some of the needs in

global governance. The response to this challenge must be a move decisively away from the realm of inter-parliamentary associations, awareness, network building, drop-in visits to inter-governmental conferences and institutions to practical procedural and institutional changes to accommodate a new parliamentary and political dimension in international affairs.

Some leaders of international institutions have given encouragement to the idea of a greater role for elected representatives at or in their institutions. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan says, “The voice of the people must be heard at the United Nations. And few render that voice more authentically than elected parliamentarians.” 5.

Mike Moore, while Director-General of the World Trade Organization, said “parliamentarians have a vital role to play in bringing international organizations and people closer together and holding us and governments accountable...all the multilateral institutions that you have created, that you own, could do with your assistance and scrutiny.” 6.

Speaking at the Swiss Parliament, World Bank President, James D. Wolfensohn, says he could be enthusiastic about a larger parliamentary role with the Bretton Woods Institutions, but draws attention to the challenge of executive, rather than parliamentary, rule in international affairs. “ The effectiveness of either the Bank or the (International Monetary) Fund dealing with parliamentary bodies is a function of your existing domestic relationship between the Parliament and your Administration. That is something that I cannot solve. It is something that I can be supportive of or be ready to follow enthusiastically.” 7.

Many elected representatives to national legislatures have expressed support for this greater role for parliamentarians. Not surprisingly the various inter-parliamentary groups, already formed around the idea of a greater role, are in the forefront of this support. Of particular note, however, is the September 2000 declaration of presiding officers of national parliaments meeting at the United Nations:

“ Parliaments embody the sovereignty of the people and can, in all legitimacy, contribute to expressing the will of the State internationally...parliaments and their members must assume increased responsibility in international relations...” .(my emphasis) (note). 8.

This is the starting point for the recommendations that follow: elected representatives have a legitimate role, not only in representing citizens, but also in expressing the will of the State in international relations. Governments must share the competence, authority and space to conduct international relations out from Executives and officials (diplomats and others) to elected representatives. We must move from traditional diplomacy and even currently fashionable “public diplomacy” to real parliamentary diplomacy in international relations. In the face of global challenges and the needs of the United Nations

(outlined in the presiding officers declaration), elected representatives must assume more responsibility in international affairs.

The question is, not whether, but how?

Some recommendations follow, proposing procedural and small (non Charter) institutional changes at the United Nations to better involve elected representatives at the world's most important body and only universal forum. Global, regional and local challenges and issues come together here. And when the world does speak together (parler) in one place, it is at and through the United Nations. It is here that parliamentarians acting at the international level, most belong.

As background to these recommendations, there are some needs, issues and questions that could be addressed as part of a wider discussion. In summary they are:

### **Elections**

Whatever the next steps might be to engage elected representatives at the international level, there must be some electoral legitimacy to this involvement. A bigger role for national legislatures in oversight and compliance with agreements is based on the sound legitimacy of national legislative elections. Ad hoc visits, conferences etc. around the margins of international institutions and decision-making (WTO, World Bank, etc.) so that national parliamentarians are well informed and can express views needs no further electoral legitimization. Formal involvement of parliamentarians ("responsibility") in international affairs, however, must be based on some element of election.

Fortunately, the Charter and procedures of the United Nations provide the vehicle for this legitimacy. Member States are elected by the General Assembly to various United Nations bodies. Those elections enable diplomats, Ministers and others to legitimately participate in institutions and affairs. Those elections can also enable parliamentarians from elected Member States to do so (doubly elected: to legislatures as representatives, and to UN bodies as parliamentarians from elected Member States).

Political parties also elect representatives. In some countries parliamentarians are elected to national legislatures from party lists, thus they are elected by parties to a candidate list and then by citizens to the legislature. Therefore, political parties can also provide electoral legitimacy to parliamentary participation at the international level. Individual national political parties could elect parliamentarians for international responsibilities. A better way, and one more certain to involve parties and parliamentarians in the South, is to work through the political "Internationals", already well placed to take up some of these responsibilities.

Non elected arrangements will no longer do if we are serious about parliamentarians taking on responsibilities in international affairs. Non-elected parliamentary associations have done important work and have an important continuing role in networking, raising issues and other politically lower order functions. However, we should be particularly concerned if the (non-elected) Inter-parliamentary

Union is set up and used as a vehicle to side-line or delay what must inevitably be electoral legitimacy for a parliamentary dimension at the international level.

### **Parliaments- Domestic Strength**

Helsinki Group advisor Raimo Vayrynen has noted that “ ..the most important route to more accountable global governance starts from the strengthening of domestic institutions.; their inclusive and participatory traits.” 9.

The presiding officers of national parliaments agree and have called on all national legislatures to strengthen their activities and capacities at the domestic level in order to undertake larger international responsibilities. This should include “continuous dialogue” with the public on international affairs, better use of current legislative procedures, involvement of all parties and members, contributions to government negotiations, better information gathering, and “a more proactive role in ratification and compliance with international agreements.” 10.

The recommendations that follow are made with these parliamentary goals very much in mind.

