

# ANSWERS: A STARTING POINT

## SUBSECTION TABLE OF CONTENTS

[A real UN fraud prevention programme](#)

[External experts oversight review](#)

[Expert personnel reviews](#)

[A true global strategy](#)

[General Assembly audit subcommittee](#)

[Annual results reporting to the General Assembly](#)

[Annual status reporting to the General Assembly](#)

[Geneva Group "due diligence" failure](#)

Anyone who has worked their way through parts or even all of this archive, and particularly the preceding sections on The UN, Alone and UNaccountable , and on Other Major Problems has seen IO Watch's detailed case arguing that management accountability and the rule of law is critically needed in the UN, but is hardly to be found at more senior levels, the locus where mismanagement is most serious because of the organizational power these people possess.

The most detailed and systematic analysis of the UN's operations, by Rosemary Righter in 1995, provides a succinct summary of the UN's central accountability problems. Thanks to the continuing Secretariat failure to implement management accountability reforms, it still offers a very accurate assessment of the UN's debilitating accountability problems.

"For years Western governments have complained about the lack of accountability prevailing in UN organizations, but in practice they have tolerated a degree of opacity that would be considered totally unacceptable for any civil service in a democracy. The Geneva Group's 'zero-growth' policy has been the nearest they have

come to sanctions, [but it] ... has had only limited success in compelling secretariats to cooperate in discussing management practices and opening the books. Inadequate internal auditing and slipshod evaluation procedures have not only shielded inefficiency, waste, maladministration, and downright fraud; they have deprived the UN's member states of the information they need to identify the organizations' weaknesses -- and strengths. ...

... [No] amount of exhortation -- as the years have proved -- can compensate for the lack of routine inspection under established rules of 'open government.' Evaluation would require ... built-in procedures requiring the UN bureaucracies to respond to criticisms. So ingrained is the collusion between the permanent representatives to these organizations and the secretariats that a majority for such an initiative among the UN membership would be difficult though not impossible to muster. But many UN staff members would welcome more rigorous scrutiny ..."

Rosemary Righter, Utopia lost: The United Nations and world order, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1995, pp. 280-281.

The UN, in short, has had serious management performance problems for six decades, which continue. Its accountability and oversight efforts are still amateurish and half-hearted, i.e. inadequate to the task. The critical underlying factor for any organization or grouping -- the rule of law -- does not exist in the UN, because of entrenched diplomatic, and management, immunity and impunity. And recent developments indicate that the UN is not presently up to the task of leading global governance, does not participate in a welcome global trend toward "a right to know", and loves to preach virtue without, however, practicing it itself.

For those who have begun with this subsection of the archive in order to get to the bottom line, this is it. However, IO Watch wishes to present fourteen quotes from a "blue ribbon" list of present and former UN senior officials (plus the recent head of the WTO, and a very recent overall and in-depth assessment by an expert outside body, the US Government Accountability Office.) These succinct summary views set the scene for the reasonable, "doable," and specific reform actions which IO Watch offers below. They are also worth a reread, as a "wrapup" group of quotes, by those who have already seen many of them elsewhere in the archive.

IO Watch would also suggest looking at one more key subsection -- The UN old boys' last hurrah?, which summarizes the major troubling events and scandals which began to pile up in UN management and operations in late 2004 and in 2005. They are severe symptoms of the stresses and strains that may fatally undermine the organization if Member States do not finally insist on establishing management accountability and the rule of law in the UN Secretariat.

The summary, scene-setting views are as follows.

"For its friends, of which we are two, ... the problem [at the UN's 40th anniversary is] .... that it is not particularly effective in averting conflict or fighting poverty, [nor ready to reverse] .... these trends, let alone its own genteel deterioration.

[Among other things], the Secretary-General must have the basic authority to manage his own organization; to hire and fire according to the highest professional standards and thereby provide overall tone and leadership to the system. There must also be a higher caliber of appointments at the top. There is nothing wrong with political appointments if appointees have a distinguished and relevant career record. But governments have too often considered comfortable United Nations sinecures a dumping ground for mediocre diplomats. A board of independent, eminent people should be constituted to establish the desirable qualifications for each senior vacancy as it comes up. If individual governments still insist on sending poorly qualified time-servers, at least their actions would be recognized for what they are."

