

**Assessing
the 2002 UNDP
Human Development Report :**

**Deepening Democracy
In a Fragmented World**

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***Assessing the 2002 UNDP Human Development Report:
Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World***

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Assessing the UNDP Human Development Report: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World

**Report of a public seminar sponsored by
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Introduction

On Thursday, 19 September 2002, the United Nations Association in Canada and Rights and Democracy co-hosted a day-long public seminar on the *2002 UNDP Human Development Report, Deepening democracy in a fragmented world: A governance agenda for a new era*.

Over 100 people from the government, academia, civil society, and the general public attended the seminar, which took place in the National Library of Canada. Aside from contributing to the dissemination of the *2002 Human Development Report* and discussion around its content, the seminar also created an opportunity to discuss different Canadian policy perspectives in support of the democratization agenda, provided a space for public education on the work of the UN and on the current challenges to the promotion of democracy and development, and engaged Canadian actors and policies in the issues raised by the Report.

This Report summarizes the proceedings of the seminar, with the intent of provoking policy recommendations and identifying areas for further research and deliberation.

We are grateful for the thought-provoking contributions of all the panellists and for the organizational work of Joan Broughton of UNA-Canada and Stéphanie Rousseau of Rights and Democracy. We also want to recognize the work of Fraser Reilly-King and Amin Virani, who served as rapporteurs for the sessions and ably pulled the thoughts of the day into form in this document.

We are particularly thankful for the support given to the seminar by CIDA's United Nations and Commonwealth Program, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development and the International Development Research Centre.

Steve Mason
Executive Director
United Nations Association in Canada

Welcome and Opening Comments

Steve Mason, Executive Director of the United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada), opened up the day's proceedings by welcoming everyone to a discussion of the *2002 Human Development Report* (HDR). He said that since the HDR is best known for the ranking it gives Canada each year on the Human Development Index (HDI), this often overshadows the more important substantive issues that are presented in the Reports. He went on to say that the purpose of this public seminar, therefore, was to develop a dialogue around the theme of this year's Report: the links between democracy and development.

Geoffrey Pearson, President of UNA-Canada, briefly drew out some of the themes of the HDR. He highlighted the inherent contradiction between the rise of democracy as a key element of human development, and the undemocratic nature of many of the global institutions that are promoting such development – biased as they are towards rich and wealthy nations.

Jean Louis Roy, President of Rights and Democracy, followed. He spoke about the challenges and opportunities that present themselves to countries where democracy is ushering in a time of great transition.

As democracy spreads to more and more countries, a larger proportion of the world's population is exposed to tremendous change. For these people, democracy represents the exciting potential of realizing new dreams. But it must play itself out in a reality that is shaped by extreme poverty. This reality means that in its initial stages, democracy lies far from its theoretical ideal. The development of democracy is a long and tenuous process.

Roy also acknowledged that it is difficult to find a common middle ground for democratic norms, especially because of the diversity between countries. In the west, we sometimes forget or overlook our wealth, yet countless other countries have no resources to trade, to develop, or with which to educate their citizens. There are massive inequalities.

In addition to the different contexts in which democracy must root itself, implementing democratic norms entails a more central problem. Roy argued that, unlike a dictatorship, democracy cannot be imposed on a society. Rather, it comes from within and requires people to stand up and demand that their rights be recognized, and their needs be addressed. An awareness of rights does not, however, guarantee their fulfillment. For people living in countries undergoing political transition, democracy then represents a guarantee that their rights will be better recognized if they accept this system. For this to occur, however, democracy requires long-term commitment. On this front, Roy suggested that the *2002 Human Development Report* would have been stronger if it had followed on the framework established by the *HDR 2000*, which focused on human rights.

Roy went on to categorize two types of society in development. In the first case, countries are so defined by extreme poverty that their citizens cannot think beyond the idea of democracy. Here, people are preoccupied with meeting their basic daily human needs. For these two billion people, theorizing about democracy carries little relevance. The second category is an intermediate society. Here, while countries are still

distinguished by their individual contexts, none are trapped in absolute poverty; their citizens are more readily able to claim their rights. This is true for the countless people who enjoy democracy today, but did not have it twenty years ago.

Roy still questioned whether democracy can continue to deliver what is demanded of it in the current international socio-economic context. At a certain point democratic institutions will be unable to deliver, and people will simply do what they must to survive. When the net result is not good, people will walk away. There must be a greater sense of justice in the world, and a view of development that moves beyond economics and commercial expansion.

For Roy, the key elements are social development, human rights and democracy. But how much does this cost? Are we prepared to make a long-term commitment to building democracy such that the institutions promoting it will not collapse? Recent events have shown that we are not prepared to pay these costs. Rather, we watch while the public debt of countless countries increases.

Roy closed by saying that foreign policy and human rights are still not universally shared as the foundations of human existence. In helping to build these foundations, Canada can still make a difference.

