



Australian Community Futures Planning

Questions about *Australia Together*

What is the proposal in *Australia Together* for a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing?

What's in this fact sheet?

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Read the latest draft of *Australia Together* at <https://www.austcfp.com.au/australia-together>

What is *Australia Together*?

Australia Together is the nation's first long term, integrated plan for a better future for everyone. It is being progressively developed by Australians for Australians so that we can tell our governments what we want them to do for us as a cohesive, democratic community.

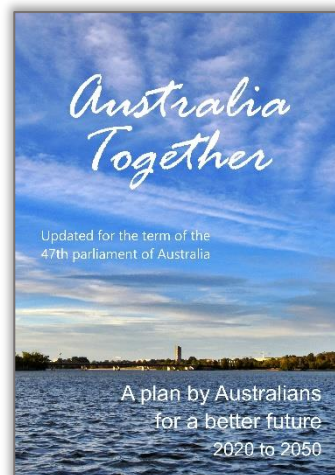
The plan is being built to ensure that Australians can maximise their chances of making their vision for the best future they can imagine a reality by 2050 or sooner. This vision has been described by Australians themselves in their responses to surveys, community engagement forums and other research during the 21st century and is summarised in the **Vision for *Australia Together***.

[Read the latest draft of *Australia Together* here.](#)

[Read the latest draft of the **Vision for *Australia Together*** here.](#)

[Read more fact sheets about *Australia Together* here.](#)

***Australia Together* is a map through time of the safe routes to a destination of wellbeing and security for every single Australian by 2050 or sooner.** Every Target and Strategy in the plan has a coloured map reference number. Follow the map by using the map references or simply by searching on keywords which relate to your topic of interest.



In *Australia Together*, what is the proposal for a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing?

The proposal for a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing appears in *Australia Together* under the map reference number **Econ04.02** and under a range of other related Targets and Strategies. It is envisaged that the Accord would be designed as a statement of the agreed principles which are to be adhered to by parliaments and governments when making budgetary and economic plans, laws, policies and decisions for the nation. Subject to community engagement about the exact wording, the intention of the Accord would be bind parliaments and governments to:

- engage with the Australian community as partners in building long term plans for the nation and its finances; and
- protect, promote and secure the economic and social wellbeing of all citizens by adherence to principles of:
 - equality of opportunity,
 - fair sharing of the burden of raising national wealth,
 - fair and more equitable distribution of national wealth,
 - public responsibility by Australia as a community for those unable to avail themselves of the minimum provisions for a dignified life, and
 - any other principles deemed essential by the Australian community in accordance with the public interest.

Who would be the parties to a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing?

The Accord would be an agreement made between Australians and their parliaments and governments, not between governments and vested interest groups like unions and businesses.

What is the purpose of the proposed Accord?

The Accord as proposed in *Australia Together* would:

- provide Australians with a formal acknowledgement – preferably in legislation – that the purpose of their national economy is to provide for the welfare and wellbeing of all Australians;
- confirm that decisions on public revenue raising and expenditure and on design and regulation of the wider national economy must be guided by the principles and the public interest as they are expressed by the people of Australia in the Accord; and
- establish – again, preferably in legislation – the basis for participation of the people of Australia in:
 - ongoing design of their own national economy, and in
 - the financial planning necessary for strong taxpayer and public sector contributions to and ethical activity within that wider economy.

At present no agreed statement of the purpose of the Australian economy has ever been established. In its absence, it has been possible for governments to lawfully ignore the interests of Australians in favour of the vested interests of multinational corporations. One intention of a legislated Accord is to prohibit this and to tie governments to transparency, ethics and fairness in decisions on the use of public funds. It is intended to ensure that governments administer public funds and national wealth in demonstrated accordance with principles deemed essential by the community.