Sadrudin Aga Khan and Maurice F. Strong, "Proposals to reform the U.N., 'limping' in its 40th year, New York Times, **October 8, 1985**.

[Note: Sadrudin Aga Khan served as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Mr. Strong was head of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and has served in other senior UN posts since.]

"Declaring that 'justice delayed is justice denied' in a speech earlier this year, [UN Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management Martti Ahtisaari] described the delays in the UN's ['internal justice'] system as 'very bad indeed'. ... he [cited] an 'indefensible situation' where one case from 1981 was still there, four cases from 1982, and ten from 1983.

Lamenting that 'Something has gone very wrong with our processes', he stressed that justice was not only important in itself, but was also a basic aspect of good staff-management relations. Justice was a 'primary defense against the buildup of feelings of arbitrariness and discrimination' which, he warned, could undermine staff morale and 'finally destroy an international organization however high its ideals and purposes.'"

"Staff-management meeting to discuss justice administration reform and performance reports", Secretariat News [New York], **31 August 1987**, p. 5.

Mr. Ahtisaari also subsequently served as the President of Finland and, most recently, in leading the independent panel which investigated UN security management lapses in the bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad in 2003.]

"Current problems in what you have correctly identified as 'the present outmoded system of personnel management' constitute a major stumbling block to true reform within the Organization.

Defects exist in nearly every aspect of present personnel practice. Recruitment has been undertaken on a more or less haphazard basis and consumes an inordinate amount of time. Training programmes are insufficient. Promotion exercises have become inordinately complicated to the point of being nearly unworkable ... Discipline and dismissal procedures are encumbered by seemingly interminable appeals processes.

The result is too much 'deadwood' doing too little work and too few good staff members doing too much, over-extending themselves sometimes to the point where they have become counter-productive." ...

The United Nations presently is almost totally lacking in effective means to deal

with fraud, waste and abuse by staff members of the type which has so recently been highlighted in the reports of audit agencies and in the news media. ...

[Reform is] especially crucial given the mounting concern of major contributing Member States over the rising level of [UN] expenditures ... Member States, deserve the reassurance that ... their contributions are being wisely and prudently utilized ."

Dick Thornburgh, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, "Report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations," **1 March 1993**, pp. 8-9, 29-31.

" ...there was little progress [in Somalia] ... until Boutros-Ghali appointed Mohammed Sahnoun [of Algeria] as his special envoy\_in April 1992. ... He was a brilliant choice. ...

... Sahnoun won the admiration and cooperation of the international relief organizations. Unlike prior UN workers, he lived in Mogadishu, enduring the heat, mosquitoes, filth, lack of water, electricity, and basic comforts. [Said Geoffrey Loane of the Red Cross], "And he worked like hell. He worked seven days a week, constantly. He inspired all of us.' ....

Sahnoun was succeeding ... where others had failed. But ... Sahnoun spoke publicly about the failures of the UN. Believing his criticism would make people aware of the UN's mistakes and save lives by preventing UN officials from making them again, Sahnoun did not flinch from expressing his views.

At a UN conference in Geneva on October 12, 1992, Sahnoun was direct. 'A whole year slipped by whilst the UN and the international community, save for the International Red Cross and a few nongovernmental humanitarian organizations, watched Somalia descend into this hell. The damage will not be repaired.' During this period '300,000 Somalis, mostly children, have succumbed, some of them in agony' he said.' ...

[On October 19, 1992], Boutros-Ghali sent Sahnoun a letter ordering him to refrain from public criticism of the UN. Such comments were 'deeply damaging to the organization's reputation.' [He then] quickly appointed a successor ..."

Ray Bonner, "Why we went": How the United Nations turned its back on Somalia and subverted the best chance for peace", Mother Jones, (USA), **March-April 1993**, pp. 54-60.

[Note: the full article is available at [MotherJones.com](http://MotherJones.com) under the author's name.]

"The effectiveness of an oversight office depends to a large extent on how senior officers perceive their roles. The concept of management accountability in the United Nations has not been consistently applied. ... no system of accountability will be effective without the assurance that sanctions will be promptly applied when violations occur. I strongly recommend that any new system of accountability and responsibility include specific penalties or sanctions for United Nations managers and other staff who disregard United Nations regulations and rules or who are negligent in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. ...

