

Chair:

Peter Eigen, Chairman, Transparency International

Panellists:

Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General and CEO, CIVICUS, South Africa
Ann M. Florini, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA
Ayo Obe, President, Civil Liberties Organization, Nigeria
Sanjeev Khagram, Assistant Professor of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Discussant:

Cheryl Gray, Director of the Public Sector, The World Bank

The workshop chairman, **Peter Eigen**, gamely initiated the discussion with a provocative assertion: "*Globalisations needs strong government.*" As neither the traditional national governments nor the existing international organizations and certainly not the powerful transnational corporations had shown themselves up to the complex task of global governance, the globalised world is facing a huge "*governance vacuum*".

National and transnational Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have more or less inadvertently moved into this vacuum. Their efforts to fill the vast need for more humane visions and concomitant local and global actions have in turn thrust open serious questions regarding their democratic legitimacy, operational strategy and lastly greater efficiency and appropriateness vis-a-vis the challenges of globalization.

The panellists were asked to present their experiences and views regarding the main issues facing civil society organizations as they struggle to contribute to the realization of a more responsive, accountable and equitable management of global society. What strategies were, or could be pursued to help CSOs develop their full potential for becoming decisive actors and a sustainable force in global governance? Was the forging of coalitions with traditional public and private actors a pragmatic approach for securing greater influence for civil society goals or a corrupting pitfall?

Kumi Naidoo's observation, that civil society organisations have unquestionably become a major force in the world, met with overall agreement. With the growth of CSOs, influence and recognition by traditional national and international organisations and leaders, there arose a commensurate demand for accepting greater responsibility and for accounting for one's actions. In so far as such demands were legitimate, Naidoo felt that CSOs *should themselves make a greater effort to meet the standards of transparency and accountability* that they expect of traditional public and private institutions. Issues of internal democracy and inter-sector rivalry must also be dealt with and a concerted effort made to gain and retain public trust. In short: CSOs must clean their up own houses if they want to be credible.

The question whether CSOs must perfect their own organisations before attempting to influence global issues and/or forging coalitions with traditional actors initially proved controversial. Ultimately, however, broad agreement prevailed that CSOs must do both at the same time: concentrate on the improvement of the integrity and performance of their own organizations and engage themselves in the identification and resolution of crucial global issues that cannot wait to be attended to.

By contrast, the public controversy regarding CSOs' legitimacy found no reflection in this workshop. The view of both **Ann Florini** and **Kumi Naidoo**, who argued that CSOs' legitimacy relies on different criteria than those of traditional political actors, was broadly acclaimed. While to be sure, CSOs, unlike political parties, cannot be voted out of office, their right to play a role in public life is legitimized by their performance. The resources in time and financing provided to them are strictly on a voluntary basis. "*CSOs perform or perish!*" stated Naidoo and was echoed no less convincingly by Ann Florini, who pointed out that "*The only power they wield is the power of persuasion. This cannot be regarded as illegitimate.*"

In her most recently published book, entitled *The Third Force*, Ann Florini analyses the rise, mode of operation and achievements of transnational civil society organizations. In the workshop, she presented a brief excerpt of her findings concluding that "*...transnational civil society's influence is not likely to wane. The WTO is swimming against the tide in keeping the voice of CSOs out ... If it doesn't find a way to incorporate these voices, it will remain ... unable to tackle the difficult global questions.*"

Another, no less convincing, argument for the legitimacy and profound importance of CSO involvement in global governance manifests itself in **Ayo Obe's** complaint about the total lack of regard for African communities' interests in intergovernmental organisations. "*African communities have no representation in international bodies. Their only contacts on human or social rights issues are international NGOs such as Amnesty - and Transparency International.*" The fact that in the WTO, every country has one vote means nothing, insists Ayo Obe. "*The people who participate in international negotiations have absolutely no contact to the communities' practical realities.*"

The key question of *appropriate strategies for CSOs to achieve a greater role* in influencing the resolution of global issues understandably remained unresolved.

Broad based coalitions with traditional public and private institutions on specific issues, such as corruption and concomitant injustices (Transparency International), or the struggle to eliminate catastrophic environmental damage and human dislocation in association with large dams (World Commission on Dams) were presented as examples for possible emulation.

