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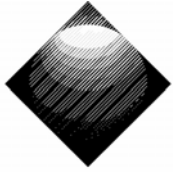
Statement of Lene Schumacher
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Consultation with Civil Society Organizations

Geneva July 2 2006

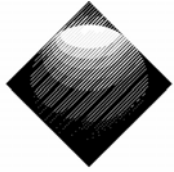
WFM is honored to present an opening NGO statement at this event. The Executive Director of WFM, William Pace, regrets that he could not be here today, but I am very happy to be able to take his place. WFM is a 60 year old international NGO. WFM operates primarily to serve and facilitate strategic networks and campaigns to promote regional and international democracy, to advocate for fair and effective democratic global governance.

- 1 As an intergovernmental body of now 192 very different Member States, the United Nation's greatest weakness is also its greatest strength. Its decisions are often prolonged and diluted due to the need to reach agreement among such a diverse community
- 2 These decisions, however, bear a unique legitimacy, moral weight and political authority, having been reached despite such extreme differences. Thus, the democratic principle is at the core of the UN. **It is its purpose and must be its fate.** In order for the UN's strengths to outweigh its weaknesses, its institutions and decision-making processes must democratize further, translating its great paradox into the survival of humanity, and beyond that to the advancement and protection of civilizations
- 3 We meet today as the imbalance in global governance has grown even greater. The Cold War represented a mortal confrontation between the East and the West. The challenge of these times is to avoid a perhaps even more dangerous clash being drawn between "North" and "South."
- 4 (Left out of the oral presentation in the consideration of time) *After two Permanent Members circumvented the UN Charter, committed an act of aggression by invading and occupying Iraq, major split were created between the majority of UN member states and the US. Many argued that the crisis threatened the integrity and legitimacy of the UN. Others, like WFM, believe that as terrible as the disaster was, the UN Charter was not compromised; indeed it worked exactly by not legitimizing aggression. In the 2005 UN Summit Outcome Document, while flawed and deficient, Heads of States and Governments reaffirmed essential multilateral principles and offered the hope of important progress in many areas of UN mandates.*



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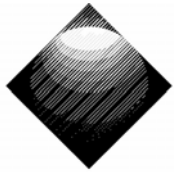
- 5 Currently, the UN is wrestling with another confrontation between the wealthy few from the North and the more numerous developing and least developed nations of the South – this time relating to the most powerful nations trying to use economic bargaining power in relation to the approval of the budget. Western countries, led by the US have tied substantial management reforms to the UN budget to pressure developing countries into approving reforms. The developing countries have objected to these reforms, seeing them as giving the Secretary-General more authority at the expense of the General Assembly. As a result the donor countries flexed their muscles and required a budget spending cap of 6 months, depending achievements on management reform. Only the day before yesterday, in the eleventh hour was this cap lifted – with major donors like US, Australia, Japan and Canada disassociating themselves from the decision. At this point it is unclear which consequences this disassociation will have, but in the worst case scenario this could affect their financial contributions to the organization.
- 6 But the problem lies equally with developing countries. The Group of 77 is often willing to forsake efficiency in order to address the skewed distribution of power. But their short-term spoiler tactics and long-term micromanagement of budgeting decisions in the General Assembly’s Fifth Committee give credence to the argument (often presented by the US) that greater representation will obstruct effective and timely decision-making.
- 7 Fortunately, UN reform is not a zero-sum game and legitimacy does not have to come at the cost of efficiency and effectiveness or vice versa. A holistic and democratic approach to UN reform is the most viable solution to effectively address the current North-South divide and achieve positive change. Member States will quickly find that efforts to enhance transparency in one area will play a central role in enhancing progress in others.
- 8 For example, the G77 countries must focus less on preventing the Secretary General from acquiring additional authority to redeploy posts and redistribute savings, and spend more time on enhancing the General Assembly’s role selecting the next UN Secretary-General and thus ensuring a Secretary-General independent from dominant powers.
- 9 We are here today to discuss the issue of system-wide coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment, and more specifically the 3 cross-cutting issues as identified by the Panel: human rights, gender and sustainable development. I would add a fourth and additional cross-cutting issue, namely that of achieving not only better UN coordination but also enhanced mechanism of collaborating with civil society at the country level.
- 10 With regards to the human rights, we applaud the creation of the Human Rights Council. As one of the greatest achievement of the UN Summit, human rights have now been elevated to the status of the third ‘pillar; of the UN, along with



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development and peace and security. Substantial improvements from the Commission have been achieved with the new Council. Noticeably is the fact that it is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. It will meet throughout the year and members will have to be elected by full majority in the General Assembly.

