

THE WINNER: "FREE THE MANAGERS"

During the long, drawn-out period from 1993-2000 the General Assembly's management accountability resolution was supposedly being "implemented" by the Secretariat, but without much evidence to demonstrate that it was actually being applied and enforced. In fact, a counter-reform of great significance was also underway, at first firmly and specifically objected to by the General Assembly, but then eventually put in place by the Secretariat.

The precise origins of the idea to free UN managers from their supposed bureaucratic bondage is not easy to trace, but it may well have come literally as a 'half-baked idea" from the pressures of the pivotal "Thornburgh report" of 1993. Toward the end of his discussion of the UN's severe budget, finance and management problems, and ways to overcome it, he mentioned that:

" ... *More flexibility should be granted to managers to manage*, while they are, of course, held strictly accountable for their adherence to clear policy goals and priorities properly established by Member States through the General Assembly."

Dick Thornburgh, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, "Report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations" ["The Thornburgh report"], **1 March 1993**, p. 16. [emphasis added]

[Note: the remainder of the sentence is -- of course -- the crucial missing half of Mr. Thornburgh's point]

As discussed in the earlier subsection on Dissatisfaction with management performance, the UN Secretariat had already attempted in 1992 to deflect Assembly pressures for more accountability by arguing that the existing "framework" for accountability was quite sufficient. But the Thornburgh report, and related reports by the UN Board of Auditors and the JIU during 1993, and pressure from the US Congress, forced the Secretariat to try a new tack. A rambling Secretariat report in October 1993, which came only after four Assembly resolutions requesting it, tried casually to pontificate only on general considerations and policy-level issues. It did, however, begin a strong push for Thornburgh's managerial "flexibility," but without his emphasis on being "strictly accountable." The report argued that:

" ... many heads of departments and offices feel that the financial and personnel

management procedures of the Organization are unduly cumbersome and hinder expeditious response[s] ...

Many United Nations programme managers consider that they are held accountable to Member States for programmes which they may not have sufficient authority or resources to deliver. ... A recurrent theme is that managers in the Secretariat must be given sufficient discretion to manage, and ... entrusted with considerable discretionary control over the resources, human and financial, required to produce them.

... [programme managers' concerns] must be balanced by ... other considerations focused on the issue of accountability, considerations that have given rise over the years to the centralized controls under which managers now chafe. ...

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

... 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 ... to Member States."

"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. 49-52, 57, 59.

The Secretariat report thus gave heavy emphasis to the wishes of UN managers "chafing" under the yoke of heavy centralized controls (including the same group of officials cited in the immediately preceding subsections for their lack of managerial skills, their often reckless and abusive performance, and their ability to easily evade those controls.) It gave far less emphasis to their management responsibilities, and to the Assembly's concern with assuring firm accountability throughout the UN Secretariat.

In fact, the concurrent 1993 JIU report on accountability and oversight noted that in the absence of strong oversight and management improvement units, organizations like the UN must rely heavily on staff members themselves, supported by training not only in management skills but in implementing programmes. Yet it found that in 1993:

"Observers have consistently noted the problems of poorly-designed UN programmes, poorly-stated objectives, and unsatisfactory evaluation reports, ... in considerable part because programme managers have not had proper training ...

Similarly, [a 1990 JIU report] noted, and the Secretary-General concurred, that ... programme managers did not know the rules and procedures on acceptance and use of extrabudgetary funds, leading to uncertainties, confusion, and vague reporting on [this] major funding source for United Nations programmes.

The Secretary-General reported in late 1992 that he would implement a comprehensive ... [training system for staff at all levels.] The report noted ... [a] 'serious gap' between what almost 15,000 staff would need and the resources available for training. For instance, the priority programme -- supervisory training -- reached only 120 people in the 1991-1992 training year and only 550 people since its inception. The United Nations presently spends only 0.29 percent of its staff costs for occupational and

management training, well below the comparable 2 to 3 percent that comparable United Nations entities and some governments spend."