The final principles on which the proposed Accord may be based will themselves need to be the subject of community engagement. But as a minimum these principles should be designed to give Australians their first opportunity to participate as equals with their parliaments and governments in orderly and efficient processes for the design of:

- national budgets and long term national financial plans (for both revenue raising and expenditure); and
- policies for ensuring equality of opportunity by mandating fairness in raising and sharing national wealth, including policies on:
 - taxation;
 - the composition of the economy and transitions from one composition to another;
 - distribution of taxation revenues, subsidies, and payments for our welfare and wellbeing; and
 - regulation of fairness in markets, particularly by ensuring national competition policy strongly discourages private monopolies and does not impede fair participation in the economy by publicly owned entities and enterprises.

Orderly and efficient processes for involving the community in the design of national budgets and long term plans and policies are now available in Australia by using [National Integrated Planning and Reporting \(National IP&R\)](#) or similar models for democratic participation in nation building and long term national financial planning. [Click here for information on how these processes work.](#)

Is the proposed National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing consistent with the Vision for *Australia Together*?

Yes. The Accord, as proposed, is central to the achievement of several of the 17 aspects of the Vision for *Australia Together*. And aspects of the Vision which focus on:

- equality,
- economic sustainability,
- optimal human and natural resource utilisation, and
- improved living standards, wellbeing and security for everyone

are extremely unlikely to be realised without an Accord which specifies the need for fairness in the raising and sharing of national wealth.

The proposed Accord is also consistent with all the Directions for Our Economy and Our Society in *Australia Together*. [Click here to read the latest draft of **Directions in Australia Together**.](#)

Is the proposed Accord similar to the Prices and Incomes Accord of the 1980s?

No. The Prices and Incomes Accord struck between trade unions and the Hawke government in the 1980s was an agreement under which trade unions committed to making lower wage claims in exchange for expansion of the welfare safety net. This enabled the government to support the most vulnerable in our society while we moved from a closed economy reliant on strong demand for our commodities, tariff protection and an administratively set exchange rate (which had culminated in high inflation and low productivity) to an open economy based on promoting our natural competitive advantages and a floating exchange rate (which thereafter culminated in an extended period of low inflation, high productivity, strong wage growth and strong growth in GDP for more than twenty years).

A National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing would not involve Australians in specific trade-offs like those in the Prices and Incomes Accord. It would not rule out the formation of a new prices and incomes accord should the need arise. But it would open up the terrain of policy making to Australians well beyond such trade-offs and put people and the public interest first in all economic decisions.

To the extent that the Accord may specify the public interest (see below) it would have a substantial qualifying effect on permissible policies for raising and sharing national wealth. More specifically, it would be expected that under any legislated National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing which puts the public interest first and specifies that interest, decisions to use public funds to support corporate interests would logically and legally be subject to any limitations stipulated or implied by the stated terms of the Accord. For instance, should corporations and their lobbyists argue for public subsidies for an investment or venture, it would be expected that government approvals would need to be accompanied by:

- a demonstration of consistency with any public interest articulated, or specifically relied on, in the Accord; and
- comprehensive assurance that any inconsistency of the approval with the public interest is fully offset and compensated for by the corporation benefitting from the subsidy.

In short, the government would need to prove that the subsidy is more in the public interest than not and that contractual terms will ameliorate the risk for the public and fully protect the public's returns from its investment. This would have the effect of abolishing limited liability for corporations in contracts with the government, particularly those involving use of public funds as risk capital.

Is there a template for the wording of a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing?

There are no current documents that might serve as templates for an accord such as this, for the simple reason that this is a new step in democratic participation and ethical governance. It might be argued that the proposed Accord approximates a type of "social contract" – an agreement among the members of a society to cooperate for social benefits, for example by sacrificing individual freedom for state protection. However, social contracts tend to be implicit rather than explicit, and as stated above the proposed Accord does not involve trade-offs between the people of Australia and their parliaments or governments. It does not require the people of Australia to sacrifice anything. Instead it is simply a statement of the principles by which decisions about public funds that may affect the Australian people and their economy are to be made and the nature of the processes for participation of the public in design of their economy.

