

GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND RELATED BODIES

Introductory quotes

"[Regarding the English Parliament] I fear that they will drag us after them ... and their wide-wasting Prodigality and Profusion is a Gulph that will swallow up every Aid we may distress ourselves to afford them. Here Numberless and needless Places, enormous Salaries, Pensions, Perquisites, Bribes, groundless Quarrels, foolish Expeditions, false Accounts or no Accounts, Contracts and Jobbs, devour all Revenue, and produce continual Necessity in the Midst of natural Plenty.

Government is not establish'd merely by *Power*; there must be maintain'd a general Opinion of its *Wisdom* and *Justice*, to make it firm and durable."

Benjamin Franklin, **circa 1770-1790**, as quoted in Mathew Stevenson, "Minting Franklin: More lives of the quintessential American: Reviews", Harper's Magazine, February 2003, pp. 75-80 [78-79].

"The terrible lie that has been told here today will have terrible consequences. People will begin to say, indeed they have already begun to say: that the United Nations is a place where lies are told."

Daniel P. Moynihan, U.S. representative to the UN, in a speech during the General Assembly debate on the "Zionism is racism" resolution, **1975**, as quoted in "United Nations: Prizes and parking tickets", Newsweek International, October 30, 1995, p. 21.

"Remarkable efforts were made at international institution building toward the end of World War II. In addition to the establishment of the United Nations, the global political organization, they involved ..."

Leo Van Houtven, Governance of the IMF: Decision Making, Institutional Oversight, Transparency, and Accountability, Pamphlet Series No. 53, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC, **2002**, pp 1-3 [underscoring added].

[Note: IO Watch that these introductory sentences underscore the basic fact that the United Nations is the central political (and also by far the most politicized) of thousands of international and multilateral public, private, and non-governmental organizations, as further discussed below; it is only one among many major ones, including the international financial institutions, the major specialized agencies of the United Nations system, and the various regional political and economic organizations;

even in its more recent operational functions such as development aid, peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations, it is largely dependent on subcontractors, or national military or other units, or semi-autonomous programs to carry out its fieldwork;
and in general and in all these areas it is less linked than regional, national, or local entities to the day-to-day lives of the peoples of the world.]

" International law -- so reverently invoked, so rarely defined Does it exist? Some spheres of international behavior (e.g., maritime matters, the rights of diplomats) are governed by law-like regimes: there are enduring and widely-adhered-to conventions, and institutions for arbitrating disputes.

The phrase 'international law' often is virtually an oxymoron. Law without a sword to enforce it is mere words, mere admonition or aspiration.

Law must be backed by coercion legitimized by a political process. The 'international community' has no such process. A true community exists only when there is consensus about certain matters -- the meaning of freedom, the nature of rights and duties, sources of legitimacy. Rhapsodizing about the U.N. as the 'international community' incarnate obscures this fact

If 'international law' is defined as what the 'international community' actually does, the problem deepens. Regarding force, history is clear; nations do what they think necessary and feasible.

Eager seizure of the label 'legal' encourages the fallacy that international law is explicit and exhaustive it puts policy at the mercy of a vague and volatile consensus of an 'international community' most members of which are unsuited to serve as ethicists or judges."

George F. Will, "The perils of 'legality': If international law is really law, who enacts, construes, adjudicates and enforces it?", Newsweek, **September 10, 1990**, p. 25.

"UN resolutions are like hotdogs. If you know how they make 'em you don't want to eat 'em. You just swallow. No questions asked."

A diplomat, explaining how UN General Assembly resolutions are formulated in New York, as quoted in Linda Polman, We did nothing: Why the truth doesn't always come out when the UN goes in, translated by Rob Bland, Viking, New York and London, **2003**, p. vii., [1997, rev. ed. published in Dutch by Rozenberg, Amsterdam, 2002.]

Chronological quotes

" ... the [UN protocol chief describes] ... the 'strain' of a 'digestion-challenging round of 300 to 400 parties, receptions and dinners' during the eleven weeks of the annual General Assembly ... the [US Ambassador to the UN], George Bush, a Texas millionaire, remarks, 'We're in the process of adjusting to all this opulence.'

The unflinching assertion of the partygoers, that 'much of the Organization's business is

conducted' at the four hundred annual blowouts, is perfectly valid, It is all there: the same babble of voices, the same ingrown exchanges, the same ... self-importance, and hot air ... and above all the lack of painful, invigorating contact with a larger dimension of ... reality.