Joint Inspection Unit, "Accountability and oversight in the United Nations Secretariat", JIU/REP/93/5, UN document A/48/420, **1993**, paras. 107-109.

[Note: the second report referred to is Joint Inspection Unit, "Extrabudgetary resources of the United Nations: Towards transparency of presentation, management, and reporting", UN document A/45/797, 1990.

Not surprisingly, the Assembly was not impressed with the managers' complaints in the October 1993 report. It "regretted" the inadequacy of the report, and in a very unusual, decisive, and specific demand, called for the establishment of the transparent and effective system of management accountability no later than 1 January 1995.

"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.

In 1994, the Secretary-General's report solemnly agreed on the long-overdue need for OHRM to finally address its essential planning and management functions and overcome inadequate "people management." It also acknowledged the need for full accountability as called for by the Assembly resolution, and even stated that efficient oversight machinery and systematic control would provide "the key to success" in achieving UN effectiveness and efficiency. It admitted further that much work was needed to revise and formalize related UN policy guidance and rules. At the same time, however, the Secretariat had already begun to forge ahead with plans and actions to delegate authority away from the highly-centralized administrative system, and especially to "empower managers to make decisions and take actions."

"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, 22-27, 47, 55.

The Secretariat report stated that "the basics" of a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility for the UN would be in place by January 1 1995. However, it then complained about the vast and annoying rules and ever-increasing reporting requirements which kept managers from implementing programmes, and stated that:

"There is now an urgent need ... for considerable deregulation in the Secretariat ... to enhance the capacity of managers, to allow them greater flexibility ... [and encourage them] -- in brief to manage better.

... the utmost care should be taken to develop a real 'management culture'... Managers must have the flexibility they need, ... incentive ... to achieve economies, and then ... the freedom to utilize the resources released ... In short, the objective ... should be the creation of a mission-driven and result-oriented Organization in which the Secretariat and the intergovernmental bodies interact, but have the confidence to concentrate ... on their respective functions: execution ... and programme

implementation in the case of the Secretariat, and in the case of the *intergovernmental bodies*, the provision of *mandates and overall policy guidance*."

"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. 105-109.

The Secretariat's evident great enthusiasm for this new, dynamic world of managerial flexibility, incentives, and freedom rather than burdensome rules and reporting to governing bodies, grew ever stronger.

In 1995, the JIU found that the first management reform area requiring much work was policy guidance and instructions. The Secretariat had identified many specific areas which needed revision, including a long-outdated official Organizational Manual, but it was very vague about any actions being taken. In contrast, it had forged ahead to issue new guidance to major duty stations on delegating authority in human resource management matters. Similar delegation in financial management was prevented by the need stressed by Member States to first greatly improve and strengthen UN rules procedures, and measures in this area.

Joint Inspection Unit, "Management in the United Nations: Work in progress", UN document A/50/507, **1995**, paras. 58-66.

In a 1996 progress report on human resources reform, the Secretariat reported that it had focused strategy implementation on "a managed system of increased delegation of human resources and benefits administration authority to programme managers..." Then, in March 1997 the new Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, also reported that

"Previous management measures

Programme Managers [now in capitals!] have been empowered to take action in their areas of responsibility, thus reducing layers of centralized administration."

"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, para. 4, and

"Executive summary of the measures outlined in the letter of 17 March 1997 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly," UN document A/INF/51/6 of **17 March 1997**, p. 3.

The General Assembly was well aware of what was going on. In an angry resolution in April 1997 it called for further and more specific reports, and stated that it regretted with deep concern that further progress in implementing the Strategy had not been achieved. It also stated very pointedly that it:

II. Reaffirm[s] its resolution 48/218A of 23 December 1993, in particular the request therein for a mechanism ensuring that programme managers are accountable for the effective management of human resources allocated to them,

...
2. Requests the Secretary-General to enhance managerial accountability with respect to human resources management decisions, including imposing sanctions in cases of demonstrated mismanagement of staff and willful neglect of or disregard for established rules and procedures, while safeguarding the due process rights of all staff members, including managers;

3. Also requests the Secretary-General to issue specific administrative instructions to establish clearly the responsibility and accountability of programme managers for proper use of human resources, as well as sanctions in accordance with staff rule 112.3 for any financial loss suffered by the United Nations as a result of gross negligence, including improper motivation, willful violation of or reckless disregard for the staff Regulations and Rules and established policies regulating recruitment, placement and promotion; ...

6. Welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to streamline administrative procedures and eliminate duplication, in relation to human resources management, through delegation of authority to programme managers, and requests him to ensure, before delegating such authority, that well-designed mechanisms of accountability, including the necessary internal monitoring and control procedures, as well as training, are put in place, and to report to the General Assembly at its fifth-third session; ..."

"Human resources management", General Assembly resolution 51/226 of **25 April 1997**, Part I, paras. 2-4, Part II, paras. 2-3, 6. [emphasis added]

A blue-ribbon expert group of UN "insiders" had reported in 1997 that acrimony in UN decision-making, based on old habits and attitudes, was fueling an "us versus them" mentality that could well undermine the reform attempts underway. The group observed the

"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.

.... 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]

This "us versus them" attitude was clearly underscored by the explicit and provocative Secretariat statement in the August 1994 report cited above that governing bodies should "have the confidence" to confine themselves to providing mandates and policy guidance, while leaving execution and programme implementation to the Secretariat. In other words, no annoying and intrusive external oversight and, god forbid, sanctions for misbehaving or non-performing managers. In short, the old game

of self-regulation and "trust me," rather than the much more sound admonition, "trust, but verify" that is central to true accountability.

These 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.]

In his required 1998 report on human resources management reform, Secretary-General Annan highlighted delegation of authority issues, with only brief acknowledgement of the General Assembly's 1993 management accountability resolution. He provided some conceptual discussion of accountability aspects, and a statement of his "intention to explore the possibility of establishing" a panel of senior-managers to consider managerial sanctions when necessary. This triple layer of imprecision responded poorly to the Assembly's insistence in its resolution 51/226 of April 1997 (see above) that he "put in place" the "well-designed mechanisms of accountability" *before* delegating authority to programme managers, which had indeed and obviously already been taking place.

"Human resources management: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/53/342 of **4 September 1998**, paras. 6-11, 18-20, 23-30. [emphasis added.]

[Note the "triple qualifiers" attached to the Secretariat's putative commitment to establishing sanctions for managers.]

A second 1998 report, on human resources management reform, emphasized "a shift to embrace a new culture of empowerment,

responsibility, and accountability" with "[maximum delegation of] ... authority, responsibility and accountability for the day-to-day management of human resources to line managers". A third report noted that an [essential] new system for rating staff performance had still not yet been fully established.

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/53/414 of **13 October 1998**, paras. 5-9, 25-30, and

"Performance management: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/53/266 of **14 August 1998**, paras. 5, 6-9, and 25.

The General Assembly remained skeptical, repeating the insistence in its resolution of 25 April 1997 [see above] on ensuring, "before delegating authority, that well-designed mechanisms of accountability ... are put in place." It stated further that it:

"IV. Delegation of authority and accountability ...

3. Also notes that no comprehensive system of accountability and responsibility has been established;

10. Reiterates its request to the Secretary-General [see para. II.2 of resolution 51/226] to enhance managerial accountability with respect to human resources management decisions, including imposing sanctions in case of demonstrated mismanagement of staff and willful neglect of or disregard for established roles and procedures, while safeguarding the right of due process of all staff members, including managers."

"Human resources management," General Assembly resolution 53/221 of **23 April 1999**, paras. II.6 and IV. 3, 10. [emphasis added.]

