



Meeting 5 Summary - 1 November Tipping the Scales: Proposals for UN Reform in a Time of Need

Proposals for reform

- Convene a General Conference on review of the UN Charter, under Article 109
 - The legal foundations of the Charter need to be brought into the 21st century.
 - The Summit of the Future can build momentum toward a review Conference.
 - A Conference is provided for in the Charter and therefore very implementable.
 - The broad-based consultations at a review Conference would be useful in themselves.

• Begin practical implementation of the UN Youth Office

- The Office should be an independent high-level body, as opposed to a department of another office, which would be subject to budget cuts.
- The Office should seek quick, low-cost wins to establish credibility and potential, such as championing OCA youth perspectives across all agendas.
- The Office could serve as a clearinghouse for youth-related research, and in the longer term, act as a secretariat for a UN Youth Council

• Ensure full compliance with human rights commitments

- Human rights mechanisms should be provided with sustainable financing, sufficient for them to deliver on their mandates.
- All treaty bodies receiving reports should establish a predictable calendar with full reviews every 8 years and midpoint follow-up reviews.
- CS representatives should have greater access to the UN campus. Similarly, the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs should not indefinitely defer applications.

• Create a single, high-level UN champion for Civil Society

 Such a champion could provide strategic direction, hold long-term memory, and remove barriers. It would not seek to represent CS organizations, but embody commitment to engage with them

• Take practical steps to facilitate CS participation at the UN

- The UN Civil Society Unit, DGC website, and announcement bulletin should be revamped to better reflect opportunities to engage and time-sensitive deadlines.
- Multi-stakeholder dialogues should be institutionalized in all UN processes, for example by the PGA's office including in co-facilitators' appointment letters.
- The PGAs's Office should have a clear CS focal point. The PGA should also make a habit of meeting with local CS actors on all official trips.

Establish a UN Emergency Peace Service

• Such a first-responding body would strengthen capacity for prevention of armed conflict, humanitarian disaster, and similar developments.

• Ensure that needed action can be taken on the basis of majority decision

- Consensus is desirable, but not at the cost of paralysis.
- **Establish chains of responsibility**, similar to the Kimberley Process developed around blood diamonds, that reinforce social values higher than financial profit alone.
- Restore a measure of the authority and autonomy of the office of the SG.

























Reflections

- A lot of time at the UN is spent talking about the what, when, and why; more time and attention needs to be devoted to the 'how'.
- In considering the 'how', it's important to recognize that political processes unfold in capitals as much as UNHQ. NGOs should work in capitals and not only with representatives in NYC.
- Thinking must go beyond current frameworks. If we were designing the UN from scratch, what would it look like? What entities wouldn't be included? What might take their place?
- There are more global challenges than resources. How should needs be prioritized, if it is accepted that the UN can't solve all problems?
- How can the performance and impact of UN programs and policies be more accurately and holistically assessed?
- Desire for radical UN reform should not obscure the value of achieving smaller steps. We want home runs, but singles and doubles can do much of the work. We should resist the urge to collapse overall reform of the UN system to the Security Council alone.
- The relationship between crisis and reform is complex. Change can be difficult in times of crisis, because trust might not have been built. Yet crisis also interrupts the status quo and demonstrates why change is needed, potentially opening new possibilities.
- CS involvement will mean little unless paradigms based in GDP growth are left behind.
- Meaningful steps of reform, such as convening a conference for Charter review, are not
 without risk. Such steps could make things worse. But perpetuating the status quo also
 involves risk. Present challenges call for an audacity of imagination.
- Proposals made today have often been tried in the past. We need to keep those experiences in mind, including why they did or didn't succeed.
- Review of past experiences should reflect an orientation toward learning and the development of capacity. Just because a baby falls the first time it tries to walk, doesn't mean helping it learn is a lost cause.
- Reforms need to be reformable. Previously there was an Agenda for Peace and a Declaration on Future Generations, but these didn't stand the test of time and now require renegotiation. We need to be able to differentiate between stability on the one hand, and static institutions and frameworks, on the other.
- "Enlightened state sovereignty" can be a useful concept. The only rational and useful view of sovereignty today is one that is consistent with a reliable and functioning global order. Any other view, ultimately, undermines goals of national wellbeing.
- The UN can play a key role in creating and building trust. Trust is the recognition of responsibility and acceptance of accountability for agreements and treaties.
- The UN must be a diverse and representative institution. Access to the UNSG's Office that is supported only or primarily through Western funding is problematic and contrary to the founding spirit of the UN.
- Adopting more inclusive models of governance will impact the roles that Member States play at the international level. This needs to be acknowledged frankly and explored collectively.
- The key question before the multilateral system is whether needed actions will be taken as a matter of conscious choice and prevention, reflecting broad based consultation, or whether they will be prompted by the suffering provoked by climate change, conflict, etc.

























