To   *All sections and structures*
From   *The International Committee for Strengthening Democracy (ICSD)*
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Strengthening Amnesty International's Democracy: ICSD final report to the IEC Executive Summary

Summary

This summary report contains the ICSD's final recommendations to the IEC (full report: ORG 82/002/2009). It should be read in conjunction with 2009 ICM Circular 9: *Implementing "One Amnesty" – IEC proposals on governance and democracy* (ORG 50/002/2009).

Distribution

This is an internal circular which is being sent to all sections and structures.

Recommended Actions

Please circulate this document to all people in your section/structure who are involved in ICM preparations, or are involved in discussions about AI's governance and democracy.

Objectives

The ICSD is aware that the necessary improvements in AI's democratic governance cannot happen at once. Therefore, it recommends that at least for the duration of the next ISP, the movement initiate, commit to and implement a shared and sustained governance and democracy change agenda with the following main objectives:

- By 2016 AI will have in place integrated democratic governance structures and systems which reliably direct AI's strategic focus where AI's human rights impact is most likely to be maximized.

- In order for such governance structures and systems to deliver best possible human rights impact they will need to incorporate all key stakeholders, have strong leaders at all levels; have an open, evidence-based, transparent, constructive and trusting discussion, decision-making and accountability culture.

- In order for such governance structures and systems to be truly democratic, diverse and inclusive, they will need to ensure that all stakeholders have basically fair and equal access and that as much open and lively dialogue and debate by as many people as possible is allowed, encouraged and fostered.

Principles

They key elements and principles of AI's democratic governance, which the ICSD proposes are:

1. Impact Focus
AI's democratic governance should become thoroughly impact centered. More effective and democratic governance is a central element of securing more and more consistent impact. Every aspect of our efforts to strengthen our democratic governance at the same time has to stand the test of whether it also strengthens AI's impact on human rights in line with our vision and mission.

2. Inclusion of ALL stakeholders
The meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, internal and external, is paramount for strengthening AI's democratic governance. With regard to our membership this means strengthening governance and democracy at the national level and giving all members the opportunity to contribute directly to the global governance and be directly a part of AI's global democracy. With regard to external stakeholders this means including them in a meaningful way in our discussion, consultation and decision-making processes.

3. Diversity and Gender
Proactive measures are needed in order to improve diversity and gender sensitivity in AI's governance. In order for AI to better understand the world in which it wants to increase its impact, to better be able to become an integrated part of civil society and the human rights movement in areas of the world and with groups of people where it has not succeeded to date, it needs to ensure that its governance becomes truly diverse and gender sensitive.

4. Quality Participation
The quality of our decision-making processes has a direct impact on the quality of our decisions and our ability to implement them successfully. Discussions, consultations and deliberations need to be accessible, transparent, and non-discriminating in order to deliver good results. Real deliberative democracy must allow for real dialogue and discussion beyond the statement of pre-defined positions. The movement should initiate an analysis of its discussion, decision-making and conflict culture with the objective to improve the quality of its decisions and of the processes leading to them.

5. Transparency
AI should adopt a general policy on access to governance related information which defines transparency as the rule and confidentiality as the exception. Amnesty's general policy on access to governance related information should be: all information is accessible unless there is a good, specific

and substantiated reason to treat information as confidential (e.g. security concerns, data protection and employment law reasons, protection of individual privacy etc.).

6. Accountability

AI should establish a proper system of international, integrated and effective accountability. Each section and structure and the IS should explicitly and formally agree and commit their contribution to the implementation of the global strategic objectives of the movement. This also means that each of them will be accountable to the movement for their use of the movement's resources and for their impact. The main function of national governance bodies in this context would be to define and commit their entities' contribution and to ensure that their section or structure lives up to its international commitments. The Global AGM's main task is to hold the Global Board accountable for coordinating the delivery of AI's global objectives.

7. Effectiveness

The movement should streamline and simplify its decision-making processes, systems and structures in order to make best use of limited governance resources. AI should have governance structures, systems and processes which are democratic, but at the same time as simple, clear and transparent as possible. The key question we should ask ourselves is whether any additional structures, systems or process will contribute to decisions which will have more impact.