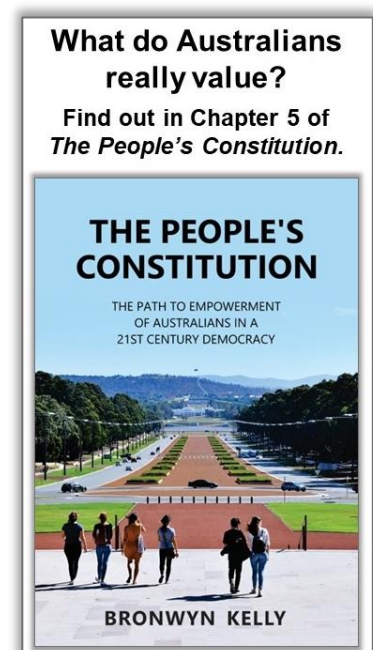
Because no template seems readily available, ACFP has developed a structure for a written Accord and some options for wording. This is for use in community engagement. [Appendix 1](#) contains ACFP's designed template/structure for a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing.

How could the public interest be articulated in a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing?

Neither governments nor the people of Australia have ever formally defined the public interest, although it can be reliably expected that when it comes to the economy most Australians will respond that fair and equal treatment for all in terms of opportunity, rights and obligations is central to the public interest. This has been borne out in numerous pieces of research about the opinion of Australians during the 21st century which have been collated and summarised by ACFP's Founder Bronwyn Kelly in Chapter 5 of [The People's Constitution: the path to empowerment of Australians in a 21st century democracy](#).

However, ACFP's research shows clearly that the public interest is not reducible to economic considerations. It entails much more and is best specified by reference to the full array of human rights available under international law to all humans. These rights are civil, political, social and cultural as well as economic.

In Australia, most of these rights are not yet available in domestic law. Were they to be made available in our laws they would constitute a ready and comprehensive specification of the public interest that politicians could then be bound to act in accordance with by the terms of the National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing. But given the silence of Australian law on these rights, especially economic rights, the most straightforward options for articulating the public interest in the Accord would be:



- a) to specify that the public interest equates to those human rights and state obligations listed in the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#); or
- b) to specify that the public interest equates to those human rights and state obligations listed in all seven core human rights treaties to which Australia is already a signatory, and which parliaments have already ratified, as well as all the rights and obligations listed under the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(the UNDRIP\)](#).

It might be noted that the UNDRIP is not customarily taken to have the status of international law. However, Australia is a signatory to the UNDRIP and to exclude it from the Accord would fully undermine what we might expect to be a fundamental premise of the Accord – that being that all Australians are political equals and should have equal access to economic rights and benefits.

For more information on the rights available under the seven core human rights treaties in international law and the UNDRIP see Chapter 6 of [The People's Constitution](#).

The options for articulating the public interest in the Accord should be a core item for consideration in any community engagement program for design of the Accord. The specification is essential, inasmuch as an Accord that does not bind governments to the public interest or one which does not define it would defeat the whole purpose of the Accord and negate the intended economic benefits.

What would be the economic effects of a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing?

Because a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing would function as a means by which Australians could be more certain that governments would use public funds for their benefit and to further the public interest rather than for the benefit and interests of private sector business owners and corporations, the proposed Accord would have a significant and positive effect on Australia's chances of reversing the negative effects of neoliberalism in politics and the economy. Neoliberal policies of:

- small government,
- light regulation of markets,
- less taxation,
- less welfare,
- less public ownership of assets and services, and
- unsustainable environmental exploitation

have caused:

- growth in inequality,
- increased costs of services,
- reduced access to services,
- welfare payments below the poverty line,
- disregard for fairness in sharing of resources and the national wealth generated by all Australians,
- uncooperative international relations,
- diminished access to higher education,
- gross inequality in distribution of funding for school education,
- acceleration of climate change, and
- complete disregard for the natural environment upon which all humans rely.

All these aspects of neoliberalism are, at their best, a blight on our prospects and capability as a nation and, at their worst, an existential threat.

One major concern is that neoliberal policies are currently preventing the public from participating in their own economy to the extent that we need if it is to grow sustainably. But insofar as any Accord could contain basic principles that public funds should be gathered and used for public and not private benefit it would provide a basis for the eventual unwinding of the effects of neoliberalism. This would set Australia on course to create an economy that works for people rather than people who work for an economy that maximises corporate profit, theft of public assets, transfers of returns on investment of public funds into private hands, and impoverishment of millions of Australians.

