

Amnesty International-Strengthening Democracy
First Consultation Paper

AI Members Only

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To *All sections and structures, members, partners, community-based organizations*
From *The International Committee for Strengthening Democracy*
Date *April 2008*

**Strengthening Amnesty International's Democracy
Consultation Pack 1
Part 1 - Effective Democratic Governance**

Summary

This first consultation pack comprises the following documents:

Part 1: The ICSD's first consultation paper, "Effective Democratic Governance" setting out its proposed overall approach to strengthening AI's democracy as well as a summary of the key areas the ICSD believes need specific attention

Part 2: Summary I: Results of Earlier Assessments

Part 3: Summary II: Governance in other organizations

Distribution

This consultation pack is issued to all sections, structures and interested members as well as to selected partners and community-based organizations. The consultation paper "Effective Democratic Governance" will also be made accessible on the internet.

Recommended Actions

Please ensure that this consultation pack is brought to the attention of the chair, board and director of your section/structure, and to those members, partners and other organizations interested in and/or most directly affected by AI's decisions and decision-making processes.

Strengthening Amnesty International's Democracy

Part 1: Consultation Paper

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



From: The International Committee for Strengthening Democracy

Effective Democratic Governance

From: International Committee for Strengthening Democracy (ICSD)*, April 2008

1. Introduction

This is the first consultation paper requesting input from within and from outside Amnesty International on how we could improve and strengthen our democratic governance. In this first paper the ICSD outlines its proposals regarding

- the overall approach to democracy AI should embrace;
- the key areas of AI's democracy that need to be addressed.

The ICSD has chosen to focus its time and energy on making proposals that will enable AI to come closer to what we want to become: a truly democratic, effective and diverse movement that has a real impact on the lives of the people with and for whom it works.

The ICSD and its members have analyzed and taken into account the outcomes of studies and reviews on AI's decision-making conducted over the last 20 years, best practice examples from other global NGOs, and current thinking on democracy and governance. However, we believe that Decision 2 of the 2007 ICM calls for action and change, not for further extended studies. In the various other documents in this First Consultation Pack you will find for your information a selection of summaries of past and recent analysis that have informed our proposals.

* Daniel Garcia, chair; Hope Chigudu, Soledad García Muñoz, Shirin Heidari, Roshan Jason, Maria Nassali, David Raper, Deborah Smith.

We are asking for your enthusiastic and thoughtful participation in the discussions around our proposals for change, mainly focussing on the kind of democracy we want, not just on the perceived shortcomings of our current system.

Specifically, we would like to hear back from you on the following questions:

Do you believe that the Overall Approach to AI's democracy (section 2) captures the essence of what AI should practice in this area?

Please comment on why you think so or what you believe the gaps are?

Do you believe that the key areas listed in section 3 are those most in need of change in order to strengthen AI's democracy?

Please elaborate on why you think so or what areas you believe are missing?

Please send your answers to Claire Smith at the IS (ClaireSmithOLU@amnesty.org) either by **31 May 2008** (allowing us to take them into account for our second consultation paper), or by **6 September 2008** at the latest.

Unless you instruct us otherwise, we will make your responses available on an electronic platform to all those interested in this dialogue. Details on how to access the platform will be communicated in due course.

We are very much looking forward to hearing from you and discussing with you the proposals we are making in this First Consultation Paper.

2. Overall Approach to AI's Democracy

At its first meeting the ICSD discussed its understanding of democracy, the views of its members on the current state of AI's democracy, and the results of earlier assessments of AI's governance. It also looked at democracy in other global civil society organizations.

All committee members agreed that democracy has always been and will continue to be one of AI's core values. It is not just enshrined in our statute; it is an intrinsic element of AI's identity. Also, the ICSD believes that AI could not credibly defend human rights if it was not democratically organized.

Nevertheless, we concluded that it is important to be explicit about what we mean when we talk about strengthening AI's democracy. Therefore, the ICSD proposes an approach to AI's democracy based on the following principles:

➤ ***Mission and Impact Focus***

Like all activities undertaken by AI, and all processes in which we invest precious time and resources, the main purpose of AI's governance system should be to further AI's mission and increase our positive impact for human rights. Appropriate representation of specific internal stakeholders may play a role in AI's democracy, but this should not become its main purpose.

➤ ***Rights Holders, Diversity and Gender***

Those who are most affected by - and who are supposed to benefit from - Amnesty International's decisions should have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the discussions and decisions. As a movement, we have committed ourselves to embrace, support and promote diversity at all levels. Only a diverse democracy is a strong democracy. The diverse voices of AI's activists are critical to AI's democracy; rights holders whose lives are affected by AI's decisions and work should also have a voice.

➤ ***Transparency and Accountability***

The type of democratic system we are striving for should be as transparent as possible, make clear and measurable decisions, consistently control whether and to what extent objectives have been achieved, and hold those responsible for implementing decisions to account.

