

UN MORAL VALUES AND RECTITUDE – FOR OTHERS

The 1990s brought a greatly-expanded UN operational role in peacekeeping, humanitarian, and human rights activities worldwide, and the worldwide good governance and right-to-know developments discussed in the two preceding subsections. As a result, UN leaders, and particularly Secretary-General Annan, have made many firm public pronouncements in recent years on moral values.

Many of these statements of high principle are commendable and useful, and are to be expected from the UN leadership. The UN has played a clear role in the global progress that has been made on human rights, governance, and free information issues. Unfortunately, however, when one applies the UN leaders' pronouncements to the UN's own operations, the message is a clear and resounding "Do as we say, not as we do." UN performance, credibility, and staff morale suffer as a result.

Article 1 of the United Nations Charter states that the UN's purposes (in the name of "we the peoples") include resolving disputes by peaceful means, devising cooperative solutions to societal problems, promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, encouraging conformity to principles of justice and international law, and harmonizing actions to achieve these ends. The UN is thus expected to transform relations among states.

"Charter of the United Nations", Article I, and

"We the peoples: The role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century ", UN document A/54/2000 of **27 March 2000**, paras. 8-11.

For decades real UN action was hampered by Cold War tensions and insistence on "national sovereignty" principles. But in 1998 Secretary-General Annan argued that:

"Only universal organizations like the United Nations have the scope and legitimacy to generate principles, norms and rules that are essential if globalization is to benefit everyone."

Kofi A. Annan, "Partnerships for global community: Annual report on the work of the organization 1998", United Nations, New York, **1998**, p. 81.

The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 really only came to life in the 1990s when the General Assembly greatly strengthened the priority, visibility, scope and programmes of its Commission on Human Rights. The UN now reports on human rights status in many but not all member countries, formulates new conventions, provides judicial assistance, and is creating international tribunals to deal with crimes against humanity.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of 1948. The full declaration can be found at www.un.org/Overview/rights.

Secretary-General Annan further stated in 2000 that the international community must employ the force of UN values, and the trust that the UN has earned, to protect vulnerable people and "fundamental human rights" and expand the rule of law, as a concern which transcends both governments and borders. His personal stress on virtue has also been highlighted in the international media.

"We the peoples: The role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century: Report of the Secretary-General ", UN document A/54/2000, **27 March 2000**, paras. 209-212 and 320-327.

For very strong praise of Mr. Annan, see Joshua Cooper Ramo, "The five virtues of Kofi Annan," [subtitle: "Drawing on his days in the classrooms of M.I.T. and the playing fields of Ghana, the U.N. leader pursues a moral vision for enforcing world peace"], Time, **September 4, 2000**, pp. 40-47.

Recent UN reports have also quite properly advocated the need for good governance and responsive institutions and processes as key factors to promote development and combat poverty. Mr. Annan urged in 2000 that weak states must be strengthened, anachronistic central hierarchies changed to dynamic networks, and decision-making structures revised to support a robust international legal order. He stated that better governance means greater participation, accountability, and transparency to open up international public processes [which should certainly include the UN] to civil society, the private sector, and other groups.

"Commission on global governance urges world conference to reform international relations", International Documents Review, 13 February 1995, pp. 1-2,

Reginald Dale, "A new debate on 'global governance'", International Herald Tribune, **July 25, 2000**,

Barbara Crossette, "Bad governments help keep countries poor, UN asserts", International Herald Tribune, **April 28, 2000**,

"Phoney democracies", The Economist, **June 24th, 2000**, p. 17, and

"We the peoples: The role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century: Report of the Secretary-General ", UN document A/54/2000, **27 March 2000**, paras. 41-46.

The UN has maintained two other major sub-elements in its "moral arsenal" and is now attempting to add a new third step, all of which relate directly to the accountability and law emphases of this archive.

FIRST, the UN has held periodic anti-corruption conferences. At the 1995 conference, Member States called on the Secretary-General to lead worldwide efforts to prevent and control corruption; improve public management; enhance accountability and transparency; analyse effective practices; assist training; and prepare relevant manuals and codes for public officials. A tenth crime congress followed up actively on this theme.

Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/14, "Action against corruption", and "Draft international code of conduct for public office holders", of 24 July 1995,

"Vienna: 10th UN Crime Congress: Making concerted efforts to combat organized crime", International Herald Tribune, 14 April 2000,

Brandolino, John, "Fighting corruption: The role of diplomacy and international agreements", The Journal of Public Inquiry, Fall/Winter 2001, pp. 9-12,

and www.odccp.org/press_release_2001-05-18_2.html

SECOND, in 1997 Mr. Annan cited the essential values of good management (actually the "efficiency, competence, and integrity" values trinity of Article 101 of the UN Charter) for an effective UN (as did his predecessors) to his own staff. Stating that they had "suffered from misinformation and even disinformation for long enough" about the UN, he admonished them that "I will not compromise" in seeking "a total commitment to excellence", especially in staff performance. He pledged to "develop a new management culture", where UN "senior managers ... must understand their "obligation to properly manage the staff ... entrusted to their care", and with reform "procedures that are fair, transparent, and humane."

"Secretary-General urges staff to strive for excellence, stressing UN performance will turn detractors into supporters", SG/SM/6140 of **9 January 1997**. [emphasis added]

Mr. Annan also pledged a dynamic UN that "upholds the highest standards of management, cost-effectiveness and accountability", and concluded in his 2000 millennium report that "we must spare no effort" to make the UN more effective, ensure the best use of UN resources, and allow it to adopt "best management practices.")

"Secretary-General pledges accountability and calls for financial support while unveiling his reduced budget", Secretariat News (New York), **October 1997**, p. 7, and

"We the peoples: The role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century: Report of the Secretary-General ", A/54/2000, **27 March 2000**, para 367.

In other forums during this period, Mr. Annan also emphasized his determination to fight for human rights anywhere:

" ... I have sought to speak out in favor of universal human rights and in defense of the victims of aggression or abuse, wherever they may be. ... I have sought to make the office of secretary-general a pulpit ... [Everywhere] I have sought, without attacking specific regimes or individuals, to use it as a vehicle for promoting the values of tolerance, democracy, human rights and good governance that I believe are universal."

...

I have at times been as skeptical of a leader's true intentions as anyone, and I have entered every war zone without any illusions about the prospects for peace or the price of misrule.

But I have persisted ...

To apply those lessons ... wherever and whenever possible is a secretary-general's highest calling and foremost duty -- to himself, to his office, and to the United Nations. My great predecessor, Dag Hammarskjold, once said that it 'is a question not of a man, but of an institution.'

It is, therefore, for the United Nations itself, and the hopes and aspirations that it has embodied for more than half a century, that we must succeed."

Kofi A. Annan, "About the United Nations and its Secretary-General", International Herald Tribune, **January 21, 1999** .

Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "Secretary-General proposes global compact on human rights, labour, environment, in address to World Economic Forum in Davos," 31 January 1999, UN Press release SG/SM/6881 of **1 February 1999**, [emphasis added]

The Secretary-General's 2000 Millennium report then argued that better global governance means not only greater partnership, accountability and openness, but greater "corporate citizenship" efforts by the multinational companies that dominate the new global economy.

"We the peoples: The role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century: Report of the Secretary-General ", A/54/2000, **27 March 2000**, paras. 45-47, and

Kofi A. Annan, "A deal with business to support universal values", International Herald Tribune, **July 26, 2000**.

Mr. Annan has also spent considerable time challenging African leaders to address their corruption and leadership problems, as in the following interview:

"In a recent [wide-ranging interview Secretary-General Kofi Annan] said it was 'disheartening' to confront a continent with calamities from end to end, and to consider what this said about African leadership.

Mr. Annan, a Ghanaian, rejects the view that a president for life reflects traditional African tribal culture.

.... 'In West Africa, we have the Ashanti kings. But the king can be removed for wrongdoing, incompetence, or lack of leadership. Its not as if they are anointed by God and can stay there forever.

His prescription for Africa is stronger nongovernmental institutions to curb the

excesses of leaders who stay for too long.

'I'm stressing the question of institution-building, legal systems, the rule of law, the right regulatory system and this whole area of privatization', Mr. Annan said.

Corruption is built on everything being in the hands of the government. So for everything you want, you need a permit. The person who gives you a permit wants a bribe. The person who's going to make the appointment for you wants a bribe. And so on."

