

**COMMITTEE FOR A  
DEMOCRATIC U.N.**

# **A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly Frequently Asked Questions**

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November 2006

## **Foreword**

In September 2004 the Committee for a Democratic UN (KDUN) published a strategy paper on the question of the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), titled “Developing International Democracy – For a Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations”. The paper has been widely distributed in print and was downloaded from KDUN’s website several thousand times since. Following the publication and distribution of the strategy paper, we’ve received a substantial quantity of feedback. Additionally, its content and conclusions have been presented to many different audiences and to individual decision-makers all over the world.

In this compilation we have collected some of the most common questions which we have been asked at our presentations, workshops and at other occasions. Some of the questions are very basic, others more sophisticated. We have tried not to repeat ourselves too much. Thus, this collection of questions and answers certainly does not replace the comprehensive overview and information given in the above mentioned strategy paper. It serves as an addition which makes it possible to get certain answers quicker and more directly. Anyone not familiar with the UNPA proposal, however, probably should read the strategy paper first to get the big picture.

Not at last, this compilation also intends to assist all those fellow activists who may be faced with similar questions themselves.

We welcome any comments and feedback.

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## **General questions**

### **1.1. What is a parliamentary assembly?**

An international parliamentary assembly is a consultative body attached to an international organization. It is composed of parliamentarians appointed by the parliaments of the organization's member states. Examples of existing parliamentary assemblies include: The Pan-African Parliament, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie. However, as yet no parliamentary assembly exists on the global level.

### **1.2. What is so important about a UNPA?**

Currently, the governance of the international system is a process exclusively between governments. An international representation of citizens or parliamentary control of international governmental action and international organizations as such, does not exist. A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly would address this democracy deficit by introducing the voice of the citizens into the United Nations and international politics. The membership of the assembly would reflect the composition of national parliaments and thus would also include members of opposition parties who are not participating in government. Furthermore, in contrast to government diplomats, members of the UNPA would be free from instructions, free to take a global perspective and to represent the world community as such. In addition, a UNPA

- § would be an important link between the citizens and the United Nations;
- § step by step could be vested with information, participation and control rights and therefore would act as body for international parliamentary oversight;
- § could serve as parliamentary umbrella for international co-operation;
- § by addressing issues concerning global governance and United Nations reform, could become a political catalyst for further development of the international system;
- § eventually could be transformed into a principal organ of a reformed United Nations.

### **1.3. Since publication of the strategy paper, what new aspects have come up?**

The strategy paper of the Committee for a Democratic UN (KDUN) on the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) was released in September 2004 and published as paperback book in May 2005. The discussion on the recommendations included in the paper is an open-ended process. At some point, the Committee will publish a follow-up paper reviewing its strategy and considering enhancements and changes.

Important aspects which came up with regard to the basic concept are the inclusion of a delegation of the European Parliament into a UNPA (being a directly elected parliament), the possible inclusion of representatives of indigenous peoples, means to guarantee gender equality in the UNPA and the question whether and how local decision-makers may be included as well.

### **1.4. Don't we have enough bodies and bureaucracy already at the international level?**

It's true that the UN system embraces a multitude of programmes, funds, specialized agencies, institutes and other entities (see chart: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/chart.html>). While there certainly are opportunities for more efficiency and streamlining, one has to keep in mind that the UN system is designed to take care of the well-being of 6 billion people on the international level. Given the growing tasks transferred to the UN by its member states, the UN Secretariat as the core of the system, for example, is very modest in size and budget.

In fact, it cannot fulfill its functions properly because it is not financed and staffed well enough. It has a total staff of about 7,500 and a budget of about 1,4 billion US-Dollars. The New York City Fire Department's staff alone, for example, is more than two times larger. The combined expenditures of the complete UN system, including, for example, peacekeeping operations, was at 12,3 billion US-Dollars in 2001 – less than 2 US-Dollars per world inhabitant and year (figures: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/finance/tables/tabsyst.htm>). The City of New York, in comparison, currently has an annual budget of 52,9 billion US-Dollars and thus spends about 6,500 US-Dollar per inhabitant and year.

