

OVERVIEW OF IO WATCH ARCHIVE QUOTES VIII, MAY-JUNE 2007

386. “**The grinding investigation of scandal in the United Nations’ multi-billion dollar procurement department** ... has gone on for more than a year ... **[with] no definitive result in sight**. But every now and then odd signs float up. ...

[Most recently, the U.N. has suspended [Sky Link Aviation, a long-term major contractor, in a] tactic ... aimed at ending the apparent stonewalling of a probe into a wide array of graft allegations in [U.N. procurement] ...

The U.N. Procurement Task Force was appointed some 14 months ago to plumb the depths of [this] corruption, ... after a Fox News investigation in 2005 led to the ... arrest and guilty plea of U.N. procurement officer Alexander Yaklovlev. ... Another U.N. procurement officer, Sanjay Bahel, is due to stand trial in New York federal court later this month ...

[The Skylink struggle relates to] ... the U.N.’s investigation of a former head of procurement, assistant-secretary-general Andrew Toh. He was suspended ... last year. ... Fox News has subsequently learned that Toh has been formally accused ... of gross misconduct. Toh himself confirmed the charge ... and has launched his own counter-suit.”

Claudia Rosett and George Russell, “Global air carrier suspended in U.N. procurement investigation”, Fox News, **May 3, 2007**.

387a. “Zimbabwe is poised to become chair of the United Nation’s Commission on Sustainable Development, while Belarus is set to win a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, in two decisions likely to attract **fresh criticism of the world body**. ...

Zimbabwe government policies are seen as having triggered its most severe economic crisis since independence, with annual inflation at 2,200 per cent. ... The Commission, created in 1993, is the UN’s main forum for discussing the relationship between development and the environment and is expected to issue recommendations on climate change next week.

Meanwhile, a coalition of 40 human rights groups called on the UN to reject Belarus’ candidacy for the Human Rights Council ... [which] has itself faced mounting criticism.

‘Belarus’ record on human rights makes [it] a supremely unfit candidate for the ... Council’, said Human Rights Watch. ... The Belarusian government ‘severely restricts the activities of human rights groups, and has systematically moved to close them and opposition parties. Peaceful protesters are violently dispersed and arrested, and opposition leaders are jailed.’”

Mark Turner, “Zimbabwe to chair UN commission”, Financial Times (UK), **May 3, 2007**. [Note: Western countries subsequently persuaded Bosnia to seek a vacant HRC seat, which it won over Belarus. However, Egypt, Angola, and Qatar won seats despite opposition from human rights groups, see “Belarus loses UN human rights bid”, BBC News, May 17, 2007.)]

387b. “A major rift between the West and Africa was exposed this weekend as Zimbabwe was controversially selected as head of the UN’s main environment body. Diplomats from the European Union and the US had strongly objected to a country that has destroyed a once-thriving farming industry, has a failing economy, an appalling human rights record and a poor record of looking after its wildlife and national parks, holding the post.

But in a secret ballot ... in New York, Zimbabwe was elected to lead the Commission on Sustainable ... Development. ... It seems developing countries voted ... in a direct show of defiance against developed ones.

The CSD's entire two-week session had earlier come under attack for its scripted speeches and inability to find common targets for green policies. [The conference ended] ... with no consensus after the 25-member EU refused to approve a paper that included no concrete measures.

A Western diplomat cited the Zimbabwe decision as] ... 'wholly inconsistent with the commission's aims. It damages the credibility of the commission itself and its ability to deal with issues affecting the livelihoods of millions from the poorest countries.'

TracyMcVeigh, "Fury at Zimbabwe UN role", The Observer Guardian (UK), **May 13, 2007**.

387c. "With Zimbabwe elected Friday to chair the Commission on Sustainable Development, we now have the latest poster child for the usual Orwellian abuse of the noble mandate ... [promised] back at the U.N. founding in 1945.

Let's get real. **Zimbabwe's U.N. coup is** not some extraordinary aberration, ... [but] how the U.N., as a grand collective, was, unfortunately, configured to work. This **is how the U.N.** – rolling in American money and support, but lacking any reasonable system of checks, balances, and accountability – **will continue to work.**

There is by now every sign that **the endless production of reports, proposals, and strategies for U.N. reform** ... [especially during the final two years under Kofi Annan] ... **serves chiefly to produce new programs, projects, and initiatives, coupled with fresh U.N. demands for money. ... in a system where ... any wrongdoing is always someone else's fault.** ...

How the U.S. might escape this U.N. cycle of insanity is hard to say, given the vested interests of our own political establishment in supporting [the] U.N. ... But one way is to start by telling the truth. ... With this latest outrage, the [CSD] has, in its way, offered a handy opening."

Claudia Rosett, "Call it the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Dictatorships", National Review Online (US), **May 13, 2007**.

388. "A Canadian lawyer with extensive experience in governmental ethics has been appointed Director of the United Nations Ethics Office, a key element of reform of the Organization mandated by the 2005 World Summit ...

Robert F. Benson served as the Interim Ethics Commissioner in the Canadian Parliament. ... [He] succeeds Nancy Hertz-Soyka who has been the Interim Director of the Ethics Office since its inception in early 2006. ...

Conceived by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Office was established to administer financial disclosure and whistleblower policies mandated by the General Assembly ... [and provide] confidential advice to staff to help them avert conflict of interest problems. Mr. Benson started work at UN Headquarters in New York on May 1."

"Canadian legal expert takes top ethics post at UN", UN News Service, **3 May 2007**. [Note: It is unfortunate that it took the Secretariat well over a year to properly establish this "key element of reform", which was mandated in late 2005.]

389. "Secretary-General [Kofi Annan] himself recognized that major management changes were needed and he proposed changes to the General Assembly. ... [They rejected them.] The 50 countries that voted in favor ... contribute about 80 percent of the assessed budget of the UN. The 120 countries that voted against pay less than 15 percent. ...

The only change that I think will work is move fundamentally away from the system of assessed contributions toward a system of voluntary contributions. [The 97 poorest countries which constitute a UN majority, pay **only 0.3 percent** of the UN budget.] ...

It is generally agreed that the best-run, most effective agencies in the UN system are those that are already funded by voluntary contributions ... [UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Program.] Not without their problems to be sure, but [with] the strongest incentive to reform ... [or the contributors can go] somewhere else. ...

[Voluntary funding] would be a very salutary battle to have ... to get into the real question: What programs are effective? What programs actually accomplish something? And what programs ... [should be abolished] or substantially changed? ... Competition would be good for the United Nations and ... [should be our objective.]”

John R. Bolton, “Speech” at Syracuse University, February 2007 (posted on-line **May 4, 2007**. [Note: Mr. Bolton’s conclusions above are preceded by a detailed, pragmatic assessment of UN entrenched inaction on management and other reforms, with little sign of any change. The full text (of some 6,000 words) is available at the American Enterprise Institute, at www.aei.org, under Short Publications.]

390. “Almost everywhere you travel these days, people are talking about their weather – and how it has changed. Nowhere have I found this more true than in Australia, where ‘the big dry’, a six-year record drought, has parched the Aussie breadbasket ... severely. ...

In just 12 months, climate change has gone from being a nonissue here to being one that could tip the vote [in pending national elections.] ... [Prime Minister John Howard declared last month that “insufficient rain] ‘over the next six to eight weeks [would mean] ... no water allocations for irrigation purposes’ until May 2008 in the Murray-Darling river basin, which accounts for 41 percent of Australian agriculture. ...

Australians were shocked. ... Australian businesses are demanding that the politicians ‘get a regulatory environment settled’ ... because they know change is coming. ...

In short, climate change is the first issue in a long time that could really scramble Western politics. ... Politics gets interesting when it stops raining.”

Thomas L. Friedman, “‘Big dry’ down under”, International Herald Tribune, **May 5-6, 2007**.

391a. ‘The **Global Environment Facility is a \$3.13 billion fund** that helps developing countries deal with climate change. ... [Its] 32 donor countries and support programs [mostly] implemented by the United Nations and the World Bank. Since its inception in 1991, it has provided \$6.8 billion in grants and helped secure \$24 billion in co-financing for over 1,900 projects in more than 160 countries. ...

[Its new head, Monique Barbut has] undertaken major changes at the fund, which had been criticized as having become too slow and not attentive enough to the world’s poorest countries. [An expert observer says] ... ‘It used to take 66 months for a project to go from the embryonic stage to initial implementation.’ Barbut, he said, reduced that to 22 months. ‘She’s made the GEF a catalyst rather than a funding mechanism,’ he said. ...

Barbut agreed that when she took over, ‘GEF was in big trouble,’ and she acknowledged that the process of change had been difficult. ... She said her goal was to make the GEF more focused on clients ... [and] to rebalance GEF’s global portfolio by giving more to the world’s least developed countries.”

Erika Kinetz, “Green but not soft: A UN fund chief sees ecology as crucial for poor states”, International Herald Tribune, Saturday-Sunday, **May 5-6, 2007**. [Note: for more, see www.gefweb.org, or, more concisely, in Wikipedia.]

391b. "**A growing dispute [involves] a United Nations program** that is the centerpiece of international efforts to help developing countries **fight global warming**. That program, **the Clean Development Mechanism, has become a kind of Robin Hood, raising billions of dollars** from rich countries and giving them to poor countries to curb emissions of global warming gases. But the biggest beneficiary is no longer so poor: China ... got three-fifths of the money raised last year. ...

China is expected ... this year or next, to become the world's largest emitter of global warming gases. That puts a spotlight on the CDM, which has grown from \$100 million in payments to developing countries in 2002 to \$4.8 billion last year.

... Poorer countries have received almost nothing, ... [making the program] a battleground, pitting an unlikely coalition of bankers, traders, industrialists and environmentalists, who defend it, against economic development advocates, who warn of distortions. ...

A vigorous cottage industry of project designers and brokers has sprung up in Shanghai ... to make it easy and inexpensive for Chinese companies to participate. ... Trailing far behind is Africa ... [where] payments totaled less than \$150 million last year."

Keith Bradsher, "Knowing what way the wind blows; Handful of nations get most subsidies", International Herald Tribune, **May 9, 2007**. [Note: for more general information, see <http://cdm.unfccc.int>.]