Barbara Crossette, "With U.S. loath to send troops, UN seeks peacekeeping changes", International Herald Tribune, **May 15, 2000**.
[emphasis added]

THIRD, a UN report in 1999 claimed, surprisingly, that (despite the "serious misconception" of a small UN role in the world economy) UN system technical agencies have actually been important in building an international economic infrastructure, and that the UN (with its universal legitimacy) should be even more involved in constructing the "rules of the road" and behavior for international markets.

Mark W. Zacher, The United Nations and global commerce, United Nations, DPI, New York, **1999**, esp. pp.4-11.

In July 2000, Mr. Annan announced a further "bold step:" a coalition of business, international agency, and civil society groups to apply nine key principles from UN system human rights, labor, and environmental declarations. The business partners agreed to publicly advocate this new "Global Compact" and its principles, to annually report their progress and "lessons learned" on a UN Internet website, and to join the UN in related partnership projects, outlined as:

"The global compact: Human rights; Labour; Environment
The 9 principles
From principles to practice
Partners and initiatives
Country information
Events calendar
News & Reviews"

[United Nations Global Compact,

the website is at www.unglobalcompact.org/Portal/Default.asp

[Note: the Compact is discussed further in a later subsection of this archive on Global Compact hypocrisy . A tenth principle, on corruption, has now been added.]

The UN Millennium Assembly in New York in September 2000 expanded on this new interactive initiative. It involved hundreds of meetings between national leaders, 185 nations signing some 300 treaties and conventions, some 200 speeches, and a final declaration of tightly-negotiated (that is, vague) "fundamental values." The UN also arranged meetings with other societal groups, in an effort to show that it is indeed "the universal forum, where all the world's peoples are represented" and at

least potentially, "the indispensable instrument for tackling our shared problems". These many activities, however, revealed some major stumbling blocks complicating this new UN role.

Barbara Crossette, "UN summit ends with goals pressed by rich and poor", International Herald Tribune, **September 9, 2000**, p. 4.

Kofi Annan, "Now lets set a new course for the world, no less", International Herald Tribune, **September 5, 2000**,

Barbara Crossette, "Globalization battle moves to UN: Summit of world leaders aims to focus on poverty and peace", International Herald Tribune, **September 4, 2000**, and

"Millenium summiteers" and "Global chat", The Economist, **September 9th, 2000**, pp. 19-20, 58-59.

-- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) became important and very dynamic factors in global programmes during the 1990s, but they were rather skeptical about Secretary-General Annan's millennial outreach to them, since various UN Member States have long tried to limit NGO access to UN forums, and to hamper their activities in social and human rights areas.

Barbara Crossette, "Work with us, Annan asks independents", International Herald Tribune, 24 May 2000, and

Joint Inspection Unit, "Working with NGOs" Operational activities of the United Nations system with [NGOs} and governments at the grassroots and national levels," UN document A 49/122 of **13 April 1994**, pp. 27-33 and

Chadwick Alger, "The emerging roles of NGOs in the UN system: From Article 71 to a People's Millenium Assembly", Global Governance 8 (2002), 93-117.

-- Secretary-General Annan urged a gathering of 1,000 world spiritual leaders to speak out against intolerance, but he was forced to explain that the UN had excluded the Dalai Lama from the meeting because "this house is really a house for the member states, and their sensitivities matter."

"UN spiritual talks to bar Dalai Lama", AFP, International Herald Tribune, **August 25, 2000**, and

"UN head exhorts religious leaders", International Herald Tribune, **August 30, 2000**.

-- As a warning sign of excessive UN "self-promotion," two prominent supporters of a 1999 "NetAid" global media event (Harry Belafonte and Danny Glover) withdrew "in disgust", citing it as a "trade show" for the UN bureaucracy and a corporate sponsor, rather than a serious effort to help the world's poor.

"People" item, International Herald Tribune, **October 9, 1999**,

Judith Miller, "Cutting funds, donors put UN aid body in tight spot", International Herald Tribune, **July 12, 1999**,

"Swedish diplomat named to head World Bank PR", Wall Street Journal, **August 10, 1999**, and

Mark Malloch Brown, "Fighting poverty with the Internet", International Herald Tribune, **September 9, 1999**.

-- And even as the Millennium Assembly met, other major international organizations continued to be sharply criticized for their lack of performance, accountability, and transparency, and their aloof and non-responsive nature.