The merry-go-round of high salaries and allowances, abused immunities, incessant parties and earth-girdling trips is important in its implications, and its repercussions in the Organization's performance. ...

A United Nations delegate ... publicly commenting on the 'opulence' of his situation ... might also ask himself whether such a state of affairs enhances his credibility as a spokesman for humanitarian causes, or his right to present himself -- as some UN personages unabashedly do -- as a dedicated, and even sacrificial, servant of the world."

Hazzard, Shirley, Defeat of an ideal: A study of the self-destruction of the United Nations, Macmillan, London, **1973**, pp. 114-117.

"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.

.... much will depend on the 'middle-sized' states [to] bridge the polarization between the powerful yet indifferent big states, for whom the United Nations is more often a scapegoat than an instrument, and the small but weak who can only resort to a politics of frustration in the General Assembly.

.... the agenda of the United Nations has become an unwieldy millstone around the [Secretary-General's] neck. [He] and his staff should be allowed to concentrate on, say, half a dozen crucial issues. At the moment, the United Nations is an octopus walking in every direction at once.

Nor need every action always wait until the last moment. A useful intervention as soon as the early warnings sound can do much more good than a later Band-Aid.Left to fester, [many complex third world upheavals] can lead to the all-too-familiar crises of mass exodus, famine or civil war that become cemented into political geography."

Sadrudin Aga Khan and Maurice F. Strong, "Proposals to reform the U.N., 'limping' in its 40th year, New York Times, **October 8, 1985**.

"Singapore's Ambassador to the U.S., Tommy Koh, who represented his country at the U.N. for 13 years, said that the U.N. budget has 'a lot of fat in it that can be cut out.' Koh also said that the U.N. needs to discourage formation of new committees, noting that, 'Very often, when a delegation runs out of ideas on an item that it has inscribed on the agenda, it resorts to the expedient of proposing a committee to examine the question. The U.N. literally has hundreds of such committees, many of which have overlapping jurisdictions."

"The United Nations continues to duck needed reforms", The Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder, No. 593, Washington, D.C., **July 9, 1987**, p. 4.

"The 'world community' sits in committee on the East River allocating opprobrium. As Alan Keyes points out, a triple standard rules: 'Western democracies, and in particular the United States, come in for frequent condemnation by name. The tyrannies of the East Bloc, though guilty of far more explicit crimes, are criticized only by implication, in mild, anonymous resolutions. The tyrannies of the developing world are almost never criticized There is a 'Special rapporteur' on human rights in El Salvador, but none on Nicaragua. Chile is regularly condemned: Cuba is never mentioned. Israel's alleged crimes [however] fill so many volumes that [one would conclude that it] is a Nazi state the size of Eurasia.

[Among] the U.N. membership ... the composition and inclinations of the majority are, for the extended future, fixed. There is a Third World majority. There is a Soviet bloc. There is an

Islamic bloc. The democracies are a small minority. There are not two U.N.s, the one imagined by the Charter and the one with which we happen to be afflicted today. There is only one, and the one that exists in this world has become a menace to the very language of Western liberalism."

Charles Krauthammer, "Let it sink: Why the U.S. should bail out of the U.N.", The New Republic, **August 24, 1987**, pp. 18-23 [21].

"Although in January, 1972, Kurt Waldheim assumed control of an enfeebled organization, an assessment of the United Nations' deterioration under his leadership is no mere study of degrees of incapacity. Waldheim's appeasement of member governments -- which was eager and obsessive, occurred in a world whose mounting disorder arose, increasingly, from popular, parochial, or anarchistic movements before whose insistence or fanaticism governments themselves were in many cases helpless. The long preoccupation of Secretariat officials with governmental contacts, and their awe of established position, had not only left them without prescience and influence in this larger sphere but encouraged their inaccessibility to the public concern, and an unreality toward those events, ideas, and transfigurations that did not come before the United Nations. Legalistic deliberations at the U.N. on crises with which the world was urgently seized were greeted by the organization as initiatives, while, to the public, they merely emphasized the U.N.'s self-indulgence and its removal from the pace and nature of new realities."

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

"The end of the cold war brought a boom in opportunities for [the UN, but it] must now reform the swollen bureaucracy.

"Australian Ambassador Peter Wilenski, [a management expert urging UN reform] says the U.N. 'is run as a club rather than as an organization.'