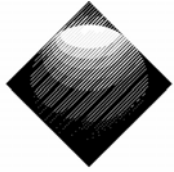
- 11 Most importantly members of the Council will undergo universal periodic reviews of their human rights record, which has potential to keep the human rights violators accountable. However, the political climate has not changed and for the Council to be effective in defending human rights, Council members **must not allow trade to trump human rights**, as has been the case throughout the history of the Commission. Not only in the defense of human rights but also in the interest of coherence must governments hold the human rights violators accountable, irrespectively of their bilateral trade balance..
- 12 WFM believes that if we are to have a World Trade Organization, a World Bank, an International Labor Organization, a World Health Organization – it is a moral and legal travesty that global environmental protection is only afforded the status of a voluntary funded programme.
- 13 We have long advocated for a global structure that would give appropriate legal and institutional authority to global environmental issues to counterbalance the powerful trade and global financial institutions.
- 14 We thus noted with interest that the recently finalized consultative General Assembly process on the institutional framework for environment showed a wide recognition of the need for a more coherent institutional framework of the UN's environmental activities. Support was expressed for a transformation of UNEP into a UN Environmental Organization. We encourage the Panel to seriously consider some of the proposed alternatives for authoritative international environmental governance by both governments and NGO colleagues - not only because of the urgency of the matter, but also because environmental issues cut across borders and thus require effective global governance.
- 15 Likewise, gender has been incorporated in the UN system across all levels, but only at the normative level and lacks authority to ensure implementation. We believe that an Under Secretary-General for gender rights and equality with the necessary authority and clout could ensure greater attention and effective implementation.
- 16 The fourth and additional cross-cutting issue which is essential to all 3 areas of the Panel is consultation and involvement of civil society organizations in the work of the UN, at country and global level. NGOs play a central role for the success of all efforts within humanitarian assistance, development and environment; **but on an ad hoc basis**. Much greater benefit – and coherence - could be achieved if enhanced mechanisms for NGO collaboration were established. Currently, the UN/civil



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society collaboration at country level is all up to the will and interest of the individual UN Regional Coordinator.

- 17 We are currently facing this problem with the recently established Peacebuilding Commission. Almost all members of the Commission recognize the importance of national ownership for a successful peacebuilding process as well as the role of civil society in obtaining such ownership. But with no formal structure for UN/CSO collaboration on the ground, WFM and other NGOs are currently in an uphill battle advocating for the establishment of mechanisms for civil society consultations at country level. With formal structures in place, we would not have to invent the wheel over and over again.
- 18 As evident from this hearing today, the voice of civil society is equally important for the UN at global level. As has been the position of the WFM for a long time, we welcome these hearings as an **additional mechanism** for the UN to interact with NGOs, but emphasizes that **it can not replace** the effective and inclusive processes of the preparatory committee meetings that were held in the 1990s in connections with the World Conferences and Treaty processes.
- 19 Private processes like the high-level panels followed by closed negotiation processes not only minimize the effective contribution and participation of NGOs but also that of relevant UN department and other International Organizations, as well as participation by experts from capitals. **It has become a way of getting it quick but not right!**
- 20 Getting it right on the other hand requires a place where experts from capitals, International organizations and civil society can come together with member states over a period of 2-3 years to discuss the issues. The end product is much better, a larger community will feel responsible for it, resulting in greater participation in the follow up and implementation.
- 21 (Left out of the oral presentation in the consideration of time) *Let me also take this opportunity to appeal to the panel to please **Do No Harm!** As we have seen very little evidence in the last years of high-level panels to prove us wrong, we do not trust these closed panel processes to necessarily bring positive change. We applaud the opportunity they bring to discuss important issues, but the Panel reports have brought very mixed results – and the Cardoso Report brought us even backwards. We don't doubt that the intentions are good and wholehearted, but the consequences have yet to prove their success.*
- 22 We believe the UN is not only **not irrelevant**, but indispensable for pursuing world peace in the 21st century. We applaud the affirmation by world leaders of human rights, development and security as the three pillars of the United Nations for the coming decades. But, these must not be pillars on paper, but pillars of stone embedded in just international law and international democracy.



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- 23 The issue of coherence cannot be de-linked from the issue of intentional lack of coherence in how the major powers – North and South – have organized the international legal order. Underlying all these debates will be two overriding questions – 1) where will the big and to a lesser extent other powers locate global governance? And 2) will global governance institutions be based on the veto and power principles of decision making or on democratic principles? We hope this consultation and the work of the panel will help clarify this.

Thank you very much for your attention!

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