

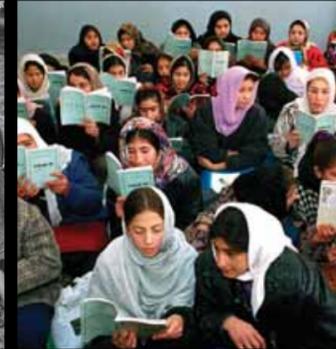


The magazine of the United Nations

# UN Chronicle

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SPECIAL  
DOUBLE ISSUE



## THE UNITED NATIONS AT 70



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# UN Chronicle

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# FOREWORD

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**I**n the spring of 2014, we started preparations for the 70th anniversary of the United Nations in 2015 and began exploring options that, in addition to being celebratory, would also contribute to substantive discussions about our Organization. Producing this special double issue of the *UN Chronicle* was at the top of the list of platforms for such discussions.

Thus in early 2015, we approached a wide, yet select group of eminent contributors who over the course of their careers have had strong associations with the United Nations, and invited them to join Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his three immediate predecessors in sharing their reflections with the world through the UN70 issue of the *UN Chronicle*. We asked them to highlight key moments or achievements, challenges and obstacles and the role played by the United Nations. We also asked them to reflect upon the future, and what would make the Organization stronger and better able to serve humanity and our planet.

This is how this issue of the *UN Chronicle* was conceived and it is published under the theme, “Strong UN. Better World”.

We are honoured and privileged to print their reflections and ideas in this special issue, and we are confident that these contributions will provide a stimulus for further discussion on the future role of the United Nations.

In a special message on the 70th anniversary of the Organization, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: “The 70th anniversary of the United Nations is an opportunity to reflect—to look back on the UN’s history and to take stock of its enduring achievements. It is also an opportunity to spotlight where the UN—and the international community as a whole—needs to redouble its efforts to meet current and future challenges across the three pillars of its work: peace and security, development, and human rights”. This issue is dedicated to this very notion of reflection and taking stock of history’s lessons.

Maher Nasser  
Director of Publication

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Evening view of the Headquarters of the United Nations, in New York. This picture, taken in January 1954 from the south of the UN site, shows the domed General Assembly building, the 39-story Secretariat and the UN Library (foreground) with, in the background, the East River and the Queensboro Bridge.

# MESSAGE ON THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS



United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon greets well-wishers during a visit to his village, Eumseong, Republic of Korea, July 2008.

By SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON

**L**ong before I became Secretary-General, the United Nations occupied a special place in my life.

I was six years old when the Korean War broke out. I have vivid memories of my village in flames as my family sought refuge in nearby mountains. But another image is even more lasting: the sight of the UN flag and the many thousands working under it to respond to our plight. We were saved from hunger by UN food relief operations. We received textbooks from the UN so that my classmates and I could continue our education even though our school had been reduced to rubble. And when we felt scared and alone, and wondered whether the outside world cared about our suffering, the troops of many nations, united

in UN blue, sacrificed their lives to restore security and peace. In these ways, the great value of the United Nations was imprinted on me—early, deeply, and, as it has turned out, forever.

Today, millions of people around the world continue to look to the United Nations to ensure their safety, protect their children and help them secure their future. Their needs and aspirations are my driving force. I know from my childhood, and from decades of public service, the immense difference the United Nations can make.

As we mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, we can see a world that has changed dramatically since the Charter's drafters gathered in San Francisco in 1945. Membership in the Organization has grown, and

new powers have emerged. Globalization, urbanization, migration, demographic shifts, technological advances, climate change and other seismic developments continue to remake our societies and transform international relations.

We can also look back on a proud record of achievement. The United Nations was founded to prevent another world war, and it has succeeded in that. In most parts of the world, people are living longer, healthier lives. Our efforts have also helped to empower women, advance international law and safeguard the environment.

**“  
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climate change.**

Yet we are keenly aware that there have been many setbacks along the way, and that today’s landscape is scarred by conflict, exploitation, displacement and despair. In truth, the passage to establishing a world of dignity and peace for “we the peoples” is a never-ending journey.

Despite today’s difficulties and the multiple crises on the UN agenda, I believe that all who work for and with the United Nations are fortunate to be serving at this time. The 70th anniversary falls in a year of potentially momentous decisions on our common future—including the adoption of a transformative new sustainable development agenda and an ambitious agreement on climate change. Progress may take years to achieve. But my hope is that one day, we will look back on our work and proudly say, “We were part of that; we did this together; this is what the United Nations helped to set in motion”.

Achieving this shared legacy will continue to demand much from us today. As we do that work, I will think often of the advice given to me when I was in middle school. “Keep your head above the clouds”, said our principal, “and your feet firmly planted on the ground—then move step by step.”

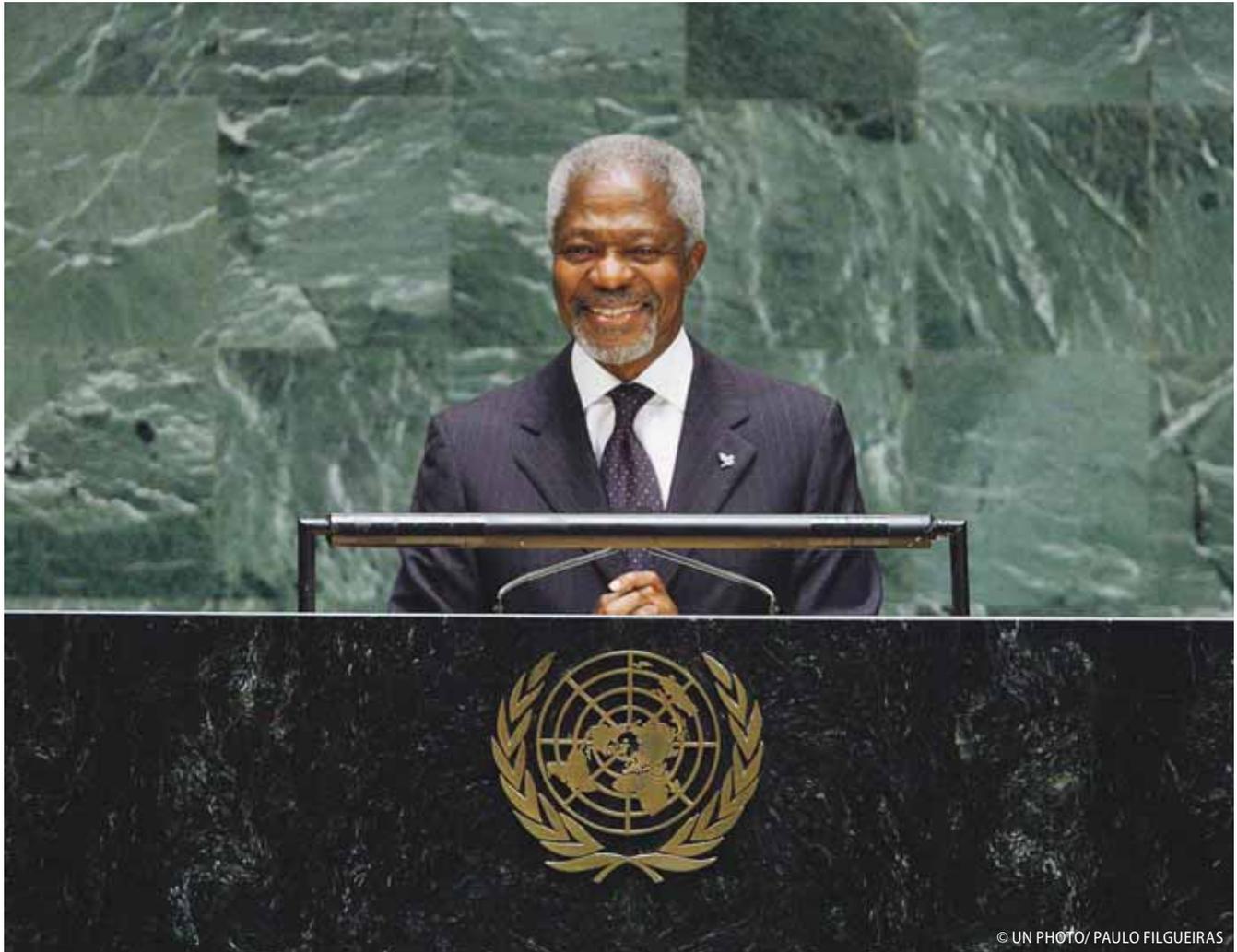
Keeping your head above the clouds means staying true to your principles. Keeping your feet on the ground means staying connected to the reality of people’s lives. And moving forward step by step means taking practical action to realize our goals.

I have tried to take this approach as Secretary-General, armed with the principles of the Charter, the testimony of the people we serve, and above all the dedicated UN staff who, often at their own personal risk, advance our goals. I am keenly aware of the enormous responsibilities entrusted to me—and equally conscious that success at the United Nations is the product of the hard work, sacrifice and example of UN personnel modelling the international collaboration we advocate.