Notes Edward Luck, president of the UN Association of the USA, 'The organization doesn't know how to set priorities -- and good management starts there.'

Much of the problem is an elaborate system of patronage based on accommodating the pride of member states.

Another problem is what Luck calls 'logrolling at its worst' in the General Assembly [as groups of states band together to protect their pet projects.]

The U.N. Economic and Social Council is too unwieldy to deal with its vast agenda ... 'Its resolutions,' says Wilenski, 'are largely unread and ignored.'

Yves Fortier, [Canada's former UN ambassador] says the organization suffers from 'overlapping mandates' among its different agencies We've witnessed some appalling turf wars.'

Last month the General Assembly took a first step to control duplication and infighting among humanitarian-aid programs by calling for a high-level coordinator."

Bonnie Angelo, "United Nations: Challenges for the new boss," Time, **February 3, 1992**, pp. 40-41 [41].

"Outside the Security Council, there are three groups of countries in the General Assembly that take a purposeful interest in the UN. The first is a small group of well-meaning countries ... the Scandinavian countries, Canada and Australia. These are the only true believers in the UN system. ... They have been urging reforms, but their leverage is not good.

Secondly, there are the economic superpowers that are not as yet permanent members of the Security Council: Germany and Japan. Neither is particularly skilled in using the UN machinery.

Thirdly, there are the countries of the former Third World This is the saddest collection of

people at the UN. They form a leaderless group that has lost its way.

In these circumstances, deprived of any popular world support, it is difficult to imagine that the UN will ever again be able to play an important role."

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

"Half a century ago, when Britain's House of Commons was debating the brand-new [UN] Charter, a man no one ever called a woolly-minded crackpot urged the development of 'a world assembly elected directly from the people for the world as a whole, to whom the governments who form the United Nations are responsible.' Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin called his proposal 'a completion of the institution which was built at San Francisco.' On its 50th birthday, the UN should be completed as Bevin asked, with the launching of a Parliamentary Assembly. Then, at last, Dag Hammarskjold's wish will be fulfilled, and people will be able to see the UN as 'a drawing they made themselves.'"

Erskine Childers, London Review of Books, **August 18, 1994**, as cited in World Press Review, June 1995, p. 11.

[Note: Childers was a UN civil servant for 22 years, and is the author, with Brian Urquhart of "Renewing the United Nations system."]

"... the quality of the General Assembly's work has deteriorated in recent years. Its agenda is extremely resistant to being streamlined or rationalized, and many agenda items are trivial, overlapping, or of very narrow interest to the member states. ... In addition, the right of every member state to place any item on the agenda, no matter how parochial or trivial, continues to be sacrosanct. As a consequence, the assembly's agenda has grown to over 150 items, each ... considered in either plenary or committee meetings during the fall session. ...

Most of the delegations at UN headquarters in New York operate on a year-round basis, while the work of the assembly ... is squeezed into the three months between the third week of September and the Christmas-New Year holiday. Ironically, [this calendar] originated in a Europe-centered age when ... UN meetings [needed to fit] the sailing dates of ocean liners to and from New York. In the contemporary world, there is no reason why the assembly cannot focus on the most significant ... agenda items when heads of state are present at the fall meeting, and allow committee work to proceed as necessary throughout the year."

Ronald I. Spiers, "Reforming the United Nations," in Roger A. Coate, ed., U.S. policy and the future of the United Nations, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, **1994**, pp. 19-40 [29-30]. [emphasis added]

[Note: Mr. Spiers served as a UN Under-Secretary-General in New York in the early 1990s.]

"Much of the work [of] the Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] is of questionable relevance to the larger problems that the United Nations must address. ... Many observers have concluded that reinvigorating ECOSOC is a hopeless enterprise, and therefore the attention this objective has received in recent years has been largely rhetorical

... the one significant reform of ECOSOC in recent years, which resulted from Japanese pressure, was to end the annual summer meetings in Geneva [which were a pretext] for a European vacation for the New York delegations. ... the real experts with serious national responsibilities shun ECOSOC meetings, and the truly challenging issues are not discussed ... or are only covered briefly in passing.

One problem with ECOSOC is that its membership has been expanded from eighteen to fifty-four, and the relevance of its deliberations has diminished proportionally. This should stand as an object lesson to those who are calling for the expansion of the Security Council ...

