

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE UN

Introductory quotes

"Article 97.

The Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Organization may require. ... The Secretary-General shall be the chief administrative officer of the Organization. ...

Article 101.3

The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographic basis as possible."

Charter of the United Nations [Emphasis added]

[Note: This key word "integrity" is often very readily and casually used UN senior officials. Please see the following thoughtful and wise definition of its true meaning for individuals (and for organizations.)]

"Integrity is like the weather: everybody talks about it but nobody knows what to do about it. Integrity is that stuff we always say we want more of.

When I refer to integrity, I have something very simple and very specific in mind. Integrity ... requires three steps:

- (1) *discerning* what is right and what is wrong;
- (2) *acting* on what you have discerned, even at personal cost; and
- (3) *saying openly* that you are acting on your understanding of right from wrong.

... A person of integrity lurks somewhere inside each of us: a person we feel we can trust to do right, to play by the rules, to keep commitments.

Indeed, one reason to focus on integrity as perhaps the first among the virtues that make for good character is that it is in some sense prior to everything else: the rest of what we think matters very little if we lack essential integrity, the courage of our convictions, the willingness to act and speak in behalf of what we know to be right."

Stephen L. Carter, Integrity, 1996, Basic Books, New York, pp. 6-7.

[Note: Mr. Carter is the William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law at Yale University, and the author of several critically-acclaimed books on related topics.]

"To [progress] toward an international civil service, there must be a recognition of the fundamental principles forming the foundation for such a service.

.... This doctrine is most persuasively set forth in a March 1954 report of the

International Civil Service Advisory Board which prescribed four positive duties defined as basic considerations:

1. Integrity to be judged on the basis of the individual's total behavior, taking into account personal qualities such as honesty, truthfulness, fidelity, probity, and freedom from corruption influences, bearing in mind that the international civil servant is a public as well as an international official.

2. Loyalty to the international organization, combined with an international outlook flowing from understanding [and tolerance]

3. Independence of any authority outside the international organization.

4. Impartiality in the form of objectivity, lack of bias, tolerance, and restraint.

These fundamental standards were supplemented with emphasis upon the need for deliberative effort to overcome, within the secretariat, biased attitudes [and, externally,] the international official's fundamental principle of independence which has been, and continues to be, challenged by national spokesmen."

John W. Macy, Jr., "Towards an international civil service", Public Administration Review (US), **May/June 1970**, pp. 258-263 [259].

"Not long ago, an editor at the *New York Times* told me that he was uninterested in stories critical of the UN, because the UN is a 'necessary failure' and always would be. But why does it have to be so? Why do we need to continue supporting the UN's more wasteful projects? There is nothing inherently good or moral about an institution, merely because it is multilateral, merely because most countries in the world belong to it, or because it claims to be interested in Children or Health. Why is there never any examination of how the agencies spend their money?"

Anne Applebaum, "An anarchy of abounding acronyms", The Spectator (UK), **12 November 1994**, pp. 9-11 [11].

[Note: Ms. Applebaum, is also the author of, *inter alia*, a very well-received recent book, Gulag: A history, Doubleday, New York, 2003.]

Chronological Quotes

"...concern with capacity and performance [in the United Nations system] reaches its highest peak when draft programmes and budgets are discussed and seems to evaporate when reports on the execution of the approved programmes are reviewed. ... This dichotomy [between budgetary concentration and performance neglect] is in itself one of the major causes of the shortfalls of the performance of the system."

Elmandjra, Mahdi, The United Nations System: An Analysis, Faber and Faber, London, **1973**, pp. 228-229.

"[Recently, as President of the Staff Union], I met with senior UN officials, [who warned me] that the staff must be extremely careful about its actions because the UN was on the verge of collapse and the tiniest upset might bring the whole structure crumbling down. I asked 'Gentlemen, do you really believe that the UN is such a fragile flower?' A solemn yes was the

reply I received. (This, I might say, is [a line] used rather consistently over the years to silence criticism and unrest. I recently saw an article from the 12 March 1947 edition of The New York Times where the first Secretary-General, Mr. Trygve Lie, was quoted as saying to a meeting of the staff, 'Everything you say will be used against this Organization by the enemies of the United Nations.')

.... more often than not, we find our [UN existence] defined by limitations and negatives rather than positives. The whole tone of present personnel policies and practices is founded on rather outdated concepts of limiting, checking, and blocking staff rather than [seeking] the optimum development of each employee so that the Organization can function better."

Lowell Flanders, "The future of the UN In whose hands?", address at a preparatory meeting of the United Nations Community Forum, Secretariat News (NY), **April 16, 1979**, pp. 10-11.

" guilty [managers] can get away with irresponsible performance more readily in the bureaucratic system of the UN than in any foreign office, however small.