On this anniversary and on every single day, we must use our power and influence to do what is right and what is necessary to uphold the Charter. While we cannot prevent earthquakes and tsunamis, we can do much to address the disasters that arise from human folly and short-sightedness. This is a time of test but far more one of tremendous opportunity. As the distinctions between the national and the international continue to fall away, we can and must use the lessons of 70 years to come together as a single human family and chart a course towards a safer and more sustainable future for all. [unc](#)

# REFLECTIONS ON THE UN AT 70

By KOFI A. ANNAN



Secretary-General Kofi Annan addresses the General Assembly, at United Nations Headquarters, 13 October 2006.

**S**eventy years ago, world leaders gathered in San Francisco to sign a unique and historic document—the Charter of the United Nations. In the name of “We the peoples”, they charted a path to a world where faith in the dignity and worth of the human person would be reaffirmed.

In the seven decades since, the world has been transformed by new technologies, by the forces of globalization, and not least, by the accomplishments of the United Nations itself. Driven by the spirit of international cooperation and multilateral diplomacy that

lie at the heart of the Organization, millions have been lifted out of abject poverty, protected from the violence of armed conflict, or sheltered from the devastation of natural disasters.

It has inspired, innovated, and catalysed; the Millennium Development Goals became a revolution in international affairs, placing poverty in all its guises at the top of the international agenda for the first time. The establishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has helped save the lives of millions and provided a new template for effective

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KOFI A. ANNAN is former Secretary-General of the United Nations, having served from January 1997 to December 2006. He is Founder and Chair of the Kofi Annan Foundation and Chair of The Elders.

international cooperation. The International Criminal Court and the rise of the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect redefined the notion of State sovereignty and offered hope to the victims of the most heinous crimes.

The United Nations, with its rules and institutions, is at the heart of the international system. They encourage States to prevent or settle disputes peacefully—one of the reasons that fewer people than ever before die from armed conflict. The United Nations speaks for the voiceless, feeds the hungry, protects the displaced, combats organized crime and terrorism, and fights disease across the globe.

high and rising; levels of international migration are unprecedented, deadly pandemics—such as Ebola—can still spread rapidly to threaten entire regions, and violent conflict, often driven by unresolved sectarian or religious divides, plagues us still.

Each of these threats has a global dimension that can only be resolved by global action, yet the international architecture of the post-Second World War era—on which the United Nations is founded—is increasingly contested. In a world that evolves as quickly as ours, no institution that remains static can continue to be effective. So we must

**“There can be no long-term security without development; there can be no long-term development without security; and no society can long remain prosperous without the rule of law and respect for human rights.”**

And these are just the headline-grabbing achievements. Seventy years on, the work of the Organization touches every corner of the globe. Of no less importance, for example, is the fact that more multilateral agreements and treaties have been developed at the United Nations in the past six decades than in all of human history, and each addition to this body of international law binds our global community closer together.

Many of these accomplishments are due to the courageous and resourceful staff of the Organization, who dedicate themselves to humanitarian principles and work tirelessly in the most dangerous and desperate places on earth—where they are needed most.

Unfortunately, despite these efforts and achievements, some of the threats the United Nations was mandated to end continue to cast a shadow.

The United Nations celebrates its 70th birthday at a time when global economic inequality is unacceptably

take this opportunity to reshape the Organization to better meet contemporary challenges. We must rededicate ourselves to the notion of a representative and inclusive United Nations; one with the well-being of each individual, not simply the sovereignty of every State, at its heart. An institution of strong leadership where the Governments and citizens of all nations have an opportunity to come together to forge a common future of peace and prosperity.

Forty years with the United Nations taught me many lessons, but one remains foremost in my mind, that healthy and sustainable societies are based on three pillars: peace and security, sustainable development, and the rule of law and respect for human rights. There can be no long-term security without development; there can be no long-term development without security; and no society can long remain prosperous without the rule of law and respect for human rights. 

# SEVENTY YEARS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

By BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI

**T**o highlight the achievements of the United Nations in the past 70 years would fill many volumes, and I'm afraid that writing about my wishes for the United Nations in the next seven decades would fill even more books.

But perhaps two moments stand out in the proud history of our Organization: the first is the invention of peacekeeping that allowed the United Nations to truly foster world peace through a mechanism we take for granted today, but which is unique in the history of international relations. When I became Secretary-General, the first-ever summit meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Security Council took place, and their mandate to me was clear: develop the next generation of peacekeeping operations. Out of that mandate came An Agenda for Peace. I wish we still heeded the messages of that proposal.

Another great moment for the United Nations was the declaration of human rights, at the start of our Organization's history, and the World Conference on Human Rights held at Vienna in 1993. There have been many conferences setting world agendas and goals before and after Vienna, but for the world to come together to define human

rights, and to state clearly a global commitment to their achievement, was an important moment in history.

So what do I wish for the future? My wish is that we build on past achievements and update them for the modern world. Just as the United Nations invented peacekeeping, we now need to modernize the practice, and the Security Council's use of the instruments at its disposal to promote international peace and security. We need a new Agenda for Peace.

We also need to build on the tremendous movement for human rights, and to help ensure that they are universally adopted. It took the same courage to state the universality of these principles in the Declaration and in Vienna, and apply it to the new attacks on the most basic human right: the right to life. Furthermore, we need courage and vision to reach a global consensus in an agreement on defining the scourge of terrorism, and a strong global commitment to fighting this evil.

I am confident that the United Nations, our United Nations, will continue to lead in innovation so that we reach the aim of the Charter for life "in larger freedom". [unc](#)

BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI is former Secretary-General of the United Nations, having served from January 1992 to December 1996.

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Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali visiting with young residents of United Nations supported orphanage operated by the Irish humanitarian organization GOAL in October 1993. He is accompanied by Brigadier General Maurice Quadri, Commander of the French contingent of the Second United Nations Mission in Somalia.

# INDEPENDENCE AND IMPARTIALITY AS THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

By JAVIER PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR



Former Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, pictured in 2011. © UN PHOTO/EVAN SCHNEIDER

**M**y United Nations memories reach very far back; as a young diplomat, I attended the first session of the General Assembly, in London, in 1946. It was a time of immense hope which was soon dashed. Before the end of the decade the permanent members of the Security Council were in open competition both ideologically and geopolitically. The collegiality between them, on which rested the collective security system, disappeared. A new world war with major powers in direct confrontation was averted, but otherwise, for decades, the ability of the United Nations to carry out its primary purpose, the

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JAVIER PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR is former Secretary-General of the United Nations, having served from January 1982 to December 1991.

maintenance of international peace and security, was severely constrained.

My career as a diplomat took me elsewhere for almost a quarter of a century before I returned to the United Nations first as the Ambassador of Peru, then as a senior Secretariat official, and, a decade later, as Secretary-General. The threat of nuclear war had receded from its October 1962 peak, but most of the other aspects of the cold war lingered. The United Nations and its Secretary-General remained largely marginalized. I am proud of what was accomplished in the decade that I held that position, much of it through careful, painstaking United Nations good offices, frequently with the assistance of outside actors, but often also by the United Nations lending assistance to the efforts of others, working closely and effectively with the Security Council.

It was a time of renewed hope, as the Security Council noted, meeting for the first time at its first-ever summit of Heads of State and Government, one month after my departure. The United Nations had played a key role—frequently the central one—in ending a series of conflicts in Afghanistan, between Iran and Iraq, and in Cambodia. Agreements on Angola opened the door to the self-determination and independence of Namibia and helped to end apartheid in South Africa. In Mozambique peace was near. The violence in Nicaragua ended, and, in El Salvador, the first United Nations mediation of an internal conflict was successfully completed. What the United Nations did in the late 1980s and early 1990s contributed significantly to the long process of unwinding the cold war.

What lessons do I draw for the future of the United Nations from that time? I devoted considerable effort to my 10 annual reports, each of which was a months-long effort involving my closest colleagues for sessions that spoiled many a summer. I have published a book of memoirs. I have had 23 years to reflect further on this question, but rather than writing a long list of prescriptions, I prefer to distill from the many experiences a single, fundamental lesson.

It is customary to point to Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations as the most important advance of the United Nations with respect to the Covenant of the League of Nations, the only treaty prior to the Charter that attempted to put

in place rules and mechanisms for the maintenance of international peace and security for an organization that aspired to universality. The importance of the principal operative provision of Article 99, the power of the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security, is beyond question, but it has been overestimated to the extent that the Secretary-General has only invoked it half a dozen times. Article 99 is more important, in my view, in what it implies and presupposes by specifically encouraging the Secretary-General to use his judgement as to whether a matter should be brought to the attention of the Security Council as it could potentially threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. This core article mandates that the Secretary-General should be constantly monitoring situations that might fall under this category. How else can he exercise the judgement requested of him? Similarly, the article presupposes that he will have the means to do so. The fact that Member States have fallen far short of providing him such means is a severe handicap, but it does not undermine the conceptual underpinning that these elements provide for the good offices of the Secretary-General.

Somewhat less consideration has been given to another Article in the Secretariat section of the Charter. That is Article 100, whose importance I wish to highlight.

When I attempt to distill my experience to its most precious essence, I come up with a single word: independence. That word encapsulates what gave me the strength and the ability to make a positive difference regarding a number of seemingly intractable issues that had bedeviled the international community, defying solution for years and years. Independence has consistently been my one-word answer to the question, how did you do it?

