

# THE FUTURE WE WANT<sup>1</sup>: UNDERSTANDING THE NEW REALITY OF GOVERNANCE POST-RIO+20

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## INTRODUCTION: AFTER RIO+20, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

“We participate to decide and we decide when we participate”; variations of this tenet have been expressed thousands of times by people all over the world since this century began. Such sentiments were heard often at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, when more than 40,000 representatives from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society<sup>2</sup> joined governments and participated in that global United Nations summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Governance issues came to the fore: good governance and participation in decision-making processes was one of the key agenda points of the conference and a major focus of the almost two-year preparatory process leading up to the conference.

By the end of September 2015, the UN and its member states will have agreed on a new set of development goals, aptly named the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, complete with geographically relevant targets, strategic parameters, review systems and a timeline for implementation. The stage should be set for a better tomorrow – or, as the outcome document from Rio+20 was entitled, for ‘The Future We Want.’

Fifteen years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, at least nine major areas need to be adequately addressed to create well-being for all:

1. geopolitical change, the re-writing of the political map;
2. replacing conceptions of the North-South bipolar world with those of a multipolar world;
3. issues of economic growth and its disparities, economic reorientation and green economies, and employment/unemployment;
4. environmental problems and ecosystem disturbances;
5. food, water, climate and energy issues;
6. education for all;
7. independent research and science/evidence-based decisions;
8. electronic development, information flows and their access;
9. equity, social inequality and poverty issues.

Three areas can be defined that can provide some tools to deal with these issues:

- a new development paradigm (and the related question of whether the post-2015 development agenda is the answer);
- a renewed understanding and use of good governance systems and processes;
- an institutional reorganisation to accommodate these two.

It is against this backdrop that governance and development issues should be judged. The test should be whether what is being proposed and negotiated adequately answers these political challenges and offers governance tools to implement plans and strategies for at least the next 20 years.

## THE BURGEONING OF ORGANISED CIVIL SOCIETY

NGOs and civil society organisations have during the past decades become increasingly accepted players, with influence seen on local, national, regional and international scenes. As more and more people in the West have left organised political parties, and an increasing number of people in other parts of the world are on the lookout for organisational instruments that can represent and channel their views, various organisational structures within the so-called non-governmental/civil society segment of society seem ready to absorb

these people and spearhead their views. India is noted as the country in the world with most registered NGOs, in numbers and by per capita – more than 3.3 million NGOs are registered there.

The picture has been one of rapid growth globally. There were an estimated 400 international organisations (defined as those operating in more than three countries) in 1920 and around 700 in 1939.<sup>3</sup> The NGO/civil society world enjoyed unprecedented growth since the Second World War ended in 1945, and can be seen to have done so in proportion to the growth of the UN. NGOs/civil society were propelled into political importance during the Cold War period<sup>4</sup> and found an outlet for engagement and expression of views through the advent and development of multilateral institutions. They became significant operators in relief and development, often viewed as impartial go-betweens, at times spearheading controversial and sensitive issues seen as too difficult for governments to touch. The many Nobel Peace Prizes awarded to various NGOs<sup>5</sup>

are testament to this. NGOs and civil society as a whole has been given added political significance by events in the world since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century not the least of which was the advent of social media.<sup>6</sup> In the present day, NGOs/civil society can no longer be dismissed as a ‘Western phenomenon’. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is a global political force, found in every country around the world.

***“Authoritarians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century pay a compliment to democracy by pretending to be democrats.”***

The struggle for people to be an accepted part of decision-making processes that affects their lives is as old as humanity itself. Civil society is often viewed as the antidote to administrative systems, institutions and bureaucracies. The truth of the matter is, however, that for civil society to be effective and have an impact, it needed to organise and form institutions.

Civil society came of age in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and not without struggles. The most difficult struggles perhaps were fought against being ignored – and to be taken seriously. For civil society to be successful in its endeavours it needed to be organised and the organisations needed to be recognised as legitimate entities. Access, participation, transparency

and accountability were key elements of this struggle – elements that are considered to be among the basic values of good governance. Without institutions, how else could issues such as accountability, rule-bound behaviour and transparent processes be tested?