### **1.5. What are the preconditions of a world parliament? Isn't the idea simply an utopia?**

The idea of a world parliament directly elected by the world's population with legislative powers embedded into an effective system of global governance certainly still is an utopia today. In practice, the concept would face insurmountable difficulties because of the extreme social disparities and political differences in development and interests in the world which exist today.

Starting from a broad notion of democracy, encompassing both political and social participation, the concept of international democracy cannot be reduced to merely establishing a new body. This approach could even corrupt the actual intention. The concept rather includes comprehensive questions of human development as well, such as how to create fair economic opportunities for everyone, thus taking on the challenge to reduce extreme poverty and to bridge the wealth divide within as well as between countries. The basic precondition for a world parliament therefore is a minimum of common economic and social welfare in the world which does not yet exist.

On the side of political participation, there are similar problems. The direct, democratic election of delegates to a world parliament in undemocratic states, for example, is simply not possible. Thus, the creation of a fully democratic world parliament, in addition, depends on the development of stable democratic systems at the level of nation states as well.

These issues in mind, however, the Committee for a Democratic UN believes that first steps are possible and urgently needed. This is why it advocates the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly.

### **1.6. Following the principle of subsidiarity, government should be brought as near to the people as possible - and people should enjoy maximum freedom within the law to run their own lives. Would a global assembly really help to advance such freedom in any significant way?**

Yes. A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) would help to solve global problems which by their nature cannot be dealt with effectively on a local level but affect people's daily lives. By bringing the voice of the people into the UN system and international relations, a UNPA would contribute to a better understanding and awareness of such global problems. Creating fair economic and social opportunities for the people, for example, is not only a matter of national, regional or local concern. It is also a matter of economic and financial relations in the world. A UNPA therefore is very much in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity since its aim is to enhance the possibility of the citizens to influence the international environment which has an impact on their day-to-day lives. Subsidiarity means that problems should be dealt with on the level as near to the citizens as possible. In case of global problems no such lower level is available. Thus, citizens need an international body to represent them more directly.

**1.7. Before we can elect an assembly for the world, the world should be willing to become a governable entity. Instead of moving in that direction, it is becoming more fragmented and polarized. Isn't this obstructing the idea to set up a UNPA?**

No. On the contrary, we believe that a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly would contribute to bridging national differences. Since a UNPA would be composed of a membership which roughly reflects the political composition of the respective national parliaments and of delegates who in principle are not answerable to their home governments, these would tend to group according to political orientation rather than divide according to national origin. In this way, delegates would recognize political agreement with fellow parliamentarians from other countries and the need for international solutions would become more apparent. A similar development on the regional level has taken place, for example, in the European Parliament.

**1.8. Doesn't the Inter-Parliamentary Union already fulfill the function of a UNPA?**

No. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the world organization of parliaments. It does not directly represent the people at the United Nations. It is an umbrella organization. The IPU's goal is to channel the views of national parliaments into the UN decision-making process. Moreover, its interest is not to control the UN and its decision-making - which is the natural role of a genuine parliament. Nor is the IPU at the moment prepared to take on the role of an international legislative organ, which participates in making international laws and regulations. In a recent paper of 2006, for example, the IPU largely reiterates the Declaration of the First Conference of Presiding Officers of Parliaments of 2000 that the "parliamentary dimension [to international cooperation] must be provided by parliaments first of all at the national level".

**1.9. Are there any experiences to draw upon?**

When imagining the possible development of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly one can draw upon the example of the European Parliament (EP). Developing out of the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, founded in 1952, the consultative function of the early European Parliament, set up in 1962, was widened to include the right to be heard in legislative processes. Since 1975, the EP has been allowed to co-decide with regard to the budget. At the beginning, the EP consisted of representatives of national parliaments. In 1979, direct election of EP parliamentarians in the EC Member States was introduced. Politically strengthened in that way, the EP rejected the draft budget of the Commission for the first time. Today, the European Parliament has the same rights as the European Council with regard to three quarters of all legislative projects in the European Union.