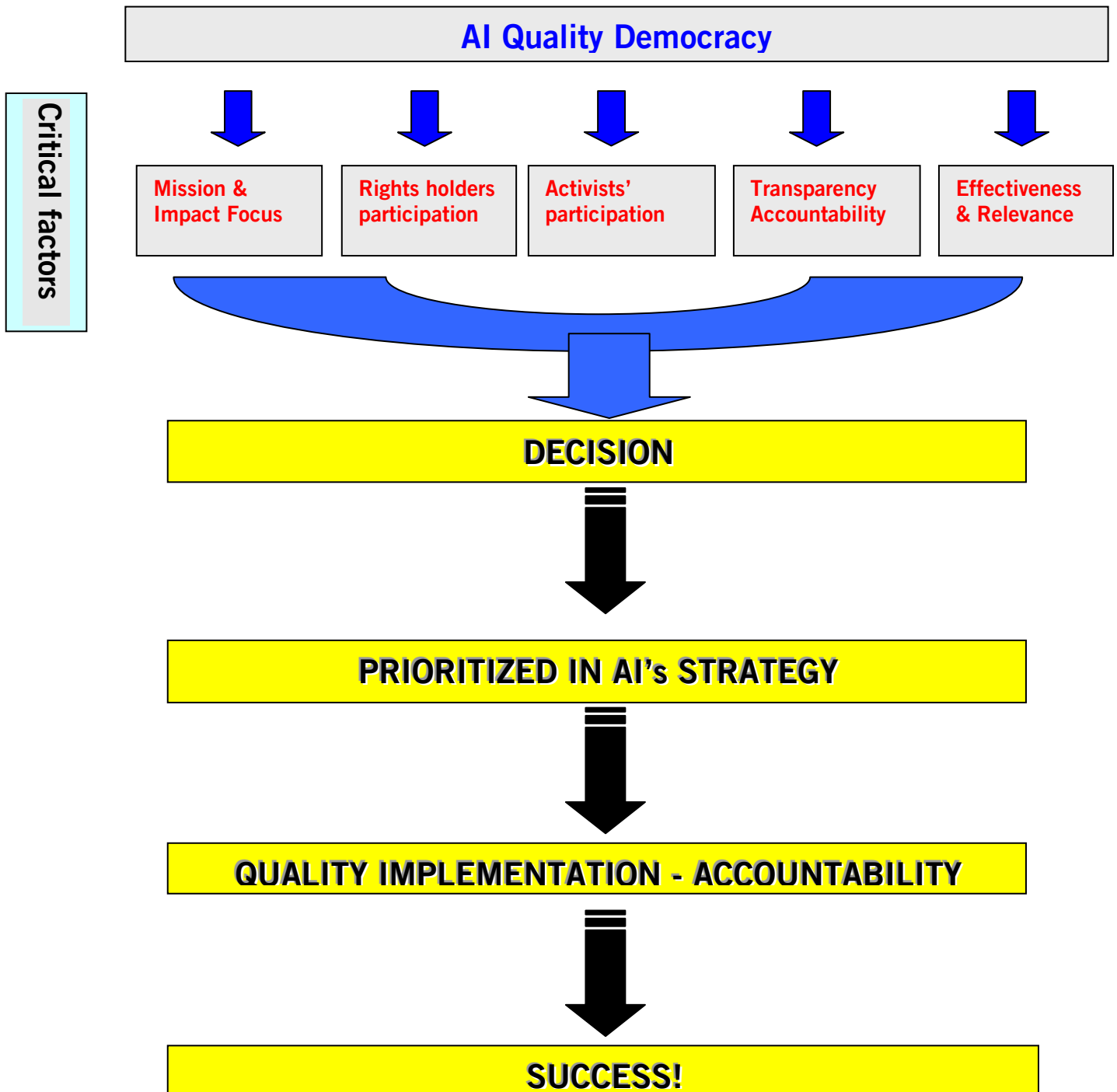
➤ ***Quality Participation***

Participatory democracy does not mean opinion-polling or settling on the lowest common denominator decision that pleases everyone. It does mean increasing the richness of our discussions, the quality of our consultations, and the wisdom of our decisions. Skills in dialogue and consultation are an important issue for organizational learning in AI.

➤ **Effectiveness**

AI's democratic governance should be designed to produce relevant, well informed, quality decisions on time. There is no choice to make between democracy and effectiveness. Among the various democratic systems available AI needs to select one that will allow it to be as effective as possible.

In the view of the ICSD, these are all key principles that should shape the elements of AI's democratic culture, systems and processes:



3. Key areas requiring change – the ICSD's assessment

"[The] lack of communication, cooperation and active collaboration between sections, groups and their counterpart elements [is] the single greatest source of wasted opportunities, wasted effort, repetition of mistakes, mismanagement of human and financial resources, isolation, fatigue, burnout, loss of inspiration and damaged morale of all the manifold obstacles limiting AI's effectiveness. . . Working together must be the guiding spirit and methodology of AI's life if it is to overcome the[se] limitations."

-Report of the Committee on Long-Range Organizational Development to the 1987 ICM

3.1 Poor decision-making culture and process limit AI's potential impact

➤ *Focus on AI's mission and intended impact*

AI's governance, both at international and national level, is often too internally focused, overly concerned with organizational arrangements and internally debated AI positions. The ICSD will explore ways for AI's decision-making to become more sharply focussed on achieving AI's mission and on delivering impact for human rights.