The word independence does not appear in Article 100. Under its second paragraph “Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.” The word “independence” might have been a bridge too far in the 1940s, at a time when sovereignty was still significantly more robust in substance and in the minds of statesmen than it is today. But it was unnecessary: there can be no doubt from the context that that is what the Charter enshrines. That is certainly as I saw it. At the time, and all the more so in retrospect, it was invaluable to me. I shall briefly explain why this was so.

Like Hammarskjöld, I did not seek to be Secretary-General. My Government wished me to be a candidate and informed Security Council members that I was available, but I refused to campaign. I did not ask for anyone’s support. I did not go to New York. I made no commitments to Member States or anyone else to become Secretary-General; there was no *quid pro quo*, no *do ut des*. I thus came to office having promised no one anything. Nor did I have any desire to remain as Secretary-General beyond the five-year term to which I was appointed.

On 13 May 1986, a few months before the expiry of what turned out to be my first term as Secretary-General, I delivered the Cyril Foster Lecture in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford University. Twenty-five years before Dag Hammarskjöld delivered a similar lecture on the subject of “The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact”. My subject was The Role of the Secretary-General.

I reviewed the good offices role of the Secretary-General and summarized it in one word— impartiality. “Impartiality,” I said, “is the heart and soul of the office of the Secretary-General.” I took it one step further, suggesting that in order to ensure the impartiality of the Secretary-General, the healthy convention that no person should ever be a candidate for the position should be re-established. It should come unsought to a qualified person. However impeccable a person’s integrity may be, he cannot in fact retain the necessary independence if he proclaims his candidacy and conducts a kind of election campaign.

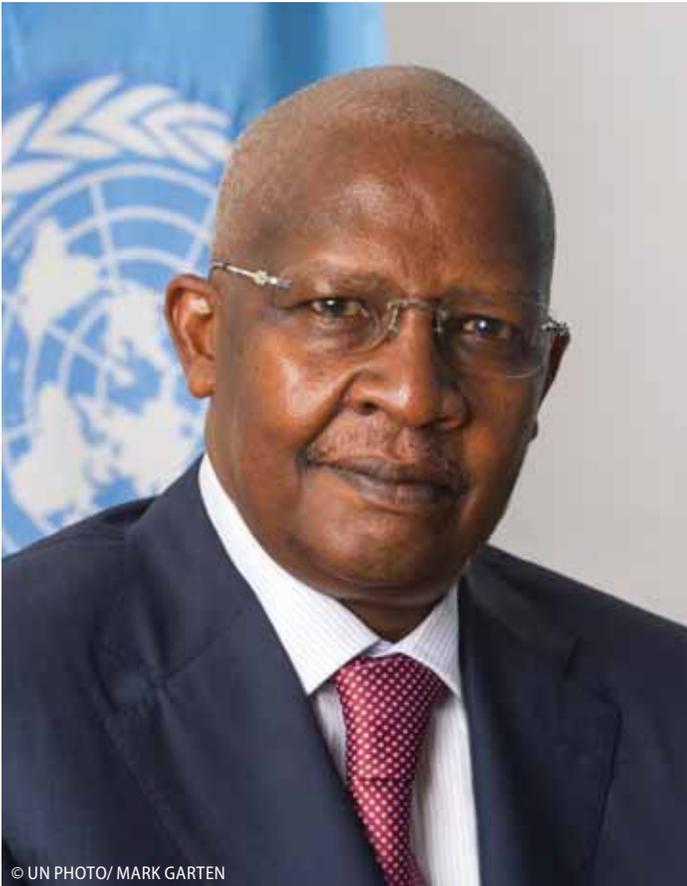
Independence does not mean that the Secretary-General can or should act as a totally free spirit: the Secretary-General is bound by the Charter of the United Nations, and for the United Nations to be an effective agent for peace he must work in partnership with the Security Council. But that partnership is strengthened if he takes a perspective broader than that of individual Member States or even the selection of them embodied in the Council. There are instances in which he may feel compelled to distance himself slightly so as to keep channels open to those who feel misunderstood or alienated by it. The maintenance of this discrete position will make him a more effective and credible partner. If he is clear about this with Security Council members they will see the usefulness of his doing so and respect him for it.

Undeterred by my clear public stance, which they could not unfairly have interpreted as an assertion of independence, the five permanent members of the Security Council approached me jointly—something they did not have the habit of doing—at the beginning of October 1986 with the request that I accept another term. I agreed only with reluctance, but I began my second term feeling newly empowered. The list of instances in which my independence with respect to Member States opened opportunities that would not have appeared had I confined myself to echoing the Council’s every utterance is too long to recite. I believe it catalysed the change in the position of the Security Council with respect to the Iran-Iraq war that provided a framework for solving it. I have no doubt that it made it possible to successfully bring about a comprehensive rather than a partial peace in El Salvador or no peace at all. These are merely two cases in which my independence provided me with the freedom of action necessary to discharge my responsibilities in a manner that was responsive to the wishes of the membership as a whole. That is the value of not having been a candidate.

Is this lesson still relevant? That is for Member States as a whole, and particularly for the members of the Security Council, to decide. 

# THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN ENSURING A SECURE, PROSPEROUS AND EQUITABLE WORLD

By SAM KAHAMBA KUTESA



© UN PHOTO/ MARK GARTEN

Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Seventy years ago the world witnessed the conclusion of two months of intense multilateral diplomacy, with the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. In one of the defining acts of the twentieth century, representatives of 50 countries endorsed the formation of an international organization created in the hopes of preserving peace and building a better world for all.

Encapsulated in the opening words of the Preamble of the Charter, “We the peoples...” is a promise to humanity that the United Nations and its Member States have strived to uphold for the last seven decades.

As we mark this important anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, we should take a moment to reflect on all that has been accomplished, and the work that is ahead of us.

Certainly, the United Nations has strived and continues to strive for humanity’s progress and well-being.

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SAM KAHAMBA KUTESA is President of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The work of the United Nations impacts people around the world on issues related to peace and security, development and human rights; from disarmament to efforts to combat terrorism and extremism; from conflict prevention to peacekeeping and peacebuilding; from disease prevention to the promotion of gender equality and universal education; from refugee resettlement to humanitarian assistance; from the rule of law to the fight against transnational crime.

Yet, given the fundamental ways in which the world has changed over the last seven decades, there is a clear need to reform the United Nations and its principal organs.

One needs to look no further than the exponential growth of the membership of the Organization; from 50 countries in 1945 to 193 countries today. The United Nations needs to transform itself in line with current geopolitical realities to maintain its relevance and improve its effectiveness.

The General Assembly needs to be revitalized. The Security Council needs to be reformed. And the Economic and Social Council needs to be reinvigorated. Furthermore, the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council needs to be strengthened.

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, we have an unprecedented opportunity to improve the everyday lives of people around the world, by putting “people at the centre of all we do”.

In a year when the world’s attention is focused on the future, three important processes are underway that will seek to improve the daily lives of people around the world. The adoption of an ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015 and the summit on a new universal and legally binding climate change agreement this December in Paris will be monumental milestones towards improving the livelihoods of people around the world.

As we celebrate this important anniversary and reflect on the role of the United Nations, we should feel heartened by all that has been achieved.

From supporting the major decolonization efforts across Africa and Asia to providing a critical platform for discourse throughout the cold war; from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger to addressing the pressing challenge of climate change; the United Nations has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure a secure, prosperous and equitable world.

As we mark 70 years of existence, we have every reason to celebrate all that our community of nations has achieved. In doing so, we should also look to the future and strive to transform the United Nations to ensure that it remains effective and relevant in a dynamic and globalized new world. 

# TOWARDS A MORE SECURE, JUST AND HUMANE FUTURE

By MIKHAIL GORBACHEV



Mikhail Gorbachev, then President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, addressing the forty-third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 7 December 1988.

**T**he editors of the *UN Chronicle* asked me to contribute an article for this issue commemorating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. I agreed, since this is an institution unlike any other in terms of its mission, its universality and the hopes vested in it when it was created. Throughout my political career, the United Nations played an important and significant role.

I recall my address to the General Assembly in December 1988, when efforts to overcome global confrontation and end the cold war were yielding the first tangible

results. Conditions were now in place for the United Nations to fulfil its intended mission—to become a platform for genuine cooperation among all Member States in their pursuit of lasting peace, conflict prevention and resolution, and solutions to global problems.

For the first time in many years, members of the Security Council were able to reach a consensus and agree on concerted effective actions, which allowed them to counter the aggression of the Iraqi regime against Kuwait. The United Nations was actively involved in settling other regional conflicts, and even the persistent confrontation in the Middle East no longer seemed insoluble. The international community and its universal Organization could

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now turn their attention to such global challenges as the environmental crisis, poverty and underdevelopment. The survival of hundreds of millions of people and of mankind itself depends upon finding solutions to these problems.

Today, we must acknowledge that we have fallen far short of fulfilling all the expectations raised back then. There is no doubt, however, that over the years the United Nations has accomplished much and has demonstrated many times how necessary it is to Member States and people worldwide. It was within its walls that the initiative leading to the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was launched in 2000. The Millennium Project has focused Member States' attention on the problems that must be solved if millions of people around the world are to enjoy quality of life, decent livelihoods and a measure of dignity. Importantly, specific targets were set in this regard. Although the outcomes have yet to be analysed and it is already clear that not all the Goals have been achieved, the Project as a whole has been a constructive undertaking. Poverty is gradually declining, and millions of people are gaining access to education, health care, clean water and sanitation. I am glad that Green Cross International, an organization I helped to create and have been actively involved with, has made its own contribution to this vast endeavour, which must be continued and made more effective.

