

Statement by Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, Acting U.S. Representative to the United Nations, on U.S. Proposals for UN Reform, in the General Assembly, June 22, 2005

Mr. President:

The noble vision for the United Nations so eloquently set forth in the [Charter](#) signed 60 years ago this week is far from realization. In part this is because those who articulated that vision could not have foreseen the profound changes that have transformed the world since 1945.

The United Nations was created to enable us to confront jointly the common threats to our security, to our freedoms, and to the ability of all our citizens to aspire to economic prosperity and its benefits. Even with its shortcomings, the UN has served us well. Clearly, however, it needs improving. We all recognize this, and we all recognize that we have an opportunity, indeed a solemn historical responsibility, to make it work better.

My Government has invested much time and effort to analyze what ails the United Nations and what can be done to fix it. U.S. interest is not limited to government officials; UN reform is very much on the minds of the American people; they too want a strong United Nations.

A timely manifestation of intense U.S. interest in UN reform is the recent [Report](#) of the congressionally mandated Task Force chaired by former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich and former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell. We welcome its contribution to the dialogue, and believe that this report, together with many recommendations from the Secretary General's [report](#), "In Greater Freedom," provides a solid basis for our consideration of the reform effort.

We know that if reform is to succeed it must be a collective endeavor. We are prepared to do our part and look forward to continuing serious discussions with delegations to define specific reform objectives and to enact them. We must not harbor illusions that this process will be easy. It will be arduous and will take time. Our final product, however, can only be as good as the work and preparation that go into it.

Our effort must possess one other essential characteristic. UN reform must be viewed and dealt with as a whole. Thus, and I must emphasize this point, reform of the Security Council cannot become the exclusive focus of attention by member states or the Secretariat.

My Government seeks reforms in seven areas. As I said before, all reforms are linked in this comprehensive approach. Our priorities, reflecting the reforms we seek, include:

Economic Development

The September High Level Event will provide the opportunity to evaluate progress on the development goals of the [Millennium Declaration](#) and to renew emphasis on their

achievement. The [Monterrey Consensus](#) provides the critical context for this discussion, with its emphasis on national responsibility, good governance, openness to trade and a vibrant private sector. We recognize that for some developing countries, especially the poorest, debt relief and official development assistance remain essential sources of finance. The U.S. is a leader in both areas, having cancelled 100% of bilateral debt from countries eligible for the [Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative](#) and nearly doubled our Official Development Assistance, to \$19 billion, since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration.

There is nothing new about the U.S. commitment to development. During the past 60 years -- the period coinciding with the existence of the United Nations -- the United States has been at the forefront of contributors of official development assistance. We intend to stay there.

More importantly, we have been the leader in opening our own economy to trade and investment flows and promoting an open international economic system. At the same time, we would stress that the need for a balanced approach to development.

In determining the development component of the September outcome document, we must avoid the temptation to give too much emphasis to the supportive role of the international system and too little attention to where development starts - at the local and national levels.

The United Nations can make its greatest contribution to development by helping countries make and implement the right choices leading to good governance. As President Bush [said](#) at the Monterrey Conference, "developed nations have a duty not only to share our wealth, but also to encourage the sources that produce wealth: economic freedom, political liberty, the rule of law and human rights."

Management

Failings in the Oil for Food Program and the UN's inability to prevent peacekeepers from sexually exploiting those they were sent to protect point to management failures.

Without a properly functioning Secretariat, it would make little sense to try and implement other reforms in the Organization. Inefficient programs and activities would become even more so without a stronger orientation on results.

Staff members who are already demoralized cannot be expected to produce more without modern human resources practices and effective accountability mechanisms. And an already stretched oversight framework will not lift Member States' confidence without greater independence and additional resources. For these reasons, management and administrative reform of the UN needs to receive the highest priority attention.