"Critics press World Bank's president for more reform", International Herald Tribune, **September 23, 2000**, p. 3,

"Retro act's swan song: Are these the final days of IOC's aging empire?," International Herald Tribune, **September 16, 2000**.

[Note: see the subsection Other Multilateral Accountability Struggles in the Inadequate UN Oversight section of this website.]

These problems indicate the need for a "reality check" on the UN's current enthusiastic pronouncements about universal values. As futurist Alvin Toffler astutely observed, the UN is in fact "a trade association of nation states", i.e., only one segment of global society, with the inevitable self-interest biases that this implies. Many, if not most, UN Member States are not strong advocates of expanding individual human rights, as will be discussed in greater detail in the Human Rights subsection of the UN Performance Problems section of this website.

Alvin Toffler, Powershift: Knowledge, wealth and violence at the edge of the 21st century, Bantam, New York, **1991**, pp. 456-457.

In addition, Czech President Vaclav Havel urged the UN before the 2000 Millennium Assembly to do everything possible to "make people see [the UN] as their own organization, representing everyone, not as some sort of club of governments and diplomats", especially since "some of those governments were not very authentic representatives of their people at all."

Steven Erlanger, "Hear the 'voice of the people', Havel implores world bodies", International Herald Tribune, **August 23, 2000**, p. 6.

Further, multinational corporations have actually moved much more actively than the UN to address their behavioural sins. Most corporate boards of directors now strive to provide much stronger oversight of their operations (unlike the UN General Assembly), and shareholder groups are monitoring performance much more closely. Most importantly, and beyond mere public relations considerations, senior corporate officials know they may be held personally liable in the courts for organizational wrongdoing and may even have to go to prison (i.e., they do not have UN officials' impunity).

For example,

"Watching the boss: A survey of corporate governance", The Economist, **January 29th, 1994**, pp. 1-17,

"Too much corporate power?" and "Editorial: New economy, new social contract", Business Week International, **September 11, 2000**, pp. 51-60 and 80, www.unglobalcompact.org/Portal/Default.asp ,

Amy Zipkin, "For big companies, questions about ethics are serious business", International Herald Tribune, **October 20, 2000**, p. 17.

[Note: for further updated material on this topic, see Corporate Accountability Struggles in the Inadequate UN Oversight section of this archive.]

UN Assistant-Secretary-General Michael Doyle explained in an interview in July 2001 that companies participate in the UN Global Compact as a foundation for a learning network where they can share "best practices". He judged that "One year in, we've seen the companies building the kinds of practical and intellectual bridges we [the UN] was hoping for." He explained further that once companies make their commitments to observe the Compact principles, 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**.

In contrast to these noble aims of openness and receptivity to outside critiques, the UN's own behaviour seems quite hypocritical. It hides its own non-performance behind a fog of non-transparent reporting and good intentions about "performance management" without actual accountability. And it very much restricts critiques by outsiders, or its own employees, of its antiquated management culture and weak oversight and internal justice mechanisms. For other quite serious examples of this dissonance, see the further discussion on the Global Compact initiative, UN whistleblowers, and other related items in the following subsection on Other Major Problems .

Despite these disturbing elements and cross currents, in October 2001 the Norwegian Nobel Prize committee awarded Kofi Annan and the UN the Nobel Peace Prize. Although this is reportedly the fourteenth time that a UN official or unit or associate has been awarded this prize, it was the first time that the Nobel Committee recognized the Secretary-General and the entire UN and its staff.

The Committee cited the UN's "work for a better organized and more peaceful world" and Mr. Annan for "bringing new life" to the Organization, and then went on rather unequivocally to "proclaim that the only negotiable road to global peace and cooperation goes by way of the United Nations". The Committee thus recognized and promoted the basic ongoing intent of UN efforts, rather than any current achievements, and indeed it

noted the UN's "many failures."

Colum Lynch, "Honor awarded to Annan and UN", International Herald Tribune, **October 13, 2001**,

"Text from Nobel Peace Prize citation", Associated Press, **October 12, 2001**,

Alister Doyle and Evelyn Leopold, "Nobel Prize recognizes UN as a global force", Reuters, **October 12, 2001**.

