

## The role of civil society in the UN

# « Helping peoples to recover their rights and powers to intervene in international affairs through the democratization of the United Nations Some ideas submitted for debate »

### 1. FINDINGS

Despite the efforts made by the United Nations to develop the Organization in line with the issues and challenges of the future, a number of shortcomings and weaknesses persist which must be addressed and overcome.

First of all, citizens are not sufficiently familiar with the United Nations system and Charter, which prevents public opinion from supporting and using the UN to build their aspirations for general well-being, from their neighbourhoods to the planet.

More generally, in the United Nations system, despite all the efforts made, the place and role of the peoples and citizens of the world are still being undermined.

The other observation, which is just as serious, is the inadequacy of the resources available to the United Nations to enable it to function.

The UN has approximately 4 billion dollars a year at its disposal for its operations (the General Assembly today followed the recommendations of its Fifth Committee, which is responsible for administrative and budgetary matters, adopting a budget for the UN and its 10,351 staff members of exactly 3,588,280,100 dollars for 2024). Its budget for peacekeeping operations is approximately 6 billion dollars per year. (For the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, the total budget for the 9 active peacekeeping operations is 5.5 billion dollars).

**At the same time, global military spending is rising steadily, reaching 2.3 trillion dollars in 2443 (source: SIPRI).**

#### Two other important issues.

##### a- The UN's lack of economic power

The fundamental obstacle to the effective and democratic functioning of the United Nations lies in the fact that its political role and power are fundamentally challenged by the absence of its economic power.

The international financial institutions, the IMF and the World Bank, as well as the bodies responsible for regulating trade under the auspices of the World Trade Organization, were set up outside the UN and operate in a manner contrary to the fundamental principles of the UN Charter.

These bodies operate on the principle of one dollar, one vote, which gives primacy of economic power to the major powers and multinationals,

##### b- Disinformation, the ideological battle waged by the military-media-industrial complex on a global scale

The economic and media forces mobilised by the military-industrial complex to support their interests in a war economy, to conceal the revolutionary scope of the United Nations Charter and, above all, to prevent the peoples of the world from seizing these elements to better wage their battle for peace, both nationally and internationally, are disproportionate to those available to the UN.

Rather than simply misinforming people, the aim is to steer them towards dead ends, such as suggesting that we can win the battle for world peace by military force.

The dominant media support the sidelining of the UN in favour of meetings of the major powers outside the UN (e.g. G5, G7, G20), with the aim of undermining the UN to better promote international financial institutions and military tools such as NATO.

Who among our neighbours is aware, for example, of Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, which stipulates that for its own security, the world must spend only the minimum amount on military expenditure?

We must therefore combat misinformation about the content of the Charter and find ways of making it known to all the citizens of the world, thereby opening up prospects for unified struggles by peoples for human rights, peace and human security.

All the reforms challenging the obstacles mentioned above cannot be carried out without a commitment on the scale of all the countries of the world enabling the peoples to become aware of their power and their right to act to achieve the objectives of the Charter.

## 2 - SOME PROPOSALS

### 2.1 Resources and structures

#### 2.1.1 Resources

The contribution of all States to the functioning of the United Nations and to peacekeeping operations must be considerably increased, i.e. doubled or tripled as quickly as possible.

#### 2.1.2 -Structures

##### 2.1.2.1-International institutions

The international financial institutions must be integrated into the general system of the United Nations, which also means putting an end to the misuse of the right of veto, which in fact constitutes a blocking minority for certain States, including the United States.

**The creation of a mediation council whose objective would be to ensure that States comply with the United Nations Charter would seem to us to be real support for its day-to-day and universal application.**

A new international banking plan, under the aegis of the UN, also seems to us to be essential to give the Organization real economic power.

##### 2.1.2.2 -Local communities

The role of local authorities and their representatives must be upgraded so that the voice of mayors and associations of elected representatives is better represented and heard at the UN: these management structures are closest to the people and therefore in the best position to understand the problems of local populations.

As part of the 'Zero draft for the future' programme, new structures and a new commission should be set up at the United Nations General Assembly to ensure that local authorities, and in particular **mayors and local or regional elected representatives, are represented.**

##### 2.1.2.3 -Civil society and associations, trade unions, etc.

The United Nations ECOSOC Commission must be enlarged and strengthened in terms of human and financial resources, as must all the United Nations structures that liaise with NGOs. NGOs must be able to obtain financial assistance from the UN for their representation.





