

# **Getting from A to B: How do we go about Creating Workable Global Institutions?**

**Contribution to the Creating a Workable World Conference,**

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## **Abstract**

Most people analysing global governance recognize the current system is not able to offer effective decision-making for the good of the world population. Whether it be the Middle East, the environment, financial crises, refugees or any other of a myriad global challenges, our international system and its institutions are not able to debate and deliver workable solutions. This we know. But here the agreement ends. Some are against expanded global governance. Some just do not think our current system of sovereign states will allow it to happen. Despite this, others are busy with plans to reform or to build new institutions. Amidst all this hullabaloo, those who are crafting transformed institutions for a more workable world have all but forgotten one crucial question: *how* do we get to transform global governance? How do we get from 'A' to 'B'? This paper attempts to provide the outline of a path forward. What are the impediments to moving toward an alternative global constitution and institutions? How do we start the thinking process? What are the elements of current international relations that impinge on the debate? What are the components of a workable world? What would effective global institutions look like? How do we build coalitions to initiate and nurture reforms, that is, to martial, monitor and sustain support for the reform agenda? More specifically, like with the MDGs and the SDGs, how do we set goals, mobilize actors, organize communications and education, and create agendas, targets, indicators to make it happen? Of course, research and analysis on specific reform proposals will go on apace, but our object must be to get the issue of *how* to create improved global institutions on the agenda. This paper will analyse these various questions to see how we can set an agenda to move the world ahead.

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### **Specifying the need for reform of global institutions:**

The world has a desperate need for global institutions capable of making workable decisions about the multitude of global problems that are plaguing the globe. Ask anyone and they will tell you the world is challenged by anyone or several of the following problems: conflicts (civil and international), climate change, the wealth-poverty gap, terrorism, pollution, global warming, the plight of women and children, fundamentalism, mass migrations, pandemics, financial crises and enfeebled states etc. But, what most people do not seem to recognize is that each one of these global challenges has one common denominator: the world is incapable of taking authoritative decisions that will command respect and be adhered to. Syria: no decisions. Ukraine: no decisions. South Pacific: no decisions. Israel and Palestine: no decisions. Nuclear weapons, no decisions. But arms sales flourish and thousands die.

On June 16, 2015, the Report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance was launched at the Peace Palace in The Hague. In presenting their report, Co-Chair, former Nigerian Foreign Minister and UN Under-Secretary-General of Political Affairs, Ibrahim Gambari noted that “the UN and global governance institutions are ill-suited to address many modern, evolving threats and must reform or risk prolonging and deepening global crises.” According to co-chair former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the world requires “more capable tools of global governance, with different kinds of public, private, and mixed institutions designed for twenty-first-century challenges.”

Their report acknowledged that we need a longer term approach to global governance reforms with “a transitional strategy that includes building coalitions to initiate and nurture reforms ... to martial, monitor and sustain support for the reform agenda.

To help fill the gap, the introduction to our Workable World Conference says that: “Creative thinkers have put forward numerous workable proposals for dealing with the major threats now facing humanity”. As examples Andy Knight proposes, “the transformation of the very conception of ‘global governance’ away from the state-centric idea of ‘International’, anarchic and hierarchical governance to one that embodies notions of multi-centric authority and subsidiary arrangements that are more conducive to self-organized steering...” Robert Johansen spells out the need for, and the nature of, a UN Standing Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) to ensure that preventable humanitarian disaster do not indeed occur. Charlotte Ku addresses the necessity that the UN system face the problem of reconciling broad-based participation and

representation on the one hand with authority and accountability on the other. Following up on the issue of representation, Andreas Bummel presents his ideas for a 'World Parliamentary Assembly', a consultative assembly composed of the world's citizens to sit beside the UN General Assembly of state delegates to move us toward 'planetary Democratization'.

