

FES New York's Engagement in Global Governance and the UN (October 2011)

Historically, the international work of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) was primarily focused on the level of individual countries. For example, FES supported the democratic opposition against the system of Apartheid in South Africa as well as against the Pinochet-Regime in Chile. Yet over time it became increasingly apparent that promoting the principles at the core of the FES's work, such as peace, democracy, and economic and social justice, also has to take place on the level of global political structures and institutions. This insight was inspired by the work of the former German Chancellor and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Willy Brandt. As chair of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (ICIDI) on the North-South divide in global development, he reminded governments, multilateral organizations and non-state actors that peace, security and development are intertwined.

Consequently, in 1981, to address these challenges on the global level, the FES decided to establish an office in New York at the United Nations. Since then, FES New York has actively contributed to new ideas about global governance in general and the UN in particular. With its more than 110 offices globally, the FES is particularly well-positioned to facilitate international communication between the North and the South and between different stakeholders, ranging from governments and international organizations to employers' associations, trade unions and non-governmental organizations. By sponsoring conferences, high-level consultations and publications, FES New York has contributed to numerous political processes to improve global governance structures.

UN reform

As the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 left the credibility and relevance of the UN in doubt, a broad debate about the future of multilateralism in general and the UN in particular ensued. FES supported this process, particularly by its engagement with High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which Secretary-General Kofi Annan established in 2003. To make this Panel a truly global endeavor, FES organized a series of regional consultations and, in 2004, supported the dissemination of the Panel's findings throughout various continents. As some of the Panel's proposals for UN reform were taken up by UN Member States, FES New York followed up the tangible outcomes of the UN Reform Summit of 2005, such as the establishment of a UN Peacebuilding architecture.

UN Peacebuilding Commission

FES supported the final negotiations about the establishment of a UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) at the end of 2005. To help its implementation and raise the global awareness for the new UN body, FES conducted a series of regional workshops. As the first countries Sierra Leone and Burundi were being advised by the PBC in 2006, FES supported the participation of civil society representatives from these countries.

UN Women

After efforts to strengthen the UN's gender architecture had stalled for many years, in 2010 FES New York became involved in an initiative of UN Member States for a grand bargain. By agreeing to an initiative to increase the system-wide coherence of the UN's development activities, Member States also voted for a consolidation of the UN's gender architecture. As a result, the four distinct offices and divisions that focused on gender equality and women's empowerment were transformed into one new gender entity, UN Women.

Global Economic Governance

FES New York has dedicated itself to many initiatives inside and outside the UN to stimulate new thinking and innovative policies to mobilize financial and intellectual resources for development. As early as 2003, FES New York, started to accompany and support the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development. In 2004 and again in 2010, FES New York assisted Member States and the UN Secretariat in their debates about a reform of the Economic and Social Council. And after the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008, FES New York has worked on strengthening the UN's role in global economic governance and to bolster the voices of developing countries. FES has followed and supported related debates and processes taking place in the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and within the G20 process.

Labor Standards and Social Justice

Based on its close connections with the international labor movement, FES has for many years supported activities focusing on the social dimension of globalization. At the UN, FES New York has supported the implementation of core labor standards and a social protection floor.