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## Statement to Panel of Eminent Persons

November 2003

Global Policy Forum welcomes the Panel and applauds its effort to strengthen relations between the United Nations and NGOs. GPF has already interacted with the Panel's members and secretariat – at a Geneva conference of NGLS, at President Cardoso's hearing in New York, and in conversations with Project Director John Clark.

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We have submitted various documents to the Panel, including our wide-ranging report "NGOs and the United Nations" of May 1999 – a report that we believe is still largely relevant and applicable. Most of the problems it identified have not been solved. GPF issued that document in its own name, but the report reflects the thinking of many NGO colleagues who we consulted.

We have also submitted our statement on the ODS ("NGO Access to the United Nations ~Official Documents System"), as well as a paper by GPF Executive Director James Paul on "NGOs and the Security Council" (2003) and a paper by Harold Paine and Birgit Gratzner, published by our partners at WEED, on "Rev. Moon and the United Nations: a challenge for the NGO Community" (2001). Further, we have called the Panel's attention to our extensive web site, with its hundreds of documents on NGOs and the UN.

This new statement will not recapitulate or summarize the many issues we have raised in detail over the years. Instead, it will highlight a few matters that we think are of special importance or that need additional or updated commentary.

### **1. NGOs' Great Contribution should be strengthened**

We begin by affirming that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participate vitally in the international system. They contribute valuable information and

ideas, advocate effectively for positive change, provide essential operational capacity in emergencies and development efforts, and generally increase the accountability and legitimacy of the global governance process. Most NGOs also strongly support the UN as an institution.

This report assumes that NGOs will grow in importance in the years ahead and that the United Nations must find ways to be ever more open to NGO partnership. Global policy making today and in the years to come will require new levels of participation of NGOs, if it is to be effective in a globalizing, ever more interdependent world.

We do not see NGOs as paragons of virtue or perfect expressions of the public interest. Indeed, we will point out ways that some NGOs fall well short of such ideals. Nevertheless, we believe that NGOs bring to the global policy making process a vitally important voice that complements and widens the policy discourse, resulting in better and more legitimate decisions.

For these reasons, the United Nations should widen NGO access to the organization and to UN negotiations and decision-making processes.

In what follows, we will identify serious problems, including problems for which UN officials and NGOs are responsible. We do this in a constructive spirit, in an effort to address real concerns and to enable the Panel to make the most of its important mandate.

## **2. How Many NGOs?**

UN officials have often referred pointedly to the large and rapidly-growing number of UN-affiliated NGOs, as if this poses a serious problem to the organization or leads to an impending crisis. Several officials have used the term "explosive growth," suggesting that NGOs are a time-bomb about to go off. We hope that the Panel will interpret the growing NGO interest and involvement as a positive development for the United Nations. As the Secretary General has said, the UN needs partnerships with NGOs to be effective and relevant in the 21st century. The Panel can help foster a new mind-set and language among UN policy makers, reflecting a more positive assessment of NGOs' role.

If the Panel makes reference in its report to the number of NGOs, we hope that it will make a clear distinction between the increasing number of NGOs with accreditation (which is only a formal relationship) and the number (increasing or not) of NGOs that are actually interacting with the UN and/or physically present at UN functions or at UN sites. If reference is made to the latter (interaction), the Panel should base its statements on clear and verifiable data, rather than vague assertions. Such clarity will avoid exaggeration and will be essential to the

usefulness and credibility of the Panel's report in the eyes of the NGO community.

### **3. Hostile and Ultra-Conservative NGOs: a challenge that calls for new understandings of "NGO Responsibilities"**

For nearly fifty years, the NGO community at the UN comprised organizations with values similar to those of the United Nations itself. Indeed, many of them helped build public support for the founding of the UN in the 1940s. Whatever differences these organizations had among themselves, they tended to favor peace, disarmament, equality, human rights and social justice. Above all, they were supportive of the UN as an institution and held it in high regard. NGOs with conservative, right-wing, or ultranationalist views, hostile towards the UN, did not seek accreditation and shunned the organization.

In the past decade, this situation has changed, as organizations like the Heritage Foundation, the National Rifle Association, evangelical religious organizations, and the Rev. Moon's front groups have applied for and been granted accreditation. These NGOs have at times been disruptive of UN meetings, because they have felt less commitment to the UN and even may have aimed to disrupt it. Their actions have created a strain between the UN and the NGO community more generally.