William Pace points toward a possible 'emerging mosaic of regional and global laws and institutions' founded on 'democracy, the rule of law, justice and human rights' all stage managed by 'strategic coalitions of democracies working in concert with civil society coalitions'. Rabbi Lerner addresses the need to surmount 'political and psychological resistance' to change including crippling demands 'to be realistic'. We need strategies to mobilize like-minded countries. Barbara Frey discussed Joe Schwartzberg's proposals for strengthening human rights at the UN in light of recent changes such as the 'Universal Periodic Review' to consider the human rights practices of every member state. Finally, Hilary French tells us that despite strenuous efforts by the UN, 'environmental decline has continued apace'. She goes on to evaluate the chances of current activities -- such as the Framework of Programs on Sustainable Production and Consumption, the SDG's, and the up-coming Paris 2015 UN Climate Conference -- for effectively managing today's environmental threats.

I should perhaps point out the obvious. We are not alone in our endeavours to create a workable world. For instance, a small but growing number of scholars have joined together to form a World Government Research Network to be found at <http://wgresearch.org/>.

Our Conference has spelled out the nature of world problems and potential solutions. This is all well and good. But we should admit to ourselves that we have been talking about many of these topics (and many more) for a good number of years now. To date, we appear to have more plans than we do realizations with a few noticeable exceptions like the founding of the International Criminal Court.

In this lack of practical reforms, we do not seem to be totally alone. Let me give one example. Maggie Black, author of '*International Development: Illusions and Realities*', recently wrote a short article about the 15,000 word report for the 17 Sustainable Development Goal and their 'dizzying' 169 targets. She called it a "monument to mushiness and wishful thinking" and asked if statesmen and bureaucrats "live in an international fairyland"? She pointed out that "there is nothing in the agenda to say **how** to bring about this peaceful, just and sustainable developing world". And, this is my very point.

I have come to the conclusion that part of our problem is that we have not stopped to ask ourselves about the 'how' rather than the 'what'. In other words, we work so hard defining 'what' needs to be changed, reformed or transformed that we forget to ask

ourselves ‘how’ we are going to get into a ‘reform’ mode – how we are going to bring about new global institutions, how we are going to get from ‘A’ to ‘B’. Of course, we must assume that research and analysis on specific reforms for the UN and for global institutions will go on apace. But, our specific effort for the moment must be on *how* we go about getting institutional reforms onto the international agenda. And this, it seems to me to be the essence of the topic I have been assigned in these closing remarks -- what are the ‘Next Steps’ for moving toward a ‘workable world’. Getting into a reform mode is neither simple nor simplistic. In fact, once we open the Pandora’s Box we see it is rather complex. So this is what I want to do now. I just want to peek inside Pandora’s Box to provide a brief glimpse at the rather prosaic tasks we must accomplish at our next conference. I have arranged them under six headings but I am sure my audience will find thing I have missed.

### **1) What are the blockages to global reforms and how do we surmount them?**

Why can’t the UN make the big, urgent decisions? In other words, what are the major obstacles we must overcome if we want to launch new and improved global institutions? Surely the most formidable obstacle is the old concept of sovereignty – the belief that each state can do as it wants with impunity. The problems of international organizations flow from this outdated European concept of sovereignty elaborated three and a half centuries ago. And, worst of all, it is the major powers which should be leading the world that are hobbling the Security Council by threatening to use their vetoes to stop any basic reforms to the UN and the international system. The five Permanent Members are intent on preserving their power and spheres of interest rather than promoting cooperation. Even so, we know that the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine is starting to gnaw into the concept of absolute sovereignty and there are numerous efforts to curb the total veto of the P5 and to make sure new permanent members do not get the veto. The question is: what sort of balance of forces will it take to get the P5 to let go of their powerful advantages.

I said the UN needs to be fixed. What I really mean though is that the attitudes of states and peoples and short-sighted leaders about sovereignty and nationalism need to be changed. The Security Council veto is founded on the bully principle that the most powerful – not the community – should call the shots. But the rot of sovereignty spreads much further throughout the UN. Regional caucuses of sovereign states demand equal representation in all UN affairs, including human rights. The bureaucracy of the UN is still corrupted by hiring on the basis of national quotas. The root problem is, first, that countries still put their own ‘interests’ ahead of those of the world community and, second, national foreign policies are still elaborated by presidents and prime ministers acting like monarchs. There are few democratic controls. How do we get populations to challenge their politicians?