It also became obvious that when acting in organised political systems, as societies are, lasting change could only be achieved when civil society was granted access to organised political systems based on rule-bound behaviour with developed transparent processes, where outcomes and agreements are respected.<sup>7</sup> The UN system offers one such system, having evolved over time.

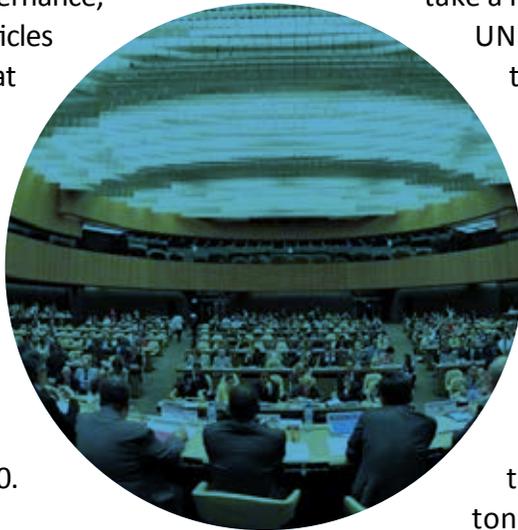
### GOOD GOVERNANCE – THE RAISON D’ÊTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

The struggle for participation and access is not new in national or global agendas, but civil society’s impact on global governance is of a relatively recent nature.

A proposed 1996 UN conference on good governance was scrapped, as governments found the topic both too tenuously defined but also too provocative. Several governments were also unsure of how to handle the growing interest in intergovernmental politics expressed by civil society during the 1990s and knew that participation and access issues would play a significant role in such a conference. But

the issues of participation and access would continue to grow in significance nonetheless.

“Good governance at the local, national and international levels is perhaps the single most important factor in promoting development and advancing the cause of peace,” stated then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the beginning of this century. NGOs and civil society were quick to echo Kofi Annan’s statement on good governance, not least by producing articles and background papers that eloquently argued for the extension of participatory privileges and access in intergovernmental fora and institutions. A decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such views had proliferated and had an impact on the preparatory process leading up to Rio+20.



## THE UN AS A SOURCE OF NGO AND CIVIL SOCIETY RECOGNITION

There is a strong focus on governance issues and stakeholder engagement in the Rio+20 Outcome Document. But governments that negotiated this document did not want cooperation with only a group of undefined “stakeholders.” They wanted collaboration

with the broad spectrum of NGOs, civil society, science and research institutions, local authorities, trade unions, and businesses. The two general terms for these groups, which are continually utilised in the document and elsewhere, are stakeholders and Major Groups.

To understand the current role of NGOs/civil society in global governance, it helps to take a historical perspective. The UN system has been important – by recognising and giving a gradually growing role to NGOs/civil society – in driving greater recognition of the important role of NGOs/civil society overall. Most intergovernmental systems have come to rely on the UN system to set the tone, and hence it helps to understand how the UN system relates to NGOs/civil society and what roles are accorded them in the UN system.

Many historians refer the invention of the concept of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the UN and its system of accreditation used at the founding conference of the UN in San Francisco in 1945, thus allowing the NGO community a formal role in being involved in international processes.

As several interest groups other than government delegations were invited to the conference, at the behest of the United States government, there was a need to differentiate between the various players, and so the term “non-government organisation” was coined. When the term found its way into the UN Charter in Article 71, it became formalised and legally recognised. Article 71 – authorising the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a charter-based body of the UN, to handle this issue – was historically the first legal recognition of NGOs, giving them a formal and respected role in intergovernmental processes.