391c. "The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is an arrangement under the Kyoto Protocol allowing industrialised countries with a greenhouse gas reduction commitment (so-called Annex 1 countries) to invest in emission reducing projects in developing countries as an alternative to what is generally considered more costly emission reductions in their own countries.

In theory, the CDM allows for a drastic reduction of costs for the industrialised countries, while achieving the same amount of emission reductions as without the CDM. However, critics have long argued that **emission reductions under the CDM may be fictive**, and in early 2007 the CDM came under fire for paying €4.6 billion for destruction of HFC gases while according to a study this would cost only €100 million if funded by development agencies [discussed in more detail in the full Wikipedia entry.]

The CDM is supervised by the CDM Executive Board (CDM EB) and is under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties (COP/MOP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)."

"Clean Development Mechanism", Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia (as of **May 14, 2007**). [Note: The UN is already parceling out billions for combating climate change? Who knew? However, the implementation problems and political battles identified above do sound familiar. In 2005, the then-UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchet famously said, in response to the Iraq Oil-for-Food program scandal, "We do not ever want it. We at the UN do not ever want to do an Oil for Food program again." [see the text of John Bolton's speech in item 389 above, in its "Management reform" section.] Could the multi-billion payments currently being made by the CDM be an even bigger oil-for-food-type scandal in the making?]

392a. "A Swiss magistrate has launched a formal investigation into **allegations of fraud four years ago in leadership elections at the World Meteorological Organization** ... concerning alleged attempts to use embezzled U.N. funds for influence peddling in a 2003 vote for the post of secretary-general. ...

The probe comes as the 188 member states of the WMO gather in Geneva for a four-yearly congress at which Secretary-General Michel Jarraud of France is standing for a second term. Jarraud has denied any wrongdoing. ...

[The investigation is] linked to an earlier Swiss probe into allegations of embezzlement which first came to light in 2003. ...

The probe into the WMO, whose aims include safeguarding the environment and water resources, adds to a series of probes hanging over various United Nations bodies. New U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has pledged to root out corruption. ...

The Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ) cited a leaked internal agency memo as saying that WMO officials allegedly offered to pay travel costs and provide an allowance to some of the delegates from developing countries in return for their pledge to vote for a certain candidate."

Thomas Atkins, "Swiss launch corruption probe at U.N. weather body", Reuters, **May 7, 2007**.

392b. "Switzerland is pushing for an overhaul of the way the scandal-hit World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is run. The United Nations body, which opened its 15th Congress in Geneva on Monday, is currently battling allegations of fraud and corruption. The Congress ... takes place only once every four years. ... **The Swiss government is** submitting a resolution aimed at increasing transparency ... and **[demanding] that the 188 member states play a more active role in the management of WMO affairs.**

... The organization is effectively run by a 37-strong executive council that acts independently of the member states. ... The Swiss resolution ... [proposes that member states sit] as observers on the executive council ... [and receive] access to all documents issued by the executive council and the WMO's finance committee. ... **'It's quite a strange situation'**, [said a Swiss official.] ...

[He] insisted the Swiss drive for greater transparency had 'no direct connection' with the ongoing corruption and fraud cases ..., but he did concede that the investigations had cast a cloud over the UN body. ... "It is a very important organization ... in climate monitoring ... [and] we are extremely interested in a well-organised WMO."

"Clouds gather over UN weather agency", swissinfo, **May 7, 2007**.

393. "**The new UN Human Rights Council was inaugurated last year** ... as the 'dawn of a new era' for the promotion and protection of human rights. ... [After eight sessions this year, has it] met the criteria set by ... [Kofi] Annan, who envisioned a new body ... that would eschew the politicization and selectivity that so discredited its predecessor?

Sadly, the new Council has not been an improvement [and] in some ways it has been even worse. ... In this report, we assess the 2006-2007 Council's record.

The body has been dominated by an increasingly brazen alliance of repressive regimes seeking not only to spoil needed reforms but to undermine the few meaningful mechanisms ... that already exist. Their goal is impunity for systematic abuses. Unfortunately, too many democracies have thus far gone along with the spoilers, out of loyalty to regional groups and other political alliances.

All is not yet lost, but ... the upcoming June session ... will be critical. ... **If the most damaging proposals are adopted** – such as the elimination of the human rights monitors for specific countries- the **prognosis for the Council will be grim.**"

"Dawn of a new era? Assessment of the United Nations Human Rights Council and its year of reform", UN Watch, **May 7, 2007**. [Note: The detailed 44-page report is available at www.unwatch.org. Further note: another detailed assessment of the HRC's troubles is Brett D. Schaefer, "The UN Human Rights Council: A disastrous first year", Background No. 2038, The Heritage Foundation, June 1, 2007, available at www.heritage.org, under "Research, Foreign Issues."]

394a. "**Old international institutions** never die; they just fade away. Yet ... they can also reinvent themselves. ... This is a challenge for all such institutions. It is particularly true today for the Asian Development Bank, an institution set up to serve a once desperately poor region that is now the world's most dynamic. ...

[A group of eminent persons addressed the issue of ADB change and their report] ... was discussed intensively at the annual meeting in Kyoto over the weekend. ...

In 2020, unless something dramatic happens, more than 90 percent of those now living in the huge region will ... live in middle-income countries ... [and] be able to finance their development from domestic funds or foreign private resources. ...

The eminent persons' group suggested that the ADB had to be transformed ... moving to faster and more inclusive growth ... [to] environmentally sustainable growth and ... a regional focus. ... [Critics objected to] ... suggested moves away from poverty, health, education, and gender equality, in particular. ... Focus is essential. ...

The report is imperfect. But it provides an excellent start ... The ADB must change, as Asia itself is doing, or fade into irrelevance."

"Reinventing Asia's development bank", The Financial Times (UK), **May 8, 2007**.

394b. "[Venezuela's president Hugh Chávez] ... says that he will leave the International Monetary Fund [and] the World Bank ... [because they] are under the thumb of ... the United States. Instead, he is proposing a new body: The Bank of the South ... to make loans to Latin American governments. ...

This might sound an empty threat: but in many parts of the developing world there is resentment against 'the Washington consensus' ... [and] the IMF is hardly the most-loved institution in Latin America. ...

[But the real question is] ... whether Latin America ... ought still to have any use for the IMF and the World Bank ... Many countries ... can now raise money cheaply in capital markets.

The answer is a qualified yes. ... The markets want borrowers to be IMF members. ... New-found [Latin American] stability [might falter. Above all, multilateral lenders' conditions] provide reasonable reassurance that money will not be wasted. Of course, [both] the IMF and World Bank could usefully be reformed to recognize the changing balance of power in the world economy. ... But to paraphrase Karl Marx, the point is to change the world not to leave it."

"Venezuela, the World Bank and the IMF", The Economist, **May 12th, 2007**, p. 14. [Note: See also "Hugo Chávez moves into banking", the same issue, pp. 51-52.]

394c. "[In Latin America] both the World Bank and its regional equivalent, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) find it harder to compete. ... Rather than surrendering its best customers to private creditors, the [World Bank] wants to price its loans more keenly and make borrowing less cumbersome ...

The IDB, which has escaped [Hugo] Chávez' ire, faces a similar challenge. 'We have to reinvent ourselves,' says its president Luis Moreno. [The IDB] is lending to state and local governments ... focusing on infrastructure [and region-wide] projects ... and stresses [like the World Bank that its] loans come with valuable technical advice. Critics say they should do more to separate the two.

Mr. Chávez portrays **the World Bank** as a domineering patron, imposing its beliefs on any nation that takes its coin. It would be more accurate to describe it as **a fading brand, anxious to serve its customers better in a newly crowded marketplace.**

"Fading brands: Development banks in Latin America", The Economist, **May 12th, 2007**, p. 52. [Note: As the development banks at least struggle mightily to reshape and sharpen their approaches and impact in the 21st century, the UN keeps dragging along with all its long-running and even new programs in almost every conceivable global area. The many endless UN arguments and bickering do not substitute at all for sharp scrutiny of those programs, a focus on top priority tasks, and agreement on new strategies to meet changing realities.]

395. "In the first such action involving a major oil company, Chevron is preparing to acknowledge that it should have known that illegal kickbacks to Saddam Hussein were being paid on Iraqi oil that it bought as part of the UN oil-for-food program, according to investigators.

The admission will come as part of a settlement being negotiated with U.S. prosecutors, which will also include fines totaling between \$25 and \$50 million ... These payments were made by small traders that sold the oil to Chevron, but records ... showed that they were financed by Chevron. ...

So far, only former UN officials, individual traders and relatively small oil firms have come under official scrutiny in the United States. ... The Chevron settlement followed months of work by a joint task force ... [in New York], with input from Italian authorities."

Claudio Gatti, "Admission by Chevron on Saddam kickbacks", International Herald Tribune, **May 8, 2007**

396a. "[In a speech at World Bank headquarters Monday, Mark Malloch Brown warned] that the bank's mission was 'hugely at risk' as long as Paul Wolfowitz remained its president. ... The bank presidency would be a neat coup for Sir Mark ... [but **consider his own UN record.**]

'Not a penny was lost from the organization', he insisted last year, following an audit ... of peacekeeping procurement ... [which actually found serious problems in \$310 million of contracts in] a budget of \$1.6 billion ... Mr. Malloch Brown also [insisted] that Paul Volcker's investigation into Oil for Food had 'fully exonerated' [Kofi] Annan. In fact, Mr. Volcker's report made an 'adverse finding' against [him. He also] ... described the idea that Mr. Annan might resign as 'inappropriate political assassination' – a standard he apparently doesn't apply to political enemies like Mr. Wolfowitz. ...

Mr. Malloch Brown never made any serious attempt to reform the U.N. beyond the cosmetic, while doing everything he could to block the real reforms proposed ... It's a remarkable bit of chutzpah for the man who downplayed corruption at the U.N. to seek the ouster of the man who has fought to reduce corruption at the World Bank."

"Axis of Soros: The men and motives behind the World Bank coup attempt", OpinionJournal, wsj.com, **May 9, 2007**.

396b. "Your May 9 editorial rests on false premises. I did not attack Paul Wolfowitz. ... Indeed, I spoke of my friendship with him, but said the situation had to be resolved. Contrary to your claim, I am not a candidate to succeed him.