### **Parties**

As noted earlier, parties play a central role in the election and political lives of parliamentarians. Parties are also the mediators between society and government, designing and setting out competing public policy choices for the judgement of citizens.

“The development of democracy in the last two centuries was determined by the development of political parties. Competition between parties allows citizens a choice between political alternatives that accumulate different values, theories and projects.” 11.

In advocating a greater role for elected representatives to provide legitimacy and oversight in international affairs, we are in fact advocating a greater role for parties (competing values and ideologies) at the international level. Whatever other personal capacities and interests they bring to their local, national and (emerging) international responsibilities, parliamentarians will be first and foremost representatives of and responsible to their parties.

Party capacity to address international institutions, agreements and global affairs needs to be examined. As we think about parliamentarians, we also need to think about parties. As the German, American and some other political parties do, greater North-South party building work needs to be taken up by parties (not governments or NGOs) in countries like Canada.

The recommendations made here recognize this.

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## **NGOs**

“Representatives of independent citizen organizations are increasingly active in policy making at the United Nations. These organizations - known at the UN as non-governmental organizations or NGOs - are often the most effective voices for the concerns of ordinary people in the international arena.” 12.

NGOs have been active and involved with international institutions and monitoring international agreements for a long time. Many have a substantial record of excellent work. Some believe they are the “voice of ordinary people.”

Every effort should be made to ensure that parliamentary steps evolve in close consultation with NGOs. Elected representatives and NGOs have important, and different, responsibilities and roles. These should evolve as mutually supportive and reinforcing.

An NGO that could be particularly helpful in dialogue and in building support for better involvement of parliamentarians is the United Nations Association (in each of 100 countries, South and North, with the New York office of the World Federation of United Nations Associations). The World Federalists -perhaps operating under an alias in some circumstances- could also be helpful.

These thoughts are reflected in the recommendations.

## **Elected Representatives**

Taking up real responsibilities for international institutions and agreements will involve costs and risks for elected representatives. Every hour spent on world business will be an hour lost to constituency, local, party, caucus, and national parliamentary work. There are no votes in New York, Geneva or Washington. Even if the monetary costs for time and travel can be set aside as an issue (an M.P. in Lithuania makes about \$700 per month, in Samoa about \$500), the opportunity costs for this work are very high.

A strong, enduring consensus will be needed to support and empower meaningful, responsible, sustained engagement by elected representatives.

The consensus must include:

**Parliaments:** In some form or other, parliaments are likely to be asked or expected to support a greater commitment by (some) members to international responsibility.

Presiding Officers, Committee Chairs, foreign affairs and finance committees, budget negotiators, research branches, libraries, international associations, friendship groups, and others should be supportive.

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**Parties:** Party leaders, councils, local organizations and parliamentary groups/caucuses must be convinced of the value of this work and responsibility, must support and encourage and should provide reporting and feedback opportunities. Leaders and colleagues must be able to defend and promote international responsibilities taken up by others. Colleagues must be willing to take up extra/other duties to enable international work.

It is likely all parties in any national legislature will have to find consensus on the value of international work to enable all party agreement for pairing (for travel), votes, committee absences, other.

**Constituencies:** The elected representative's constituency must be convinced, at least a little, of the value of international work and responsibility. This may require extra media and communications effort and resources, extra staff resources to attend to constituency business, extra constituency travel to make up for time away (abroad).

Note: future watch keeping to ensure that parliamentarians elected from party lists (no constituencies – some European countries), or not allowed to seek a second term (e.g. Mexico) do not come to dominate the international parliamentary dimension.

NGOs, businesses with trade and international interests, faith communities and other specific interest constituencies can be helpful partners in building support for international work and responsibilities. The United Nations Association, Chambers of Commerce, and service organizations like the YM/WCA could be potential partners.

The recommendations that follow recognize the risks and high potential costs to elected representative to become more involved in international institutions. There is a belief that these risks can be transformed to opportunities and benefits.

## **The EU Model**

It isn't. Nothing has happened in the world parallel to the events, profound thinking, leadership, and decisions over the past 50 years that generated and accomplished the European project. Furthermore, in Washington, Moscow and elsewhere, unilateralism points in the opposite direction. Unable to deal with Rwanda, Darfur, Haiti, Srebrinica and other life and death circumstances, States show no signs of being interested in pooling sovereignty or taking even small steps to surrender real power for functional integration. This was a 1950s European pre-condition to the creation of even a powerless, early European Parliament. Even where there is considerable economic integration as in North America (NAFTA Canada, U.S. and Mexico) no government, no national or state legislature, no parliamentary committee and no political party has ever proposed even a (powerless) regional parliament. Emerging powers like India and China are unlikely to want to pool their newly won status and power with others. The world in 2004 is not the post-war Europe of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman. Reference to the EU as a model isn't helpful for the way ahead.

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“Short of a fundamental change in governance, the most important way to ensure that international institutions are more responsive to the poor, to the environment, to broader political and social concerns is to increase openness and transparency.”

Joseph E. Stiglitz 13.

“Public debate on globalization is at an impasse...the will for consensus is weak. Key international negotiations are deadlocked and international development commitments go largely unfulfilled.” World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization, February 2004. 14.