A second problem with ECOSOC is that it has become increasingly irrelevant and

ineffective, and as a result, it now plays only a minimal role in coordinating UN activities in the economic and social field. ..."

Ronald I. Spiers, "Reforming the United Nations," in Roger A. Coate, ed., U.S. policy and the future of the United Nations, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, **1994**, pp. 19-40 [31]

"The majority of the United Nations members owe money to the organization, starting with the United States.

It has just turned 50 and is already about to die. The celebration of its half-century of life can be changed to an evening funeral.

To celebrate its birthday or pray for a response ... The exhausted organization has made a final and surprising effort acquiring kilometers of red carpet for the occasion. But the decrepit state of the Manhattan headquarters will not leave space for doubt about the bad patch it is going through after a period of euphoria when lethargy left thanks to the decomposition of the USSR.

Without accord over reform.

The fall of 1995, the 50th anniversary ... was going to be the opportune moment for the 185 members to adapt the organization to stand up to the challenges of the post-Cold War era. The pending reform will only be, however, evoked in the speeches that will be delivered by Presidents on the grounds of the organization's birthday. [They] ... will adopt a solemn declaration concerning the future of the organization."

"The UN turns fifty at the edge of bankruptcy", El Pais (Spain), **15 October 1995**, as translated by the UN office in Madrid.

"History, that insufferable know-it-all, has its noble brow furrowed. While noting much to commend in the way this lofty experiment has played out, it finds the U.N.'s charter conference an affair doomed by internal contradictions. Haunted by the disaster of appeasement, the framers assumed all humanity would rally behind the rescue of any country, no matter how remote the peril to any other country's vital interest. They believed each government would surrender at any time its warmaking powers to a supranational force. They provided not at all for conflicts within nations, and they considered open debate and resolutions of good will to be a cure for all evils.

As the globe's potentates assembly in New York City next week to celebrate the U.N.'s formal 50th anniversary, the occasion augurs more than traffic gridlock unlike any that Manhattan has ever seen. Outside the champagne parties on Turtle Bay where the UN has its quarters, the anniversary stands to produce a feast of cynicism about the visions of 1945. From this angle, the organization's ambitions look overblown and its bureaucratic arthritis embarrassing. As fashion statement, the U.N. is growing scandalously démodé."

"Cover: Reform or die! The United Nations at 50", Time, **October 23, 1995**, pp. 22-47.

"Although the United Nations is essentially an enormous information processing and sharing machine, it ... almost never addresses frontally the quality of [its] data, the value added ... and the cost-effectiveness

A report on ['Restructuring and revitalization ' (A-50-697) hides] these key questions under layers of esoteric bureaucratise. ... A section entitled 'Documentation' [says] 'the documentation crisis in the United Nations is not a new phenomenon. ... despite repeated analyses and discussions, the crisis continues and indeed, may have grown more acute. It seriously impacts the ability of intergovernmental bodies to perform their mandated functions ... Although member states have complained insistently, ... the Secretariat [also] can have no interest in bringing out a document long after the due date.

"The roots of the documentation crisis are systemic. ... Without a cultural change in the way business is done in the economic, social, and related sectors, where the tendency has been to increase the number of bodies as well as the frequency with which they meet, it is unlikely that the documentation crisis will abate."

"UN economic & social sector reform ignores critical issues of information flow and use", International Documents Review (New York), **November 27, 1995**.

"Now it's 'Yes ..., but ...' time. Yes, the Millennium Summit was an unqualified success if the measure was getting [some 150] world leaders together under one roof without too much cold shouldering. But what did it mean really, what was actually achieved and where does the UN go from here?"

Some cynics will say that, notwithstanding the lofty affirmations in the Declaration adopted Friday, nothing much will change. The penitent sinners will regress when all the euphoria wears off, they'll say, and nothing will change. Perhaps they're wrong and this extravagant if not desperate bid to rescue the UN from the affliction of irrelevance may prove to have been well worth the effort.

Yes, past experience of UN peaks and troughs, hopes raised and then dashed, makes it tempting to go along with the dismal scenario. But, for once things can be different. It only needs the member states, rich or poor, to make it so."

Michael Littlejohns, Earth Times News Service, **September 9, 2000**.

"Just a month after the United Nations released a self-incriminating report on the massacre in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, an equally damning report has appeared on Rwanda. During 100 days in 1994, a staggering 800,000 civilians were slaughtered in this small Central African state. The United Nations had 2,500 troops in the area in early 1994. All but a few hundred were withdrawn when the killing started.