Keynote Address

What is New in the 2002 Human Development Report

Tanni Mukhopadhyay, from the Human Development Report Office at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), highlighted what was new about *HDR 2002*. The Report attempts to determine how we arrived at the present, and to engage society with the challenges we face in the future. It takes three main thrusts: first, since the report has been produced for ten years, it can assess some trends throughout the 1990s, an era of globalization; second, this longevity permits a review of the democratic process in the developing world, its successes, setbacks and challenges; and third, the Report explores the pressing issue of inclusive global governance.

Before elaborating on these three points, Ms. Mukhopadhyay summarized the analytical contributions of the Report. These are the evaluative and “agency” aspects of human well-being underscored by the Report. The former issue is showcased by the *Human Development Index*, which assesses a minimal set of basic human capabilities. This comprises a person’s standard of living, literacy, and health and lifespan. The “agency” aspect considers the ability of individuals to determine the factors that affect their lives. Furthermore, these two aspects reinforce one another. The *HDR 2002* has moved beyond looking at an individual’s basic human capabilities to consider these latter “agency” components, and highlights the centrality of civil and political freedoms to the development process.

The *HDR 2002* is also a follow-up on *HDR 2000*, which highlighted the centrality of human rights to development. But the 2002 Report goes beyond this to consider how to make states accountable for obligations that are not easy to enforce legally. This raises issues of voice, accountability and participation. It also links the Report to the current debate on governance. Governance, as such, falls into two categories: governance to make markets function better, which focuses on the rule of law, contracts, transparency, and corruption; and governance as electoral processes and political structures, which highlights the institutions of democracy. The 2002 Report, however, emphasizes the quality of such governance, and hence places social justice, equity and fairness at the center of development. Democracy promotes political incentives, open dialogue and debate; these are important for equity, social justice and efficiency.

On the three themes outlined earlier, Ms. Mukhopadhyay highlighted first the HDR’s assessment of the 1990s. The report sees the 1990s as a decade of unprecedented growth and progress, but also as a time in which there has been increased fragmentation as the gap widens between rich and poor. Its analysis underscores this sense of fragmentation and exposes the increasing challenges to development. For example, overall global poverty has increased; aid has fallen sharply; there are higher incidences of global hunger, refugees and internally displaced people; devastating famines and AIDS continue to ravage countries; and many states still have restricted civil and political freedoms, or have overturned newly ‘democratic’ regimes.

Such fragmentation requires a further deepening of democracy. The Report takes up this theme, and endeavours to set a new agenda for democratic governance. It dismisses the old ‘cruel dilemma’ debate, which argued that civil and political freedoms were

incompatible with high economic growth, as in East Asia. While authoritarian regimes may achieve promising economic results in the short term, this does not compensate for the long-term set-backs these countries face in terms of human development. Instead, the Report demonstrates how democracies can engender high economic growth while also promoting civil and political freedoms. Furthermore, it argues that greater accountability and participation – key tenets of democracy – in fact help guarantee that poverty will be addressed and human development advanced. The Report, hence, firmly establishes democracy as an essential component of development.

Nevertheless, while democracy does present itself as key to development, there are a number of challenges and problems to a deepening of the democratic process. For example, some governments have been declared incapable of delivering social services, and majority opinion in some democracies still circumvents the rights of minorities. This has created deficits in terms of political participation, social inequalities and lapses in political accountability that have diminished the quality of democracy. Equally, elections alone are no guarantee of democracy if the appropriate checks and balances are not in place to assure that, once democratically elected, leaders do not slip into authoritarianism. Formal mechanisms need to be reinvigorated to make democracies function better, and the citizenry need to be engaged in order to exert pressure on governments so that the latter remain effective and accountable. In fact, despite some reversals of fortune, the greatest advances in the democratic process have been made through increased popular participation and effective civic engagement through formal institutions.

The final theme that Ms. Mukhopadhyay outlined was that of inclusive global governance. The democratic project, she said, requires a supportive global environment to succeed at the national level. The end of the cold war ushered in an opportunity for dominant countries to be sincere in their support for democratic development – rather than simply promoting regimes that enhance their strategic and geopolitical interests – and for accountable governments. However, aid has fallen well below the 1970 target of 0.7% of GDP, and is doing so at a time when the developed world needs to make a strong commitment to human development and poverty eradication. This is an even more pressing issue for countries in conflict or in the process of reconstruction. Equally important is the need to maintain civil and political freedoms in the context of a war against terrorism. Global governance also requires an explicit commitment to democratic, pluralistic and inclusive forms of global engagement by the dominant countries. Yet institutional situations such as the Security Council veto, and the lack of transparency and accountability in many international organizations is fueling growing global discontent.

In this context, the role of the HDR is to place human development concerns back at the center of development discourse, discussions and debates.

Panel 1

The Right to Development in the Context of Social Exclusion

Joanna Kerr, Executive Director of the Association for Women's Rights and Development, acted as chair for the first panel. She drew attention to the fact that the *HDR 2002* not only offered words of hope regarding human progress and democratic reform, but also shifted the development paradigm from a framework reliant on neo-liberal economics to a new framework based on democracy, good governance and human rights. This panel would be focusing on the human rights approach to development, while also looking at social exclusion in the context of development.