## **Parliaments, Parties and Politics: Moving Toward Responsible Global Governance**

There is now a critical need to engage elected representatives from national parliaments in a formal role in international institutions in order to increase openness and transparency and to improve nascent global governance. NGOs, private businesses, academics and others can make continuing important contributions to the substantive work and the transparency of these institutions, even while these institutions remain largely inter-governmental. However, only elected representatives can provide the fully accountable, and necessarily political solutions to the democratic deficit that is undermining international cooperation itself. No institution is more important or appropriate for this attention than the United Nations.

Practical proposals are needed to engage elected representatives in the work and progress of the United Nations in a way that would bring elected politics and improved governance to the global level of human affairs. A key area of these affairs is the domain of the

International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization which, since the end of the Cold War, have had a rapid expansion of their geographical coverage and have acquired “a range of additional responsibilities going beyond their original mandates and taking them into much more highly sensitive and indeed politicized areas of policy making.” 15.

Democratic oversight of these special institutions will involve, first, bringing them into the overall framework of the United Nations and, in particular, to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), proposed by the International Labour Organization and others. As noted by former Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, the ECOSOC can bring coherence and arbitrate conflicts among these specialized agencies. Elected representatives from national parliaments could then monitor a coherent view at a coordinated place. 16.

Democratic legitimization and further transparency in security affairs may be even more important. Elected representatives must have a role in monitoring the Security Council in the knowledge that the costs of war, military conflict or collapsed state security inevitably undermine human security, economies and social well being and can threaten the very survival of humanity.

The Cardoso Report (Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, (June 2004) and the Secretary General’s response provide some openings to propose further, practical ideas to address the urgent need to engage elected representatives in governance at the global level through the United Nations. Engaging elected representatives from the United States must be a specific goal. 17.

As well, there is growing integration of the local and the global, not only for those involved in trade and finance, technology and the arts, travel and tourism, but also where life “ is lived by people in slums, conflict areas and other zones of need throughout the world.” 18.

Now more than ever, national parliamentary, political and party interests must include the international. “ ... making international cooperation and solidarity part of our daily political work,” as noted by Birgitta Dahl. Proposals are needed for elected politics (meaning the politics of competing, ideologically based, democratic parties) to take a place in emerging global governance. Thinking and progress to date have been dominated, on the one hand, by the idea of NGOs as the political actors and, on the other hand, by bloodless proposals from governments for closed, elite, invitational fixes (e.g. the G3 to the G7 becomes the G8 generates the G20).

To move to a global dimension of democratic, legitimate, elected politics it will be necessary to move beyond the necessary but limited role of NGOs and beyond “by invitation” governmental clubs and arrangements. There is a need to address “political

work” (Dahl), to build supportive constituencies within political parties and in public opinion. This is an essential development to enable elected representatives to undertake real responsibilities at the United Nations.

A global dimension of elected politics will help address the disparity in modern politics, highlighted in the Cardoso Report. “ Economics, trade, communications and even culture are becoming more global. But representative democracy remains essentially national and local.” 19.

The Cardoso Report goes on to address expanding roles for civil society (NGOs), and touches lightly on a role for parliamentarians at the United Nations. Recommendations:

- encourage debates in national parliaments on UN matters
- M.Ps. should discuss UN matters with Ministers
- parliaments should have UN documents
- the Secretary General should “seek cooperation” with parliamentary associations
- Governments should consult and debrief M.Ps. on UN matters and meetings
- Governments should include M.Ps. in delegations to (some) UN meetings
- M.Ps. (especially if they are “specialists”) could be invited to speak at Committees, General Assembly
- Governments (Member States) should instruct the Secretariat to experiment with (one or more) “global public policy committees” of M.Ps. “to discuss emerging priorities on the global agenda.” 20.

The Secretary General agrees, “more should be done to strengthen the Organization’s links to parliaments and parliamentarians.” He commends the Cardoso recommendations to the General Assembly and suggests specifically parliamentary input for the 2006 declaration of the Commitment on HIV/AIDS. In presenting the Cardoso Report and the Secretary General’s response to the General Assembly on October 4, 2004, the Deputy Secretary-General confined her remarks entirely to NGOs, with no mention of elected representatives. 21.

However, neither the Cardoso Report nor the Secretary General’s response address the recognized political disparity that human affairs are now global while representative democracy remains national and local.

This is not adequately addressed in the proposal for “one or more” Global Public Policy Committees. As proposed, these committees would not be institutional, but rather ad-hoc and occasional (rare?). Who would decide whether, when, what subjects, how to have such a committee and who the members would be? They would not be accountable in the way that national parliamentary committees are accountable to national assemblies and committee members are accountable to party leaders, caucuses and voters. And, one suspects, they would be used and be seen to be used as consultation show boats, or side

shows, with the great danger of going the ill-fated way of previous UN Conferences (accompanied by the travelling circus of mobilized international civil society).