Given its membership, the United Nations will never meet all of the world's many humanitarian challenges. But it should at least avoid empty efforts that serve to excuse the world's inaction.

If the world's leading governments are indifferent to genocide, the United Nations should not act as the vehicle for token interventions to hide their shame. It should use that shame to fight indifference; it should broadcast the horror of genocide to voters and stir the outrage that might produce serious intervention. [Secretary-General Kofi] Annan likes to say that the United Nations should not be neutral in the face of evil. Indifference to evil is not a matter for polite neutrality, either."

"Confession on Rwanda", *The Washington Post*, International Herald Tribune, **December 21, 1999**.

" [At] a succession of high-level meetings in 2000, [it is expected] that the privilegerati will fashion a new agenda for equitable development, economic and social.

What might such an action agenda consist of? Three ideas the international community would do well to consider:

Environment: Why not set up a new 'implementation network' to ensure that the dozens of existing global treaties and protocols are adhered to by the very nations that agreed to them at long, costly conferences? [not] more U.N. type talk-fests but specific steps by which localities can mobilize current resources to lower pollution.

Infrastructure. Why not empower local communities to join hands with resource-laden multinational corporations in drafting modest, culturally sensitive infrastructure projects with relatively short gestation periods?

Education. Developing nations [are] penalized by growing cyber-illiteracy. The

mandarins of the cyberage can help establish a 'cybercorps' to widen computer literacy in poor countries.

Mahatma Ghandiforesaw how quickly developing societies would be rived by the creation of two classes -- the haves and the have-nots. He always said: 'Think about tomorrow, but act for today.' Not a bad mantra for the new millenium."

Pranay Gupte, "The Mahatma's message: 'Think about tomorrow, but act for today' Ghandi said. Not a bad millennial mantra", Newsweek International, **January 31, 2000**, p. 4.

"Recently, the UN listed 45 states that have temporarily lost their right to vote in the General Assembly because they owe more than two years' worth of dues. Another seven states, equally overdue [retained] their vote.

Analysis: It is popular to portray the United States as a UN deadbeat. But astonishingly, fully one out of four UN Member States either can't or won't pay their assessments.

.... [Of these 52 states], 24 are African, 11 are Asian, 11 are Latin American or Caribbean, and 6 are Eastern European.

.... the fact that 27% of UN Member States have accumulated such steep debts either implies an inadequate respect for the UN, or a problem with the UN's budgeting methods.

Most of the states with two years' arrears are assessed at the minimum rate of 0.01% of the UN regular budget. Yet, even this figure seems too onerous for some to pay.

Perhaps the fact that [these] states still enjoy the right to vote in other bodies -- including the Security Council the Commission on Human Rights, and so on -- minimizes the penalty they face. It may also embolden some of them to criticize others."

"The Wednesday Watch: Analysis and commentary from the UN Watch in Geneva", **February 9, 2000**.

[Note: in 2003, the minimum dues amount for UN Member States was \$13,502 per year].

"On the first day of what was billed as the Millenium Summit last September in New York, Kofi Annan, [UN] Secretary-General, welcomed the assembled dignities from 147 countries with a banquet and the proposing of a toast to 'You [who] have the authority to speak for, and the ability to transform, the lives of six billion people.'

The flattery was extravagant but it was cheerfully received (strong applause, complacent nods) and for three days and three nights the dignities gave speeches, ratified treaties, glanced at documents, signed declarations of blameless principle in favor of human freedom and the biosphere.

Our twenty-first-century faith in scientific miracle gives rise to the hope of 'transnational institutions' capable of managing the world's affairs with the sangfroid of the late emperor Caesar Augustus.

.... the front page news mocked the presumptions of omnipotence -- civil war in Colombia and Sierra Leone, famine in Ethiopia, a mob with machetes murdering three U.N. officials in West Timor (on the same day that Kofi Annan was raising his glass of congratulatory champagne), civil war in Chechnya and Sri Lanka, floods in India and six men arrested for cannibalism in Tanzania."

Lewis H. Lapham, "Cleopatra's nose", Harpers Magazine, **November 2000**, pp. 9-11.

"The concept 'Dialogue among Nations' proposed by President Mohammed Khatami of Iran was unanimously endorsed by the members of the United Nations.