When appointees to a post up the hierarchical ladder are voted politically into place by the concerned Member States group, they have a fiefdom bestowed upon them which they value for all its perquisites. independence spreads through all their activities as long as they hold office. Needless to say, in such political appointments, knowledge of the subject field, previous experience and quality of performance in the job are peripheral considerations. The result is absence of continuity in the work of the unit, questioning of the ability of the incumbents and a continuing decline in the institutional image of the UN organization in international affairs."

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

"In the 13 years that I have been with DTCD [the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development], formerly OTC, formerly BTAO, formerly etc., we have been reassessed, redefined, reoriented, readjusted, rearranged, reordered, reduced and, of course reorganized. We've been aligned and realigned, maligned, streamlined and asinined. All in the name of progress and increased efficiency. It seems to be the curse of bureaucracy that every new situation is met by reorganization. ...

There comes a time, however, when you wonder if the people responsible for all this needless turmoil will ever be held accountable. ...

Where's accountability in the United Nations? Who takes responsibility? Where does the buck stop? ... at the UN it does not seem to matter how severe the financial mismanagement or how erratic and bungling the reorganizations -- no one in management either at the Departmental or central level is held accountable.

Strange, therefore, that this Department is being slowly strangled to death through bureaucratic malfeasance and petty political haggling ...

... Where's the accountability?"

Lowell Flanders, "A.D. 65", Secretariat News (New York), **December 1984**, pp. 10-11.

"The decline of the U.N.'s public image and performance is spoken about commonly. Staff morale is at rock bottom ...

we have to look for another instrument that might help to re-establish systematically standards of quality in our work.

The most direct approach certainly is to enforce accountability and the emphasis should clearly be on failures. Unfortunately, they occur more often than successes, and for the time being, avoiding failures seems to be more important to our public image than scoring successes

-- which nobody really expects of us. ...

Responsibility ought to be accompanied by proper progress and performance evaluation. This is the more difficult side of the coin, as evaluation necessarily involves subjective judgement. It is evident, though, that we have not as yet found a satisfactory system of evaluation."

Andreas Kahnert, "Needed: U.N. accountability", UN Special (Geneva), **March 1985**, pp. 10-11.

"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**.

" ... Member States [difficulty] in obtaining a complete picture of the processes of planning, budgeting, performance monitoring, and evaluation [was compounded because there was] ... no information on the implementation of the programmes of the preceding budget.'

' ... the new proposed programme budget ... had been drawn up without the benefit of a critical analysis of ongoing activities ... Member States were therefore unable to form a precise idea of the efficiency with which the resources were used or of the quality of the results ...'

" ... more time ought to be spent on evaluating the application and implementation of ... programmes.'

'[The General Assembly and relevant bodies] should be given more information ... to review the proposed programme properly and take enlightened decisions ... '

' ... [A Member State representative] could not believe that every programme element ... was fully useful ... Indeed, ... Member States [broadly believed] ... there was ample room for improvement, internal redeployment and reassessment of priorities. What the United Nations lacked was the machinery [for this purpose] ... A new impetus must be given to the identification of activities that were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective."

Critical statements made in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, in "Summary records", General Assembly, Fifth Committee document A/C.5/40/SR.22, paras. 3-5, 7, 15, 20 and 22, and A/C.5/40/SR.23, paras. 12-13, 38, 48, both of **6 November 1985**, as quoted in UN Joint Inspection Unit, "Reporting on the Performance and Results of United Nations Programmes: Monitoring, evaluation and management review components'", UN document A/43/124,1988, p. 3.

"Member States have ... stressed the need to be told, more clearly and more extensively what has been the programmatic performance of the Secretariat, which outputs have been delivered, and with which result....

Let us strengthen the monitoring and evaluation functions ...

Let us say clearly and dispassionately what has been done and with which result, and

equally what has not been done and why....

Let us produce more analytical performance reports

I find the essential problem one of better and more transparent information, thus permitting better decisions."

"Statement", Response to the above criticisms by UN Under-Secretary-General for Management Patricio Ruedas, **12 November 1985**, as quoted in UN Joint Inspection Unit, "Reporting on the Performance and Results of United Nations Programmes: Monitoring, evaluation and management review components", UN document A/43/124,1988, p. 3.

"No Medals for Bravery

I refer to the article 'S-G's I have known', by Brian Urquhart in UNS Jan. '88, where he labeled former Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, a 'living lie'

While it might be convenient to have found a scapegoat for the U.N.'s shortcomings and mismanagement ... [overall] accountability is lacking. [Senior officials] are rarely, if ever, held responsible within the organization.

While our top management and our staff unions always underline our missionary visions and ideals, they rarely question the practical results and the ways and means selected by the U.N. management to achieve its goals. Only the outside world dares to voice skepticism and motivated criticism ...

