

## **UN Reform Upon 60th Anniversary: The Great Bargain**

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*Secretary-General Kofi Annan believes that the United Nations must undergo a radical reform if it is to effectively play the role it was designed for. To see what needs to be done and how from a different perspective, in 2003 he commissioned two international teams of world renown experts which both came up with a wealth of analysis, concrete proposals and recommendations in their respective fields of security and development, and the common one of United Nations reform. To the landmark reports of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and the Millennium Project, the Secretary-General later added his own, inclusive of a third element of human rights. It is now up to the world summit to convene at the United Nations headquarters in September 2005 to decide how to act on the wide array of proposals before them and on the future of the United Nations.*

### **Introduction**

Every year, United Nations General Assembly convenes on the second Tuesday of September, the International Day of Peace as it is appropriately called, at its New York headquarters. The agenda before it reflects practically every issue that in one way or the other relates to every single nation and every individual on earth. But when it meets to celebrate its 60th anniversary later this year, the top item on its agenda will be reform - of none other than itself. For without taking a series of bold and radical steps, the world organisation will not be able to effectively address the rest of its very demanding global agenda.

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## WHY REFORM ?

The Charter of the United Nations was signed by the 51 founding member nations on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco and entered into force upon adoption by the General Assembly on 24 October 1945. In the 60 years that have elapsed since then, the Charter has been amended but thrice only, the latest taking place in 1971. Considering just how much the world has changed during that period and continues changing at an ever-accelerating pace in every imaginable way, it becomes self evident that the world organisation has lagged behind in adapting itself to new realities. To put it very simply, United Nations today tries to address the issues of the twenty-first century with its organisational and financial structure shaped on the realities of a totally different world of 60 years ago.

The case of the Security Council offers an eloquent example of the difference between the thinking at the time of the creation of the United Nations and the changes that have taken place since then.

Security Council is one of the five principal organs of the United Nations. Given its crucial role in matters relating to international peace and security, it is perhaps the most commonly known and controversial body of the system. Of the fifteen (originally eleven) members of the Security Council, five are permanent and have veto power. So united in their commitment to leave World War II behind them and to prevent the recurrence of a similar catastrophe were the permanent five back in 1945 that this special status was granted to them not as a reward but indeed as a special mission to protect international peace and security. And yet against that optimistic background a total of 279 vetoes practically paralysed the Council for more than 40 years until the Cold War came to an end in May 1990. But then once the veto problem was overcome and the Council started to deliver, demand on the organisation increased tremendously, especially in terms of peace-keeping and usually *stretching the organisation's capability to its limits*.

The Trusteeship Council, another principal organ of the United Nations, on the other hand, served the purpose it was designed for, namely decolonisation, so well that eventually it not only transformed the United Nations, but also exhausted its very *raison d'être*. It was through the relentless efforts of the Trusteeship Council that half of mankind won independence and dozens of new states emerged in the first 30 years of the United Nations, raising the number of member states from the original 51 founders to 191 today and developing especially the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council into very deliberative but increasingly less effective organs.

Actually the need for reform is not new to the United Nations. Successive Secretaries-General have voiced that need and have in fact embarked upon certain projects to the extent of their authority as the chief administrative officer of United Nations and therefore largely in the form of reorganisation of the Secretariat.

However, a reform in the true sense of the term, one which would bring about substantial change in the structure of the organisation and in the ways such structure works, requires the mammoth task of amendment of its Charter tantamount to strong, if not full, support of the General Assembly. What is needed to that end is an objective assessment of the issues facing the international community and a blueprint for action to address them.

In due recognition of that need, the Secretary-General formed in 2003 the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Not surprisingly, the Panel's report released in December 2004 came as striking as an imaginative thriller in its analysis of the threats currently facing mankind, accompanied by concrete recommendations for UN reform to tackle them. So much so that, Secretary-General Kofi Annan termed it as "the most comprehensive and coherent set of proposals for forging a common response to common threats that I have ever seen or expect to see in my lifetime".

#### **PANEL REPORT: SECURITY**

The Panel has identified six clusters of threats which the world should focus its attention on and even a quick look at which shows that the report essentially focuses on security:

- War between states;
- Violence within states, including civil wars, large-scale human rights abuses and genocide;
- Poverty, infectious diseases and environmental degradation;
- Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons;
- Terrorism; and
- Transnational organised crime.