You seek to undermine my record as a leading U.N. reformer by distorting the truth. For example you pretend that when I said U.N. overbudgeting in a peacekeeping operation did not lead to the loss of funds that I was talking about procurement practices overall. I set up a task force to investigate procurement fraud. You take a comment I made on an interim Paul Volcker report as relating to his final finding. ..."

Sir Mark Malloch Brown, "I didn't attack Wolfowitz, nor am I succeeding him", The Wall Street Journal, **14 May 2007**.

396c. "Mr. Malloch Brown's letter ... is a tribute to the skills [of rhetorical elasticity] he has developed during his long career in such 'multilateral' institutions as the U.N. He claims that he came to the World Bank last week not to bury Paul Wolfowitz but to praise him. As smooth an actor as Sir Mark knew exactly how his words would be interpreted. ... He didn't correct the news reports saying he had encouraged Mr. Wolfowitz's resignation. We can guess what Mr. Wolfowitz thinks of such 'friendship.'

Mr. Malloch Brown's record in downplaying the Oil for Food scandal at the U.N. is well known, and he knows that Paul Volcker's 'adverse finding' against ... Kofi Annan was first made as part of an interim report, not the final one. That's when Mr. Annan's future at the U.N. was most in peril, and that's when Mr. Malloch Brown pushed the public line that Mr. Annan believed he had been 'exonerated.' There's much more, but you get the idea."

"Malloch Brown's 'friendship'", online.wsj.com, **May 14, 2007**. [Note: Sir Mark's stature as "a leading U.N. reformer" is growing more and more tattered

(see, for starters, Overview quotes 198-200, 204, 236, 263, 287b, 292, 295, 300, 311a-b, 315a, 347-348, 360a, 370, 381b, and 387c.) His version of the major UN procurement scandal is also extremely “elastic”: actually, Secretariat task force action (still dragging along) began only as very belated “damage control” months after Fox News, US government auditors, and independent consultants uncovered the scandal in late 2005 (see Overview items 386, 172, 177-178, 184, and 214.)]

397. “As climate change and global warming continue to dominate the headlines, there is a concerted move ...for an [expanded role] of the United Nations in fighting environmental degradation.

The Western industrial nations, led by France, have long sought to elevate the existing U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi into **a gigantic U.N. Environment Organization**. But the current chair of the Group of 77 (G77), told IPS ‘The general trend in the G77 has not been very favorable. ...

Last November a blue-ribbon [UN expert panel complained] of overlaps and redundancies in sustainable development ... and said there were at least five U.N. entities involved in environmental issues. ...

During a conference last February, **outgoing French President Jacques Chirac** said that France ... [had] a reference to an Environment Charter in its Constitution. ‘I hope that initiative can serve as inspiration within the United Nations and .. [in] all states,’ he added. Chirac ... has been pushing for the creation of the UNEO ... and the establishment of ‘world environmental governance.’ ...

The [UNEP] is outstanding, but it does not have adequate powers or institutional clout. ... [The] proposed UNEO, declared Chirac, will act as the world’s ecological conscience.”

Thalif Deen, “U.N. debates wider leadership role on climate”, **Inter Press Service, May 12, 2007**. [Note: Uh-oh! First, as noted in items 340e. and 387c., the UN always hungers for grand new programmes and money. And, however much Mr. Chirac may wish it, and to note only the most flagrant current warning signs, the UN is very, very far from being ready to accountably and effectively combat the vast challenges of global climate change (see items 387a-c, 391a-c, 392a-b, and the next item.)]

398. “[Secretary-General Ban is] eager to make a diplomatic breakthrough somewhere. Instead, he should redirect his laser-like focus on another global hotspot where a breakthrough is actually possible – and where it is just as necessary: the United Nations.

Mr. Ban has been painfully slow in filling vacant U.N. positions. The internal justice system remains hostile to whistle-blowers while old wagons circle around wrongdoers. ...

Mr. Ban’s political team ... correctly identified Lebanon and Sudan as areas where a U.N. chief might have some effect. ... But [his] attempts to engage the dictators [involved] have reached their inevitable dead end.

[Meanwhile,] ... an audit of the U.N. Development Program Office in [North Korea], announced ...in January after reports of [serious problems], ... was meant to show that Mr. Ban will act quickly to uproot the corruption that plagued [Kofi] Annan’s administration ...and start a process that would independently re-examine all UN programmes. But the U.N. board of auditors probe has proved toothless ...[after North Korea flatly refused to cooperate.] ...

Only after setting things right in his own house can Mr. Ban – whose instincts about international affairs are sound – ... become a useful tool for setting things right in the world.”

Benny Avni, “Message to Ban: First clean your own house”, **New York Sun, May 14, 2007**.

399. "U.N. investigators are looking into allegations that the U.N. Development Program and the World Bank aided in the transport of diamonds out of Zimbabwe in violation of rules meant to prevent trafficking in so-called blood diamonds. ...

"In a report ... the ... country's Foreign Ministry confirmed claims made by a local diamond company, Buby Minerals, that its chief rival, River Ranch Limited, used UNDP-registered vehicles to smuggle uncertified diamonds out of the country. The UNDP denies direct involvement in the smuggling but says it is investigating them. ... River Ranch is one of the companies aided by Africa-wide entities set up by UNDP and the World Bank to help 'small and medium enterprises' in countries like Zimbabwe.

[Zimbabwe's] Financial Gazette reported that Zimbabwe's Foreign Ministry confirmed some of the allegations made by Buby and that at least one UNDP-registered vehicle was involved in River Ranch's smuggling diamonds out of Zimbabwe."

Benny Avni, "UNDP accused of aiding gem-smuggling", The New York Sun, **May 18, 2007**.

400. "The war on terror has shredded the reputation of the Bush administration ... [and Tony Blair's government in Britain, Ehud Olmert's in Israel, and Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's in Iraq.] Here's a prediction: it will destroy future ... governments as well. ...

John Robb, a special-ops counterterrorism officer ... [has written a] thought-sparking book, *Brave new War*. ... [He] observes that today's extremist organizations are ... open-sourced, decentralized conglomerates of small, quasi-independent groups ... that learn from each other's experience. ...

Global guerrillas ... specialize in ... systems disruption. They attack the networks that support modern life. In one case, Iraqi insurgents spent roughly \$2,000 to blow up an oil pipeline. ... It cost the Iraqi government \$500 million in lost revenue. ...

These new groups ... seek to weaken states, so they can prosper in the lawless space created by collapse of law and order. ... They've learned that ... when nations don't feel existentially threatened, ... they try to fight wars on the cheap, and end up in a feckless state somewhere between real war and nonwar.

... The core issue ... is that nation-states are inefficient learning organizations, at least compared to their feudal and post-national foes."

David Brooks, "The insurgent advantage", International Herald Tribune, **May 19-20, 2007**.

401. "I became under secretary general for management at the United Nations in 2005, just a few days before [Paul] Wolfowitz was to take over the [World Bank.] ...

I was about to wade into the scandal surrounding the [UN] oil-for-food program, [which] sadly ended as the largest single account of corruption and fraud in international development assistance. ...

[After oil-for-food] ... and a subsequent scandal in the United Nations procurement office, the United Nations quickly embarked on ... powerful whistle-blower protection policies, an ethics office, and new accounting and disclosure standards.

Additional reforms proposed by [Kofi Annan and Ban Ki Moon] await approval from the General Assembly. ... Claims of politicization ... have prevented [further changes]. My fear is that a reform agenda at the World Bank, absent Wolfowitz, faces a similar fate. ...

If it intends to continue to have international legitimacy, ... the World Bank ... needs to carry on with strong executive leadership on anticorruption measures ... effective administration and controls, a pervasive culture of ethics inside and out and sufficient financing and staffing levels for oversight. ... [It will be tragic] if the bank's board allows any retrenchment or retreat by whomever takes Wolfowitz's place."

Christopher B. Burnham, "Pressing the corruption battle", International Herald Tribune, **May 21, 2007**. [Note: Mr. Burnham himself worked very hard on management reform efforts at the UN. But he seems to accept the Annan reform intentions too easily, ignoring the many recent signs of their flagrant non-implementation which directly challenge the UN's own legitimacy, as discussed throughout these Overview quotes V-VIII ff.)]

402. "I have argued before ... that, on balance, the world is a better place because of U.N. contributions ... The balance could tip in the other direction ... because the organization has been leaking legitimacy through long-festering sores.

For example, sexual abuses by peacekeepers preying for more than a decade on the very civilians they were meant to protect have undermined the moral authority of the United Nations. ...

[The] Security Council as the key decision-making body ... suffers from a fourfold legitimacy deficit. Its performance legitimacy suffers from an uneven and a selective record. It is unrepresentative from almost any point of view. ... Its procedural legitimacy is suspect on grounds of lack of democratization and transparency in decision-making. It is unanswerable to the General Assembly, the World Court, the nations or the peoples of the world. ... George Montbiot argued recently that 'Global governance is a tyranny speaking the language of democracy.' ...

The United Nations' legitimacy has suffered also because of the oil-for-food scandal. ... The United Nations lacks the capacity and expertise to manage such a complex program and should firmly refuse such tasks in the future."

Ramesh Thakur, "U.N. legitimacy eroding like festering sore", The Daily Yomiuri (Japan), **May 21, 2007**. [Note: Mr. Thakur is former senior vice rector of the U.N. University in Tokyo.]

403. "The UN every year publishes a 500-some page book which lists the "Staff of the UN Secretariat", organized by nationality. For reasons still not entirely clear, the UN claims that it can withhold this list from the press and public, despite being a public institution. ...

[A U.N. spokesperson said the list is for ... Permanent Missions of Member States, ... and senior staff who need access to it for their work.] ...

[A correspondent expressed confusion] ... as to why who does what is such a secret, and was told 'because of privacy reasons.' ... The Office of the Spokesperson has [also] declined a number of times to provide a list of the UN's 'dollar a year' officials as well as those paid 'When Actually Employed.' ...

Ban Ki-moon ,, ran [for office] on a platform promising transparency and accountability. But the release of this List itself may become a test.

