

OUTREACH AT THE SUMMIT

Daily news and critical analysis of the UN Summit proceedings

HOW THE UN SHOULD RUN THE INTERNET

The UN could become the guardian of an internet run entirely by individuals instead of governments and corporations

By: Bill Thompson

There are two reasons for the internet's success. First, for ten years after it was created in 1983 the internet was generally ignored by politicians, policy-makers, campaigning organisations and almost everyone outside the circle of university researchers who were building it. And second, those who created the standards, built the physical network and wrote the code were interested in creating something that worked, not something that satisfied interest groups, promoted any particular agenda or met with the approval of anyone except themselves.



This is no longer the case. Over the last decade the net has gone from being a largely academic pastime to become a key part of the infrastructure of the burgeoning network society. The old mechanisms have broken down as the bodies defining the net's technical architecture have become more distant from ordinary users. This has created a democratic deficit that leaves the future development of the network open to capture by two very powerful interests – private corporations and national governments – to the exclusion of civil society.

The conflict between them, both seeing themselves as the appropriate locus for the networks' development, is clearly shown in the

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Inside this Issue:

- ◆ **Hanspeter Bilgler: *How to Democratisise the UN***, page 3
- ◆ **OutreachFocus: MDG Progress**, pages 4 - 6
- ◆ **FREE GIFT!!!**, page 8

debate which is heating up ahead of November's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). A "working group on internet governance" (WGIG) was convened after the December 2003 WSIS meeting, and it has come up with a range of proposals for the governance of the internet, governance it defines as, "the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the internet."

(Continued on page 2)

STAKEHOLDER FORUM



(Continued from page 1)

Most of the discussion circles around the future of ICANN, the body set up in 1998 by the US government to manage the domain name system and the allocation of IP addresses. As a result wider issues will remain largely unaddressed.

WGIG's proposals assume that the technical aspects of managing the internet can be separated from policy issues. The idea is that international bodies can be left to agree the technical standards and network architecture while national governments deal with content regulation, community standards and other "political" aspects.

Power to the People

We should aim to govern the internet in accordance with its own principles: those of distributed responsibility, disintermediation and peer review.

Internet governance does not need a simple-minded direct democracy, where standards are proposed and voted on by the ill-informed masses, but a true deliberative forum that takes full advantage of the affordances of the internet itself and extends membership to all who wish to engage.

Such a forum is in danger of being dominated by the same interests that have already captured the existing structures, so we need to take the more radical but very desirable step of taking governments and corporations out of the technical space entirely. The simplest way to achieve this is to restrict membership of the deliberative community to individuals, with no corporate, organisational, company or any other forms of representation possible.

Instead of representatives, we will have the people speaking without intermediaries, members of a massive, distributed, online community which determines internet standards, set up and managed by an international body (on which more later) which backs up those standards with research, reference materials and test implementations of software, the whole system using advanced community management tools to make it work. In this way the net could be the key to its own salvation.

The forum will be a combination of eBay's auctions, the Second Life multiplayer game and the Slashdot community, based around a reputation system that provides greater weight to the opinions of those who have provided sound ad-

vice and shown good judgement in the past.

Once decisions are made then national governments will have to judge whether their political goals can be achieved using the international standards or whether they need to deviate from them. But at least the standards will be set in a way that does not allow government and corporate agendas undue influence.

This is not a perfect solution. Firstly, it fails to address one of the core problems facing any form of net governance, which is how to represent the interests of those who are not yet connected but will be in future, the next five billion users, and some method must be found to allow them to have a voice.