I remember a striking episode [at the UN's 40th anniversary ceremonies, in 1985, when] the representative of the Secretary-General, during a public and heated debate on the mismanagement of world affairs by the U.N. Organization, hastily picked up his papers and left the Assembly Hall indignantly. He [perceived] an unblemished U.N. Organization which he had [long] served. How could he ever accept that all [his happy] years of service had brought him was publicly labelled bluff and cynicism?"

E. Muller, "No medals for bravery", letter in UN Special (Geneva), **March 1988**, pp. 30-31

"Accountability, that source of institutional health, had been excluded from United Nations experience; and, along with it, indivisibly, the stimulus of direct public engagement and response. 'It is not a United Nations Organization', Aleksander Solzhenitsyn was to say, in his Nobel address of 1972, 'but a United Governments Organization.' In offering itself as the mere creature of its member governments, the United Nations system entered a state of arrested moral development, marked by the habitual emblems of immaturity: demands for approval, and incapacity for individual or collective self-questioning."

Shirley Hazzard, "Breaking Faith: I", The New Yorker, **September 25, 1989**, pp. 63-99, [76].

[Note: Ms. Hazzard worked at the UN for ten years, resigning in 1962 to become a very successful full-time writer.]

"Any new organization that is to bring to the conduct of world affairs a meaning far beyond governmental maneuvering will be brought forth by public pressure stimulated by a new degree of anxiety and alarm. It will depend, as the United Nations has not done, on quality: on accountability to human reason and accessibility to public involvement; and on the individual distinction of its officers."

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

[Note: Ms. Hazzard worked at the UN for ten years, resigning in 1962 to become a [very successful] full-time writer.]

"The crude truth about many of the UN agencies is that they don't know what they are trying to achieve; and that cronyism, sloth and incompetence would ensure they could not achieve it even if they did. The obstacles to reform are huge, the courage to tackle them nowhere visible. Still, here are some suggestions.

The system reflects the whims and false starts of 44 years. Some parts should be radically slimmed or closed entirely.

Other parts are paralysed by having too many disparate aims, too many programmes Each agency should be given a manageable set of objectives and focused on those.

Accountability must be improved. That would at least mean regular and public reports on where and how the money goes, and on how far pre-stated targets of achievement are being met.

Co-ordination between the various agencies is much talked about. It should happen.

The quality and morale of professional staff must be raised ... start rewarding merit, not political or personal connections.

Not least, the length of time anyone can run an agency should be strictly limited."

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

" ... [The UN programs which eat] up the great bulk of U.N. resources ... the economic, social and humanitarian programs aimed at development, emergency relief and 'better standards of life' around the world ... [get little scrutiny.] ...

Clearly, the United Nations employs many hard-working and idealistic people. [but] ... Parts of the system are overstaffed and lethargic, while others, particularly field offices in unpleasant places, are overstaffed and overworked. ...

Local employees tend to bear the brunt of disciplinary action ... when fraud or abuse are discovered ... while erring international professional staffers often survive and even advance in the organization. At the same time, U.N. employees who complain about irregularities [lose promotions or must transfer elsewhere.]

It is a system that tends to cover up its abuses and discourage whistle-blowers. ...

A European U.N. official, who recently left his agency in frustration, [said] 'A certain enabling environment ... allows {fraud} to happen. The question is not whether you do it or not, but whether you're stupid enough to be caught.'

"Basically, there's a lack of determination to combat the sleaze factor' he said. 'In an environment where mediocrity has a strong self-protective interest, these things flourish."

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**, pp. 3-4.

"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.

" the United Nations [increasingly supervises] elections in Third World countries [but] who is scrutinizing electoral practices at the United Nations itself? There have been far too many allegations recently of the misuse of the powers of incumbency and questions of managerial style during election campaigns at certain U.N. agencies.

The U.N. family has more than 55 organizations [and their heads] have mind-boggling powers of patronage.

Here are some [reform] suggestions from inside the arena, where this observer has watched the deal making take place.

-- Public hearings on candidates' qualifications [and action plans]

-- Any incumbents or in-house candidates must resign some months before the elections to deny them the powers of patronage.

-- Change the rules of procedure [to avoid] sordid deals that are invariably made in later rounds as the process gets protracted.

-- empanel eminent observers, including journalists, to supervise the elections. The United Nations spends millions to monitor polls [around the world]. Why not invite observers to its own elections and dispense with hypocrisy?

In the absence of an open system, the United Nations and its agencies run the risk of terminally endangering their credibility."

Pranay Gupte, "United Nations shenanigans: Elections at U.N. agencies are too often tainted by charges of underhandedness. Reform is needed", Newsweek International, **May 24, 1993**, p. 6.

[Note: Mr. Gupte is executive editor of *The Earth Times*.]