This prize is indeed prestigious, but it seems very awkward to award it to all 50,000 people in an organization widely criticized for its politicized nature and bumbling bureaucracy. Amid much praise in the media, genocide survivors who are suing the UN and Mr. Annan in national courts said that they were "appalled" by this award. Other observers expressed scepticism, and a few weeks later the UN diplomats went right back to lecturing each other at "the year of dialogue among civilizations".

Alistair Lyon, "World hails Annan's Nobel, massacre survivors demur", Reuters, **October 12, 2001**, and

"Tainted prize, absurd winner", Daily News, October 13, 2001,

Ranhan Roy, "U.N. to focus on new global dialogue", Associated Press, **November 8, 2001**, and

Irwin Arieff, "UN talkfest promotes dialogue as diplomatic tool", Daily News, **November 7, 2001**.

Four more recent events underscore the dissonance between aggressive UN moralizing and the values and respect for human rights and respect for integrity that are actually on display in its very own Secretariat.

FIRST, according to one admirer, when Mr. Annan accepted the Nobel Peace Prize award in December 2001, he challenged the "bosses" -- the politicians, dictators and others who run the UN Member States -- to put individual rights ahead of outdated notions of sovereignty, notions that many of them have abused without fear of UN sanctions. The article quoted Mr. Annan's belief in a 21st century mission for the UN, defined by a new and more profound awareness of the sanctity and dignity of every human life. He stated further that this process

"will require us to look beyond the framework of states, and beneath the surface of nations or communities. We must focus, as never before, on improving the conditions of the individual men and women who give the state or nation its richness and character."

Hoagland, Jim, "No room for terrorist states in this new world", International Herald Tribune, **December 14, 2001**.

Mr. Annan went on even more emphatically in his Nobel Prize speech to state, in challenges that certainly can be applied to operations within his own UN, that

"the sovereignty of states must no longer be used as a shield for gross violations of human rights..."

If today, ... we see further, we will realize that humanity is indivisible ...

Today's real borders are not between nations, but between powerful and powerless, .. privileged and humiliated. Today, no walls can separate humanitarian or human rights crises

It is in this spirit that I humbly accept the Centennial Nobel Peace Prize."

"Annan: Saving one life is to save humanity itself", Reuters, **December 10, 2001**. [emphasis added]

SECOND, human rights efforts have finally begun to have a real impact worldwide, particularly in invoking "the power of shame" and the "right to meddle." UN Under-Secretary-General Mary Robinson of Ireland, for instance, firmly called on leaders everywhere to invoke the "rigorous framework" of human rights worldwide and to ensure that they "respect human rights and are not complicit, directly or indirectly, in violations." At the same time, Ms. Robinson and Secretary-General Annan pledged several years ago to "mainstream" human rights throughout the UN system.

"The world is watching: A survey of human-rights law", The Economist, **December 5th, 1998**, and

Stephanie Nebehay, "UN rights head back Afghan probe, criticizes U.S.", Reuters, **December 7, 2001**, and

Dembart, Lee, "For Afghans in Cuba, untested legal limbo: Old laws hard to apply to modern terrorism", International Herald Tribune, **January 25, 2001**, and

Robinson, Mary, "Tell leaders that human rights aren't optional", International Herald Tribune, **February 7, 2002**., and

"New human rights chief pledges "bridge-building: Q & A/Mary Robinson", International Herald Tribune, **24 September 1997**.

[Note: for more on the very modest efforts to apply human rights in the UN, and a strong suggestion for decisive action in this regard, see Human Rights Ombudsman .

THIRD, the head of the UN Global Programme Against Corruption", Under-Secretary-General Pino Arlacchi, was quoted in the lead-in statement to the UN's own web site on corruption as emphasizing that "Corruption is a major social and economic issue. And the world's tolerance of it is fading fast." The statement went on to explain that corruption is caused by the abuse of power by officials seeking private gains, poorly managed programmes, failing institutions, inadequate checks and balances, a corrupt judiciary, and a lack of accountability and transparency.

"Corruption", Global Programme against Corruption,
at www.unodc.org/unodc/index/html

This message would be more credible had not media pressure

led to an OIOS investigation, and then reports on serious mismanagement, in Mr. Arlacchi's own programme in May 2001 (see Top corruption fighter corrupted under Other Major Problems .) The OIOS called for urgent action, but Secretary-General Annan merely decided not to extend Mr. Arlacchi's contract in 2002, and he in fact quietly resigned in January of that year. This quite unaccountable and leisurely departure of a very senior UN official without sanctions does not build confidence that tolerance for corruption "is fading fast," as Mr. Arlacchi himself had so dramatically asserted.