Most NGOs are strongly committed to pluralism and they oppose any political criterion for accreditation. However, all suffer from the present situation. NGO leaders must respond and they should consider self-regulation, since new rules and regulations are clearly needed. For example, there must be restrictions on participation by large numbers of representatives from a single, small organization— such as the 35 monks from a single Canadian monastery who actively participated in the Cairo+5 follow-up in 2003.

In our view, the NGO community should develop proposals, not the UN Secretariat or member states. It is time for the NGO community to address its own problems and to create a clear set of commitments and responsibilities that can manage relations with the UN into the future. The Panel should promote action along these lines and the Secretariat might take the matter up with leading NGO interlocutors. In particular, there might be an exchange of rights and responsibilities (see below #5).

### **4. State-NGO Relations: Questions of Independence and Credibility**

The concepts of "civil society" and of "non-governmental organizations" imply independence of citizen groups from states. In the minds of many, NGOs are fiercely independent and they receive their funding entirely from membership

dues. The reality is quite different. NGOs are often excessively influenced by states. States have legal and financial means to pressure NGOs and to lure them into unequal partnerships. NGOs in the former Soviet Union were typically subordinate to the state or the ruling party. This type of arrangement continues today in many monolithic states, creating what are often referred to as GONGOs, or government-controlled NGOs.

In addition, and much less widely commented, powerful democratic states exercise undue influence on NGOs, through financial relationships. Such states often provide large sums to NGOs for work in the international arena, including multimillion dollar contracts with humanitarian organizations and other providers of development assistance – funding that can represent half or even three-quarters of total NGO revenues. The amount and percentage of state funding of humanitarian NGOs in Western countries has risen sharply in the past fifteen years. As a result, dues and citizen contributions have declined as a percentage of NGO budgets and member control has waned. Governments have sometimes used their financial leverage over NGOs to press for policy conformity. As a result, a number of humanitarian organizations have engaged in joint exercises with government military planners and many have agreed to a blurring of the distinction between humanitarian action and military/political action.

Many policy-oriented NGOs also receive funds from governments for policy work that projects the states' national interests into the world of civil society. States buy NGOs' policy credibility and advocacy capability, as an adjunct to their traditional diplomacy. A number of NGOs active at UN headquarters take government grants and some rely very heavily on government funding. Some observers would argue that these relationships are based on mutual concerns and consenting "partnerships." In our view, however, the relationships are more problematic. We know of cases in which states have proposed and arranged funding for entirely new NGO projects and programs. Such arrangements pump large resources into NGOs, but they do not speak well for NGO accountability and independence.

The Panel should consider how these developments affect NGO action at the UN and what new rules or guidelines the UN should adopt to enforce NGO accountability and discourage government abuse. At the very least, NGOs should be encouraged or required to make clear their government funding when they carry out a particular project. One might also ask: at what level of state funding does an NGO stop being part of "civil society?"

## **5. Secretariat and NGOs: Need for consultation when rules change**

Secretariat officials and staff often have very positive relations with NGO representatives. NGOs are grateful for the support they get every day from

friends in the Secretariat. Relations with many in the security service are likewise positive and have improved substantially through mutual effort and the positive leadership of Chief McCann.

Paradoxically, however, when the UN creates new rules and security arrangements, the institution often acts in a very high-handed and bureaucratic way. NGOs often learn about new rules only after the rules are already in force.

Since 1999, the NGO community in New York has strongly urged the Secretariat, including the security service, not to change rules without prior consultation with NGO leaders, a serious opportunity to hear NGO points of view and a readiness to take NGO concerns into account.

Unfortunately, arbitrary rule changes persist. The UN's "cost-recovery" approach to NGO use of headquarters facilities provides a good example. Until about 2000, NGOs could obtain UN conference rooms without charge, for events that were related to UN conferences, prep comms and other UN activities. Since then, the UN has sought to impose charges for such use, without consulting NGOs. NGOs discovered that charges had been put in place not by a general announcement of charges and conditions, but by receiving unexpected bills in the mail!

Since then, NGOs have discovered that the Secretariat imposes charges inconsistently – fees for the same facilities vary and some organizations may be exempt from charges altogether. NGOs have not been able to obtain a statement of the scale and condition of fees, which remains a closely-held secret that high officials have said they are not privy to. NGOs are thus at the mercy of arbitrary action by persons unknown in the Secretariat. Naturally, this has stirred resentment and probably it has reduced the number of NGO meetings in the headquarters complex, a setback for UN-NGO cooperation.