"The responses to allegations of black-market dealing and drug smuggling among peace-keeping troops in Yugoslavia are already looking unpromising. Sylvana Foa, the spokeswoman for the U.H. High Commissioner for Refugees, found it odd that anybody should be surprised that 'out of 14,000 pimply 18-year olds a bunch of them should get up to naughty tricks'"

The Spectator, **September 4, 1993**, p. 5, 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. 399.

"... Always an opaque organization, it is not easy to understand the UN's workings, and almost impossible to follow the threads of its myriad activities. Sometimes it seems more like a church for the faithful, with its attendant mysteries, than a political institution run by rational individuals.

Only four groups of people [diplomats, journalists, academics, and members of the secretariat] are familiar with its arcane ceremonies, and all of them usually conspire to sing its praises.

.... [They] all have such a vested interest in the UN that they rarely question the organization's existence.

.... I believe we should regard it with ... suspicion ... and shed no tears if it were to

disappear."

Richard Gott, "Nations divided by a lost vision", Guardian Weekly, London, **12 September 1993**, pp. 1-3.

"The United Nations is losing an estimated £270 m. each year because of corruption, waste and mismanagement, an investigation by the *Sunday Times Insight* team has discovered.

The new evidence of widespread financial abuse ... comes ... from 'Operation Irma', the trouble-ridden evacuation of wounded refugees from Bosnia.

The disclosures will fuel growing international criticism of the U.N. and its controversial refugee agency [the UNHCR], accused of incompetence and red tape. ...

An estimated £1 m. has been raised in one week in public donations, but aid agencies are bitter and angry that hundreds of times that amount of cash has been squandered by the U.N. so far this year.

Jeffrey Clark, deputy director of the Refugee Policy Group, an international agency helping refugees in Bosnia, said: 'At the very moment when the U.N. needs to persuade people and governments to spend more on expanded operations its credibility is undermined by waste, mismanagement, ineptitude, and pure stupidity.'

Nick Rufford, Ian Burrell and David Leppard, "Scandal of U.N. 'lost' millions", The Sunday Times, 15 August 1993, p. 1, [the above are only a few of the comments on UNHCR among those excerpted in the UN Special (Geneva), **October, 1993**, pp. 20, 22, 27.]

"On the very day the Sunday Times published [a very critical report on UNHCR operations in Bosnia in September 1993], I received the news of the killing of one more UNHCR colleague, Boris Zeravic, in Bosnia. The report failed to mention the sacrifices that the vast majority of the United Nations staff make, particularly the loss of life, while working in conflict situations.

The Staff Council in UNHCR agrees with the thrust of the criticisms. The staff wants to weed out corruption, mismanagement, nepotism, double-dippers, desk-warmers, and all other irregularities ... Staff representatives have been tirelessly pointing out unsavory management tendencies and reported to the governing body of UNHCR ... on how to strengthen the organization and to ensure the effective use of its human resources. The question is: what do these government representatives do with these reports when they return to their capitals ...

UNHCR ... staff on the ground work with dedication and have twice, won the Nobel Peace Prize, but they are demoralized when subjected to unjustified criticism. UNHCR staff needs the help of the media to further strengthen its humanitarian commitment to work for refugees."

Nasr Ishak, "HCR staff replies", UN Special (Geneva), **October 1993**, p. 20.

[Note: a reply letter to the *Sunday Times* article excerpted above, by the Chairman of the Staff Council, UNHCR].

" ... the four main oversight units ... are foundering:

- internal audit needs "urgent strengthening", again
- internal evaluation is an acknowledged "somewhat sickly child";
- monitoring spews out only a flood of tepid numbers;
- management advisory efforts fall far short of stated objectives.

The various other accountability, control, and oversight processes in the Secretariat fare little better:

- on-site inspection work scarcely touches operating units;
- fraud and abuse investigations are too little, too late;

- "hotlines" are considered to be too much trouble;
- information systems work is tied up in one big project;
- financial control discipline is questioned in many areas;
- management training will begin, but very late in the day;
- management improvement potential is scarcely being tapped;
- many other "assessment reports" often have little to say;
- management consultants are reserved for internal use;
- reorganizations have brought confusion as well as streamlining;
- needed programming tools have not developed as expected; and
- effective personal accountability does not exist."

Joint Inspection Unit, "Accountability and oversight in the United Nations Secretariat", UN document A/48/420 of 12 October 1993 and Add. 1 of **22 November 1993**, pp. 2, 25.

"The General Assembly ...

4. Endorses the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the establishment of a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility no later than 1 January 1995...;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to include in the system of accountability and responsibility the following elements, taking into account relevant experience within and outside the United Nations system;

(a) The establishment of clear responsibility for programme delivery, including performance indicators as a measure of quality control;

(b) A mechanism ensuring that programme managers are accountable for the effective management of the personnel and financial resources allocated to them;

(c) Performance evaluation for all officials, including senior officials, with objectives and performance indicators;

(d) Effective training of staff in financial and management responsibilities."