During this first year, [the new office] has addressed symptoms but has not yet been able to address the root causes of many [UN] problems. I refer to such issues as recruitment and promotion policies, the administration of justice, management reporting systems, staffing and financing of peacekeeping operations and contract management.

A vast amount of work remains to be done before the United Nations has management structures and a management culture adequate to the great tasks entrusted to it.... "

Mohamed Ali Nyazi, Assistant-Secretary-General, longtime UN internal auditor, and first head of the transitional oversight body preceding the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in his introduction to "Report of the Office of

Inspections and Investigations", UN document A/49/449, **28 September 1994**, pages 5-6.

"[This report] outlines a strategy to modernize and re-energize human resources management in the [UN Secretariat] ...

[While the UN's role and mandates have expanded], commensurate changes and modernization in human resources management have not occurred. As a result, [such] management has been fragmented, bureaucratic and incapable of dealing expeditiously with ever-changing demands ... The Office of Human Resources Management ... has been largely unable to address properly [its essential] planning and management functions. ... [This in turn has] partially contributed to the slow deployment of field missions, inadequate people management, low staff morale, and insufficient mobility. Thus, the time is overdue ... to introduce changes to maximize the contribution of [UN] human resources."

"A strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization: Revised estimates ...: Report of the Secretary-General [Butros Butros-Ghali]", UN document A/C.5/49/5 of **21 October 1994**, paras. 1 and 23.

"The [UN] Secretariat's current personnel procedures are inconsistent with the development of the competent meritocracy that is required to deal with the important problems faced by the United Nations. As a consequence of years of improvised, backward, and careless personnel practices, staff morale has been severely damaged.

Numerous deficiencies are apparent in the personnel practice of the Secretariat. For instance, it lacks a worthwhile staff-evaluation system ... Moreover, promotion within the Secretariat is not competitive nor is it based on merit, and staff discipline is very low in some departments. In addition, the policies for recruiting new Secretariat personnel are unclear, and professional training is almost nonexistent. Collusion between staff members and state delegations seeking to justify the continued employment of their nationals is quite common, and often leads to 'requests' by the General Assembly for prolonged studies and reports that have no purpose and will never be read."

Ronald I. Spiers, "Reforming the United Nations," in Roger A. Coate, ed., U.S. policy and the future of the United Nations, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, **1994**, pp. 25-26.

[Note: Mr. Spiers served as a UN Under-Secretary-General in New York in the early 1990s.]

"The issue of 'deadwood and mediocrity':

Constant talk about 'deadwood', 'mediocrity', 'bloated bureaucracy,' etc., does not promote optimism about any significant improvement. What is desperately needed is serious work on the problems. The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to organize an independent commission of internationally respected civil-service and recruitment specialists. It must be so composed as to enjoy the trust and cooperation of staff associations as well as of the member-governments. It should carry out a thorough screening of the actual competence for their designated posts of officials at mid-professional and above grades. Such a process alone would reliably establish how many existing staff actually have a useful function in UN service. Responsibility for the costs of the termination of those who do not must be shared by member-governments. ....

Sweeping talk of 'mediocrity' is unprofessional and misleading. .... The potential

of a significant number of staff is simply not known because of poor job assignment, indifferent supervisors (themselves inadequately supervised by poorly chosen department heads), and the lamentable paucity of in-service training and retraining. The real extent of irredeemable 'mediocrity' can only be identified by proper, independent screening."

Erskine Childers, with Brian Urquhart, Chapter X, "The international civil service", in "Renewing the United Nations System", Development Dialogue, 1994:1, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, **1994**, p. 165.

[Note: Mr. Childers worked for the UN for 22 years, including assignments as special adviser to the UN Director-General for Development and in many UN system organizations in all regions and at all levels. Mr. Urquhart was one of the first UN staff members, served under five Secretary-Generals, and was Under-Secretary General for Special Political Affairs from 1974 to 1986.]

"The United Nations of today ... is a better Organization in many respects, than, say, five years ago, and enhanced oversight has played its part in that change.

However, further improvement within the United Nations is still necessary in many ways. Internal controls are not strong enough yet; accountability continues to be blurred and misunderstood; delegation of authority must be effectively executed; and human resources management is in need of further reform, particularly in the areas of career development, intensified staff rotation, enhanced substantive support in respect of staff-management relations and the system of personnel assessment. ... The operational and psychological distance between Headquarters and the field, that is, the other duty stations ... remains a problem.

