



ECI DAY 2020
Today and Beyond | 25.02.2020



Caroline Vernailen
United Nation's project "World Citizens' Initiative"

- Democracy International grew out of a network of activists who lobbied for and gained the introduction of the ECI. Citizen participation is our core business. The basic principle of democracy is that those citizens who are influenced by a certain policy, should have the power to take influence on that policy. It is recognized as a Human right by international law.
- At the moment we are seeing a rise in issues that are global in nature and that affect us all: Global Warming, peace and security, globalized health crises, poverty, economic crises: these are some of the most important issues we face today.
- What they all have in common is that these are global issues. In an interconnected world no single country can address them acting alone. We cannot afford not to work together.
- This is why we have built complicated international structures to address these issues at the level we need to tackle them. The United Nations is the most important hub of such international politics. But for citizens there is no straightforward way to take influence on decisions being made on this level or to hold their representatives there accountable. The UN is often criticized for being intransparent and inaccessible for citizens
- Involving citizens in global decision-making will lead to better decisions that are more responsive of the concerns people all over the world have.
- This is why, together with Democracy Without Borders and Civicus, and inspired by the ECI we came up with a proposal for a tool. We propose a UN World Citizens' Initiative: We want the UN to introduce a tool that allows citizens to table a proposal at the UN General Assembly.
- We have asked two academic experts to look into how a tool like this could work exactly. In their paper "A voice for global citizens: a World Citizens' Initiative", Professor James Organ, an expert on the ECI and Professor Ben Murphy, a scholar of International Law examine the feasibility and practicability of a world citizens' initiative.

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- Their conclusion: the UN Charter allows for the creation of subsidiary organs and the implementation of a WCI would not only be possible, democratization of the UN has been a core concern for many years. In other words, a World Citizens' Initiative is feasible and desirable!
- What would it look like? We propose an instrument in symmetry to the ECI, that allows a committee of citizens, representative of geographical diversity, who have gathered enough signatures, we propose 5 million in 18 months, in a geographically representative sample of member states to propose a resolution to either the UN General Assembly or the UN Security Council, who would be obligated to hold a public hearing and respond publicly to the proposal.
- We propose a geographical representation along the lines of the seats of the non-permanent members of the Security Council: 5 countries in Africa and Asia, 1 in Eastern Europe, 2 in Latin America and 2 in Western Europe or other states. However, our report is a sketch not a blueprint.
- We are aware of the challenges and limitations of a tool like this. The ECI itself is not perfect - Very few people in Europe actually know it exists. Very few ECIs succeed. And if they do, they are not binding. If the Commission decides to do nothing, there is no way for citizens to appeal...
- But it shows us that it is possible to have an instrument for citizens' participation on a large scale. It shows that citizens are interested in using it. It shows us that civil society can really use this tool to rally around subjects of importance to them. And most importantly, we can learn from this experience – we know where the pitfalls are.
- Imagine, if at the General Assembly debate each year in September, with heads of state and government present, representatives of citizens' initiatives could address and trigger a resolution on issues that are important to them. It is time to really put to work the promise held by the UN Charter preamble:

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We the peoples of the united nations determined

- *to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and*
 - *to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and*
 - *to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,*
-
- This is why we have named our campaign ‘We the Peoples’. We have already secured the support of over 130 civil society organisations around the globe and are looking to build a much bigger alliance still.
 - The United Nations are turning 75 this year and have kicked off a global evaluation and reform process “The Future We Want, The UN We Need” All over the world dialogues are being organized to evaluate the work the UN has done over the past 75 years and what its tasks for the future should be. At the General Assembly this year in September, a high-level political declaration by the member states will set out goals for the future.
 - This is our chance to commit to and ensure a more democratic global governance. In times of increasing globalization, quasi limitless technological possibilities and daunting challenges on a global scale the future of our transnational decision-making infrastructure in general, and that of the UN in specific, needs to involve citizens – it needs to be more democratic.
 - More information on: www.worldcitizensinitiative.org

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