Some 40 NGOs were present at the founding conference in San Francisco in 1945. When the UN started its work, four NGOs were given accreditation. After 25 years, by 1970, when the word “international” had started to attain a deeper understanding and UN membership stood at 140 states, some 380 NGOs had been accredited by ECOSOC to the UN. It would take another 20 years, by the time of the first Rio Conference in 1992, for this figure to reach 900. But in less than 10 years following this, by the turn of the new century, this figure had more than doubled, to almost 2,000.<sup>8</sup> By the end of 2013, almost 4,000 NGOs have been given a form of ECOSOC accreditation.<sup>9</sup>

Because of the staggering numbers of NGOs attending the various large-scale

UN conferences of the 1990s, the UN invented what was termed a “fast track accreditation system” allowing for a large number of NGOs to be accredited on a conference-by-conference basis. During the 1990s, the UN thus gave accreditation, and the political recognition and credibility this confers, to tens of thousands of NGOs all over the world. With the new millennium, the world of global politics had definitely come to accept another political actor that demanded more than lip service recognition: NGOs and by inference large segments of civil society had become a political force in the intergovernmental sphere and a practical operator in the field.<sup>10</sup>

## INNOVATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY RECOGNITION AT RIO

Behind the Rio+20 Conference and its 40,000 NGO/civil society participants were a number of formal considerations. Formally speaking, the bodies of the UN functioning under the UN General Assembly (UNGA), or the Charter bodies of the UN,<sup>11</sup> should recognise only three actors: member states with their delegations, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs. Strictly speaking, any non-state organisation that is not recognised as an NGO by ECOSOC should not be given access to any UN body under the UNGA, any of the Charter bodies or a UN Summit such as Rio+20.

However, recognition of a growing challenge in conventional ways of organising intergovernmental politics, which manifested itself through the 30,000 or so non-state participants in the first Rio Conference, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992,<sup>12</sup> fed a realisation of the need to expand conceptions of NGOs/civil society. As Rio+20, UNCED was a UN conference organised under the auspices of the UNGA. Consequently the formal challenge was to relate an enlarged understanding of the NGO concept to the understanding expressed by Article 71 of the Charter and further elaborated by ECOSOC. This led to the birth of the Major Group concept. The invention of the nine Major Groups can be understood as a creative effort by members of the UN system and its member states, with active contributions from NGOs and civil society, to bridge formal, conceptual and political gaps in the debate on how to understand the emerging and growing world of civil society and non-state actors.

First tested as a concept and used as a designation during the March 1992 preparatory meeting for UNCED, the nine Major Groups received their formal recognition in Agenda 21, the outcome document of UNCED. They are: Women; Children and Youth; Farmers; Indigenous Peoples; NGOs; Workers and Trade Unions; Local Authorities; Science and Technological Community; Business and Industry.<sup>13</sup>

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE UN: MUTUAL INTERDEPENDENCE

Growing numbers of accreditation implied that NGOs had become recognised as a political force in the intergovernmental sphere and a practical operator in the field.<sup>14</sup> Since then, it can be argued that the sheer number of NGOs, combined with their expertise and implementation capacity in the field, has made it harder for governments to ignore them. That is why the Rio+20 Outcome Document begins by referencing the participation of civil society and ends with a plea for voluntary commitments that can be made by both governments and civil society.

Global politics and intergovernmental processes have changed dramatically over the past few decades. The contribution UN bodies make to establishing global norms may not always be well understood, but the diffusion of norms is often a prerequisite to the successful implementation of agreements. Among these normative contributions is the involvement of civil society including non-governmental organisations in global processes.

An often stated truism is: unless governments own intergovernmental processes, policies will never be taken seriously. Another could be: unless people feel ownership of development, little will be implemented. Intergovernmental processes and civil society need each other. The post-Rio process

to develop the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) offers a unique opportunity to combine these two political realities, since the SDGs will shape major UN work well into the next two decades.

## THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM – THE PINNACLE OF GOVERNANCE

A little more than a year after Rio+20, UNGA established what initially was thought to be the most important intergovernmental mechanism for follow-up. On 9 July 2013, during its 91<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting, UNGA formally adopted by consensus in resolution 67/290 the format and organisational aspects of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The HLPF has replaced the Commission on Sustainable Development as the supreme entity at the UN to coordinate sustainable development, and it will become the future home of the SDGs. No UNGA resolution has ever given NGOs/civil society such wide ranging access opportunities to the UN. In some ways, the resolution could be seen as a crowning achievement for non-governmental organisations and civil society in their efforts to be accorded access to decision-making processes historically reserved for government representatives. Major Groups will have access to all HLPF meetings, the ability to intervene in proceedings and make oral and written statements.<sup>15</sup>

Considering the HLPF and its content merely as a Rio+20 follow-up fails to grasp the historical significance of this construct. Without the weight of NGO history and several decades of lobbying the intergovernmental system by NGOs, the HLPF would never have been formulated in the way it is. The HLPF can be seen as the result of the work of NGOs at the UN over the past 60 years.

## THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS – A NEW DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

The era of development and aid was initiated in part by the UNGA, when it named the 1960s the first Development Decade (DDI). This focus would dominate large parts of international collaboration into the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the 1970s, amidst the discussion about a New International Economic World Order,<sup>16</sup> the aid and development discourse was evolving, and the UN concocted the Basic Needs Strategy, while numerous NGOs became important partners to government aid agencies and UN bodies involved in development, such as UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the regional development banks. The dominant development paradigm of the time divided the world into North and South, reflected in patterns of organisational functioning. These discourses also made the major part of the UN into a North-South functioning organisation.

The SDGs introduce a new idea of development, although it seems ironic to term this debate as new, as it embraces and promotes one of the basic tenets upon which the UN was founded in 1945: the principle of universality. Designed as an all-embracing development approach, the SDGs will apply to every country in the world. This will challenge our traditional view of development, while still being based on basic values to promote well-being for all people. One major issue in these debates is whether poverty eradication should be a goal, a target or an over-arching cross-sectional theme. For those countries scoring high on the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), a global goal on poverty eradication makes little sense, as these countries do not have the extreme poverty seen elsewhere. However, these countries still struggle with social exclusion, issues of injustice and growing inequity. Perhaps a generic goal on inequality would be more attuned to the next 20 years of development and targets to deal with this better outlined?

Last year's CIVICUS State of Civil Society report<sup>17</sup> discussed the problem of inequality at length and stated:

“Meanwhile, greater inequality (in both rich and poor countries) is also discounted in the agendas of discussions on our future. This is despite clear consequences of inequality, which at one level can lead to increased

political instability and violence, and at the other end to entrenching poverty.”

What will it take to have an intergovernmental organisation firmly founded in an analysis of the world based on sustainable development with a view to creating the future we want? The post-Rio debate has yet to deal with how to put in place an institutional structure for civil society to propagate good governance for the future. CIVICUS raised the issue in last year’s report:<sup>18</sup>

“There is a need for a renewed debate over the roles and priorities of civil society in many parts of the world, which should reassess relationships with both the State and civil society membership and constituencies alike ... The issue is therefore not just a question of resources, but also one that may challenge the very roles of organisations that were set up and driven by a specific externally-funded aid agenda... Key questions here include: are the large numbers of development groups or specialised agencies as necessary as they once were?”

Undoubtedly these issues will have an impact on how we see governance in the future.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES TO GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY – CONCEPTUAL PRECISIONS

A number of challenges will arise for how the role of NGOs and civil society in global governance can be further developed, sustained and enhanced in future. Three are listed here: a conceptual precision, specialisation that may divide and governance openings that are closing.

The concept and meaning of civil society must be utilised with care and with precision. An increasing number of reports and studies now attempt a new distinction using terms such as

non-state actors or simply stakeholders with the intention that this would mean civil society. Substituting civil society with ‘stakeholders’ or ‘non-state actors’ in formal documents, such as UN resolutions, thinking this will guarantee that the interests of civil society organ-

isations or NGOs are taken care of, is at best erroneous, and at worst disastrous.