➤ *Clear definition of roles in discussion, consultation and decision making*

The lack of effectiveness in decision making partly stems from a lack of clarity on who is supposed to participate in which way. The ICSD will explore how the different roles can be clarified and how expectations about different forms of involvement and participation can be better communicated.

➤ *Strengthening the quality of AI's internal dialogue*

Amnesty International's internal discussions are characterized by fixed positions, unequal access to information and power, lack of expertise, crowded agendas and participation by only a small number of members. The ICSD will explore ways to promote more thoughtful and effective dialogue aimed at increasing both the quality of AI's decisions and our commitment to implementing them.

➤ *Strengthening AI's leadership*

Amnesty International is a highly complex global organization. Leading it requires a team of excellently qualified leaders with a well-balanced range of know-how. The ICSD will review the selection and induction of and the support for AI's office holders.

3.2 Lack of transparency and accountability creates distrust and limits AI's ability to learn and develop

➤ *Setting clear objectives and defining measurable deliverables*

Increasing AI's effectiveness requires setting clear targets for identifiable people, and measuring whether and how far they have been achieved. The ICSD will explore how best to govern and manage AI, linking this process to the development of organizational performance indicators which is already under way.

➤ *Securing transparency at all stages of decision making and implementation*

Lack of trust between members and the leaders they have elected is a major shortcoming of AI's governance. The relationship between members, elected leaders and staff is often an

additional concern. The ICSD is convinced that more transparency is required in order to speed up decision making, improve cooperation and increase organizational learning.

➤ *Establishing democratic control and accountability*

While AI puts a lot of focus, time, resources and energy into democratic decision making, it neglects democratic control and accountability. The ICSD will review how accountability can be established as an integral part of AI's work.

3.3 Lack of participation of those AI wants to serve (rights holders) limits AI's legitimacy and relevance

➤ *Opening AI's decision making to partners and rights holders*

AI's governance system is very strongly focussed on its (mostly northern) members while it provides very limited space to the people with and for whom Amnesty works (often southern). In order to secure its ongoing relevance to the struggle for human rights AI needs to open itself up to inputs from those it endeavours to serve. The ICSD will produce proposals how this can be done.

➤ *Developing an approach for inclusion of AI's partners and rights holders in AI's governance*

In order to increase its impact AI should look for ways to include perspectives and views from both, others who work for human rights and members of the communities we hope to benefit in our debates, consultations and potentially decision-making. The ICSD will look into possibilities as to how this issue can be approached.

➤ *Developing a system for shared learning about mission-driven governance*

Sharing its learnings internally and with external stakeholders will help AI to continuously improve its performance and generate information about others' learnings which AI can use for its own benefit. The ICSD will look into this issue as well.

3.4 Combining democracy and effectiveness

The overall picture the ICSD draws is based on the understanding that, in order to achieve its mission, Amnesty International needs both to: strengthen its democracy and improve its effectiveness. Being strongly democratic but ineffective does not serve AI's purpose nor does being effective but undemocratic. Combining democracy and effectiveness is key to AI's future success.

4. Consultation Process: Timeline

The ICSD is looking forward to engaging a continuous and fruitful discussion and dialogue within the movement and with external partners and rights holders between now and the 2009 ICM. We are planning to structure our work and the discussion and consultation process as follows:

- Step 1:** Review of existing democracy, best practice and past analysis ⇒ proposal of the overall approach including key areas of change ⇒ First Consultation Pack (by 20 April 2008) ⇒ start of consultation process:
Phase 1: any feedback received **until 31 May 2008** can be taken into account for the Second Consultation Pack
Phase 2: we expect your feedback **until 6 September 2008**
- Step 2:** Review and analysis of feedback received during Phase 1 above ⇒ development of an overall concept for a stronger democracy ⇒ identification of appropriate structures and processes summarized in a first draft ⇒ Second Consultation Pack (by 30 June 2008)
- Step 3:** Movement-wide consultation and discussion as well as consultation with key partners and rights holders on the Second Consultation Pack
We expect your feedback until 6 September 2008
- Step 4:** Review and analysis of feedback received, information of movement and external stakeholders ⇒ coordination with ISP Committee ⇒ depending on progress and outcome of discussions, short additional consultation on specific issues ⇒ second draft submitted to and approved by the IEC for consultation ⇒ Third Consultation Pack ⇒ enabling ICM resolutions and statute amendments submitted (by 31 December 2008)
- Step 5:** Movement-wide consultation and discussion and consultation with key partners and rights holders on Third Consultation Pack.
We expect your feedback until 15 March 2009
- Step 6:** Review and analysis of feedback received, information of movement and external stakeholders ⇒ third draft submitted to and approved by the IEC for distribution to the movement as proposal for ICM decisions (by 30 April 2009)
- Step 7:** Movement-wide dialogue and discussion on third draft proposal (until 2009 ICM)

Throughout the process the ICSD welcomes formal and informal input from anybody willing to contribute and participate. The ICSD will endeavour to conduct this dialogue as openly and transparently as practically possible, including making documents and contributions publicly available.