Proposals are needed to engage elected representatives in a meaningful, consistent, coherent and democratically accountable relationship with the United Nations and related international institutions. As noted by Finnish M.P. Kimmo Kiljunen, “parliamentary oversight of the work of international organizations is, without doubt, becoming increasingly important. Trans-national cooperation among parliamentarians is an asset in global governance.” 22.

### **The General Assembly**

Article 22 of the United Nations Charter states: “ The General Assembly may establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions.” 23.

The Cardoso Report notes that “The General Assembly needs to be reformed.... The United Nations should welcome carefully planned inputs from civil society and others with relevant expertise *to make the debates better informed and attuned to citizens’ concerns.*” 24. (my emphasis).

The Cardoso conclusion is that this can best be done by the Secretariat using “its network of contacts.” However, there is no better way for the General Assembly to be informed of citizens’ concerns than through the direct engagement of the elected representatives of those citizens.

### **Recommendation 1.**

Under Article 22 of the Charter the General Assembly should establish a subsidiary body to provide input to its affairs and debates. This body would reflect “citizen concerns” through already elected representatives.

### **The Committee of Elected Representatives**

This Committee would be subsidiary to the General Assembly itself, and therefore not an alternative “World Parliament” or “ UN Parliamentary Assembly.” Member States (governments) would still form the General Assembly and make decisions. The United Nations would remain an intergovernmental organization. Nevertheless, the Committee of Elected Representatives would provide a formal mechanism for parliamentary input to the General Assembly and General Assembly outreach to national parliaments (and their electors). The Committee would bring elected representatives from national assemblies to the global assembly, in a structured, regular way.

The Committee of Elected Representatives would function as an 8<sup>th</sup> Committee of the General Assembly (in addition to the 6 Main Committees and the General Committee) and would mirror the General Committee.

Member States elected to the General Committee would be eligible for 2 seats on the Committee of Elected Representatives (one government party member and one opposition party member). There are 21 General Committee members (Vice Presidents) elected by the General Assembly. The Committee of Elected Representatives would have 42 members for renewable terms if Member States are re-elected to the General Committee in successive years. Committee members would elect a Chair who would be an ex-officio member of the General Committee.

It would be left to national parliaments to design a selection/election process for members of the Committee of Elected Representatives (one government party, one opposition party). Options could include election by the congress/parliament/house of assembly, appointment by the Speaker, election or appointment by parties, selection by or from a foreign affairs or other parliamentary committee, or other.

The costs of the participation of the members of the Committee of Elected Representatives would be borne by the government and/or parliament of Member States elected to the General Committee. With strict criteria in place, some from the South could be assisted by the new Partnerships Office (a special fund to support Southern participation of elected representatives).

Members of the Committee of Elected Representatives could not be members/participants of Member State delegations to the General Assembly (or other United Nations conferences/activities) and would maintain their distinct identity and status as parliamentarians at the service of the General Assembly.

Recognizing the existing heavy demands on parliamentarians, the Committee of Elected Representatives would meet for one week during the General Assembly. Its annual General Assembly committee tasks/agenda would be determined and agreed in advance by the President of the General Assembly. The Committee could provide views on one or a range of issues on the General Assembly agenda, and/or it could decide to undertake some specific task, for example, related to globalization, governance, democracy. It could invite and hear from non-government experts, and other citizens.

For preparation, outreach and reporting/transparency web sites, e-mail, telephone and video conferencing could be used to advantage. The Committee would be supported by the UN Partnerships Office. It should also be supported by national parliamentary, foreign affairs committee and political party staff and resources. Mainstreaming United Nations affairs into national parliamentary and political life is also an important goal.

Members of the Committee of Elected Representatives would be encouraged to report to other parliamentarians and parliamentary bodies at home, to constituents and civil society organizations. They could be given formal roles/reporting responsibilities in parliaments and parties and to national United Nations Associations. They would be encouraged to report and network with other parliamentarians regionally and in parliamentary associations.

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## **The Security Council**

The Charter and the 200 member nations of the United Nations have given to the Security Council “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” and have agreed that in these matters “the Security Council acts on their behalf.” The Security Council is then arguably the most important institution of the United Nations (which was founded in the first instance “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”) and, especially at moments of crisis, may be humanity’s most important forum. Unfortunately the Security Council has a culture, inclination and practice that run contrary to openness, transparency and democratic norms. The Security Council is highly state-centric. It is not accountable to the General Assembly (the Charter requires the Council to provide only informational reports for “consideration” by the Assembly). There is an historic and persistent deep division in the Council between the ten elected, non-permanent members and the permanent P-5 who can operate as a secretive cabal of “Great Powers.” This division raises issues of openness, transparency and inclusion even within the Security Council itself. 25.

Nevertheless, in recent years there have been changes and improvements to the culture, practices and out-side relationships of the Security Council. These changes offer opportunities for proposals to go further, especially in engaging elected representatives. 26.

### **Recommendation 2.**

Article 28 .2 of the Charter instructs the Security Council that it “ shall hold periodic meetings at which each of its members may, if it so desires, be represented by a member of the government or by some other specially designated representative.”

To date, this requirement and opportunity have been taken up by high-level government representatives, usually foreign ministers.