Georges Proulx, a Board Member of Human Rights Internet, spoke first and looked at human rights as the basis for development. He defined social exclusion as the result of a lack of respect for various human rights, which in turn underscores various dimensions of human deprivation. When development rests on human rights, this places emphasis on securing various human rights norms, such as respect for one another, and social, economic, cultural and political participation.

The principle elements of these human rights norms are both individual and collective rights. These were established in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in the 1940s, and the Declaration on the Right to Development that came later in the 1980s (despite significant opposition from developed countries). The developed countries' objections to the Right to Development focused on the collective aspect of human rights that were being established through this document, versus the individual rights already set in place by the UDHR.

The text of the Declaration on the Right to Development constitutes ten articles, representing the interdependent and inalienable right of all people to be "entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized" (A/RES/41/128). The purpose of development is then to make this a reality and create the conditions that allow for this to occur. The United Nations Millennium Goals, adopted by the General Assembly, echoed this target.

Under current circumstances, however, this Declaration is in danger. The 2002 Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution that outlined the challenges that lie ahead in making this vision a reality. For example, some current obligations placed on countries are contradictory to them fulfilling these rights. In particular, the resolution acknowledged the declining figures for aid, and noted the need to address issues of access to markets and technology for developing countries, to broaden decision-making processes within international institutions, and to render globalization more inclusive and equitable. The Commission therefore named an expert to report on the progress of countries towards fulfilling these rights.

Proulx ended by saying that it is not just governments that have a role to play in assuring that people have the right to choose the society in which they live, and to determine their own development. Civil society has an important role to play as well.

Pam Foster, Coordinator of the Halifax Initiative, spoke about global governance and whether it remained a possibility or paradox. First she looked at the role of the State and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in enabling individuals to realize both their collective and their individual rights.

The negative impacts of the IFIs is already well documented. In countless countries, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have been shown to instigate, rather than mitigate, economic crisis and poverty. Yet few reports have monitored the impacts of the IFIs from a rights-based perspective, even though the “Washington Consensus clearly has an impact on people’s rights as it undermines individuals’ capacities. In an effort to redress this, the IFIs have instigated new means of increasing participation and ownership, such as through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the World Commission on Dams, and the SAP Review Commission. But there is still little evidence as to how this has meaningfully led to increased ownership, participation and change. In Uganda, for example, macro-economic policy remains beyond public debate, with negotiations restricted to the Finance Ministry and IFIs. The IFIs are also still able to leverage countries through conditionalities, through the policy advice they offer as the Knowledge Bank, and as the gatekeepers to debt relief and loans. Yet the poverty of analysis in the World Bank (WB), illustrated by the flaws highlighted in their internal reports, means that countries are faced with the same old ineffective policy choices.

In this regard, Chapter 5 of the HDR, which looks at ‘Deepening democracy at the global level’, makes some important recommendations. These include enhancing the voice of developing countries in the IFIs, opening up the leadership process beyond the United States and Europe, changing quotas at the WB, opening up WB and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Board meetings, disclosing their evaluations, and voting on PRSPs through national parliaments. These are all critical recommendations that governments need to pursue at the WB and the IMF. Whether increased participation by developing countries will lead to increased support for developing countries, however, has yet to be seen. What is needed is a new commitment to human rights.

Gauri Sreenivasan, from the Policy Team of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), spoke to how well the human development approach to governance addresses the structural causes of social exclusion. She began by looking at the Report as a whole. While she asserted that the Report is not comprehensive about the causes of poverty and social exclusion – nor does it try to be – it does make important links between human development, good governance and poverty eradication. Indeed, she maintained that good governance has now almost become a panacea for donors and recipients alike. Commensurate with the widespread use that the term “good governance” has come to enjoy, however, its meaning has become more and more blurred.

Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings, the Report does make important points, from her perspective, about the politics of development and the politics of empowerment. This is one of its strengths. Understanding the causes of poverty and exclusion is key to determining the most effective approaches to addressing them. Global poverty is geographically concentrated and conditioned by axes of difference, including gender, class and race. Poverty is both absolute and relative. For example, the notion of social exclusion highlights poverty in the context of wealth and privilege. Organizations such as CCIC therefore focus on increasing opportunities for the poor and marginalized to have

sustainable livelihoods, to have control over assets and resources, and to express their own views, entitlements and rights. The CCIC approach to poverty also emphasizes how power can influence the ability of the poor to exercise their rights. Sound international policies and practice should help the poor attain, for example, the right to land, health and food. They should also expand the democratic space available to the poor to organize collectively and to articulate their interests and needs. Such collective citizen action has been a motor of progress for promoting issues central to development. This is the political side of development, and represents a process of both conflict and consensus. Democratic debate is necessarily loud and messy, and an essential component of development is therefore the ability of marginalized groups to voice their concerns and fight for their rights. Ms. Sreenivasan commended the HDR for highlighting this key aspect of development – that is, the politics of development.

