

Informal Notes of the Breakfast Dialogue
on the Follow-up to Rio+20 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda
Ideal Global Governance: Reframing Multilateralism for Decision Making
14 February 2013

Organized by the Bahá'í International Community and International Movement ATD Fourth World

A diverse group of stakeholders¹ convened to informally discuss key issues on the topic of reframing multilateralism for decision-making. The following are highlights of the comments made during this discussion:

- The UN has no will itself; it is just a forum for debate, discussion, and hopefully agreement. Its success or failure therefore depends on the ability of member states to reach agreement.
- Human societies are in constant evolution, and international systems of governance and decision-making have to adapt to that reality. We cannot succeed if we stick too strongly to traditional mentalities based on 19th century ideas of the nation-state.
- Rio+20 brings a new conception of human development that will have an effect in every country and even on the common citizen. It will, however, require time.
- Multilateralism is strongly influenced by the development of sub-national entities such as civil society groups and local governments, and global institutions with some super-national features.
- Given the evolution of multilateralism, the social contract needs to be renegotiated. We no longer need the protection of the state; we need the protection of a much larger entity. We must recognize that solving global problems will sometimes require giving away a little of our national sovereignty.
- Ongoing processes affecting multilateral relations include reform and strengthening of ECOSOC, reform and improvement of the Security Council, a commission for reforming the UN charter, and ideas centered on transforming the UN into something like a world parliament.
- Effective approaches often involve action that is based on themes that have global resonance, but which are illumined by the narratives of local communities.
- To be effective, multilateral negotiation needs to identify common denominators among differing actors. One useful criterion: What will help advance humankind?
- Multilateralism will increasingly need to account for powerful businesses/corporations, which today hold significant wealth, can mobilize resources around the world, and exert considerable influence on governments. These are indirect players in global governance.
- It is important to look at current processes such as Post-2015 as an opportunity to reframe multilateralism.
- One way to address frustration with the current state of multilateralism is to adopt a historical perspective. It took 3,000 to 4,000 years for humanity to create an organization where everyone is represented in some fashion, and it will take another 100-300 years for multilateralism to work as we would like it to. But it is still better to have it than to not.
- Diplomats cannot work with or follow the advice of all NGOs, but they cannot come to international fora with ideas generated only by themselves, but from the people of their countries – an idea some have called “social diplomacy”.
- Key methods of improving global governance could include curbing unbridled nationalism, eliminating prejudice, dealing with extremes of wealth and poverty, promoting gender equality,

¹ Permanent Missions represented: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Germany, Guyana, Ireland, Japan, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Mali, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Kingdom, and European Union. UN represented: Executive Office of the Secretary General, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Post-2015 High-level Panel Secretariat, UNICEF, UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service, and UN Women Civil Society Organizations represented: Bahá'í International Community, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Global Policy Forum, Good Shepard International Justice Peace Office, International Council for Social Welfare, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Presentation Association, United Nations Foundation, World Vision International, and Young Women's Christian Association.

addressing health challenges such as HIV/AIDS, providing young people with the tools and skills to make social impact today, strengthening the role of communities in society, and formulating policy putting the needs of the most vulnerable first.

Participants raised the following questions:

- Civil society is becoming more and more important, but some feel there are already too many NGOs to cooperate efficiently. How can we address this challenge?
- The successes of the UN have often come from diplomats who are not afraid to make personal interventions. How can diplomats reconcile the importance of their own vision and convictions with the need to represent the views of their capitals?
- Given the growing importance of the corporate sector, could legally binding systems of determining/shaping corporate leadership be developed?
- The idea of a high level global coordination council for economic affairs – like the Security Council for economics – has been around for a long time, but has never been seriously taken up, and in some cases been actively avoided. What needs to be done to change this reluctance?
- To avoid a piecemeal approach to transforming global governance, could a second San Francisco or a second Bretton Woods be convened? This could serve as an occasion to start discussions on what structures, mandates, systems, etc. will be necessary going forward.

The following links are links to the projects mentioned during the session:

- Ekta Transglobal Foundation, Inc: <http://www.ektatransglobal.org>
- DevInfo: <http://www.devinfo.org>