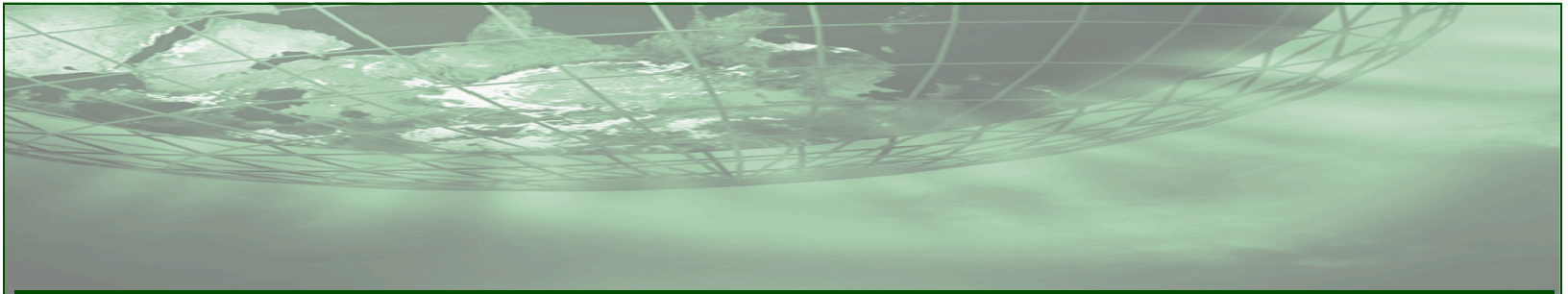
Secondly, central guidance cannot be taken out of the equation altogether. Responsibility for the system must clearly lie with the United Nations, (or one of the agencies in the UN system such as the International Telecommunications Union) creating a direct connection between the highest levels of the UN system and ordinary users. Putting aside current debate surrounding its future, those of us with faith in the UN must work for its reform and rehabilitation. Giving a UN agency responsibility for the net is one way of achieving this.

Without a way of reconciling the vastly differing interests of private companies, public bodies, governments and civil society, the prospects for the internet's future as anything other than a heavily-censored, highly inefficient and privately run data network are poor indeed. It is time to strip out the intermediaries and the vested interests and return net governance to the people.

Bill Thompson is a journalist and new media pioneer who has been working in, on and around the Internet since 1984. He writes two weekly columns for the BBC, and is a frequent contributor to the Guardian, the Register and the New Statesman. He is a contributing editor to openDemocracy.net. His website is www.andfinally.com



The full-length version of this article is part of openDemocracy's "Peer Power: Reinventing Accountability" article series. openDemocracy's partner in this debate, AccountAbility, is holding a major event on 3-5 October in London. See: <http://www.accountability21.net/conference.asp>



How to Democratisise the United Nations

By: Hanspeter Bigler

The United Nations summit this week has agreed a document that represents a series of compromises about the organisation's future role and activities. But if the summit is truly going to establish the democratic legitimacy of the UN and enhance its role in world politics, one reform is urgently needed.

The UN is already a unique, worldwide institution, with 191 member-states and an extensive mandate to secure world peace, safeguard human rights and promote international solidarity. Its leading role in these areas, and its considerable degree of democratic legitimacy, make it an important institution in the implementation of international rules, particularly as economic globalisation increases and the role of transnational corporations grows.

But the democratic legitimacy of the UN is limited. While an increasing number of political issues that affect citizens all over the world are decided on an international level, and global political structures are taking shape to reflect this, the UN is held back by its reliance on nation-states. Since nation-states – the UN's building blocks – are represented at the UN by their governments, national governments have become the key international decision-makers. And whereas these governments are subject to parliamentary control at home, there is a deficit of democratic accountability at the international level.

Lack of transparency in the decision-making process deepens this democracy deficit. As long as decisions affecting the world population are treated as secret diplomacy by national governments and made behind closed doors, citizens will reject them. The United Nations requires citizens' acceptance for its policies as a basic and important condition for its legitimacy.

Furthermore, reform is needed for the problem-solving capacity of the UN. At present, national governments, acting primarily according to national interests rather than prioritising common welfare, deadlock decision-making processes.

A parliamentary assembly at the UN (UNPA) could solve the problems of democracy deficit, lack of transparency, low acceptance, and decision-deadlock.

The election of such a parliament would do three things: 1)

promote direct participation and representation of civil society; 2) establish transparent processes and structures of negotiation and decision-making; 3) enhance the overall acceptance and legitimacy of the United Nations

The delegates of a future parliamentary assembly would, moreover, be grouped into international parties following a common political ideology rather than being subject to national concerns. This would improve the problem-solving capacity of the UN, as strategies and resolutions would be based on common global interests, thus avoiding the paralysing effect of state interests.

