

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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**STATEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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**HEARING ON "REFORMING THE UNITED NATIONS:
BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES"
Washington, D.C., 19 May 2005**

Chairman Hyde,
Distinguished members of the Committee,

I am honoured to be here today to discuss with you issues of mutual interest concerning the United Nations.

Allow me to introduce myself: I am the Chief of Staff of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I took office at the beginning of January this year, after serving for more than five years as Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme -- a position I will give up when my successor arrives this summer.

When, in circumstances of crisis, the Secretary-General brought me into his team five months ago, he made it clear that he was looking to me to work with him and the Deputy Secretary-General to help advance a serious and ambitious agenda for reform of the United Nations. That is the agenda that has brought me here today.

And I am very glad that it has. Let me be clear: we in the United Nations Secretariat are acutely aware of the reform issues raised by events of recent months -- by the troubling revelations on oil-for-food, the related findings of the Volcker panel, your own Congressional probes, and reports of sexual exploitation and abuse in some of our peacekeeping operations.

We know that while we have made enormous strides over the past few years in many operational areas -- from building better-functioning country teams for development, to creating the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which led the response to the recent tsunami disaster -- we have some real issues of audit oversight, management accountability, financial disclosure and general performance that we urgently need to get right.

And while the UN has seen more reform under Secretary-General Kofi Annan than under any of his predecessors, he welcomes the fact that you are as intent as he is to ensure that the United Nations is the most effective instrument it can be, in the interests of the people it exists to serve. There are many other countries around the world -- some of them also large contributors -- who have the same commitment to UN reform. I encourage you to make common cause with them.

The shared objective before us, then, is adapting the United Nations to the needs of the 21st century.

That means nothing less than a transformation of the United Nations -- a transformation that is already underway: taking it from a conference-organizing, report-writing Organization, to one equipped to undertake large, complex, global missions -- from peacekeeping and peacebuilding in post-conflict societies to humanitarian relief, recovery and rehabilitation following disasters such as the tsunami.

The Secretary-General's reform proposals call for a UN organized behind three priorities: development, security and human rights. It is an action-oriented UN, responding to what citizens everywhere -- from Peoria to Phnom Penh, from Luanda to London -- want from today's United Nations: a principled, problem-solving, action-oriented body that works with Governments to fix problems that need fixing.

To get there, we see three phases of reform:

First, there are immediate management reforms which we are already undertaking - as described in the fact sheet provided as part of my written briefing, with specific timelines for completion. These include measures to improve the performance of senior management; enhance oversight and accountability; ensure ethical conduct, and increase transparency, including more rigorous financial disclosures by senior officials.

Among other things, that means measures to better protect whistleblowers, so that staff feel free to come forward with their concerns, confident that they will be protected against retribution; and a host of concrete steps to stamp out the heinous acts of sexual exploitation and abuse which have inflicted such wounds on our field operations.

We have also asked Member States to conduct a comprehensive review to strengthen of our Office of Internal Oversight Services. In the meantime, OIOS reports are now available to Member States, while we are seeking immediate and significant increases in resources for investigations.

In other words, Mr. Chairman, transparency and accountability are the watchwords for the United Nations in the new century. The Volcker inquiry is a case in point. As Mr. Volcker himself has said, "few institutions have freely subjected themselves to the intensity of scrutiny entailed in the Committee's work... I don't know of any other institution that has been scrubbed quite as hard as this one."

Second, we envisage a number of systemic measures, targeted at disentangling the gridlock at the centre of staff-management relations: frayed trust in management, together with a lot of entrenched employment rights that block staff turnover, new recruitment and promotions on merit where needed. This leads to a real difficulty in making change work. We need to tackle the policies, the culture and the institutional set-up that have bred this deadlocked workplace.

And *third*, we are advocating a longer-term agenda, as described in the Secretary-General's report, *In Larger Freedom*. That agenda, which will require the approval of Member States, encompasses a much larger set of fundamental changes than I can cover fully today.

Under that agenda, the Secretary-General has proposed reform of all the major organs of the United Nations -- to build a better, more representative Security Council, a new, much-needed Human Rights Council, and a reformed Economic and Social Council to track and promote progress towards our shared goal of halving global poverty by 2015.

The Secretary-General has asked Member States to conduct a comprehensive review of all UN mandates more than five years old, to ascertain if they are still meaningful, or if resources could be better spent elsewhere. We cannot strengthen new areas such as peacemaking, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and human rights if we do not prune elsewhere. If we are to undertake new tasks to address emerging priorities, we must be prepared to end others that no longer serve real purposes.

And he has asked for the authority and resources to pursue a one-time staff buyout, carefully calibrated and managed to realign our staff profile with today's realities.

Mr. Chairman,

If we agree on the symptoms, however, we may disagree on some fundamental aspects of the diagnosis: for me, the United Nations is not oversized, over-resourced, or under-supervised by its Member States.

Rather, from where I sit, the United Nations is currently stretched too thin, in both material and human resources, to be able to do the job that people and Governments around the world want it to do -- and have a right to expect it to do.

Let me take one example -- sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. This is clearly a terrible and shameful blot on UN peacekeeping. As I said earlier, we are taking a number of steps to wipe it out and to ensure that these actions do not go unpunished. But when we look into what happened, we find national contingents of troop-contributing countries often not accepting the results of some investigations conducted by the UN; weak or malfunctioning judicial systems in the mission area; inadequate military police to keep troops off the streets and out of the bars; and no real investment in recreation and welfare arrangements.

That is not surprising, perhaps, when you consider that the UN is conducting 18 peacekeeping operations around the world, involving almost 67,000 uniformed personnel, on a budget of four and a half billion dollars. That budget is equivalent to less than half of one per cent of the world's military spending -- and means a unit cost for peacekeeping that is a fraction of that spent by the US and UK in comparable operations. It's a bargain -- but perhaps too much of one.

So while there is in some quarters an understandable temptation to respond to UN failures by threatening to cut peacekeeping or other contributions, I would argue that what is really needed, for a long-term, sustainable solution, is for the United States and fellow Member States to agree what they want the UN to do: then fund it properly to allow the UN to do the task well.

I would also argue that just as the United Nations is under-funded, so is it in some ways over-supervised. In many areas -- most notably personnel decisions -- it suffers from a bewildering array of inter-governmental constraints that often amount to micromanagement. The Secretary-General has less autonomy to move resources from one department to another than the heads of some US Government agencies. As head of UNDP, reporting to an Executive Board of Member States, I had much more autonomy -- but also, much more accountability for results -- than the Secretary-General in the Secretariat, who is mired in a web of Governmental committees and outdated rules that impede his freedom to manage.

At the heart of our reform agenda, then, is the organizing idea of how a Secretary-General can be given back the power to manage, while at the same time Governments recover the strategic tools to ensure accountability for results.

Mr. Chairman,

To paraphrase the words of a distinguished American, I hope these hearings are laying the groundwork for a US-UN relationship where your Committee can help the United States Government make the United Nations an institution "when right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right." I hope we can work together to carry out that mission.

Thank you very much.

Appendixes:

1. UN Management reforms: 2005
2. Report of the Secretary-General - *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*