"Review of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", General Assembly resolution 48/218 A, **23 December 1993**, paras. I.E. 2-5.
[emphasis added]

["The fact that these very sound and well-recognized management principles [cited in the 1993 General Assembly excerpt directly above] ... seem to have been 'discovered' by the UN ... [almost fifty] years after its creation, and then only implemented in part in 1994, is a candid admission that, in the past, senior UN managers have either not been aware of, or have not been seriously concerned with, the basic need for a strong management base for the Organization's programmes and operations."]

Yves Beigbeder, The internal management of United Nations Organizations: The Long Quest for Reform, Macmillan, London and St. Martins, New York, **1997**, p. 127.

"... [UN staff and managers' capacity and expertise at all levels] must correspond to the responsibility assigned and authority delegated and must be balanced by full accountability through appropriate accountability mechanisms. An efficient organizational oversight machinery will monitor the operation of the system and conduct audits, inspections, evaluations and investigations ... The systematic control of the interrelated processes ... will provide the key to success... and contribute to the Organization's effectiveness and efficiency.

"Establishment of a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility: Report of the Secretary-General", UN document A/C.5/49/1 of **5**

August 1994, paras. 12 and 109. [emphasis added]

"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. ...

[This Office] has initiated a comprehensive overhaul of the oversight functions of the United Nations ... with high expectations but with [an acknowledged] inadequate level of resources. During this first year, [it] 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. ... "

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

"Senior [UNDP] officials say that they are going to be more aware of public relations so that people can understand what UNDP does [with its \$1.4 billion budget, second in the UN only to peacekeeping]. Listen to [it's head, James Speth] addressing his staff on the great transformation: 'It has required that we empower national and GS staff, resolve the issues of OPS and integrated offices; redefine and rationalize the roles of BPPE' and 'bring UNSO, UNV, Unifem, UNCDF, TCDC into closer synergistic relationship with the main line of the reformed UNDP programme.' Simple, really."

Ian Katz, "UN 50 years on: Aid body faces its midlife crisis", The Guardian (UK), **May 15, 1995**.

"Somewhere ... I once read an article listing '25 ways to tell that a company is about to go bankrupt.' Along with the building of a new corporate headquarters, I seem to remember that ... large, expensive, self-congratulatory social functions were considered one of the surest signs of impending collapse. It that is so, the United Nation's 50th anniversary celebrations are worth a closer look.

Secretary-General Butros Butros-Ghali said that [despite new challenges] the UN has not been given the resources required.

Unfortunately, [he] was only half right in his analysis of the UN's financial predicament. While it is true that the UN is approaching bankruptcy, What the UN needs is to stop frittering its resources on programmes and departments that are unnecessary, unimportant, and extravagantly wasteful.

If the 166 world leaders gathered in New York this week want to see [the UN] last another 50 years, perhaps they should stop preening for the cameras and ... return to the UN's core business and put an end to 50 years of wasteful diversification."

Anne Applebaum, "What a waste -- and not just the birthday party", The Spectator (UK), **October 24, 1995**.

"Many studies on the UN are produced in academia, and governments conduct their own

enquiries, but from a journalist's point of view the UN is one of the world's most under-reported organisations. So much is taken at face value and so little is known. A fog of misinformation envelopes the Secretariat, a situation which ideally suits its member governments. It is not always possible to keep some matters secret for ever and the evidence gathered here will go some way to explain what happened to the world's last, best hope.

The world of international diplomacy is a closed shop and curious outsiders are often dismissed. The covert behaviour practised in this twilight zone helps to ensure that information is reserved for those with an inside track. There is an ever-present inclination toward cover-up."

Linda Melvern, The ultimate crime: Who betrayed the UN and why, Allison & Busby, London, 1995, p. 434.

"Can 'we the peoples' do anything to help?

Yes. Take an interest in how your country's delegation votes and behaves at the UN. Don't let them get away with it!

Show that they are being watched. Write and shout. If they make deals in smoke filled rooms, let them know that you'll roast them afterwards.

Complain to your newspapers and TV stations about lack of coverage. If they say the UN is boring, tell them to get better reporters.

It's your United Nations. It says so in the Charter. Rescue it from the gray people in gray suits. Take it back!"

Ian Williams, United Nations for beginners, Writers and Readers, New York, 1995, p. 152.

The United Nations has substantially restructured its leadership and operations and partly implemented a merit-based and performance-oriented human capital system ... However, ... the overall objectives of the reform have not yet been achieved. Specifically, the United Nations has not yet implemented reforms to focus its programming and budgeting on managing the Secretariat's performance. These initiatives would enable Member States to hold the Secretariat accountable for results and are key to the success of the overall reform because they institutionalize a shift in the organization's focus from carrying out activities to accomplishing missions. ... the U.N. reform is an interrelated process and requires that all core elements be in place to succeed."