Our proposals relate to three themes: accountability and integrity, improved effectiveness, and boosting relevance. To advance these themes, we believe the

following specific measures, many of which were suggested in Gingrich- Mitchell report, need to be implemented:

- n Internal Oversight needs to be more independent from the activities it reviews; an oversight board with separate budget authority would help accomplish this.
- n The Secretary-General's authority to waive immunity must be affirmed so that UN officials suspected of committing criminal activities are fully investigated and guilty individuals are held accountable.
- n UN activities must be reviewed for continuing relevance as required and new mandates need to be subject to sunseting so they do not continue after they have accomplished their objectives.
- n Actions must be taken to reduce administrative and support costs, including meeting expenses, so that resources can be applied to high priority areas.

These initiatives will complement actions of the Secretary-General, who has created an ethics office, established a management performance review board, and enhanced the UN's policy against fraud and corruption. The United States commends these actions and looks forward to learning about the results achieved as they are carried out.

With a more streamlined organization and a firm commitment to accountability and results, the United Nations will be appropriately positioned to perform its role in dealing with the challenges we face.

Human Rights

The protection of human rights is one of the United Nations' most solemn duties, a Charter responsibility that should be a source of hope to millions of oppressed people throughout the world. Unfortunately, the [UN Commission on Human Rights](#) as currently constituted, where countries with records of serious human rights abuses like Zimbabwe and Cuba sit in judgment of democratic countries, casts a shadow on the work of the Commission and seriously harms its reputation and effectiveness.

We support the creation of a UN mechanism such as the proposed Human Rights Council that effectively addresses the most serious human rights situations. A smaller body is needed for more efficiency and less politics; 20 members would be ideal.

We believe that members of the new Council should have a solid record of commitment to human rights and should not include serious human rights abusers. This is not a pass/fail test, but a guideline that UNGA members should keep in mind when they cast their votes to elect members of the Council, and a message that all countries and the UN leadership should emphasize.

Candidates/members of the Council should recommit themselves to the principles of the [UN Declaration of Human Rights](#). Seats should be filled through elections with regional allocations. Candidates would have to secure a two-thirds majority vote as suggested in the SYG's recommendation to be elected and they should be eligible for re-election. The

Council can vote to remove members that fall out of compliance with these criteria after election. No country should serve on the Human Rights Council if it is subject to sanctions imposed by the Security Council.

The Council's mandate should empower it to take effective action to deal with the most egregious human rights violations and crises. The Human Rights Council should not compete with the UN Security Council. A division of labor between the Human Rights Council and the [General Assembly's Third Committee](#) -- or, as the United States Government has proposed, a universal-membership [ECOSOC](#) replacing the [Second](#) and [Third Committees](#) -- should be implemented.

The universal body, which is not standing year-round, might best deal chiefly with thematic and norm-setting issues, while the standing council can deal with pressing situations of human rights abuse. On a technical note, the U.S. believes that a smaller, efficient, standing Council could better coordinate urgently needed technical assistance to the countries that need it most, in order to improve a human rights situation or prevent a human rights emergency. We also believe that the [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR) continues to be woefully under-funded and the U.S. Government will fully support the steady increase of Regular Budget funding for it.

Peacebuilding Commission

The Peacebuilding Commission proposal has generated significant support among member states. The Commission is needed quickly to ensure greater coordination between the UN's political and military activities and we will advance detailed recommendations shortly, and combine efforts of the GA, ECOSOC, and the Security Council. Our vision of how to make the Peacebuilding Commission most effective includes the following elements:

- n The Commission would, upon request, advise the Security Council on conflict situations, including planning for peacekeeping missions and reconstruction and stabilization efforts.
- n It would serve as a focal point for donor coordination and review progress toward medium-term recovery goals.
- n It would advise the UN system on planning for post-conflict activities to increase coordination and enhance efficiency of UN action.
- n It would coordinate UN system efforts to build the capacity of regional organizations.
- n Resources to establish the PBC should be re-programmed from within the UN system; we oppose the creation of a proposed Standing Peacebuilding Fund.
- n The Commission would consist of a Core Commission and country-specific sub-groups. The Core Commission would perform an executive function: it would be responsible for establishing country-specific sub-groups and for overseeing possible discussion of thematic peacebuilding best practices.

