

Many to Many

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“Many to Many” under the aegis of Operation Peace Through Unity is a communicating link between “we, the peoples” of all nations, races, creeds and ideologies offering in the spirit of the preamble of the United Nations Charter an instrument for the furthering of better relationships based on deepening mutual understanding and the aspiration to promote unity and cooperation beyond all differences.

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Anthony Brooke & Gita Brooke, co-founders Te Rangi, 4 Allison Street, Wanganui 5001, New Zealand PHONE/FAX: 64-6-345-5714
Website: www.peacethroughunity.info or www.isleofavalon.co.uk/manytomany.html or www.angelfire.com/journal/brooke2000/
Email optubrookiana@xtra.co.nz

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I. Trade

Trade could perhaps be seen as the human equivalent to the constant and continuous exchange of energy between the various kingdoms of nature, sustaining the many lives within our planetary environment.

Despite natural disasters and seasonal shortcomings, nature seems to have a way of restoring balance, healing wounds, and making the best possible use of extreme circumstances. Even the effect of cataclysmic events throughout the Earth's history, such as ice ages, polar reversals and tectonic shifts, have been redeemed in measured steps and stages, with life forms undergoing the necessary transformation and refinement to become once again contributory parts of the planetary economy. Nature seems ever evolving and moving forward – in small steps or great strides – towards the destined goal, hidden deep within its being.

From the time when old caravan tracks and trails brought goods from one country or continent to another and until today, trading has with increasing speed and efficiency been weaving a complex and intricate web of connections and relationships between all within our global neighbourhood. Earthly assets are habitually converted into the current medium of exchange we call money in a perpetual pursuit of wealth, power, dominion and control.

Throughout the rise and fall of past civilizations humanity has demonstrated to itself the vices and virtues of the many ways we have been trading goods and services, lives and loyalties, and managed the resources at hand.

Although the learning curve has been steep and painful, experience has taught us well. And humanity is now in the position where it is able to take stock - locally, globally and holistically - and assess and review the overall state of affairs from a global perspective. The wealth of information today is telling us what has and has not been good practice.

The causes of imbalance, depletion and distress within our societies and the natural environment are being brought to light. Clearly the exchange of energy has neither been fair nor mutually beneficial. The predominant value system has taken us to the brink of bankruptcy: we have taken too much, given too little - and not cared enough.

But both science and wisdom tell us that energy is all there is. An ancient script says: *“Through energy the worlds were made and through that energy they make progression; through energy the forms unfold and die; through energy the kingdoms manifest and disappear below the threshold of the world which ever is and which will be forever”*.

Consumption has exhausted our present civilization, and its outdated structures and its value system are no longer able to hold the human spirit in bondage. Empowered with deeper understanding of causes and effects and awakening to the fact that we and all the kingdoms of our planet form part of a universe permeated with life and purpose, we can continue our journey into the world ‘which ever is’.

Will we progress upon the path of redemption? In the heart lies the answer.

II. Culture of Peace

“it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”

It has often been stated that nothing can withstand an idea whose time has come. And this can truly be said about the “departments or ministries for peace” initiative which is steadily growing into a worldwide movement aiming to create a body within national governments which will help transform the present dominating culture into a culture of peace.

Many such campaigns have come together (currently from 23 countries) under the name “Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace” (www.peoplesinitiativefordepartmentsofpeace.org) to cooperate with and support each other’s efforts.

The underlying source of inspiration for all activities is the UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/RES/53/243)

Next step for NZ Ministry for a Culture of Peace initiative:

In New Zealand the choice was made to add the word *culture* to the Ministry for Peace to emphasize that the wish for peace needs to become our culture - our way of life.

We have therefore begun a process of consultation and cooperation with schools, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the general public, through which the idea will be introduced and discussed. The outcome: a mutually agreed proposal for a Ministry for a Culture of Peace to be presented to the Government.

The discussions will be based on the 5-points proposal already tabled by Operation Peace through Unity (OPTU). These five points have sought to encapsulate the essence of the UN Declaration and Plan of Action.

The decision was made to begin the consultation process with school students, at intermediate, secondary and tertiary levels, who will discuss the 5 points as well as the UN Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace. Other relevant websites and information which will also be made available.

We have emphasized that this should not be seen as an invitation to a ‘talkfest’, but rather as an opportunity to become constructively involved at the beginning of the consultation process to create a new type of governance, based on democracy: ‘government by all the people’.