This does not mean, however, that we can be satisfied with the course of world affairs in the post-cold-war era. Rather, we have good reason to be sharply critical of what has happened and continues to unfold before our eyes. Instead of a truly new world order, which, in the words of the late Pope John Paul II, would be safer, more just and more humane, we have witnessed the escalation of random, often chaotic processes that are beyond the reach of global governance.

This has affected the role and stature of the United Nations. Its influence suffered greatly when it was barred from the process of finding solutions to challenging security threats, particularly in the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. Unilateral actions by Member States contradict the very essence of the world Organization. Events of recent years have demonstrated that such policy is not only dangerous, but counterproductive for everyone, including its adherents. Instead of solving problems, it makes them worse and creates new, often more severe and perilous complications. Yet it seems that not all countries have learned from this bitter experience.

The last year and a half has proved particularly challenging for the international community. Mutual trust has been lost between leading States, including those upon which the Charter of the United Nations confers a special responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

The fundamental principles that should form the foundation for international relations are being defied. These are the principles of dialogue, respect for mutual interests, compromise, and peaceful approaches to disputes and conflict resolution. Of course, the United Nations cannot be expected to function effectively under such circumstances.

What worries me most is that disagreements between the leading Powers with regard to the Ukrainian crisis have brought their interaction and cooperation on many important global problems to a virtual standstill. High-level contacts are now kept to a minimum, and when they do occur, they often resemble the dialogue of the deaf. The situation is increasingly reminiscent of the state of affairs of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when global leaders avoided meeting with one another, while the world slid towards the abyss. Today it is imperative to demonstrate the political will to break the impasse and begin to restore confidence and normal interaction.

I believe that we must now return to issues of principle, the top priority being the inadmissibility of the use of nuclear weapons. Military doctrines and concepts adopted by nuclear Powers in recent years contain language that represents a step backward in comparison to the Joint Soviet-United States Statement of 1985, which emphasized the inadmissibility of nuclear war. I am convinced that another statement, perhaps at the level of the Security Council, must be issued in order to reaffirm that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought"!

Considering the important role of the Russian Federation and the United States of America in the world, I have called upon the leaders of these two countries to meet in order to discuss the entire global agenda, review all issues and develop a framework for cooperation in order to resolve them. Disagreements over a single regional conflict, albeit a very serious one, cannot be allowed to completely disrupt world affairs. I am confident that the other permanent members of the Security Council could also actively contribute to initiating a meaningful dialogue and identifying mutual interests in order to steer world politics back towards cooperation rather than confrontation.

There is no doubt that today, much depends on leadership. If leaders acknowledge their responsibility and overcome long-standing disagreements, including subjective grievances, it will be possible to find a way out of the impasse. Thirty years ago, we managed to do so under much more difficult circumstances, when the political stand-off seemed insuperable and the stockpiles of nuclear weapons were much larger than now. Today, we must not panic, nor cave in to pessimism. Figuratively speaking, it is possible to clear the skies over the United Nations Headquarters and create conditions for the global Organization to fulfil its mission. 

# A TIME FOR BOLD REFORMS

By GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND



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Gro Harlem Brundtland, Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Climate Change, addresses the opening of the High-level Segment of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, at United Nations Headquarters in New York, 9 May 2007.

**W**hen the United Nations was born in 1945, I was six years old. The world was emerging from the horrors of the Second World War and Norway was reasserting and re-establishing its democracy after five long years of Nazi occupation. By the time I was ten, my family was living in New York and I was proud and keenly aware that a fellow Norwegian, Trygve Lie, had become the first Secretary-General of the United Nations. Little did I know then that I would also have a long involvement with the Organization.

Over the past 35 years, I have had the honour and privilege to serve on various United Nations commissions and panels, as well as to head one of its flagship agencies. I have seen many positive United Nations-led initiatives which have helped to promote peace, democracy and human rights, improve living conditions and protect the environment, to name a few.

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However, now, more than ever, the relevance of the United Nations is at a crossroads. There have been profound shifts of power and wealth in the world since the Organization was established. Of the 193 Member States of the United Nations today, nearly three quarters were not members in 1945.

The purpose of the United Nations is greater than trying to maintain peace and security among nations; it is also to help humanity solve the economic, social, humanitarian and environmental problems facing us.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As a young Minister of the Environment in the 1970s, I witnessed not only the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), but also the United Nations itself engaging Governments in addressing key concerns and challenges. In 1976, my work with the Ministry of the Environment brought me to Vancouver, Canada, for the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements,

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and a year later, in 1977, to Mar del Plata, Argentina, for the United Nations Water Conference. I also travelled to Nairobi, where the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972.

My first role serving the United Nations was in 1983 when Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar invited me to establish and chair the World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Commission considered the intertwined challenges of environmental degradation, poverty and population growth. The Commission, which is best known for developing the broad political concept of sustainable development, published its report *Our Common Future* in April 1987.

This report placed environmental issues firmly on the political agenda, and presented them not in isolation,

but as intrinsically linked to development and as a right for all people and nations, thus recognizing their interdependence. The recommendations by the Commission led to the Earth Summit—the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

We have come a long way since the publication of the report more than 25 years ago. Indeed, great strides have been made since the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. We have dramatically reduced the proportion of people living in extreme poverty. More people have access to safe drinking water. Fewer children are dying in infancy.

However, even a cursory glance will show that while some in the world are experiencing unprecedented levels of prosperity, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Environmental degradation continues, and the effects of climate change have begun to threaten the world’s most vulnerable populations and ecosystems.

This is why the sustainable development goals (SDGs), which will be launched in September 2015, will be crucial in continuing the momentum to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 and to address a number of critical economic, social and environmental issues, including climate change.

#### HEALTH

In 1998 I had the honour to be elected Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). I wanted to promote WHO as the moral voice and the technical leader in improving people’s health. Besides prevention and combating disease and alleviating suffering, we needed to promote sustainable and equitable health systems in all countries.

Before embarking on a career in politics, I had trained as a doctor like my father had before me. A young mother and newly qualified physician, I won a scholarship to the Harvard School of Public Health where my vision of health began to extend beyond the confines of the medical world into environmental issues and human development.

This holistic sense of public health and its intimate and intricate links to wider social issues informed my vision for WHO and continues to guide my work today as a member of The Elders ([www.theElders.org](http://www.theElders.org)) and of the board of the United Nations Foundation ([www.unfoundation.org](http://www.unfoundation.org)).

While we concentrated our efforts on combating health threats, such as the tobacco epidemic, and diseases such as malaria, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, I also wanted Governments to fully realize how investment in health can be an investment for national economies. This must also be recognized in the forthcoming SDGs.

## STRENGTHENING THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations was born out of the shared desire that the world should never again descend to the horrors of global war and tyranny. Yet before the Organization was 10 years old, the Iron Curtain had descended across Europe and the cold war with its attendant nuclear arms race had changed the geopolitical landscape beyond all recognition. These divisive dynamics meant that there was little appetite to fundamentally review the nature and functions of the Organization's institutional mechanisms.

Now, however, a generation has passed since the end of the cold war and it is high time the United Nations addressed these outstanding questions. All institutions must adapt to cope with new circumstances—and today's circumstances are very different from those of 1945.

A number of proposals have been put forward for changes in the arcane composition of the Security Council. It is highly legitimate to demand a more representative composition, to reflect the emergence of new dynamic countries and regions, and their growing international responsibility for peace and security. It is also legitimate and necessary to be considering the need for effectiveness. Should we extend the right of veto to new powers or focus on curtailing the use of veto of the present Permanent Five (P5)?

Could a possible compromise be found in introducing a new category of members, serving longer terms than the present non-permanent ones, and eligible for immediate re-election, leading to a form of permanence, provided they retain the confidence of other Member States? Efforts by some countries to establish a similar practice without changes to the Charter of the United Nations have so far been met with *de facto* opposition.

It is frustrating and fuels the legitimacy debate that some of the vetoes cast, as well as the sometimes equally effective veto threats, have collided with widely held views of what humanitarian needs require of us as a responsible international community. We should call on the five existing permanent members not to prevent the Security Council from taking binding decisions, when whole populations are threatened with atrocious crimes.

It is inherent in the system today, that the P5 will have recourse to veto when they consider their vital interests to be at stake. None of them take such decisions lightly, but we should request a full and clear explanation of the alternatives they propose, as a more credible and efficient way to protect victims. And when one or more of them do use the veto in that way, let the others promise not to abandon the search for common ground, but to work even harder to find an effective solution on which all can agree.

Moreover, we should request that the Security Council listen more carefully to those affected by its decisions. When

they can agree, the permanent members too often deliberate behind closed doors, without listening enough to those whom their decisions most directly affect. From now on, let them—and the whole Council—give groups representing people in zones of conflict a better opportunity to inform and influence their decisions.