Only a political process can achieve such reform. And this political process has begun. We have spent much time debating and analysing the development and structure of a future parliamentary or people's assembly at the UN. Important groundwork has been done. We have concepts available for instituting a future parliamentary assembly at the UN. We know what we want to achieve. Now we must discuss how we want to achieve it – and decide. The time for reform has come.

Hanspeter Bigler is secretary-general of the Society for Threatened People in Switzerland and Swiss representative of the [Committee for a Democratic UN](http://www.uno-komitee.de/en/). <http://www.uno-komitee.de/en/>

This is an extract from Hanspeter Bilgler's article in openDemocracy's global debate, "A democratic United Nations?"



What do you think about UN reform?

Join the discussion on openDemocracy

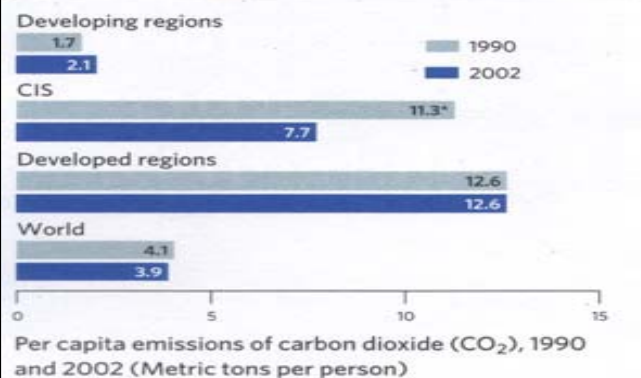
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OUTREACH FOCUS ON: MDG PROGRESS

2005 UN MDG REPORT HIGHLIGHTS FAILINGS IN PROGRESS

"Let us be clear about the costs of missing this opportunity: millions of lives that could have been saved will be lost; many freedoms that could have been secured will be denied; and we shall inhabit a more dangerous and unstable world." -Kofi Annan, 2005 MDG Report

Rich countries produce the most greenhouse gases



www.who.int

Social Watch launches Annual Report featuring new development indexes

Social Watch launched its Annual Report 2005 on the 14 September in New York. "Roars and Whispers. Gender and Poverty: Promises vs. Action" presents two new indexes to measure social development, and concludes that the targets set for 2015 as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will not be met.

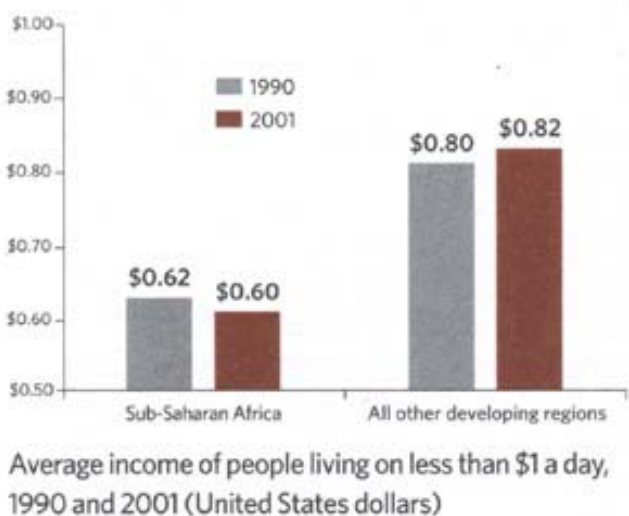
The new study shows that the international community has largely failed to live up to the commitments it adopted five years ago to eradicate poverty and promote development, a fact that has been highlighted with increasing urgency by civil society.

Despite the promises made by governments, spending on social services is decreasing throughout the world while inequality has grown since 1990, according to the report, which was compiled by a research team based in Montevideo using statistical data from each country evaluated.