Beyond these managerial challenges, some more general phenomena have been of concern to me throughout my tenure here, and remain complicating factors in the daily struggle of the Organization:

A staff-management relationship that is characterized by antagonism rather than the spirit of cooperation ... "

Karl T. Paschke, Under-Secretary-General and head of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in "Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services" A/54/393 of **23 September 1999**, Preface.

"Challenges to implementation

... No amount of money or resources can substitute for the significant changes that are urgently needed in the culture of the Organization.

... People everywhere are fully entitled to consider that [the United Nations] is *their* organization, and as such to pass judgement on its activities and the people who serve in it.

Furthermore, wide disparities in staff quality exist and those in the system are the first to acknowledge it; better performers are given unreasonable workloads to compensate for those who are less capable. Unless the United Nations takes steps to become a true meritocracy, it will not be able to reverse the alarming trend of qualified personnel, the young among them in particular, leaving the Organization. Moreover, qualified people will have no incentive to join it. Unless managers at all levels, beginning with the Secretary-General and his senior staff, seriously address this problem on a priority basis, reward excellence and remove incompetence, additional resources will be wasted and lasting reform will become impossible."

Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations [the "Brahimi report"], UN document A/55/305 -- S/2000/809 of **August 21 2000**, p. xiv.

[Note: The full document is available at <http://www.un.org/documents/> under the A document number.

Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi has most recently served as the UN Secretary-General's special envoy in Afghanistan and in Iraq.]

"Challenges that must be globally managed keep popping up: genetic engineering, AIDS, and global terrorist networks. Yet ... the global landscape has dramatically changed in the last 50 years, but the institutions serving the world have not.

The institutions cannot reform themselves. Two generations of institutional contamination and tenured self-interest ensure that this deadlock continues. But this lack of coherence damages their collective credibility, frustrates their donors and owners, and gives rise to public cynicism. There is a consensus that something must be done, but no consensus on how to go about it.

.... It's time for a small group of national leaders to take on the challenge of reforming and rebuilding global governance. They should build this effort around the issue of the democratic deficit in multilateral institutions. The leadership must come from the top. .... Otherwise, endless seminars and conferences will inevitably bog down the process in the name of consensus ...."

Similarly, [senior officials in national legislatures] should form a democratic caucus to provide systematic oversight of international institutions, focusing particularly on increasing the transparency of these institutions. .... [This informal] caucus would strengthen national governments in their role in holding these agencies to account."

Mike Moore, "Multilateral meltdown", *Foreign Policy*, **March/April 2003**, p. 75.

[Note: Mr. Moore was Director General of the World Trade Organization from 1999 to 2002 and a former Prime Minister of New Zealand. He is the author of *A world without walls: Freedom, development, free trade, and global governance*, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK, 2003.]

"Saying that the United Nations had come to a 'fork in the road', Secretary-General Kofi Annan argued Tuesday that fundamental weaknesses in the architecture of the institution must be remedied for it to retain any effectiveness in combating genocide, terrorism and nuclear proliferation. ....

He was stern and passionate Tuesday as he lectured the assembled delegates from 191 nations, saying that the institution and its more than 9,000 employees belong to them, and they must do a better job of protecting them. ....

But the overarching theme of the speech was that the need to change the institution is urgent.

Central to any change, he said, was reforming the Security Council. ....

He chastised his audience for debating this issue for more than a decade without taking action. ....

He added: 'history is a harsh judge; it will not forget us if we let this moment pass.'

He then said that he intended to set up a panel of 'eminent personalities' to assess the current security threats and the best use of collective action to respond to them. This group, he proposed, could also recommend changes in the institution and processes of the United Nations."

Felicity Barringer, "Annan puts urgency in his call for UN reform", *International Herald Tribune*, **September 24, 2003**.

"An independent panel investigating the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad said today that the UN's security systems were 'dysfunctional'

...

What procedures were in place in Baghdad when the 19 August attack took 22 lives were 'sloppy' in observance, and non-compliance with regulations was 'commonplace,' according to the report of the panel led by Martti Ahtisaari, a former president of Finland [and also a former UN Under-Secretary-General for management].

...

