Call for input – democratic and equitable international order: challenges to international peace and security

1.   What are the main challenges to maintaining and strengthening international peace and security at the global level, for instance in relation to needed structural reforms of United Nations organs, global disarmament, the realization of the right to peace, accountability, etc.?

The biggest challenges facing humanity such as violent conflicts, the threat of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, pandemics, the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, forced displacement, discrimination and inequality are global and cross-cutting in nature. With each passing day, they become more pressing. International collaboration and global governance need to improve significantly and become more accountable to those affected most: the world's citizens.

The aforementioned challenges to a peaceful international order can only be successfully addressed by ensuring that all human beings engage in collaborative efforts and this also means giving people a stronger voice in global affairs and at the UN. To ensure international cooperation, secure the acceptance and enhance the legitimacy of the United Nations and strengthen its capacity to act, people must be more effectively and directly included into the activities of the United Nations and its international organizations. They must be allowed to participate better in the UN's activities. We, therefore, recommend the implementation of democratic participation and representation on the global level.

On the occasion of the UN's 75th anniversary, heads of state and government committed to making global governance more inclusive and the UN Secretary-General promised to promote a new model based on full, inclusive and equal participation in global institutions. However, more needs to be done and structural reforms of the UN system are required to achieve, inter alia, international peace and security.

2.   What solutions do you deem necessary to overcome those challenges?

In order to overcome these challenges and achieve a more equitable and democratic international order, the UN and its member states should implement three specific institutional changes:

1. The creation of the instrument of a United Nations **World Citizens' Initiative** (UNWCI)[1], which enables people to put forward proposals on key issues of global concern for discussion and further action at the highest political level. Any proposal that reaches a certain threshold of popular support should be put onto the agenda of the UN General Assembly or Security Council. In many countries, there are instruments that allow citizens to provide input for consideration of the executive or legislative branch of government. In the European Union, there is the official

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[1] A study on the practical implementation of this reform can be found here.

instrument of a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) which gives citizens the power to submit a legislative proposal to the European Commission. In principle, the ECI enables everyday citizens to identify a problem, propose a solution and submit their proposal, based on the support of one million EU citizens, to the European Commission for review. The ECI represents the first transnational tool of participatory democracy in the world. The idea of a UNWCI is that if a certain number of global citizens endorses a citizen-launched initiative, UN bodies such as the General Assembly or the Security Council have to put the item on their agenda and give representatives of the initiative the floor to make their case. In terms of the General Assembly, this could be done during the annual general debate while heads of state and government are present. A UNWCI will allow global citizens to have more impact in a world with growing dilemmas that require global cooperation of both states and citizens alike. It will help create a citizen-based global political sphere.

2. The creation of a **UN Parliamentary Assembly** (UNPA)[2], which allows for the inclusion of elected representatives in the agenda-setting and decision-making of the UN. The assembly will act as a representative body and watchdog connecting the people with the UN and reflecting a broad diversity of global viewpoints. Such an assembly would not simply be a new institution; as the voice of citizens, the assembly would be the manifestation and vehicle of a changed consciousness and understanding of international politics. The assembly could become a political catalyst for further development of the international system and of international law. It could also substantially contribute to the United Nation's capacity to realize its high objectives and to shape globalization positively.

3. The United Nations needs a high-level focal point to empower, convene and coordinate civil society. It would powerfully contribute to strengthening citizen engagement and empowering citizens and civil society to help deliver the world we want and the UN we need. CIVICUS, therefore, recommends setting up the office of a **UN Civil Society Envoy**[3] to enable greater participation, spur inclusive convenings and drive the UN's outreach to the public and civil society organisations. This envoy should champion the implementation of a broader strategy for opening up the UN to people's participation and civil society voices.

These new tools will help the UN and member states to tackle global challenges more effectively. They will enhance the legitimacy of global governance and facilitate its transformational potential.

3.   Is there any particular issue relevant to this topic that you would like to bring to his attention?

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[2] A study on the practical implementation of this reform can be found here.
[3] A background paper can be found here.