The pass office in New York has operated in a particularly arbitrary and unaccountable manner and its ground rules appear to change from one case to the next. When NGO leaders have raised such problems, UN officials have insisted that the pass office acts outside of established lines of authority and eludes orders. This seems highly improbable. In our view, pass office problems suggest higher officials seeking to avoid responsibility. The pass office is often the place where NGOs encounter new or temporarily changing rules for the first time. If officials discussed new rules with NGOs in advance, and assumed their proper responsibility for them, the pass office would probably not be the scene of so much conflict and stress.

Since the 1999 battles over the Memorandum of Mr. Iqbal Riza, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary General, the UN has made progress in reducing arbitrary rule-changes. But unaccountable action remains deeply-ingrained in the Secretariat.

NGOs lack a firm UN commitment to the principle of consultation. GPF believes that the UN should express this principle through a memorandum of understanding from the Secretary General, a document that could be enlarged to form a new "NGO Bill of Rights." Such an undertaking could be combined with discussions towards a parallel "NGO Responsibilities" document.

## **6. Lack of Clear & Consistent Standing Rules**

The UN has never published clear standing rules governing NGO physical access and conduct in UN buildings and conferences. Such rules remain vague and obscure, even though the UN sometimes expels NGOs from events or even denies them accreditation for breaking these rules. Fortunately the UN has not commonly practiced abusive enforcement. Nonetheless, the danger of abuse grows, at a time of tightened security, eroding civil rights in the host country, and rising concern about terrorism and security threats.

NGOs do not want a vast rulebook, but the UN should set down basic rules and make them available to all those obtaining a grounds pass, whether temporary or annual, whether at UN permanent sites or at off-site conferences. If the UN clarifies its rules, it might in the process relax some of its most restrictive expectations and adapt to an environment in which the organization is becoming more "political" and less "diplomatic." At the same time, clear rules can remind NGOs that the UN is not the same terrain as their national political environment and can alert representatives to likely consequences. For an institution defending the "rule of law," this would seem a logical step.

The Secretariat should codify its standing rules through full consultation with the NGO community.

## **7. Funding of NGO Service Units**

The UN suffers from an impossibly tight budget. Nonetheless, if the organization is to improve its interaction with NGOs, it must strengthen its funding of services for NGOs. Additional funding would help to improve existing services, to increase the use of information technology in NGO services and to broaden service provision. Funding should be restored in funds, agencies and programs, many of which have eliminated their NGO offices in response to budget pressures.

We would suggest increased funding for all UN units, including the two NGO Sections (DPI and ECOSOC) but most especially for NGLS, which has proven to be a uniquely valuable resource and advocate for NGOs. At present, NGLS operates on a very small core budget of about \$500,000, supplemented by voluntary contributions and private fund-raising. Since NGLS serves the entire UN

system, operates in both Geneva and New York, and has worldwide travel and administrative responsibilities, the core budget is unacceptably small.

#### **8. NGO "Visiting Committees" to Provide Feedback and Assessment of NGO Service Units**

NGOs know a lot about the UN units that directly oversee NGOs and provide NGOs with accreditation and other services. To promote the best level of service and the highest degree of mutual understanding, the Secretary General should set up a "Visiting Committee" of NGOs that could develop reports on the work of these units on a regular basis – for instance, once every two or three years. Such reports could emerge from a "visiting" process of about a week that would involve interviews with staff and NGOs, examination of programming and planning, and more. The reports would provide those overseeing these units and those leading them with valuable feedback that could lead to improved services and new service ideas and ideals.

Such a review process could usefully be applied to the ECOSOC and DPI NGO sections as well as NGLS. If successful, the UN might create a similar process of review to consider the UN web site, the pass office and the security services. Members of such panels might be named jointly by the Secretary General and CONGO. They might issue a public report. They might also act privately, to deal with sensitive topics such as personnel matters.

#### **9. Service Units' Communication with NGOs**

NGO service units tend to communicate with NGOs using very traditional means – printed letters, printed reports, magazines and other documents sent by post. This method is old-fashioned, slow and expensive and seems quite antiquated to many NGOs, who are accustomed to operating with email and the web. While some older NGO representatives appreciate the familiar printed materials, many NGOs relegate these mailings immediately to the trash can. Letters and documents sent by post travel very slowly and bring news from the UN to distant locations only after long delays.

We would suggest that the NGO service units review these methods, using them only as absolutely necessary to communicate with NGOs that do not have email and web access or that prefer traditional methods. For the majority of NGOs with access to modern communication facilities, the units should allow recipients to opt out of mailings, in favor of email communications. This will save money and reduce the negative environmental impact of so much printed matter.