'The main conclusion ... is that the current security management system is dysfunctional. It provides little guarantee of security to UN staff in Iraq or other high-risk environments and needs to be reformed,' the panel said.

The panel labelled as a major deficiency a 'lack of accountability for the decisions and positions taken by UN managers with regard to the security of UN staff.'

'The United Nations', it said, 'needs a new culture of accountability in security management.' ...

In his briefing, Mr. Ahtisaari said ... "We need a much more professional approach, a professional staff ..."

"Iraqi bombing panel finds UN security systems dysfunctional, in need of reform," UN News service, **22 October 2003**.

"Why GAO did this study

The U.N. Secretary General launched two reform agendas, in 1997 and 2002, to address the U.N.'s core management challenges -- poor leadership of the Secretariat, duplication among its many offices and programs, and the lack of accountability for staff performance. ... In 2000, GAO reported that the reforms were not yet complete.

What GAO found

... First, the Secretariat has taken positive steps to strengthen its human capital management, but reforms in this area are ongoing and additional challenges remain. Second, the U.N. has begun to adopt results-oriented budgeting, but its monitoring and evaluation system does not measure program impact. ...

UN reform faces several challenges. For example, the Secretariat does not conduct comprehensive assessments of the status and impact of U.N. reforms. In addition, the reform agendas lack clearly stated priorities, interim goals, and target dates for overall completion. Other challenges include resistance to change from program managers and possible resource constraints.

What GAO recommends

... the [US] Secretary of State and [US Mission to the UN] should work with other member states to encourage the Secretary-General to (1) report regularly on the status and impact of reforms; (2) identify short- and long-term goals and establish target end dates for remaining reforms; and conduct assessments of the resulting resource implications."

U.S. General Accounting Office, United Nations: Reforms progressing, but comprehensive assessments needed to measure impact, GAO 04-339, **February 2004**, "Highlights" page. [emphasis added.]

[Note: the complete report is available at [www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-339](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-339) .]

The above quotes provide incisive and consistent criticism of UN accountability failures from very close observers over the years, and they bring the situation right up to the present. Strong actions are needed, perhaps more than ever before, in the

UN's long, wavering, and very unenthusiastic march toward true management reform and accountability.

Rosemary Righter concluded her 1995 examination of the UN by noting that multilateral cooperation activities are here to stay, that there are new forms beyond UN "universality", and the weaknesses and rigidities of the UN as a multilateral vehicle. She then analysed in detail the increasingly moribund character and marginalization of the UN in global discourse, despite the repeated attempts at restructuring and reforming it.

Ms. Righter offered a set of pragmatic options that Western governments [who "pay the bills"] could use to finally make the UN more relevant and useful:

- (a) to simply drop out of the organization;
- (b) to attempt structural reform from within;
- (c) to continue "façade management" of participating in the UN (apart from the Security Council) in name only; or
- (d) a strategy of "positive discrimination".

Ms. Righter recommended the last choice, using the West's power of the purse, organizational abilities, and political influence to build up those UN units capable of doing good work, while letting its worst units wither on the vine. These real reform actions would concentrate on the most urgent needs for global cooperation, and expose the UN to healthy and much needed competition with other cooperative processes.

Rosemary Righter, "Introduction: The United Nations at a watershed," in Utopia lost: The United Nations and world order, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, **1995**, particularly pp. 5-10.

A decade later, however, UN managerial self-reform and self-regulation are still failing. The prevailing "facade management" results in funds squandered and global problems poorly addressed. It is finally time, after six decades of faltering experience, for Member States, their missions to the UN, and the citizens (and taxpayers) of the world to act. The "global community" must insist that effective UN programmes be rewarded, while sanctioning and overcoming UN performance failures and the debilitating (and unchecked) UN management culture. Above all, the UN must become (not just perpetually promise to be) firmly and transparently accountable.

IO Watch believes that eight more critical factors must be stated before presenting eleven subsections that offer doable, not expensive, and already available (at least elsewhere) answers as a starting point to overcome the UN's plight. Eight are in this subsection: three others are presented in the last subsections of Where is the Rule of Law? .