Terrorism

It is time for all UN member states to unequivocally outlaw acts of international terrorism, which is an unacceptable scourge for all countries. We are in broad agreement with the counter-terrorism strategy proposed by the Secretary General, but do not agree with all its elements.

Regarding a definition of terrorism, the U.S. welcomes the position, contained in the Secretary- General's report, that the right to resist occupation does not justify the targeting and killing of civilians. We do not, however, want the effort to come to agreement on a definition of terrorism to distract from the more important task of moving forward on completion of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. Adoption of the Convention would be an important and symbolic achievement in the UN's global effort to combat terrorism.

We must join together on the occasion of the High-level Event to condemn all deliberate and targeted terrorist attacks against civilians and non-combatants. It is time for all UN Members to recognize that there can be no justification for such attacks, regardless of the cause, motivation, and grievance. We believe that the Outcome Document must include language to this effect. This is a priority for my government.

Democracy Fund

Human rights and democracy are at the center of our collective vision for the United Nations. The UN Democracy Fund is an innovative, yet practical, tool for promoting democratic values, including the rule of law, independent courts, a free press, political parties and trade unions, and free and fair elections.

The Secretary General has proposed very constructive Terms of Reference for the Fund. We ask member states that are democracies to contribute to the Fund through grants and in-kind assistance. Widespread support for the Fund will unequivocally signal that member states are committed to supporting democratic institutions.

In concluding my remarks on this subject, I would point out that our approach to democracy initiatives, such as the Democracy Fund, is wholly consistent with the Monterrey Consensus, which established national responsibility, good governance, trade and private investment as the drivers of development. Support for the Democracy Fund is also support for economic development.

Responsibility to Protect

It is a given that national authorities must protect their own populations. In cases involving genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and other large-scale atrocities in which national authorities are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens, the international community should be prepared to use diplomatic, humanitarian and other methods to protect civilian populations. If such methods appear insufficient, the Security Council may, out of necessity, decide to take action under the Charter to restore international peace and security.

Preventing WMD Proliferation

We believe that Weapons of Mass Destruction proliferation is one of the most serious threats that the international community faces today, and that all states have a responsibility to take actions to address proliferation challenges.

We believe that [Security Council Resolution 1540](#) is an important step in this direction. Instead of focusing on actions that a few states should take, our focus should place greater emphasis on those actions that all states must take to strengthen barriers to WMD proliferation, ensure compliance, deal with instances of noncompliance, and otherwise enhance the global nonproliferation regime. In this context, member states should continue their ongoing efforts to render the UN's disarmament and nonproliferation machinery more able to respond to today's threats.

Security Council Reform

There should be no lingering doubts: the United States is open to [Security Council](#) reform and expansion, including the addition of new permanent members. We continue to support Japan for a permanent seat; with its significant contributions to all aspects of the UN, Japan has clearly earned it.

We recognize that the world of 2005 is not that of 1945. Security Council reform, therefore, should take account of the challenges likely to face the international community in the 21st century and look at how the Council should be reconfigured to meet those challenges.

Because Security Council expansion will have far-reaching implications, we believe that a criteria-based approach is the best way to measure a country's readiness for membership. Criteria might include GDP, population, military capacity, contributions to peacekeeping, commitment to democracy and human rights, financial contributions to the UN, non-proliferation and counter-terrorism record, and geographic balance. We look forward to hearing the views of others on appropriate criteria. Candidates for the UNSC should be supremely well qualified and should meet these criteria.

On the basis of such criteria, we would consider supporting the addition of two or so new permanent members and two or three additional nonpermanent seats, allocated by region, to expand the Council to 19 or 20. These seats would ensure geographic balance. We are also prepared to consider longer-term renewable seats.

Mr. President:

There can be no question: Now is the time to reform this organization. The United States continues to be ready to contribute in every way possible to the great task before us, a task that will take the United Nations closer to becoming the organization that its founders envisioned in the Charter they signed almost 60 years ago this very day: "to

reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights ... in the dignity and worth of the human person ... in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small."

Thank you, Mr. President.