For more information on the damaging social and economic effects of neoliberalism in Australia and the advantages of reversing it see:

- Chapter 7 of [By 2050: Planning a better future for our children in 21st century democratic Australia](#), by ACFP Founder Bronwyn Kelly; and
- [The State of Australia 2022 – Part 1](#), also on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdB1s5PGW8Y>

Would a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing be advantageous to parliaments and governments?

Yes. The proposed Accord would offer significant advantages to parliaments and governments, particularly insofar as it would release them from pressure that is frequently brought to bear on politicians by the business sector as to the amount of taxation revenue that should be raised as a proportion of GDP, who should pay it and who should benefit from it.

Politicians are under constant pressure to reduce revenue from taxation and free businesses from proper regulation, despite the fact that this inevitably results in essential service reductions for Australians and in any case is not what Australians prefer. Numerous studies of what Australians want have shown a consistent high level of agreement about the preferences of Australians about taxation and expenditure of public funds and a rejection of neoliberal policies for free markets, contracting out, privatisation of public assets, and rent seeking by the private sector. For example:

- “On average, 61% of respondents are prepared to pay some level of increased tax for more service spending.” ([CPD and Essential, 2017 – What Do Australians Want?](#)) They do not primarily favour tax cuts, especially for the rich.
- 66% of Australians say that “the government should directly invest in the economy by creating projects and jobs, and raise the standard of living for the majority of workers” and only 17% say that businesses should be encouraged “to grow and create more jobs” through “relaxation of regulations and lower taxes for the wealthy”. ([Essential Research Report, 11 May 2021](#))
- “Most Australians agree with positive statements about taxation, and would prefer additional government spending to tax cuts or deficit reduction.” ([The Australia Institute, Attitudes to tax and budget priorities, May 2021](#))
- “Four in five people want the wellbeing of the population to guide our leaders’ decision-making, above other concerns.” ([CPD study, 2024 – Purpose of Government Pulse](#))

- “About four in five people consistently say government should deliver social services themselves rather than outsourcing them.” ([CPD study, 2024 – Purpose of Government Pulse](#))
- “Fair and equal treatment for all, including the most vulnerable, is the unchallenged leading purpose of democracy over five consecutive surveys.” ([CPD study, 2024 – Purpose of Government Pulse](#))

These results demonstrate that the vast majority of Australians would support making an Accord in which the wellbeing of all Australians is acknowledged as the primary purpose of government and that all economic plans, policies and decisions should be directed towards securing that above all else.

Once such an Accord is made and legislated, governments and parliamentarians would have a means of relegating the influence of corporate donors and lobbyists to its proper place, insofar as they would be able to assert that acceding to disproportionate corporate influence is not lawful – that is, laws and contracts could not be made in its favour. Governments may, of course, risk unlawful courses of action by confining themselves to actions in policy and administrative decisions (i.e., by sidelining parliamentary involvement). Nevertheless, the legislated Accord would create a basis for a trend away from neoliberal capitulations as more voters begin to hold governments to account for repeated breaches of the Accord, each of which will be more obvious and far harder to hide over time due to the specification of the public interest.

Over time, the existence of the Accord as a statement that politicians are free to sign if they are seeking office would provide transparency about their character and their intentions in the exercise of power for the public benefit. It would become evident that any politician who has trouble committing to the Accord or refuses to commit to it is simply not fit to run for or hold public office.

What benefits could arise from an Accord that would otherwise be unlikely for individuals, the nation and the economy?