The students have also been asked to try to envisage what kind of governance would, in their view, create good, healthy and stimulating communities and neighbourhoods, locally as well as globally.

The 5-point proposal:

The primary aim of a New Zealand Ministry for a Culture of Peace would be to act as an instrument for the building of a culture of peace in accordance with the guidelines of the UN Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace through:

1. Identifying root-causes of conflict, disharmony and hostility within and between peoples, cultures and nations;
2. Actively promoting the employment of conflict-resolution, mediation, negotiation and other peacebuilding/peacemaking skills, and encouraging that these skills become common practice;
3. Acting as a focal point for comprehensive, consistent and constructive cooperation and consultation between government (and its various departments) and interest groups within the various parts of society (education, health, environment, industry, unions, science, arts, culture, law, media, police, military, volunteers, local government etc.) ensuring that the legislative process of formulating any specific law takes into account the effect it may have on the community in its entirety;
4. forming working partnerships with international institutions and co-workers for the building of a culture of peace worldwide;
5. keeping the government and the general public aware of the UN resolutions, which our Government has committed itself and us all to implement.

Once the students have prepared their recommendations, one or more students from each school will be invited to present their paper at a roundtable planned to take place by the end of July. Local MPs, councilors, NGOs, teachers and others will also be invited to listen to the students' proposals. Those attending may ask questions and offer constructive suggestions but not give their own opinions.

All tabled papers as well as the outcome of the deliberations and question time will be gathered and, based on this material, a committee (including students, teachers, OPTU and UNA branch members and others) will formulate a proposal, which will be sent back to each school for approval or amendments.

OPTU: e-mail optubrookiana@xtra.co.nz – website (www.peacethroughunity.info)

“We are in the midst of a fundamental shift that will impact new governance. It recognizes the rise of the ‘third sector’ – civil society – and that it has a certain economic value... .. To make the most of this breakthrough opportunity civil society will need to meet three challenges, which are:

Consciousness – Conscientiousness – Competence’

Lester Salamon, Director, Centre for Civil Society Studies, John Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies

III. Student Peace Alliance – US.

The Student Peace Alliance is uniting youth from across the country in a commitment to furthering a culture of peace and to establishing a Department of Peace. This they aim to do through education and grassroots action. In their pamphlet the Student Peace Alliance

Says: “A Department of Peace will be our future so we must begin building the culture that will support it *today*”. E-mail: spa@thepeacealliance.org (www.studentpeacealliance.org)

IV. ‘Free the Children from War’

On the initiative of the French foreign minister, Phillippe Douste-Blazy, and jointly organized by the French Government and UNICEF. an international high-level conference took place in Paris 5-6 February this year. With the theme “Free the Children from War” the conference brought together

representatives from about 60 countries, including government ministers, the United Nations, international organizations and civil society. Former child soldiers were also represented.

The purpose of the conference was the adoption by the states present of a text entitled “the Paris Commitments”, asking for an end to the illegal and unacceptable use of children in armed conflict. The conference also called for the preparations of new programmes to care for, protect and reintegrate child soldiers; a re-affirmation by states of their active support for the UN Security Council resolutions on the issue; and political support to disseminate the “Paris Principles”. These principles, drafted under the auspices of UNICEF, are updating the 1979 “Cape Town Principles”.

The Paris Commitments are complementing the political and legal mechanisms already in place at the UN Security Council, the International Criminal Court and other bodies trying to protect children from exploitation and violence. They are also providing detailed guidelines for protecting children from recruitment and for providing assistance to those already involved with armed groups or forces.

Mr. Douste-Blazy expressed his deep concern that girls continued to be overlooked in the effort to protect and make a commitment to help redress this imbalance. We must, he said, “*commit ourselves to spare no effort to end the unlawful recruitment and use of children by armed forces or groups in all regions of the world*”.

UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, Rima Salah, believed that this conference had taken a historic step in the effort to protect boys and girls from getting caught up in adult wars, and in her concluding remarks: “*We are very excited to see so much political commitment to tackling this issue. We know it is a long road ahead of us and it will require long-term commitment and support, but we truly hope this marks the beginning of the end for the use of children in warfare.*” (website: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/index_38242?q)

According to **Save the Children, UK**, member of the Save the Children Network, despite the guidelines already in place to eradicate the use of child soldiers, at least 13 countries are still recruiting children to fight in war, namely Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

Between 250,000 and 300,000 of the world’s children are today associated with armed forces and groups. Child soldiers are living in misery, subjected to brutal intimidation, often forced to commit atrocities as military ‘training’, and then used on the frontline. Girls, taken to become army ‘wives’, are often physically and emotionally abused. When released these children are often finding it very difficult to re-enter ‘normal life’.