But donors tend not to focus on the messy and discordant side of the development debate, or the sticky questions of assets, rights and resources. Instead they restrict themselves to the orderliness of markets, the rule of law, and sound investment climates. Good governance for them focuses on good government – that is, the right institutions, administration and accountability. While this is an essential component of development, there is not enough focus on the role of citizens and civil society in holding governments accountable to their people, rather than just to their donors. In this respect, for example, CIDA's new approach to aid effectiveness focuses too narrowly on governments, bypassing the positive contributions that civil society can play in implementing good governance.

Ms. Sreenivasan then focused briefly on issues of trade and development, and governance at the World Trade Organization. While democratic politics and civic engagement is key to good governance, the shape of current governance structures, institutions and rules also determine the extent to which democratic politics can be successful. To this extent, the two enjoy a symbiotic relationship. But the WTO suffers from a distinct democratic deficit. Ms. Sreenivasan commended the Canadian government for pushing for greater transparency and improved decision-making within the WTO. On the other hand she signaled that this initiative has focused on helping poorer countries make better use of the current system. The UNDP Report is more comprehensive in its calls for change. It highlights the problems with an informal decision-making process that excludes the least powerful, and practices and procedures that disproportionately favour those with the most resources. Its recommendations for reform therefore focus on overhauling decision-making rules to make them more transparent, ensuring the neutrality of the WTO Secretariat, and enhancing external transparency.

Ms. Sreenivasan agrees that these are important areas of reform, and already go beyond where developed countries are willing to go. Because these reforms focus on enhancing access to the WTO for players of different power, however, they fail to redress the inequities of power that distinguish current trade rules. For CCIC, one of the major governance challenges lies in moving towards a set of rules within the WTO that defines some common principles, but that is responsive to the different levels of development and assorted development strategies of diverse countries. Such a system would be responsive to the needs of weaker economies, and would offer a built-in bias that allows developing economies to generate their own vision of a strong and diversified national economy. This would not only enable countries to assert their right to development, but would also

help close the gap between rich and poor and redress current power imbalances. In turn, this would bolster the good governance of the global institutions themselves by creating a more level playing field for all the players.

Managing this diversity is an essential part of the governance challenge for global institutions. Without it, a new governance approach at the WTO will not address the structural causes of exclusion.

Question Period

In the question period that followed, the audience asked how the right to development can be promoted when the current international development institutions do not talk about the mechanisms by which we can access these rights, or even human rights in general. Ms. Sreenivasan responded by saying that it is the responsibility of states to negotiate with its people over their right to development. Current governance structures, however, impede their ability to do so. In addition, although the UN framework offers an important and democratic framework for realizing this, it lacks the capacity to enforce its decisions. We therefore need to shrink the capacity of some of the international financial institutions, and raise the moral power of the institutions of the UN, as well as recognize national struggles.

Ms. Mukhopadhyay argued that a global parliament was not possible. Nevertheless, plural, inclusive and democratic forms of governance are still necessary. This requires helping national governments become more accountable to the people that they are representing.

Another question focused on the Human Development Index (HDI), and attempts to include democracy as a variable. Ms. Mukhopadhyay said that, in 1993, the UNDP attempted to do this through the development of a *Human Freedom Index*. As a result of this initiative, however, the Report almost didn't get published. Subsequently, the *Human Development Report* is now protected from censure by the UN General Assembly. She did say that a new *Arab Development Report* had been successful in creating such an index, and that its strength lay in the fact that it had come from within the region, and thus had some credibility. While the HDR Office had thought about elaborating on the Arab Report to create a freedom index, it found that a lot of the indicators on governance were more perception than data indices. She also added that they are reluctant to mess with the HDI, as it has acquired some value by looking at the same indices over time. Nevertheless, they have also developed both a poverty and a gender index.

Another audience member argued that, just as we can't say that one size fits all for development, isn't this also the case for democracy? And, as a follow-up question, how might one go about redistributing power? Ms. Mukhopadhyay agreed with the observation, but said that countries will necessarily be differently democratic, depending on their history and circumstances. There was no specific democratic form. On the question of redistributing power, she pointed to the need to hold those in power accountable, especially between elections, to increase political participation, and to have free and fair contestations. Ms. Sreenivasan followed up by saying that power redistribution occurred through mobilization from below. This requires the generation of

a different development trajectory that gives power over to other people.

A final question focused on the lack of explicit emphasis in the report on gender equality and participation by women. One of the biggest democratic deficits, it was argued, was the lack of participation of women in public affairs and government. Ms. Mukhopadhyay responded that the Report had looked at examples of where there have been advances in gender equality, as in instances where countries have had positive discrimination policies and quotas. It also looked at women's participation in budgeting and identified interesting initiatives. While agreeing that this may be the case, Ms. Foster highlighted the fact that the WB's gender strategy applied to project lending, but not to adjustment lending. She added that gender is not mainstreamed throughout the Bank, and there is little analysis of the gendered impact of privatization on the poor.