**1.10. If the idea of a world parliament goes back to 1913 and earlier, why hasn't it been realized since?**

The idea of a world parliament was introduced initially before the First World War. However, at that time, no international or regional organization existed. The paramount thrust of many proponents of an international organization was to introduce some institution which would control national state behaviour at the international level. Thus, they saw an international organization - first the League of Nations, after the Second World War the UN - by itself as a kind of parliament which would control states behaviour. That this would not work as long as there was no democratic control within the organization was for a long time not recognized, especially during the time of the Cold War where the UN also took on the role of a mediator.

Therefore, the legitimacy deficit of the UN was only widely criticized after the end of the Iron Curtain, *i. e.* the 1990s.

Moreover, there was another, even more important reason why a UN Parliament was never realized. For governments, it was already a huge concession to set up an international organization after the First World War. They were not prepared to give up their sovereignty to an organization - which the idea of a parliament would entail when it is implemented, *i. e.* when it is entrusted with genuine democratic rights of control and law-making. Nevertheless, one government, namely, Germany, tried to introduce a World Parliament as part of the new League of Nations after the First World War. However, Germany could not impose itself since it had lost the war. Major decision-makers at that time, especially the US President Wilson, the instigator of the League of Nations, were against the idea. This was also the case after the Second World War and continues until today. However, meanwhile, the UN comes under more and more pressure because it demands national democratisation, but is not democratically organized itself.

### **1.11. Wouldn't international cooperation become even more complicated and ineffective if a UNPA would have a say?**

Yes and no. On the one hand, it is true that a Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations would be another player in the diplomatic scenery which governments and their executives in international organizations would have to take into account to a certain degree. On the other hand, being composed of elected parliamentarians, the assembly would be closer to the citizens and as such it would lend more credibility and legitimacy to international decisions in which it is involved. In this way, the parliamentary assembly actually would contribute to an increased efficiency of international action.

### **1.12. Not all UN politics are to the good of the people - why then concentrate on the UN at all?**

The United Nations was set up after the Second World War in order to avoid wars in the future and to reduce nationalist thinking through cooperation of states. This is also reflected in the UN Charter which describes as the task of the UN "to maintain international peace and security", "to develop friendly relations among nations on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples", "to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex language or religion" (Art. 1 of the UN Charter). In pursuing these goals, the UN has achieved a lot throughout the years, be it with regard to the whole system of human rights, the de-colonization process, development, etc.

Of course, not all UN politics may be to the good of all affected by them. The reason for this is that single political decisions - beyond the framework just described - are left to the states which have to decide about them in the UN organs. States are represented by governments - not by direct representatives of the people - and in addition often have pure national interests - and not the common good of the world, for example the avoidance of climate change - in mind. Moreover, the UN is made up of thousands of bureaucrats - and people always need some control in order to be reminded of public goals and not only to cling to their personal interests.

Thus, what the UN needs is a control mechanism - and not its abolition. It necessitates an independent organ which controls governments' decision-making, weighing it against the common good of all humankind, and evaluates the actions of those implementing the decisions, mainly, the UN Secretariat and governments. The UN has achieved many good

things for humanity. Without it, the world would be poorer, colonized, crueler, and less supervised. Thus, it is better to maintain the UN and rectify its deficiencies and wrongdoings.

## **Creation of a UNPA**

### **2.1. Is a reform of the UN charter needed to establish a UNPA?**

No. A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly with consultative functions vis à vis the UN General Assembly can be established by a majority vote of the UN General Assembly according to Art. 22 UN Charter which says: “The General Assembly may establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions.” No veto right applies, because the Security Council need not be involved in the decision-making. Besides, a UNPA could also be established by a stand-alone international treaty and a cooperation agreement with the UN. A reform of the UN Charter, however, would be necessary should the UNPA once be transformed into a principle organ of the world organization at a later step.

### **2.2. Where will the UNPA be located?**

It is too early to determine the eventual seat of a UNPA administration. The Committee for a Democratic UN does not make recommendations in this respect at this time. To save costs, however, plenary sessions could be held free of charge in the hall of the UN General Assembly in New York, for example, or at other venues all over the world. A rotation system would involve the opportunity to impart the work of the UNPA to a larger public in the according regions. If a government is ready to place appropriate premises at the UNPA’s disposal, at zero cost and for an indefinite duration, this could be an argument to settle the administrative headquarters there.