Johanna MacVeigh, Protection Advisor to Save the Children, says in a statement: “It is inconceivable that ten years after international guidelines were set up to protect children from recruitment, so many are still being horrifically exploited. Children can’t wait. Governments and the UN must show their support for the Paris Principles and commit to stamping out the use of child soldiers and looking after those who have been released”

In support of the aims of the recent international conference in Paris to establish new guidelines to help eradicate the use of child soldiers, Save the Children is calling on:

- All governments and armed groups immediately to release all children associated with fighting forces, and to put a stop to all on-going recruitment and re-recruitment. This must not be dependent on a ceasefire or permanent peace agreement;
- All governments to ensure they have signed and ratified all relevant international law to protect children from unlawful recruitment and use, and to adhere to The Paris Principles;
- The UN and the Human Rights Council to adopt the Paris Principles by way of resolution, recognizing these bodies as the leading international instrument on the obligations of states and others in this area.;
- Donors adequately to fund programmes to ensure released and demobilized children can return to normal life. Current reintegration programmes are not protecting them sufficiently. Funding for such activities should be set at a minimum of five years.
- The international community to ensure that special provisions are made for former girl soldiers and their children, to lessen the risks of forced early marriage, isolation, re-recruitment or health implications of sexual violence.

Save the Children hopes people throughout the world will actively support the sentiments in the Call and help realize its goal. Contact your local Save the Children office or visit their website (<http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/index.html> or <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk/jsp/resources/details.jsp?id=4925&group=resources>)

The UN Commission on the Status of Women will hold its 51st session at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, 26 February – 9 March, on the theme: *The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child*".

The Commission will base their work on two reports of the Secretary-General on the girl-child; one which will identify and discuss key issues and make recommendations with regard to all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl-child, while the other will provide an overview of mainstreaming efforts related to the girl-child at national level.

The Commission's aim is: to help accelerate the implementation of commitments already made at national level; to enhance the capacity to mainstream the issue of the girl-child; and to identify key policy initiatives to move implementation forward. Provisions will be made for the participation of girls at the Commission itself as well as in the preparation and follow-up processes. (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw)

V. Women and Peace Building

In her foreword to a new pamphlet, published by United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), entitled "*VOICE, INFLUENCE, JUSTICE, SECURITY – the keys to Inclusive And Sustainable Peace Building*", Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM Executive Director, stresses that "*the overriding goal for women must be social transformation, not reintegration into a system in which they are marginalized. To make real progress, they need our commitment and support, as required by resolution 1325*".

On the 31 October 2000 the UN Security Council unanimously adopted the historic resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which recognizes women's important and essential role in conflict management, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building.

The UNIFEM pamphlet highlights how conflict resolution and peace-building is still often an ‘exclusive, closed business’ in which women are nearly systematically excluded. The exclusion of women from peace negotiations will inevitably have an effect on the way the post-conflict reconstruction processes are carried out: “Security sectors can be re-stocked, constitutions redrafted and legislatures re-built – all without the participation of a significant segment of the population.” This, argues the pamphlet, can lead to the re-fueling of the very social discontent that produced conflict in the first place.

UNIFEM has worked to bring women in conflict-affected countries to the peace negotiation tables and to strengthen their role in the peace-building and reconstruction processes within their communities and nations. As an example of such initiatives, Noeleen Heyzer mentions the International Women’s Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC), established in 2005 under the auspices of UNIFEM. This Commission, consisting of Palestinian, Israeli and international women, is committed to negotiating a two-state solution, and is gaining increasing support from governments as well as UN officials to its call for an international conference to ‘jump-start final status negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians and bring new life to the agenda for a just and sustainable peace’.

Together with the Initiative for Inclusive Security and the World Bank, UNIFEM organized the **Symposium on Gender and Development in Liberia** to take place in Washington DC in conjunction with the Liberia Partners’ Forum held 13-14 February in which the government of Liberia and donor countries and agencies will review progress made by the government in the reconstruction of the country.