## 2.2 Working methods, operations and popular education and training

### 2.1.1 Training

- In response to the lack of knowledge of international law, the rules of multilateralism and primary knowledge of the United Nations Charter, tools must be put in place to enable genuine initial and mass popular education on these principles.
- Develop a global network of universities for peace (at least 2 universities for peace per continent), taking as a reference the UN University for Peace based in Costa Rica.

**(The University for Peace (UPEACE)** is an international academic institution set up by the UN in 1980. Its aim is to promote an international culture of peace in order to fulfil the founding mission of the United Nations, which is to establish international peace.

- Passing a resolution at United Nations level requiring each State to set up one or more information centres on the United Nations and the rules of international law, and creating the conditions for maximum access by all citizens to these information centres in their respective national languages or at least in all the official languages of the United Nations.
- Set up rapid information circuits to make UN resolutions known not only to experts, connoisseurs and activists, but to public opinion as a whole.
- **Strengthen the education/health and environment sectors**, in particular with a much larger fund for youth and early childhood, in order to guarantee access to a balanced diet and healthcare for all, schooling for all children, a healthy environment for all, and strengthen UNESCO and UNICEF. **It is necessary to have a vote on an educational foundation that would be a fundamental right for every child, regardless of the country in which they live.**
- A world media library of documentary and film resources developed by the UN should provide access to this documentation at the best price, whereas a number of tools of this kind have had to be abandoned for lack of resources.

### 2.1.2 - working methods

The UN must find new, original and interactive ways of communicating **to enable public opinion to intervene more effectively beforehand or to support the implementation of UN resolutions.**

#### New global governance:

- Reform the UN to give the General Assembly its rightful place as the institution's decision-making body.
- The Charter allows the UN to create subsidiary bodies (art. 7.2); the same applies to the Security Council (art. 29); we therefore propose the creation of a 'mediation council' attached to the General Secretariat, constituted by the ECOSOC Council or an emanation of its assembly, which would thus see its role legitimised and strengthened in support of peacekeeping efforts; such a council, independent of the interests of States, could act before the Security Council takes a decision.
- Strengthen the weight of civil society (local elected representatives and NGOs).
- Include more young people active for the environment, climate protection and peace in civil representation.
- Ensure equal representation of men and women on all state and UN bodies, and create youth councils.
- Increase the funds allocated to international peace and security.

#### International law and applications :

- Obligation for all countries to apply the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and human rights, and possibility of binding fines and sanctions for countries that do not respect these rights.



## ENVIRONMENT:

- **Protection of ecosystems:** forests, oceans, fauna and flora, through the creation of national and regional reserves, as well as the compulsory cleaning of natural areas, water and all resources, as well as the protection of populations living on natural resource sites, through the application of human, women's and children's rights.

## UN funding.

- **Establish a moratorium to redirect to the UN the funds allocated to armaments in countries** that are currently over-investing (enforce Article 26 of the Charter).

- **Ethical reflection on AI.**

- Strictly supervise artificial intelligence with ethics committees responsible for this issue to preserve individual freedoms, prevent the risks of dictatorship, and preserve democratic functioning and peace in the world.

In our view, there are a number of ways of strengthening the role of the UN:

- Continue the battle to promote and broaden ratification of the CTBT, the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, adopted by the UN on 7 July 2017 and as of 9 January 2023, signed by 92 states and ratified by 68 states.
- Use the reports from the last meeting of the CTBT to show how to move away from the logic of confrontation and the nuclear 'umbrella'.
- Take advantage of the change in economic relations with the expansion of the BRICS to contribute to better coexistence between peoples.
- Move away from neo-colonial 'development' by reorienting the priorities of the World Bank and the IMF, integrating these monetary, economic and trade institutions into the UN system, and promoting the concepts of public and cooperative services.
- Strengthen the implementation of all the SDGs, including for the Culture of Peace and non-violence, and with the reinforcement of a Culture of Peace Education in schools from the earliest age;
- Dedicate to an ecological and energy transformation based on solidarity by establishing the necessary common goods: in particular water and energy, which are underestimated triggers for conflict.
- Increase the UN budget, which is derisory compared to global military spending.

It is by involving civil societies and citizens more closely that the UN will be able to become more effective, or regain its effectiveness, through active support for resolutions that promote the implementation of its main objectives, namely peace and human security.

For example, as was already done in 2000, when 700 million citizens supported the UN resolution for the development of a culture of peace and non-violence.



**LE MOUVEMENT DE LA PAIX - Agréé Association Nationale de la Jeunesse et d'Éducation Populaire**  
Association à statut consultatif ECOSOC à l'ONU

9, rue Dulcie September - 93400 Saint-Ouen - 01 40 12 09 12 / national@mvtpeix.org / [www.mvtpeix.org](http://www.mvtpeix.org)