Simpol Strategic Partnership Invitation

Non-governmental organisations enjoy wide public support. Millions of people give them their time, money and trust, and few institutions have done more to raise public awareness of climate change, poverty, biodiversity loss, unfair trade, tax avoidance and weapons proliferation. NGOs have won many important victories.

Yet, after decades of campaigning, the overall picture has not been reversed. Emissions continue to rise, inequality persists, and governments regularly agree to targets they then fail to meet. Many supporters sense this. They see awareness growing year after year while the underlying problems get worse, and some begin to wonder whether their efforts are making a real difference.

Simpol believes the reason is not a lack of public concern, campaigning skill or political will. It is a structural problem that most NGO strategies do not yet take properly into account: **Destructive Global Competition (DGC)**.

In a global economy where capital, investment and jobs can move freely across borders, any government that acts alone to raise environmental standards, tax corporations or global wealth more fairly, or regulate financial markets, risks driving business elsewhere. The result is job losses, lower competitiveness and lost votes. So governments hold back, or adopt watered-down measures, for fear of moving first. This is not a failing of any particular government or party. It is a trap that every national government is caught in.

The *Financial Times* described the problem clearly in relation to climate change: "…governments remain reluctant to address this threat because any country acting alone to curb its greenhouse gas emissions, without similar commitments by other governments, risks damaging the competitiveness of its industries."

Most NGO campaigns implicitly assume that enough public pressure on a government will eventually persuade it to act. For many demands, that is true. But for demands that would put a country at a competitive disadvantage, even the strongest pressure on one government at a time tends to hit the same wall. Until that wall is addressed, many of the changes NGOs seek will remain out of reach.

What is the Simultaneous Policy (Simpol)?

Simpol is an international citizens' campaign designed to overcome Destructive Global Competition, and to do so in a way that complements and strengthens existing NGO campaigns. Simpol is a range of policy measures to be implemented by nations *simultaneously*, only when all or sufficient governments have signed a pledge to do so. Politicians and governments can therefore sign the Simpol Pledge without having to implement it until enough other governments have signed too.

Because every country moves together, no country loses out competitively, and the main governmental objection to far-reaching reform disappears.

Crucially, Simpol gives citizens in every democratic country a new way to use their vote to *compel* politicians to support it. Simpol supporters let it be known that, at elections, they will give strong preference to candidates who have signed the Pledge. Where elections are close, as they often are, this puts politicians and parties into competition with one another to sign. Over 100 UK MPs from all political parties have already pledged to implement Simpol alongside other governments, and support in other countries is growing. It is this electoral power that Simpol offers to your organisation.

Our proposal: split your demands into two categories

We invite your organisation to look at its policy demands through the lens of Destructive Global Competition and to divide them into two categories, using one simple test:

Could our government implement this policy on its own without a significant risk of losing investment, jobs or international competitiveness?

	Unilateral demands	**Simultaneous demands**
What they are	Policies a country can adopt on its own without putting itself at a significant competitive disadvantage.	Policies that would put a country at a competitive disadvantage if it adopted them alone, and so need other countries to act at the same time.
Typical examples	Domestic conservation and land-use protection; public health and consumer protection measures; human rights and anti-discrimination law; transparency and freedom-of-information reforms; many local pollution controls.	Stringent carbon pricing and emissions cuts; fair taxation of multinational companies and global wealth; financial-market regulation; binding labour and environmental standards in trade; regulation of frontier artificial intelligence.
How to pursue them	Through your existing campaigning methods: lobbying, public campaigns, petitions, media work, legal action and protest.	By allying with Simpol, which removes the competitiveness objection by having governments act together.

The dividing line will not always be sharp, and some demands may have elements of both. Simpol would be happy to work with your policy team to apply the test to your own campaign priorities.

Splitting your demands in this way offers several advantages:

- **Effort goes where it can work.** Your existing methods are concentrated on the demands governments can actually deliver alone, where they are most likely to succeed.

- **The competitiveness objection is answered.** When a government says a measure would harm competitiveness, your organisation has a clear, credible response: "Then sign the Simpol Pledge and implement it together with other nations."
- **Supporters see a coherent strategy.** Your members and campaigners can see that you have a realistic plan for every demand, including those that have so far seemed impossible.
- **Your identity is unchanged.** You keep your own campaigns, priorities and voice. Simpol simply provides a route for the demands that cannot be won one country at a time.

How could your organisation ally with Simpol?

For your simultaneous demands, we propose a strategic partnership for mutual benefit. There are three main ways your organisation could take part.

1. Encourage your supporters to join the Simpol campaign. Simpol's influence depends on the number of citizens ready to use their vote in support of it. Your supporters are among the people most likely to understand why it matters. The more of them who join, the more pressure politicians face to sign the Pledge, and the sooner governments sign it. Joining Simpol costs your supporters nothing and does not compete with their support for your organisation; it adds a powerful new tool to it.

2. Help formulate Simpol's policies. The policies governments will be asked to implement simultaneously have yet to be finalised, and we would greatly value your organisation's expertise in shaping them. Much of the expert work on what needs to be done already exists within NGOs. What it lacks is a route to implementation. By contributing to Simpol's policy development process, you can help make sure your simultaneous demands are included in the measures governments eventually implement.

3. Add support for Simpol to your campaign demands. Where appropriate, you could ask your government not only to adopt the policies you campaign for but also to sign the Simpol Pledge, so that measures it cannot implement alone can be implemented alongside other nations.

What practical, co-operative actions could we take?

For example, we could:

- inform our respective supporters of each other's campaigns and encourage them to join and become involved;
- link to each other's websites and social media. We would list you as a "Simpol Partner Organisation", with a brief description of your work and a link to your website;
- include news items or articles about each other's campaigns in our newsletters and mailings;
- invite each other's representatives to speak at conferences, meetings and online events;
- involve your policy specialists in developing Simpol's policy proposals in your areas of expertise;
- campaign jointly, when appropriate.

This list is not an "all or nothing" proposal. It is a menu from which we can choose the items that suit both organisations, or add new ones. If you would like to take this further, please contact us.