The Symposium will hear the voices of a group of 18 Liberian women, led by the Hon. Vabah Gayflor, Minister of Gender and Development. The group represented women in Parliament, in advocacy groups, living with HIV, and women entrepreneurs.

Their key message was, that Liberian women are major stakeholders in the post-conflict reconstruction of their country and that therefore mechanisms must be put in place which would secure women’s effective participation in the formulation and reform of policies, including on land tenure reforms, national security and education. Concerned that 85 per cent of adult women are illiterate, the women asked that greater emphasis was given to adult literacy. They also stressed that in light of the increasing incidence of gender-based violence, including rape, in the Liberian communities, this issue should be included in the discussions on the enhancement of national security. (www.unifem.org)

VI. International Women’s Day – 8 March 2007

For more than thirty years this day has been celebrated throughout the world and has helped to increase public awareness on the need for deep and comprehensive changes in the relations between women and men, and to the benefits that such a transformation will bring to the entire international community.

This year’s theme, “*Ending Impunity for Violence against Women*”, is highlighting the fact that violence against women is still the most common and the least punished crime in the world. “Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture” says

the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in his message on the Women's Day, adding that although most societies prohibit such violence – 'the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned.' The Secretary-General stressed that "empowering women is not only a goal in itself. It is a condition for building better lives for everyone on the planet."

Among the publications commemorating the International Women's Day are the most recent Development Dossier, published by UN-NGLS, entitled "*The Unfinished Story of Women and the United Nations*". Going back more than 85 years it tells hitherto untold stories about the role of women in the formation of the League of Nations and the unfolding history of women at the United Nations for the advancement and empowerment of women, particularly in the last 30 years. (www.un-ngls.org/pdf/UnfinishedStory.pdf)

Another publication is the report of the Special Rapporteur, Yakin Erturk, on violence against women, its causes and consequences, entitled "Intersections between culture and violence against women" (A/HRC/4/34) The report highlights the culture-based thought forms and paradigms that could justify or explain the violations of women's rights; it also outlines some general guidelines for an effective strategy to counter and transform culture-based discourses, which constitute one of the major obstacles to the implementation of women's rights. (http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=106)

VII. Fragile States – Fragile Groups Tackling Economic and Social Vulnerability

Under the heading "*Fragile States – Fragile Groups*" a conference will take place on 15-16 June in Helsinki, Finland. The conference is organized by United Nations University's first research and training centre, WIDER (Helsinki 1985), in collaborations with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and the support of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Here policymakers and researchers from the academic, government and development communities will come together to tackle the issue of the 'economic and social vulnerability' of the poorest and most 'fragile' countries where more than 350 million people live in extreme poverty and more than four million children die each year before reaching the age of five. The conference will be discussing the concepts and measures of fragility and vulnerability, consider appropriate policy options and identify future research directions. (www.wider.unu.edu)

VIII. The International Simultaneous Policy Organisation

At the heart of the International Simultaneous Policy Organisation (ISPO) is the Founding Declaration which contains the basic principles and ideas on which the organization is created and which all its members are committed to uphold.

ISPO is described as a way to build the necessary consensus to facilitate the move from global competition to global cooperation.

British businessman, founder and director, John Bunzl, says that Simultaneous Policy (SP) could be seen both as a policy and a process:

“It is”, according to the Declaration , “a *policy* which is to consist of a range of measures to be implemented by all, or by virtually all, nationals simultaneously. Its contents will be determined by all adopters, working together co-operatively. The individual policies that make up SP will be those that cannot presently be implemented unilaterally by individual governments, or restricted group of governments, due to destructive global competition.

It is also a *process* whereby politicians can be led by civil society to implement such policies. The Declaration describes the process like this: “ By adopting SP, individuals pledge to vote in future elections for ANY political party or candidate – within reason – that has pledged to implement SP (or, where an individual has a party political affiliation or preference, their adoption indicates their preference for that party to pledge to implement SP). When sufficient numbers have adopted, politicians will be obliged to pledge to implement SP, in order to be elected. When a party in power or a national government has pledged to implement SP, it will be required, with the consent of its citizens, to deliver on that pledge when the governments of every other country (or of a sufficient number of other countries) have also pledged to do so. To be valid, pledges to implement SP must be given in a manner specified by ISPO.”

The aim is “to empower people to transform the world by bringing about international co-operation, leading to a sustainable global society based on respect for the Earth and life in all its diversity. We will achieve this by promoting the adoption and eventual implementation of SP”.