### **2.3. Which are the steps to be taken for the creation of this new body?**

Politically, the most important step is to secure considerable support by national parliaments and governments. Eventually, the proposal needs to be scrutinized and debated in detail by like-minded governments, ideally in co-operation with parliaments and civil society. Depending on the results, these deliberations then would lead to the introduction of an a proposal into the respective committee of the United Nations General Assembly or, for example, to a genuine treaty negotiation process.

### **2.4. How much does a UNPA cost and where would the money come from?**

First calculations of the Committee for a Democratic UN how much the setting up of a UNPA would cost resulted in a first rough total estimate of 100 to 120 million Euro per year. This would include the establishment and maintaining of a permanent secretariat, the administration, logistics and the carrying out of parliamentary work in a first, still limited step, during two to six weeks per year. The figure was calculated based on the budget of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for the administration of its Secretariat and on the budget of the European Parliament for travelling, accommodation during sessions as well as for extra costs, costs for special travels in execution of the mandate and general reimbursements. It is based on the assumption that all UN member states which participate possess a constitutionally elected parliament. The actual financial need for the first step can only be quantified if it is clear how the UNPA is to be designed, for example composition, voting procedure, participating states and legal basis.

The money could come from UN Member States through incorporating it into the regular UN budget, as far as the UNPA is established according to Article 22 UN Charter which says “The General Assembly may establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions”, otherwise through a budget which has to be set up and financed separately. Otherwise, voluntary contributions for a direct financing of the UNPA from

governments, international organizations, individuals, corporations and other entities could be made possible, analogous to Article 116 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. This could relieve the regular contributors. Precondition would be that these contributions are in accordance with relevant criteria defined for this purpose which especially have to guarantee the independence of the UNPA from donors.

Furthermore, the UNPA could be recipient of means raised by innovative financial sources such as global taxation of airline travel, should they once be established.

## **2.5. Couldn't civil society organize its own world parliament? Why draw upon national parliaments?**

Certainly, civil society could organize its own conferences to discuss issues of global concern. In fact, it is doing so. The World Social Forum, for example, is a successful implementation of this approach. Another example is the Millennium Forum which took place in 2000 or the efforts to create a regular NGO conference ahead of the yearly United Nations General Assembly. A parliament, however, is something different. The term describes a type of representative deliberative assembly vested with a varying degree of political powers under the respective constitution which holds the executive branch of government accountable and participates in law-making. A self-organized conference which has no legal links to the established political order and which is not officially elected by the populace obviously is not a „parliament“ and certainly cannot adopt any sort of „legislation“. Since civil society organizations and their representatives are not popularly elected, they lack a central precondition which characterizes parliaments and their membership. The same applies to any self-appointed „people's assemblies“. By its definition, therefore, a „world parliament“ in the actual meaning of the term as such cannot be organized by civil society. However, it is possible to draw upon national parliaments because these are regularly elected by the populace.

Links:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_social\\_forum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_social_forum)

## **Design of a UNPA**

### **3.1. How many members will each country have?**

The Committee for a Democratic UN (KDUN) recommends that the determination of the number of delegates per country in the UNPA should be left to the political negotiations of the governments during the preparatory process. Basis of the negotiations should be a commitment to a graduation oriented according to population size, corresponding, in principle, to existing parliamentary assemblies. Beside the population size, other criteria could play a role, such as the equality principle (one member one vote) or the financial contributions to the UN system. However, the calculation should - and can - be made in such a way that huge countries, such as China or India, are not over-represented and small countries have also some weight. A graduation constitutes a perfect means for achieving this. Furthermore, KDUN recommends an upper limit for the total number of delegates between 700 and 900.

### **3.2. If such a planetary assembly would be popularly elected, a third of the seats would go to China and India. What voice would people from smaller countries have?**

No. A third of the seats would only go to China and India if such an assembly would only take the population size into account and if it would be directly mirrored in the distribution of seats. However, the composition of none of the existing regional parliamentary assemblies directly mirror the population size of their member states. The Committee for a Democratic

UN also does not recommend such an approach. Existing regional assemblies all work with a graduation of seats and/or votes which perfectly allows to avoid an over- or under-representation of member states. Moreover, beside the population size, other criteria, such as the equality principle (one member, one vote) or the financial contributions to the UN system and others, are being discussed as additional criteria to calculate the distribution of seats and/or votes. See also question 3.1. and para. 39-43 of the strategy paper.

