



**Citizens for
Global Solutions**

MINNESOTA

www.globalsolutionsmn.org

**Newsletter
January 2010**

OUR VISION:

We envision a future in which countries work together to abolish war, protect our rights and freedoms, and solve the problems facing humanity that no country can solve alone. This vision requires effective democratic global institutions that will apply the rule of law while respecting the diversity and autonomy of national and local communities.

OUR MISSION:

We are a membership organization working to build political will in the United States to achieve our vision. We do this by educating Americans about our global interdependence, communicating global concerns to public officials, and developing proposals to create, reform and strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations.

THE QUEST FOR GLOBAL POLITICAL EQUITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Claude Buettner, President, MN Chapter, CGS

Decade One of the new millennium (since 2000) is complete. Punctuated by mass murder, regional wars, more evidence of environmental degradation and near-missed economic meltdowns, the first decade makes it easy to be pessimistic about the future. But some progress has been made in the world coming together at the national governmental and NGO levels on crucial issues such as mass relief for natural disasters and coordinated economic policy when a crisis threatens the global economy.

More than ever before this past decade has brought to light how decisions made in key institutions that collectively pass for our nascent world government (e.g., the UN Security Council, World Trade Organization and World Bank) affect everyone on the planet. Calls for legitimacy of government in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and other nations shed light on the limited democracy of the most powerful world institutions of global governance. A critical deficiency now is lack of democratic legitimacy, which makes it more difficult to address problems that can't be solved at the national level, among the most pressing of which are environmental degradation and the persistence and spread of nuclear weapons.

It isn't just Las Vegas, as the ads say, that is America's back yard. Recent studies suggest that up to 250 million people will be environmental refugees by 2050 (whether or not one believes this is due to climate change brought about by documented increases in carbon dioxide gas). Millions of desperate people in an interconnected world will certainly lead to conflicts over resources and to social instability that will spill to every continent (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/6653187.stm).

On the horizon for the new decade will be calls for the formation of a UN Parliamentary body, perhaps with initial advisory status only (see TTGIF notice for January on page 2). Regardless of the compromises made during the creation of such a body, it will not be perfect. But it will be a step in the right direction of democratizing the UN. As the legendary United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld told us, the UN was "not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to **save us from hell**."

The wheel of history will keep turning whether or not steps are taken immediately to democratize existing world governmental institutions. What holds us back is the fear by many that we are moving too fast. However, moving too slowly risks having global problems overwhelm the current level of world order and the foreclosing of the promise of a more secure future.

THIRD THURSDAY GLOBAL ISSUES FORUM

Free and open to the public.

Where? Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church,
511 Groveland Avenue, Minneapolis (at Lyndale & Hennepin). Park in church lot.

Thursday, January 21, 7:00 – 9:00 pm.

A WORLD PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Although its Charter begins with the words “WE THE PEOPLES,” the UN is an organization of *states*. It suffers from a profound democratic deficit and ignores Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declares, “*The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.*” Recent years have witnessed a growing chorus of calls to democratize the UN by means of a UN Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA). Endorsers of this proposal include former UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali; the Parliaments of both the European Union and the African Union; both houses of the Argentine Congress; and more than 700 parliamentarians from more than 90 countries (though none from the USA); This presentation will indicate what form a UNPA might take, how it might function, and how it might be established.

Presenter: JOSEPH SCHWARTZBERG. A prolific writer on issues of global governance, Joe is well along on a book to be entitled *Designs for a Workable World*. He is also a member of two think tanks and of the international Councils of the World Federalist Movement and the Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly. He served 11 years as President of the Minnesota Chapter of the World Federalist Association and its successor organization, CGS, and is active in the Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers, the UNA, and several other peace and justice organizations. The University of Minnesota, where he taught for 36 years, selected him as its “Distinguished International Emeritus Professor” for the year 2009.

Thursday, February 18, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

THE CURSE OF BILATERALISM IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: AFGHANISTAN IN DIPLOMATIC PERSPECTIVE

There are various ways to analyze the current situation in Afghanistan and critique the justifications for the sharp increases in U.S. troops there, the one already accomplished and another proposed for the year ahead: military strategy, development theories, cultural analysis, and so on. Viewing Afghanistan in regional context does not get a great deal of attention, even though the country cannot be understood apart from historical, ethnic and regional geopolitical perspectives. This can be seen as a chronic weakness in U.S. foreign policy, a weakness particularly evident and problematic in areas where U.S. knowledge is limited. The presentation will discuss aspects of U.S. policy formation, and then focus on the regional diplomatic context as a path to a more stable and less militarized Afghanistan.

Presenter: WILLIAM DAVNIE. In 2007, after serving 26 years in the U.S. Foreign Service, Mr. Davnie retired and moved to Minnesota, where he had lived as a child. Although his overseas service focused mainly on Southeast Asia and the former Soviet Union, he served in Tajikistan, adjacent to Afghanistan, and was in Baghdad in the summer of 2007 during the “surge” in that country. His degrees are from Wabash College, Vanderbilt University Divinity School, and the National Defense University. Prior to joining the Foreign Service he was a Henry Luce Fellow, placed at an Islamic Teachers College in Indonesia, and served as a Presbyterian minister in rural North Dakota.