First, the UN must finally admit and systematically address its corruption problems (and indeed it is especially vulnerable to corruption given its high-pressure global operations under emergency conditions, and poor accountability and transparency practices), and recognize that it does not stand on a pedestal above the rest of mankind:

"The essays in this book ... probe the whys and wherefores of contemporary corruption. They raise deeper philosophical issues about the nature of this particular form of human wrongdoing, how people confront it, and what they expect others to do about it. If other forms of misbehavior, once commonplace and legitimate, have become increasingly unacceptable, why does corruption persist and expand? ...

One message that comes through ... is not so much that people do not know what to do about corruption as that they tend to lack sufficient will, fortitude, stamina, resolution, and persistence to do anything about it. ...

This book [attempts to] ... throw light on the most important concerns. ... [It] has something for everyone, ... from the simple concerns of fairly clean governance in one part of the world to the worries of citizens experiencing very dirty governance in another. from long-term institutional failure to short-term success, from the pessimistic to the optimistic, from the circumspect to the ambitious, from the half-hearted to the resolute, from the idealistic to the pragmatic. All of these reflect the current state of the art."

Gerald E. Caiden, O.P. Dwivedi, and Joseph Jabbara, eds., Chapter 1, "Introduction", in Where Corruption Lives, Kumarian, Bloomfield, CN (USA), 2001, pp. 1-13, [2, 6, 9.]

Second, the UN could obviously benefit from participating directly itself in its own Global Compact, and thereby avoid great hypocrisy on its part. In an interview in July 2001, a senior UN official explained how multinational corporations participate in the Compact as a foundation for a learning network where they can share "best practices" in accord with United Nations human rights, labor, and environmental principles. He judged that "One year in, we've seen the companies building the kinds of practical and intellectual bridges we [the UN] were hoping for." He explained (rather smugly) that, once companies make their commitments to observe the Compact principles (as the UN should definitely do), and have chosen their methods of carrying them out

"they engage in an open dialogue on how they were doing so ... [and] *are subjected to critiques -- by their own employees as well as outsiders including human rights and environmental groups and labor unions.*

Irwin Arieff, "Some 300 firms sign up for global compact", Reuters, **July 28, 2001.** [emphasis added.]

Third, the UN suffered in 2004 from two severe scandals, one involving probably the greatest humanitarian assistance (and one of the largest international financial) scandals ever, and a tragic accident largely attributable to severe security management failures:

"The [United Nations is] suffering from two self-inflicted wounds ,, a kickback scandal of multi-billion dollar proportions swirling around the UN-run oil-for-food program [in Iraq]. The other is ... that oversights in UN security management may have worsened the toll in last August's terrorist bombing of the Baghdad headquarters.

Urgent steps, including high-level demotions and dismissals, are already underway to address the security failures. Ferreting out the murky details of the financial scandal, and meting out appropriate punishments, is no less urgent.

... UN officials clearly failed to supervise effectively the roughly \$10 billion a year in transactions and may have been involved in illicit deals. ...

Now there is finally some political will to investigate, and details of the corruption are emerging ... The investigators must put aside diplomatic niceties and concentrate on cleansing the UN's reputation."

"Clean up the UN," International Herald Tribune, April 8, 2004.

Fourth, the way out of this morass was stated clearly in the aftermath of the Somalia disaster of a dozen years ago. Subsequent events only underline the continuing need for Member States, and the General Assembly, and Secretary-General Annan, to apply transparency and accountability:

"There is no shortage of suggestions for reforms at the United Nations, ... [but] if, in the future, the UN hopes to avoid failures like that in Somalia, it will need to change on a more fundamental level.

Above all, if the UN is going to be effective, it must be accountable. 'The UN is probably the least accountable government-based bureaucracy in the world -- a main reason not only for the cataclysm in Somalia, but for the persistence of famine throughout Africa' said Alex de Waal, a British anthropologist who has studied the UN's response to famines. 'Officials who are responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths must face the prospect of prosecution, not promotion.'

There is also the need for a freedom of information act, so UN officials cannot hide from the public everything from their salaries to their mistakes to how much they're spending on public relations. And, finally, or perhaps first, there must be an independent watchdog organization with full power to investigate UN agencies. The General Assembly has the authority to establish a commission of inquiry **to examine what went wrong in Somalia, but it has never examined its own performance.**

Ray Bonner, "Why we went": How the United Nations turned its back on Somalia and subverted the best chance for peace", Mother Jones, (USA), March-April 1993, pp. 54-60 [60].