FOURTH, these policy and leadership emphases eventually led to a new UN global Convention Against Corruption (the UN's subsequent incongruous new role as a leading anti-corruption fighter is also discussed further in the Other Major Problems subsection which follows.)

Edith M. Lederer, "U.N. Assembly OK's anti-corruption treaty," AP, **October 31, 2003**, and

"Report to Congress pursuant to the International Anticorruption and Good Governance Act (Public Law 106-309);, section II.D. "Global anticorruption diplomacy in the United Nations", US Dept. of State, **2001**.

Meanwhile, the UN public information and public relations machinery has been going through yet another reorganization, and gearing itself up to release an ever-expanding flood of material on the UN's activities and leadership ambitions throughout the world.

"... the Department of Public Information has undergone a major reorganization of its priorities, structures and processes ... based on the premise that its role is to manage and coordinate the content of United Nations communications and to strategically convey this content to achieve the greatest public impact. ...

A [recent] ...feature was ... the establishment of small expert groups to deal with the public information consequences of emerging crises ... [including a group] ... of information officers from the Middle East and the Arab world ... to bolster the flagging image of the Organization in that region. ...

[DPI] ... has set in place new strategies aimed at generating support for new and expanding [peacekeeping] operations among Member States, the general public and the local populations [involved] ...

The use of external public venues for United Nations observances and commemorations has proved to be a most successful innovation ...

The use of multi-site videoconferences and Internet exchanges, linking students and civil society partners around the world, has boosted our capacity to encourage public dialogue ...

United Nations Radio continues to provide daily and weekly news reports and features in the six official languages ... to hundreds of radio stations around the globe ...

United Nations Television estimates that an audience of 2 billion people sees its programming, including hundreds of hours of coverage supplied to the world's broadcasters [of] ... meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council, and other events and conferences. ..."

"Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", UN document A/59/1, **20 August 2004**, paras. 263, 266-267, 269-270, 279-280.

In a summary perspective on the uses and impact of public information activities and use of the media by modern public and private organizations, an Amnesty International report in March 2000 warned corporations that they risk their reputations (and jeopardize their self-interest) if they do not adhere to international human rights standards in their operations and accept outside scrutiny of their performance. As the UN steps proudly to center stage to lead the march to a newly accountable and transparent global society and system, it too must willingly subject itself to the same public scrutiny that it advocates for everyone else.

Alan Cowell, "Human rights issues present new kind of corporate risk", International Herald Tribune, **April 7, 2000**, and Human rights: Is it any of your business?, Amnesty International, London, **2000**.
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The public statements of Mr. Annan and other senior UN officials on human rights continue on, particularly in various discussions of the Millennium Assembly Development Goals but on ongoing human rights, governance, and freedom of information issues as well. IO Watch will add more of these quotes in due course.

However, the following four quotes from this website's subsection on Staff Rights? under Where is the Rule of Law? already demonstrate the UN's entrenched traditions of autocracy and hypocrisy, which continue:

"An end must be put to everything that seems to make the Secretary-General's post an autocratic one, to everything that tends to make the staff subject to the whims and caprices of their superiors and makes careers -- and even employment -- dependent on blind obedience to such absolute power."

chief French Delegate Henri Hoppenot, protesting abuses threatening the creation of a valid international service, during a debate in the U.N. General Assembly in **March 1953**, as quoted in Shirley Hazzard, "Breaking faith: I", The New Yorker, October 2, 1989, pp. 74-96, [86].

"A quarter of a century ago, with great hopes from all mankind, the United Nations Organization was born. Alas, in an immoral world, it too grew immoral."

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Nobel Prize Acceptance Address, **1972**, as quoted in Houshang Ameri, Fraud, waste and abuse: Aspects of U.N. management and personnel policies, University Press of America, Lanham, MD (USA), June 2003.