At the same time, the service units should consider more effective use of email and the web. Printed matter cannot be superceded without UN units making much better use of IT methods in their work.

#### **10. NGO Access to Information: UNICs, Print Documents, Web & ODS**

The UN is reducing access to information in its two most important traditional areas: UN Information Centers and print versions of official documents. These cost-reduction measures have a negative impact on NGOs. The Department of Public Information is about to close many European UNICS. Meanwhile, the Secretariat has greatly decreased the print-run of official documents and during 2003 it closed the document window at headquarters where NGOs often obtained print documents.

GPF regrets the UN's elimination of the European UNICs as a cost-saving measure and we are especially dumbfounded at the recent US proposal to eliminate the UNIC in Washington, DC, a place where the UN especially needs to explain its work and a city where a large number of NGOs are present. UNICs provide a unique information presence of the UN and they service NGO information needs everywhere. We note that member states expressing enthusiasm for UNIC closure have not closed their own national information centers and we note that the European Union is expanding its own information centers at this time. The Panel should consider UNICs as an NGO resource and should counsel strongly against further closures.

In another information area, the UN has done a very good job in developing new information provision through its web site. UN agencies, funds and programs have likewise built substantial sites that help to inform NGOs and the public. The UN has wisely devoted considerable resources to this effort and the UN site has continuously evolved, with new information provision. The new Security Council site, put up in 2003, is an outstanding innovation in this area. NGOs use the UN web presence very heavily.

The web does not provide access to many UN documents, however. According to an estimate by the IT section of the Secretariat, the UN web site does not provide access to more than 10% of all current UN documents and access to English documents is greater than in other languages, especially Russian, Chinese and Arabic. For this reason, NGOs have long sought access to the UN "Official Documents System" (ODS). Global Policy Forum has been campaigning with NGO partners for over six years for such access. On April 25, 1997, twelve major NGOs sent a memorandum to the Secretary General urging NGO access to the ODS.

NGOs point out that the ODS: (1) makes documents available worldwide in all official languages, greatly increasing access by NGOs in developing countries, (2) makes documents available as soon as they are released, whereas documents that are posted on the website may not be posted for days or even weeks, (3) allows a full-text search by keyword, which is not possible on the web, (4) is increasingly providing an important historical document archive back to 1945. NGO access to ODS would certainly save the UN considerable costs in the long run. For these reasons and more (see GPF paper), NGO access to ODS would be an important step in UN transparency and NGO information access.

NGOs have raised the issue many times since 1997, in meetings with the Secretary General and with other UN officials, as well as meeting with delegations. Recently, in June, 2003, the CONGO board adopted a resolution urging UN provision of ODS access. Thirty-five NGO leaders signed a similar statement at the NGLS conference in Geneva. The World Federalist Movement, Third World Network and many other NGOs have sent letters to delegates or raised the issue in meetings.

GPF is pleased that a recent report of the Joint Inspection Unit on ODS referred favorably to the provision of gratis access. [See Recommendation 3, page vi, "From the Optical Disk System to the Official Documents System (ODS): Status of Implementation and Evaluation" (Geneva, 2003) JIU/REP/2003/3]

GPF is extremely grateful to President Cardoso for his strong advocacy of NGO access to ODS through his letter to the Secretary General. We are also glad to learn that the Secretary General has indicated his intention of urging the General Assembly to approve the necessary budget plans. NGOs are now lobbying with delegations and we are hopeful that the Fifth (Budget) Committee will leave the necessary funding line in the Secretariat's draft biennial budget for 2004-2005. We urge the Panel to continue to use its influence to press for this result as the budget negotiations reach their final phase in December. Two years ago, the cost item was cut from the budget at the last minute. This must not happen again!

## **11. Leadership on NGO issues in the Secretariat**

Since 1997, Secretariat oversight and leadership on NGO matters has resided in the office of Gillian Martin Sorensen, Assistant Secretary General for External Affairs. This arrangement placed NGO matters directly in the Executive Office of the Secretary General (an advantage). It also meant that the NGO portfolio was only one of many under Ms. Sorensen's responsibility (a disadvantage) and it meant that NGO oversight was part of an office of "external affairs" (seen by NGOs as symbolically negative).

At the time of our 1999 report, there was considerable conflict between Ms. Sorensen and NGOs, but efforts on both sides led to considerable improvement and far better communication. Regular meetings helped greatly and led to improved NGO relations with the security service as well.

