

For the Council of the World Federalist Movement

(Document first prepared for the international congress in summer 2012 : for the Commission United Nations Reform and Global Governance; Federalism at the Global and Regional Levels. Chapter: Global democratisation.)

Article published in "Mundial", journal of the Swiss World Federalists (autumn 2011), translated from French :

Draft resolution for the next international congress of the World Federalists: the model of Swiss federalism and its direct democracy.

A board committee of the Swiss section of World Federalists was formed to draft a resolution to be presented at the next international congress of the World Federalists, which proposes to build a worldwide federalism based on the Swiss model of direct democracy; this follows a first draft that I used to present to the committee.

For a few years, I have been thinking about the forms of a possible federalist and democratic world institution, inspired by the Swiss Confederation model : a new institution compared to the UN and composed of countries and regions fully ready to play the game of direct democracy and federalism (including the principle of subsidiarity, decentralization and governmental collegiality) ; a "confederation" ideally composed at first of some federalist and democratic continental or regional areas, with the idea that it could gradually be extended to all countries members of the United Nations ; its establishment and development could be sustained by the UN. This "confederation" project would not prevent a parallel reform process of the UN itself, a reform currently supported by the World Federalists Movement and which can also be realized in the sense of a federalism based on the Swiss model and on direct democracy.

The board committee of the World Federalists Swiss section rather focuses first on the UN reform, which is the priority task for the moment. The text (in italics) of the draft resolution prepared by the commission, formed by Mrs. Romy Paroz and Mr Willi Herrman, Christian Müller and Raphaël Broquet, follows hereunder:

Resolution on Direct Democracy:

The Switzerland World Federalists suggest that the World Federalist Movement draws its inspiration from the Swiss Confederation model in order to have a global constitution aimed to be democratic and federalist, with separated powers. Swiss Confederation is experiencing direct democratic and federalist structures. It practices free election as regards both Houses of Parliament; it has four official national languages, and its main character lies in cultural multiplicity.

Direct democracy ensures a balance between centralized and decentralized forces. Swiss people recognize human rights and cares about humanitarian tradition.

Direct democracy requires the promotion of a good general and civic education.

As a first step, we support the campaign for democratic (KDUN) United Nations (UN).

To my mind, reference to Swiss model is important because Swiss political institutions have searched for unity for a long time, while respecting differences, through two key concepts: subsidiarity and direct democracy.

Subsidiarity consists in assigning what is strictly necessary to the responsibility of upper levels only; the mere citizen, which is the basic level, is the most important.

Direct democracy represents the greatest autonomy and responsibility of citizens - therefore of every person - facing collective and power mechanisms that always involve possible risks and misuse. Direct democracy is the cornerstone of a counter power system, which basically controls the political system and compels its representatives to serve general interests at best. From this point of view, Switzerland is certainly the best example in the world. However, direct democracy requires good civic education and information to citizens, which should not depend too much on financial resources of a richer political board to the prejudice of another (from this point of view, Switzerland has still progress to make).

Currently, all countries in the world, even though sometimes poor, enjoy a rather good level of education and literacy, and civic education aiming at direct democracy should not be so complicated to implement. What is more, Internet has nowadays developed everywhere, even in poorest countries: it can provide the technical and logistical means to organize referenda and elections (on small or large scale), remembering that young people of all countries deal quite easily with Internet and its wide and fast information and communication tools. The latter are already helping in developing and serving a kind of collective conscience, some transparency, an accountabing information and a democratic political influence.

To prevent economy to hold too much power on popular consultations (by pawning huge sums in campaigns), we can imagine a legal framework able to limit the sums to be committed.

To my mind, direct democracy and federalism are tightly linked. Federalism involves subsidiarity, that is to say a balanced and complementary share of skills and responsibilities at different levels of public community which fit together, starting from the basic element and first element, namely the person/citizen, with his responsibility and his skill. Direct democracy is therefore encouraged through a good developing federalism - which implies the principle of subsidiarity -, that is to say, by searching a harmonious distribution of skills at every level of public organization, from the basic person/citizen up to the human community. Many countries lack a tradition of direct democracy, but the development of federalism throughout the world and inside continental groups encourages - and may even further encourage - countries to implement more decentralization and direct democracy.

Anyone interested will find on the website www.weltfoederalisten.ch (cf. Groupe CDIE, page "Links") detailed information on the global confederation draft based on Swiss Confederation model - that is to say on direct democracy, on subsidiarity and on governmental collegiality. It is also possible to write an email to my address : rbroquet@bluewin.ch.

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