### **3.3. How can one have free elections for the UNPA in countries that do not allow free elections for their citizens at all?**

In undemocratic countries which do not allow for free, equal and secret elections at all it will not be possible to have democratically legitimate delegates for the United Nations Parliamentary Assembly. Pseudo-parliamentarians coming from such undemocratic states actually would be subjects to the instructions of their home government. KDUN has dealt with this problem in its strategy paper, para. 32: „There are objections that the participation of such parliamentarians could undermine the legitimacy and moral authority of the assembly altogether. This opinion contradicts the fact that the affected states are represented in the United Nations with equal rights according to international law. In view of this, excluding these states from a participation in a Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations could hardly be explained. Furthermore, to draw the line between the criteria for an inclusion and those against would hardly be possible in a convincing way. An exclusive membership would undermine the global perspective and would make it implausible.” Having said this, it certainly is important that the clear majority of the membership is democratically legitimate. Since the majority of the UN Member States are democracies, this would be the case.

### **3.4. Are there other models than that recommended by the Committee for a Democratic UN?**

In a question as complex as the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, it would be pretty extraordinary if there were not different opinions on various aspects. These are the most important differences between the recommendations of KDUN and other proposals:

	KDUN recommendation	Other proposals
Mode of establishment	In a first step subsidiary body to General Assembly according to Art. 22 UN Charter or transformation of Inter-Parliamentary Union and subsequent co-operation agreement between UN and IPU	Stand-alone international treaty by like-minded states
Participation	Open to all UN Member States	Open only to democracies
Attached to	United Nations, later including financial institutions	No attachment
Election	At first step indirect election through national parliaments, later direct election optional	Direct election

Furthermore, there are initiatives promoting a self-organized „people’s assembly“. For this see question 2.5. „Couldn’t civil society organize its own world parliament? Why draw upon national parliaments?“

### **3.5. How can the ordinary citizen participate in the work of a UNPA?**

One of the reasons to establish a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) is to provide for a closer link between the United Nations and its affairs and the citizens in the UN

member states. Citizens would be able to contact the delegate to the UNPA responsible for their constituency and in this way would have a direct contact person to raise issues which may affect them and are of international concern or directly linked to the UN or its affiliated organizations. Delegates would be able to provide information and to take up issues for further consideration in the UNPA.

### **3.6. Why should the maximum number of delegates range between 700 and 900?**

The Parliamentary Assembly at the United Nations should not exceed a certain number of delegates in order that its efficiency and functionality is maintained. The Committee for a Democratic UN estimates that the upper limit for this is at about 900 delegates. These seats then would be distributed to the participating states. An example for this procedure is the European Parliament. Representing about 450 million citizens of the European Union, it has a maximum number of MEPs fixed at 750, with a minimum threshold of five per member state and no member state being allocated more than 99 seats.

## **Rights and functions**

### **4.1. What would the main functions of a UNPA be?**

The populations of the UN member states have to be better and more directly included into the activities of the United Nations and its international organizations. This can be achieved by setting up a parliamentary assembly. Possible functions a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly could be vested with have been named in KDUN' strategy paper (para. 5):

- § Submission of its own opinions/resolutions to the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the Secretary General, the Security Council, and to the organs and other institutions of the UN system;
- § consultation by the General Assembly, ECOSOC and by organs of other institutions of the UN system with regard to important questions;
- § the right to address questions to the Secretary General, the Presidents of the General Assembly, of ECOSOC and of the Security Council as well as to the heads of other institutions of the UN system;
- § rights of information and participation in relation to the activities of the institutions of the UN system including the still independent Economic and Financial Institutions;
- § readings of draft resolutions of the General Assembly and of ECOSOC with the right to submit suggestions for amendments;
- § the right to submit to the General Assembly and to ECOSOC draft resolutions for further negotiation and adoption;
- § co-decision with regard to the adoption of the UN budget;
- § co-decision with regard to the election of the UN Secretary General;
- § the right to be integrated into all treaty negotiations which are conducted under the auspices of the United Nations to establish or modify international institutions;
- § the right also to be integrated into multilateral treaty negotiations at the international level not under the auspices of the UN;
- § the right to submit, in accordance with Article 65 of its Statute, legal questions to the International Court of Justice.