In addition to country reports from the more than 50 countries that make up the Social Watch international citizens' network, the report includes a global study based on two new indexes designed to measure social development, the Basic Capabilities Index and the Gender Equity Index, which complement the human development indexes most commonly used until now in various aspects.

For more information refer to: www.socialwatch.org

The very poor are getting poorer



*The Millenium Development Goals Report 2005"

WOMEN DISAPPOINTED BY SUMMIT OUTCOMES



After months of pressuring governments on women's rights, advocates from around the world have achieved some gains on gender equality in the World Summit outcome document, despite the lack of meaningful action on the total package under debate.

Advocates ensured that women's rights issues were not casualties of the Summit's high-stakes poker game. In fact, the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality (#3) has been expanded from an original focus on primary education to include the following:

- ◆ An end to impunity for violence against women
- ◆ The goal of universal access to reproductive health
- ◆ The right to own and inherit property
- ◆ Equal access to labor protections
- ◆ Increased representation of women in government decision-making bodies

World leaders also agreed to repeal all laws that discriminate against women and promised to implement the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, which promotes women's increased participation in peace and security processes.

Another significant achievement of the Summit was a historic agreement on the responsibility of states and the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Another concrete gain is a commitment to double the budget for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

However, women's groups have been dismayed by a shameful lack of political will on the part of governments to tackle poverty, foster peace, and ensure human rights. The grand



www.takingitglobal.org

bargain envisioned for the World Summit has failed. This bargain called for a serious commitment to trade reform, debt relief and financial resources for development in exchange for a Human Rights Council, Peace-building Commission, and UN management reform. Instead, countries deferred these issues to the General Assembly, where the same

political divisions prevail.

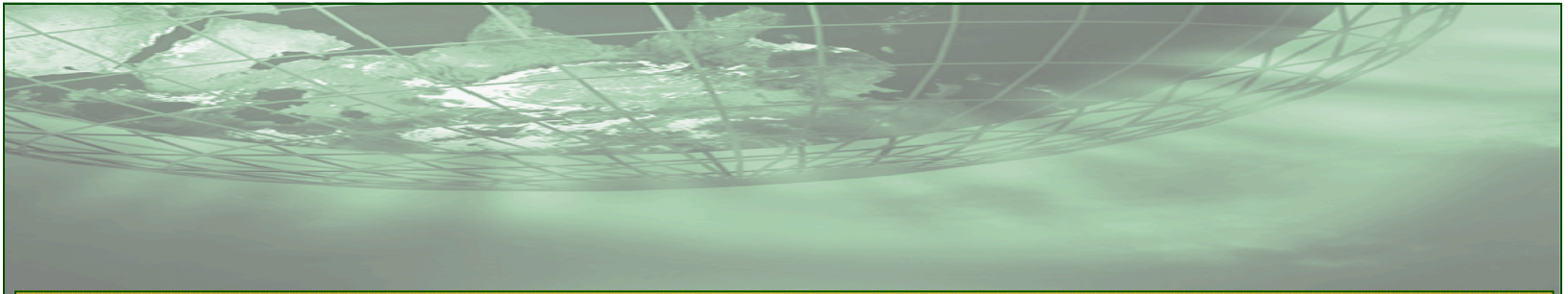
The US was rebuffed on its top priority of UN management reform, because of its refusal to agree to any substantial compromise on development issues.

No progress was made on the key demands of developing countries-The US and a few other wealthy nations refused to commit to deadlines for giving 0.7 percent of GNP for official development assistance. Agreements on trade were virtually meaningless. The "agreement" on climate change was a step back from what the G8 agreed to at their recent meeting in Gleneagles, which was already weak. Furthermore, the permanent members of the Security Council retain their veto power, even in cases of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Women expected more from their governments. Once again they have missed an opportunity to take meaningful and bold action on the world's most critical problems. But women's advocates will not be deterred. We will continue to press for our rights and to hold governments accountable for their commitments to the world's women.