Actually, all the above clusters are closely interrelated. For instance, poverty, infectious disease, environmental degradation and war feed one another in a deadly cycle. The World Bank estimates that the attacks of 11 September 2001 alone increased the number of people living in poverty by 10 million; the total cost to the world economy probably exceeded \$80 billion. Similarly, because

international flight times are shorter than the incubation periods for many infectious diseases, any one of 700 million international airline passengers every year can be an unwitting global disease carrier. The influenza pandemic of 1919 killed as many as 100 million in a little more than a year. Today, a similar virus could kill tens of millions in a fraction of the time.

The report clearly shows that we live in a world of new and evolving threats that could not have been anticipated when the UN was founded 60 years ago and a world where a threat to one is a threat to all. Global economic integration means that a major terrorist attack anywhere in the developed world would have devastating consequences for the economic livelihood and general well being of millions of people in the developing world.

It follows that the response has to be collective and to effectively build such collective response the UN has to be modernised. This means revitalising the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and increasing the credibility and effectiveness of the Security Council. Regarding the latter, the Panel has developed two concrete proposals for the long-debated Security Council reform:

Model A calls for the creation of six new permanent seats with no veto power and three new two-year non-permanent seat. Model B provides for a new category of eight four-year renewable-term seats and one new two-year non-permanent and non-renewable seat.

It is worth noting here that all five permanent members of the Security Council are represented on the Panel<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to the existing institutions that need to be strengthened, the Panel draws attention to the need for new institutions to meet evolving challenges. One such entity is the Peace-building Commission, a new mechanism within the United Nations, drawing on the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, donors and national authorities. Outside the United Nations, the Report proposes a forum bringing together the heads of the 20 largest economies, developed and

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<sup>1</sup>The Panel is composed of the following dignitaries: Anand Panyarachun (Thailand) (Chair), Robert Badinter (France), Joao Clemente Baena Soares (Brasil), Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway), Mary Chinery-Hesse (Ghana), Gareth Evans (Australia), David Hannay (United Kingdom), Enrique Iglesias (Uruguay), Amre Moussa (Egypt), Satish Nambiar (India), Sadako Ogata (Japan), Yevgeny Primakov (Russian Federation), Qian Qichen (China), Nafis Sadik (Pakistan), Salim Ahmed Salim (Tansania), Brent Scowcroft (United States).

developing, to help in the coherent management of international monetary, financial, trade and development policy. Finally, the Report recommends that the Secretary-General's critical role be strengthened.<sup>2</sup>

## **SACHS REPORT: DEVELOPMENT**

According to the High-level Panel, meeting the challenge of today's threats means getting serious about prevention, the Report says, because the consequences of allowing threats to spread or become active are simply too severe. And for a collective security system that takes prevention seriously development has to be the first line of defence. And development, as formulated in the Millennium Declaration, is the central theme of the second major report to be before the summit next September, that of the Millennium Project.

But first a few words about the Millennium Declaration.

The then 189 member nations of the UN, 147 of them represented by heads of state or government, convened in New York in September 2000 for the Millennium Summit. World leaders unanimously adopted the landmark Millennium Declaration at the summit, pledging "We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than one billion of them are currently subjected". The Declaration, in turn, led to the articulation of eight specific targets or the Millennium Development Goals, all for translation into reality by the year 2015:

1. Halving extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieving universal primary education;
3. Achieving gender equality;
4. Reducing child mortality by two-thirds;
5. Reducing maternal mortality by three quarters;
6. Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases;
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability;
8. Creating a global partnership for development.

While formulated separately, Millennium Development Goals are in fact closely interrelated. That is, intervention in a particular sector corresponding to a specific goal will usually have effects on several other goals. For instance, reducing gender inequality is essential for reducing hunger, containing HIV/AIDS,

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<sup>2</sup>Please visit [www.un.org/secureworld](http://www.un.org/secureworld) for more on the High-Level Panel Report.

promoting environmental sustainability, upgrading slums, and reducing infant and child mortality. Similarly, access to clean water, electricity and modern cooking and heating fuels are essential for ensuring that clinics and hospitals function, for reducing women and girls' time burdens so that they can engage in productive economic activity and attend school, and so forth. Reaching the Millennium Development Goals thus depends on ambitious action across many sectors.

Poverty, among them, is central to all MDGs. Extreme poverty may be defined as 'poverty that kills', depriving individuals of the means to stay alive in the face of hunger, disease and environmental hazards. When individuals suffer from extreme poverty and lack the meager income needed even to cover basic needs, a single episode of disease, or a drought, or a pest that destroys a harvest can be the difference between life and health.