Since Ms. Sorensen has now left the Secretariat, there is a clear opportunity to review and revise the arrangement for NGO responsibilities in UN leadership. GPF suggests that the Panel propose a new post at the ASG level in the Executive Office whose sole responsibility would be NGOs. Such an official would be able to interact regularly with NGOs, not only at headquarters but around the world. Such a person would also be able to devote time to solving NGO problems, promoting dialogue between NGOs and the UN, advocating for a greater NGO role, and more. To counteract pressures for tightened security, more rules and less NGO access, NGOs need a strong advocate for their concerns at the highest levels of the UN.

## **12. Infrastructure**

The UN buildings are badly dilapidated and they provide poor infrastructure for NGOs. Hopefully the extensive renovation planned in the coming years will take care of some of these problems. However, the UN has not consulted NGOs about their needs and priorities in the renovation. It is not too late for consultation, to make sure that design details take NGO needs into account. For instance, it would be helpful for NGOs to have plugs for laptop computers in the galleries of meeting halls. NGOs are not confident that the UN's design consultants will think of such details.

The UN has at times been astonishingly reluctant to correct infrastructure problems that are vital to NGO interests. For example, working earpieces for access to translation have been lacking in many conference hall galleries where NGO representatives sit. This has been a special concern to NGOs who frequently use the Security Council gallery.

NGOs began to request repairs to earpieces in the Security Council gallery in 1998 or 1999. High officials promised action, but the earpieces remained broken. When NGOs complained, they were given a variety of excuses, including that repair orders had been "lost in the bureaucratic system." NGOs then felt compelled to campaign with friendly delegations. Several ambassadors raised the issue informally, but to no avail. Even an intervention by Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock of the UK, when serving as Council president, did not stir the Secretariat to prompt action (see letter of 30 July 2002 from the President of the Council). But at last the wheels began to turn. Later in 2002, four years after the first requests, repairs were finally made. This shows what a low priority the Secretariat has accorded to high-importance NGO needs.

### **13. Office Space & Facilities in New York**

NGO space and facilities at headquarters depends very much on the Church Center for the UN, located at 44th Street and First Avenue, at 777 UN Plaza, a small office building owned by the United Methodist Church housing the offices of the International Peace Academy, the World Federalist Movement, the Quaker UN Office, the Amnesty International UN Office, and Global Policy Forum, among many others. The building also has many meeting rooms. But with a growing number of NGOs having full-time representation at headquarters and with a growing number of conferences held at headquarters, the CCUN has been unable to meet the new level of demand for offices and, above all, for meeting space. The UN and its agencies, funds and programs have been increasingly renting meeting space in the building, "crowding out" NGO users. Commercial space in the immediate area of UN headquarters is either very expensive or too dilapidated. It does not offer many viable alternatives for NGO use.

The UN should include in its new building program provision for NGO space, especially low-cost NGO meeting rooms and tax-exempt, at-cost rental space for NGO offices. Such arrangements would enable NGOs to find sufficient accommodation in New York in the years ahead, so that they could expand their work with the UN and its agencies.

### **14. NGOs and the Security Council**

NGOs have developed an active dialogue process with Security Council members. The NGO Working Group on the Security Council, organized by GPF, meets on average about once a week with a Council ambassador and sometimes also with a high UN official. This process, which began in early 1997, has been completely unofficial and informal. It is testament to the importance of NGO voices and to the flexibility and responsiveness of delegations.

The Council eventually agreed in 2000 to open up the Arria Formula – an informal briefing process – to allow NGOs to brief the Council. NGOs now have created a number of specialized advocacy groups on Council issues and they meet often with Council delegations in a variety of contexts, including bilateral meetings and informal events. The NGO Working Group has even met with several foreign ministers.

Consultation works well at headquarters, but it is far from satisfactory in crisis-torn areas where the Council is active. The Council should make a greater effort to be in contact with NGOs when it goes on field missions. Ambassadors in the leadership of the missions and Secretariat planners of the mission itineraries must be sure to include meetings with appropriate NGOs including women's NGOs and NGOs serving youth and concerned with the situation of child soldiers.

NGOs in New York are willing to make suggestions as to potential NGO interlocutors in the field, but there should be a broad system of inputs solicited for this purpose. Haphazard meetings of this kind can be counterproductive and obviously such meetings in war-torn areas may not be as smooth and easy as meeting with NGOs in the calm of New York. Council members will have to give this issue more thought and only regular practice will show the way forward.