In addition to regular meetings of the Security Council (ambassadors/permanent representatives to the UN) and Security Council meetings of Ministers, parliamentarians should be designated as special representatives for one special Security Council meeting each year.

### **Annual, Special Security Council Meeting of Elected Representatives.**

This special meeting would engage elected representatives from the 15 Member States of the Security Council on critical issues of international peace and security at the highest forum for deliberation. These would be non-voting, non-decision making meetings of the

Security Council, for deliberation and advice. Elected representatives would have the opportunity to bring the interests, views and “concerns of citizens” and parliaments to the work of the Security Council and to the peace and security issues of the moment. The elected representatives would take back to their national politics and parliaments profound Security Council and United Nations knowledge and perspectives.

Participants could be Speakers/Presidents of elected national assemblies. A more practical proposal would be a special meeting of Chairs of national foreign affairs committees. They would be required to bring to the Security Council meeting one opposition member of those committees as an alternate representative. These participants would be advised by their committees, parliaments and parties in advance, would likely be well- briefed on issues of the day, and would be required to report to their national parliamentary bodies, parties, constituents, national United Nations Association and others.

Each of the 15 participants (and 15 alternate representatives) would be temporary and/or honorary members of Member State United Nations delegations (for briefings and other support) and would be supported by the Partnerships Office of the UN where necessary. Costs of participation would be borne by the governments and/or parliaments of the Security Council Member States.

The annual special meeting could be held in the first quarter of each calendar year (February- March), when newly elected members have just joined the Security Council, when the General Assembly is not in session and when many parliaments are in session.

(Article 28.3 of the Charter enables the Security Council to meet anywhere in the world that “will best facilitate its work.”).

### **Recommendation 3.**

In recent years the Security Council has made slow but admirable progress in its relations with some select NGOs. This has been an important advance.

In 1992 Venezuela’s Ambassador Diego Arria proposed informal meetings that could be called by any member of the Security Council so that Council members could meet with experts and others. This arrangement for non-official meetings of the Council for outside

consultations is known as the Arria formula. The formula has been promoted by elected, non-permanent members of the Security Council to help provide input and transparency to Security Council affairs: Chile (Juan Somavia), Portugal (Antonio Monteiro), Sweden, Brazil, Austria. In April 2000 Canada (personally led by Foreign Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy) and the Netherlands led a revival of the Arria process in bringing together members of the Security Council and others to discuss sanctions and then again to meet with Oxfam, CARE and MSF in advance of Security Council consideration of the protection of civilians in conflict. Jamaica, Namibia, Britain and Singapore continued this process. In 2003 Pakistan organized a Security Council Arria meeting on Iraq with humanitarian NGOs. Germany brought together the International Crisis Group and NGOs to speak on the situation in Darfur in May 2004. An important precedent and practice has been set that can provide an opportunity for greater participation by elected representatives in Security Council issues and affairs. 27.

### **Parliamentary Working Group on the Security Council**

In addition to an annual Special Security Council Meeting with Chairs of foreign affairs committees, elected representatives need to have a sustained, on going relationship with the Security Council. At a minimum this should be no less than the existing relationship between the Council and NGOs. The NGO Arria /Working Group (note) relationship and an elected representatives' relationship would complement each other and would likely be mutually re-enforcing. The Security Council, the United Nations and international peace and security would be beneficiaries.

Unfortunately, parliamentarians do not have the time or capacity to be in New York for frequent meetings with Security Council ambassadors and others all year. 28.

However, thanks to the internet and e-mail, parliamentarians have available to them a wide range of resources. These include: United Nations/Security Council documents, at least some national delegation material (briefings and sometimes "national interest" political analysis), material from their parliamentary/congress research branches and foreign ministries, media coverage of the Security Council, NGO views and analysis, think tank papers and journal articles.

They can build their own well informed relationships with the Security Council (and not cede that task to a non-political intermediary organization such as the Inter-parliamentary Union IPU: elected representatives are politicians). 29.

The political "Internationals" can play a key role.

The Internationals have already set precedents for engagement in UN affairs, and for cooperation among themselves, especially in human rights. Speaking of this cooperation Liberal International Deputy President, Lord Alderdice, (Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly) says,

“ ... there is wider work to be done in involving parliamentarians. That is why the Liberal International has come together with the Socialist International and the Christian Democrat International and...agreed to work together on human rights issues as far as possible.” 30.

At its Congress in 2003, the Socialist International committed to “coordinate the work of the parliamentarians of its member parties...arrange cooperation, exchanges of positions and meetings of parliamentarians...” for the purpose of “governance in global society.” This work began in earnest in 2004. 31.

Calling for “Democratization in the international and local arena” the Christian Democrat and Peoples Parties International has undertaken to “...foster a major democratic participation not only at local level but also at world level, in international institutions and multilateral organizations.” 32.

These three global political organizations should establish a Parliamentary Working Group on the Security Council. 33. At the Conferences/Congresses of each International, 5 parliamentarians would be elected to the Working Group for a 3 year term (with a view to regional diversity and the participation of women). These 15 world-wide, doubly-elected representatives (elected to national parliaments and elected by international conferences) would be charged with a responsibility to monitor Security Council affairs and to meet at least once per year in New York in an Arria formula meeting with the Council. They would stay in touch and share information and views. They would be powerful and important voices in monitoring the Council, commenting on peace and security issues, giving voice to citizen concerns and bringing elected politics to the profoundly important affairs of the Security Council.