At the same time, as **Peter Eigen** pointed out, the dangers of engaging in coalitions with figures lacking integrity, tending towards corrupt practices and/or striving to achieve self-serving goals, were undeniable. Such sobering insights notwithstanding, Peter Eigen, as most of the workshop participants, including those most radical in their criticism of traditional powers, seemed in agreement, that there was no alternative to finding forms of working with the powers in being if one wished to influence their behaviour and goals.

In this vein, it proved altogether appropriate that **Sanjeev Khagram**, the last workshop panellist, focused on the *World Commission on Dams* as a paramount "*experiment in the emerging new international order*".

The Commission was founded to probe into and resolve what historically had proven to be the world's most contentious interests: the proponents of big dams (national and international development agencies, international and domestic engineering corporations, agribusiness and their respective lobbyists...) and the affected local communities, national and transnational civil society coalitions who opposed large dam construction as environmentally and socially unacceptably destructive. The Commission's brief was to agree on an agenda of reforms or to abandon large dam construction. With the publication of the Commission Report in November 2000, what seemed a "mission impossible" had been brought to a successful conclusion.

According to Sanjeev Khagram, who was a member of the Commission, the Commission's success and its potential as a model for future global governance institutions is closely related to its combination of unique characteristics and processes. The Commission was a multi-stakeholder, composed of representatives of civil society, public and private sector institutions. It had independent funding from about 80 organisations; no one could dominate. Its operational processes were participatory, transparent and accountable. And last but not least, it focused on new global norms: it reported on new directions forward and then ceased to exist.

Although other organisations based on this "model experiment in global governance" have followed, Khagram did not neglect to point out that such new institutions continue to entail a number of unresolved issues:

- Who sets them up?
- Who decides who stakeholders are?
- Who represents civil society?
- How can the experiments be truly participatory?
- Where can one go to get decisions/projects implemented once recommendations have been formulated?

Main Themes Covered

1. The rapid spread of globalization poses numerous new challenges to the task of securing economic welfare and social justice for all of the world's peoples. These developments have manifestly intensified the need for strong government. The kick-off hypotheses for debate suggested that the inappropriateness of both the traditional national states and of the intergovernmental system for coping with the vastly changed global management needs have resulted in a "governance vacuum".

2. The World Trade Organization (WTO) was focused upon as the potentially most powerful institution for dealing with the global issues arising from the vastly expanded economic integration and its social and environmental correlates. Its performance, however, was found to be dramatically wanting and thus relentlessly attacked.
3. The potentials and limitations of transnational civil society organizations (CSOs) to develop into a sustainable force in a new global governance paradigm were discussed and issues such as CSOs' standards of transparency, accountability, effectiveness and above all democratic legitimacy critically reviewed.
4. Specific strategies such as the forging of multi-stakeholder coalitions with the aim of enhancing CSOs effectiveness as an active force in global governance were touched upon and the World Commission on Dams, its unresolved issues notwithstanding, presented as a "model experiment in global governance".

Main Conclusions

1. We live in a world that is still controlled by institutions designed for and determined by the needs of nation states. Even the intergovernmental organisations, created in the wake of World War II to redeem some of the gravest limitations of the nation state system, have continued to perpetuate the domination of the many by the militarily and or economically powerful few. The role of the UN Security Council and the more recent formation the G 7 are only the most paramount examples of the decisive power of a few super states over billions of the world's peoples, to whom they are neither accountable for their actions nor transparent in their decisions.
2. The WTO was analysed to be in a league of its own in terms of the power it wields and the economic injustices it produces. The same holds true for the opaqueness of its decision-making processes and the staunchness with which it has refused to become more responsive to the fundamental critique of developing countries and civil society activists. And yet, while the WTO demonstrates that the old intergovernmental, nation-state-based system still prevails, the massive street protests it evokes and the unabated efforts of transnational civil society organisations to engineer its reform highlight the rise of new global norms and commensurate social movements.
3. The question regarding the potential for transnational CSOs to move into the global governance vacuum and thus to significantly compensate for the deficiencies of the nation state based intergovernmental system remained unresolved. Although civil society advocates as well as their scholarly analysts articulated reservations about some CSOs lack of transparency and accountability - that however were felt to be amenable -, they unequivocally defended the need for and legitimacy of CSOs' role as a moral voice and defender of global public goods. A discussion on appropriate strategies for further empowering CSOs to assume an enhanced role in global governance, one which would go beyond identifying issues to setting the agendas for action and where appropriate ensuring their effective implementation did not really take off. One can only conclude that the time did not seem ripe to strive beyond advocacy.