

MANAGEMENT CULTURE DETERIORATION

IO Watch's central concern, as its title indicates, is the rule of law and management accountability in the UN. This archive has emphasized this problem throughout, in the many programme performance difficulties cited; the ongoing weaknesses of accountability, transparency, and oversight processes; and especially the void of a UN outside the law (and the bias in "UN law" toward protecting managers instead of honoring basic staff rights).

The problems of bad, or careless, or non- UN management proved to be a very persistent and consistent theme over the first half-century of UN operations, as the following eight quotes indicate:

"Based on its studies ... the committee reiterates the vital importance above all others of selecting well qualified personnel and not letting standards deteriorate because of the difficulties and complexities of recruitment. The ability of the United Nations to carry out its essential and urgent work depends in the final analysis on the quality of its personnel."

Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat, document A/7359 of November 27, 1968, p. 37, 1968, as quoted in Housang Ameri, Politics of staffing the United Nations Secretariat, Major Concepts in Politics and Political Theory, Vol. 8, Peter Lang, New York, 1996, p. 549.

"Some members of the [UN] staff have great ability and commitment but they support a great many parasitic 'deadwood' employees and employees serving primarily the political interests of their government. ... The principle of merit can in the long run be protected only by fair and objective procedures and safeguards, which are subject to law and to effective grievance procedures. But ... should the present trends continue ... the staff would probably be suspected of lacking neutrality and might lose the confidence of some Member States. The result might be paralysis of the Secretariat, which would be unable to play an effective role in situations of crisis."

Theodor Meron, The United Nations Secretariat: The Rules and the Practice, Chapter 4, "Selected legal questions", D.C. Heath, Lexington, Mass., 1977, pp. 83-84. [emphasis added.]

[Note: Mr. Meron is a former delegate to the UN, international law professor at New York University, and currently serves as president of the UN tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.]

"A complaining staff member is immediately classified as a 'personnel case', presumably because he or she has had the temerity to intervene. If the complaint has to do with management direction, all hands in OPS [Personnel] and its affiliates close ranks to gather material to fashion as strong a personnel case as possible, and no recognition whatsoever is made of the key management issue.

The guilty persons can get away with this kind of irresponsible performance more readily in the bureaucratic system of the UN than in any foreign office, however small. There is no really effective vertical responsibility upwards within the UN table of organization, nor effective direction downward ..."

Donald Dunham, "Management by personnel action", Secretariat News (New York), **November 30, 1984**, p. 11. [emphasis added]

"A distinguished professor of international law once deplored the fact that 'the League of Nations has been abandoned to the diplomats', but the UN Secretariat is much more dependent on the national diplomatic bureaucracies. They derive invaluable flexibility and power from having additional posts at their disposal ... to confer favors but also to displace unwanted staff. ... the incentives are all the greater because many UN posts, especially the senior ones, are much sought after because of the [high] scales of pay ... and the prestige they carry.

A diplomatic ideology has even developed at the UN, [that] there is no higher dignity than that of Ambassador, holders of this title being by definition capable of taking up any high-ranking post, even in a technical field. This naturally generates a bias in favor of 'generalists' at the expense of other professionals."

Maurice Bertrand, "The recruitment policy of United Nations staff", in de Cooker, Chris, ed., International Administration: Law and Management Practice in International Organisations, UNITAR, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, the Netherlands, **1989**, II.2/1-9, pp. II/2 and /3.

[Note: Mr. Bertrand served as an Inspector in the UN Joint Inspection Unit from 1968-1985.]

"Survival of the unfittest

.... Few [UN system] agencies have staff able or willing to develop anything new. Many are packed with time-servers more concerned with the forms of international bureaucracy, above all their own little empires, than practical results.

.... the UN is right to [seek balance] and discriminate in favour of people from the third world.