A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly—a global body of elected representatives – could invigorate our institutions of global governance with unprecedented democratic legitimacy, transparency and accountability.

Boutros Boutros-Ghaliⁱ

NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE AN EFFECT

Ronald J. Glossop

What happens if Iran gets nuclear weapons? What if other countries get nuclear weapons? These questions are the focus of attention of the media and political leaders.

But nuclear weapons as well as other large-scale weapons are *an effect* caused by something else. Whether the issue is a medical disease like avian flu or a social disease like war and weapons, we don't get the problem solved by focusing on the effects. We need to focus on the *causes*.

What causes *war* and the desire for large-scale weapons? That is a different question than what causes *conflicts*? Most conflicts within society do not result in wars. Within our country there are many conflicts and opposing viewpoints, but there has been no war within the country since 1861-65. The same is true within other democratic countries. Wars occur within countries when there are no trustworthy political and judicial institutions (that is, when there is no democratic government) to resolve the conflicts nonviolently.

The same thing is true at the international level. Wars occur between countries when there are no trustworthy political and judicial institutions (that is, when there is no democratic world government) to resolve the conflicts nonviolently. Unlimited national sovereignty means that the final arbitrator in disputes between nations is international war, and the winner is the nation with the strongest military and biggest weapons, including nukes. In such a situation, why won't all countries want nukes if they can get them?

War and nukes are effects, not causes. In order to deal with the problem of war and nuclear weapons our media and our political leaders need to focus on the causes rather than the effects. They might not like to address the issue of the implications of unlimited national sovereignty, but unless they do, we will have more and more weapons of mass destruction, biological as well as nuclear --and these weapons won't be limited to the larger countries.

At the international level we still lack the trustworthy political and judicial institutions needed to resolve conflicts nonviolently. The United Nations and the International Criminal Court are moves in the right direction, but we still lack a democratic world federation with the trustworthy political and judicial institutions that can resolve international conflicts nonviolently.

It would be a wonderful change if our media and political leaders would focus on the causes of our current dangerous social situation rather than just the effects. As Albert Einstein noted, "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our ways of thinking." We are still fixated on particular weapons and particular wars, that is on the effects, rather than on the causes of why we have wars and nukes.

Editor's Note: Ron Glossop, a professor emeritus of philosophy, is President of the St. Louis Chapter of CGS and the Chair of the Steering Committee of the World Federalist Institute (WFI), a CGS think-tank. This essay is adapted from the version that appeared in the November 2009 number of WFI's thought-provoking journal, *Minerva*.

AVAAZ

The CGS-MN Board wishes to commend to you the **AVAAZ** organization. Avaaz, subtitled "The World in Action," is a new global non-governmental organization with "a simple democratic mission: to close the gap between the world we have and the world most people want." The name means "Voice" in many languages of Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Those of us familiar with Avaaz see it as a good organization, appropriate for people interested in global issues and solutions. We see it as totally international in its organization, orientation and perspective, and in the issues in which it gets engaged. Avaaz tends to email not

too frequently and its requests for financial support are relatively low-key. It focuses on informing members about global issues and on providing opportunities for action (typically asking you to add your name in support of a position or communication or to sign a petition.

And those of already on the Avaaz list think you will benefit from signing on to their list (at www.avaaz.org) if you want an assist in keeping up on global issues and believe the downside (e.g., too many email messages) is minimal. We encourage you to visit their website.

CGS MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Dennis Dillon

Since I have been Treasurer of our local chapter, I've been able to clarify a few things about membership that I hope will be helpful to you:

- Memberships are handled solely through the national office, and payments (to "Citizens for Global Solutions" – individuals, \$25; couples, \$40) should be made payable to that office.
Citizens for Global Solutions
P.O. Box 96222
Washington, D.C. 20090-6222
- Membership payments for the first year of a new membership are given back to the local chapter by the national office, thus supporting the local chapter through membership recruiting. We encourage you to join CGS if you are not currently a member.
- Renewal requests were mailed this fall to all current members. If you haven't already sent in your renewal, please renew in January. The national office encourages you to renew online. Once they have your email address, your membership renewals will be handled online (to save on paper, printing and postage).
- If you wish to support the Minnesota chapter directly, please send donations to me at 210 W. Grant St., #414, Minneapolis, 55403-2244. Donations are greatly appreciated and will be used to support our Newsletter printing and mailing, annual meeting expenses not covered by attendees, and the monthly Third Thursday Global Issues Forums. Checks should be made out to "CGS-MN."
- If you would like to receive your Newsletter by email only, please email your request to claude101@comcast.net.

Thank you for your interest in, and especially for your support of, CGS and your local chapter. Please email me at dennis.dillon@msn.com if you have any questions.

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(formerly the World Federalist Association)

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Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.

Reinhold Niebuhr