Statement by:

ActionAid International
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development Gender Program
Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)
Choice for Youth and Sexuality, Netherlands
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
Family Care International
Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS)
Gender and Education Office (ICAE)
Girls Power Initiative, Nigeria
Inform, Sri Lanka
International Council on Adult Education
International Institute for Cooperation Amongst People
MADRE
Milenio Feminista
Red de educacion popular entre mujeres de America Latina y el Caribe (REPEM)
United Methodist UN Office
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)



Africa Calls It - world's poor betrayed in UN Summit document

GCAP - Africa

The Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) in Africa is deeply concerned that the Draft Outcome Document of the Summit is a betrayal of the world's poor, particularly those in Africa.

The declaration does not review progress nor address the challenges faced by governments in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It does not make any clear commitment to accelerating the flow of resources or demonstrate the political commitment to do so. Five years after the UN member states signed the Millennium Declaration and adopted the Millennium Development Goals, it is clear that the majority of countries are in grave danger of failing to achieve these targets by 2015.

Our concern is that if the negotiators continue in the current form and structure, the cost to Africa will be catastrophic. Poverty will continue to ravage the continent's poor and deny them the right to a life of dignity. We note with consternation that the consultation process has, by and large, left Africa out in the cold. Most African delegations have not effectively engaged in this process and this failure means that groundbreaking agreements on development, human rights, peace, UN Reform and above all, special interests for Africa hang in the balance.

HIV and AIDS

The draft outcome document undermines hard won progress in reducing stigma and discrimination by making reference to "personal responsibility and behaviour change", thus implying that people who live with HIV and AIDS can be accused of irresponsible behaviour. Women and girls (the largest proportion of people living with HIV and AIDS in Africa) often do not have the power to make decisions about safe sexual practices and behaviour themselves.

Such unhelpful and cowardly statements absolve the world's leaders from taking decisive multilateral action to fight the pandemic. Rather than advance from the commitments made at the G8 at the Gleneagles Summit, leaders are failing to address the specifics of a multilateral agreement on funding commitments towards achieving universal access to treatment by 2010.



www.un.org

While GCAP acknowledges that small gains were made at the G8 in July, we believe that greater steps are required at the UN Summit for a real difference to be made.

On Debt

Debt cancellation is still tied to the fundamentally flawed IMF driven HIPC Framework that has left the African continent poorer than ever. African leaders and citizens must insist on 100% unconditional debt cancellation. African governments and civil society must also demand that debt cancellation does not result in the reduction of net aid flows to Africa.

On Aid

Leaders in Africa and in the rich world must ensure that aid reaches the poorest women and men in Africa. This will not be feasible if rich countries fail to agree to meet the 0.7% target immediately. It is unpardonable that rich countries require another 10 years to implement an agreement that is already 35 years overdue.

On Trade

The sovereignty of developing countries to determine and implement their own economic policies and the need to protect their domestic markets is paramount. African leaders and civil society must stand strong on the Doha agenda and push for a multilateral timetable on the elimination of subsidies and other trade distorting policies.



**FOCUS:
MDG
PROGRESS**

Education

Education is one of the most powerful weapons in the fight against poverty, but five years on, pledges on education for all are now nothing more than a pipe dream. The only target set for 2005, was to get as many girls as boys in schools. But if you look at the 100 million children who are out of school today, two-thirds are girls.

African countries must live up to their commitments to free universal primary education by eliminating all barriers to education, including tuition fees. The developed nations should in turn ensure full and immediate funding for the education fast track initiative. Support to education should include secondary and tertiary education.

Genocide and crimes against humanity

Africa's experience with genocide and crimes against humanity in Rwanda, Sierra Leona and Sudan requires shared commitment from the world's leaders to intervene where citizens lives are at stake. Clearly the international community should intervene to protect citizens. This role goes beyond traditional peacekeeping and should entail the use of necessary force. The responsibility to protect alters traditional notions of sovereignty and rigid adherence to the principle of non-interference. While the inclusion of this principle in the draft outcome document is welcome, its parameters need to be clearly defined, as must the circumstances meriting international intervention.

