

# Should We Support a UN Parliamentary Assembly?

## A Simulation Exercise



**Introduction:** Should this country support the creation of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly? You are part of a team of national lawmakers taking part in a debate to decide. At the end of the exercise, you'll cast your votes. You will also have the opportunity to go online and sign the actual petition of support for a UNPA, should you choose to do so. You will draw on the assigned readings on the UNPA, and democracy beyond the state more generally, to participate in this exercise.

### Instructions

- 1) First read the brief "pro" essay on the next page.
- 2) Now, your class has been divided into 'Pro' and 'Con' sides on the UN Parliamentary Assembly question.
- 3) Each side should select one overall Chair and three Sub-Committee Chairs. The remaining members should then divide themselves equally among the three sub-committees. Each sub-committee works under the coordination of its Chair to prepare one Pro point, in favor of the UNPA; **or** one Con point, against it, to raise in the debate. The overall team Chair helps coordinate the efforts of the three sub-committees and leads the debate for her/his side.
- 4) The full Pro and Con sides then come together, and Sub-committee Chairs take turns raising their points. After each point is raised, the other side is given a chance to respond. Then debate is open, and anyone can offer a comment on the point that was raised until the instructor calls time. The next point is raised by a Sub-Committee Chair, and the process is repeated until all six points have been raised and debated.
- 5) At the end of the debate, all students cast votes by show of hands to determine whether the country will support the creation of a UNPA. This is an open 'conscience' vote, meaning that you can vote whichever way seems best to you, regardless of whether you were on the Pro or Con side.
- 6) After the vote has been tallied, you will be asked to go online to the actual UNPA Campaign site, read it and determine whether you yourself will add your name to the UNPA support petition there.

## Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly:

<http://en.unpacampaign.org/>

In this age of globalization, more and more issues have a global dimension that requires global cooperation. At the UN and other international fora, governments come together to negotiate and decide on policies that affect us all.

The UN Charter begins on the promising opening words: “**We the peoples.**” However, one will seek in vain for any clause in the document that specifies a means by which ordinary people can play a role in the organization’s deliberations and decision-making.

The bodies of the UN and international organizations are occupied by **officials who are appointed** by the executive branches of national governments. In view of the growing importance of international organizations and their decisions, this is no longer sufficient.

A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) for the first time would give **popularly elected representatives** a formal role in global affairs. As an additional body, the assembly will directly represent the world’s citizens and not governments.

Initially, states could choose whether their UNPA members would come from national parliaments, reflecting their political spectrum and gender equality, or whether they would be directly elected. Eventually, the goal is to have **all members directly elected**.

Starting as a largely consultative body, the rights and powers of the UNPA could be expanded over time as its democratic legitimacy increases. The assembly will act as an **independent watchdog** in the UN system and as a democratic reflection of the diversity of world public opinion.

In the long run, once its members are all democratically elected, the assembly could be developed into a **world parliament** which - under certain conditions and in conjunction with the UN General Assembly - may be able to adopt universally binding regulations.

In short, the UN should evolve from what many believe to be a generally ineffectual “talk-shop” into a viable democratic and legislative body.

## Supporters

The creation of a UN Parliamentary Assembly is supported by a broad range of **individuals and institutions from more than 150 countries**.

**Individual supporters** include politicians, former UN officials, distinguished scholars, cultural innovators, representatives of civil society organizations, and many committed citizens from all walks of life.

In particular, 608 current and 856 former members of parliament across principal party lines have endorsed the campaign to date. The sitting MPs represent an estimated 119 million people. Supporters also include current and former heads of state, foreign ministers, Nobel laureates, and over 400 professors, including from world-leading universities.

**Institutions** that have expressed support include numerous civil society organizations, parliaments, international parliamentary assemblies and party networks. For instance, the Pan-African Parliament,

the European Parliament, and the Latin-American Parliament have adopted resolutions – as have the Socialist International, the Liberal International, or the Green World Congress.

<b>Referendum on Australia's Support for a UN Parliamentary Assembly</b>	
Vote only once by putting an X in the box next to your choice	
Should the Australian Government support the creation of a UN Parliamentary Assembly?	
<b>Support</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Do Not Support</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**FINALLY: Are you yourself willing to sign up as a supporter at the Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly?**

(scroll to the bottom of the page): <http://en.unpacampaign.org/supporters/>