How will we understand and utilise the concepts NGO and civil society? As earlier stated, the UN Charter in 1945 was the first legal document to recognise the term non-governmental organisation. As the UN Charter also employs the phrase “We, the peoples” which are words that are often closely associated with civil society, the association to civil society may have already been made. Since then, the term NGO seems to have become synonymous with civil society. This is, however, an assumption based on a faulty and imprecise understanding of the nature and work of NGOs and civil society. It would for instance be correct to state that: All civil society organisations are non-governmental organisations, but all non-governmental organisations are not civil society organisations.

Many have tried to give a clinching definition of the concepts of NGOs and civil society, but in a fast-changing political environment consensus and widespread usability have remained elusive and often incorrect. This debate has many sides to it: theoretical, conceptual, political and ideological. Civil society is not a legal concept while the term non-governmental organisation has a legal definition. NGOs cannot formally be seen or understood to be only synonymous with civil society. For instance, the Major Groups defined by Agenda 21 are organised as NGOs and

***“Alienation of NGOs/civil society could prove devastating to the future of governance and the SDGs.”***

interrelate with the UNGA system through NGO-constructs. The Major Groups system is also one of the most efficient tools available today for NGOs to access the UN system. This system will continue to be a major force in post-Rio governance work. Several of the nine are often directly associated with civil society and also see themselves as representing such organisations. It will therefore be important in these contexts to connect the concept of civil society to the concept of NGOs to give civil society a more formal and hence more legitimate position. An imprecise application of these concepts has already contributed to stakeholder confusion that exists today, which can be counterproductive to what civil society tries to achieve.

## WILL SPECIALISED NEEDS DIVIDE CIVIL SOCIETY?

Key elements of our development demand more and expert input. As the world grows more complex, issues are singled out and given special treatment. Processes agreed upon in the Rio+20 Outcome Document will also rely on expertise at a high level. Clearly defined interest groups with expert knowledge are therefore likely to be invited to participate in these intergovernmental processes. Governments often ask NGOs and civil society how they can contribute to the development and implementation of such processes.

Beginning in the 1990s, single-issue institutions have been more inclined to accept at a high level NGOs, Major Groups and other civil society fora that have relevant expertise on these issues. The UN consists today of a plethora of such institutions and the following are some that have relevance to sustainable development issues: the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), an institution that reports on chemicals to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); the Committee on World Food Security (CFS); and the many UN Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

However, complex global developments are also reflected in the discussions taking place at the more general bodies of the UN and will most decidedly have an impact on the SDG process.

Since specialised expert groups, to which many single-issue NGOs relate, can provide government negotiators with cutting edge research results and incisive analysis, delegates are more prone to integrate expert groups into the inner, formal sanctum of the intergovernmental system. It follows that delegates are then more inclined to design formal rules of procedure catering to this need. Thus it has become easier for expert groups and the NGO community to interact with the substantive and thematic areas of single-issue organisa-

tions. The danger raised is whether this could split the civil society community between those that have insider status and those that do not.<sup>19</sup>

## GOVERNANCE OPENINGS ARE CLOSING

Authoritarians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century pay a compliment to democracy by pretending to be democrats; liberal democracy has become the default acceptable form of government on the political landscape. By the turn of this century more than 60 percent of the world's independent states had become electoral democracies.<sup>20</sup> Windows of opportunity for including NGOs/civil society into intergovernmental processes seemed at first to open up all around. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) established formal links with NGOs during the 1990s. After the first Rio Conference in 1992 and the establishment of the Major Groups system, other bodies within the UN system opened up and accorded NGOs and members of civil society participatory privileges. Most of the UN Specialised Agencies and the Rio institutions<sup>21</sup> quickly integrated non-state actors to a high degree, and report after report could attest to the benefits of such integration.

During the 1990s, the Cold War de-escalated and brought new opportunities for political cooperation, with harmony emphasised over enmity. During this period governance devel-

opment progressed, and the participation of NGOs/civil society was granted throughout most of the intergovernmental system. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), charged with following up Agenda 21, became a leader in good governance processes, and inspired other entities of the UN to follow suit. Paragraph 84 of the Rio Outcome Document is written in this spirit:

“We decide to establish a universal intergovernmental high level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development...”