Alas, third world countries are less discriminating in choosing who to send there. For them the UN agencies serve often as a convenient dumping-ground for people they would rather not have at home, because they are incompetent or a political threat. And under the guise of equity, they have insisted that cushy jobs be created for their nationals at all levels of the UN.

The richer countries, who complain the loudest about this, must share the blame for [politicized recruitment] to an international civil service [theoretically] beyond the reach of national governments.

Member governments' intrusive backing of their own nationals has created a system in which merit plays little role. Too many UN staff have got in (and on) not because of what they achieved, but because of where they came from, who they knew or who owed whom a favour."

"The United Nations agencies: A case for emergency treatment", The Economist, **December 2, 1989**, pp. 27-28, 30 [28].

[emphasis added.]

"UN officials who advocate a cleanup ... say that management by ... top officials has been inept and, occasionally, corrupt. 'There is no [regular] supervision of any agency' ... said [a senior official.] Governing councils ... are 'basically rubber-stamp bodies.'

The U. N. Board of Auditors ... cites numerous [problems] and 'weak internal controls' ... during 1990 and 1991 ...

[Many anomalies [that they report] 'appear to be recurring' and point to a 'lack of determination to enforce regulations and rules and make the heads of units of the organization accountable,' the report says.

A recent confidential internal paper circulating in the U. N. Development Program ... put the problem more bluntly. Citing 'a deplorable vacuum of basic ethics' in the system, it noted widespread criticism of 'prolific structures, pompous-Byzantine attitudes of ranking officials, operational inefficiency and ... gross mismanagement of financial and personnel resources.'"

William Branigin, "The U.N. empire: polished image, tarnished reality", "As U.N. expands, so do its problems: Critics cite mismanagement, waste", Washington Post, **September 20, 1992**, p 4.

"Current problems in what you [Secretary-General Butros Butros-Ghali] 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. ...

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."

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

" ... all United Nations agencies specializ[e] in the production of pious verbiage, which skillfully combines highmindedness with the self-interest of its staff ... for the fact is that agencies ... are inherently corrupt and corrupting, regardless of who directs them.

... This is not to say that [they do] no good work at all, ... or that [they do] not have sincere and competent staff in ... lower echelons. But at ... higher levels politicking and jockeying for position overwhelm any lingering concern for [the agency's mission].

[The agency] hires not by competence but by allocation of jobs among member nations. This not only amounts to positive discrimination in favour of the incompetent but ensures that political skills matter more than technical capacity."

Anthony Daniels, the Sunday Telegraph (UK), **25 April 1993**.

[emphasis added.]

Determined General Assembly resolutions seeking accountable management in the late 1980s and early 1990s produced little Secretariat response to this sorry situation. Finally, in 1993, as discussed in the archive subsection on 1993 Management Accountability Attempt , the Assembly passed its very specific

management accountability resolution (48/218 A). The Secretariat, however, fought back with its own proposals, not only to forestall implementation of the new management accountability requirements, but to promote instead a vigorous strategy of "freeing the managers to manage".

This process of liberation began under Secretary-General Butros Ghali from 1993 to 1996. But it has been even more vigorously pursued by Secretary-General Annan from 1997 up to the present time. It should be noted that Mr. Annan is the ultimate UN "insider", having spent almost his entire career of 40 years as a UN staff member, with the last 15 as a senior official. The following six capsule quotes show the steady pressure for UN management freedom from the original aggressive 1993 declaration of independence" on up to the present day:

"The more complicated and increased demands by Member States ... may require adjustments in [Secretariat regulations and rules] ... The balance between centralized controls and the legitimate concerns for a more decentralized style of management will have to be rethought. ...

... But *ad hoc* adjustments will not address the central problem of [balancing] ... **the need for a greater degree of managerial discretion by senior staff** and the ultimate responsibilities of the Secretary-General to Member States. A thorough review of the [relevant] regulations, rules and procedures [for staff] will be undertaken ... to

provide sufficient discretion in the conduct of their work, and in particular in the use of resources, to permit [UN] programme managers ... to implement mandates ... in an effective and efficient manner, while preserving adequate central control and oversight ... [and]

make the necessary adjustments to the [existing UN] systems of accountability and responsibility."

