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August 24, 2004

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017  
&  
United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchet  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Annan and Deputy Secretary-General Fréchet,

I am writing to you to express both our support and concerns with the Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations - Civil Society Relations. The World Federalist Movement welcomes the Secretary-General's reform initiatives and applauds the Panel's effort to enhance the engagement of civil society in the United Nations. Likewise, we support the spirit of inclusiveness in the Report and the recommendations for participation of all relevant stakeholders in the United Nations. WFM is devoted to advance the positive aspects of the report in the forthcoming follow up process.

WFM has been supportive of the UN since our organization was founded in 1947 and has actively participated in UN processes both through our consultative status with ECOSOC and our information exchange with DPI. We have partaken in many civil society networks and assumed leadership roles of numerous civil society processes such as the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, The Hague Appeal for Peace, International NGO Task Group on Legal and Institutional Matters, the Earth Summit as well as the issue of extending consultative rights beyond traditional international NGOs.

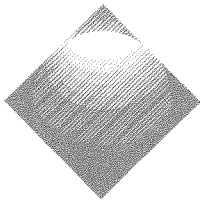
Throughout our participation in UN processes, we have valued the integrity and solidness of resolution 1996/31 on the relationship between the UN and NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC. However, we regret that in revisiting the framework for NGO involvement at the UN, the Cardoso Report did not acknowledge how resolution 1996/31 (and its predecessors) embraces the idealism and best practices of NGO engagement as well as the privileges and responsibilities encompassed within it.

In continuation of this, we are concerned with the Panel's emphasis on the participation of other actors such as the business sector without outlining a framework for the rules of engagement for these actors. We do not object to the access and participation of for-profit organizations but we find it crucial that legitimate rules of engagement are established for these actors, similar to the principles outlined in resolution 1996/31. We thus call upon you to ensure that specific rules and principles of engagement in support of the UN are instituted with regards to the participation of for-profit entities in UN decision-making processes.

Overall, WFM supports the Panel's steps to facilitate greater involvement of parliamentarians in UN processes and approves of the initiative of Global Public Policy Committees. However, we have some concerns regarding the need for more inclusiveness in consulting with parliamentary associations. WFM has had a parliamentary dimension to our organization throughout its six decades and while we welcome the emergent role

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of the Inter-Parliamentary Union with the General Assembly, we have substantive recommendations on how to improve this relationship.

WFM endorses the Panel's reintroduction of the issue of non-state actors' participation in the General Assembly. In the capacity as Chair of the International NGO Task Group on Legal and Institutional Matters, WFM has worked on this issue for many years and drafted in consultation with hundreds of NGOs a proposed General Assembly NGO Resolution in 2000. This Resolution was endorsed by Amnesty International, Greenpeace and many NGOs from both the North and the South. WFM rightfully respects and wishes to protect the integrity of the General Assembly and we maintain that the provision for participation of NGOs should only be consultative. Accordingly, we call for an extension of the modalities of ECOSOC to limited consultative arrangements for NGOs to the General Assembly including the right for accredited NGOs to attend open meetings, receive documentation and be able to make their reports and written documents available. We do not advocate extending the ECOSOC speaking rights nor the privileges to have translation and circulation of written statements, but we do request our right to observe. Given the research and knowledge that WFM holds on this issue, we would welcome the opportunity to share our expertise with you.

WFM welcomes the proposal for one single accreditation unit, given that it will improve the application process and facilitate a faster and less resource intensive evaluation procedure for the UN Secretariat and governments. In agreement with the Panel's observation of the current accreditation process as being too politicized, WFM advocates an enhanced role for professional evaluations of applications. We question the degree of depoliticization which would be accomplished by moving the accreditation mechanism to the authority of the UN General Assembly and recommend that the main part of the accreditation process is performed by professional staff at the UN. Accordingly, we highly support a continued discussion on how to depoliticize the process while respecting the intergovernmental legitimacy of the UN and the sovereignty of the Member-States.

In line with the Panel's proposal for Public Hearings, which WFM endorses in principle, we recommend that the Secretary-General or Deputy Secretary-General consider convening public hearings to discuss the Report with governments, civil society and other sectors. Since the release of the Report many substantive, legal, political and practical questions have been raised by all actors indicating a need for an inclusive follow up process where such questions could be attended to. Given that the Report is addressing the issue of civil society engagement in the UN, WFM finds it especially vital that a follow-up framework with modalities for input and participation of civil society is established.

Lastly, we wish to emphasize the importance of ensuring the preservation of Article 71 of the UN Charter as well as Resolution 1996/31. The proposals suggested by the Panel must, if implemented, in no way compromise the rights and privileges confided on NGOs by the UN Charter which has developed constructively since the first years of the UN.

Sincerely,

William R. Pace,  
Executive Director

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Enclosed: INTGLIM proposed General Assembly NGO Resolution