A wide array of vital adjustments to the way national wealth is raised and shared would be made possible under the Accord. Moreover, they would be made possible in a manner that is fair and will support Australia’s economy as sustainable and beneficial for all. Several of these are already set out in [Australia Together](#) including:

Targets and Strategies in <i>Australia Together</i> arising from an Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing (as at Issue No. 7)	
Econ04.02.01	Revocation of policies restricting government sector participation in Australia’s economy
Econ04.02.02	Community engagement on and justification of national budget priorities – participatory budgeting
Econ04.02.03	Establishment of the Community Australia Bank
Econ02.04	National plan for full employment supported by a social wage – introduction of a universal basic income for all adult Australians. For more detail view video here.
Econ02.04.02	Community engagement on introduction of a social wage – a universal basic income
Econ02.05	National Economic Transitions Commission
Econ06.01	Program for recovery of ownership and operation of government trading enterprises
Econ06.01.01	Program for recovery of ownership and operation of government trading enterprises – direct investment of public funds
Econ06.01.02	Program for recovery of ownership and operation of government trading enterprises – publication of plans

However, the biggest benefit for individual Australians that would arise under the Accord would arise from **Econ02.04** with the **introduction of a social wage for all adult Australians – often called a universal basic income**. In summary, a social wage, if it is made under the sort of National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing proposed here, would help Australians reset the national economy onto a sustainable footing to the benefit of everyone. It can help us do this because:

- It can open the way to lower and flatter personal taxation without necessarily making the taxation system unreasonably regressive, without making the national wealth sharing system more inequitable, and without cutting services.
- It can remove the current disincentives in our social security and tax systems that act to discourage many Australians, particularly women, from participation in the workforce, because they retain more income after tax. At the moment the tax system can be a disincentive to workforce participation, especially for second income earners in households with care responsibilities. Reduction of participation by women and carers robs us of economic capacity and productivity and this builds in lower standards of living.
- It can provide stimulus to the economy by boosting spending capacity in places where there is little or none now – that is, among the growing numbers of the poor – more than 3 million of them. It pulls those people into participation in the economy instead of pushing them out of it. That alone makes the economy instantly bigger and it cuts costs for health and social support.
- It can significantly rebalance gender inequity because it applies equally to adult dependents and second income earners, who are usually women.
- It's great for students and people who need to re-train to shift their careers.
- It's a vital contributor to the productivity increases that we need – increases that can only come from setting up to provide lifelong education for everyone who needs it.

Most importantly, a social wage would help propel Australia towards achieving and maintaining full employment in the workforce, in part because it would immediately raise disposable income for everyone and thereby create enough new demand for jobs growth in both the public sector – especially in education – and in the private sector in trade exposed industries. A well-structured social wage would allow trade exposed industries to remain more competitive than they otherwise would over the next decade because it can help keep wages affordable for those industries without lowering the standard of living for workers.

More information on the benefits of a social wage made under a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing is available in ACFP's video series, [Snapshots from Australia Together](#). **Click on the pictures below to view each episode.**



Further questions may be forwarded to ACFP at info@austcfp.com.au
Become involved in building a plan for a better Australia at the ACFP: www.austcfp.com.au

Appendix 1 – Draft template/structure for a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing

The following template for drafting a National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing is offered for purposes of engaging the Australian community on wording that would meet the intentions of all parties to the Accord. The template need not restrict the final form of the Accord, but it will help start discussions about its structure and content.