"Accountability and responsibility of programme managers in the United Nations: Report of the Secretary-General", UN document A/48/452 of **October 5, 1993**, paras. 57, 59. [emphasis added.]

"The Secretary-General's strategy for modernizing the management of the Organization's human resources ... encourages improved managerial skills, increased managerial responsibility and effectiveness through increased delegated authority, responsibility and accountability as well as optimal individual staff performance and, thereby, improved organizational performance."

"Implementation of the strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources: Report of the Secretary-General", UN document A/C.5/51/1 of **16 August 1996**, Summary.

"I am pleased to submit ... what I believe to be the most extensive and far-reaching reforms in the fifty-two year history of the Organization. ...

... the Organization needs to be significantly reconfigured to do better ... also so realize significant administrative efficiencies.

...

The report seeks ... on my own initiative, nothing less than to transform the leadership and management structure of the Organization. ..."

"Renewing the United Nations: A programme for reform: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/51/950 of **14 July 1997**, Letter of transmittal.

... The prime responsibility for taking action to remedy accidental and intentional performance failures will lie with supervisors and managers at all levels. ...

... In addition the Department of Management is considering the setting up of transparent accountability mechanisms ..."

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General", UN document A/53/414 of **13 October 1998**, paras. 6-9. [emphasis added]

"The next few years will see the consolidation and institutionalization of the [management reform] changes introduced to date, and further improvements aimed at ensuring ... [accordance] with worldwide standards of good practice. ... so as to enable the Organization to attract, develop, and retain staff of the highest quality ... [with] due attention to the request by the General Assembly that [the Secretary-General] continue to improve accountability and responsibility in the reform of human resource management, as well as monitoring mechanisms."

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/57/293 of **8 August 2002**, para. 12.

[Note: this language would have been much precise and accurate if it had said "attention to the *many and repeated* request[s] of the General Assembly" and to "continue to improve *management* accountability and responsibility *in the UN secretariat*", although that lesser task that it did specify has also not been honored.]

"Improving the quality of management was a priority of my first term. I have put great emphasis on establishing clear lines of responsibility and ensuring that managers are held accountable ... I am confident that [our] new system of recruitment, by giving managers primary responsibility for staff selection, will lead to a new level of accountability and empowerment. ...

I intend to adopt additional measures to cut unnecessary layers of bureaucracy. At present, the Organization recruits highly qualified individuals for management functions -- yet its procedures do not allow them to manage a budget, procure what they need for everyday activities or authorize travel for their staff.

As decision-making authority is devolved to programme managers, the roles and responsibilities of the central service provider ... will need to be reviewed. "

"Strengthening of the United Nations: An agenda for further change: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/57/387 of **9 September 2002**, paras. 188-190.[emphasis added.]

This determined parade of new Secretariat initiatives to progressively free UN managers, with ever-greater assertions of the benefits to (someday) be obtained, has gone on now for eleven years and shows no signs of ending. Unfortunately, however, IO Watch concludes that this grand process of liberating the

managers to "manage, buy and travel" **has never been joined with implementation of the management accountability processes and sanctions for managers who perform unsatisfactorily or abusively.**

The effect, not surprisingly, has been deteriorating overall management performance in the UN Secretariat. Mr. Annan may have hoped that good new managers hired would somehow overpower the bad ones, but the fact is that those bad ones continue to exist, and to arrive, in the UN Secretariat, and it seems that their very negative impact on UN performance, morale, and credibility continues to grow and grow.

Flashing caution signs about this Secretariat management deterioration have been posted all along the way over the past decade, as shown by the following capsule quotes.