Two independent reports in 2000 underscored the failure to implement the new management accountability system, even as delegation of authority efforts forged ahead. In May the US General Accounting Office, in the only overall independent assessment of the mid-1990s UN management accountability reforms ever made, stated that:

"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]

Ironically, a JIU report in October 2000 found that the only factor hindering the Secretariat managers in their relentless drive for freedom (and self-regulation) was -- bad Secretariat management. The JIU reported that the delegation of authority was "at the core" of Secretary-General Annan's vision of reform, but in fact efforts to implement it had been conducted *ad hoc*. They lacked a well-thought-out strategy and amounted mostly to a "dumping of clerical tasks", with much confusion and a good deal of discontent among all parties concerned.

The Inspectors therefore recommended a comprehensive plan of action, strict compliance, revised rules, a culture of clarity, transparency, and communication, and assistance to "empowered" managers. In addition, they stated that an accountability system *should be* based on firm guidance to managers, mechanisms to evaluate their performance and sanctions to deal with failure, and performance indicators. The Inspectors called for central control and "strict adherence" to prerequisites and benchmarks, to keep systematic efforts toward a modern management culture and delegated authority on track.

Joint Inspection Unit, "Delegation of authority for the management of human and financial resources in the United Nations Secretariat", UN document A/55/857 of **October 2000**, especially Summary and para. 93.

Intriguingly, one searches this JIU report in vain for any serious emphasis on implementing the General Assembly's managerial accountability system of 1993, or citations of its subsequent resolutions of 1997 and 1999 deploring the poor implementation and lack of mechanisms and sanctions, as noted above. Neither Assembly resolution 48/218 A nor any of the JIU's own three reports in 1993-1995 on UN accountability and oversight were even included in the October 2000 report's footnotes. Essentially, the JIU report focused, *de novo*, on haphazard Secretariat implementation of a delegation of authority process which, they vaguely urged, really should include some firm accountability processes.

Yet in the next reform status reports that the Secretary-General's provided in August 2000, and counter to the two above outside reports on inadequate implementation, Mr. Annan "declared victory" and buried the management accountability reform process.

His first report, on reform progress in ten "building block" reform areas, included laundry lists of "issues of accountability and the mechanisms needed" to underpin delegation of authority. A second report, entitled "Accountability and responsibility," rehashed modifications to existing [and much

criticized] Secretariat management processes (adding only a new "Accountability Panel" of senior managers to meet annually -- or on an *ad hoc* basis), and expressed his firm opinion that these adjustments "will allow for the effective implementation of the comprehensive accountability system now established."

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General", UN document A/55/253 of 1 August 2000, especially summary and para. 6 and 14-19, and

"Accountability and responsibility: Report of the Secretary-General", UN document A/55/270 of 3 August 2000, especially Summary and paras. 1-6 and 23-43.

The Secretary-General ended the second report with the ringing statement that:

"In conclusion, 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."

The General Assembly may wish to take note of the mechanisms in place since 1994, including those discussed in the present report, which together constitute the comprehensive system for the Organization."

"Accountability and responsibility: Report of the Secretary-General", A/55/270 of 3 August 2000, paras. 47-48. [emphasis added]

Three very important reservations must be noted about this sweeping conclusion. First, the Secretary-General was simply saying "Trust me" -- not a valid stance on a fundamental accountability issue. Second, he sweepingly asserted that the mechanisms "are effectively used, are seen to be used, and ensure" staff accountability -- without presenting any evidence or analysis of results to substantiate his contentions. Third, he made a very misleading statement about "the mechanisms in place since 1994," implying six years of operation. In fact, the Secretariat had only told the Fifth Committee in 1994 that the "basic elements" would be in place by January 1995, then immediately qualified this assertion by admitting that

"some of the elements essential ... are already planned [but] it is necessary to develop [them] further or refine them, to add others and to integrate them into a coherent, interactive system. ...

... the process of establishing the transparent system must not downplay the magnitude of the problems in the culture of the United Nations ... the utmost care must be taken to develop a real 'management culture' [and] ... ensure high-quality work."

"Basic elements for transparent system of accountability and responsibility in UN to be established by January, Fifth Committee is told," UN document GA/AB/2954 of 24 October 1994, pp. 1-2.