[Note: the full article is available at [MotherJones.com](http://MotherJones.com) under the author's name.]

Fifth, and returning once more to Mr. Ahtisaari, he observed in commenting on his panel's report on the bombing of

the UN headquarters in Baghdad in 2003 and the severe UN security management problems that the panel found, that:

"Everybody bears responsibility, the Member States, who are asking the UN ... [to act] and of course the Secretary-General himself -- the buck stops always with the Secretary-General!'

"Iraqi bombing panel finds UN security systems dysfunctional, in need of reform," UN News service, **22 October 2003**. [emphasis added]

The sixth and seventh quotes come from a very recent assessment by Claudia Rosett, with both of which IO Watch is very much in agreement. The first is an imagined statement which she wishes Secretary-General Annan had made, and the second her assessment of the entrenched "accountability deficit" still to be found in the UN today:

"NEWS FLASH -- *In a stunning development that even the [UN's] fiercest critics will surely hail as a turn for the better, Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced yesterday that he is entirely disgusted with the U.N. art of investigating itself. 'It's a way of deflecting criticism, not solving problems,' said Mr. Annan, adding that 'The U.N. Secretariat has become a secret society, swathed in privilege and shielded by immunities. As secretary-general, tasked with upholding the integrity values and moral authority of the [UN], I am authorizing a new policy of complete transparency, financial and otherwise, in the workings of the Secretariat, starting with full disclosure of all internal debates, correspondence, memoes, audits, expense accounts and cafeteria subsidies. Oh, and by the way, I apologize for presiding over the biggest swindle in the history of humanitarian relief, the Oil-for-Food Program in Iraq.'*

OK, all right, just kidding. This is raw fantasy. Mr. Annan never said any such thing."

"[The UN integrity survey] is of course just one of the UN's various investigations into itself. ...

Does anyone see a problem here?

The basic flaws are simple. Any time you create a large institution, accord it great privileges of secrecy, give it a big budget and have it run immune from any sane standard of accountability, you are likely to get a corrupt organization. ...

The problem with the Secretariat isn't "tone" at the top. It's accountability at the top and secrecy throughout. ...

Someone needs to help this institution, and it's not a consulting team hired by the same institution, nor is it a batch of investigators operating under terms defined by the U.N, nor is it a grand gathering of staff members being urged to risk reprisals by telling tales of earlier reprisals.

A better place to start is to ... withhold part of the U.N.'s budget ... [or] tackle the system that engendered Oil-for-Food ... For now, I'm [starting to believe] that in ... reforming the UN, the only thing worse than having the U.N. ignore a problem is to have the U.N. investigate it."

Claudia Rosett, "The problem with the Secretariat", The Wall Street Journal, **June 16, 2004**.

Eighth and finally, the pivotal factor has been noted in many places, including the UN's own pious Global Compact advice

for others expressed in the July 28, 2001 quote above. This is the need for independent outside assessments of any organization -- and especially the secretive, and immunity and impunity-bound UN -- as promoted by, and found in, OECD countries in general:

"Taking action against wrongdoing

*Taking action against violation of standards is the shared responsibility of managers and external investigative bodies.* OECD countries recognize that disciplinary actions against a breach of public service standards should be taken within the organization where the breach occurred. All governments have developed a general framework for disciplinary procedures that both allows managers to impose timely and just sanctions and guarantees a fair process for the public servants. ...

Although public service managers have the primary responsibility for initiating disciplinary measures in their agencies in a timely manner, they may also receive assistance from specific external institutions. These **external institutions are the primary instruments for investigating and prosecuting misconduct in the public service.** These bodies have the power to bring suspected cases of corruption directly to court in all OECD countries. Moreover, two-thirds of countries have procedures and mechanisms to enable the public to signal wrongdoing to bodies exercising independent scrutiny on public service activities."

"Annex I: OECD public management policy brief on building public trust: Ethics measures in OECD countries," in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Public sector transparency and accountability: Making it happen, OECD, Paris, 2002, p. 192. [emphasis added]

With the above, introductory, senior officials' assessments of the UN's management struggles, the subsequent observations on the urgent need for real accountability and transparency in UN operations, and the wise OECD guidance, IO Watch suggests the following eleven "Answers" (eight here, three in Where is the Rule of Law?) as key starting points for finally creating an accountable, transparent, law-based, and effective UN.