Cross-Cutting Issues

The ICSD recommends putting special attention on the three following cross-cutting aspects:

1. "Cultural" Change

We need to openly identify, address and modify accepted and entrenched behaviours in AI which risk undermining the effectiveness of our governance. Much of the potential for AI's democratic governance lies in improving its "democratic culture" rather than exclusively in structural or system changes. Mutual trust, our approach to leading and being led, our communication culture and the openness of our discussions are worth further analysis. Also, in order to become impact driven, we need to start relying much more on honest, evidence-based assessments and evaluations of our potential and impact. An analysis of the consequences of the existing "power structures" in the movement and an open discussion on how to address any negative consequences derived from them, would also contribute to empowering our members and strengthening our democracy and governance.

2. Global Perspective

In the long term, global governance bodies need a global perspective. We have currently a key global governance body, the ICM, composed exclusively of representatives of sections' and structures' national perspectives. The representation of the global or overall interests and perspectives is absent or left to the IEC and the SG, who are regularly suspected of furthering the interests of the centre. Changing this dynamic and composition in the long term would enhance the relevance, the quality and the consistency of AI's decisions as a global impact-oriented movement.

3. Membership Democracy

The movement should implement the concept of "one member – one vote" in its membership democracy. The consultation feedback expressed a clear desire for stronger membership democracy. We call ourselves "democratic", but in fact large numbers of our members, including our international members, have no access to our decision-making system, neither at the national nor at the international level. We therefore suggest strengthening AI's internal democracy by laying down the principle that each AI member is entitled at least to access relevant information, to participate in discussions and consultations and to vote.

Summary of Proposals for Decision Making Structures

- Global AGM
  A Global AGM, which in the long-term should be elected by all AI members globally and should be composed of activists, members and external stakeholders, carrying more democratic legitimacy and encompassing a broader range of crucial know-how. Meeting annually and with a smaller number of voting participants it is positioned to more effectively guide Amnesty through demanding decisions of the highest strategic importance and it wields better and more frequent control over the work of the Global Board.

  If the IEC and the movement believe that it is too early to envisage this type of change, there are several improvements which could be implemented without prejudicing the final, long term shape and form of a Global AGM or ICM. Improvements could be initiated e.g. with regard to the inclusion of external stakeholders (with or without voting rights) and international members, the election of ICM delegates and the ICM's tasks and responsibilities. The size of the ICM is also worth an immediate cost/benefit analysis, which could also include the option of a smaller but annual ICM, but essentially with the current structural composition (i.e. basically exclusive section and structure representation).

- Global Board
  Elected by the AGM against a set of high quality role briefs, the Global Board holds an optimal mix of key skills required to lead AI successfully towards greater impact. The Global Board appoints and supervises the Secretary General and holds sections and structures accountable for fulfilling their commitments to the movement and for complying with AI's global rules and strategic plans.

- National Governance Principles and Standards
  Securing high quality democratic governance world-wide requires all sections and structures to fulfill a number of minimum standards in their own governance, including: a) making sure all members have actual access to their democratic governance, ideally applying the "one member – one vote" concept at least at one level of their governance; b) meaningfully including external stakeholders in national governance systems and processes; c) ensuring quality and a good mix of skills in their national boards; d) ensuring diversity and gender balance; e) implementing systems and processes to improve transparency, accountability, clarity of roles and efficiency.

Additional Proposals

1. Global Forum
A lively democracy means among other things that a) there is a "public" space for discussion and debate in order to shape "public" opinion, and b) everybody is – or at least can easily be – engaged. A stronger and more inclusive democracy should make strategic use of the possibilities of technology to engage in a quality dialogue online, in addition to its formal and physical structures and meetings.

The ICSD is proposing to prepare a more detailed and concrete proposal on how a Global Forum (including its physical components) would work. In the meantime, smaller pilots could show that it can be done successfully.

2. Chairs Forum
We propose that the review of the Chairs Forum's past performance be conducted (although not exclusively) with a view to the possibility of strengthening its role on two levels, which is where we see its main potential (in addition to the functions it is already performing):
- as the movement's and the Global AGM's main advisory body;
- as the body where sections and structures coordinate and commit their contributions to the movement's strategic objectives.