[A spokesperson subsequently reported that Mr. Ban brought five Koreans with him ... including one in the [UN top managers' office.] Inner City Press has asked [what post the last-named person] obtained, and what process was followed to put him in this post. ... Developing"

Matthew Russell Lee, "In Mr. Ban's UN, why is list of staff still kept confidential, even from the staff?", Inner City Press, **May 21/23, 2007**. [Note: Actually, this list has been prized for decades as a "shopping catalog" to help Member State diplomatic missions pull strings to get "their people" into the UN Secretariat posts, levels, and units they consider most desirable.]

404a. "Discounted apartments and cash were given to a former United Nations procurement official and two other U.N. workers got nights with prostitutes to help secure \$100 million in UN contracts, a businessman testified Tuesday at [the bribery trial of] Sanjaya Bahel ... who was

chief of the U.N.'s Commodity Procurement Section from 1999 to 2003. Bahel, 57, is charged with bribery, wire fraud and mail fraud. ...

[Nishan Kohli's family] gave Bahel a laptop computer, plane tickets, thousands of dollars in cash, and subsidized rent on two luxury Manhattan apartments and 'ultimately a very low-priced sale' ... [in return for information on contracts coming up for bids] ...and how to overcome bidding requirements ...

Kohli said he spent \$6,000 one night to provide [the] two U.N. procurement workers with dinner, drinks, a strip club visit and a hotel room with prostitutes. He said he repeated the night for one of them a few more times. ...

Mr. Bahel could face 30 years in prison if convicted."

Larry Neumeister, "Witness: UN workers got prostitutes", Associated Press, **May 22, 2007**.

404b. "A former **U.N. procurement official, [Sanjaya Bahel,] was convicted** in a fraud and corruption scandal on Thursday ... [He faces up to 20 years in prison for four counts of fraud, five years for one count of conspiracy and 10 years on one charge of accepting corrupt payments.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he was 'satisfied that justice has been done.' ... [His spokesperson also said] ... **'The Secretary-General remains committed to actively pursuing any fraud and wrongdoing at the United Nations.'**"

Daniel Trotta, "Ex- U.N. official guilty in New York corruption trial", Reuters, **June 7, 2007**.

405. "**The entire international economic architecture established after World War II ... is buckling** under the weight of globalization, trade disputes and the ambitions of rising economic powers in Asia and elsewhere, experts and policy makers say. ... The World Bank and its sister groups were established to secure the international economy in 1944 at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire.

But the bank's role in lending ... [has mostly shifted] to so-called middle-income countries like China and India. ... [It's] contribution to the poorest countries amounts to only about 7 percent of the government-backed aid they get from 230 international aid agencies ... [and] through private foundations. ... [But its defenders say it is often] a strategic partner in many poor countries. ...

The International Monetary Fund is becoming more marginal. ... [Its] interest income is down and the fund is in a budget crunch. ... Leaders in Asia and Latin America whose countries staggered under austerity programs imposed by the fund [are critical, but many economists say it] ... will be needed when, inevitably, the next crisis occurs.

The World Trade Organization ... is struggling mightily to salvage the current round of trade talks that started five years ago."

"Steven R. Weisman, World economic net fights to keep role", International Herald Tribune, **May 23, 2007**.

406. "**Pakistani UN peacekeeping troops have traded in gold and sold weapons to Congolese militia groups they were meant to disarm**, the BBC has learnt. ...

The trading went on in 2005. A UN investigative team sent to gather evidence was obstructed and threatened. The team's report was buried by the UN itself to 'avoid political fallout.' ...

The head of the UN in Congo, Ambassador William Swing, ... denied emphatically that peacekeepers had been rearming the militia. ... He says that the investigation into gold trading has yet to be completed.

A UN official connected with the inquiry told the BBC there seems to have been a plan to bury it, to avoid alienating Pakistan – the largest contributor of troops to the UN. **The UN in New York has refused to explain what took place or why, nearly two years after** the allegations

first surfaced, the Congolese people have no idea what action – if any – has been taken to discipline the Pakistani soldiers concerned.”

Martin Plaut, “UN troops ‘traded gold for guns’”, BBC News, **May 23, 2007**.

407. “Seventeen of the world’s aid agencies ... [have] unveiled details of a standard of good management to which all of them (and, in due course, other agencies) should aspire. ... The hope, presumably, is that ... [when a human tragedy arises, donors can have] confidence that their money will not be wasted or diverted. ...

That is much more than a platitude. Aid workers are still blushing over blunders they made after the 2004 tsunami. Such embarrassments have given independent aid bodies a strong incentive to review their own record. ...

Getting a **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) certificate** (valid for three years) means inviting auditors to take a tough look at your mission statement, your accounts, and your control systems – both at head office and in the field. Auditors’ reports will be as open to the public as company accounts are. ...

The first stage ... involves asking whether the organization is a real not-for-profit agency, committed to the relief of suffering. Later stages involve testing the view of beneficiaries, and seeing how complaints are dealt with.

The HAP certificate might ... [help considerably by highlighting] the first principle of Hippocrates: First, do no (avoidable) harm.”

“Humanitarian aid: Weighed and found wanting”, The Economist, **May 26th, 2007**, pp. 64-65. [Note: For much more on this important new initiative, see

www.hapinternational.org/en. Applying the HAP accountability and transparency process to the UN’s own humanitarian programs would, of course, also be a very, very big step forward. For starters, see the preceding item on Congo peacekeeping.]

408. “For two of Paul Wolfowitz’s most prominent critics, Mark Malloch Brown and Ad Melkert, ... [the recent World Bank controversy conveniently distracted from the North Korea Cash-for-Kim scandal that just months ago threatened to engulf **the U.N. Development Program**], piloted for the past eight years first by Malloch Brown [1999-2005] and since early 2006 largely by Melkert.

... [UNDP now channels] more than \$5 billion per year worldwide. ... [It employs] 7,355 staff plus a host of consultants, ... [and] has offices in 135 countries, and programs in 165. ... [It] relies not only on ‘core’ donations from member states, but ... also operates more than 600 trust funds [of widely varying types.] None are particularly transparent. ...

[The UN’s auditors last year] expressed generic concern at ‘the increase in project expenditure not audited,’ ... [noted that audit reports for some \$1 billion of nationally-executed project spending were submitted late], and ... that more than one-quarter of these audit reports had yet to be submitted at all....

[A \$737,000 book about UNDP’s history], commissioned in 2004 by Malloch Brown, ... was a paean to ... Malloch Brown in particular, describing his reforms as a model ‘of efficiency and effectiveness.’”

Claudia Rosett, “Crying Wolfowitz ... while the United Nations bankrolls dictators”, The Weekly Standard (US), **May 28, 2007**. [The article identifies various UNDP country-level operational difficulties, in addition to the many provided in these Overview Quotes subsections from Matthew Lee of Inner City Press and others since late 2006.]

409. “[Alaadin Morsy,] a senior official at the UN Population Fund,(UNFPA), ... was threatened with termination by that agency’s chief, Thoraya Obaid ... [over a dispute about vehicle misuse

on a project in Egypt, which he contested. He stated that] Ms. Obaid was ... telling him to quit or face an investigation which would result in his dismissal. ...

The UN Joint Appeals Board ruled in his favor, ... [and] ordered a 'suspension of action' until the OIOS conducted an investigation. ... **An investigation into a sitting Under Secretary General** like Ms. Obaid would to some be an indication of an end to or limitation on impunity.

... **[But] Under Secretary General for Management Alicia Barcena** ... in a May 1, 2007 letter to Mr. Morsy, ... without explanation calls the JAB's [decision] 'too vague' to act on. In essence, [she] **called off the investigation before it even began.**

Still, it is another indicator of a UN system of internal justice that is broken, but remains in place. The Staff Union is calling for an interim system of binding arbitration, so that rulings like the JAB's in this case cannot simply be ignored by the Secretariat."

Matthew Russell Lee, "At UNFPA, ruling to investigate Obaid is called off by Alicia Barcena, justice on the rocks", **Inner City Press, May 30, 2007.**

410. "The cost of [UN] peacekeeping has hit a staggering 5.4 billion dollars each both in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, [and is expected to rise to 6.7 billion to 7 billion dollars when the United Nations decides to deploy new peacekeeping missions to Darfur, Chad and the Central African Republic later this year. ...

Currently, there are over 100,000 troops from 115 countries serving in 18 missions overseas. The three largest troop contributors are Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, which together provide over 35 percent of all blue helmets. But the cost of the operations is borne primarily by the 27 European Union countries, plus Japan and the United States. ...

[Yu Chong of China recently told delegates that peacekeeping expenses had grown dramatically,] ... and placed a huge burden on member states, ... [so] it was important to consider how better to utilize resources and avoid mismanagement and fraud ... and ... [better utilize] existing structures and resources.

The largest number of peacekeeping missions is in Africa, including Western Sahara; Democratic Republic of Congo; Ethiopia and Eritrea; Liberia; Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan and Sierra Leone."

Thalif Deen, "U.N. peacekeeping budget continues to soar sky high", **Inter Press Service, Asian Tribune, May 31, 2007.**

411. "Last spring, [US] Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stood before a pack of reporters for a briefing, one of Africa's most notorious dictators at her side. Rice was her usual assured self, [but eventually she turned to] Teodoro Obiang, president of the tiny oil-rich nation of Equatorial Guinea. ... 'Thank you very much for your presence here,' she cooed. 'You are a good friend, and we welcome you.' ...

For Cassidy and Associates, a prominent [Washington,] D.C. lobbying and communications firm, the Secretary's comments were payoff for years of hard work ,, [and] at least \$120,000 of payments per month [since 2004] to overhaul the country's image. ... Equatorial Guinea has ... [oil wealth], but in one of the 10 most corrupt nations on earth, little of that money trickles down. Obiang rules the country with an iron fist. ...

In the post-9/11 world of 24/7 media coverage, authoritarians need a different strategy – an intensive, crisis-management approach to PR. ... [Nation rebranding] even has its own academic discipline, including a journal called *Place Branding [and Public Diplomacy.]* ... Most rebranding is focused on making it easier for rogues to do business with the White House. And it works."

