

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Introductory quote

"ANNEX FIFTY-YEAR CAPSULE SUMMARY OF EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH UNITED NATIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

1950s

1950: The General Assembly first stressed the need for careful programme reviews to effectively use available resources.

1953: The Secretary-General made a comprehensive review of the work and structure of the Secretariat to concentrate resources on priority programmes which could be performed effectively, and to launch a 'continuing self-criticism' of programme implementation.

1956: The Office of Personnel found that "not all staff were aware of procedures" for periodic staff performance reports, and issued new guidance.

1958: After the General Assembly called for concentration on the highest-priority tasks and "the utmost economy" in resource use, the United Nations budget was reformed to concentrate on objects of expenditure and consolidated staffing tables.

1960s

1961-1962: A committee of experts appointed by the General Assembly recommended budgetary stabilization, enforcement of programme priorities, closer scrutiny of budgets by governing bodies, and greater administrative control and analysis of the budget: the General Assembly responded by calling for an integrated budget policy.

1966: Another group of experts called on the United Nations and the system to deal with a financial crisis through integrated planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation systems; clear objectives and strategies; and strengthened evaluations and internal reviews.

1968a: The Secretary-General established a report to evaluate work programme accomplishments and ensure real value for money in operations: however, by 1971, these reports had reverted to purely financial documents.

1968b: Another expert group on reorganization cited the need for new budgetary techniques, an effective management service, and systematic budget review and organizational reform.

1969a: The CPC concluded that rapidly growing United Nations system programmes would encounter increasing Member State criticism and public disillusionment unless greater review and evaluation efforts were made, especially detailed and systematic review from intergovernmental bodies.

1969b: The "Capacity Study" characterized the United Nations system as a highly complex and disorganized machine, badly in need of systematic management procedures and programming, information, and evaluation processes.

1969c (and 1974): JIU studies noted that the United Nations had fallen behind the large specialized agencies in installing medium-term planning and programme budgeting systems.

1969d: An Administrative Management Service (AMS) was established to ensure that the best management practices and techniques would be used in the Secretariat, and to undertake an extensive survey of manpower utilization.

1970s

1971: A JIU report found a "crisis of modernization" in Secretariat personnel management due to rapid staff growth, much more complex work tasks, and confusions about the management skills and management reform actions needed, and urged a series of changes in personnel policies, methods, and processes which the General Assembly endorsed.

1972a: The ACABO criticized cumbersome United Nations legislative machinery and fragmented decision-making, and urged review of the budget format to allow Member States to relate inputs to outputs and determine whether they were getting their money's worth.

1972b: The Secretary-General acknowledged the decade's delay in establishing an integrated programme planning system (see 1961-1962): he proposed such a system to greatly aid governing-body decision-making with coordinated information on past performance, present proposals, and implications for the future.

1973: After criticism from the CPC and ACABO, the Secretary-General acknowledged that evaluation had not yet begun, but would be an essential part of future budget procedures.

1974: The first biennial programme budget was initiated [for 1974-1975], and the first medium-term plan (for 1974-1977, subsequently changed to a six-year plan for the 1984-1989 period).

1975a: The Secretary-General acknowledged that there was still "no systematic evaluation of results", which was the "key problem" which the medium-term plan did not yet cover.

1975b: Yet another group of experts, and a working group, recommended strengthening CPC for planning, programming, coordination, and programme review, as a mechanism to effectively evaluate programme implementation and results.

1976: The Fifth Committee expressed concern that the management services potential and recommendations of the AMS (see 1969d) were being ignored, and the General Assembly reemphasized the need for competent internal machinery, the necessary mandate, senior management support, and sufficient resources for management improvement work.

1977a: The Secretariat reported that the staff performance evaluation system was much criticized by the staff, and developed a new format with an elaborate rebuttal system (see 1956).

1977b: After two years of deliberation, an Ad Hoc Committee's work led the General Assembly to a "restructuring resolution" to reshape the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, including improved programme planning and evaluation.

1978a: The Secretary-General issued a brief but substantive report on the implementation of personnel policy reforms, especially the intent to establish a career development system, but personnel management then settled back into ad hoc personnel reports or detailed statistics with very limited policy or progress information.

1978b: The ACABO noted with concern the difficulties of establishing management training “to create and sustain a management climate” in the Secretariat: the Secretary-General promised to give high priority to management skills and training in the future, but little happened.

