The Charter of the United Nations Organisation begins with the words: “We, the peoples...”. However, the peoples are not (yet) directly represented; the executive powers or governments of nation states are. A call for reform of the UN, if not democratic legitimation of the world organisation, is increasingly heard in many lands, even though the victor states of World War Two which permanently sit at the helm of the UN Security Council have not yet agreed, in spite of Article 103c of the UN Charter, to call in a UN Reform Conference.

In the thirties and during World War Two, several politicians and statesmen as well intellectuals proposed true community if not federalist measures for world governance, while condemning nationalism of Nazi Germany, Italian fascism and Japanese military imperialism. Campaign for World Government is an American organisation which was formed in 1937. In 1938, Clarence Streit proposed in the USA, in a book Union Now! that a Federation of Democracies be formed. His thesis made a great number of adepts on both sides of the Atlantic and eventually gave birth to two independent organisations in America and in Britain, called Federal Union.

The invention of nuclear power caused great fears, given the discernible inefficiency of the UN system to control armaments of mass destruction. After the Second World War, the peoples of Asia and Europe were still greatly suffering of the disastrous consequences of the global conflict. Many doubts prevailed regarding the conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms of the UN Charter.

Soon after the war, a friend of Winston Churchill, Emery Reves, emphasized in his bestseller Anatomy of Peace the need to transfer to a World Federal Authority the control of armaments of mass destruction, by partially limiting the absolute nation state sovereignty. His call resulted in a peace philosophy or ethics, if not in a true universal patriotism, and caused the birth of movements, such as Crusade for World Government or the observance of a world government week.

From October 13 through 16, 1946, took place in Luxembourg a preparatory conference gathering 30 organisations from 14 countries, with the aim of establishing a Universal Movement for a World Government, which gave way, from August 17 to 24, 1947 in Montreux, Switzerland, to a conference which saw the birth to what is called today the World Federalist Movement. At the same time, European Federalists established the European Union. A popular French priest and parliamentarian, l’Abbé Pierre – known for his Emmaüs Companions charity, was at that time one of the celebrities who actively participated in the world federalist conference and soon afterwards became the movement’s executive president.

The participants in the Montreux world federalist conference were thrilled by a message received from Albert Einstein who hoped that world federation would contribute to effectively solve global problems. Already in 1945, together with the author Thomas Mann
and twenty eminent Americans, he had called for a Federal Constitution for the entire world. Many politicians and intellectuals shared similar hopes. Workshops and conferences took place in several countries. In 1948, Swiss philosopher, author and federalism proponent, - Denis de Rougemont, was the rapporteur at The Hague Conference, presided over by Winston Churchill, which discussed the establishment of the United States of Europe.

In May 1948, a former US military pilot, actor Garry Davis, appalled by his participation in the bombing of Nazi Germany, gave up his US citizenship. In autumn of the same year, with active support of French intellectuals such as Albert Camus or l’Abbé Pierre, he demanded from the public bench in the Palais de Chaillot in Paris which then hosted the UN General Assembly, that a Peoples’ & World Citizens’ General Assembly be established at the UN. He was convinced that the system opposing sovereign nation states could still become the cause of conflicts and damaging wars. Garry Davis’ world citizens’ movement gave birth to a Registry of World Citizens which nowadays still operates as an NGO in Paris, calling for symbolic elections of a People’s Congress and coordinating activities of ‘mundialized’ townships which claim to be world territory.

On the occasion of a World Federalist conference in 1951 in Rome, Pope Pius XII received a delegation at the Vatican and stated: “Your movement seeks to realize an efficient political organisation for the world. Nothing could be more in conformity with the traditional doctrine of the Church...” In the encyclical Pacem in Terris, his successor, John XXIII, demanded “the constitution of a public, universally competent authority”. In 1951, delegates endeavoured to meet in a World Constitutional Assembly. At the same time, parliamentary groups began to form in different countries – the Parliamentarians for World Law, as they are still called today.


Prior to the outbreak of the Cold War which deeply divided nation states in the Eastern and Western world, there were reportedly 250,000 active or registered World Federalists throughout the world. Today, undoubtedly their numbers have decreased; however, their associations are actively present in several countries and from world headquarters in New York, they facilitate a coalition of over 1,000 NGO’s for global justice – the International Coalition for the International Criminal Court with representatives in the Hague and Brussels, working in parallel with another NGO human rights coalition on the UN Responsibility To Protect.

In June 2005, the European Parliament, in a resolution on UN Reform, proposed the creation of a World Parliament which in the beginning would function with a consultative status. Lately, a movie maker, Joel Mardsen, after an eight year journey throughout the world, produced the World Vote Now documentary which illustrates election procedures and voting practices in 26 countries of all continents, and constituted, when screened in the European Parliament, a vivid record of citizens’ and even voting commissions’ aspirations for a world referendum on the planet Earth inhabitants’ life conditions.
The concept of the total *sovereignty* of the Nation State goes back to October 24, 1648 when the *Treaty of Westphalia* was signed to end the Thirty Years War and the 80 years’ battle for the Low Countries’ (today Netherlands) independence. The concept of *human rights, of citizens’ and even minorities’ rights* – a concept which defines each human being’s sacred rights as opposed to the City or to the State, goes back to the Antique times. Socratus proclaimed that he is a *citizen, not of Athens, neither of Greece, but of the world.* However, the principles ruling the relations between States as defined in the seventeenth century are still applicable today in matters of international law: in brief, Nations States are sovereign. Nation States which exert authority over their respective territories are competent to protect their citizens’ rights. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) defined modes and ways for settling disputes and conflicts and safeguard peace between Nation States, namely through conferences, arbitration and lottery. Undoubtedly, these methods can mitigate conflictual situations. They, however, cannot be imposed or be binding on States. How could they be effective in the 21st century in a globalized, technical, digitized world in which distance has been annihilated to become a village. Living conditions of weaker elements and minorities on planet Earth are thus jeopardized. It is the same 17th century methods and procedures which today preside over inter-States and UN action. The *European Union* which within its Council resorts to inter-State procedures, succeeded to establish a social order of peace, prosperity and intercultural dialogue through the community process. In order to resolve world problems today, World Federalists and World Citizens propose that Nation States share a portion of their sovereignty with a *global governance system* consisting of a *Parliament,* a *Court interpreting World Law* and an *Executive Government* with real powers, albeit strictly limited to world problems alone. In the same vein as the 27 member States of the European Union have achieved on a continental level, through a community approach.