The first head of the transitional unit preceding the OIOS, Mohamed Aly Niazi, spoke from years of hard internal oversight experience when he informed the General Assembly in 1994 that:

"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 OII] has addressed symptoms but has not yet been able to address the root causes of many [UN] problems.

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...."

"Report of the Office of Inspections and Investigations", UN document A/49/449, **28 September 1994**, pages 5-6. [emphasis added]

More than 4,200 UN staff were queried in a worldwide survey in 1995 about their work. While generally satisfied, the staff identified bureaucratic managers and systems as the "Achilles heel" of UN operations. The results indicated that:

"When it comes to organization and supervision, [43 percent] consider that their supervisor's performance is inadequate ... or downright bad. Professional staff are the most concerned. ..."

... On the whole, staff members want better -- i.e., qualified -- managers, more accountability within the Organization and more personal initiative and responsibility."

"Picture of UN staff: A worldwide survey: Organized by UN staff for UN staff", Geneva, **25 September 1995**, pp. 3, 5, 10, 13-14.

A 1995 article on a staff-management dispute over the right of staff to challenge the performance ratings given them by managers focused the debate very concisely:

"In considering [this dispute] ... a critical question has been avoided: what is the rationale for increasing the vulnerability of staff to unfair and/or arbitrary judgements by administrators? The pat answer to that -- it will allow "managers to manage" -- is unconvincing because the most serious problem affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Secretariat has been bad management. ...

The Secretariat reforms proposed by the Secretary-General would ... remove a range of checks and balances built into the international civil service for the very obvious reason that in a multicultural, multinational context, justice must not only be done but be seen to be done. While the integrity of the [staff performance] rebuttal process might seem an arcane matter to outsiders, it is the only recourse for a staff member victimized by a bad manager. To weaken it would be to reduce the integrity of the entire structure ...

The United Nations will clearly [face] ... wrenching changes in the period ahead, and it would be both unfair and counterproductive to do away now with the only means staff have to hold managers accountable."

"Staff-management spat with possible serious impact reflects a joyless 50th anniversary," International Documents Review, **16 October 1995**, p. 2. [emphasis added]

A 1993 UN consultant study which surveyed the UN management culture had already noted the serious underlying problems in the Secretariat (confirmed by other analyses), arising from:

(a) a United Nations 'board of directors with 185 members and sensitive, competing and even conflicting views ...

(b) an organizational culture that increasingly values control over facilitation, "process" over outcomes, hierarchy over collaboration, and personal power over collective purpose, all in a highly sensitive multicultural context;

(c) complex and cumbersome managerial systems [that] ... nevertheless permit abuses of authority;

(d) the perception that management and administration are of lesser worth than "substantive" work;

(e) the very broad span of control ... [at top levels] and the often poor communication ... throughout the Organization;

(f) a general confusion about the [UN's] goals and objectives;

(g) a lack of the clearly understood standards and measurements required to establish accountability for ... performance;

(h) valuing staff rights over the needs of the Organization, leading to ... [cumbersome] rules and processes that subvert managers' ability to lead;

(i) bending hiring and promotion rules to allow personal and political objectives to supercede those of the [UN];

(j) [complex and cumbersome] financial and budgetary procedures that ... [often lead to] untimely and almost-useless work; and

(k) controlling offices [concentrating on preventing failure rather than] encouraging success or improving systems ..."

As cited in

Joint Inspection Unit, "Management in the United Nations: Work in progress", UN document A/50/507, **1995**, para. 113.

A 1995 JIU report also explored Secretariat progress in management reform and stated in general that:

"United Nations management' has been termed an oxymoron, a juxtaposition of incompatibles. Over the past fifty years, there have been various attempts to strengthen United Nations programmes and improve their management, but they have not been well implemented. ...

However, the future status and credibility of the United Nations require it to demonstrate that it is a learning organization which will skillfully and flexibly manage its limited resources to produce results ...

The current effort is undoubtedly the best, and possibly the last, opportunity to establish a strong management culture and performance emphasis in the United Nations."

