

## **A Guide to the Civil Society Conference Background Papers**

The project premise is that in order to have increased influence in current international governance, global civil society (GSC) must aggregate their advocacy efforts. By aggregating, global civil society could exploit opportunities for making a greater impact. They could use resources and energy more efficiently by avoiding duplication and uncoordinated efforts in shared and parallel causes. They could offer international institutions the service of a legitimate, representative and accountable “voice” to advise in global decision making. The six papers summarized below provide a backdrop and context for the discussion of three conjectural scenarios on the future successful “aggregation” of existing groups to create a new entity to effectively give voice to global civil society.

---

international civil society as it is to those of states and international governmental organizations. Thompson urges that a true partnership amongst actors is necessary to create a constructive and complimentary CSF to house and facilitate a great number of CSOs while simultaneously relieving IGOs of the added encumbrances that have come with being more inclusive.

### **Barriers to Aggregation**

*The Centre for Global Studies (CFGS)*

Given the complexity, size, and scope of GCS organizations, the process of creating an aggregated “front” or “voice” is confronted with barriers and challenges. Civil Society’s strongest asset – its diversity – is also its greatest challenge when attempting to cooperate.

The paper explores several barriers to civil society aggregation, arising from the inherent complexity and diversity:

1. Opposition to the Notion of Aggregating
2. Varying and Multiple Objectives
3. Incompatible Organizational Structures
4. Incompatible Organizational Cultures
5. Differences in Perspectives and Frameworks
6. Differences in Technical Knowledge and Competence
7. Divergent Tactics
8. Different “Life Expectancies”
9. Problems with Leadership
10. Competition for Resources
11. Hostility of governments and IGOs
12. Hostility of CSO Sponsors
13. Cultural and Linguistic Barriers
14. What if it works?

This list is by no means comprehensive. It is intended to provide conference participants with a shared understanding of the complexities involved in the designated task of designing a “venue” to focus and amplify the voice of global civil society.

### **Models of Aggregation**

*The Centre for Global Studies (CFGS)*

This paper provides an overview of a range of contemporary models of aggregation for cooperation, collaboration, and coalition. A taxonomy of civil society models of aggregation is described. The typology of networks, consortia, alliances and forums is intended to draw attention to different types of organization structures. Such a typology may help to provide insights into effective means of consolidating the collective knowledge and resources of “global civil society” and focusing the diversity of their voices.

An organizational theory perspective highlights various structural and compositional factors and strategic objectives adopted by the civil society coalitions. Organizational profiles for select civil society entities are classified with respect to nine sets of descriptive characteristics:

1. Degree of Formality / Informality
2. Shape of Governance Mechanisms: Vertical (Hierarchical) / Horizontal (Flat)
3. Permanent (comprised of many permanent bodies / One Time (few permanent bodies)
4. Routinized / Ad Hoc
5. Closed-Restricted Membership / Open-Non-Restricted Membership
6. “Like” (single-sector membership) / “Like-Minded” (multi-sector membership)
7. Focused Objectives / Broad Objectives

8. Inflexible Mandate / Flexible Mandate
9. Results-Oriented / Dialogue-Oriented

For expository purposes, the models of aggregation are depicted by ascending vertical and horizontal scales. A two-dimensional graph, containing a vertical axis and a horizontal axis, organizes models in terms of their organizational characteristics and separates the graph into four central quadrants. The nine descriptive “binaries” are grouped loosely together around those factors that are oriented toward structure and composition and those that more closely correspond to strategic objectives. The selected organizations are plotted with the most formal/structured and results-oriented being plotted in the top-right quadrant and the least formal/structured and results-oriented in the bottom-left quadrant. The heuristic graph represents one lens to organize the descriptive characteristics and depict models of aggregation visually.

### **Cultural Differences**

7. Membership in International Organization
8. Civil Society Representation on Executive Board
9. NGO Forums
10. Regular / Scheduled Consultative Meetings between CSOs and IGOs
11. CSO Attendance in IGO Meetings
  - NGO Attendance at Council Meetings:
  - Participation in annual sessions of Board, Commissions, and Expert Meetings: UN
  - Formal access to inter-governmental meetings
  - NGO participation in the procedure for taking evidence
12. Implementation/Service Provision/Operational Relations

It also includes comparative tables of “NGO Participation in a Selection of International Bodies” and “NGO Participation in International Judicial and Quasi Judicial Proceedings”. Annex A contains descriptions by various organizations (in their words) of their methods for civil society engagement.