

## Reform of the UN System

### UN Reform Efforts

In 2003, the United Nations adopted administrative and management reforms on several fronts. The United States was one of the major supporters of the Secretary-General's Track III reforms adopted in Resolution 57/300 (2002). It actively engaged the UN Secretariat and other member states to maintain the momentum for reform and ensure reform measures were implemented. The Secretary-General's September 2003 status report on UN reform highlighted several administrative, management, and structural reforms that were implemented, particularly in the areas of budget management, human resources management, public information, and human rights.

Despite strong resistance from some developing countries, the United States and other Western countries achieved moderate reform of the UN budget process for the first time since 1986. The new budget process outlined in Resolution 58/269 called for a two-year Strategic Framework in place of the four-year Medium-Term Plan. The Strategic Framework will consist of a Biennial Program Plan and a Plan Outline that will also reflect program objectives beyond two years and will be the UN's principal policy directive for program planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation. A budget outline, combined with the Strategic Framework, will guide the preparation of the next biennial budget that will synchronize, for the first time, program plans with the availability of financial resources. In addition, the budget reform resolution diminished the budgetary reviewing role of the Committee for Program and Coordination. Instead, the Committee will concentrate on monitoring and evaluating programs. The results of its reviews will have a direct role in preparing the next biennium budget, enabling member states to target resources to priority areas.

In addition, the General Assembly adopted several modest administrative and management reforms in Resolution 58/270, which concerned the 2004–2005 biennium budget. This resolution gave the Secretary-General greater authority to manage UN staff on an organization-wide basis. It authorized him for the first time to move up to 50 professional positions among departments in the Secretariat to address staffing needs for high priority activities. The General Assembly also agreed to terminate 912 obsolete or redundant outputs that had been funded in previous budgets. One of the more notable targets for elimination, the cumbersome and outdated Repertory of Practice (a legal publication containing analytical studies of the decisions of the UN principal organs under each Article of the UN Charter), would result in savings of \$2 million. The General Assembly mandated the elimination of several secretarial positions in New York and Geneva and called for suspending the recruitment of individuals for new general service vacancies. The elimination of these positions would reduce the ratio of

general service to professional positions, in keeping with the UN's substantial investment in information technology.

In accordance with the Secretary-General's proposals, Department of Public Information (DPI) activities were divided among three new divisions and engaged in closer coordination with other UN departments. The DPI also developed an action plan that would smooth the transition from the model of national-level UN Information Centers to a new regional hub model, and in December 2003, the Secretary-General consolidated nine information centers in Western Europe into a regional hub in Brussels. Also, the General Assembly requested an operational and management review of all UN libraries with a focus on the libraries' staffing requirements.

Concerted efforts were underway to provide an integrated and consistent response to member states that request support in strengthening their national human rights protection systems. The General Assembly supported greater cooperation among treaty bodies and clearer lines of reporting. The Secretariat established a Special Procedures Branch in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to oversee rapporteurs and other mechanisms mandated by Commission on Human Rights resolutions. The UN Secretariat, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and member states consulted with each other on methods to improve the special procedure mechanisms. Additional management improvements focused on the implementation of OIOS recommendations that called for, among other things, more consolidated and clearer lines of reporting, organizational streamlining, and strengthening of internal planning and assessment practices at OHCHR. To meet these objectives, the General Assembly approved six new posts for OHCHR.

To maintain momentum for UN improvements, the General Assembly also requested a variety of studies on other subjects, including ways to improve the UN's development assistance programs, ways to strengthen priority setting, the structure and function of New York-based liaison offices of UN funded programs, and evaluation of the potential for reducing staffing costs through increased local recruitment.

In a speech to the General Assembly on September 23, the Secretary-General proposed to create a High-Level Panel to examine current international threats, provide analysis of future challenges, and recommend changes necessary to ensure effective UN action. Anand Panyarchun (Thailand) was appointed to chair the 16-member panel; former U.S. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft was appointed as a panel member. The United States supported this initiative.