Joshua Kurlantzick, "Extreme makeover: Putting lipstick on a dictator", **Mother Jones** (US), **May/June 2007**, pp. 13-15. Note: The full article is available at www.motherjones.com under the author's name and "putting lipstick ...").

412. "Lars Bromley, a geographer with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, ... paid \$2,117 ... [to obtain before and after satellite images as] indisputable proof that [at] Porta Farm, ... more than 850 buildings that had housed at least 6,000 people [west of Harare, Zimbabwe] had been wiped off the map. ...

'Within one day of getting those images out,' recalls Ariela Blätter, director of Amnesty's Crisis Prevention and Response Center, 'we generated more media attention for Zimbabwe than we had in 10 years.'

Bromley has also worked with Colombian researchers who used satellite data to pinpoint mass graves, activists in Burma tracking government persecution of the Karen people and Amnesty staff documenting the genocide in Darfur."

Robin Mejia, "Geek squad vs. death squad: Worth 1,000 words", Mother Jones (US), **May/June 2007**, p. 23. Note: Further information is also available at www.amnestyusa.org, under "Issues, Darfur", and also at shr.aaas.org.)

413. [IO Watch has come across a pair of excellent investigative articles which provide much information and many insights into the very stubborn, decades-old problems of combating poverty in Africa, but are too lengthy to briefly excerpt.

The first focuses on the Kenyan village of Sauri, chosen by Kofi Annan's special adviser **Jeffrey Sachs** as the first research village of his Columbia University Earth Institute's **Millennium Villages Project** (MVP). Its stated goal is to halve the number of people living on less than a dollar a day in sub-Saharan Africa by 2015 via a package of inexpensive, scientifically based solutions, all for as little as \$110 per person annually, and eventually spreading across the entire African continent. The effort has received much global publicity, funding, and celebrity enthusiasm. Experience in Sauri since 2004, however, has proven very uneven, although international organizations had worked there for more than fifteen years beforehand. The ambitious MVP 2015 goal already seems far out of reach.

The second article focuses on the struggle for existence in the slums which now comprise some 90 percent of Addis Adaba, Ethiopia. A returning former resident vividly describes hardscrabble living conditions, violence and crime, AIDs, forced prostitution, ill health, and a never-ending daily struggle to somehow obtain a few cents to get by on. In Addis, as in other slums choking world cities such as Caracas, Cairo, and Dhaka, it seems that neither the MVP project or anything else will really help this very large and dispossessed urban group.]

Victoria Schlesinger, "The continuation of poverty: Rebranding foreign aid in Kenya", Harper's Magazine (US), **May 2007**, pp. 58-66, and

Yohannes Edemariam, "From an ancient cloud: Getting by in Ethiopia's slums", Harper's Magazine (US), **May, 2007**, pp. 67-75.

414a. "Europe's hottest businessman of the 1990s is ... leading a drive to create millions of micro-businesses in the developing world. For three years [Percy] Barnevik has quietly been funding [with \$5 million of his own money] and organizing Hand in Hand, a charity that is lifting [some of the poorest people in India out of poverty.] ...

The target, he says, is to create 1.3m jobs and 250,000 enterprises in Tamil Nadu within five years ... [by mobilizing the poorest women into self-help groups; eliminating child labor 'bonding'; providing access to knowledge tools; providing medical aid; and improving local environments.] The worldwide total could be 50m jobs in 10 years.

Hand in Hand directly employs 1,100 people, ... [plus] 700 part-time teachers, and 5,000 volunteers. But running costs are remarkably low. ... 'It helps that we have no westerners on the payroll', [Barnevik] says. **'Even our CEO, Kalpana Sankar, earns only a third ... as much as a United Nations consultant in Afghanistan.'**

A key factor in ... success ... is the extensive use of business consultants to make sure that the women entrepreneurs ... make good use of their loans.”

Clive Cookson, “Barnevik lends a hand”, The Financial Times (UK), **May 31, 2007**.

414b. “[In Malawi,] the British government is handing out £750,000 of aid ... [as] cash rather than food. ... Cash aid [can] ... cut the cost of aid delivery, reduce opportunities for corruption and theft of goods, and ... give [aid recipients] more control over their own well-being.

So far, cash-aid programs represent only about 10 percent of the \$3.2 billion yearly international food-aid spending. But experts expect the figures to rise sharply this year, as the U.S. government (the world’s largest aid donor) [supports the strategy, having found] ... that 65 percent of [its] \$2 billion food-aid budget is eaten up by red tape and logistical costs. ...

Cash aid, which is typically delivered via ATM’s, ... won’t create unfair competition for local farmers [but can still distort local markets,]... helps to foster dignity among victims of war or disaster ... [avoids most corruption, and is] relatively easy to audit. ... [But] cash aid works better when it’s handed out to women ... [and] in places with functioning markets. There will be plenty of testing grounds this year, as the United States, the U.K., and other nations roll out numerous cash-aid trials around the world.”

Silvia Spring, “Aid with less baggage”, Newsweek International, **June 11, 2007**, p. 49. [Note: in both these innovative approaches, a major element is to cut out the middlemen and go straight to the local level, which could considerably reduce UN involvement and bureaucracy. Both, it seems, will also greatly aid women.]

415a. “**The long-awaited and controversial audit of United Nations operations in North Korea has concluded that ... the [UN] Development Program and other agencies contravened their own regulations** in hiring local staff nominated by the dictatorial North Korean government, and in making unauthorized payments to the Kim Jong Il regime. ...

The latest audit makes clear that North Korean input into UNDP operations in the country was extensive and pervasive. ... [22 of the 31 UNDP staff were ‘seconded’ from the North Korean government] ... and considered to be immune to U.N. rules and regulations ... [Also, the unorthodox hiring and foreign exchange practices ... had been exposed in previous audits dating back to 2001. ...

[UNDP argues that its 36-member Executive Board was] ... aware of those practices through the previous audits, and tacitly accepted them. ...

The latest audit report added a further mystery of its own. It was signed not by the ... [investigating] auditors, but by senior officials in the member-countries who had provided ... [them. A UNDP spokesman could not explain this procedure. In addition,] one member of the three-man team, ... Pierre Brodeur of France, abruptly resigned ... before the audit was made public.”

George Russell, “U.N. auditors find development program broke rules in offering aid to North Korea”, Fox News, **June 1, 2007**.

415b. “**Secretary-General Ban is facing a growing scandal that may prove his leadership’s Waterloo.** Will he, from now on, dedicate his energies to fixing Turtle Bay’s shortcomings, or will he shrug and chase diplomatic glory instead?

... [The UN audit report on North Korean operations was incomplete,] but basically confirmed the original American allegations. [A summary of the UNDP response is as follows:] a. we did no wrong; b. everybody does it; c. our predecessors did it (including the previously unassailable former administrator Mark Malloch Brown); and d. we already fixed what needs fixing. ...

To his credit, Mr. Ban was cautious. ... His statement stressed that the audit indeed found that the agencies have violated the U.N. rules, and that auditors should now dig deeper – including so-far denied visits to North Korea. As in the debacles that besieged Mr. Ban’s

predecessor, Kofi Annan, **some aspects of the North Korea scandal may – and should – end up as criminal investigations.** ...

The audit [examined some \$72 million of expenditures from 2002-2006, found only a few tightly-supervised agency visits to projects, and was done without a complete set of financial statements.] Mr. Ban now must decide between the competing versions.”

Benny Avni, “Scandal at UNDP tests Ban”, The New York Sun, **June 4, 2007**.

[Note: See also item 422 below.]

416. “The latest bid to end the prolonged negotiating impasse of the 65-member Conference on Disarmament (CD) is faltering. ... Western diplomatic sources and a UN official ... [indicated] in May interviews that the prospects for the conference holding negotiations this year are growing dimmer as each day passes. The UN official said ... that there is a ‘definite sense of momentum being lost.’

The CD operates by consensus, and the last agreement it negotiated was the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Following the conclusion of that treaty, conference members have almost continuously clashed over negotiating priorities. The sole exception was a few weeks in 1998 when the conference convened negotiations of a fissile material cutoff treaty (FMCT), which would prohibit the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for weapons. No agreement resulted from those talks.”

Wade Boese, “Conference on Disarmament stalemate persists”, Arms Control Association, Arms Control Today, **June 5, 2007**.

417a. “**[Almost 6,000] survivors of Bosnians killed in Srebrenica are suing the Dutch government and the United Nations for damages,** on the grounds that UN peacekeepers failed to adequately protect the population. ...

[The 228-page suit filed in The Hague addresses] ... whether and to what extent UN peacekeepers charged with protecting a foreign population can be held accountable for their mistakes. The judges will also be faced with the fundamental question of whether the UN can be held responsible for the failure of a military force under its command. ...

The prosecutors are convinced that the Dutch soldiers were criminally negligent when it came to fulfilling their duty. ... **The suit has gained impetus from a decision handed down in February by the International Court of Justice, under which states are obligated ‘to prevent genocide.’** ...

The plaintiffs say that [the UN’s general] immunity can no longer apply in this case. ... [since] the UN approved the Bosnian mission ... and executed it with the help of UN peacekeepers. **It would be an unacceptable ‘concentration of power’**, says [one of the lawyers], **‘if [the UN] cannot even be monitored by the courts any more.’**”

Udo Ludwig and Ansgar Mertin, “Srebrenica survivors sue Netherlands, United Nations: Criminal negligence?”, Spiegel Online (Germany), translated by Chris Sultan, **June 5, 2007**.

417b. “The United Nations said it has immunity from a suit by survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia ...

[A UN spokeswoman] said Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon joins the survivors in demanding justice [by apprehending Serb leaders.] The UN will not rest, she said, ‘until it’s fully equipped to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future within its peacekeepers’ ... [and] **‘The fact that the U.N. is immune from the legal process** under the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations **in no way diminishes the U.N.’s commitment to assist the people of Srebrenica** in the aftermath of this tragedy.’ Is that what the U.N. will argue in court? “This is the position’, she replied.

About 200 survivors ... accompanied lawyers as they delivered the civil summons at the Dutch Supreme Court ... A report commissioned by former U.N. Secretary-General **Kofi Annan**

admitted 'errors of judgement' regarding Srebrenica in 1999 and highlighted a series of U.N. reforms to prevent a repetition.

