

UN MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY STRUGGLES

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This section of the IO Watch archive begins with a review of an omnipresent and critical operational hazard of modern society and its organizations, corruption, and of the major processes to counter it, accountability and transparency. Both topics provide subsections on the many UN problems in these two areas over the past six decades.

The following subsections focus on overall difficulties of UN reform; the only major attempt at UN management accountability reform in 1993; continuing efforts to reform various UN management systems; and a distinct trend in the past half-dozen years to "free the managers" of the UN, accompanied by disturbing elements of manager/investigators investigating in their own programmes, and suppressed staff whistleblowers, and a strong need for staff self-defense tactics.

These sections, unlike the chronological quotations in the performance problems section, combine excerpt quotes with brief IO Watch commentary and summaries, in order to piece together a "story line." This connective material is required primarily because the UN's lack of serious attention to management accountability, transparency, and corruption issues means that relevant "needles" must be dug out of the UN information "haystack" and then linked together. This situation of course underscores a long-standing UN aversion to proper performance, accountability, and reporting processes, (which necessitate heightened UN staff vigilance to protect their own interests.)

The following two quotes are useful to help set the scene. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a group of 30 member countries committed to democratic government and the market economy. It has extensive publications and statistics activities; a global reach through active

relationships with some 70 other countries, NGOs and civil society; and a prominent role in fostering good governance in the public service and in corporate activity.

See <http://www.oecd.org/home/> .

In 2001 the OECD and the Organization of American States (OAS) organized a forum in Brazil with the common aim of building accountable and transparent public administrations that serve their citizens' needs. An Annex in their report presented an OECD policy brief on building public trust. It described what makes an effective and comprehensive ethics management policy, and suggested policy directions to build its further use in public institutions, under the following headings:

"Core values underpin public service
Standards of behaviour set boundaries for conduct
Putting values into effect starts with communication
Ensuring integrity in daily management
Monitoring compliance
Taking action against wrongdoing
Citizens trust public institutions if they know that
public offices are used for the public good ..."

"Annex I: OECD public management policy brief on building public trust: Ethics measures in OECD countries," in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Public sector transparency and accountability: Making it happen, OECD, Paris, 2002, pp. 189-194.

"Citizens trust public institutions if they know that public offices are used for the public good

Lessons from the OECD survey suggest the following steps for building trust in public institutions:

- Defining a clear mission for the public service. ...
- Safeguarding values while adapting to change. ...
- Empowering both public servants and citizens to report misconduct. ...
- Co-ordinating integrity measures: a precondition for success. ...
- Shifting emphasis from enforcement to prevention. ...
- Anticipating problems. ...
- Taking advantage of new technology. ...
-

...the following steps are necessary to build a consistent system of supportive mechanisms, namely the Ethics Infrastructure:

- Communicate and inculcate core values and ethical standards for public servants in order to provide clear guidance and advice to help solve ethical dilemmas.
- Promote ethical standards by preventing situations prone to conflict of interest and rewarding high standards of conduct through career development.
- Monitor compliance and report, detect and discipline wrongdoing."

"Annex I: OECD public management policy brief on building public trust: Ethics measures in OECD countries," in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Public sector transparency and accountability: Making it happen, OECD, Paris, 2002, pp. 193-194.

The above OECD guidance on actions to monitor compliance, combat wrongdoing, and build public trust may seem somewhat overwhelming. But it provides a well-thought out and coherent framework for building and maintaining these essential components of a healthy, growing, learning -- and above all accountable -- organization.

Unfortunately, UN actions on these matters, as discussed in the following subsections, fall woefully far short of meeting the basic criteria. The UN Secretariat has spent considerable time talking about them, but has not yet implemented the mechanisms and overall framework needed to ensure management accountability and control UN corruption and mismanagement, with severe negative consequences for the Organization.

The material presented below is only an initial compilation. IO Watch will be adding many more quotations in the future, and would like to add documented contributions suggested by present and former UN staff members and others interested (please see [Contact IO Watch](#)), to make this archive as full a record as possible.

(For an explanation of the nature, rationale, and parameters of the quoted excerpts found throughout this archive, please see the subsection on [archive Rationale, Development, and Parameters](#) .)

The following abbreviations of major UN organizations and entities appear throughout this archive:

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|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACABQ | Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions |
| ACC | Advisory Committee on Coordination (heads of UN system agencies, recently retitled "Chief Executives Board for Coordination") |
| Board of Auditors | of the United Nations |
| CPC | Committee for Programme & Coordination |
| DAM | Department of Administration and Management (recently retitled the Department of Management, DM) |
| DPI | Department of Public Information |
| DPKO | Department of Peace-keeping Operations |
| ECOSOC | Economic and Social Council |
| Fifth Committee | (Administrative and Budgetary) of the General Assembly |
| ICSC | International Civil Service Commission |
| JIU | Joint Inspection Unit |
| OIOS | Office of Internal Oversight Services |

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| OHRM | Office of Human Resources Management |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| UNHCR | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East |
| WFP | World Food Programme |