National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing Draft template/structure for community engagement	
Section	Content
Part 1	<p>The Parties This would identify the parties to the Accord as the people of Australia and elected parliaments and governments.</p>
Part 2	<p>Objects of the Accord This would set out the objects of the Accord, which as a minimum could be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide Australians with a formal acknowledgement that the primary purpose of their national economy is to provide for the welfare and wellbeing of all Australians; • confirm that decisions on public revenue raising and expenditure and on design and regulation of the wider national economy must be guided by the principles and the public interest as they are expressed by the people of Australia in this Accord; and • establish the basis for participation of the people of Australia in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ongoing design of their own national economy, and in ○ the financial planning necessary for strong taxpayer and public sector contributions to and ethical activity within that wider economy. <p>An additional object might be to provide guidance to parliaments and governments as to the types of budgetary and economic policies and decisions that would be inconsistent with the Accord and should therefore be taken to be prohibited or limited by the Accord.</p> <p>[Additional objectives, subtractions and amendments would be the subject of community engagement, a process which would ideally need to be driven by members of the Australian community rather than governments.]</p>
Part 3	<p>Principles This would cover the principles which the Parties agree are to be adhered to by parliaments and governments when making budgetary and economic plans, laws, policies and decisions for the nation. As a minimum these principles would be that in all budgetary, financial and economic decisions parliaments and governments are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage with the Australian community as partners in building long term plans for the nation and its finances; and • protect, promote and secure the economic and social wellbeing of all citizens by adherence to principles of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ equality of opportunity, ○ fair sharing of the burden of raising national wealth, ○ fair and more equitable distribution of national wealth, ○ public responsibility by Australia as a community for those unable to avail themselves of the minimum provisions for a dignified life, and ○ any other principles deemed essential by the Australian community in accordance with the public interest as specified in this Accord.
Part 4	<p>Further agreements by the Parties, including definitions of the public interest This would cover the community expectations about aspects of the public interest that must be upheld and protected in all planning, policy development and decision making on government budgets and the economy. As a minimum this would need to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an acknowledgement that fair and equal treatment for all in terms of opportunity, rights and obligations is central to the public interest; and

National Accord on Wealth, Welfare and Wellbeing Draft template/structure for community engagement	
Section	Content
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a specification that the public interest equates to those human rights and state obligations listed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. <p>It could also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a specification that the public interest equates to those human rights and state obligations listed in all seven core human rights treaties to which Australia is already a signatory, and which parliaments have already ratified, as well as all the rights and obligations listed under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the UNDRIP). <p>[The options for articulating the public interest in the Accord should be a core item for consideration in any community engagement program for design of the Accord. The specification is essential, inasmuch as an Accord that does not bind governments to the public interest or one which does not define it would defeat the whole purpose of the Accord and negate the intended economic benefits.]</p>
Part 5	<p>Prohibitions and limitations</p> <p>This would provide guidance as to any types of policies and decisions that would be assumed to be prohibited or limited under the Accord because they are wholly or partly inconsistent with the principles and the public interest. In general terms, it might include a requirement that approvals of access to or use of public funds by private entities are prohibited wherever they are inconsistent with the principles of the Accord unless the risk to the public interest is fully offset and compensated for by the entity benefitting from the funds and that bonds or other financial arrangements have been made that will fully protect the public's returns from its investment of funds. Another example could be an option to prohibit policies which restrict the capacity of the public sector to compete on a level playing field with the private sector in the wider national economy or competition policies which favour transfer of natural monopolies to private sector control.</p> <p>[This section is necessary because the Accord itself is necessarily wide enough not to interfere with the law and policymaking rightful powers of the parliament and government. It imposes no unreasonable constraints on their power to make laws, policies and decisions and merely provides guidance for budgetary and economic decision frameworks. This implies an element of reliance on the good faith of the Parties. However, if there are lines that the community feels should not be crossed in decisions this is the place to specify them. Examples of lines that should not be crossed could include breaches of human rights, especially breaches of the rights of future generations to a sustainable environment and economy, or subsidies for industries which adversely affect the public interest without sufficient offsets and/or compensation.]</p>
Part 6	<p>Statutory and Policy Intentions</p> <p>This could set out intentions of the parties as to the status of the Accord, including whether the Accord is to be legislated or merely adopted as a policy by each parliament and government at their discretion. Broadly, there are two main options here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option 1: An agreement to vest the Accord in legislation would signal an intention that successive parliaments and governments agree to be bound by the principles and terms of the Accord until such time as they might legislate to withdraw from the Accord. Option 2: An agreement to merely ratify the Accord as a policy rather than a law would imply a lesser degree of agreement to be bound by the principles. <p>[Option 2 may defeat the purpose of the Accord in part or in whole. However, if it is the preference of the Parties it may be a suitable place to start, particularly if it leaves open the possibility of legislation and for a change of heart by future parliaments and political candidates. Nothing in either Option 1 or 2 rules out other options, such as establishment of the Accord as a document that is permanently open for signature by any candidate for or holder of political office.]</p>