

Vision Works 2022

The meeting of global CEOs and Board Chairs

Caux*, Switzerland, 26-27 April 2022,

Outcome

The annual Vision Works meeting brings together a distinguished group of global CEOs from the world's leading international civil society organisations (ICSOs) and close partner organisations as well as their respective global Board Chairs. In total, 17 leaders were physically present during the conversation in April 2022, and 10 were able to dial in to the hybrid sessions. While the Centre hosted Vision Works in the previous September, for many this was the first time to meet face to face after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was an opportunity highly appreciated.

Day 1 started with introductions and the traditional session sharing with each other “**What keeps us awake at night**”. In small and then combined groups participants discussed their core challenges. For many, the multiple crises – coming out of the COVID-19 crisis with its diverse repercussions for staff and programme and the war in Ukraine with its direct implications as well as global ripple effect – in combination with organisational changes come with enormous challenges. Therefore, a suggested framing of “**what gets us out of bed in the morning**” provided a useful avenue to also exploring the possibilities that lie in these crises. Peers exchanged with a high level of trust and continued their discussions on various organisational challenges during the two days.

Rachel Coldicutt of Careful.Industries provided the first external input of the day on **civil society futures**. She shared [three alternative long-term scenarios for 2036](#) and what the role of civil society could be in those. Questions from participants focused on the “soft” elements of the scenarios, that often miss from so-called official futures, such as spirituality, wisdom, value of lived experience, and care. Rachel and participants also discussed the inevitability of counter-narratives and cultures that need to be anticipated in futures thinking. Participants therefore also deliberated what it would take to work towards one of these scenarios and whether there was potential in being more effective in collaboration with each other to working towards positive futures. Should participants be interested in exchanging further with Rachel and Careful.Industries, [please get in touch](#).

In the afternoon of Day one, participants split into two groups, discussing **post-pandemic working culture** led by Daniel Eriksson of TI, and **strategy as a journey of not knowing** led by Philip Goodwin of VSO International. Recurring themes and challenges regarding post-covid work set-up included balancing organisational needs of physical presence with new expectations of staff regarding flexible and remote work, team cohesion and the danger of further losing weak ties (in- and externally), gig economy and the opportunities as well as challenges that come with it, as well as labour law and office lease implications that need to be navigated. Almost all participants signalled they were still testing what works, but many were under pressure provide clarity and policies.



Strategising becomes more complicated in volatile and rapidly changing times, where unexpected developments derail longer-term planning and call for different approaches. Starting from Philip's [podcast](#), the group reflected on different parameters for planning and strategising, including values over outcomes, highly decentralised approaches and referring back to the more informal and 'softer' parts of futures thinking, as outlined in the morning session.

The official programme of the day was concluded with a presentation and discussion over the Centre's programme on civic space and operational environment, the **Solidarity Action Network (SANE)**. During warm-up, presentations and break-out discussions participants explored the different concepts and possibilities of standing in solidarity with each other and local partners. All not already involved in SANE are warmly invited [to find out more about the offer](#) and engage with [Eva](#) or [Miriam](#) over it.

A walk in Montreux, visiting the statue of Freddie Mercury, and a dinner wrapped up the day.

On day 2, the first session focused on **Mis- and Disinformation (MDI)** and cybersecurity. Led by Christian Humborg of Wikimedia, the concept of MDI was revisited and the implications for ICSOs discussed. Stephane Duguin, Cyberpeace Institute then joined online and informed participants about **their [cyberpeace builders programme](#)**, matching volunteers from corporates with CSOs in need. Apart from the ad-hoc support the programme further endeavours to map impact and harm of cyber-attacks on individuals and organisations as well as tracking attacks and gathering data then to present to governments for advocacy. Further guidance over cyber attacks on ICSOs can be found here in [a newly published guidance document](#) produced by CPI and SANE.

Having already touched on the war in **Ukraine**, the next session focused on the **war and its global ripple effects**, featuring a panel with *Sofia Sprechmann (CARE)*, *Rainer Brockhaus (CBM Christian Blind Mission)*, *Casey Harden (World YWCA)*, *Justin Derbyshire (HelpAge international)* and *Agnès Callamard (Amnesty International)* joining online, moderated by Ignacio Packer (ICVA). A very intense dialogue brought several core themes to the front:

- Acknowledging the plight of people with disabilities as a particularly vulnerable group in conflicts, as well as women – both their victimisation as well as agency as strong community actors.
- The war lays bare the crisis of multilateralism and global governance. What could a new and better system look like and how can we seize the moment to shape it, taking into consideration shifts and new dynamics regarding the influence of China and other emerging, yet authoritarian world regions?
- Western and Northern focus on Ukrainian war unleashed debates over double standards, discrimination due to racism, and forgotten crises. How can ICSOs raise attention over forgotten and exacerbated crises yet not pit suffering against each other and keep values and standards high?
- Getting ready for funding crises and likely global recession

For the final block of the day, several Global Board Chairs, Global CEOs and external presenters joined remotely. Tosca Bruno-VanVijfeijken and Esther Kwaku presented results and recommendations from the **Power Shift benchmarking study** (sent as attachment) the ICSC had commissioned them to undertake. Participants were not surprised about outcomes of the study, though looking forward to their individual ICSO profiles they will receive. It was



recommended that the CISC looks into measurability of progress in the spirit of “what gets measured, gets done”. Overall, participants were both committed and self-critical over their own investments and steps toward improving their organisations in respect to power shift.

In the final session, Ed Boswell of Conner Advisory, provided input and space for discussion over the **relationship between executive leadership and boards** in the context of organisational change initiatives. Please refer to shared presentation for Ed’s systematization.

The Centre thanks everyone for their engagement during the event, and in particular the Vision Works Steering Committee and Caroline Harper, as the Centre’s Board Chair.

*The Caux Initiative of Change hosted us in the Caux Palace near Montreux, Switzerland. On day two, they provided a tour of the palace and an initial background information on the history and approach of their global network focused on peace building. You can find more about them [here](#).