For the billion-plus people still living in extreme poverty, the Goals are a matter of life and death, and that is why the UN Secretary-General chose 2005 to give a new impetus to their achievement in the next ten years left before the 2015 deadline. Directed by Prof Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University, the UN Millennium Project is an independent advisory body commissioned by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to develop a global plan for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015.

The UN Millennium Project released its report "Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals" in January 2005. The report and the annexed thematic task force papers, in the vicinity of 3,000 papers combined, is perhaps the most formidable intellectual contribution from the UN system to the development debate. Indeed, the ten Task Forces together comprised of 265 internationally recognised experts from around the world, including researchers and scientists, some among them Nobel laureates; policymakers; development experts; members of parliament; representatives of civil society, UN agencies, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the private sector - collectively, a "who's who" of development thinkers and doers. The enormous challenge put before them was to diagnose the key constraints to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and to present recommendations for overcoming the obstacles to get nations back on track to achieving them by 2015. And following nearly three years of intensive work, they did. "Until now, we did not have a concrete plan for achieving the Millennium Development Goals" said a proud Prof. Sachs on 17 January. "The experts who contributed to this huge undertaking have shown without doubt that we can still meet the Goals – if we start putting this plan into action now," he stressed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Please visit [www.unmillenniumproject.org](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org) for more on the Millennium Project Report.

Here are some quick highlights from the report:

First of all, ambitious as they may be, the Goals are still achievable within the timeframe set by the Millennium Summit, the report observes, even in the poorest countries.

The report outlines in vigorous technical detail what needs to be done, where immediate action should be taken and how much it would cost.

In the first detailed costing exercise of its kind, the report shows that MDGs can be achieved with an investment of just one half of one percent of the incomes of the industrialised countries - well within the aid targets they have already promised to meet at the UN's global Financing for Development conference held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002 and re-affirmed at the 2003 G8 Summit in Evian, France. Currently, however, the major donor countries are spending an average of only 0.25 percent of their GNP. In addition to official development assistance, the immediate enactment of long overdue trade reforms and debt relief are also critical. The latter should be in the form of a deepened and extended debt relief, coupled with the provision of grants rather than loans. "Debt sustainability" should be redefined as "the level of debt consistent with achieving the Goals", the report argues, with a view to arriving in 2015 without a new debt overhang.

While achievable and affordable, some targets are just much too big for governments alone and inclusiveness is the key to success, according to the report. That is, private sector and civil society have to be brought into the economic and political mainstream along with the public sector.

Any increase in the quantity of assistance has to be coupled with an increase in quality. Project task forces offer blueprints for efficient, effective *investments and argue that a "front-loading" of these expenditures now will ultimately save billions of dollars, not to mention tens of millions of lives.*

To quote some recommendations of the report:

- Aid from the industrialised countries should be increased to an average 0.44 percent of their GNP in 2006 and should reach 0.54 percent of GNP by 2015.
- Beginning in 2005, donors should choose at least a dozen "MDG fast track" countries for a major increase in aid. More countries should be designated as they qualify.



- High-income countries should open their markets to developing country exports and should help the poorest countries to raise export competitiveness, build capacities and technological capabilities and through investments in infrastructure.
- The international community should mobilise \$7 billion per year to promote global science and technology for the poor, in health, agriculture, environmental management, energy and climate research.
- Regional groups like CARICOM or the African Union should promote intra-regional trade and develop cross-border infrastructure (roads, power, telecommunications); donors should increase their financing of these regional programmes.
- Each country with extreme poverty should adopt a national development strategy, ambitious enough to achieve the goals. These strategies should be backed by specific policy reforms and an assessment of the required investment needs, domestic financing and external financing.
- The Secretary-General, through the UN Development Group, should strengthen coordination among UN agencies to support the MDGs at the international and country level.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Where does Turkey stand in this context?**