The Dutch government has accepted 'political responsibility' for the mission's failure, and gives around US \$20 million ... in aid to Bosnia annually, ... [about a third relating to] rebuilding Srebrenica.'

"United Nations says it has immunity from suit by survivors of Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia", Associated Press, International Herald Tribune, **June 8, 2007**.

417c. "The United Nations is investigating **allegations that Bangladeshi peacekeepers beat and killed prisoners** in a brutal reprisal for a deadly ambush in the lawless Ituri region of eastern Congo in 2005. The probe comes two years after an internal inquiry ... [was] never released. ...

The allegations raise questions over whether the UN paid sufficient attention to its own human rights investigators. ... Troop discipline remains the province of national governments, whose record of follow-up is patchy. ...

[An official said] 'This is going to be a big blow to the credibility of the mission in the eyes of the Congolese government and Congolese people.' ... The allegations are the latest in a line of scandals ... [following] findings of sexual abuse of minors by peacekeepers ... [and allegations] that Pakistani peacekeepers had traded gold for guns. ...

Jean-Marie Guehenno, head of UN peacekeeping, told the FT ... that 'It would be a very good thing to systematically have human rights officers involved [in investigations.] ... **Louise Arbour, UN human rights commissioner**, who voiced concerns after visiting the Congo last month, **said** **'The whole point of my own efforts in the region is to attack the culture of impunity.'**"

Mark Turner and Dino Mahtani, "Probe into alleged UN reprisal in Congo", The Financial Times (UK), **June 11, 2008**. [These new developments, including item 406 above, raise not only important international legal and performance questions, but how, and whether, and when Ms. Arbour and others can or will 'attack the culture' of UN immunity/impunity, everywhere.]

418. "The proposed \$2 billion renovation of the United Nations headquarters building in New York is proceeding with little outside oversight or control and is a case study on the need to reform U.S. foreign aid programs, said a top Republican lawmaker yesterday. Sen. Tom Coburn ... said cost estimates for the proposed five-year project have ballooned, while U.N. officials have yet to release basic audit, contracting and procurement data. ...

[He] teamed with Sen. Barack Obama ... to sponsor a major reform of federal funding programs, including foreign aid, [which became law in September. It] will create a single Web site listing the names and locations of all recipients of federal funds, including the amount received annually by program.

Under the law, **the United Nations and other ... [U.S. foreign aid recipients must] provide detailed lists of where U.S. funds go**, including subcontracts and loans. Mr. Coburn said 'transparency' is the key to improving the efficacy of foreign-aid spending, now amounting to over \$25 billion a year. ... He called such mandatory disclosures **'a great antiseptic' against corruption and inefficiency**. 'Transparency isn't the goal. Accountability is', he said."

David R. Sands, "U.N. renovation hit on oversight", The Washington Times, **June 7, 2007**.

419. "[Undersecretary-General Inga-Britt Ahlenius,] head of a U.N. inspection office [the OIOS,] said **the world body needed a 'major overhaul' of how it procures \$1.9 billion in goods annually**. ... Commenting on the conviction of a former U.N. purchasing official [Sanjaya Bahel, see item 404 above, she] said a Procurement Task Force that reports to her was

reviewing contracts worth \$1 billion for waste and fraud and had opened 140 cases [of which 20 to 25 are 'large' cases.] ...

U.S. federal prosecutors have indicted ... four U.N. staff members. The Bahel case had been investigated by [her] predecessor, who had himself been under investigation, but was dropped for lack of evidence in 2004. ... Her task force held its own probe.

But Ahlenius avoided questions on investigations now underway ... as well as new completed reports, saying she was forbidden to do so by the U.N. General Assembly. The 192-member assembly also has delayed new procurement regulations for the past two years.

'I think the secretiveness that is held by this organization serves us poorly', Ahlenius said. ... She said the [UN] ... was not protected enough from 'corrupt vendors' and was 'a victim' of unscrupulous companies and vendors."

Evelyn Leopold, "U.N. needs overhaul in procurement, U.N. watchdog says", Reuters, **June 8, 2007**. [Note: See also items 386 and 404.]

420. **"Reminders of the need for far-reaching U.N. reform keep rolling in.** The latest is the conviction of former ... procurement chief Sanjaya Bahel. ... Each sorry tale strengthens the hand of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. ... **Perhaps the stars have finally aligned.**

Mr. Ban's tenure thus far encourages optimism. [The OIOS, once derided, last week] ... called for a major overhaul of [U.N.] purchasing operations. Reform cannot begin without a vigorous watchdog.

... Reform's real story is often told through hirings and firings. Mr. Ban's giving pink slips to a number of top figures from the Annan years can only be regarded as good news. ... Mr. Annan had no problem retaining cronies ... if doing so could reinforce his influence.

Certainly Mr. Ban acts and sounds like a different kind of Secretary-General. [Last week he stated] ... that he was 'shocked and dismayed' by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent assertion that a countdown for Israel's 'destruction' is underway. In the Annan years, the secretary-general and friends would look away. ...

[But] while the crooks seem to have fewer places to hide nowadays, investigators must nonetheless continue to sniff out fraud and corruption in all corners of the United Nations."

"Banning U.N. corruption", The Washington Times, **June 11, 2007**.

421. "The UN Secretariat has been ... [praised for] accepting questions, even those that are evaded with UN-speak rather than answered directly. Recently, however, the ... atmosphere has been changing. [On Wednesday, the Spokesperson] ... at the daily noon briefing called on some reporters more than once, while allowing others no questions at all, ... [and a supposed backstop, of e-mail questions responded to by end-of-day deadline, produced no answers.]

[In addition, the UN's redesign panel recommended that judges in the 'reformed' internal justice system be appointed by an internal justice council,] but recently Ban Ki-Moon ... insisted that he be given the right. ... The conflict of interest is clear: a staff member would be challenging a job action by the Secretariat, before a judge chosen directly by the Secretary General. This reversal of course is a bad sign.

[Furthermore, the Secretariat] ... claimed to want New York staff to be represented in the next 'Staff-Management Coordination Committee' meeting, [but the meeting has now been switched from New York to] ... Cyprus, which some characterize as 'a nice vacation.' [Sources cite personnel head Jan Beagle as being behind these anti-staff policies, but] ... Mr. Ban is ultimately in charge."

Matthew Russell Lee, "In Ban's UN, backsliding on internal justice and question-taking", Inner City Press, **June 12, 2007**.

422a. "A June 8 letter from [UNDP number two Ad Melkert to US officials stated that] ... UNDP's 'reasonable cooperation' is 'strictly voluntary' and is 'without prejudice to **the [UN's] privileges and immunities.**]' ... Melkert contests that UNDP deviated from any of its rules in North Korea, and requests ... 'copies of all UNDP documentation and ... [information that a former UNDP consultant may have given the U.S. Government.]'

On June 11, ... Inner City Press asked ... [UNDP's David] Morrison about his statement that no retaliation has taken place at UNDP, ... [in light of a June 5 complaint filed] with the UN Secretariat's Ethics Office. Mr. Morrison spoke of 'an individual on a short term contract' which was 'simply not renewed.'

... [Asked] to confirm that the individual in question was, in fact, the head of operations of the UN in North Korea for some time, ... Mr. Morrison declined to answer. [That official, in January 2007, had alerted [UNDP head Kemal] Dervis that '**For years UNDP staff have raised the issue of ... [IT security] and urged action** to] 'no longer allow DPRK national staff to manipulate and download and corrupt data in the network.'"

Matthew Russell Lee, "At UNDP, tales of data corruption, 'whirling' Dervis and whistleblower's warnings about N. Korea", Inner City Press, **June 12, 2007**. [Note: available at www.innercitypress.com.]

422b. "**A top executive of the ... [U.N. Development Program] threatened 'retaliation' against a State Department official this week** even though America, the top financier of the agency, pays \$100 million of its annual budget. ... On Wednesday ... [a U.S. ambassador] presented [UNDP second in command Ad Melkert with documents on UNDP's North Korea program activities.] ...

'I was surprised and concerned to learn' that during the meeting 'Mr. Melkert suggested to Ambassador Wallace that UNDP viewed United States inquiry relating to such new information as justifying some kind of 'retaliation' against the Government of the United States', [US Ambassador Zalmay] Khalilzad wrote to [UNDP Administrator Kemal] Dervis yesterday. ...

UNDP spokesman David Morrison said yesterday that the agency intended to respond to Mr. Khalilzad's letter, ... but [earlier this week said that] the new allegations 'don't add up.' ...

'Their job is not simply to refute every external criticism of UNDP, but rather to ensure the integrity of UNDP from within', ... [a US ambassador] yesterday told a General Assembly committee that oversees the development agency, referring to Messrs. Dervis and Melkert."

Benny Avni, "Top U.N. official threatens 'retaliation' against State Dept.", The New York Sun, **June 15, 2007**. [Note: See also items 408 and 415 above.]

423. "U.S. [Congresswoman] Ileana Ros-Lehtinen ... [and 17 other Members yesterday introduced] the UN Transparency, Accountability and Reform Act of 2007, ... [to link some \$5.3 billion in annual U.S. contributions to broad UN reform.] ...

UN budget practices are largely controlled by the General Assembly, two thirds of whose members ... [jointly] pay less than one percent of the UN's regular budget. "This disconnect ... creates significant perverse incentives to spend without limits or accountability," [Ros-Lehtinen] said. ' [Their] delay, dilution and defeat of various modest reform proposals ... undermines support ... among Americans weary of [the UN's] tepid response to widespread corruption.'

A February 2007 Gallup poll found that 66 percent of Americans think that the United Nations is doing a poor job, the UN's lowest job-approval rating ever.

The legislation, *inter alia*:

- Requires that the UN shift ... its regular budget to a system of voluntary contributions;
- Creates a U.S. inspector general for [US] contributions to the UN system and makes funding contingent on ... [UN agreement] to cooperate with the IG]; ...
- Links U.S. support for new [UN peacekeeping] missions ... to reforms in the planning, management, conduct and accountability in [those operations.]"

"Ros-Lehtinen and 17 members introduce legislation to jumpstart efforts to reform UN budget & accounting", Press Release, US Congress, **June 15, 2007**.