Several years of negotiations on the composition of the Council have failed to produce results. Many Member States seem equally eager to prevent other countries from serving more frequently or even permanently on the Council than they are to create a more legitimate council.

Several other United Nations reform proposals have failed due to the Member States themselves. Many good proposals fail because Member States have imposed rules on the United Nations which they are unwilling to change. Some years ago, a laudable effort was made to reduce the number of mandates given to the Organization to fulfil. Hardly any were deleted.

Every time a new Secretary-General is elected, we see a great deal of expectations. The General Assembly has for years requested to have more influence with the choice than hitherto, when it is presented with one proposed name from the Security Council. Personally, I would like to see the General Assembly allowing the new Secretary-General more room for initiative and innovation on behalf of the Organization, than Member States have so far conceded to vest in that role.

I have always been convinced that we need to base our decisions upon facts and evidence, but facts alone are not enough. We need ethical leadership and a clear political will to make the tough decisions that must be taken. This applies to Member States as well as to those at the helm of the Organization.

In this 70th anniversary year, the United Nations must show itself to be mature and responsible enough to make bold reforms that can secure its long-term effectiveness. It must also exhibit humility and engage with ordinary citizens in its Member States, listen to their views, recognize their respective contributions to development, and show that it is relevant to their lives, and to the lives and prospects of their children.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, the founder of The Elders, "The real makers of history are the ordinary men and women...their participation in every decision about the future is the only guarantee of true democracy and freedom."<sup>1</sup> 

## Notes

1 Nelson Mandela, "Address to Rally in Durban, 25 February 1990", in *The Struggle is My Life* (London, IDAF Publications LTD., 1990), p. 228.

## THE UNITED NATIONS AT 70

### A VETERAN'S VIEW



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By MARGARET JOAN ANSTEE

**T**he United Nations, founded in 1945 with high hopes for international peace and security after the horrors of two world wars, has reached the venerable age of three score years and ten and it is time to take stock.

During those seven decades the United Nations has grown exponentially, spawning many organizations and agencies designed to improve most aspects of human existence. Its normative activities are extensive, ranging from human rights to drug control and nuclear arms. Poverty was seen as a major scourge and led to a wide network of operational programmes of technical and financial assistance in developing countries.

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Political activities at United Nations Headquarters to solve or reduce threats to international peace and security, the main aim of the Charter of the United Nations, have had to contend with a turbulent and ever more complex world, and have not always been successful. Mediation and conflict resolution have been supported by operational peacekeeping missions that have multiplied since the end of the cold war and now embrace peacebuilding elements as realization has grown that security and development are intertwined.

It is fashionable to criticize the United Nations for its shortcomings and overlook achievements obtained against great odds. There have been many regional and local wars, but global conflict has been avoided, although humanity has teetered on the brink of catastrophe several times. Poverty and inequality still persist, but there have been major advances in critical areas such as maternal/

child health care and infant mortality, and the killer disease of smallpox has been eradicated. The Organization has become proficient in handling natural and man-made disasters and has also taken the lead in addressing emerging issues of international importance, such as climate change.

I have been involved with various aspects of the Organization for 63 years, 41 of them—from 1952 to 1993—as an official and, since my retirement, in advisory and voluntary capacities. It was by coincidence that I became a local staff member of one of the first technical assistance offices in the Philippines in 1952. That opened the door to a long career that has brought me many satisfactions as well as some disappointments. I was fortunate to work mostly in operational field programmes and to spend 22 years living in poor developing countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa. These were concrete activities with specific goals and measurable results.

The promotion of economic and social development was a new concept then, as was the provision of aid to poorer countries. It was exciting to be part of that new adventure when both we and the United Nations were young and hopes were high. It was especially challenging for me because I entered an exclusively male domain. I was the first woman international field officer of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, which later became the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In 1956, I was Acting Resident Representative of the programme in Colombia, and in 1957 was made titular Resident Representative in Uruguay. I was warned that I was a “pilot project”; after seven years, when I was still the only woman, I enquired, “Am I the light that failed?” A second woman was appointed, but for years we were the only ones. Half a century later, out of 131 UNDP country heads of mission (now usually called Resident Coordinators) only 48 are female, a poor showing for an organization that should be setting an example.

I held further Resident Representative posts in Argentina, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Morocco and Chile. In 1974, after General Augusto Pinochet’s sanguinary coup in Chile, when his secret police searched my house, I was transferred to New York. There, in 1977, I became the first female Assistant Administrator of UNDP, heading the Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation.

Upon moving to the United Nations Secretariat at the behest of the then Secretary-General, I became the first woman Assistant Secretary-General in a line post, serving in the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development, which managed operational programmes all over the world (1978-1987). In 1987, I was promoted to Under-Secretary-General, again the first female to

attain that rank, and became Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna which, in addition to representing the Secretary-General in Eastern Europe, was made responsible for operating worldwide programmes in narcotic drugs control, crime prevention and criminal justice, and social development. It is gratifying to note that women Under-Secretaries-General and heads of specialized agencies are no longer a rarity.

In 1992, the Secretary-General asked me to be his Special Representative (SRSG) in Angola and Head of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II). I hesitated, knowing that the United Nations had been given an inadequate mandate and even more inadequate resources to deal with a deeply entrenched conflict. Not long before, the previous Secretary-General had wanted to make me head of peacekeeping at United Nations Headquarters but had to desist because of the opposition of ambassadors and others to the idea of a woman commanding military troops. If the mission in Angola failed, as well it might have, the blame would be attributed to the gender of the SRSG. In the end I accepted the challenge, swayed by two arguments: it was the final male bastion to be conquered in the United Nations; and I had long encouraged women to have the courage to take risks, both physical and professional.

I have chosen to highlight the United Nations role in women’s issues because it is an area in which progress has been made, and I was privileged to play some part. The role of a female pioneer is not easy: your performance has to be much greater than that of your male counterparts, and you are painfully aware that it is not just your personal career that is at stake, but also the prospects of other women who would like to follow in your footsteps.

Important international milestones were the United Nations global conferences on women, held in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted in 1979. In its efforts to give women greater prominence in its own bureaucracy, the United Nations made the mistake of creating posts with the limited mandate of dealing with women’s affairs. I am proud of the fact that the posts I occupied had previously been male preserves until 1987, when the Division for the Advancement of Women became part of my portfolio in Vienna. It is gratifying that many women now fill a wider variety of senior United Nations posts.

Progress was slow initially in the appointment of women SRSGs. Five years passed before a second one was named to follow me. Another key milestone was the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on

women, peace and security, which urged the Secretary-General to increase the number of women SRSGs and addressed all aspects of women caught up in war. The seeds for this were sown at a meeting in Windhoek on gender issues in peacekeeping that I chaired in May 2000 and the outcome document which Namibia presented to the Council in October of that year. Nevertheless, as with so many United Nations resolutions, implementation was very slow. Now there is an improvement, with 5 out of 21 country-specific SRSGs and 2 country-specific Deputy SRSGs being female, but the presence of women at negotiating tables continues to be very sparse.

The effectiveness of the United Nations system has been impaired by the multiplicity of its semi-autonomous agencies and other entities. The lack of cohesion has been especially severe in the field of development cooperation. I was involved in various attempts to rectify this situation, beginning with *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System* (1969), prepared by Sir Robert Jackson, with myself as his Chief of Staff. It proposed root-and-branch reform, designed to strengthen the authority of UNDP through the “power of the purse”, ensuring that assistance reflected each country’s priorities rather than projects imposed by the agencies, and making the system “speak with one voice”. Intended as an integrated proposal, it was only adopted piecemeal. A unique opportunity was missed, and the number of international, regional and national bodies offering development cooperation has increased, as has the pull of centrifugal forces and the blurring of the role of UNDP. Subsequent reform efforts have reiterated the same precepts but still met the same opposition of vested interests both on the part of Member States and of entrenched bureaucracies. We are still a long way from gearing development cooperation to the priorities of recipient countries.

The United Nations has become increasingly politicized. The concept of United Nations officials answering only to the Secretary-General and the Charter of the United Nations, as defined by Dag Hammarskjöld in his Oxford lecture in 1961, has become seriously eroded:

- There is too much interference by Member States with the administration of the United Nations and the appointment and promotion of their nationals.
- Many staff regard themselves as servants of their own nations and turn to their embassies and capitals for support.

- Political appointees to Assistant and Under-Secretary-General posts often lack the qualifications and experience required.
- No punishment is meted out or sanctions are applied when basic United Nations principles are transgressed.
- Offending a prominent Member State may prejudice a Secretary-General’s prospects for a further term of office.

This situation will only be resolved if there is a sea change in government attitudes and an example must be set at the top by the Secretary-General. At present many limitations are imposed on his authority. Member States do not want a strong Secretary-General and the tortuous “horse trading” process of electing the Secretary-General can lead to the “least common denominator” being chosen.

Obvious reforms are not acted upon because of the paradox that, in an age of rapid globalization and diminishing national power, the pursuit of narrow national interests, often mistaken, and the tendency to “go it alone” are on the increase. Ironical as this is, these counterproductive factors represent the political reality of today’s world. “Realpolitik” will not allow some of the most obvious changes to take place, but it is imperative that we find some way of strengthening the United Nations, which is more needed than ever in our conflict-ridden world.