In 2001 the General Assembly dutifully recalled its exhortations of 1997 and 1999 for ensuring that well-designed

mechanisms of accountability and control were in place before delegating authority, and that sanctions should be imposed in case of demonstrated mismanagement of staff. It took the trouble to emphasize that the Secretary-General's powers of managerial discretion should conform with relevant provisions of the UN Charter, and expressed doubts about the existence of a "robust monitoring capacity" in OHRM. Otherwise, and apparently growing tired of the accountability struggle with the Secretariat, the Assembly only called on Mr. Annan to continue to improve accountability, and related monitoring and control mechanisms, and to report again in 2002 on progress achieved.

"Human resources management," General Assembly resolution 55/258 of 27 June 2001, Section VII, "Delegation of authority and accountability".

However, as already noted in the preceding discussion of the 1993 resolution, the US General Accounting Office issued a follow-up report in February 2004, which updated its May 2000 report cited above. With regard to the issue of freeing the managers, it found that they were doing "just fine" in resisting reform:

"Why GAO did this study

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

What GAO found

... 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. [emphasis added]

[Note: the complete report is available at

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-339 , and see again the GAO's report of May 10, 2000 cited above.]

In a later report section entitled on factors impeding full implementation of the reforms, the GAO cited the lack of systematic Secretariat follow-up on the reforms to assess how they are working and of time frames or milestones for completion of reform actions. The report then stated that:

"Third, according to [UN] ... officials, some program managers and staff have resisted implementing certain reform initiatives. ... OIOS reported that about half of program managers across the Secretariat have not complied with U.N. regulations to monitor and evaluate the performance of program activities ... [and that] The Secretariat lacks clear rules and procedures for conducting [such] ... exercises. ... Some managers also stated that they lacked resources to support this work and were concerned that these evaluation requirements would detract time and money from their regular work

responsibilities. ...

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. 35, 36.

The GAO observations highlight several harsh truths. Bad (but influential) UN managers continue to evade management accountability measures and sanctions simply by sabotaging their implementation. And, while the GAO emphasizes that managers' support is critical in the long term", many UN managers quite simply have not and will not support the reforms, at least not until Member States finally exercise their "due diligence" and insist on it.

The General Assembly's 1993 management accountability reform initiative is officially dead and buried, and "free the managers" is indeed the winner, with only the much more vague 1997 and 2002 reforms still "in play."

IO Watch has already stated its belief (in the Management Accountability Struggles subsection) that the accountability situation in 2004 is, in fact, even worse than in the old "baronial" days. The UN "barons" at present not only hide behind their wall of soothing rhetoric about management accountability, but actually disguise four major and very disturbing anti-accountability processes which further undermine effective UN operations:

- a continuing process of "freeing the managers;"
- a grossly defective "internal justice" system which protects managers;
- a very weak personnel monitoring system to further protect them; and
- allowing managers to become very amateurish "investigators" of perceived wrongdoing by their staff, as discussed in the following archive subsections.

The grand 1993 General Assembly plan to establish "a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility and sanction managers if necessary has thus faded quietly away. Only the first half of the Thornburgh prescription of 1993 -- delegation of authority -- but now isolated from strict accountability and expanded to "free the managers" -- continues on in full force.

A former senior UN official, celebrating Mr. Annan's reelection in 2001 as Secretary-General, urged freeing the managers even further as a needed morale booster, which could also -- no less -- let these newly freed UN managers become the recognized managers of global governance:

"Kofi Annan's election to a second and last term should normally allow him to help establish the United Nations as the centerpiece of an emerging system of global management that is efficient, just and accepted as legitimate by all peoples and nations.

...

Decisive action should not continue to be postponed in regaining the motivation and professional quality of the United Nations in its earlier years ...

Also, much would be achieved if UN programme managers were allowed to manage -- yes, manage -- their own budgets and personnel. Not only would their motivation increase immediately, but they could be held accountable for failure to achieve agreed objectives."