The Declaration specifies the guiding principles which will characterize all ISPO organizations as: Universal Inclusiveness; Non-partisanship; Honesty and Integrity; Accountability; Democracy; Unity and diversity, and Commitment.

John Bunzl is also the author of the book “The Simultaneous Policy – An Insider’s Guide to Saving Humanity and the Planet”

General inquiries: ISPO, POB 26 547, London JE3 7YT, UK. E-mail: info@simpol.org
Website www.simpol.org

IX. United Nations Global Compact

In his speech to the World Economic Forum, Davos 1999, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, called on the business leaders gathered ‘ – *individually through your firms, and collectively through your business associations – to embrace, support and enact a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, and environmental practices* ’.

In the year 2000 the Global Compact’s operational phase was launched at the UN Headquarters and today thousands of companies, international labour and civil society organizations have joined the Global Compact, working to advance ten universal principles based on the three areas mentioned in Kofi Annan’s speech:

Human Rights:

Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

Make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

Labour Standards:

Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour,

The effective abolition of child labour, and

The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Environment:

Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges,

Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility, and

Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

Anti-Corruption

Businesses should work against all forms of corruption, including extortion and bribery.

The Global Compact is a network - not a regulatory body which 'police', enforce or measure the behaviour or actions of companies. Instead it 'relies on public accountability, transparency and the enlightened self-interest of companies, labour and civil society to initiate and share substantive action in pursuing the principles upon which the Global Compact is based'. At its core are the Global Compact Office and six UN agencies:

The Human Rights Council

United Nations Environment Programme

International Labour Organisation

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Industrial Development Organisation

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime

Building networks of communication and cooperation the Global Compact seeks to involve all relevant social actors in the process of implementing the principles to which it is committed.

<http://www.unglobalcompact.com/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html>

The World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting which took place in Davos 28 January 2007, attracted over 2000 business, political and economic leaders as well as academics, UN agency chiefs and NGO representatives, to assess, discuss and explore 'practical opportunities for progress through partnership'.

At the very centre of this year's discussions was climate change with the Forum expressing a deepening commitment to cooperate with other groups on this urgent issue as well as other global concerns. Among some of the concrete proposals arising from this Annual Meeting are:

The formation of a new international partnership of seven organizations to establish a generally accepted framework for climate risk-related reporting by corporations. Among the founding members of this institutional consortium, the Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB), were the California Climate Action Registry, Carbon Disclosure Project, Ceres, World Economic Forum Global Greenhouse Gas Register and World Resources. The CDSB members have agreed to align their core requests for information from companies in order to ensure that they report climate change-related information in a standardized way that facilitates easier comparative analysis by investors, managers and the public.

The Forum also announced the establishment of a joint Israeli-Palestinian business council, which will encourage and facilitate constructive cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian business leaders, reinforce economic relationship and help peace building efforts by a credible and legitimate voice. The Council will bring together some 200 Palestinian and Israeli CEOs and hold its first

assembly during the World Economic Forum Meeting on the Middle East at the Dead Sea in Jordan, 19-20 May 2007.

The heads of the Big Four Accounting firms (Deloitte, Ernst Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers) have agreed to work with the World Economic Forum 'Partnering Against Corruption Initiative' (PACI), to support the global fight against corruption. The presidents of the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Executive Director of the international Finance Corporation have re-affirmed their support of PACI and will explore using PACI's frameworks and tools as a starting point for developing their own programmes.

The Forum and the 'Reinvention Bretton Woods Committee' issued a two-year public-private review of the international monetary system in cooperation with 'Group of 20' governments, entitled "*The International Monetary System, the IMF and the G20: A Great Transformation in the Making?*".

The above examples together with the many other proposals from the Forum illustrate, according to Rick Samans, Managing Director of the World Economic Forum, the growing interest of companies to work in partnership with governmental and civil society organizations to advance progress on critical challenges: "Multi-stakeholder alliances such as these illustrate an important aspect of the 'shifting power equation' that was the theme of our Annual Meeting this year". (<http://www.weforum.org/annualmeeting>)

X. Debating NGO Accountability

"Debating NGO Accountability" is the title of a Development Dossier, written by Jem Bendell and produced by the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) which, together with the book entitled "NGO Accountability – Politics, Principles and Innovations" (Jordan & Van Tuijl, Earthscan 2006) was launched at a panel discussion on this subject at UN headquarter in New York, 19 January this year.