Furthermore, a UNPA must have the right to establish inquiry committees which may summon functionaries of the UN institutions to fulfill their task. In line with a comprehensive reform of the United Nations in the future, the UNPA could be transformed into a UN main body and become part of a global legislature.

## **4.2. Would delegations of the UNPA have the right to participate in international governmental conferences?**

Wide parts of the populations do not feel sufficiently represented by their government in international institutions and negotiation processes. An indication of this are the continuing protests of civil society alongside international government conferences. The Committee for a Democratic UN therefore strongly recommends that the United Nations Parliamentary Assembly should have the right to fully participate in multilateral treaty negotiations processes and to this end should have the right to send official representatives or delegations.

## **4.3. Can you give some examples where parliamentary control of international action would have been crucial?**

As government-independent parliamentary body a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly could have assumed a role to scrutinize international action, or inaction, in the case of the genocide in Rwanda 1994, to name an important example. While there in fact has been a subsequent inquiry commissioned by the UN Secretary General on the failings of the international community in face of the genocide, a UNPA would have been able to address the inadequate response by the United Nations during the events themselves. Since a UNPA would include delegates of oppositional parties from the parliaments of the UN member states, it would offer them an international platform to voice concerns which governments would not address. Alerting the world community of large-scale human rights abuses therefore is an area where a UNPA could play an important political role.

Another area where a UNPA could assert oversight functions and conduct important analysis is the UN's sanction regime. The United Nations Oil for Food programme, for example, was only thoroughly scrutinized by an international inquiry committee set up for this purpose by the UN Secretary General after the US General Accounting Office discovered severe irregularities in its operations. This underlines the need that there is a permanent independent body which is able to provide continuous oversight of the UN's programmes.

A UNPA would be well suited for this purpose. In contrast to inquiries by national authorities or by ad-hoc bodies set up by the UN Secretary-General, a UNPA inquiry committee would be representing an international view and would be democratically legitimated through its parliamentary membership.

Links:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil\\_for\\_food](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_for_food)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_Genocide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Genocide)

## **4.4. What is the ultimate aim of establishing a UNPA?**

The creation of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly will be an ongoing long-term process which will continue even after it is once established as consultative body in the first step. Connected with globalization, this process will be closely interlinked with the continuing evolvement of an ever closer world community and a growing need for effective global governance. A UNPA is the embryonic starting point for the creation of a world parliament in the long-term future in order to guarantee the involvement of the citizens in international affairs as closely as possible and to support a sense of the global common good.

## **Campaign for a UNPA**

### **5.1. What can I do to support the campaign?**

As an individual citizen you can do one or more of the following:

§ Sign the international appeal for the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly which will be published in April 2007.

- § Write an e-mail to your friends and colleagues and invite them to sign the appeal as well.
- § Subscribe to our newsletter in order to be up to date on current developments
- § Write politely to the member of parliament of your constituency and ask him/her to support the proposal to establish a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly. Should you get an answer, share it with us!
- § Help us with a donation to the Committee for a Democratic UN. Any amount counts!
- § Become supporting member of the Committee for a Democratic UN
- § Volunteer your professional skills. The campaign is largely based on volunteer collaboration. We need translators, web programmers, graphic designers, lobby assistants, research assistants and volunteers with other skills which are necessary to build an international campaign of this kind.
- § If you are member of a civil society organization or a political party, campaign for its support of the establishment of a UNPA.
- § Write a carefully drafted letter to the editor of your newspaper if an article invites a comment touching upon the UNPA proposal. Maybe it will be published!

## **5.2. Which governments support the UNPA proposal?**

The Committee for a Democratic UN is trying to establish a dialogue with open-minded governments on the proposal to establish a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly. As yet, no government officially endorses the approach.