Panel 2

Building Democratic Processes in Post-Conflict Societies

Don Hubert, Senior Policy Advisor on peace-building and human security at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), chaired the second panel. He commented that, while democracy has become more widespread in the 1990s, this does not necessarily mean the world has witnessed a democratic deepening. Equally, more peace agreements were signed in the 1990s than the preceding forty years, but the quality of these accords is questionable. To this extent, we need to explore how democratic participation can ensure peacebuilding and development.

Nahla Abdo, a Professor of Sociology at Carleton University, commented on the gender dimensions of the *HDR 2002* and the *Arab Human Development Report* (AHDR). She said that fostering democracy and development in the world requires an appropriate environment in which to grow. In particular, it requires human security, and a decent level of economic growth and political stability; but these remain rare commodities in the third world. The *Human Development Report* and the *Arab Human Development Report* both showcase the hardships endured by men, women, and children worldwide. Both have also shed some light on gender issues, but they have failed to integrate a comprehensive gender analysis into their reports. For any gender analysis to make sense of its subject, it needs to be contextualized and articulated at the local, national, and international level.

For example, in the Middle East, Ms. Abdo argued that a proper appreciation of the status, role, and contribution of women to democratization cannot be divorced from an analysis of the overall gloomy picture of their lives in the Arab world – shaped as they are by external pressures and internal contradictions inherent within Arab society and its traditional culture. Ms. Abdo illustrated her case with several examples. In Iraq, tens of thousands of Iraqi men, women and children are suffering from malnutrition and poor medical attention due to the trade embargo imposed on the country. Sudan and Somalia are mired in poverty and low life expectancy rates due to the ongoing internal wars that have ravaged their societies. Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are living under daily threats of Israeli aggression. The Palestinian people have a history of dealing with such problems, but in the last two years efforts towards destroying Palestinian society have intensified. Against this backdrop, democracy is too frequently regarded as a form of cultural imperialism. It is dismissed as part of a Western threat – linked with Israel. Moreover, this dismissal has given Arab states the authority to clamp down on human rights, silence political dissent, discourage and prevent the formation of opposition parties, control all institutions of civil society, and suppress women's rights.

Gender gaps, in fact, are pervasive throughout the Arab world. Here women have been marginalized in both absolute terms – that is, in terms of the public services and entitlements they enjoy – and in relative terms – that is, as a consequence of the gender construct of women in the Arab World. The *Arab HDR* outlines three areas where the Arab world lags behind: the freedom deficit, women's empowerment deficit and a human capabilities and knowledge deficit. Gender gaps can be found in all three areas. Women fair dismally in all aspects of life, including political and economic participation, education, and health. Women and children also figure prominently among the refugees

that come from Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, and Iraq.

In conclusion, Ms. Abdo said, two processes of change must take place. Democracy and human development can only flourish with peace and political stability. This requires local fertile soil that is conducive to change, and which is therefore free from the threat of occupation, imperialism, intervention, debt, and economic dependency. It also requires the realization that women's empowerment will only be enabled via increased access to education, and economic and political participation. For its part, Arab political leadership needs to purge itself of corruption, political repression, a disregard for human rights, and its patriarchal attitudes towards women. For their part, women must stand up and assume their role and carve a way upwards through civil society and democracy.

George Kossaifi, Chief of the Human Development Section, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), spoke next about the *Arab Human Development Report*. He reported on a regional study in which he participated that focused on poverty and democracy in the Arab World. The poverty determinants of the study encompassed political, economical, social, cultural, and environmental factors, measured at both a national (internal) and international (external) level. There were three deficits that played into the poverty matrix: the freedom and democracy deficit; the women's empowerment deficit; and the equality of knowledge acquisition deficit.

These deficits help characterize the internal typology of the Arab state, and define where it lies in the spectrum of political structures, ranging from the clan to the modern institutional state. In all thirteen Arab states studied, a small group of men have largely dominated the positions of power. This can be attributed to an executive branch that controls all other institutions, the absence of checks and balances, a flawed representative democracy, and the curtailment of freedoms of association and participation.

The external challenges impeding democracy and development taking root in the Arab world stem from two main factors: the long-standing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the international double-standard applied to the Arab World. The AHDR states that if human development is about enlarging people's choices and realizing their human rights, then nothing stifles this more than occupation by foreign forces. Referring to the international double-standard, Mr. Kossaifi compared the situation of Israel and Iraq. In the latter case, the international community has called for the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and its compliance with UN resolutions; yet in the case of Israel, few have suggested the need for weapons inspectors, nor have many questioned the lack of Israeli compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions.

Mr. Kossaifi concluded by saying that the primary focus of ESCWA is on good governance and democracy. Referring to the challenges for democracy in the Arab World, Mr. Kossaifi recommended two solutions: NGOs from the North and South need to forge partnerships to alleviate the international double-standards to which he referred; and the Arab region needs to initiate change, bearing in mind that "God won't change people unless the people themselves want to change".