The panel moderator, Elisa Peter (UN-NGLS) pointed to the timeliness of the debate, both with regard to the increasing visibility and influence of NGOs in today's world community and also an important contribution to the World Social Forum being held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 20-25 January on the theme "People's Struggles, People's Alternatives".

Elisa Peter said that as the role of NGOs become more prominent the issue of their accountability is being discussed: "*Concerns about their role calls for greater responsibility, questions about NGO credibility, legitimacy, transparency, and accountability have been voiced from different quarters in recent years, including at the United Nations and among some of its member states*".

Panellist, H.E. Ambassador Rezland I. Jenie (Indonesia) posed the question "Are NGOs good or bad for the UN"? The Ambassador went on to say that there is today a considerable 'confidence deficit' in the relationship between UN member states and NGOs, suggesting that this was partly due to the fact that "*a lack of international standards has allowed far less legitimate NGOs to undermine the effectiveness of credible NGOs*".

Mr. Jenie proposed that there should be a standard for NGOs integrity and performance, saying that *“the idea of a code of conduct can be an instrument to ensure that NGOs commit themselves to the aims of the United Nations Charter and act in a manner that respects the intergovernmental character of the UN”*.

Considering the question whether or not NGOs were good for the UN Jenie, a personal adviser to the president of the 60th General Assembly on relationships between member states and civil society, said: *“NGOs may not be able to claim to be the representatives of certain defined groups of people, but they can definitely give a voice to a wide range of opinions that emerge from various segments of society, and we must value that.”*

Agreeing with Mr. Jenie’s statement regarding a ‘confidence deficit’, Dr. Steve Charnovitz, co-author of “NGO Accountability”, said that NGOs will need to be more ‘scientific and fact based in their work. However Charnovitz was skeptical of top-down efforts in enforcing NGO accountability, suggesting that *“if we can improve the marketplace of ideas in the world, we have come a long way. The solution is rational debates, not regulation”*. But NGOs may need to show more self-responsibility.

Concerned with the limits and risks for NGO regulation, Co-author, Dr. Patricia Armstrong, pointed to the direct link between the right of freedom of speech and association and accountability, insisting that: *“Human rights and the right of association must be at the centre of thoughts around NGO accountability and regulation systems”* and adding: *“Any generic or universal approach would very rarely be appropriate”*.

Although NGOs were still trusted by many their reputation was falling, according the Jem Bendell, who stressed the importance of NGOs defining themselves in terms of who they are and what they do: *“NGOs need to practice what they preach. That means maintaining their budgets; achieving their missions better; and contributing better to society.*

The panelists made it clear that the issue of NGO accountability might not be as simple or straightforward as it appeared, as their accountability is intrinsically linked with and related to that of other actors within the local/global community.

In answer to the question: ‘So, who are NGOs accountable to?’ Dr. Patricia Armstrong suggested: *“In general NGOs are accountable to donors in respect of funding, to owners, members and founders in all respects, to the public – only when there is a legitimate public interest (e.g. if the NGO is collecting money on the street), and to governments only when there is a legitimate governmental interest (e.g. if the NGO receives tax benefits).*

Dr. Enrique Peruzzotti argued that maybe the question was not so much **who** but **what** the NGO was representing: *“Civil society has a role of generating political and cultural innovation through free and creative action and by challenging existing forms of thinking”*, he said, adding *“It is the force of the argument that gives legitimacy to NGO claims”*.

Juliette Majot saw NGO legitimacy as a ‘road trip’ rather than as an ‘end point’, and stressed that in order to be legitimate and effective NGOs need to have a set of values and understanding; be extremely committed to accuracy and rigorous thinking and to get information from the best possible sources. For an NGO to work with integrity and legitimacy in extremely difficult political issues it needs to know itself and its authority:

...numbers is not what gives NGOs legitimacy.... Rather it is the argument and the integrity of that argument that gives NGOs their legitimacy”.

Another issue discussed at the meeting and highlighted in the two publications launched that day was: is NGO accountability necessarily always a good thing? Juliette Majot believed that *‘accountability is bad when used to ensure silence in civil society’*. Jem Bendell argued that accountability in itself is not simply a ‘good thing’ as so often assumed: *“rather, it must be clear that groups must be accountable specifically to those that are affected by their decisions and actions.”* Dr. Steve Charnovitz added: *“NGOs need to do better to get their own house in order”*. They need also to promote ‘better governance’.