1978c: A special review by the Board of Auditors led to a programme of major improvements in financial management and controls: the Board also recommended that the scope of internal audit be expanded and auditor skills be steadily upgraded.

1978-1979: The Secretary-General acknowledged again that there was “no systematic evaluation” and that improved budgeting procedures and better budget submissions and workplans were needed to enhance performance monitoring and the identification of marginal activities.

1979: A proposal for a much-strengthened external audit function, under an Auditor-General, was considered by the General Assembly but not acted upon.

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1980s

1981: JIU found that, despite a small evaluation unit finally established in 1980, the United Nations had fallen behind most other United Nations system organizations in developing and using evaluation.

1982: The General Assembly established programming regulations and rules, inter alia to subject all programmes to periodic and thorough reviews and periodically evaluate the results achieved.

1983a: A report to the General Assembly which acknowledged slow progress in establishing even a minimal evaluation system was sharply criticized by the CPC and “deplored” by the General Assembly.

1983b: Secretariat officials blamed tardy programme budget issuance on the complexity of the process, and launched a long, slow search for new budgetary processes, procedures, and formats.

1983-1984: Secretariat officials branded the staff performance evaluation system ‘quite meaningless and totally unreliable’, and developed a revised system with more dialogue, increased rebuttal procedures, and careful monitoring to ensure an effective system (see 1977a): despite continuing sharp criticisms, some minor modifications were made in 1984.

1984: A JIU report found reporting to ECOSOC to be voluminous, tardy, and uninformative: the Secretary-General agreed that - if intergovernmental bodies would more strongly support the deliberative process - the Secretariat would strive to produce more analytical documents, highlight key policy issues, and prepare more concise and results-oriented reports.

1985a: As suggested by yet another outside expert group, an internal task force, and pressure from the General Assembly, CPC, and the JIU, the Secretary-General established small central evaluation and monitoring units. but JIU found the United Nations to be lagging even further behind other System agencies in the assessment of results to improve future programmes.

1985b: The General Assembly strongly criticized programme performance reporting and repeated the necessity of strengthening monitoring and evaluation, and the Secretariat promised more transparent and analytical reports on performance and results.

1985c: A JIU report found that computer systems development in the Secretariat required urgent action to upgrade ineffective systems and attain management improvements and cost savings: after an even sharper Secretariat evaluation in 1987, the Secretary-General acknowledged “widespread dissatisfaction” with the many outdated administrative computer systems and the “severe repercussions” on Secretariat operations, and launched the IMIS project.

1985-1986: Outside consultants found that internal audit coverage was ineffective, particularly away from Headquarters, and recommended a large increase in audit staff and their skills, which did not occur: the “Group of 18” experts also urged much greater independence for the internal auditors.

1986: The “Group of 18” experts cited the importance of monitoring and evaluation, but devoted most of their attention to planning and budgetary issues and to calls for strengthened human resources management and leadership.

1987: The accuracy, objectivity, fairness and format of the staff performance evaluation system were again sharply criticized, but after some discussion no action was taken (see 1983-1984).

1988: The JIU found major problems with disorderly programme budgeting processes and programme performance, evaluation, and management reports; the General Assembly twice endorsed the JIU call for reports emphasizing programme results and quality, but the Secretariat argued that the evaluation system was still too weak to provide such reporting and settled for minor performance reporting adjustments.

1989: The General Assembly called on the Secretary-General, as it had in 1983 and 1985, to complete development of a comprehensive career development plan, which would recognize merit through a rational performance evaluation and reporting system,

1990s

1990: The ACABQ expressed real doubts about the value of the medium-term plan, its verbosity and length, the quality of intergovernmental reviews, the lack of relevant evaluation activities, and programme performance reports that were of little use.

1990-1992: The General Assembly repeatedly urged action to strengthen internal controls, through more stringent oversight and assurance of compliance, and decisive action to deal with fraudulent resource use.

1992a: A Secretary-General’s report acknowledged that a career development system was “indispensable” and that efforts had been “going on for some time”, but stated that the entire concept needed now to be rethought (see 1978a and 1989); the General Assembly welcomed and encouraged an integrated personnel planning approach.

1992b: The Secretary-General reported that the organization had ‘been operating in slow motion’ and required optimum use of human resources, new ways of thinking, modern management practices, and “an integrated approach to all the interrelated managerial issues”.