"US General Accounting Office, "United Nations: Reforms are progressing, but overall objectives have not been achieved", GAO/NSIAD-00-169, 15 pages, of **May 10, 2000**, especially summary and pp. 2-3 and 9-15, and

"United Nations: Reform initiatives have strengthened operations, but overall objectives have not been achieved", GAO/NSIAD-00-150, **May 10, 2000**, 84 pages. [emphasis added]

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

The United Nations does go through the motions. A 'Lessons Learned Unit' is currently [assessing] a peacekeeping operation in Yugoslavia, which ended in 1995, and one in Angola, which ended in 1997. Apparently, the lessons of failure come slowly.

More important than the glacial pace of self-assessment is the nature of the organization.

....

Peacekeeping missions are handled by the UN bureaucracy which has 188 bosses yet no effective oversight. The bureaucracy knows that it can ill afford to anger any of the 188 members. So it discourages initiative and avoids measuring its results or honestly evaluating its

failures.

Waste and mismanagement are not reported since the bureaucracy is not accountable to any congressman, journalist, or taxpayer. The organization's internal auditor has existed for only six years, and Madeleine Albright once referred to the office as 'a junkyard puppy.'

So for more successful peacekeeping, either the way that the UN is used by its members or the performance of its bureaucracy has to improve. Neither is likely to happen."

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

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

"The chain of accountability

1. Specifying responsibility, authority and results to be achieved ...
2. Providing guidance and support ...
3. Monitoring and assessing the exercise of responsibility and authority ...
4. Taking appropriate action

Follow-up must be capable of distinguishing between and dealing appropriately with the following

- (a) Excellent or satisfactory execution of responsibility and authority;
- (b) Unsatisfactory execution of responsibility and authority as a result of carelessness or ignorance;
- (c) Unacceptable exercise of responsibility and authority due to deliberate flouting of policies, rules and regulations, or exceeding the limits of authority;
- (d) Misconduct or fraud."

"Accountability and responsibility: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/55/270 of **3 August 2000**, Annex II.

" ... the Secretary-General is confident that the comprehensive system of accountability now in place ensures that accountability mechanisms are effectively used, are seen to be used, and ensure that staff at all levels are held accountable for their actions and inaction."

"Accountability and responsibility: Report of the Secretary-General", A/55/270 of **3 August 2000**, Summary, paras. 1-2, 47-48.

"Challenges to implementation

... No amount of money or resources can substitute for the significant changes that are urgently needed in the culture of the [United Nations].

... 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.]

"This policy brief summarizes the results of a major UNU/WIDER project ... [which] has sought to identify the main ways in which the governance needs of the world economy and polity can be strengthened, in particular to better protect the interests of the poorer developing countries. ...

The evolution or development of institutions for governance has simply not kept pace with the challenges of the twenty-first century. ...

Global governance ... is not so much about world government as it is about institutions and practices combined with rules that facilitate cooperation among key actors. ...

The United Nations is the core of any international system of governance. Therefore, it is essential to contemplate reform that would make it more credible, more legitimate and more effective. It must act in accordance with its charter. It must be democratic in achieving representation and making decisions, through participation, transparency and accountability. It must move toward political independence in relation to the powerful geopolitical actors. Some institutional changes are obviously desirable. ..."

Deepak Nayyar and Julius Court, Governing globalization: Issues and Institutions, Policy Brief No. 5, United Nations University and World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), Helsinki, Finland, **2002**, pp. v, ix, xi, 11.

"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 the Director General of the World Trade Organization from 1999 to 2002 and is 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.]

"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**.

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.

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

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

[Also, and regrettably, the GAO reports of 2000 and 2004 did not discuss or even note the critical 1993 management accountability reform mandate given by the General Assembly and its failure, concentrating instead on Mr. Annan's 1997 and 2002 reforms.]

"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 them. ...

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, based on responses from some 6,000 UN staff, is "United Nations organizational integrity survey", Final Report, prepared by Deloitte Consulting LLP, **June 2004**.

It can be found at <http://www.un.org/News/oss/sg/index.shtml> .]

" ... Staff [in the Integrity Survey] believe that not enough action is taken to investigate and address instances of unethical behaviour, and that those who expose such breaches may put themselves at risk of reprisal. Staff also perceive that the disciplinary process is applied unevenly, ... that the outcome of the process is generally not known. ...