The Working Group members would be encouraged to establish information sharing and other relations with the participants (foreign affairs committee Chairs and alternates) in the annual Special Security Council meeting of Elected Representatives.

The annual (or more) Working Group meetings would be financed and supported by the Internationals (member parties) and supported in appropriate ways by the UN Partnership Office. The Security Council host member (Arria formula) would be responsible for meeting arrangements in New York.

### **Trade and Development**

Elected representatives around the world are already at work to bring a “parliamentary dimension” to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization.

## **The WTO**

A group of 120 parliamentarians issued the 1999 (Battle in)“Seattle Declaration” calling for a permanent parliamentary standing body to monitor the WTO. Since then there have been regular meetings, discussions and papers proposing competing views about how best to promote transparency, openness, the rule of law and parliamentary monitoring or oversight of the WTO. Former Canadian House of Commons Speaker, John Bosley (and others) have proposed a Parliamentary Assembly. Thailand Member of Parliament , Kobsak Chutikul (and others), have cautioned against this, advocating annual informal parliamentary meetings “on the occasion of WTO Ministerial meetings.” 34.

There are many unresolved issues and some dangers in a WTO parliamentary body. As political scientist Gerald Schmitz asks,“ what will be the scope of its mandate and what powers will it have, if any? How should it be selected so that smaller countries and the least developed have more than a token voice? How will it be able to operate with such a large membership? How will it report to national parliaments and interact with NGOs? And who will pay for all this?” At the same time, he notes, there are dangers that a powerless parliamentary body would further undermine the credibility of parliamentary democracy world-wide (“ giving apparent democratic legitimacy to decisions over which those elected would in reality have no power”), deepen suspicions in the South, and complicate and even cripple the necessary inter-governmental negotiations and technical work of the WTO. 35.

Nevertheless, a parliamentary dimension is evolving. The IPU and the European Parliament hosted a parliamentary meeting in November 2001 at the WTO Ministerial meeting in Doha, Qatar. In September 2003 in Cancun, Mexico 320 people participated in a similar “Parliamentary Conference on the WTO” billed as a “parallel event...to make the voices of parliamentarians hear loud and clear by government negotiators...”, on the margins of the Ministerial meeting. The Conference adopted a declaration that was given to the Chair of the Ministerial WTO meeting. 36.

Discussions and debate continue as elected representatives explore needs, expectations, realities and different approaches, including in the context now of China as a member of the WTO.

### **Recommendation 4.**

In the meantime, scrutiny of the WTO should certainly be strengthened in national parliaments. Canada’s current Prime Minister, Paul Martin, made the case after the 1999 Seattle WTO ministerial meeting and protests, “...in a democracy there is a place where people can have impact on the policies of the IMF, the World bank and the WTO, and the global issues they address. That place is the national legislature. In Canada, that place

is parliament. And that is where, first and foremost, the public will should be articulated.”  
37.

### **Annual Parliamentary Debates on World Trade, World Trade Agreements and the WTO.**

As the world’s most trade dependent nation Canada should lead in the establishment of a world-wide, national legislative day of debate on trade and the WTO. 38. The Government of Canada should commit one government business day of the House of Commons each calendar year for this debate. Parliamentarians active in inter-parliamentary affairs could encourage other national legislatures to do the same. Preparations for these debates could include hearings by the foreign affairs or other committees (in Canada, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade), with a committee report or recommendation providing the “motion” or business for debate.

The independent International Development Research Centre IDRC (Ottawa) would be charged with the annual project of monitoring some of these debates (through its world-wide regional offices), reviewing all of the parliamentary records of the debates, identifying themes, issues and recommendations and producing a synthesized/summary report each year. The report would be formally presented to the Director-General of the WTO on behalf of the participating parliaments. The Director-General would be asked to provide a written response within 60 days. The report and response would be presented to the presiding officers of national and regional legislatures, made public and widely circulated and promoted.

Among other results, these national legislative debates, report and response would help inform the parliamentary process taking shape in the margins/parallel to WTO Ministerial meetings.

### **The IMF and World Bank**

Parliamentarians are also already at work internationally to strengthen their role in monitoring the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation summarizes the reasons why:

“There seems to be increasing evidence and agreement that structural adjustment policies of the Bretton Woods Institutions have failed over the past to achieve their intended goals of poverty reduction in developing countries. As a consequence, structural adjustment programs were replaced by the new concept of ‘poverty reduction strategies.’ However, the spin of this new work often inaccurately claims that the BWIs have genuinely moved to a new way of thinking. One major concern for many critics of the World Bank and the IMF is that the institutions still do not provide for equal participation of developing

countries in decision making and norm setting. One important reform proposal is therefore the democratization of the BWIs to achieve greater transparency, participation and accountability at these institutions.” 39.