Enrique ter Horst, "A re-elected Secretary-General can give the world the facts," International Herald Tribune, 6 July 2001. [emphasis added]

[Note: Mr. ter Horst was a former UN Assistant-Secretary-General, who served under several UN Secretary-Generals, including Mr. Annan]

This formulation not only changed the Secretary-General's theme of "Trust me" to one of "Reward me first, and then, maybe, I'll perform better." It also clearly stated (whether candidly or recklessly) that UN managers in fact continued not to be held accountable.

In 2001 the Secretary-General's annual report had indicated that the control processes intended to ensure managerial accountability had become an "old boy" process of self-regulation:

"... the Office of Internal Oversight Services [is]... working in partnership with managers at all levels to instill accountability and best management practices throughout the Organization."

"Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization." UN document A/57/1, 2001, paras. 185-186, 193. [emphasis added]

Note: Discussion of the OIOS, which has proved to be much more a lapdog than the intended watchdog, begins in the following subsection on Internal Oversight: The OIOS and continues in Recent Developments .]

And Secretary-General Annan's new round of management reforms for his second term then included another new slogan, "investing in excellence," with higher salaries included, as he presented:

"... proposals designed to ensure that the United Nations can count on an able, versatile and well managed-work force. These new initiatives are intended to: ...

... rejuvenate the Organization; further empower managers; ... better resolve internal disputes between management and staff; and enable the United Nations to offer more competitive rates of pay and benefits."

The measures described ... add up to a very different way of doing business ... The Secretary-General is seeking a strong endorsement from Member States for the entire package."

"Strengthening of the United Nations: An agenda for further change: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/57/387 of 9 September 2002, p. 4.
[emphasis added]

In the same report, under a heading of "Continuing efforts to improve management," he went on to say:

"One of my priorities in my first term was to improve the Organization's professional capacity and to promote a new culture of performance, accountability and trust. We have made significant strides ...

I am confident that the 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."

"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. 174, 188-190. [emphasis added]

The long-standing UN management reform bias toward freeing UN managers to "do their thing" continues relentlessly on. Unfortunately, there are only passing references to ensuring that they are held accountable, in part because the mechanisms cited are still perpetually "under construction", as reaffirmed in the Secretary-General's reform reports of 2004.

[The UN management programme] is oriented principally toward fully meeting client needs and taking a proactive approach to implementing the Secretary-General's management reform measures ... Through a constructive dialogue, the status quo ... will be challenged, client priorities identified and management policies developed or improved to ensure that [UN] ... work is carried out in a more timely, efficient and effective manner. The capacity of managers to deliver mandated programmes will be strengthened through management training and ... greater delegation of authority, with accountability ensured through systematic monitoring, evaluation and greater transparency in decision-making. ...

Human resources management reform will ... be implemented to empower staff, increase their flexibility and mobility, and [help make their work more effective.] ...

... offices away from headquarters ... will be given greater authority to respond to the requirements of their offices. ...

The Department [of Management]'s leadership role within the United Nations system will be maintained ...

The Department will provide strategic policy guidance to all entities in ... broad management areas.

"Proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007: Part Two: biennial programme plan: Programme 24: Management and support services", UN

document A/59/6 (Prog. 24), **19 May 2004**, paras. 24.3-24.9. [emphasis added]

[Note: the two words on accountability are highlighted because otherwise they would be lost in all the continuing gush about freeing UN managers around the world, with only this fleeting mention of holding them accountable. Also, the UN seems very confident in its self-proclaimed management leadership role vis-à-vis other UN system agencies, although many of these agencies quite simply perform better than the UN does.]

IO Watch believes that the great "sell-out" of UN management accountability by the managers' ongoing and self-serving "freedom" campaign thus continues on. They remain unencumbered by annoying issues of internal controls, results assessment, accountability, and sanctions. This sorry situation is further illustrated by three more citations from the new UN strategic framework for the period 2006-2007:

-- the strategy set out for the Department of Management concerns management services (and administration of justice) programme inputs and accounts, human resource management, and support services [no accountability mention there], and its lead items are:

"Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat:

"(a) Enhanced capacity of programme managers to manage and administer their own department's human, financial and material resources, through adoption of new policies and procedures. ...