... [and] that breaches of integrity and ethical conduct are insufficiently and inequitably addressed by the disciplinary system. At the same time, they voice concern about the consequences of 'whistle-blowing' or reporting on misconduct, and uncertainty about the mechanisms for such reporting. ... The [OIOS and Office of Ombudsman channels] ... need to be better known and made more accessible to staff at large. We will inform all staff about the means available to them for reporting on suspected misconduct. We will also develop measures to reinforce formal protection for whistle-blowers, while ensuring that they are not used to cloak false accusations."

"Dear colleagues", letter from Secretary-General Annan to UN staff on the findings of the Integrity Survey, of **4 June 2004**, pp. 2-3.

Having [found] ... that Secretariat staff don't trust the top management and are afraid to speak out for fear of reprisals, Mr. Annan's response will be to convene a group of top managers and invite staff members to speak out. ...

Does anyone see a problem here?

The basic flaws are simple: Anytime 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. ...

[A real solution] ... would probably require setting up a competing international institution, based on openness and accountability."

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

"Rosemarie Waters, [the UN Staff Union President], said that ... in the last six years, [UN] ... management had been reforming itself and increasing managerial authority, while reducing accountability. The Staff Union [had great respect for the Secretary-General's vision and reform programme goals.] ... It could not support, however, the erosion of staff rights and dissolution of oversight mechanisms as a means of implementation, [or legitimize] ... actions in which staff, through their elected representatives, had no meaningful role to play. ...

The [integrity survey] ... revealed that staff ... feared reprisals for exposing breaches of ethics, and they perceived that the disciplinary process was applied unevenly. Their view of integrity among senior managers was less than positive..

The Organization had yet to establish concrete measures for individual accountability, she continued. It was essential that areas with expanded delegation of authority for personnel decisions should be carefully examined and, if abuses were found, such delegation should be revoked. ... The [OHRM] had informed staff representatives of its inability to enforce

accountability because they lacked central authority. The Fifth Committee may wish to recommend that concrete individual accountability be developed, in consultation with staff representatives, on a priority basis."

"UN staff committee representatives tell budget committee concerns ignored in management reform report", Fifth Committee, Press Release GA/AB/3641 of **29 October 2004**, pp. 2-3.

"James O. C. Jonah, ... [who worked at the UN for three decades] ... and served as head of personnel from 1979 through 1982, ... recalled that [when the Fifth Committee initiated reforms in the late 1970s], ... a staff-management consultation process was established, and it was decided that staff representatives should be allowed to appear before the Committee. Now, it was sad to see the erosion of the international civil service in the United Nations. That had serious implications. The Committee should also have a serious look at the results of the integrity study. Never had the staff perception of integrity been so low. ... In some respects, the reforms had weakened the Secretariat considerably.

When he served as head of personnel, his biggest fight had been with programme managers, who were most resistant to reform He could not believe that such measures as giving authority to programme managers would strengthen the international civil service. What had been said about the lack of authority of the OHRM was true. Without a strong personnel office, however, there would be no uniformity of rules and fairness in the system. Governments should not take what was happening lightly."

"UN staff committee representatives tell budget committee concerns ignored in management reform report", Fifth Committee, Press Release GA/AB/3641 of **29 October 2004**, p. 4.

"Integrity sponsor unit 35:

The staff council:

[Recalling its April 2004 request that the Secretary-General establish an independent investigation of violations of the delegation of authority in the OIOS] ...

Regrets the decision of the Secretary-General to accept the findings of an incomplete investigation; ...

Further considers that the failure to fully investigate the allegations ... upholds the findings of the [staff integrity survey] that there is a lack of integrity particularly at the higher levels of the organization;

Recalls that the Secretary-General declined to accept the honourable action of the deputy Secretary-General who tendered her resignation as a result of the Baghdad bombing of a UN compound that resulted in 22 staff members perishing, to hold accountable the head of UNHCR for alleged sexual harassment and to hold accountable the chef de cabinet whose son was employed by the Secretariat in contravention of staff rules;

Decides that the senior management no longer displays the level of integrity expected of all employees of the organization;

Requests:

i. The president to convey this vote of no confidence to the Secretary-General and president of the General Assembly ...

iv. to the staff at large and;

v. to issue a press release."

"Raw data: U.N. staff resolution", Fox News (US) website, **November 19, 2004**.

Note: Fox News stated that the above was the text of a UN staff resolution which it received, calling for a vote of no confidence in Kofi Annan.

"U. N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said yesterday he was disappointed in his son for accepting payments from a key contractor in the oil-for-food programme for more than four years longer than ... previously acknowledged. ...

But the appearance of a payoff to the Secretary-General's son was just the latest ... of revelations about the Iraqi oil-for-food program ...

While the organization scrambles to respond to oil-for-food inquiries, other troubles are piling up at the organization's doorstep. ...

The U.N. peacekeeping program is wracked by accusations of rape, sexual harassment and extortion by blue helmets and civilians in the U.N. mission in Congo. ...