1992c: The Secretary-General concluded that leadership and management quality were crucial to meet pressing operational challenges, and launched a new, comprehensive system of management training to link managerial skills with better programme delivery.

1993a: The General Assembly expressed strong concern at late issuance of documents; a lack of sustained and timely dialogue with the Secretariat; and the failure to analyse restructurings undertaken, the control and management of posts, and reform of the administration of justice.

1993b: The Secretary-General announced a new placement and promotion system with increased transparency which would reward staff for competence, creativity, versatility, and,

increasingly, mobility.

1993c: The Secretary-General concluded that DAM must play a crucial role in transforming the Organization, especially in responding to changing requirements and ensuring a timely flow of information and effective consultations with Member States.

1993d: A group of experts considered a new programme planning format and approach and concluded bluntly that 'Much more time is spent on reviewing plans and budgets than on implementation and evaluation' and that "This imbalance needs to be corrected".

1993e: The General Assembly regretted that a Secretariat report on the accountability of programme managers, which it had requested for several years. was inadequate: noted the parallel JIU report which identified many existing accountability and oversight problems; requested that a new "transparent and effective" system of accountability and responsibility be established by 1 January 1995; and also urged a complete review of the existing performance evaluation system "without delay"(see 1987).

1993-1994: The small internal oversight units were consolidated into a single and more independent Office of Internal Oversight Services, headed by an Under-Secretary-General and reporting both to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly.

1994-1995: The Secretariat launched the new system of accountability and responsibility and a new human resources strategy and planning capability, together with such actions as expanded management training, a commitment to overcome the inadequacies of mechanical programme performance reporting and very limited evaluation studies and a streamlined programme planning and budgeting process (see 1983b. 1988 and 1990), testing of a new performance appraisal system, the final stages of IMIS establishment (see 1985c). revision of the Organization Manual and other guidance and instructions, efforts to delegate additional authority to the field, a reexamination of internal controls, proposals to reform the administration of justice, a major review of procurement, and new public review and reporting initiatives."

Joint Inspection Unit, "Management in the United Nations: Work in progress", UN document A/50/507,1995, Annex, pp. 46-49.

[Note: the annex also contains the following footnote:

147. [This Annex] material is taken from the relevant sections of this report and four other JIU reports, which also contain the appropriate document citations:

"Reporting on the performance and results of United Nations programmes", UN document A/43/124, 1988, Annex I, "Evolution of programme performance review and reporting, 1950-1987" and Chapters III.B and IV,

"Accountability and oversight in the United Nations Secretariat", UN document A/48/420, 1993, Chapters III and IV,

"Advancement of women in the United Nations Secretariat in an era of 'human resources management' and 'accountability'", UN document A/49/176, 1994, Chapter V.A. V.B. and Chapter II.B., and

"Toward a new system of performance appraisal in the United Nations Secretariat", UN document A/49/219, 1994, Chapter III.A."

Chronological quotes

"8. In the Secretariat there is no unifying directive on the functions of management. The need to keep subordinates informed of what is going on; the need to convey just praise and blame; the need for the impartial award of privilege and promotion; the need for discipline; the need to avoid unnecessary impositions on the time and energy of subordinates; the need to set a personal example do not seem to be appreciated as well as they should be.

9. These major shortcomings are accompanied by the less important but nevertheless tiresome defects in working conditions perennial irritants that would be tolerated if morale were high, but which count for much when it is low. Add to this the insecurity implicit in staff reductions and in the adjustments required to achieve proper geographic distribution and a balanced budget and you have a most unhappy conglomeration of forces making for discomfiture of the staff.

10. The staff feels the need for a lead from the top to combat these disrupting factors."

A confidential analysis in **April 1947** of the UN Secretariat's morale, as quoted in Stephen Baldwin, "Good management in the United Nations", Secretariat News (New York), January 31, 1986, pp. 11-12.

" Recruitment for the international civil service must [consider specific factors without] parallel in any national administration: first, the need to ensure balance at every stage between the nationalities representing the growing number of member states; second, the importance of maintaining balance between permanent and fixed-term appointments; and third, the need to bring about better balance in the use of the working languages.

[Equitable geographical distribution efforts] deal neither with the shortage of competent personnel in [member] countries nor with [general personnel recruitment problems]. In the current system, each vacancy is advertised as and when it occurs no provision is made for periodic examination of all posts, nor for a systematic review of all the staff members in a service -- measures which would permit concerted plans for recruitment.