This is the major structural blockage to institutional change. But, there are many more impediments. For instance, many of those who have operated at the UN, what some call the 'UN hands', like to tell us, our 'pie in the sky' dreams of radical reforms are neither necessary nor useful. The United Nations, according to these bureaucrats, is always in a process of reforming itself. For instance at present, the UN hands point to a considerable number of studies, commissions, conferences and initiatives for global governance reforms that prove the UN is not at a stand still.

- The High-level International Panel on UN Peace Operations and the Peacekeeping Summit recently convened by President Obama;
- The 2015 Paris Conference Global Warming;
- The Advisory Group of Experts reviewing the UN's peacebuilding;
- International reform efforts such as the Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance, and the Independent Commission on Multilateralism of the International Peace Institute;
- The ongoing "delivering as one" program to enable UN development, humanitarian and environment activities in countries to be administered through one budget and lead agency;
- The Secretary General's report on his 'Ten Year Reflection' on the 'Responsibility to Protect' initiatives;
- Restructuring of the UN Human Rights machinery being led by the High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- The recommendations from the High Level Review of the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
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There are two lessons here. We will have to be vigilant about current events that can upset the reformist applecart. Even if we can claim that these people who try to quash broad schemes of reform rarely 'stand outside the box' themselves to see the big picture and to ask what in the world is not working and why, they still have a stultifying capacity to block those who do try to promote structural reforms. Secondly, we must be totally aware of the international context within which our reform efforts are being put forward so that we may integrate them with on-going developments..

A third blockage comes from those who should be our allies – the cosmopolitanists. As international relations theorists they doubt that 'real' world national sovereignty can be overcome, but they are also motivated by a positive fear of world government which they argue would be centralized and despotic. Thus they become "abwg" – anything but world government which is seen as unnecessary and potentially dangerous. They propose alternate conceptions of a world beyond sovereign states but definitely not including global governance. For instance, one proposal is for a cosmopolitan liberalism based on a moral community of free and equal persons linked by cooperative associations and federations among peoples. The truth is that after more than two centuries, these people have barely gone beyond Emanuel Kant.

Nevertheless, we must reassure them. Principles and values are fundamental. Fears of creating an authoritarian global government must be displaced by the certainty that any new institutions will include the techniques of democratic state-craft.

Reform will not be easy. It will be opposed by those who have an interest in war rather than peace; those who feel secure within their narrow nationalism; and those who want to keep 'the ignorant mob' outside foreign policy decision-making.

**2. How do we instigate thinking about a World Constitution: values, norms and principles?** We will need to develop research, analysis and workshops on the normative fundamentals required in the workable world order. This amounts to initiating a global constitutional debate. What might a new UN Charter for the 21<sup>st</sup> century look like? Should we seek a new set of "Globalist Papers" by leading world thinkers to open up the debates on the values and institutions required for a "workable world"? Certainly we will have to consider, among other subjects: evolving concepts of sovereignty, democracy, federalism and human rights; the meaning of security, development and authority at a world level; the purposes, objectives, principles of action, and membership rights and obligations for new world organizations, as well as their functions, powers and domains of action and responsibility, and of course rules of representation, voting methods and means of ratification etc. Constitutional and democratic safeguards will include dividing and controlling power, promoting rights and equality, democratic institutions and processes, federalism, liberalism, rule of law, local police and militias and decentralization. Also, as we have just seen, we will have to continually up-date our understanding of the present and future context of world governance and the global challenges facing the new institutions. This context might possibly include a family of world institutions that will surround a new UN.

Second, we might learn from the European Union's step-by-step model of gradually building common functional institutions, creating supranational law, rights and institutions, creating weighted voting according to population, particular interests, economic weight and sovereign participation. A first step is to open our foreign policy apparatus to democratic participation and controls.

**3. How do we envision new global Institutions: Rethinking global authority, institutions and reform processes?**

Peace and security are only one of the elements of global governance but they are its sine qua non. Even in philosophy, ever since Immanuel Kant wrote Perpetual Peace in 1795, the goal has been peace but the fear of centralized domination has impeded thinking about possible world institutions. The effort to end war was the mandate of the United Nations. So far, it has helped to stop most international wars for sixty years, only to see local civil wars spill over into the international realm. Consequently, the UN has

had to develop a wide-ranging peacebuilding capacity – encountering many notable difficulties. We must study the successes and failures of world organizations during this period to see how we can better insure peace and security.