Suspicious about these institutions, their policies and governance, have led to a crisis in legitimacy. This must be addressed and has been taken up by the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank PNoBW (among others). Calling for greater scrutiny of both institutions by parliamentarians PNoBW Chair, Albert Koenders, M.P. (Netherlands) circulated a petition to national parliaments in September 2004. “The major bilateral and multilateral donors have stressed their commitment to maximizing country ownership of development policies...(but) there can be no country ownership without parliamentary ownership.” 40.

Rick Samans, Executive Director of the World Economic Forum, has proposed the annual G8 Summit as a coordinating body and accountability check on the Bretton Woods Institutions “with respect to the overall performance of the world economy,” with an add-on parliamentary component. The Heads of the three institutions would prepare a joint annual report for the G8 leaders on the performance of the institutions and the state of the world economy. The joint report would also be presented, later, to two public hearings each year “presided over by small international panels of national parliamentarians and perhaps national ministers.” 41.

Such a step in reporting would unlikely address the deep suspicions and legitimacy issues now surrounding the BWIs, especially in the South and especially in highly indebted, least developed and already marginalized societies and states. If anything, reporting to G8 leaders would likely deepen the suspicions that the institutions are the tools of only “the rich and the powerful.” Furthermore, it is probably unrealistic to expect that G8 leaders would give serious attention and response to such a report at their annual Summit. The Summit agendas are loaded and often blown off course by world events and G8 politics (note). The report would almost certainly be passed off to the same ministries and government officials who manage the affairs and policies of the BWIs already. Reporting to the G20 might well be even worse in terms of deepening divisions and suspicions (the “rich and powerful” and 12 of their very closest, also relatively rich and powerful, friends), overloaded agendas and meeting management.

An alternative idea is to bring the Bretton Woods Institutions more directly under the universal body of the United Nations and, in particular, to the Economic and Social Council.

“Without destroying the positive features of the existing system that has served them well, it is necessary, however, to bring the Bretton Woods Institutions and others under the broad legitimizing umbrella of the UN.” says former World Bank Vice President, Kemal Dervis. 42.

Bringing the BWIs together would generate coherence and the possibility of an integrated “status report on the world economy and the performance of the major economic institutions,” proposed by Rick Samans. Bringing them together at the United Nations brings them to a world-wide forum (rather than a self appointed directorate). Bringing them to ECOSOC opens an opportunity for a parliamentary dimension.

The BWIs already work together and already work with the United Nations at the “working level” of Commissions, meetings, visits, panels, seminars and preparing reports for the General Assembly and ECOSOC. In 1996 the General Assembly mandated closer cooperation and ECOSOC in particular has pursued this and asked for progress reports. 43. The Heads of the BWIs are members of the United Nations Secretariat Administrative Committee on Coordination ACC and in 1998 the ACC set priorities for UN and World Bank cooperation. More recently there has been deepening cooperation on country level assessments, strategies and technical assistance.

As well, there are annual “high-level” meetings of the ECOSOC and the Heads of the BWIs and the WTO. These meetings take place in April or May in advance preparation for the ECOSOC’s annual substantive meetings in June and July. The high-level meetings are very well attended and draw in other international organizations, business and NGOs. Finland’s Permanent UN Representative and current President of ECOSOC, Marjatta Rasi, noted at the 2004 high level meeting, “coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the Monterrey Consensus continues to be at the heart of our work.” She also noted, “we have homework to do in capitals.” 44. One of the problems in United Nations-BWIs relations is the sometimes contradictory positions taken by Member States, noted in the Secretary General’s Progress report on UN-BWIs cooperation, “Member States can contribute to this process immeasurably by better coordination of their individual positions at the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions.”45.

### **Recommendation 5.**

The annual Economic and Social Council, Special High-Level Meeting with the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization should be further institutionalized with the addition of some sort of formal reporting arrangement from the BWIs and the WTO to the ECOSOC. A Study Group should examine this and make recommendations (perhaps based on Article 64 of the Charter which empowers the Council to take steps “to obtain reports”).

#### **Annual ECOSOC- BWIs /WTO Meeting for Elected Representatives**

Under Articles 71 (consultations) and 72 (procedures) of the Charter, a parliamentary dimension should be added. ECOSOC and the High-Level BWIs participants should meet

with parliamentarians as part of the ECOCSOC annual work plan and agenda. This should be done every year to take place immediately after the annual High-Level Meeting with ECOSOC Member State delegations, as part of a two day session. Hosted by the President of ECOSOC, the elected representatives meeting, too, should be institutionalized.

Each of the 54 members of ECOSOC would be eligible to send 2 legislators to the annual ECOSOC -BWIs /WTO Meeting for Elected Representatives. Recognizing that there may be constraints on parliamentarians in many countries for one-day meetings in New York, the major international parliamentary associations should be invited to send 2 participants each. In particular these should include those associations with a strong South dimension: the African Inter-Parliamentary Union, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, others. The three political Internationals should also be invited to send 2 parliamentary representatives (ideally with strong participation from the South).