Joint Inspection Unit, "Management in the United Nations: Work in progress", UN document A/50/507, 1995, "Executive Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations."

The same JIU report concluded that perhaps the situation was now beginning to change, but also cited two telling examples that suggested not:

"... the Inspector does know of a comparatively relatively recent situation in which a professional staff member complained to a senior administrative assistant about their new Director's almost total lack of involvement in 'his' unit's work, and she responded, with earnest disbelief, 'But Directors are not supposed to do any work.'

The current [top UN manager] recently observed that he could not forget the 'tremendous burst of applause' at a 1995 meeting he had with staff in Geneva when a staff member denounced the low quality of management. He cited this incident as a 'defining moment' in his relationship with the [UN], and recognized the right of staff to good leadership and his obligation to give it to them."

Joint Inspection Unit, "Management in the United Nations: Work in progress", UN document A/50/507, 1995, paras. 114-117. [emphasis added.]

The first head of the OIOS, Mr. Karl Th. Paschke, stated in his first annual report to the General Assembly in 1995 that, with regard to accountability, he sought an active partnership with managers. But even he was troubled by their attitudes:

"... efforts must be made to do away with the widespread tendency of staff, even in key positions, to shun responsibility and accountability. OIOS backs measures taken by the [DAM] to achieve this goal and will focus its own recommendations to management accordingly. ...

... Many UN managers are not used to and seem to be quite reluctant to accept criticism, particularly when it comes to applying accountability criteria rather than settling for the promise that some specific problems won't recur. This feature of the United Nations culture must be changed if we are ever to develop staff awareness and acceptance of responsibility and accountability. **United Nations managers must stop being defensive** and enter into a critical dialogue with OIOS. In order to make oversight effective, we offer ourselves as partners, not adversaries."

"Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the [OIOS]", UN document

Another report, by a blue ribbon group of UN "insiders" in 1997, cited the accountability complications and acrimony in UN decision-making. The group feared that various practices, habits, attitudes, and misperceptions on the part of both the Secretariat and Member States had fueled an "us versus them" mentality that could well [and in fact did and seems to continue to] undermine UN management reform attempts. The report summarized the respective "sins" involved:

"Sins of member states:

Secretariat staff resent ...member state interference in ... their daily work ... [their micromanagement of] the hiring and promotion of Secretariat personnel ... [and of] Secretariat budgeting, too often ...seeking to control the minor details of spending allocations.

Secretariat staff members are also frustrated by lack of clear direction from intergovernmental bodies. Too often member states fail to agree on how best to confront global problems Moreover, mandates are frequently assigned to the Secretariat with little thought as to the resources needed for their implementation.

Sins of the Secretariat:

.... Member states contend that ineffective -- some would say nonexistent -- managerial practices throughout the Secretariat have led to inefficient use of the [UN resources] ...; a staff unaccountable for its actions and prone to delegate upwards; insufficient program coordination ...; and wasteful duplication of efforts. There has been a lack of transparency in Secretariat decision making [on] policy issues, personnel, and budget expenditures. ... much of the information that is provided is not timely or readable. ... Overall, inefficiency and lack of accountability within the Secretariat, whether perceived or real, have invited member state micromanagement."

"Making UN reform work: Improving member state-Secretariat relations", Report of the twenty-eighth United Nations issues conference, The Stanley Foundation, February 21-23, 1997, pp. 2, 14-16. [emphasis added.]

Management conflicts were also revealed in an *International Documents Review* article in early 1998 about a project which the new head of OHRM was undertaking for a "thorough review" of UN staff matters. The article observed that she sought delegation of 'maximum responsibility' to line managers, because central control is 'excessive.' She stated that:

"OHRM will convene ... a task force of experts [to make a] 'clear delineation of responsibilities' [which] is expected to lead to a reduction in micro-management.