International pressure also is building on the United Nations and the Security Council to do more to protect civilians in Darfur, Sudan. ...

Internally, a [staff] ... group seeks to reopen an investigation of [the head of the OIOS] ... over charges of sexual harassment and favoritism ...

The U.N. staff union also has criticized Mr. Annan's willingness to exonerate Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette for failing to protect U.N. staff members in Iraq ...

[Mr. Annan] also threw out an internal report finding merit in a [recent] sexual harassment complaint against ... [UNHCR head] Ruud Lubbers."

Betsy Pusic, "Another oil-food scandal emerges", The Washington Times, **November 29, 2004**.

"The United Nations, which extols the virtues of 'good governance', is not practising what it preaches, say [many long-time observers.] ...

The complaints ... come amidst several recent scandals, including accusations of bribery, nepotism, sexual harassment, and mismanagement of peacekeeping operations overseas.

"The underlying problem is a lack of transparency and accountability" says Hillel Neuer, [one close observer.] ..

... in 2003 the OIOS cleared the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna of charges of corruption and mismanagement.

... Senior U.N. officials in New York [have reportedly routinely abused] their first class or business class airline privileges ...

[Neuer said] 'if some of the things that happen at the United Nations took place in a big corporation, people would have been fired.'

[A UN shortcoming, Neuer added, is that the investigation results emerge very slowly] ... are mostly 'white-washed' ... [and occur] only after 'a lot of prodding from the media and NGOs.'

[A reporter asked spokesman Fred Eckhard if there is] 'a record that shows that the United Nations, under Kofi Annan, has taken allegations of mismanagement and misbehaviour seriously and fired people as a result?'

[Eckhard replied] ... 'I will certainly ask for you ...'

Thalif Deen, "Corruption: U.N. failing to practice 'good governance', IPS Inter Press Service, **December 9, 2004**.

[Note: No such record seems to exist, but it definitely should, as a clear measure to confirm that the UN indeed takes accountability seriously.]

"Two lawyers for U.N. whistle-blowers urged the United Nations on Wednesday to protect staffers who want to disclose corruption at the world body, including the oil-for-food program for Iraq.

One of the lawyers said 'five or six' U.N. employees including a high-level employee had contacted him for advice on how to reveal evidence of wrongdoing in [that] ... programme without jeopardizing their careers. ...

Andre Sirois -- himself a U.N. staff member and former whistle-blower --- said ...

'In one case it was something big, that definitely would make the front page ...'

But based on his advice, none of [them] ... have gone public, he said. 'I know them. They won't. They are very quiet and under a lot of stress.' ...

While U.N. rules call for wrongdoers to be punished, they do nothing to shield staff members from reprisals when they come forward with evidence, [Tom] Devine and Sirois said.

'There is irreparable harm when freedom of speech is canceled, irreparable harm to the institution,' Devine said. 'The message is, 'Do not say anything to investigators.' ...

An independent U.N. inquiry led by [Paul Volcker is investigating] ... whether any U.N. employees received bribes or allowed kickbacks."

Irwin Arief, "Lawyers call on U.N. to shield whistle-blowers", Reuters, **December 15, 2004.**

"[In my view,] ... the UN is constitutionally incapable of conducting any operation efficiently or honestly. Ideally the UN, foreshadowing a future world government, ought to be run by a global meritocracy -- rule by the best. In practice, it is the opposite. Any state that can be legally defined as one can join the UN -- it is a club having no rules of probity or morals. ...

... The result is failure and graft. UN officials are not answerable to bodies like Congress or the U.K.'s Parliament, which would be sure to track down, expose and punish gross abuses and manifest failures. No senior UN official has ever gone to jail. It's rare for anyone to be sacked or removed. The top brass resist any kind of investigation, on principle. The oil-for-food inquiry is unique that it has taken place at all and seems to be garnering results.

But will any punishment be meted out? Will any serious reforms be pushed through? Of course not. ... As for reforms, the UN is beyond reform until membership is restricted to civilized powers that practice democracy and the rule of law and hold their rulers responsible for their actions."

Paul Johnson, "The UN is for talk, not actions," Forbes (US), **March 14, 2005.**
[Note: Mr. Johnson is an 'eminent British historian and author."]

Note: Much more discussion of UN corruption problems is included in other subsections of the archive, including Corruption Characteristics , Is the UN another Enron? , Top corruption-fighter corrupted , "The UNCTAD One" , Iraq oil-for-food programme , A real UN fraud prevention programme , Unleashed Managers , Disappearing Whistleblowers , Investigation Efforts: Is the OIOS a fig leaf? , and Suppressed Whistleblowers .

Useful Sources

(Note: informally assembled by IO Watch, roughly ranked from "most useful" on down, and subject to change as new sources are added)

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