#### **15. NGOs and UN Conferences**

NGOs regret that the UN has cut back on its global conferences, largely a result of pressure from a single member state and a frustration at blocked progress in global policy negotiations. Those conferences, held so successfully in the 1990s, helped to build the world-wide NGO movement and give the UN a global policy profile for millions of ordinary citizens. The UN's relationship with NGOs would be much more positive – and much more balanced geographically – if it continued to hold such conferences, building consensus through regional preliminary meetings.

NGO rights at conferences should be established on a standard basis and not subject to time-consuming case-by-case negotiation by the General Assembly. The office of the General Assembly president has developed information on past practices of NGO conference accreditation. The GA should act on a standard text that would serve as the basis for accreditation to all conferences.

#### **16. NGOs and the General Assembly**

NGOs have sought better access to the General Assembly, but progress towards this goal has been disappointing. Member states rebuffed this idea when it was negotiated under the leadership of Ambassador Ahmed Kamal of Pakistan in 1996-97. But serious thought should again be given to action along these lines by the Panel. Member states might consider a step-by-step approach, in which initial NGO rights are relatively modest. The World Federalist Movement has been the leader of the NGO community on this issue and the Panel should give special thought to WFM input on the matter.

#### **17. NGOs and the Circulation of Documents**

NGOs with ECOSOC accreditation have the right to have short statements translated and circulated by the Secretariat. This old fashioned method of communicating with delegates is now partially superseded by email and web sites. Without abandoning the old rights, the UN might consider developing new and more effective methods to promote NGO document circulation to delegations. For example, accredited NGOs might be permitted to post materials (in the language of submission) on an intranet for delegates' consideration.

Better yet, the UN might send out accredited NGO statements to delegations on a UN list-serv. The UN might also add appropriate NGO material on the official UN site or create links to NGO sites. The UN might also circulate web URLs of NGO policy papers to delegations by email. The Panel should consider various ways to bring these practices into line with current technologies, to gain more effective document circulation, and to save a lot of wasted paper!

#### **18. Accreditation Processes & Political Pressure: An Expert Review Panel?**

We pointed out in our 1999 report that the accreditation process for NGOs is very time-consuming and very political, especially in the case of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs. As a result, legitimate NGOs that annoy or criticize member states for any reason can face rejection of their accreditation application or (once accredited) a challenge to their quadrennial reports. In our 1999 report, we mentioned the case of Human Rights in China, but that NGO is by no means the only one to suffer in this way in the ECOSOC process. The UN has also excluded NGOs from DPI and conference accreditation for what are widely seen as illegitimate political reasons. The current process, even when it leads to NGO success, can be unnecessarily demeaning and humiliating, which can discourage NGO participation.

The Panel should consider ways around this overly political process by proposing an expert review process that might stand on its own or work to provide a pre-selection to the Committee. In the meantime, we welcome efforts by the NGO Section to streamline the application process, digitize the document review, and make the NGO review process as smooth and painless as possible, in what remain difficult circumstances.

#### **19. Business & "Civil Society"**

We are concerned that the UN's increasingly active interaction with business companies may crowd out its relationship with NGOs. We believe that the UN system has two or three times as many staff working on business "partnerships," the Global Compact and other corporate programs as those working on NGO relations. In our view, large companies already have too much power and influence, which they often exercise through governments, as well as through highly-paid lobbyists. We suggest that the UN use great restraint in its relationship with such companies. We believe that under no circumstances should the UN give accreditation to for-profit companies, since non-profit business associations already have NGO status and already provide representation.

#### **20. Challenge of Broad Participation**

The NGOs presently active at the UN do not adequately reflect the world's people, though they probably do so far more effectively than NGOs in 1945 or even 1985. International NGOs must appoint more staff and representatives from the global South and Southern NGOs must find ways (and find assistance) to gain regular representation at UN headquarters

The UN can and must work to improve this situation and the Panel can make constructive recommendations, including better communication strategies (like free access to the ODS), more use of telecommunications, more travel funds, meeting space at regional offices, better outreach and so on.

To attract growing and constructive NGO engagement worldwide, the UN must do more than provide better rules and a more welcoming atmosphere. The UN must become a policy arena where NGO and citizen concerns are seen to make a difference and where important issues of economic and social policy are discussed and decided. The solution to this problem lies beyond the capacity of the Panel. The most powerful member states, and particularly the United States of America, must ease their opposition to a more democratic world order. Only in such conditions can the United Nations and NGOs flourish together as advocates of peace, social justice and human dignity.

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