

## Developing International Democracy

For a Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations

Brief overview of the strategy paper of the Committee for a Democratic U.N.  
The complete version is available at [www.uno-komitee.de](http://www.uno-komitee.de).

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1. Mankind faces the task of ensuring the survival and well-being of future generations as well as the preservation of the natural foundations of life on Earth. Critical developments have taken such dimensions that they cannot be solved any longer without taking into account the will, ideas and initiatives of the people of the world

2. Globalization and related efforts to shape global policies make democracy deficits on the international level more and more visible and significant. Wide parts of the populations do not feel sufficiently represented by their government in international institutions and negotiation processes.

3. The inclusion of the people into the institutional structure and into the decision-making mechanisms of the international system therefore has essential importance. The citizens must be allowed to participate in order to prevent growing discontent, to secure acceptance and legitimacy of the United Nations and international co-operation as well as to strengthen the United Nation's capacity to act.

4. The Committee for a Democratic UN (KDUN) conceives the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) as a decisive step towards the introduction of a new quality, a new impetus and a stronger representation of citizens into the international system.

5. A Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations would not simply be a new institution. As the voice of citizens, taking a global view in the common international interest, the As-

sembly would be the manifestation and vehicle of a changed consciousness and understanding of international politics.

6. During the *first step* the strategy consists in affiliating the UNPA to the UN General Assembly as a secondary body or special organization with consultative function. This means that the assembly would be able to draft and pass recommending resolutions without binding force and to submit these officially to the General Assembly for information and further consideration.

7. Important fields of international policy and decision-making therefore are to be located in the special organizations and programs as well as in the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO themselves. Because of this, proposals have been made to establish a parliamentary dimension or parliamentary assemblies (PA) directly within these bodies. This would be distinctly more than parliaments could cope with.

8. The UNPA therefore is to be regarded and designed as a parliamentary umbrella and parliamentary focal point of international cooperation. Step by step, the UNPA's sphere of influence would be extended to the institutions of the UN system and the economic and financial institutions through a similar gradual affiliation. This way, the UNPA could also help to overcome the fragmentation of international efforts in the UN system. In the frame of comprehensive UN reform, the UNPA could finally be incorporated into the UN with the status as main body.

9. The commissions of the UNPA should regularly include national parliamentarians, who are not members of the UNPA, but are experts belonging to the respective commissions of their national parliaments. Delegations of the UNPA should be directly admitted to international governmental conferences.

10. As additional connecting link to civil society, the commissions could directly consider in their deliberations information, recommendations and expertise from the non-state sector through hearings and other forms of cooperation.

11. According to the example of the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations should, *within further stages of development*, step by step be provided with genuine rights of information, participation and control.

12. As new institution the UNPA could be established through a vote of the General Assembly under Article 22 of the UN Charter. Alternatively to that, as far as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is ready and fulfills the preconditions, it is conceivable to transform the IPU into a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly in form of a secondary body or alternatively a special organization. Again this is possible through a decision under Art. 22 or alternatively through an according cooperation agreement on the mutual relations with the United Nations.

13. The Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations should be open to all member states of the United Nations which are provided with a constitutionally embodied parliament. The disadvantage connected with the participation of undemocratic countries could be balanced by advantages on other fields. By including "pseudo-parliamentarians" into its midst, the assembly could exert a democratizing influence on them and in this way become a force for the advancement of democracy in the non-democratic countries.

14. The majority of the participating countries would be democratic. In a study of 2003 Freedom House has classified 117 from the 192 states in the world as democracies.

15. The Committee for a Democratic UN recommends that in the first development stage, the delegates of the Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations are uniformly elected from the midst of the parliaments of the participating countries. In the long run, partial or complete direct election of its members should be possible.

16. The determination of the number of delegates per country in the UNPA should be left to the political negotiations of the governments during the preparatory process. Basis of the negotiations should be a commitment to a graduation oriented according to population size, corresponding, in principle, to existing parliamentary assemblies. Following the sample of the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe or the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the smallest states get less and the larger states get more members.

17. Before entering into the negotiations on the actual distribution it is recommended that an upper limit for the total number of delegates be defined. This number probably lies between 700 and 900.

18. The actual financial need for the first step can only be quantified if it is clear how the UNPA is to be designed, for example composition, voting procedure, participating states and legal basis. A first rough total estimate on the basis of the conclusions of the Committee for a Democratic UN comes to 100 to 120 million Euro per year. This figure is based on the assumption that all UN member states participate which possess a constitutionally elected parliament.

19. Addressing the possibilities and concepts for reforming the United Nations and the UN system should be one of the thematic main tasks of the United Nations Parliamentary As-

sembly. As a unique and institutionalized hinge between parliaments, civil society, the United Nations and governments, the UNPA could become a political catalyst for further development of the international system and of international law.

20. numerous bodies and conferences already have dealt with the UNPA concept and the question of a “parliamentary dimension” at the international level. 1992 a report of the Liberal International suggested that in the long run the establishment of a directly elected second chamber to the General Assembly should be considered. In spring 1993, the establishment of a UNPA was supported by the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade.

21. In 1999, the European Parliament put the term in concrete form when interpreting it as “parliamentary bodies composed of the chairmen of parliamentary committees of national and regional parliaments [...]”. The German Bundestag asked the Federal government in 1999 to “to contribute to establishing the IPU as the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations”. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe subsumed, in a resolution of 2000, to “parliamentary dimension” a body of the United Nations “with competencies similar to that of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe”.

22. In the year 2000, the UNPA concept was picked up, and the consideration of its creation recommended by the Millennium Forum of Civil Society. The XXIIInd Congress of the Socialist International, in October 2003, explicitly pronounced itself in favour of a UNPA. For the first time in ten years, the European Parliament explicitly picked up the approach in a resolution in early 2004. In its report of February 2004 the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization established by the International Labour Organization (ILO) called for an expansion of accountability for global policies and actions to “parliamentary groupings” on international level.

23. Not at least, the proposal to set up a Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations seamlessly builds upon the proposals of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations of June 2004. This is a good starting position to mobilize more and deepened support for a UNPA and to introduce the concept into the reform process at the United Nations.

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