Participants would report to their national assemblies, committees, parties, constituents, national United Nations Associations and others. Where possible they should contribute to the annual national legislature debates on world trade and the WTO and in the international parliamentary activities in the margins of the WTO. The participating parliamentary associations and political Internationals would provide useful, timely reports from the meeting to their members.

### **Conclusions and Next Steps**

These 5 recommendations offer a way forward to better engage elected representatives from North and South in the on-going work of the most important international institutions in a meaningful, legitimate, sustainable and institutional way.

[The United Nations General Assembly](#): Annual parliamentary input to global issues at the only universal forum.

Recommendation 1. The Committee of Elected Representatives

[The United Nations Security Council](#): Annual parliamentary overview of key international peace and security issues and decisions.

Recommendation 2. Annual, Special Security Council Meeting of Elected Representatives (Foreign Affairs Committee Chairs).

Recommendation 3. On-going overview of international peace and security issues, annual input from Parliamentary Working Group Arria formula meeting with Council members.

[The World Trade Organization](#): Improved national legislative role, attention, oversight, and input.

Recommendation 4. Annual Parliamentary Debates (Common Report) on World Trade/WTO and WTO response.

[The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund](#) (Bretton Woods Institutions): Institutionalized opportunities for parliamentarians to engage with BWIs leaders and experts on the common ground of the United Nations.

Recommendation 5. Annual Bretton Woods Meeting for Elected Representatives hosted by the ECOSOC President.

Several processes need to be set in motion or re-enforced in order to advance the role of parliamentarians in international institutions so that they can take up these (and other) real responsibilities in global governance. The focus should be the United Nations. The goals should be legitimacy through election, institutionalized opportunities for participation, universal access, sustainability, and accountability to national parliaments, parties and voters.

1. Opportunities must be created at the United Nations.
2. Elected Representatives must be convinced of the value and benefits of this work and these responsibilities. They must be given the authority and capacity to undertake this work.
3. Parliaments, political parties, NGOs, and voters must increasingly understand and support this.

In pursuit of these goals it will be necessary to identify and engage opportunities, entrepreneurs, and risk takers.

Diego Arria initiated non-official meetings of Security Council members, others pushed the formula and initiative. More recently activists in “new diplomacy” secured the Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty and the International Criminal Court. There are many other examples of policy and international relations entrepreneurial initiative, not least of which is the original Helsinki Process (and Treaty) which is all too often overlooked in passing around credit for the end of the Cold War.

Recommendation 6 – Build Helsinki Group Capacity for Next Steps.

The current Helsinki Group can seek out opportunities and risk takers to promote creative, practical initiatives to strengthen a parliamentary role in global governance. To do so, the Group (before or after the 2005 Conference) will need some capacity to develop strategies, implementation plans, on-going evaluations and strategic assessments, Track II/public diplomacy, follow-up and monitoring.

#### Recommendation 7 – Seize the U.S. Moment

The Group will need government and political champions. A next wave of parliamentarians will be key. The re-elected Bush administration has suggested it may reach out for international re-engagement. Such an opportunity should be seized as soon as possible and American legislators engaged at a moment of opportunity and hunger for restoring U.S. image in the world.

The next President of the General Assembly could experiment with an (ad hoc) Committee of Elected Representatives. Who will that President be? How could she be elected? The President of the ECOSOC could call for a special meeting with BWIs and parliamentarians.

Any member of the Security Council can invoke Arria and organize a meeting with Member State parliamentarians on a trial basis – should a commitment to do this influence (regionally) who gets elected in November? Will Finland and Tanzania be willing to promote this in the politics of the General Assembly?

Some Member States could set precedents and practices in the engagement of parliamentarians at the United Nations General Assembly and Committee (Austria, Barbados?), at the Security Council (Germany, Romania, Brazil, Chile?) and at ECOSOC (Finland, Tanzania?). At least some others would be under increasing pressure to follow.

The Socialist International at its next Council meeting in Johannesburg, November 15-16 could be asked to open discussions with the other Internationals on a Security Council Working Group.

Are there other international organizations/groups that should be engaged and addressed in coming months? Could some of the major parliamentary associations call for a more formal role for elected representatives in international institutions/ the United Nations? (Are we hostage to the existing UN – IPU relationship?).

Does the Helsinki Group wish to consider, organize and undertake a coordinated campaign to promote these interests, look for opportunities and find entrepreneurs and risk takers? Does it have the capacity to do so? If not- then what needs to be done and by whom?

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I would like to thank the Helsinki Group and Track 1 participants for the opportunity to contribute to this important and timely project, and to thank John Foster for encouragement and stimulating thinking. I will welcome any opportunity to continue discussions about the way ahead.

Sincerely,

Steve Lee  
Ottawa

(\*) Steve Lee served the Parliament of Canada for 10 years as a senior advisor and researcher in international affairs. He has also served a national political party as Director of International Affairs, and has served the Canadian government as Executive Director of the Centre for Foreign Policy, as a member of the Foreign Minister's Advisory Board, and as a senior policy advisor in several government departments. He teaches and is published in Canada and abroad. An OSCE election observer, he holds the Presidential Medal of the Slovak Republic, and a university medal for work in post-communist Europe.

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