This led, as earlier stated in this article, to the UNGA resolution establishing the HLPF, with wide-reaching participatory privileges for NGOs, Major Groups and civil society organisations. But the question remains – how long will the governance door stay open?

Already there are dark clouds on the horizon. The Rio Outcome Document granted universal membership to UNEP and mandated it to redirect its entire system. Having once been the first body within the UN system to allow NGOs and members of civil society the privilege to participate, UN member states belonging to the G77 group of countries – that are engaged in writing the rules of procedure for the revised UNEP – are now questioning these privileges.

Several country groupings within the UN are given special attention due to development priorities. The Small Island Development States (SIDS) is one such group, and ever since it was established, NGOs including civil society were welcomed and considered respected and necessary actors in implementing field programmes. Members from the G77 group of countries are trying to establish a formal procedure to block participation for NGOs/civil society in upcoming SIDS conferences. Even the new HLPF is not yet safe, despite the strong language found in the UNGA resolution. The greatest challenge to NGOs/civil society today is whether they have the necessary knowledge, strength and strategic skills to preserve and further develop the governance privileges attained at the moment in intergovernmental processes.

The NGO/civil society community was crucial in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The same community will play an equally important role in the implementation of the SDGs. Should NGOs and civil society be prevented from participating in SDG policy processes, there is a good chance they will not be able to play a full part in national or regional implementation. This community can play important roles in the future of SDGs, review processes, analysis and outreach. Alienation of NGOs/civil society could prove devastating to the future of governance and the SDGs.

## CONCLUSION

The progress on good governance we enjoy today is primarily the result of a long and arduous struggle by civil society, often opposed, often suppressed and more often than not ignored. The struggle for participation and access to allow people to participate in decision-making processes is also the struggle to establish and organise civil society into more than just ‘the voice of the people’. No governance process functions without an institution; therefore, the right to organise into institutions became one of the cornerstones of civil society’s effort to improve the lives of people.

To fully appreciate the struggle for freedom, justice, democracy and participation, a long perspective, drawn through many cultures, is needed: from civil society in Greek city-states, through laws of Hammurabi in the Middle East; via the elegant civil servant systems developed in China, through the principle of Habeas Corpus expressed in the Magna Carta in 1215; via the heroic and fearless struggle of the Enlightenment philosophers in Europe, through the bravery of human rights lawyers including the first arbitration negotiations in Latin America, declarations of Independence and heroic struggles against colonialism in Africa and Asia; to the Charter of the UN and “we, the peoples”.

It is not possible to stop a historic trend, but it is possible to halt it, sometimes for long

periods of time. What is needed for the post-Rio period is a vigilant and knowledgeable civil society – able to plan and work for the future, willing to compromise to collaborate amongst itself and sort out internal differences, alert enough to spot negative trends before they emerge and with enough integrity not to fall prey to co-optation. Only then will civil society be successful in constantly implementing good governance for all.

<sup>1</sup>This title is also the title of the outcome document from the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio 2012, the Rio+20 Conference.

<sup>2</sup>This paper will also discuss the utilisation of the concepts NGOs, civil society, stakeholders, Major Groups, etc. There is considerable debate over these issues, often fraught with inaccuracies. This article deals with these issues in relationship to the UN, and accordingly a number of formal issues become important. The UN General Assembly system formally recognises only the concept of NGOs. Hence, I consistently use this term first, and then connect other elements: NGOs/civil society; NGOs and members of civil society, etc. Other organisations may choose to do otherwise.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted from Bill Seary in *The Early History: From the Congress of Vienna to the San Francisco Conference*, in *The Conscience of the World: The influence of non-governmental organisations in the UN system*, ed. Peter Willetts (London: Hurst, 1996); For further reading see also L Emmerij, R Jolly, and TG Weiss, *Ahead of the Curve?: UN Ideas and Global Challenges*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup>Several authors have dealt with this issue – including J Galtung, the Bertrand Russel Peace Foundation and others – for an overview of this issue and a list for further reading, see M Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*, (UK: Polity Press/Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003).