STAKEHOLDER FORUM BOOKS



Human and Environmental Security—An Agenda For Change

This book is edited by **Felix Dodds** of Stakeholder Forum and **Tim Pippard** of Jane's Information Group and came out for the MDG Summit as a contribution from Stakeholder Forum to the debate around the report to the Secretary General – Challenges, Threats and Change.

Stakeholder Forum will be organizing a series of round Tables on the issues in the book with some of the authors in September. If you are interested in being kept informed then email - fdodds@stakeholderforum.org

The contributors to the book are:

Foreword - Celso Amorim Foreign Minister Brazil-**Introduction- Klaus Toepfer** Executive Director UNEP

Section 1 Peace and Security

1. Peace and Conflict: New Threats and Challenges-**Lord David Hannay**: Member of the Secretary General's Panel on Challenges, Threat's and Change; 2. Human Security and the War on Terror-**Oliver Richmond**; 3. Achieving Nuclear Non-Proliferation-**Marian Hobbs** Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control New Zealand; 4. Peace building Commission-**Anders Liden**; 5. Gender and Human Security-**Norleen Heyzer**: Director of UNIFEM.

Section 2 Sustainable Human Development

6. Human Security for the Poor - **Jan Pronk**: Former Minister of Environment and Development in the Government of the Netherlands; 7. Trade and Security in an Interconnected World - **Hilary Benn**: Secretary of State for Overseas Development UK; 8. Securing a Healthier World - **Dr Christine Durbak**, **Dr Claudia Strauss**; 9. Migration and Development-**Devyani Gupta**; 10. Protecting our Biodiversity - **Jeff McNeely**: IUCN Chief Scientist; 11. Food Security-**Henrique Cavalcanti**: former Chair of the UNCSD (1995) and Brazilian Minister of the Environment; 12. Water for All - **Patricia Wouters**; 13. Climate Change: Impacts and Security - **Melinda Kimble**: Vice President UN Foundation; 14. Human Security for Human Settlements - **Anna Tibaijuka**: Executive Director UN Habitat.

Section 3 Global Governance

15. Changing role of the State and the emergence of Regional Governance - **Sabin Mendibil Intxaurraga**: Minister of Environment Government of the Basque Country; 16. Human and Environmental Rights: A need for Corporate Accountability-**Hannah Griffiths**: Friends of the Earth; 17. Democracy in Trouble - **Felix Dodds**: Stakeholder Forum; 18. Reforming Environmental Governance - **Serge Lepeltier**: French Minister of the Environment; 19. America as Empire - **Jim Garrison**: President of State of the World Forum.

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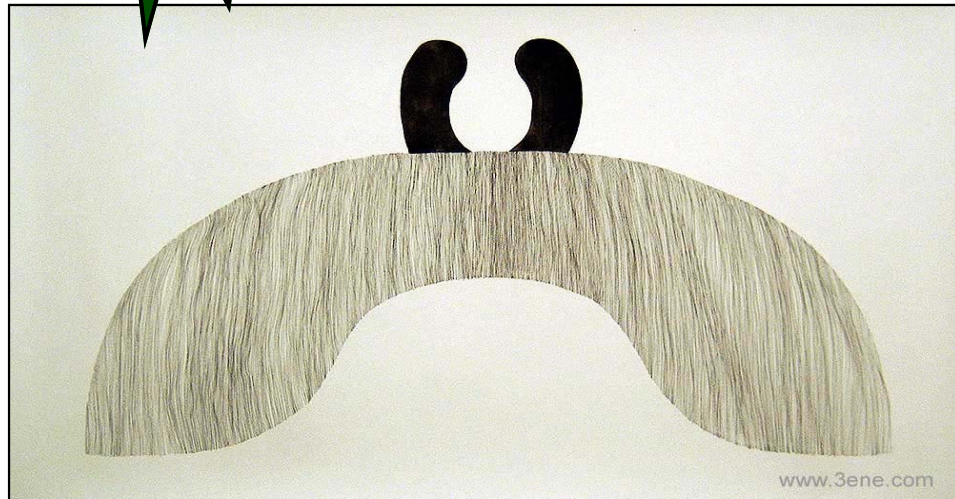
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