.... however, one must realistically conclude that, since most member nations, including

Iran, suppress free and open dialogue any dialogue that may occur involving any nation that does not respect free speech and a free independent press will be stunted and severely reflective of interests of those in power.

Perhaps one day a representative of a democratic country with an open society will introduce a resolution in the United Nations to advance unintimidated speech and a free press in every member state. If that resolution passes then the 'Dialogue among nations' will be more than a slogan, for it will have meaningful resonance.

One must hope that a future UN will be less inclined to slogans and more dedicated to substance."

Alexander Epstein, Toronto, letter to the Editor, International Herald Tribune, **July 18, 2001**.

Note: The UN did indeed go on to proclaim 2001 as "The Year of Dialogue among Civilizations", see article by Irwin Arief, "UN talkfest promotes dialogue as diplomatic tool", Reuters, November 7, 2001.

"The 55th session of the U.N. General Assembly ended on Monday with its outgoing Finnish president criticizing the body's hit-or-miss agenda which left too little time for important issues.

Specifically Harri Holkeri, a former Finnish banker, said ... the assembly's agenda spread itself too thin with 200 issues, many of them overlapping with the 'big issues' hidden.

The assembly has 189 members and controls the budget and general programming of the United Nations. While its decisions on political issues express the will of the international community, they are not mandatory ...

... Holkeri also criticized the number of conferences held throughout the world that he said 'cost big money.' If the assembly trimmed its agenda, such issues could be [discussed] during the body's main session. ...

'There is a tendency to do too much at the same time,' Holkeri said, adding, however, that 'This is a bureaucratic institution. Nothing happens overnight.'

Holkeri also grappled with reform of the U.N. Security Council which has gone nowhere for eight years. ...

... he said he would promise that when Finland 'in about 2000 years,' gets the presidency of the assembly again 'I am not going to be available for that position.'

Evelyn Leopold, "UN General Assembly president laments free-for-all agenda," dailynews.yahoo , **September 10, 2001**.

"After seventeen years of [MF] structural adjustment Bolivia remains the poorest country in South America. [Economist and adviser] Jeffrey Sachs, ... [says] 'I always told the Bolivians that what you have here is a miserable, poor economy with hyperinflation; if you are brave, if you are gutsy, if you do everything right, you will end up with a miserable, poor economy with stable prices.' ...

[I ended a recent visit to Bolivia] in a market town ... garden with a convivial group of local officials. Talk turns to the IMF, whose local representative [just left, telling] Bolivia that first and foremost it must solve the corruption problem. ...

Seriously, someone asks me, [isn't there any hope for] bringing democracy to the I.M.F. [or] the U.N.? Shouldn't the citizens be electing representatives ... so these powerful institutions might be accountable? I can't think of any reason why not. It is only later ... maybe it's back in New York -- that I remember it is only people in countries like Bolivia who know or care what the World Bank or the I.M.F. do. In the West, most of us have other things to worry about."

William Finnegan, "The economics of empire: Notes on the Washington Consensus", Harper's Magazine, **May 2003**, pp. 41-54 [pp. 45-46, 54].

"As the United Nations General Assembly opens, the world organization faces twin crises in its effectiveness and its legitimacy.

Ten years after the Rwanda crisis, the UN's painful inability to prevent genocide has been on display during the hand-wringing over Sudan. ...

... The UN [also] remains scarred by the war in Iraq and its bloody aftermath ... which suggests a crisis in legitimacy that questions the very idea of the United Nations as a significant actor in international peace and security. ...

The General Assembly [will be preparing] the 60th anniversary celebrations of 2005 ... [and the UN] security and development ... [agendas could be considered] together. ...

... It might be possible to [secure] ... greater cooperation from developing countries for counterterrorism and counterproliferation activities in exchange for greater development assistance and reform of agricultural subsidies by Western countries.

It is far from clear, however, that there is an atmosphere of crisis of the kind needed to bring about change on this scale. ...

It is possible that recalling the atmosphere of crisis that accompanied the drafting of the UN Charter 60 years ago will remove the need for a comparable crisis in order to change it."

Simon Chesterman, "59th General Assembly: A battered UN needs to go back to its roots", International Herald Tribune, **September 14, 2004**.

[Note: Mr. Chesterman is executive director of the Institute for International Law and Justice at New York University School of Law.]

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(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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[Note: discusses the weaknesses of the General Assembly Declaration of Commitment at its Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 25-27, 2001.]