424. “European Union countries have threatened to pull out of the **[UN] Human Rights Council** if its developing-country majority succeeds in an attempt to prevent scrutiny of the worst abusers.

The proposals include the abolition of 12 of the 13 independent human rights envoys charged with reporting on specific countries. ... Instead, an alliance of mainly African, Asian and Middle Eastern states ... is poised to push through institutional procedures that would make it almost impossible to hold individual countries to account for human rights violations. ...

... [A] vice-chairman of the European parliament’s human rights committee said the threat was no bluff. ... **‘The Europeans would rather see the whole institution collapse than agree to an institution where the perpetrators of human rights abuses can walk away scot-free.’**

Developing nations say the system of country envoys is unfair in singling out just a few countries for investigation [but insist on continuing to discuss Israel at every meeting], enshrines ‘double standards’ of western governments, and engenders confrontation rather than co-operation to raise human rights standards. ... The EU is also resisting [other] developing country proposals, described as ‘red line’ issues for the EU.”

Frances Williams, “EU in rift with developing nations over human rights”, The Financial Times (UK), **June 15, 2007**. [Note: On June 19, the Council session ended, after “marathon discussions” and laborious compromises, see “UN Human Rights Council agrees to details for reviewing countries”, UN News Service, **19 June 2007**, but with much fallout and ill-feeling:

Canada “blasted” the compromises, and Libya was elected to lead preparation of a 2009 World Racism Conference, see Betsy Pisik. “Canada rips U.N. rights council’s actions”, Washington Times, **June 22, 2007**, and, concerning a new Racism Conference, see also Overview quote item 291;

Eye on the UN made a detailed critique of the Council’s record, see “The first year of the Human Rights Council: A human rights catastrophe”, **June 18, 2007**, (available at www.eyeontheun.org);

Human Rights Watch agreed that serious problems exist, but urged member states with a good human rights record to stop being so passive in Council sessions, see Peggy Hicks, “Don’t write it off yet”, International Herald Tribune, **June 22, 2007**; and

the US House of Representatives voted to forbid use of US funds to the UN for the Council, see Gulf Times (Qatar), **June 24, 2007**.

425. “Inner City Press ... [asked officials] about UNDP’s support of the police force of the Somali “Transitional Federal Government”, which is accused of shelling civilian neighborhoods and of war crimes. [The UN’s spokesperson answered:]

“ ... The UN does not directly provide any financial assistance to the TFG. Instead, donor nations channel their aid to the TFG through UNDP. So **UNDP is a conduit for funding by donors: the UN provides no unique assistance.**”

But it’s a simple question – how much money has passed through ...? Since, although UNDP seems to forget it, all of ‘its’ money comes from donors, the distinction between its funds and those of donors is false. ... The principle is the same: accountability and transparency.”

Matthew Russell Lee, “At UNDP, Melkert’s spin machine shoots at Khalizad, Somalia secrets”, Inner City Press, **June 15, 2007**. [Note: The UN as glorified delivery boy? For more on murky, but ambitious, UN fund flow processes, see items 325, 340a-c, and especially 418 and 419 of these Overview quotes.]

426a. "In the outside world, ... [Zimbabwe's 83-year old Robert] Mugabe has looked more conciliatory recently. ... Inside his country, however, Mugabe's rule is increasingly taking on the outlines of the worst dictatorships – another Burma, or even North Korea. On a rare journey into Zimbabwe, NEWSWEEK found a nation dominated by fear and the ever-present secret police, where a suspicious population is gradually turning on itself. ...

The lush green country once boasted Africa's highest literacy rate. ... [But] last week two separate U.N. bodies estimated that by early next year some 4 million Zimbabweans – one third of the population – could go hungry. An additional 3 million are living abroad now ...

Mugabe came to power in 1980 as a hero, having led a brutal war of liberation ... and feted as a reformer. [But] in the past few years ... his forces set about intimidating opposition leaders, beating prominent activists and cracking down on the press.

... Such tactics have drawn fierce and unwelcome attention abroad; a British ... [minister] recently warned that Mugabe was opening himself up to war-crimes charges. ... 'Their strategy is to keep on dividing us until there is no opposition left', [says a politician.]"

Scott Johnson, "Digging a grave for Zimbabwe", Newsweek International, **June 18, 2007**, pp. 22-25.

426b. "Russia and China ... are quietly undermining the battle against [nuclear] proliferation by helping arm another dangerous outlier on the sly: Burma. According to recent reports, Moscow has just sold the tiny state a nuclear reactor, and China is helping it modernize six naval bases.

... Burma's dictators have coveted nukes for years. But the Russian deal only came through now because Burma is suddenly flush with cash, thanks to rising prices for its natural resources, oil in particular.

What's most frightening is the regime's utter incapacity. Experts doubt it can properly run a research reactor, let alone a WMD program. This creates an 'unacceptably high risk' of a serious accident or sabotage, says [an observer.] So the world may have a new type of rogue on its hands: one that manages to threaten or cause serious damage to itself and its neighbors, not intentionally but through sheer incompetence. How does one guard against that?"

"Periscope: Burma: A new rogue from the East", Newsweek International, **June 11, 2007**, p. 4.

427. "US underfunding of UN peacekeeping for the coming year could seriously undermine missions from Darfur to Somalia and Haiti, campaigners have warned. ...

[They] contend that a \$1.1 billion request by the Bush administration to Congress is \$570 million short of what is needed, ... [that the request underfunds the UN Congo and Lebanon missions by \$90 million and \$40 million respectively, and that it makes no provision for] potential new UN missions in Chad or Somalia.

The financial blow comes after the UN's budgetary committee whittled down a [Secretariat] request to provide 290 extra peacekeeping officials at UN headquarters. [It] will get 150 new staff instead ...

UN officials say their headquarters staff are severely overstretched, and that without more support ... breakdowns in control could occur, and that new operations will be difficult."

Mark Turner, "American shortfall could hit UN relief missions", The Financial Times (UK), **June 20, 2007**.

428. "[The UNHCR's report on global trends to the end of 2006] ... says the number of refugees coming under its core mandate by crossing national borders jumped 14 per cent to almost 10m, reversing a declining trend since 2002. ...

The UNHCR also has responsibility for nearly 13m internally displaced people (IDP), more than half the estimated 24.5m IDP's uprooted by conflict worldwide, ... and [is] assisting many hundreds of thousands of [others.] ...

Antonio Gueterres, the high commissioner, said the UNHCR was struggling to reach many of the IDP's it was trying to help. 'Faced with a situation like Darfur, the role of organizations such as ours is severely constrained,' he said.

The overall number of people covered by the UNHCR's mandate jumped 50 per cent last year to a total of almost 33m."

Frances Williamson, "Fleeing Iraqis lift refugee numbers to highest in five years", The Financial Times (UK), **June 19, 2007**.

429. "An audit by the [U.S.] Government Accountability Office of six U.N. agencies, including the World Health Organization, World Food Program and UNICEF, found that the six have 'made progress in implementing international auditing standards, [but] they have not fully implemented key components.'

It said most lack resources and expertise, especially outside the main headquarters and regional branches.

The push for improved auditing and evaluation of agency oversight grew out of ... studies of oil-for-food [which] found widespread corruption involving U.N. and Iraqi officials.

U.S. Republican Senator Norm Coleman, who requested the GAO investigation, said he will introduce amendments to U.N. peacekeeping legislation this year to use 'the budget to bring about extensive and effective reform' at the United Nations."

"U.S. auditors say U.N. agencies have improved accounting and oversight but not enough", Associated Press, **June 20, 2007**. [Note: The full report is available at www.gao.gov/new.items/d07597.pdf.]

430. "This year the world celebrates the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. But a new report from the U.S. State Department shows that the abhorrent practice of trafficking in humans is alive and well.

12.3 – The number, in millions, of people in forced labor or sexual servitude around the world

800,000 – The number of people trafficked across national borders each year

300,000 – The number of children under 18 currently being exploited in 30 global armed conflicts

90 – The estimated percentage of children rescued from brothels in Southeast Asia who are infected with HIV."

"By the numbers", Newsweek International, **June 25, 2007**, p. 5.

431. "Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro told ... more than 2,000 delegates attending the Seventh Global Forum on Reinventing Government. ... [that] the results of the meeting 'can help guide our ongoing attempts to make the United Nations the best it can be.' ... [She recalled that Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon] ... had dubbed his mission 'Operation restore trust.']

Welcoming delegates, the Director General of the UN Office at Vienna, Antonio Maria Costa, said corruption is often to blame for a lack of public trust. 'The fight against corruption is another way of reinventing governance,' he said.

This year, for the first time, the Forum is being hosted by the world body as part of a UN-wide partnership led by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs."

"UN can benefit from results of global forum on good governance", Migiro says", UN News Service, **26 June 2007**. [Note: The UN hypocrisy level here is rather high. As Mr. Ban's mission to "restore trust" clearly indicates, and as much information in these overview quotes for 2006 and 2007 shows (see, for instance the next item), the UN has very far to go to attain good governance

itself. This is especially true since Mr. Costa and DESA have had some serious corruption and “bad governance” issues themselves (see [Top corruption fighter corrupted](#) in the IO Watch Archive, and, for DESA, items 297a-c and 379 in these Overview quotes.)

432. “America already gives more than any other country to bankroll the multi-billion dollar UN activities politely known as ‘peacekeeping.’ ... But the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has just ... [agreed to] increase U.S. contributions [from 25% of the ever-expanding UN peacekeeping budget] to 27.1%, retroactive to 2005 and extending through 2008, adding another billion or so.

... The UN ‘peacekeeping’ record by now includes failure to prevent genocide ..., ... sexual exploitation of the people the peacekeepers are sent to protect ... and a netherworld of money-laundering, kickbacks and fraud involving UN peacekeeping supply contracts. And **despite the UN promises of reform, which the UN emits like squid ink every time a new abuse comes to light, there is still no real system of UN accountability in sight.**

The issue isn’t just whether the average American taxpayer ought to be paying more than anyone else ... for UN peacekeeping, or graft-keeping, or sex-keeping or whatever ... It is also whether Americans really want to be responsible for this kind of behavior – which we are if, instead of demanding the UN shape up, we reward UN abuse by shoveling in even more U.S. money.”