Historically, a similar proposal was put forward by one of the first democratic governments of Germany in 1919, after the First World War. Its draft for the statutes of the League of Nations included a „world parliament“ elected by the parliaments of the member states. Naturally, as defeated country, Germany's position had no relevance at that time.

## **5.3. Which parliaments support the UNPA proposal?**

In 1993 the European Parliament has been the first directly elected parliament to endorse the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly in an official resolution adopted by its plenary. It has reiterated its position in resolutions from 2003 and 2005. In January 2006 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has also adopted a resolution containing such support.

As at October 2006, no similar resolutions have been adopted on national level. However, a majority of the members of the National Council of Switzerland has endorsed the UNPA proposal in an open letter addressed to then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in February 2005. In 1993 the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade of the House of Commons of the Canadian Parliament did support the UNPA proposal. Because of subsequent elections, the plenary never dealt with the issue, however.

It is the goal of the Committee for a Democratic UN's campaign to build more parliamentary support for the proposal.

These and other relevant resolutions and documents are available here:

<http://www.uno-komitee.de/en/documents/projects/unpa.php>

## **5.4. Who else is supporting the idea?**

Besides of parliamentary support, several organizations and conferences have supported the proposal of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly. To name the most important: The Socialist International, the Liberal International, the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy and the Millennium Forum 2000. Furthermore, the idea of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly is being supported by hundreds of distinguished individuals from more than 70 countries, among them parliamentarians, leading scholars, former government members, civil society leaders, human rights activists, authors, nobel laureates and others. See

the list of initial supporters of the international appeal for a Parliamentary Assembly at the UN to be published in April 2007.

### **5.5. What are the views inside the Inter-Parliamentary Union about the KDUN campaign?**

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) at the moment consists of 148 member parliaments. The views held within the IPU therefore are not uniform. Consciousness of a legitimacy deficit of the UN and of a role of the IPU in overcoming this deficit is there. However, views diverge with regard to which way to follow. The official road map of the IPU is becoming and maintaining the "parliamentary dimension of the UN". This amounts to a representation of national parliaments at the international level, rather than representing the people at the UN and democratically controlling the UN, *i. e.* being a watchdog of UN affairs and speaking for those represented within - "we, the peoples". However, there are also those members and individual parliamentarians who perceive the IPU as being capable and being predestined for being more - a real UN Parliament, which includes democratic decision-making and control, building on the large institutional knowledge which the IPU has acquired within more than 115 years. Yet, up to now, these voices are still in the minority within the IPU.

See also question 1.9. "Doesn't the Inter-Parliamentary Union already fulfill the function of a UNPA?"

### **5.6. What if the United States or another veto power does not support the proposal?**

First of all, in order to set up a UNPA, support of the veto powers on the UN Security Council legally is not necessary. If a UNPA is established as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, its majority vote is sufficient (every state has one vote). If a UNPA would come into existence through a rapprochement of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to the UN, this could be done through a more detailed cooperation agreement which would contain genuine parliamentary rights and duties for the IPU. In this case, the UN organ to which the UNPA should be linked, in this case the General Assembly, decides about the treaty either by majority vote or, if it is judged to be an "important question" in accordance with Art. 18 (2) of the UN Charter, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. In the IPU itself, which naturally also would have to decide about such an agreement, the US is not a member anymore. And even if it were, the decision-making organ of the IPU, the Governing Council, also decides by majority vote. Thus, US support legally is not necessary to set up a UNPA.

Nevertheless, political support of the veto powers would of course be highly desirable. The United States, in particular, throughout the last years repeatedly criticized the UN of not being efficient, effective, and of being corrupt. The US even conducted its own investigations at Congressional and federal level into the corruption accusations towards the UN Oil-for-Food Programme, for example. This gap in the UN legal system is exactly what the Committee for a Democratic UN wants to fill: Since the UN members and the UN administration cannot control themselves effectively, we need an institution which is independent and is equipped with sufficient investigation and control rights. This would be the main task of a UNPA. A UN Parliament should be able to set up inquiry committees, which can question UN officials and have access to documents. It would be able to rectify possible wrongdoings within a huge institution such as the UN. Furthermore, the US has stated its desire to increase democracy in the world.