Some ideas have been circulating that would have a multiplier effect:

- Changing the procedure for electing the Secretary-General by introducing a pre-selection process. The final decision will be political, but this approach would ensure that the choice would be made from well-qualified and experienced candidates.
- Limiting the Secretary-General’s term of office to a single period longer than the present five years. This would increase the incumbent’s authority and protect him or her from undue pressure from Member States. unc

# FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY

## UNITED NATIONS PERSONNEL ARE DRIVING CHANGE

By NAVI PILLAY



© UN PHOTO/JEAN-MARC FERRE

In March 2011, Navi Pillay, then United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, presented the Human Rights Council's annual report during the sixteenth session of the Council. Ms. Pillay is shown in traditional dress, according to a yearly custom followed by the Council.

The United Nations has come a long way since it was established, 70 years ago, by sovereign States to resolve inter-State disputes. Its massive efforts in peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and setting global standards compel me to wonder what we would have done without it. Like everyone, I recognize the magnitude of the crisis that the United Nations—and indeed, the world—faces today. First, though, I want to focus on a few of the many achievements that I consider to be impressive.

Throughout the dark days of apartheid in my native country, South Africa, I was firmly convinced of the need to be guided by a system of universally recognized values of

what is right and just. The United Nations provides us with such a standard of values and norms, together with the tools to implement them. It has advanced resoundingly from a State-centred system of traditional international law, based on the pre-eminence of State sovereignty, into a norm-based institution. Its goals are clear: while respecting the freedom of sovereign States, it is also dedicated to protecting and promoting peace, security, development, rule of law and human rights for the people of the world.

International law increasingly plays a role in shaping state policy, as well as domestic law, to advance protection of human rights. There has also been marked growth in international criminal law, with its emphasis on the criminal responsibility of the individual. Progress in international criminal justice lay dormant for half a century after the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals. But the landscape has

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shifted rapidly over the past 20 years. The establishment of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993 and of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in 1994, was followed by ad hoc international courts in East Timor, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, and the courts for Iraq and Lebanon. With the adoption of the Rome Statute in 1998, the International Criminal Court, the world's first-ever permanent international criminal court, was established.

Yet the idea of developing universal standards of human rights is relatively new. And this use by the international community of judicial power backed by punishment to deter serious violations of human rights is an even more recent development. As witnesses in the ICTR genocide trials—where I was a judge—said, “We have longed for this day, to see justice being done.” Setting up a system of international criminal justice was a real milestone for the United Nations.

International law sets clear standards of equality, freedom from discrimination and human dignity for all persons. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the foundational framework for human rights, and today all the countries of the world subscribe to its principles. Most constitutions and national legislations embody them, and they have been strengthened over 70 years of steadfast United Nations activity involving the adoption of conventions, treaties, resolutions and declarations.

In accordance with the fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, States accept that it is they that carry the foremost responsibility to protect the human rights of their people—civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights—and to fulfil their demand to be free from fear and want.

At the same time, the United Nations subscribes to the principle that when States need assistance in implementing their responsibility to protect their own people, the international community should assist. This is critical where States confront armed groups committing atrocities against the people, and where a country is ravaged by natural disasters or lacks the resources essential for delivery of services.

International law is also clear that where a State manifestly fails to protect its population against massive violations of human rights, the international community must intervene to protect, using the means prescribed and circumscribed by the Charter of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, State sovereignty is often invoked to deflect United Nations action to prevent serious human rights violations. And Governments themselves, by their actions or omissions, are often culpable in tolerating abuses.

It is a bitter paradox that as we celebrate 70 years of achievements by the United Nations, the Organization faces its greatest challenges in current times. The conflict in Syria has entered its fifth year—spreading its tentacles across

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borders into Iraq; causing the loss of more than 200,000 lives and displacing millions of Syrians now cramped in United Nations shelters and in various temporary quarters.

The atrocities being perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) rebel group particularly shock our collective conscience. Thousands of men, women and children have been executed or forcibly recruited, girls sold into sexual slavery and women raped. Imposing their own extreme form of Islam, they offer no other option to their captives but to convert or be slain. Employing sophisticated modern technology of the digital era, ISIL has managed to recruit young fighters across the world in a most insidious manner. The Government of Iraq, unable to contain this massive conflict, confronted by Syrian and foreign insurgents, has asked the United Nations for assistance to protect its people.

Other complex and potentially highly eruptive conflicts are underway in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen. These crises hammer home the full cost of the failure of the international community to prevent conflict. They combine massive bloodshed and devastation of infrastructure with acutely destabilizing transnational phenomena, including terrorism, the proliferation of weaponry, organized crime and spoliation of natural resources.

None of these crises erupted without warning. They built up over years of human rights grievances; deficient or corrupt governance and lack of independent judicial and law enforcement institutions; discrimination and exclusion; inequities in

development; exploitation and denial of economic and social rights; and repression of civil society and public freedoms.

Early detection systems such as the then 51 special procedures experts (currently 55) of the Human Rights Council, and systematic scrutiny by treaty bodies repeatedly alerted us to these shortfalls. Thus, although the specifics of each conflict could not necessarily be predicted, many of the human rights complaints that were at the core of a confrontation were known. They could and should have been addressed.

This was, in the first place the duty of relevant States. But when Governments are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens, the people look to the United Nations—through its various system bodies, but specifically through the Security Council, to intervene, invoking international law and deploying the range of good offices, support, inducements and coercion at its disposal to defuse the triggers of conflict.

Sovereign States established the international human rights framework precisely because they knew that human rights violations cause conflict, and this undermines sovereignty. Early action to address human rights concerns protects States, by warding off the threat of devastating violence and forced displacement. Recognition of this urgent truth, and a broader conception of national interest, would be more appropriate to a century in which a growing number of challenges face humanity as a whole.

In August 2014, when, as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, I addressed the Security Council, I stated this view, pointing out that use of the veto to stop actions intended to prevent or defuse conflict is a short-term and ultimately counterproductive tactic. The collective interest, defined clearly by the Charter of the United Nations, is in the national interest of every country.

Human rights are always central to conflict prevention. Patterns of violations, including sexual violence, provide early alerts to escalation; this truth has never been so clear as it is today. But the human rights agenda is also a detailed road map for ways to resolve disputes. The years of practical experience of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), through its presence in more than 58 countries and via human rights components of peacekeeping missions, elicit a number of good practices that address both proximate triggers of conflict and root causes.

These include strengthening civil society actors, increasing participation by women in decision-making and dialogue, and addressing institutional and individual accountability for past crimes and serious human rights violations.

While it is disheartening that conflicts rage unabated in a small number of States, an increasing number of countries are nonetheless making serious efforts to implement the United Nations agenda to advance human rights. Credit for that should go to the countless brave and committed civil society activists, journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers

and government personnel, who, over decades, have slowly succeeded in firmly rooting international human rights norms in their societies. It is vital that civil society be given greater democratic space within international fora, as well as within every country.

The Security Council's interest in human rights increased markedly during my tenure as High Commissioner, with growing acknowledgement that it cannot hope to safeguard peace, security and development unless it is alerted to the relevant human rights context. But despite repeated briefings regarding escalating violations in multiple crises, by OHCHR and other United Nations bodies, and despite the Secretary-General's appeal for collective action, there has not always been a firm and principled decision by Security Council members to put an end to conflicts. Short-term geopolitical considerations and national interests, narrowly defined, have repeatedly taken preference over intolerable human suffering, and over grave breaches of, and long-term threats to, international peace and security.

In my address to the Security Council on prevention of conflict, I suggested that the Council take a number of innovative approaches to prevent threats to international peace and security. The Human Rights Up Front action plan is an important initiative for collective and immediate delivery by all United Nations agencies for the protection of human rights in crises. It is a welcome development, stemming from the failure of the United Nations to protect human rights in Rwanda and Sri Lanka. In the future, I hope that it will give the Secretary-General the means to be even more proactive in alerting to potential crises, including situations that are not formally on the agenda of the Security Council.

For while the United Nations can be credited for creating an impressive body of law, the fact is that implementation on the ground is sorely lacking. I must pay tribute to the highly committed United Nations staff who work tirelessly, in cooperation with States and civil society actors, to implement change. Their work is not glamorous enough to attract media attention but represents a long series of small steps towards long-term benefit, namely building stable societies.

The United Nations has also achieved much progress in awareness of rights. Today, one cannot read a newspaper, a blog or switch on a channel, without hearing about human rights. Together with the heightened visibility and activism of civil society organizations, this is one of the most remarkable developments of the last 20 years. Despite some pushbacks, individuals and groups feel empowered to demand greater equality, participation, accountability and freedom.

In the next 70 years, I deeply hope that States will recognize that respect for human rights, and for the Charter of the United Nations, bestows legitimacy on leaders. I trust too that those who ignore this imperative will, sooner or later, be called to account. 

# STRIVING FOR HUMAN SECURITY

By SADAKO OGATA



**W**hen I started my work as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in February 1991—as the first woman, the first Japanese, and the first academic in that post—the world had just moved away from the rigidly controlled cold war structure. Within weeks of my arrival in Geneva, almost 2 million Iraqi Kurds had fled to Iran and Turkey in the aftermath of the Gulf War. That was the beginning of my turbulent decade as High Commissioner until I left the position in 2000.