For its part, Turkey is on its way to achieving many of the Goals, according to its Country Report on Millennium Development Goals. Yet, the Country Report adds, the fact remains that there are still pockets of deep poverty in the country, with significant domestic structural inequality, particularly based on gender and geography. That is why Turkey is placing emphasis on Goal 1: *eradication of poverty and hunger*; Goal 3: *gender inequality*; Goal 4: *child mortality*; and Goal 5: *maternal mortality*, as areas where Turkey appears to face significant challenges and structural barriers. With the exception of the issue of poverty, Turkey has shown a remarkable progress in reducing the gender gap and infant/child mortality rates. In reaching the other goals, that is, Goal 2: *universal primary education*; Goal 6: *combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis*; Goal 7: *ensuring environmental sustainability*; and Goal 8: *developing partnerships for development*, Turkey has reached all of the MDG targets though significant

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<sup>4</sup> Their second annual Global Monitoring Report released on 12 April 2005 placed the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund firmly behind the new drive towards achievement of MDGs by the 2015 target year.



progress is still necessary in reaching targets such as the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.

### **THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT - 'IN LARGER FREEDOM'**

In March 2005, Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued his report "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All"

As its name suggests, the report is built on the work of the Millennium Project and the High-Level Panel, but incorporates the third element of human rights as well. For "The world must advance the causes of development, security and human rights together, otherwise none will succeed. Humanity will not enjoy development without security, and it will not enjoy either without respect for human rights". But that is not all; "In a world of inter-connected threats and opportunities, it is in each country's self-interest that all of these challenges are addressed effectively. Hence, the cause of larger freedom can only be advanced by broad, deep and sustained global cooperation among states. The world needs strong and capable states, effective partnerships with civil society and the private sector, and agile and effective regional and global intergovernmental institutions to mobilise and coordinate collective action. The United Nations must be reshaped in ways not previously imagined, and with a boldness and speed not previously shown" the report says once again underlining the need for UN reform.

#### **Development**

The following are priority areas for action in 2005 as identified in the Secretary-General's report:

- **National strategies:** Each developing country with extreme poverty should by 2006 adopt and begin to implement a national development strategy bold enough to meet the MDG targets for 2015. Each strategy needs to take into account seven broad "clusters" of public investments and policies: gender equality, the environment, rural development, urban development, health systems, education, and science, technology and innovation.
- **Financing for development:** Global development assistance must be more than doubled over the next few years. This does not require new pledges from donor countries, but meeting pledges already made. Each developed country that has not already done so should establish a timetable to achieve the 0.7% target of gross national income for official development assistance no later than 2015, starting with

significant increases no later than 2006, and reaching 0.5% by 2009.<sup>5</sup> The increase should be front-loaded through an International Finance Facility, and other innovative sources of financing should be considered for the longer term. The Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria must be fully funded and the resources provided for an expanded comprehensive strategy of prevention and treatment to fight HIV/AIDS. These steps should be supplemented by immediate action to support a series of "Quick Wins" - relatively inexpensive, high-impact initiatives with the potential to generate major short-term gains and save millions of lives, such as free distribution of anti-malarial bed-nets.

- **Trade:** The Doha round of trade negotiations should fulfil its development promise and be completed no later than 2006. As a first step, Member States should provide duty-free and quota-free market access for all exports from the Least Developed Countries.
- **Debt relief:** The Secretary-General's report supports the conclusion of the Millennium Project that debt sustainability should be redefined as the level of debt that allows a country to achieve the MDGs and to reach 2015 without an increase in debt ratios.

## Security

- **Preventing catastrophic terrorism:** States should commit to a comprehensive anti-terrorism strategy based on five pillars: dissuading people from resorting to terrorism or supporting it; denying terrorists access to funds and materials; deterring States from sponsoring terrorism; developing State capacity to defeat terrorism; and defending human rights. They should conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism, based on a clear and agreed definition. They should also complete, without delay, the convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism.<sup>6</sup>
- **Nuclear, chemical and biological weapons:** Progress on both disarmament and non-proliferation are essential. On disarmament, nuclear-weapon States should further reduce their arsenals of non-strategic nuclear weapons and pursue arms control agreements that entail not just dismantlement but irreversibility, reaffirm

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<sup>5</sup>In a statement issued on 24 May 2005, Secretary-General Kofi Annan warmly welcomed the European Union's decisions well in line with the commendations in his report 'In Larger Freedom'. According to the statement, all Member States which joined the EU before 2002 will allocate 0.51 per cent of their gross national incomes to aid by 2010 and will reach the 0.7 per cent target by 2015. Member States which joined the EU after 2002 will reach a 0.33 per cent target by 2015, with an intermediate target of 0.17 per cent by 2010.