Françoise Nduwimana, a member of the Tables de concertation sur le Congo-Rwanda-Burundi, spoke about the role that African civil society has played in building peace and democracy. Referring to the title of the *HDR 2002*, she said that, if the world is

fragmented, then the African continent lies at the top of the list of fragmented states. Whether we attribute this to the violent nature of African history, or the current global economy that is marginalizing Africa, both assessments confirm the urgency of reflecting in greater depth on peace and stability around the world as a whole.

Ms Nduwimana went on to say that, while such peace and stability are required for democracy to work, negotiating peace is increasingly challenging as countries in transition - even those in the North – instinctively lean toward war. This is all the more so because public space is becoming more restricted, civil liberties more confined, and unilateralism more established.

In this context, Ms. Nduwimana pondered on the alternatives civil society have to offer in fostering a new era of freedom and democracy. While she did not suggest that civil society was a panacea for Africa's woes, she indicated that they did represent a promising remedy for some of its ills.

Ms. Nduwimana argued that most conflicts in Africa can be traced back to the colonial roots that nurtured them. These conflicts surfaced during Africa's theoretical "independence", but erupted into a long series of crises prodded by the colonial legacy and the dictatorial rule that followed decolonization. In this sense, much of Africa is only just emerging from conflict some forty years after "independence".

It is amidst this environment of conflict that civil society has demonstrated its strength as it champions democratic ideals for the continent of Africa; but it has also realized its vulnerability, confronted as it is by ongoing conflicts and patron-client relations that hamper the development of a common vision and a pluralistic culture. In fact, while it is true that emerging from a conflict lights the way to peace and stability, much of Africa is still devastated by war. Worst of all, these are civil wars that are claiming the lives of civilians and that are fueled by ethnic, regional and religious factors. Furthermore, these civil wars are giving way to human rights violations of grave proportions and of disturbing new manifestations.

Ms. Nduwimana admitted that the challenge that this presents for civil society – which she describes as any group promoting human rights and civil liberties – is overwhelming. Their role goes from defending the most basic rights, such as the right to life, through to the prevention of violence and the promotion of a culture of peace and democracy. Civil society is the guarantor of transparency and free and fair elections, and the advocate of projects that promote the public, rather than a private, interest. Civil society can promote the separation of executive and legislative powers, and an independent media and judiciary. From her point of view, civil society is the key to reconstruction, national reconciliation, and inter-ethnic dialogue. It struggles to find the meaning of humanity in a world that witnesses suffering and exclusion, gender inequality, exploitation, and an absence of international will to remedy the humanitarian crises that shadow the future of the African continent.

To conclude, Ms. Nduwimana offered a bleak overview of the current state of Africa. Here education, health and security are luxuries, not rights; Africa is mired in massive external debts; it is menaced by famine, AIDS and HIV; it is home to millions of refugees and internally displaced persons; millions more are without safe drinking water. That

said, amidst such an apocalyptic vision, African civil society is raising its hand in defiance, and in this fragmented world is asserting its conviction that “in freedom, above everything else, lies our reason for living”.

Question Period

The first question focused on the responsibilities for helping the developing world develop. While one can agree that industrialized countries shared some responsibility for helping the developing world to industrialize, one can also argue that, for the most part, the responsibility for the deepening poverty and human rights injustices in Africa lay with irresponsible African governments. Ms. Nduwimana agreed that a large part of the responsibility lay with African countries, but it was also a consequence of broader structural problems and the policies of the IFIs. This responsibility needs to be shared. Furthermore, while corruption cannot be justified, we also need to acknowledge issues within the context of North-South relations. Ms. Abdo also reflected on the need to consider external and internal forces. Development in the context of thinking about rights and democracy means bringing to the table what both sides see as the fundamental problems.

A second question focused on Mr. Kossaifi’s comments and the possibility for an open intellectual debate among social scientists in the Arab world. The *Arab Human Development Report* had been critical of many situations, and it underscored the importance of re-establishing a research community in the Arab states; but how difficult would this be in a context where many people have been imprisoned for their ideas?

Mr. Kossaifi highlighted the main merit of the AHDR as being the critical nature of the document. Bearing in mind that the political environment is very sensitive, he recognized the importance of substantiating all research with scientific evidence, rather than simply making a series of assertions. He pointed to the UNDP’s *Human Development Report 2002* and ESCWA’s *Micro-economics and Sustainable Human Development* as good examples of such texts. This principle is the same one being employed in the latest project by ESCWA entitled *Database on Democracy in the Arab World*.

A final question focused on the role of civil society and the tendency to romanticize its capabilities. It was noted that, while NGOs demand the accountability of other institutions, they still need to strengthen their own accountability. Ms. Nduwimana admitted that this was true, but that she had chosen to focus on the positive aspects of civil society in the African context. It was also said that civil society needs fertile ground and strengthening from within. How can this be accomplished? Ms. Nduwimana went on to say that civil society is a reflection of society, and the patriarchy within development organizations is still there. Ms. Abdo responded by saying that women’s NGOs in the Middle East were developing internally, but that their work is often focused on addressing practical needs, rather than furthering women’s human rights.

Panel 3

Deepening Democracy Through Participation

Dr. Bernard Patry, Member of Parliament and Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, chaired the final panel on democracy and participation.