The Gulf War of 1991 was a major watershed in the advancement of multilateral diplomacy and humanitarian action that set the stage for the post-cold-war period of the 1990s. The scale and speed of refugee exodus were unprecedented, and the pace of their return was equally rapid. Backed up by Security Council resolution 688 (1991), the coalition forces intervened to set up a safe haven in northern Iraq to bring back the Kurdish refugees. Soon we moved to northern Iraq for the first time, working closely with international military forces to help refugees and internally displaced persons. In the following years, especially in the former Yugoslavia and the Great Lakes

Region of Africa, we were constantly challenged to rethink our protection, assistance and solution strategies.

The foundation of protection remained legal, but ensuring this protection increasingly became an operational, practical, hands-on activity. UNHCR was on the front lines, often in war zones, and frequently alone. We became much more active in countries of origin, particularly when helping returnees to reintegrate.

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The times also demanded innovative approaches to asylum. We broke new ground—and together saved many lives—by promoting temporary protection for refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, or by implementing the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme for refugees from Kosovo. Following the dramatic events in the Great Lakes Region of Africa between 1994 and 1997, and a request by the Secretary-General to make proposals on how to ensure security and neutrality in refugee camps, we developed a “ladder” of options, from the basic “protection by presence” to a range of “medium” alternatives of training and deployment.

When the cold war came to a close, people optimistically spoke of the arrival of the new world order. Reflecting on the changed environment, peace agreements were reached in Central America, Cambodia, South Africa and elsewhere in the early 1990s. The main operations of UNHCR in these regions became repatriation. The reality that followed, however, betrayed our optimism. The predictable universe of cold war relations was replaced by a period of uncertainty and instability. Super-Power rivalry and proxy wars were replaced by ethnic conflicts within nations. New patterns of conflicts made population movements more fluid and complex than before. Many crossed borders and became refugees eligible for international protection, but many more remained internally displaced, receiving no protection from their States. The mixture of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as the rapidity and scale of human movement, were special features of my time as High Commissioner. This trend has continued, and today, when there are 51 million forcibly displaced worldwide—exceeding 50 million for the first time in the post-Second World War era—the number of internally displaced persons became double that of the figure of refugees.

Conflicts were inevitably the main cause of mass exodus, and more than ever, displacements and wars became inextricably linked. My first briefing to the Security Council was in 1992, when violence broke out in the former Yugoslavia, displacing millions of people. To me, it was like crossing the humanitarian Rubicon. The long-upheld principles of neutrality and impartiality were generally interpreted by the humanitarian community as meaning to keep a clear distance from political involvement. No head of a humanitarian agency had ever addressed the Security Council.

I was often quoted as having stated “there are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems.” What I wanted to emphasize then was that refugee problems are essentially political in origin and therefore have to be addressed through political action. Humanitarian action may create space for political action, but on its own can never substitute it, as well demonstrated by the tragic example of Syria today. Solutions require decisive intervention by leading global and regional powers or by the Security Council. Against this conviction, I willingly briefed the Security Council, the most

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**One lesson I have learned is that solving refugee problems takes time. Changing people’s attitudes takes time. Developing confidence among people who fought each other takes time. But the task is not impossible. Focusing on people themselves and harping on their self-interest may seem like a roundabout process, but it is the most effective approach to conflict prevention and finding lasting solutions.**

powerful political organ of the United Nations, 12 times. I made strenuous efforts to urge the political actors to become more engaged in settling humanitarian crises.

In carrying out my responsibility as High Commissioner, my concern was always centred on providing security to the refugees and giving them opportunities to lead happier lives. Traditionally, security issues were examined in the context of “State security”, i.e. protection of the State, its boundaries, its people, institutions and values from external attacks. People were considered to be assured of their security through protection extended by the State. However, in the post-cold-war era, without external aggression or threat to territorial integrity or State sovereignty, people were faced with outbreaks of intra-State violence, caused by historic rivalries and animosities among different ethnic, religious and social groups. The State as protector of people frequently remained ineffective in ensuring “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. Maintaining or developing peaceful relations among opposing individuals, groups or communities became a central security issue.

I questioned countless times how we should address the central security issue of the day, i.e. the security of the people. I learned that by focusing more directly on the people, we could find ways to provide protection and enhance

security. This quest for a people-centred security concept led me to take up “human security” as a paradigm shift from the traditional “State security”. It was in the search for new ways to meet the security challenges of the day that the Commission on Human Security was established in 2001 after I left UNHCR, under the initiative of the United Nations and the Government of Japan. I was honoured to co-chair the Commission together with the Nobel Prize economist Amartya Sen. Our 2003 report, *Human Security Now*, drew on two years of research, field visits and public hearings to propose an innovative framework of action that addresses critical threats to human security.

With the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, the concept departed from the abstract and reached the concrete, equipped with means for protecting and empowering vulnerable people across broad sectors, and allowing seamless transition from humanitarian relief to development action. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), where I served as President from 2003 to 2012, proactively partnered with humanitarian actors, hoping to cover gaps between humanitarian relief and development work. The human security approach was implemented by JICA, not just for communities recovering from conflicts, but also to overcome a variety of hurdles such as poverty, unemployment and climate change.

Human security concerns both protection and empowerment, with the aim to capacitate people to take an active role in making their lives and communities more secure. Human security cannot be achieved singularly; it operates as a common platform, providing an inclusive and consolidated approach for all partners—from government and United Nations agencies, various donors, civil society and local residents through defining their needs, setting up common goals and mobilizing expertise. Human security also provides a wide view, looking across broad sectors to address interrelated issues. In this continuum, communities can build positive mechanisms to deal with many types of insecurities.

Today, with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 290 (2012), the human security approach sets up broad consensus among Governments and practitioners. It was a heartening moment for me to address the High-level Event on Human Security in May 2013 at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Chamber in New York.

However, the question remains how to sustain the political will of Governments and leaders to act on behalf of those whose lives and dignity are at risk, and to turn such compassion into political action. The equation is even more complicated, when a new source of threat manifests itself in the form of international terrorism and violent extremism. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) operates beyond national borders with devastating speed. Globalization, which not only creates wealth and

opportunities but also widens inequality, has added further complications to security management. The extraordinary growth in information technology and advancement in communication through social networking sites can easily and rapidly polarize the landscape and recruit dissatisfied adolescents to terrorist militancy. The acceleration of climate change and global warming induce mega disasters, deadly epidemics, and even conflicts, disproportionately affecting those already living in vulnerable situations. We are tested by whether we can stay united to pass on a livable planet to future generations.

Since the United Nations was established, significant progress has occurred. When the Charter of the United Nations was ratified, most Asian and African countries were still European colonies. The United Nations started with 51 Member States, expanding over these 70 years to 193 today. The evolving threats and challenges against which the Organization is tested may have outpaced the progress. Article 1 of the Charter proclaims that the first aim of the world Organization is to “maintain international peace and security”. If to be secure means to be free from being killed, persecuted or abused, free from extreme poverty that brings indignity and self-contempt, and free to make choices, then still too many people today cannot afford security.

“From development to peace to human rights, the United Nations must be ever more fit for purpose,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his briefing to the General Assembly in January 2015 with the milestone year ahead. I welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to appoint a High-level Panel to explore the ongoing challenge of how to close the growing gap between humanitarian needs and available resources. In the run-up to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, and in the endeavour for the United Nations to live up to its mission, I would like to call on people, rather than States, to take centre stage.

One lesson I have learned is that solving refugee problems takes time. Changing people’s attitudes takes time. Developing confidence among people who fought each other takes time. But the task is not impossible. Focusing on people themselves and harping on their self-interest may seem like a roundabout process, but it is the most effective approach to conflict prevention and finding lasting solutions.

After all, people are what matters most. I have often been asked from where I draw my energy. I often think of all the refugees whom I met in camps, in villages, in reception centers, in shantytowns. I believe that what has kept me going is the conviction that our collective efforts can turn the terror and pain of exile to the safety and unity of family and friends. What the United Nations has done and will continue to do are worthwhile efforts for the future and happiness of all people everywhere on Earth. 

# A New Agenda

## THE ROLE OF MULTILATERALISM IN A COMPLEX AND CHANGING WORLD



Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of ESCWA.

By RIMA KHALAF

**T**he 70th anniversary of the United Nations presents an opportunity to take stock, recognizing our successes and acknowledging our shortcomings.

The United Nations has indisputably made the world a better place over the past seven decades. We have succeeded in making the world recognize the wealth in its pluralism and diversity. For the first time in history, a consensus around human equality has been forged. No race or culture can claim to exclusively represent human civilization.

There are five core areas where the contribution of the United Nations can best be demonstrated.

Firstly, in universal values. The United Nations has succeeded in formulating and expounding universal statements of principles and values, as enshrined in its Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has also succeeded in translating these principles into globally agreed agendas and courses of action. Today, the United Nations protects and promotes human rights through dozens of treaties and declarations, duly ratified by States and widely embraced by individuals and civil society.<sup>1</sup>

The second crucial area is peace. The world has effectively been saved from the scourges of a global war. Since its

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founding, the United Nations has helped end conflicts and foster reconciliation in many countries. It has helped disarm more than 500,000 ex-combatants<sup>2</sup> in the past decade alone. Today, over 122,000 peacekeepers are present in 16 operations on 4 continents<sup>3</sup>, sacrificing their lives to protect the lives and livelihoods of civilians and local communities.