<sup>6</sup> International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 April 2005.

their commitment to negative security assurances, and uphold the moratorium on nuclear test explosions. On non-proliferation, the International Atomic Energy Agency's verification authority must be strengthened through universal adoption of the Model Additional Protocol, and States should commit themselves to complete, sign and implement a fissile material cut-off treaty.

- **Reducing the prevalence and risk of war:** Currently, half the countries emerging from violent conflict revert to conflict within five years. Member States should create an inter-governmental Peacebuilding Commission, as well as a Peacebuilding Support Office within the UN Secretariat, so that the UN system can better meet the challenge of helping countries successfully complete the transition from war to peace. They should also take steps to strengthen collective capacity to employ the tools of mediation, sanctions and peacekeeping (including a "zero tolerance" policy on sexual exploitation of minors and other vulnerable people by members of peacekeeping contingents, to match the policy enacted by the Secretary-General).

### **Human Rights**

- **Rule of law:** The international community should embrace the "responsibility to protect", as a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. All treaties relating to the protection of civilians should be ratified and implemented. Steps should be taken to strengthen cooperation with the International Criminal Court and other international or mixed war crimes tribunals, and to strengthen the International Court of Justice. The Secretary-General also intends to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity to assist national efforts to re-establish the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict societies.
- **Human rights:** The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be strengthened with more resources and staff, and should play a more active role in the deliberations of the Security Council and of the proposed Peacebuilding Commission. The human rights treaty bodies of the UN system should also be rendered more effective and responsive.
- **Democracy:** A Democracy Fund should be created at the UN to provide assistance to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy.

### **UN Reform**

- **General Assembly:** The General Assembly should take bold measures to

streamline its agenda and speed up the deliberative process. It should concentrate on the major substantive issues of the day, and establish mechanisms to engage fully and systematically with civil society.

- **Security Council:** The Security Council should be broadly representative of the realities of power in today's world. The Secretary-General supports the principles for reform set out in the report of the High-level Panel, and urges Member States to consider the two options, Models A and B, presented in that report, or any other viable proposals in terms of size and balance that have emerged on the basis of either Model. Member States should agree to take a decision on this important issue before the Summit in September 2005.

- **Economic and Social Council:** The Economic and Social Council should be reformed so that it can effectively assess progress in the UN's development agenda, serve as a high-level development cooperation forum, and provide direction for the efforts of the various intergovernmental bodies in the economic and social area throughout the UN system.

- **Proposed Human Rights Council:** The Commission on Human Rights suffers from declining credibility and professionalism, and is in need of major reform. It should be replaced by a smaller standing Human Rights Council, as a principal organ of the United Nations or subsidiary of the General Assembly, whose members would be elected directly by the General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.

- **The Secretariat:** The Secretary-General will take steps to re-align the Secretariat's structure to match the priorities outlined in the report, and will create a cabinet-style decision-making mechanism. He requests Member States to give him the authority and resources to pursue a one-time staff buy-out to refresh and re-align staff to meet current needs, to cooperate in a comprehensive review of budget and human resources rules, and to commission a comprehensive review of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to strengthen its independence and authority.<sup>7</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Needless to say, building a better world takes much more than a report or a summit. It will take resources commensurate with the scale of the challenges ahead;

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<sup>7</sup> Please visit [www.un.org/largerfreedom](http://www.un.org/largerfreedom) for full text of the report.

commitments that are long-term and sustained; and leadership from within states and between them.

Perhaps best describing the delicate balance and strong interaction between poverty and security are the words "grand bargain", to quote UNDP Administrator and Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Chef de Cabinet Mark Malloch Brown: "We need a firm commitment from rich and poor nations alike that policy reforms and the genuine efforts to eradicate poverty within developing nations will be met by promised trade and debt concessions and assistance from the developed countries, and quickly. Taken in parallel with the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, this offers the world a new start on this critical interconnected agenda: security and development."

We, in the United Nations, every now and then resort to the rhetoric that 'had there been no UN, we'd have to create one' or 'the UN is the sum total of its member states'. In fact, both are true. But they are also incomplete. For 60 years of experience tells us that if we were to create the UN anew today it would certainly have to be quite a different one, better designed and equipped to reflect the will of its member states even when such will is not as strongly exercised as it is manifest.

In an historic observation addressing the General Assembly in 2004, the Secretary-General had stressed that the United Nations had arrived at a fork. The Millennium +5 summit in September 2005 will be crucial in telling the UN which path to take.