It is clear that as the international organizations [evolve], the recruitment of their staff must be made on a long-term basis that [considers] the international service as a whole instead of on a post-by-post basis.

One [way to achieve] this would be to establish an interorganizational, intergovernmental civil service commission [to develop] a single unified service with one personnel policy"

Tien-Cheng Young, "The international civil service reexamined", Public Administration Review (US), **May/June 1970**, pp. 217-224 [220, 224].

" after extensive study in 1923, the so-called Noblemaire principle was adopted as the guiding standard in determining international salaries. This standard called for a level of compensation sufficiently high to attract the personnel of the highest paid national civil service. this principle has been maintained [although World War II] moved the standard from Great Britain to the United States. [Since] American rates are substantially higher than national civil service salaries in most other countries, the pay received by the vast majority of international civil servants is far more attractive than they can expect from service in their own country.

But equality can only be assured if pay rates are based upon common job classification standards but the job evaluation framework has never [fully evolved] and there are serious discrepancies within and among organizations in the job classifications assigned.

Another underdeveloped phase is training and education. There have been a number of moves in this direction, but none of them have had the urgency or the magnitude to have appreciable impact.

The recruitment of the international [work] force must become better planned, more extensive, and more affirmative."

John W. Macy, Jr., "Towards an international civil service", Public Administration Review (US), **May/June 1970**, pp. 258-263 [262-263].

" ... the question remains: how in practice to revitalize a flagging organization which is somehow out of tune with the needs and moods of the times? ... I believe that a shock treatment is called for and the present moment provides an unique opportunity to apply that treatment ... I have come to the conclusion that the only practical way to revitalize the organization is through a major consolidation and regrouping. This must be no mere cosmetic surgery. It would require some drastic staff reduction -- up to 50 percent in some areas -- and a major redeployment of UN resources in those tasks in which it can be most useful to its members and the world community."

Maurice Strong, then the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, in UN document A/C.5/SR 1433, **9 November 1971**, as quoted in Shirley Hazard, Defeat of an ideal: A study of the self-destruction of the United Nations, Macmillan, London, 1973, pp. 112-113.

"I have been intrigued by the question of who is in charge at the UN; who sets the standards and values of the Organization? Who says what the UN is, what it does, what it cannot do?

Events indicate [that there is no] monolithic power structure at the UN. The Secretary-General is constrained by the political clout of his closest collaborators, particularly the Department Heads. further complicated by [growing exercise by the] Fifth Committee and General Assembly of managerial responsibility because [they are unable to ensure] that managers in fact do [their jobs.] In an environment of shifting power relationships, where it is increasingly difficult to fix responsibility, it is important that staff have a strong voice, lest it be forgotten by those whose only interest is self-interest.

.... policy derives from an accretion of small decisions and actions up and down the management line. There is no thread of coherence running through the whole. At any given time, a special assistant may be as important in establishing values and policies as is ... the Secretary-General himself. Such people define the Organization through our failure to do so, through our acquiescence."

Lowell Flanders, "The future of the UN In whose hands?", address [by the President of the Staff Union] at a preparatory meeting of the United Nations Community Forum, Secretariat News (NY), **April 16, 1979**, p. 10.

" any respect for the institution of management within the UN has largely disappeared. [Unavoidable staff cynicism] thankfully does not affect their belief in the value of what the organization does, [but] centers on the perception that there is little or no relationship between the value of the work one performs and the rewards, psychic or tangible, likely to be received

Cynicism is a corrosive quality. it ultimately becomes very difficult indeed to maintain an increasingly abstract pride in an Organization's ideals and purposes when you despise many of its nominal leaders, and most of its standards for selecting those leaders.

As was the case ... 40 years ago the U.N. has no 'unifying directive on the functions of management. All it would take is the implementation of a meritocratic standard for advancement at all levels of staff employment. Do this and virtually all other problems would fade away Make quality leadership and good management qualities the hallmarks for praise and promotion, and at the very least we will have, finally, a mature United Nations with a proud, strong, unified staff to do the work."

Stephen Baldwin, "Good management in the United Nations", Secretariat News (New York), **January 31, 1986**, pp. 11-12.

[Note" see also the April 1947 analysis above on management inadequacies which was quoted in this same article]

"As spendthrift as ever.