Claudia Rosett, “More of your tax dollars for UN graft, fraud, rape, and – oh right – peacekeeping”, The Rosett Report, at www.pajamasmedia.com, **June 27, 2007.**

433. “When everyone is a publisher, paparazzo or filmmaker [with a blog, a MySpace page, a cell phone with a camera, and a video on You-Tube] everyone else is a public figure. ... The blogosphere has made the global discussion so much richer – and each of us so much more transparent. ...

A new book by Dov Seidman ... is simply called ‘How.’ [His] thesis is that ‘how’ you live your life and ‘how’ you conduct your business matters more than ever. ...

More and more of what you say or do will end up as a digital fingerprint that never gets erased. ... You have nowhere to hide your skeletons. ... Ditto in business. ...

‘We do not live in glass houses ... we live on glass microscope slides ... visible and exposed to all,’ he writes.

So [whatever you’re doing] ... get your hows right – how you build trust, how you collaborate, how you lead and how you say you’re sorry. More people than ever will know about it when you do – or don’t.”

Thomas L. Friedman, “The world is watching,” [International Herald Tribune](#), **June 28, 2007.** [Note: The UN old guard seems more than ever committed to secrecy and non-transparency (see, most recently, item 419 above and the many recent UNDP “spin” efforts, as in items 415 and 422.) But thanks to the Internet, media attention to UN problems is vastly more intensive and informed than ever before, providing, sadly, the only real “oversight” of a very recalcitrant Organization.]

434a. “University of Colorado students paid \$160,000 in April to hear former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan say the people of the world must work together to bring about peace.

The amount came as a surprise ... to several members of CU’s board of regents ... and brought calls for more frequent audits of student government ... [which] oversees most campus speaking engagements. ...

Of the \$160,000, Annan received \$100,000. The rest was for transportation, lodging, food and security. ... **Annan told [the audience] that all of humankind is linked.** ... 'We should be responsible to protect each other from the crimes against humanity,' he said."

Berny Morson, "CU regents gasp at \$160,000 speaker's fee for ex-U.N. boss", Rocky Mountain News, **June 28, 2007.**

434b. "The \$160,000 speaker's fee ... [that Kofi Annan pocketed] for a one-hour talk at the University of Colorado ... is an amount remarkably close to the sum allegedly skimmed out of Oil-for-Food relief money by Annan's handpicked head of the ... program, Benon Sevan (who slipped quietly off to Cyprus, out of reach of extradition to the U.S., during the Oil-for-Food investigations, while Annan's office was assuring the press he would be available for questioning in NY.) ... Wouldn't it be a nice gesture for Kofi Annan to donate his fat speaking fee to the Iraqi people bilked out of billions in relief while he was running Oil-for-Food at the helm of the UN?"

Claudia Rosett, "Coincidence and the latest in Kofi's cash", The Rosett Report, **June 28, 2007.** [Note: Mr. Annan's \$60,000 fee for his expenses and entourage was probably 50 times as much as that spent to bring 200 Mothers of Srebrenica to The Hague for the filing of the case against Mr. Annan's UN for failing to "protect each other" in the genocidal massacres at Srebrenica: see Overview quote items 417a-b.]

435. "The United Nations is preparing a contingency plan for **a possible 20,000-strong new peacekeeping force in ... Somalia.** 'It is clear, however, that even in the best case scenario, addressing the problems of Somalia will be a demanding, dangerous, and massive undertaking,' Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in a report to the Security Council released Thursday. ...

Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Ghedi ... admitted that one of the political failings of Somalia has been its longstanding conflicts – 'clans against clans' and 'subclans against subclans' – which have devastated the country.

In his report, the secretary-general has warned that a U.N. mission in Somalia 'would likely face a number of threats, predominantly by radical groups ... some clan leaders who ... [oppose] any normalization ... [and] an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 clan militia and other armed groups generally under clan control.

... [An expert observer warned that] 'there is significant opposition to the Transitional Government and this opposition cannot be removed militarily.' ...

Ghedi described the situation in Somalia as inspired by international terrorism. The type of activities, he said, include suicide bombings, foreign militants and improvised explosive devices. These, he added, are alien to Somalia and alien to the region."

Thalif Deen, "U.N. unveils contingency plan for peacekeepers in Somalia", Inter Press Service, **June 29, 2007.** [Note: This situation certainly brings back very uncomfortable memories of the 1993 Somalia peacekeeping debacle – and this time the task looks much more formidable.]

436. "**Transparency became a taboo word at last week's meeting of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Program, literally.** Despite public statements ,, that audits would be made available outside the agency, all that was agreed to last week was for a study of the issue to be prepared for next year. As one wag joked in the wan meeting's waning hours, maybe even this report will be withheld as confidential. ...

Various Board member states' missions blamed the United States. We were getting toward a regime of transparency, one said, until the United States brought North Korea up. Now the G-77 [developing countries group] refuses to pass anything with even the word transparency in it, he added. ...

The public sessions droned on and on. ... [A Northern European representative, speaking anonymously, said] the problem with UNDP and its lack of accountability is not only the

absence of transparency, but the 'quality of the people' the Member States send to the meetings. 'Look at them,' he said. 'They are entirely unprepared.' Another participant opines that UNDP keeps what little substantive discussion there is out of the public view, in 'informals' that no else can attend."

Matthew Russell Lee, "At UNDP, hunting down leakers and whistleblowers' photos, hiding disclosure behind a bored board", Inner City Press, **June 28, 2007**.

437a. "[Foreign Policy magazine and the non-profit Fund for Peace have released the third annual "Failed States Index", which rates 177 countries according to 12 "indicators of instability", and then charts the 60 most unstable in detail. The accompanying analysis includes many interesting insights:]

- Few encouraging signs emerged in 2006 to suggest the world is on a path to greater peace and stability.
- The world's weakest states are also the most religiously intolerant.
- This year, several vulnerable states took a step back from the brink.
- ... For the weak, there is nothing more costly than a strongman calling the shots.
- Pollution can derail progress in vulnerable states.
- In some of the world's most dangerous regions, failure doesn't stop at the border's edge.
- What holds back many of the world's most fragile regimes is that they were never truly in charge in the first place.
- Governments will often go to great lengths to regain breakaway regions, and their efforts can be tremendously costly."

"The Failed States Index 2007", Foreign Policy and The Fund for Peace, **July-August 2007** (published, however, in mid-June), pp. 54-63. [Note: see www.ForeignPolicy.com and www.fundforpeace.org for further information. Further note: This issue contains no less than four articles with fresh and challenging perspectives on major, but often ignored, aspects of key global governance issues -- not surprising since *Foreign Policy* just won a US national award for magazine excellence, and is truly globally available (in 160 countries and in 12 different languages. In each of these four challenging areas, the UN, at present, is not of much help.]

437b. "In the past five years, the bird flu epidemic claimed 186 victims worldwide. In the same period, another less-recognized but growing menace maimed or killed millions of people and produced massive economic losses. ... I am talking about street crime. ... Crime rates are on the rise almost everywhere. ... [assaults, robberies, and murder.] ...

In the poorest countries, the consequences of high crime rates are crippling. [Crime increases business costs, makes countries less competitive, and can scare away investors.] ... But the main reason to reduce crime rates ... is to give citizens the right to walk their streets – or stay home – without fearing for their lives. ...

So what drives up crime rates? Researchers can agree upon little beyond the general notion that crime soars in places where there is a combination of young males, ample drugs, and easy access to guns. ...

The problem has the potential to be a far greater global nightmare. Consider China and India. ... If these two nations become more like other poor countries in this regard, too, their crime rates could soar to unimagined levels. Suffice it to say, the crime pandemic would never be hidden from anyone again."

Moisés Naím, "The hidden pandemic: How crime is quietly becoming a global killer", Foreign Policy, **July-August 2007**, pp. 96-95.

437c. "A dark ideological specter is haunting the world ...almost as deadly as the tired ideologies of the last century – communism, fascism, and socialism – that failed so miserably. ...

It is the half-century-old ***ideology of Developmentalism***. And it is thriving ... [promising] a comprehensive final answer to all of society's problems.

[Jeffrey Sach's] own plan features ... [expert intervention to solve all problems of the poor] ... 'by a united and effective United Nations country team.' ... [Rich countries' admirable concern] is thus channeled into fattening the international aid bureaucracy. ...

In reality, high-growth countries follow a bewildering variety of paths to development, and the countries ... [change] from decade to decade. ... Unfortunately, ... the regions where the [Development] ideology has been most influential, Latin America and Africa, have done the worst.

... The only 'answer' to poverty reduction is [to be unchained from foreign control.] ... Free societies and individuals ... will make bad choices. ... [But the] process of learning from mistakes is what produces the repositories of common sense that make up mainstream economics. ...

Fortunately, many poor societies are forging their own path toward greater freedom and prosperity anyway. That is how true revolutions happen."

William Easterly, "The ideology of development", *Foreign Policy*, **July-August, 2007**, pp. 31-35.

437d. "From Argentina to Zambia, ***investment firms are snatching up the poor world's debt***. To turn a buck, they sue, harass, and otherwise claw their way into making debtor states pay. Poverty activists say these so-called vulture funds are preying on the impoverished. But they're only doing what the international financial system can't – holding corrupt and irresponsible regimes to account. ...

[Fund managers say that] 'Debt relief advocates should recognize that the beneficiaries of debt relief are corrupt or incompetent regimes.' ... They inflict pain on countries that default. ...

[But debt relief activists] point to the ongoing case against Zambia as evidence of the hardship that vulture funds can inflict. ... [After two decades it] may end up paying many times the amount it borrowed.

For every Zambia, however, there is an Argentina, which ... [can pay but] has treated its creditors, including elderly Italian and German pensioners, with contempt. Sadly, the international legal system can't distinguish between the two. ...

What is sorely needed is something different, a legal mechanism that can inject some equity into the process. A system that will cry for Zambia but punish Argentina. Until then, the vultures will continue to circle."

David Bosco, "The debt frenzy", *Foreign Policy*, **July-August 2007**, pp. 36-42.

This chronology continues in
[Overview of IO Watch Archive Quotes IX](#)