Philip Oxhorn, Associate Professor of Political Science at McGill University, opened the panel. He started by saying that, while it was essential to link democracy and human rights to development, there were other issues, such as participation, that were also key. His argument concentrated on whether or not the state, civil society and the international community were up to the challenge of promoting participatory development. He argued that problems of crime, education, health, and employment can only be resolved if civil society gets involved in some capacity to identify problems and suggest solutions.

For example, Argentina, once the richest country in Latin America, has recently born witness to rising unemployment figures and an increasing number of people living in poverty. These people have learned to organize and mobilize, ousting five presidents in the span of a few days. Civil society has therefore proven itself effective as a veto group, but has so far failed to present alternative solutions to the surfacing problems. The State has also proved incapable of tackling the challenge at hand, continuing its trend with a weak, corrupt government, with no independent judiciary capable of intervening and rectifying the situation. Theoretically privatization should allow for the establishment of open markets, but in Argentina it ushered in private monopolies to pay off the debt – without any hopes for the future, because the already impoverished government was the sole consumer of the goods produced by these firms.

Another method of ameliorating the situation, as suggested in the *Human Development Report*, is decentralization as a means of promoting participation. Using Argentina again as an example, Prof. Oxhorn noted that the Argentinian provinces responded to decentralization by creating their own currencies, further aggravating the debt crisis, and impeding the ability of the central government to sustain any kind of fiscal policy. The potential of decentralization was therefore not realized and, in fact, made the crisis far worse.

Mr. Oxhorn also noted the role the international community played in the Argentinian crisis. In examining the IMF and its role, he noted that it offered too much too late. Pouring huge amounts of money into a bottomless pit seems irresponsible, but, conversely, how can one hold the government entirely responsible when 50% of the population is living in poverty? Long-term vision is needed, and for that vision to be properly nurtured, institutions like the IMF need to forge partnerships with organizations like the UNDP in order to construct a more long-term directive. This vision should serve as a means of focusing on the victims of unemployment, creating good government that can be accountable, and strengthening civil society.

Civil society and participation make democracy work because they engage and encourage people to define and defend their interests. For example, one way of counteracting crime would be to nurture the active involvement of the community, enhance relations with the police, and create a civil rights group. Yet solutions to crime, education and employment cannot be attained without the State being accessible and democratically organized. This requires honest, well-trained police and judges, the effective use of educational resources, and a government that facilitates a role for civil society by funding it.

Mr. Oxhorn concluded by saying that the international community's role involves generating a long term perspective that focuses on strengthening institutions, and coordinating policies that concentrate on all aspects of society, not just on the economic ones. Lastly, it has a role to play in helping civil society, and those who are otherwise disadvantaged, to organize themselves. This entails providing resources and know-how, and engaging civil society in the democratic process.

Diana Rivington, Director of the Gender Equality Division at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), argued that political power is as important to development as economic growth. Participation is one key means of achieving such power. Participation, therefore, should not be observed as an abstract human right, but as something concrete, and directly related to the reality of peoples' lives and rights. Yet despite the aims of participatory development, little or no attention is given to understanding the fundamental questions of who can participate, who wants to participate, what makes their participation possible, and why it is beneficial for the people involved. She argued that, when you ask these questions, you realize that women's needs are often left out of the process.

Ms. Rivington noted that CIDA accounts for women's different needs and realities by being aware of the structural inequalities that gauge female participation. These inequalities include: power imbalances; diverse interests; axes of difference marked by age, class, and ethnicity; intra-household and intra-family relations; differing abilities; cultural barriers; and the realities of who is able to participate. Unless these factors are considered, the dominant group's needs will be reflected. Consequently, the democratic process should begin from the bottom-up, in the household – yet this area is still undemocratic. Micro-credit programmes have provided some positive advances by empowering women at the household level, but domestic violence often accompanies the transition from economic dependence to autonomy.

Including children is also integral to the democratic process. According to Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, mature and capable children's voices should be heard. In fact, at the recent Children's Summit, participants remarked that 'we are not your future, we are here now!' This requires enabling children with skills such as problem solving, democratic decision-making, and advocacy.

Furthermore, Ms. Rivington argued, democracy cannot be imported. Democratic institutions therefore need to be culturally and environmentally sensitive. We need to recognize that societies are constantly engaged in adapting influences from elsewhere, and that local cultures are diverse and reflect many competing beliefs and practices. From a programming point of view, this means developing democratic institutions that acknowledge stratification within society and that do not inadvertently reinforce local

hierarchies.

She went on to say that more work needs to be done on 'equal participation' so that it moves beyond counting numbers, to considering what voices are heard and how those voices are integrated into the choices that are made. For example, equal participation has started to manifest itself in the political arena through quota systems. But this is no guarantee against dominant cultures serving the interests of some groups, while hampering those of others. The right to vote is only one measure of voice. Consequently, some participatory approaches aim to create space for those marginalized by cultural norms to allow them to express their views and take action.