UN specialized agencies also adopted significant reforms in 2003. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 32nd Conference in November agreed to amend the FAO Basic Texts to reinstate term limits for the Director-General position, a key reform priority for the United States and other major contributors. In doing so, the FAO re-joined other UN agencies in recognizing that term limits for heads of UN agencies are a necessary part of good

management, and that periodic change in leadership is healthy and desirable. The 32nd Conference also agreed to a new methodology for determining equitable geographic distribution, which uses the current UN system with its weighting factors of membership, population, and contribution (but not post or grade-weighting). The old system was based on members' assessed contributions and relied on an arbitrary grade-weighting scheme that dated from the 1950s.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) amended its funding structure to compensate for a trend among donors to provide earmarked rather than unrestricted core contributions. Though earmarked contributions are essential, it is the non-earmarked funding that provides UNICEF with the basic infrastructure and capability to conduct both the flexible, rapid-response programming and long-term work that define its success in both the humanitarian and development fields. UNICEF's new framework creates a sliding scale of assessments that is based on factors such as size of the contribution, the nature of payment, and reporting requirements. The system aims to provide a straightforward, transparent way to provide incentives for donations that fund core UNICEF activities and cost less for UNICEF to administer.

In the UN Development Program (UNDP), the United States has been building the case for a transparent and consistent cost-recovery schedule in Executive Board decisions, requesting UNDP to review its cost-recovery policy and practice. This has led to a Board review, scheduled for September 2004, of UNDP's report on how it can improve cost recovery with a timetable.

## **Peacekeeping**

On March 7, 2000, the UN Secretary-General appointed an independent panel of experts to study UN peacekeeping operations and make recommendations for improvement. The Brahimi Panel, named after Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi (Algeria), who headed the panel, proposed 57 recommendations that addressed doctrine, headquarters staffing, rapid deployment, and information technology. The United States supported the Secretary-General's initiative and many of the panel's findings, particularly those calling for an improved UN capacity to plan, rapidly deploy, and manage peacekeeping operations.

Many of the reform measures were in place by 2003. Staffing shortages in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) had been addressed during previous years. With recruiting largely complete, much of the organizational restructuring suggested by the panel continued to proceed.

Member states continued to focus attention on the problem of slow deployment times caused by financial and logistical barriers faced by Troop Contributing Countries. To meet deployment goals of 30 days for traditional missions and 90 days for complex missions, as suggested by the Brahimi Panel and endorsed by the Secretary-General and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 56/292

on July 18, 2002, authorizing \$141.5 million to establish the Strategic Deployment Stockpile (SDS) in Brindisi, Italy. The SDS was established to facilitate the storage and maintenance of reusable assets from missions being closed down. In addition, the depot's strategic location helped to lower costs of shipping to newly created missions and redistributing equipment. The United States strongly supported this concept. In 2003, the smooth deployment of UN peacekeepers to Liberia indicated that the initiative was performing as expected.

The United Nations undertook significant efforts in 2003 to address issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse. The DPKO initiated a three-pronged approach to prevent human trafficking, involving the following: (1) awareness and training; (2) discipline, accountability, and community relations; and (3) support to anti-trafficking activities. In October, the Secretary-General issued a bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, stating that UN forces conducting operations under UN command and control are prohibited from committing acts of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. In November, the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs established a working group to design a system for implementation of the bulletin by all parts of the UN system. The working group agreed that, in every country where a UN entity has a substantial presence, the entity must appoint a female senior-level sexual exploitation and abuse focal point and alternate. The working group also agreed that focal points would receive specialized training in handling complaints and form country-level networks, and that these networks would communicate with local populations about prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and channels of recourse for victims in the relevant languages.

## **Security Council**

In a speech delivered to the UN General Assembly on October 27, U.S. Representative to the United Nations James B. Cunningham reiterated the State Department's seven principles that should guide UN reform, which the United States focused on applying to Security Council and General Assembly reform. These principles are:

- **Responsibility:** Nations need to fulfill their responsibility to stop global dangers, such as terrorism and WMD proliferation.
- **Accountability:** Membership in UN institutions, especially the Security Council, should go to those that shoulder burdens.
- **Effectiveness:** The UN Secretariat and the inter-governmental process need to be consolidated and rationalized, and need to be held accountable for producing results.
- **Stewardship of Financial Resources:** Poorly performing agencies and programs should improve or be ended.
- **Modernization:** Regional groups need to realign to reflect changing global realities, such as the enlarged European Union's impact on the Western European and Others Group and the East European Group.