[The IDR then notes that] Micromanagement by intergovernmental bodies is an index of the lack of trust between the majority of delegations and the UN Secretariat. ... [If this trend is to be reversed] there must be a much clearer conceptualization of change, a balanced explanation of implications, and an absolute sincerity of purpose. The current perception of the Secretariat among many delegations is that in terms of personnel policy it is confused, does not understand the full implications of what is proposed, and has a hidden agenda. ...

In pushing for reorientation, Ms. Salim speaks some home truths... 'We can no longer assume that a [20-year] staff member has developed the necessary managerial and supervisory skills' ... there is 'widespread staff distrust of management' and the UN's

'organizational culture is one in which advancement is generally expected on the basis of longevity rather than performance.'

"UN personnel chief reviewing all aspects of management in bid to simplify controls, delegate authority," International Documents Review, **16 February 1998**, p. 2. [emphasis added.]

Meanwhile Mr. Paschke, despite his earlier faith that UN managers could develop and apply their own performance and monitoring systems, was having second thoughts. The OIOS found in 1998 that:

"The quality of departmental submissions received by OIOS for the 1996-1997 programme performance period clearly indicates that, in many departments and offices, there is still inadequate commitment to oversight, and, consequently no coordination or managerial mechanism that collects and analyses on a routine basis information on the progress made and results achieved under the various activities and programmes. Many departments still do not have either a senior planning and coordination function ... or a unit to provide coordinated feedback on the success and shortfalls in programme implementation. [Progress requires that programme managers recognize] ... such systems as basic management tools for improving efficiency and effectiveness of implementation."

"Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the OIOS", UN document A/53/428, **23 September 1998**, Preface, para. 184 . [emphasis added.]

An assessment of recent UN peacekeeping problems illustrated the ongoing management problems in the critical major area of UN field operations:

"After the ... chaos in Sierra Leone, [many people have urged changes in UN peacekeeping]. But such demands assume that the UN is capable of reform. Unfortunately, that may not be the case.

The UN is always short of the personnel it needs for peacekeeping operations. First World countries with first-rate armies are usually unwilling to put their troops at risk. Thus, these operations are often left to Third World countries, and the UN sends some of the worst soldiers in the world off to situations where it can only hope they are not called on to do anything.

The same is true of the UN's police monitors, who are supposed to improve respect for human rights.

When peacekeepers perform badly, it is too politically embarrassing to remove them. This is particularly true of senior officials since they were often given their jobs not because of their ability but because of the country they represent. For instance, as the situation in Sierra Leone began to melt down, UN officials in New York, who usually micromanage things, began to blame the officials in Africa for the failure."

Dennis C. Jett, "The UN's peacekeeping failures are built in and intractable", International Herald Tribune, **May 23, 2000**.

[Note: Mr. Jett, an advisor at the Carter Center, is the author of Why peacekeeping fails, St. Martins, New York, 2000, and was U.S. ambassador to Mozambique from 1993-1996]

A much-awaited report in 2001 on serious performance problems and crises in the major, and critical, operational area of UN peacekeeping was similarly blunt in its criticisms.

"The Brahimi report implicitly criticizes the appointment of key peacekeeping personnel on geopolitical grounds, rather than on merit, and details how UN senior peacekeeping staff in the field -- civilian and military -- should prepare for duties. In the case of Sierra Leone, there is little evidence of any preparation at all. As the report states, 'Put simply, the UN is far from being a meritocracy today, and unless it takes steps to become one, it will not be able to reverse the alarming trend of qualified staff ... leaving the organization.' These are fighting words at the UN, where turf, national advantage, and every job are fought over and preserved with a vigor that belies the public image of UN torpor in most other respects. The UN is urged by the panel to create a standing pool of civilian personnel specializing in field service ... , in the absence of which inexperienced and untrained staff must start afresh in every peacekeeping operation, thus inevitably making many avoidable mistakes early on."