So far, [despite earnest U.N. reform promises], there is scant evidence of such 'good faith efforts.' Though the U.N. may be pinching costs a little here and there, the organization is as spendthrift as ever. ... according to U.N. documents [Proposed Programme Budget 1986-1987], it is spending:

-- \$123,000 to rent a limousine for the President of the General Assembly over a two year period.

-- \$200,000 for a shooting range in the U.N. garage.

Assembly.
-- \$48,000,000 in budget 'add-ons' during the closing days of the 1986 General

Headquarters."
-- A \$91,204,800 slush fund of 'Common services not distributed to programs [at

"The United Nations continues to duck needed reforms", The Heritage Foundation, Background, No. 593, Washington, D.C., **July 9, 1987**, pp.1-2.

[Note: Although UN supporters object to this Foundation's quite negative conclusions about UN operations, the more knowledgeable ones agree that they do a good job of digging out awkward facts that no one else bothers to search for or notice.]

"[In the 1970s and 1980s] the salaries of senior members of the U. N. service would in a number of cases be supplemented, in another reversal of the Charter articles, by large subsidies from their respective governments (one official receiving, for instance, a U. N. salary of a hundred and twenty thousand dollars a year while accepting from her government an additional annual payment of eighty thousand dollars.) Each ensuing violation has been condoned by successive Secretaries-General, whose sworn obligation and public claim it is to defend the Secretariat from just such interventions. ('This book is my religion', the fifth Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuellar, told the *Times* in 1982, pointing to the Charter.)"

Hazzard, Shirley, on UN top salaries in the **1980s**, in "Breaking Faith, Part I", *The New Yorker*, September 25, 1989, pp. 63-99, [74].

[Note: This policy continues on, *inter alia* in the case of the UN's first "inspector general," Mr. Karl Th. Paschke, under Secretary-Generals Butros-Ghali and Annan, see the section on internal oversight]

"Knot the purse-strings?

Not that the UN is flush with cash. Far from it. The rich countries have used their financial power to try to knock some sense into its agencies. The United States has led the way. In 1985 Congress ruled that America's contribution be withheld unless there was substantial reform. The UN [set up] a group of 18 wise men to review its efficiency. They held 67 meetings in six months, came close to agreeing on a radical course of reform and then flunked it by producing a wish-list designed to protect everyone.

Other rich countries have taken a subtler line. Britain makes agencies sweat until the end of their financial year before it hands over the cash. But financial austerity has achieved little meaningful reform. And since cuts have been imposed across the board, the better agencies have been penalized along with the worse."

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

"There is no doubt that the United Nations ought to have a recruitment policy for its Secretariat. A coherent set of methods is needed to secure 'the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity', as stipulated by the [UN] Charter itself, while at the same time paying due regard to the need to recruit 'on as wide a geographical basis as possible'. Unfortunately, no such policy exists. The influences working against the establishment of one are so powerful that it is surprising that some progress could still have been achieved."

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

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

"[Concerning allegations of corruption at UNHCR in articles in the Washington Post in September 1992] It is misleading to imply laxity in UNHCR's financial management. At least for the period with which I am most familiar, UNHCR, alone among the U.N. humanitarian and development agencies, had its financial accounts approved by the United Nations' Board of External Auditors with no qualifications. Accounts of others, including UNICEF and the U.N. Development Programme, were either disapproved or approved with qualifications."

Arthur E. Dewey, "No laxity", UN Special (Geneva), **November, 1992**, p. 31.

[Note: Mr. Dewey was deputy high commissioner of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)]

"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.

Internal audit reports reveal an alarming pattern of abuse. In the last two-year period alone, £540 m. has been squandered, one former senior U.N. official said. ...

The lack of accountability at U. N. Geneva, ... the city that inspired Frankenstein's monster, has astonished even the U.N.'s own board of auditors. In a report last year after a rare visit, they complained, '[In U.N. Geneva] major reviews of budgetary and financial controls have not been executed for years.' The auditors discovered that the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) was not audited at all."

Nick Rufford, Ian Burrell and David Leppard, "Scandal of U.N. 'lost' millions", The Sunday Times, **August 15, 1993**, p. 1, [as excerpted in UN Special (Geneva), October, 1993, pp. 20, 22, 27.]

[Note: A much more detailed discussion of UN management systems problems of the past 20 years is contained in the UN Management Accountability Struggles section, in the subsection on UN Management System Reform Attempts]

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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