- **Credibility:** Members of all UN bodies should reflect the purposes of those bodies. States subject to sanctions should not serve on the Security Council, and human rights abusers should not serve on the UN Commission on Human Rights.
- **Freedom:** UN programs should help individuals secure their political and civil rights, promote the Monterrey Consensus, extend the rule of law, and provide benefits of economic freedom, good governance, and democracy.

The United States believes that any Security Council reform must ensure the effectiveness of Council. The United States consistently stressed that any Security Council reform must focus on practical, achievable reforms to enhance its ability to effectively implement its original mandate. The United States continued to oppose any reform that would encumber the Council's authority, including the elimination or dilution of the veto.

## **General Assembly**

On December 19, the General Assembly adopted by consensus Resolution 58/126, "Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly." In an explanation of position, the United States welcomed efforts to reform the work of the General Assembly, but stressed that member states had to take bolder steps. The United States warned that the General Assembly risked sliding into irrelevancy.

Concerning the General Assembly's agenda, the United States noted that it was cumbersome and overloaded; redundant items should be culled through biennialization, triennialization, clustering, and elimination. The United States also proposed the elimination of the entire current agenda and a new focus on the UN's Strategic Framework, a formal planning document establishing UN priorities. The United States believed that the organizing priorities of the Strategic Framework should also serve as an organizing principle for the agenda of the General Assembly.

The United States urged that the General Committee be empowered to make more aggressive proposals to manage the General Assembly's agenda and emphasized that revitalization efforts should not incur additional costs or additional meeting time. The United States opposed efforts to split the General Assembly into two sessions, thus extending business of the Assembly through the year, questioning whether that would really represent a "reform." The United States strongly preferred to advance agenda reform and review its results before considering calendar reform.

The United States made progress in working to reform the General Assembly's treatment of Israel. First, the United States led a successful move to consolidate seven resolutions related to the UN Relief Works Agency for Palestine Refugees into one, with adoption of Resolution 58/95 by a vote of 133 to 0, with 35 abstentions. Second, the United States sought to end the mandate of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian people and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. Strong lobbying in capitals and New York produced moderate

gains in increasing the number of No votes and abstentions to the extent that these nearly equaled the number of positive votes. Finally, U.S. representatives at the General Assembly continued efforts to seek abolition of three other bodies the United States considers biased against Israel: the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights, and the Special Information Program on the Question of Palestine. Thanks to U.S. efforts, support for the first two bodies in the General Assembly diminished significantly.

## **Democracy Caucus**

A relatively new area of reform in which the United States engaged in 2003 was in encouraging the development of a democracy caucus within the United Nations. UN members have formed caucuses around many different issues, including regional interests, economic similarities, religious affiliation, and other shared positions or objectives. The United States believes that stronger coordination among democratic countries that share similar values and institutions will help strengthen the UN's work in promoting democracy, fighting tyranny, and standing for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as outlined in the UN Charter. In turn, success in these efforts will advance the UN's work to promote peace and economic development.

The democracy caucus is not a substitute for the regional bloc system, in which countries organize themselves into five regional groups. Rather, the democracy caucus is a complementary effort, which would allow like-minded democratic states within or across regions to discuss and coordinate voting, launch initiatives, and support UN efforts that promote democratic values. In addition, the caucus can be used as a tool to encourage and recruit more democratic countries to serve on UN bodies, such as the Commission on Human Rights. The Community of Democracies, a network of over 100 democratic countries, has endorsed the concept and has been a driving force behind the formation of a democracy caucus.

At the UN General Assembly in 2003, the foreign ministers of the 10-nation Convening Group of the Community of Democracies met to discuss, among other issues, the formation of a democracy caucus. The idea of a caucus was endorsed in the Warsaw Declaration of the Community of Democracies in 2000 and again in 2002, when the Community adopted the Seoul Plan of Action, which stated that democracies would work together to promote and consolidate democracy at the United Nations and other multilateral bodies.

Democracies within the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council have met to discuss the concept of a democracy caucus, how democracies can work more closely together to strengthen the UN's work on democracy promotion, and how to ensure that more countries which govern by the standards embodied in the UN Charter can be elected to UN bodies. Though still in its early stages, the concept of a democracy caucus

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has received broad support from democracies and nongovernmental organizations worldwide.

*United States Participation in the United Nations—2003*