David M. Malone and Ramesh Thakur, "UN peacekeeping: Lessons learned?", Global Governance, 7 (2001), 11-17 [14]. [emphasis added.]

[Note: the report referred to is the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations [the "Brahimi report"], UN document A/55/305 -- S/2000/809 of **August 21 2000**, which is available at www.un.org/documents under the A document number]

In 2001 when Secretary-General Annan was re-elected for a second term, even his supporters emphasized that there was still very much work to be done to improve UN management.

-- One editorial emphasized that he "must continu[e] to curb patronage and wasteful spending elsewhere in the UN bureaucracy."

-- A former senior official praising Mr. Annan nevertheless warned that "Decisive action should not continue to be postponed in regaining the motivation and professional quality of the United Nations in its earlier years."

-- And another admirer stated bluntly that "The personnel system is still a disaster, which he must now tackle resolutely."

"Kofi Annan's record", The New York Times, **27 March 2001**,

Enrique ter Horst, "A Re-elected Secretary-General can give the world the facts", International Herald Tribune, **6 July 2001**, and

William Shawcross, "Another five years at the UN helm for Annan, of course", International Herald Tribune, **27 June 2001**.

But IO Watch finds that UN bad-management problems have continued to expand, as discussed in some detail under the preceding sections of this archive.

-- Managers have now been empowered not only to select their own staff, but to investigate them at any time for perceived misconduct.

-- UN whistle-blowers seem to be an extinct species, although the General Assembly emphasized that they were to be a functioning and closely-protected one.

-- Mr. Annan admitted (but has done precious little to change) the widespread belief that the UN internal justice system shields managers from accountability for their decisions.

-- A new "code of conduct" developed by the UN Administration turned staff rights into obligations and was quite soft on "due process" requirements.

-- A long-standing process keeps too many UN staff in limbo as "floaters", "discards", and "walking wounded", even as the Secretariat speaks stoutly of "zero tolerance" for harassment, and control of managerial misconduct.

-- new quasi-judicial processes threaten summary dismissal and other grim fates for staff in the shadows of the inadequate internal justice system, including potential criminal prosecutions (but not for managers).

-- and an OHRM long known for its own liberal exceptions to UN rules, is now tasked by the General Assembly with oversight of management accountability, although its role is only slowly developing and remains very vague.

The deficiencies of this "brave new world" of UN management freedom without accountability were confirmed by the US General Accounting Office in 2004, when it reported that:

"In 2002, the ... [OIOS] found that program managers and department and office heads were not complying with U.N. regulations. ... nearly half of program managers were not regularly monitoring and evaluating program performance. In addition, program managers were not held accountable for meeting program objectives because U.N. regulations prevent linking program effectiveness and impact with program managers' performance. U.N. officials told us that a more mature program monitoring and evaluation system is needed before program managers can be held responsible for program performance.

We found that there were a variety of problems ... Most programs do not have comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plans ... overall, evaluation findings were not used ...

The Secretary-General tasked the ... OIOS to develop a strategy to systematically evaluate and monitor programme results and to introduce information systems needed ... and expects to have a complete system by 2006.

U. S. General Accounting Office, United Nations: Reforms progressing, but comprehensive assessments needed to measure impact, GAO 04-339, **February 2004**, pp. 19-23 [22-23]. [emphasis added.]

The GAO concluded that there was a strong need for Member States to insist on regular reporting by the Secretary-General on the status and impact of all recent and current reforms, and to work to especially to overcome the resistance of managers to the reforms:

"To promote full implementation and accountability of the Secretary General's overall reform actions, we recommend that the Secretary of State [and the US Mission to the UN] work with other member states to encourage the Secretary General to

- Report regularly through an existing U.N. reporting mechanism on the status and impact of the 1997 and 2002 reforms and other reforms that may follow ..."