<sup>5</sup>Médecins Sans Frontières, 1999; International Campaign to Ban

Landmines, 1997; The Pugwash Conferences on Sciences and World Affairs, 1995; International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, 1985; Amnesty International, 1977; The League of Red Cross Societies, 1963 and 1944; Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW), previously known as the Friends Service Council, 1947.

<sup>6</sup>Engagement by NGOs and civil society at World Trade Organisation (WTO) meetings and at UN Conferences of the Parties (COPs), especially in 2009 at the Copenhagen Summit (COP 15), as well as most recently during the Arab Spring.

<sup>7</sup>Anti-slavery work in Britain is a case in point. After several strong persons had laboured individually against the abomination of slavery, the “Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Britain” was founded in 1787. This was reorganised through the Anti-Slavery Society (ASS), founded in 1823. Its substantive objective was achieved in 1838 after serious lobbying the British parliament for years when slavery was abolished.

<sup>8</sup>P Willetts in JW Foster and A Anands (eds.), *Whose world is it anyway?* (Ottawa: United Nations Association, 1999), pg 254.

<sup>9</sup>Basic facts about ECOSOC status are available at: <http://csonet.org/index.php?menu=17>.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Edwards and David Hulme parallel this development in M Edwards and A Fowler (eds.), *The Earthscan Reader on NGO Management* (London: Earthscan, 2003), pgs 187-198.

<sup>11</sup>The United Nations Charter bodies are as follows: The UN Security Council, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court at the Hague, the Secretariat of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the UN General Assembly.

<sup>12</sup>The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992, which adopted Agenda 21.

<sup>13</sup>Chapter 23 in Agenda 21 recognised by the UNGA resolution A/RES/47/190, in December 1992.

<sup>14</sup>See fn 7.

<sup>15</sup>Paragraph 15 of the HLPF resolution.

<sup>16</sup>The New International Economic World Order (NIEO) was promoted by the developing nations through UNCTAD in the early 1970s, inspired by the UNGA resolution on Declaration for the *Establishment of a New International Economic Order* (A/

RES/S-6/3201). It was an effort to recreate the global economic system on a more just and equitable basis with improved terms of trade for “third world countries”. Among its protagonists was the Dutch economist Jan Tinbergen. To an extent the NIEO concept was also inspired by the philosophy espoused in *Small is beautiful: Economics as if people mattered* (1973) by British economist E.F. Schumacher. Infused with the Basic Needs principles, NIEO also inspired many of the fair trade schemes developed as a critique to the dominating economic free trade and free market systems. NIEO died a sad death during the economic debates and global recession of the 1970s, only to be replaced by structural adjustment policies that by most accounts opened the way for new public management (NPM) and exacerbated poverty and inequality, available at: <http://socs.civicus.org>

<sup>17</sup>CIVICUS, *State of Civil Society 2013: Creating an enabling environment*.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>The Finnish Philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright defines what he calls “the tyranny of experts” as one of the major challenges to democracy and participation. As our societies become more complex, and information is suffused with the language of experts, the ability to make relevant, sensible decisions and to understand the consequences of such decisions becomes increasingly difficult and opaque. Rather than labouring to understand the complexity of issues, ordinary people may increasingly rely on experts and believe that experts will make the correct decisions. He also makes the point that expert decisions rely more on scientific facts, often bereft of moral understanding and implications, which removes expert decisions from decisions arrived at democratically. Participation, transparency and good governance are the lost elements. See GH von Wright, *The myth of progress* (originally published in Swedish, *Myten om framsteget*, 1993); see also M Ignatius, *The lesser evil – political ethics in an age of terror*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

<sup>20</sup>See F Fukuyama, *The origins of political order*, (London: Profile Books, 2011).

<sup>21</sup>Primarily the institutions around the three Rio Conventions: UNFCCC (climate), UNCBD (biodiversity) and UNCCD (desertification), the Commission on Sustainable Development, CSD.