Indicators of achievement.

(a) ... benefits deriving from the introduction of new policies and procedures, reflected in:

(i) Progress toward corporate management targets ...

(ii) Increase in the percentage of programme managers indicating satisfaction with delegated authority and support provided."

"Proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007: Part Two: biennial programme plan: Programme 24: Management and support services", UN document A/59/6 (Prog. 24), **19 May 2004**, p. 5. [emphasis added.]

[Note: IO Watch believes that the slogan here, briefly stated, is "Happy managers!" Staff involvement and effectiveness are not an item on the agenda.]

-- the UN objective for human resources management, and its expected accomplishment (c) (after improved staff selection and administration, and improved geographical and gender balance) are just more "super-soft" [from an accountability viewpoint] intentions:

"Objective of the Organization:

"To ensure that the Organization selects the best-qualified staff and deploys them at the right time to the right place" ...

Expected accomplishments: ...

(c) "Improved human resources planning and monitoring of delegated authority;

Indicators of achievement: ...

(c) An increase in the percentage of departments/offices successfully

implementing their human resources action plans, for the Secretariat as a whole."

"Proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007: Programme 24: Management and support services", UN document A/59/6 (Prog. 24), **19 May 2004**, p.11.

-- finally, the brief list of overall legislative mandates presented for UN Secretariat management work cites the General Assembly resolutions concerning:

-- the "Group of 18" reform efforts of 1986 (primarily on budgetary consensus);

-- results-based budgeting in 2000;

-- Secretary-Annan's "strengthening" and "quiet revolution" reform proposals of 1997 and 2002;

-- and the programme budget for 2004-2005.

The 1993 General Assembly resolution insisting on management accountability (see again the preceding subsection on 1993 Management Accountability Attempt) is not mentioned. It remains, now and forever, the General Assembly resolution where, in the UN Secretariat, "none dare speak its name."

"Proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007: Programme 24: Management and support services", UN document A/59/6 (Prog. 24), **19 May 2004**, p. 33.

IO Watch is very much in accord with the strong warnings and concerns about the evolving, self-serving management takeover of UN accountability processes stated by a UN staff representative before the Fifth (Administrative) Committee of the General Assembly in October 2004.

"Rosemarie Waters, President of the United Nations Staff Union, said that the measures introduced in the past six years had had a profound and sometimes deleterious effect on the staff of the Organization. ... management had been reforming itself and increasing management authority, while reducing accountability. The Staff Union had the greatest respect for the Secretary-General's vision for the Organization and had supported the goals of his reform programme. It could not, however, support the erosion of staff rights and dissolution of oversight mechanisms as a means of implementation, and it could not continue legitimizing actions in which staff, through their elected representatives, had no meaningful role to play. ...

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.

This archive details the many grave and entrenched UN management problems which exist. With the mere creation of some *pro forma* accountability "building blocks" and a few short management training courses, the UN top management asserts (or at least did until late 2004) that it has miraculously erased its deep-seated management deficiencies, poor management climate, defective management systems, inadequate and incomplete performance management processes, and complex and flawed management structures and decision-making processes. And these same UN managers are now enjoying further liberation measures.

IO Watch believes that the "game" of increasing UN managerial power without firm accountability may continue in this fashion for years and years to come, or until the UN collapses from erratic mismanagement, whichever comes first.

IO Watch concludes that, at the UN, the foxes (also known as the UN barons) are now more firmly in charge of the chicken coop than ever before in UN history. The next three subsections conclude this discussion of UN management accountability struggles by examining the disturbing current actions of the newly-freed UN managers, the disappearance of the UN's [supposedly] encouraged and protected whistleblowers, and staff self-defense mechanisms within this new Secretariat environment of sweeping managerial freedoms.