"[Because of the resistance, and lack of guidance and resources for implementing the reforms] ... the Secretariat is providing training to all departments to assist managers and staff in conducting self-monitoring and evaluation exercises to comply with performance-oriented budgeting and overcome resistance. Managers' support is critical for the institutionalization of reforms in the long term."

U.S. General Accounting Office, United Nations: Reforms progressing, but comprehensive assessments needed to measure impact, GAO 04-339, **February, 2004**, pp. 36, 35.

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

Most recently and widely, a quite significant and up-to-date UN-wide staff survey, released in June 2004 and cited in several concluding parts of this archive, criticized the "ingrown" UN leadership and its lack of response to reports of corruption:

"A new survey of ... [UN integrity perceptions has found that] while structures for reporting and combating corruption exist, most staff members are either unaware of how to use them or afraid to do so for fear of high-level retaliation.

'The UN has a 'phone book' of rules and regulations which are totally useless as they are never practiced', a staff member is quoted as saying ... [Another says,] 'Senior leaders caught in serious breaches of ethics should be punished, not promoted as usual.'

... [The study] is being made public at a time when Secretary-General Kofi Annan has been forced by the widespread publicity [about corruption in the Iraq oil-for-food program] to appoint a high-level panel to look into [it] ...

The new study records relatively high levels of worker satisfaction ... but its most negative findings have to do with ingrown leadership and the lack of response to reports of corruption.

'Get rid of the old boy network,' one staff member ... [says.] 'That network is wide, tenacious and powerful. ... So long as you can wind your way into that network, you are OK. ... Opposing the network is certainly the end of a UN career.'

Warren Hoge, "Report criticizes the way UN fights corruption", International Herald Tribune, June 16, 2004. [emphasis added.]

[Note: The actual survey is

"United Nations organizational integrity survey", Final Report, prepared by Deloitte Consulting LLP, **June 2004.**

[Can the more than 6,000 staff worldwide who responded to this survey be wrong about this anti-integrity bias of the UN leadership?

It is also interesting to note, in comparing this 2004 survey with the one in 1995 cited previously, that things have indeed gone downhill -- staff in both surveys sought better management, but in 2004, after a decade of "reform", they are

much more concerned with senior management accountability issues.]

The UN Secretariat, at present, thus seems suspended in an unaccountable world. This is all very nice for its empowered managers. But IO Watch concludes that the Secretariat's determination to free them -- the good, the bad, and the ugly -- to do whatever they want in the Secretariat with impunity -- displays only the leadership's inability or unwillingness to enforce accountability and insist that managers who mis-perform will be sanctioned.

This way lies the decline and fall of the UN, in a fundamental loss of credibility and morale. Instead of the intended assessment of views about "Integrity" that the 2004 staff survey sought, staff in fact provided their grave concerns about the opposite -- an absence of accountability.

The General Assembly needs to join with the staff and to insist, as the following incisive quote states, on once and for all getting rid of bad UN managers. If the leadership cannot act, it is time to find some new top managers who "are up to managing this outfit."

"[In an] info-tech based economy, people are all that's left, and for most companies that's a big problem because it means **underperformers -- and especially underperforming managers -- have to be moved aside or moved out. The great majority of companies can't handle it.**

Keeping poor performers means that development opportunities for promising employees get blocked ... productivity and morale fall, good performers leave, the company attracts fewer A players, and the whole miserable cycle keeps turning. ...

It gets worse. Employees [and top executives] know who the underperformers are. So **every day the top team fails to address the problem, it's sending a message: We're not up to managing this outfit.** ...

Most companies have serious work to do here. Where to start? That's easy: at the top. Dealing systematically with under performers is hard ... [but] Successful companies deal with underperformers systematically, every day; unsuccessful companies don't. As the economy slows, **a company does absolutely no one any favor by showing it can fire people 1,000 at a time but can't one by one.**"

Geoffrey Colvin, "Make sure you chop the dead wood: Mass layoffs won't work if you can't get rid of weak managers", *Fortune*, February 2001.

[emphasis added]