In their concluding remarks the panelists expressed the hope that NGOs would be capable of building trust, be self regulating and self aware, and play their part in responsible global governance. NGOs were warned, that reputation, once lost, is difficult to restore. NGOs must be careful not to adapt their approach to suit the needs of donors. According to Jem Bendell *“Large donors can have a great influence on what NGOs do, and unless dealing with that issue, we would continue the challenge.... We have to reconcile the contradictions of the wishes of donors and ideology.”*

Jem Bendell, author of “Debating NGO Accountability”, maintained that it is the concept of ‘democratic accountability’ that lies at the heart of the book and which will, he believes, allow NGOs to continue to develop as effective and important actors in the international arena.

The answer to the question: is there a particular form of accountability that merits being regarded as ‘desirable’, is, Jem Bendell believes that one must seek a deeper understanding of rights and democracy, and how the rights of the individual human being as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be realized universally without undermining the rights of any person group within the local or global community.

Perhaps the most desirable form of accountability and responsibility could be said to be the one in which ‘all organs of society’ unite in a common striving towards *“the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want”* - and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours.

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) is an interagency programme of the UN system that facilitates dialogue, cooperation and constructive engagement between the UN system and the NGO community worldwide on global development issue. NGLS has offices in Geneva and New York.

Sources: NGLS report, and the report submitted by Dr. Eileen J. Ain, OPTU representative to the UN DPI/NGO

e-mail npls@unctad.org or npls@un.org Website (www.un-npls.org)

XI. The World Social Forum

The World Social Forum (WSF) had its first meeting in Porto Alegre in 2001, where subsequently a Charter of Principles was formulated by the initiating committee of Brazilian organizations. The first paragraph of this Charter states that “The World Social Forum is an open meeting place where groups and movements of civil society opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism, but engaged in building a planetary society centred on the human

person, come together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, formulate proposals, share their experiences freely and network for effective action.” (<http://wsf2007.org/process/wsf-charter>)

Under the motto: *Another World Is Possible* the Forum has been placing social justice, international solidarity, gender equality, peace and defense of the environment on the agenda. Although it provides an international platform for those groups and movements who ‘concrete, sustainable and progressive alternatives to imperialist globalisation’ the Forum does not see itself as a ‘monolithic world revolutionary vanguard movement, nor is it a reincarnation of an international ‘united front’ seeking to overthrow, one by one, governments around the world’ This would be a ‘complete negation of the very essence and concept of the World Social Forum as outlined in its Charter of Principles’

The Forum held its 7th meeting in Nairobi this year between the 20th-25th January, on the theme: “People’s Struggles, People’s Alternatives”. People from the Asia-Pacific, Latin-America, The Caribbean, North America, Europe and all corners of the African continent gathered in Nairobi, where the African peoples had the opportunity to share their history of struggle against foreign domination, colonialism and neo-colonialism, their rich heritage of natural wealth, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity, and their role in the quest for another possible, more progressive global human society.

The January-February issue of the newsletter ‘Civil Society Observer’, distributed by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), contains several comments from articles and reports written by people who attended the Nairobi World Social Forum, which offer some insight into the opportunities and challenges of such an open platform for people and organizations representing a wide variety of views and agendas.

One participant believed that the widely publicized protest by poor activists against the entrance fee had resulted in more poor participants attending this Forum than ever before; that the Forum had contributed to enhancing the place of Africa within the global social movements. Another attendant however thought that the Forum was more a gathering of NGOs than of social and political movements and people’s organizations and wondered whether these NGOs were loyal and accountable to their donors or to the African people?

One visitor to the Forum felt that the World Social Forum had matured and evolved and that its greatest strength could well be the development of global networks whose political clout would emerge in the next 5-10 years. (To receive Civil Society Observer, contact NGLS at: npls@un.org)

XII. Ethical Careers in Science, Design and Technology

UK based Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR) is publishing a series of briefings on ethical careers, the latest entitled Career Choice and the Chemical Industry. It looks at scientific and engineering careers that can improve the environmental performance of the chemical industry or reduce its negative impacts on human health. I also highlights career options that can help eliminate chemical weapons or reduce animal experiments. The briefing also includes an explanation of the major regulatory changes that are currently taking place, especially in Europe. All SGR’s ethical career publications can be downloaded from <http://www.sgr.org.uk/ethics.html>

XIII. The Great Invocation in English

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the plan on Earth