Surely, we will want to go into greater depth and debate about all the reform topics brought up at this conference and in Joseph Schwartzberg's ground-breaking book *Transforming the United Nations System: Designs for a Workable World*. In my own earlier book on *Modernizing the United Nations System*, I went into considerable depth on institutional renewal and how to bring it about. So we will want to study what has already been written about the reform of international organizations to mine these works for seminal ideas. We will want to turn to the specialists on the sociology of institution building.

Then there is the question of principles, purposes and functions of new institutions and the paths for attaining them. A primary question is: are we aiming for one institution like the UN or several? How do we surmount the primary issues that have bedeviled the UN? If we consider spin offs like the G-7 and the G-20 we cannot avoid asking what do we do about too many chefs spoiling the broth versus the necessity of equitable representation? How do we deal with both economic and political functions? We must consider the executive, legislative, judicial and administrative functions of new institutions and the requisite powers and financial resources to carry them out. But, underlying these practical issues are even more fundamental discussions about how we define the sort of world management we envision. In part, the answer must be in transferring to the global level the best we have learned about national politics. We will have to analyze how some of our most fundamental concepts can work at the global level, including: democracy, decentralization, federalism, subsidiarity, checks and balances, human and minority rights, liberty, representation and participation, accountability, transparency, distributive justice, government under law and limited power.

**4. Setting Goals:** We should take a lesson from the brilliant planning done for the original Millennium Development Goals. Success depends on setting concrete agendas, targets and indicators. For instance, consider the following conundrums. In what order of priority should reform proposals be put forward? What is urgent and fundamental or, indeed, should what is fundamental be tackled after some minor successes have been achieved. Who are the most important audiences to target and in what order? For instance do we attempt to convince state leaders first or general public opinion? Which leaders are the most important: political, economic or social? Are there priority publics that should be targeted first? And how do we mobilize educational and communications talent and develop the most convincing arguments? Enough said.

## **5. How do we build coalitions to initiate and nurture reforms and then martial, monitor and sustain support for the reform agenda?**

We have to bring together NGOs, former international practitioners, academics, former politicians and, potentially some governmental representatives and other informed and concerned global citizens to build on the knowledge and concepts we are developing. To achieve this goal we should study case histories like the campaigns for the creation of the International Criminal Court and the Landmines Treaty. What do we do about other potential participants like business, the arts and religion? But the major task is to mobilize world opinion and set in motion a process of reform of international organizations. This will require support from educators, psychologists and communicators. Possibly there will have to be world movement of regional and ancillary meetings – along with virtual meetings on the Internet. We have to give world citizens an opportunity to have a voice concerning their future management.

How do we recruit lead committees and supportive NGOs and other associations? We have to aim to combine both broad representation and finely honed project administration, to marry the twin aims of representation and efficiency. To get the public interested, we can learn from ‘deliberative democracy’ exercises about how to include citizens. This process of democratic assemblies was developed over the past two decades to be both educative and participative and to bring informed public input to policy making.

## **6. How can we move the world ahead?**

Let us not neglect the all-important support of a small number of forward looking governments. Some might create ‘Workable World’ specialized programs in their ministry of Foreign Affairs and give it the resources required to carry out this monumental task. These ministries would be seeking to advance global governance and encouraging ‘like-minded’ countries to become partners. It is only states which have the personnel and finances to move us toward more competent global institutions. Non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) can plan, push and prod to get the ball moving, but eventually some; governments have to buy in.

At present, reforms to the UN and other global governance machinery are dealt with by governments on a piecemeal and usually narrow calculation of national interest. If such UN reform-focused programs existed, they should not only be focused on their own initiatives, but also serve as an interdepartmental focal point for the growing number of current proposals for global governance reforms.

**The next step:**

So, our work is not finished, It has just begun. I am pleased to announce that the Workable World Trust will be helping to sponsor **a new Conference on ‘Creating Workable Global Institutions’** in a year or so. I take pleasure in inviting everyone who is interested in the topic – and I hope that will include all of you – to help make our next step forward a great success

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