Ms. Rivington concluded her presentation by saying that participation is not as straightforward as it seems. This is not an argument against participation. Rather, it underscores the importance of using certain methodologies with care so that they highlight questions of authority, power, and decision-making, and in a manner that promotes equality and democratic objectives.

The final speaker, John Foster, Senior Researcher at the North-South Institute, spoke less on the question of participation than on Chapter 5 of the *HDR 2002*. This chapter, he felt, offered a comprehensive overview of how to "Deepen Democracy at the Global Level", and he suggested that a number of useful proposals and strategies could be drawn from it. In particular, he highlighted the suggestion for widening the UN's representative base, through proposals such as a global people's assembly, a global civil society forum, and a global civil society policy forum; and he noted the proposals for promoting democratic principles through the multilateral system of the UN. He argued that the responsibility for doing so rested with three groups: the United Nations, its Member States and civil society itself. Yet there are challenges to this. While the UN has embraced the language of democracy, democracy is absent from its own governing structures. For their part, Member States have been uneven in their responses to civil society. Countries such as Finland, Mexico and Canada have begun engaging civil society more directly in various UN processes. Yet at the recent Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey, Mexico, the Canadian government took a step back in its relations with civil society. NGOs are also mixed in their opinions. Some believe the UN is passé and that UN structural issues are not worth the attention, while others push ahead on important issues such as the International Criminal Court and foreign debt. This said, the NGO and civil society movements have still failed to coalesce around the larger structural reform issues. This inability to collaborate in a global forum has been due to the lack of continuity or trust, competition, inadequate funding and a number of other issues. While Mr. Foster acknowledged that there have been important steps forward in the form of autonomous global social forums, he suggested that the UN really needs to establish a mandate for a Global NGO Forum.

Mr. Foster furthered his argument by concentrating on other issues requiring more work. The principal omission from the Report, he argued, was the failure to address what he saw as the greatest challenge to democratic governance: the erosion of the normative triumphs of the UN (in terms of human rights, labour and environmental treaties, covenants and declarations) in favour of trade rules and laws in the WTO that are superceding these triumphs. Mr. Foster reminded participants of an earlier work he had

written, *Whose World Is It Anyway?*, in which he joined with other rights groups in asserting that governments needed to recognize that the UN's normative frameworks with regard to human rights, gender, and environment agreements and treaties, preceded and superceded the more recent trade negotiations. This, he argued, made it imperative for multilateral organizations, such as the WTO, to be brought entirely under the supervision of the UN.

The responsibility for doing this, he added, lies with the Member States of the UN, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO. At the same time power and influence over social and economic issues has shifted from the UN to the better-funded multilateral economic institutions. This is because industrialized countries are better able to influence decisions made there, than in organizations such as the UN that are dominated by developing country interests. Mr. Foster suggested, however, that this problem can be remedied. The Zedillo report presented at the Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey recommended that an Economic and Social Security Council be established, that would have ample power and a broader base than the current Security Council. Mr. Foster argued that such a body would reinvigorate the UN. In fact, he said that it was incumbent on the Canadian government, and of central interest to NGOs and civil society, to bring the WTO, IMF and WB back into line, and integrate them fully into a strengthened and democratized UN system.

Question Period

The first question was directed at John Foster and related to reform at the WB. Given that the G8 has become the self-appointed Board of Directors of the global economy, could the G8 be changed to a G23 and serve as the Executive Committee of the WB? In essence, rather than creating something new, couldn't you reinvigorate an old institution? Mr. Foster said that this was a good response, but that it raised further questions. Who for example would be among the 23, and how would they be selected?

The second question related to gender and participation. The participant reiterated Ms. Rivington's ideas that participation was not about numbers, but about the representation of ideas and voice. Given this, is there a particular formula in terms of coming up with this alternative voice? Ms. Rivington said that there was no such formula or magic bullet. Gender analysis, however, provided insight into power relations, how power is shared, and how we can make space for change. It is also a question, she said, of looking for entry points that would allow for fundamental structural changes, such as has been the case in Colombia and Honduras. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to change gender relations and to impose broad new ideas on individuals. This means that, amid the dozens of barriers to women's participation, the steps to change are incremental, not revolutionary.

Finally, one participant called into question the well-meaning nature of civil society. Oxhorn agreed that civil society may not always be representative, and may not represent anybody's interests but their own. Mr. Foster replied that the reason his talk so underscored engaging civil society in a global forum is that he is searching for a way to bring NGO forces together. To move ahead, he said, NGOs need to move from protest to proposal.

Closing Remarks

Maureen O'Neill, President of the International Development Research Centre, made the closing remarks. She commented that we often come to these seminars looking for answers, but equally often we leave by wanting to refine the questions. For her, some of these questions might focus on how we move from protest to proposal, how we encourage deep public discussion, and how we deepen our own democracy. Today, she said, we have heard a lot about the first and the monumental steps that need to be taken by all countries in the world. We must focus on improving the conditions of the individual men and women who give society the richness of its character. For, at the end of the day, it is the focus on the individual and the contributions they can make that make democracy different from other systems