"In the late 1970s, the U.N. staff union in New York engaged the American labor

negotiator Theodore Kheel to represent it in its dealings with the U.N. administration. His ... experience with the U.N. hierarchy -- which he likens to 'the court of Henry VIII' --- [focused in particular on] its propensity for abrogating formal agreements on basic matters of staff rights

'The thing that utterly amazed me' Kheel said recently, 'was the position taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations [then Kurt Waldheim] to disregard the elementary established rights of employees; that the agency created to maintain standards of human decency and to bring about peace by negotiated settlement would violate its own agreements and see no necessity for compliance with its own word.'

Hazzard, Shirley, "Breaking faith: II", The New Yorker, **October 2, 1989**, pp. 74-96 [86].

"How not to

'UN internal reform has done little to solve what staff see as the real problems of the Organization. The U.N. has concentrated mainly on cutting staff costs, increasingly awarding temporary contracts -- some 'temps' have been with us for 15 years. [However] the combination of management incompetence, job insecurity and overwork have created a workforce beset by stress, jealousy and fear, all of which diminish the cost-effectiveness of 'human resources.'

The U.N. does not apply its own international conventions on, say, collective bargaining, on the technical grounds that not being a state, it cannot sign them.

Where there's no will, there's no way. However, even if the U.N. really couldn't sign the conventions securing basic rights it could still consider committing itself to applying them and, to prove its good faith, even designate an independent tribunal as the ultimate arbiter. But let's stop daydreaming.

'Staff effectively surrender their labour rights when they join [the U.N. They are] not covered by [national] labor law, and, in the event of a dispute with their employer are obliged to appeal through the internal justice system, which is administered by that same employer.'

Eric Blair, "From our man in Absurdistan", UN Special (Geneva), March 2000, p. 31; the quoted material is excerpted from a letter by Nigel Lindup, a UN-Geneva staff representative, printed in the **February 18, 2000** issue of *The Guardian Weekly* (UK).

Despite all these important cautionary statements, however, some UN loyalists still cling naively to the idea of a mystical and reified UN, and its executive head as a shining beacon of global moral values. For example, as stated in 2001 upon Mr. Annan's re-election as UN Secretary-General:

"No country or group of countries, however powerful and rich, can steer the world

....

Only the UN secretary-general, elected to pursue the common good of all inhabitants of this shrinking planet, can bring vision and coherence

Kofi Annan's [re-election should allow] him to help establish the United Nations as the centerpiece of an emerging system of global management that is efficient, just and accepted as legitimate by all peoples and nations.

Enrique ter Horst, "A re-elected secretary-general can give the world the facts", International Herald Tribune, **July 6, 2001** .

[Note: This extremely effusive and optimistic paean was written by a former UN assistant secretary-general who served under Mr. Annan.]

IO Watch wishes to end this subsection -- for the present -
- on a lighter note, which contains an important point about the
value of the "sunshine of transparency" in the real world.

A January 2004 *Business Week Europe* report examined the
best and worst managers of the year, noting that "from the
pinnacle of performance to the depths of shame, 2003 witnessed a
spectacular range of managerial achievement." The report was
based on inputs from the magazine's staff of 140 writers and
editors in New York and in 21 bureaus worldwide, and its table of
contents included the following:

The best managers: Some succeeded by cutting costs, others by boosting innovation
Managers to watch: An eclectic bunch facing a bewildering array of challenges
Repeat performers: How yesterday's leading lights managed to hold onto the magic
The Freshmen: These 14 leaders have recently taken the reins at badly ailing
corporations
The fallen managers: It can be lonely at the top, but it's lonelier still when it all
collapses for the inept, the devious, and the greedy
Executives on trial: In the coming year, a number of CEOs and CFOs [Chief
Financial Officers] will be handed get-out-of-jail-free cards -- or hard time
PR fiascoes: Execs who tarnished their images."

"Special report: The best and worst managers of the year," *Business Week Europe*,
January 12-19, 2004, pp. 35-63.

The UN's senior officials are certainly not ready for such
frank and public scrutiny, nor for the sanctions, court cases,
and even prison terms that some of the corporate managers
profiled above will surely suffer. However, IO Watch believes
that if this type of straight-forward comparative assessment were
to be regularly made of UN system managers' performance, they and
their governing bodies would suddenly become much more attentive
to their oversight responsibilities, and the system's programme
performance would improve quite substantially.

Useful Sources

(Note: informally assembled by IO Watch, roughly ranked from "most useful" on down, and
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