The third is decolonization. The United Nations has successfully supervised the accession to independence of previously colonized countries, welcoming them into the global community as integral and sovereign States.

The fourth is the critical area of development. The United Nations has succeeded in promoting increasingly progressive and inclusive development policies through its various agencies, Regional Commissions, funds and programmes operating around the world. It has led the struggle against poverty and hunger, and helped to achieve increased literacy, better health and longer life expectancy. Working with Member States, the United Nations created and helped implement the pioneering Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were the first-of-its-kind global development agenda. Today the United Nations is fostering global agreement and support around new sustainable development goals (SDGs) that will form the backbone of the post-2015 development agenda. The SDGs aim to build on the successes and shortcomings of the MDGs process to promote more relevant and effective development. The United Nations also enacted the first legally binding instrument

to control harmful emissions and combat climate change.

Finally, humanitarian assistance: the United Nations provides food to more than 80 million people in 75 countries.<sup>4</sup> It saves more than 2 million lives every year through vaccinations and the eradication of diseases.<sup>5</sup> Since 1951 the United Nations has provided aid to more than 60 million refugees<sup>6</sup> fleeing war, persecution or famine. It has also proven its ability to respond in a timely and effective manner to sudden crises, such as the Asian tsunami and the recent Ebola outbreak.

Furthermore, internally, the United Nations has always been innovative and proactive in reconciling its breadth and scope with emerging needs and conflicting priorities. Continuous reform has kept the United Nations agile and nimble, enhancing its impact in all parts of the world.

The successes of the United Nations, however, have been tempered by failings. These are mainly to be found in its peace and security mandate.

Despite the prevention of global conflicts on the scale of the First and Second World Wars, an epidemic of local and regional proxy conflicts has resulted in levels of human suffering comparable, in the aggregate, to the two global conflicts. A third world war has been averted but it has been replaced by many third world wars.

The end of worldwide classical colonialism has been achieved, but open wounds remain. The Israeli occupation and settler colonization of Palestine has persisted for half a century, ruining lives and livelihoods, hindering development and posing serious threats to regional and global peace.

The United Nations system has also failed at times to adequately protect human rights and uphold international law. For the sake of political convenience, human rights abuses, and even crimes against humanity have remained unaddressed by United Nations organs such as the Security Council. Examples, in addition to Palestine, include Cambodia, Rwanda and the Balkans.

The reasons behind these shortcomings are numerous. The most prominent among them is the misalignment between the structure of the United Nations and the world that it serves.

The United Nations was founded in 1945. Since then tectonic horizontal and vertical shifts have taken place in world politics. Geographically, the political and economic seats of power are shifting eastward, and State sovereignty is being challenged vertically, from above, at the regional and supranational level, and from below, by sub-State actors. Yet the institutional setup of the United Nations remains as it was originally designed 70 years ago. The veto power which was provided as an incentive to bring the most powerful nation States into the multilateral fold, has become a source of inaction, allowing conflicts to fester and violators to go unpunished. When the interests of the few trump universal values, the ability of the United Nations to operate with neutrality is compromised.

In addition, the current system of governance affects funding patterns and priorities. Funding is increasingly unpredictable and the political and security dimension is often prioritized over development. This is particularly regrettable since it is the

long-term developmental ailments which breed discontent and disenfranchisement, in turn triggering conflict and violence.

Despite growing development funding in absolute terms, the financing of the United Nations has been increasingly dependent on non-core funding, with core funding shrinking in comparative terms, thus weakening the operational capacity of the United Nations. Earmarking at the expense of core funding can compromise the autonomy and impartiality of the Organization.

Failure to adapt the structure of the United Nations to a changing environment could imperil the relevance of the Organization, making it unwanted by the weak and unneeded by the strong.

If multilateralism as embodied by the United Nations ceases to be relevant, effective and legitimate nation States and other global actors will conduct business around it, without it, and even against it. To prevent that, Member States need to continuously adapt and reform the system. At this juncture, reform is most needed in three main areas.

Firstly, decision-making should be brought back into the United Nations and democratized. Enlarging the Security Council and restraining the veto power can significantly enhance the representativeness and legitimacy of the Council. It can also ensure the fairness, enforceability and sustainability of Security Council decisions.

Secondly, current budgetary trends should be changed. Doing more with less is a mere illusion. The United Nations annual regular budget barely exceeds US \$5.5 billion—less than what certain tobacco firms allocate for marketing their products in a year.<sup>7</sup>

Lastly, in all reforms, development work should be protected and enhanced. Developmental and humanitarian policies should be seen as key to achieving political stability and security. We should invest in long-term development to both save lives and resources. Development today is tomorrow's avoided war.

It is in everybody's interest to fashion a modern, adaptive, flexible and responsive United Nations. Today's circumstances are different, but certainly no less urgent than those that led to the creation of the United Nations 70 years ago. Despite its numerous imperfections, this universal body remains the institution of choice to bring lasting peace and prosperity for all. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, "The UN is the worst form of government, except for all the others". **unc**

## Notes

- 1 Available from <https://treaties.un.org/pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx>.
- 2 Available from <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/backgroundnote.pdf>.
- 3 Available from <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/bnote0315.pdf>.
- 4 Available from <http://www.wfp.org/about>.
- 5 Available from <http://www.un.org/en/un60/60ways/health.shtml>. (57. Halting the spread of epidemics).
- 6 Available from <http://www.un.org/en/un60/60ways/ha.shtml>. (46. Assisting refugees).
- 7 A lot less than what the top 5 tobacco companies spent on advertising in the United States alone in 2012: [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/tobacco\\_industry/marketing/](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/tobacco_industry/marketing/).

# LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD



Amina J. Mohammed partakes in a panel discussion on the theme, “Knowledge from experience: Building the post-2015 development agenda with people living in extreme poverty”, held at United Nations Headquarters, 27 June 2013.

By AMINA J. MOHAMMED

Seventy years ago, during the closing days of the Second World War, representatives of 50 nations attended the United Nations Conference on International Organizations in San Francisco, leading to the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, that came into force on 24 October 1945. The Charter is as relevant today as it was seven decades ago. The United Nations was forged through a unified resolve to uphold peace and security, development, and human rights for all and these remain the three pillars that frame the work and mission of the Organization.

The turn of the century marked a major milestone in development, when political leaders revised the terms of development cooperation. The United Nations Millennium Summit

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in 2000 convened the largest gathering of world leaders, which saw Heads of State adopt a new framework for human development, the United Nations Millennium Declaration. A year later, a set of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) distilled from the declaration was presented to the General Assembly of the United Nations. While there was criticism on what was not included in the MDGs and what should have been emphasized more, such as economic growth, governance, land degradation and climate change among other issues, the MDGs represented a fulcrum for a new development collaboration between developed and developing nations.

The MDGs had a difficult birthing process. Some would say it also had a multi-year launch. From the start, it lacked inclusive consultations and was essentially devised by a few

experts at the United Nations. The first few years were in part stagnant, and the excitement and anticipation dissipated just as the hype around Y2K, a few months into the new millennium.

However, looking back at the last 15 years, the MDGs have become a landmark agenda that has transformed the world. The MDGs provided the first attempt of an integrated prescription for the social agenda to address the world's toughest challenges with incredible precision and focus on the poor, combining vertical efforts, such as health and education, in one common strategy. The process brought together vertical subject-specific goals from various international and United Nations conferences of the 1990s, including priorities such as education (Jomtien, 1990), children (New York, 1990), the environment and development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), population (Cairo, 1994), social development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the status of women (Beijing, 1995). Standing alone, these prescriptions were half-empty, but together they provided an opportunity to make a real difference in addressing poverty and inequality. Over the years, the MDGs have demonstrated that an integrated agenda and target setting work. The results have been impressive and have required the partnership of Governments, businesses, civil society, international institutions, foundations, academia and other stakeholders to make meaningful gains. It is these gains that have provided the credibility to embark on the successor agenda to the MDGs.

It was not until 2002, during the first United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in Monterrey, Mexico that the means of implementation for the MDGs took root. Attended by Heads of State, ministers of finance and foreign affairs, and international institutions, world leaders agreed that developed nations should provide the financial resources and support mechanisms for developing countries to implement the MDGs, and set a goal of 0.7 per cent of gross national income as official development assistance to developing countries. Given the backdrop of the 1990s as a decade of major scale back in spending on public programmes in developed and developing countries, this was a major milestone in supporting the implementation of the MDGs worldwide.

I have seen first-hand how the MDGs catalysed deep transformations in my own country. In 2005, Nigeria was granted debt relief from the Paris Club of Industrial Country Creditors. This effectively freed up US \$1 billion in savings annually. In addition, as part of the debt deal, the President had committed to investing the entirety of debt relief gains to accelerating Nigeria's efforts to achieve the MDGs. As the adviser to the President, I assisted in setting up a Virtual Poverty Fund that would effectively deploy, coordinate and track the money from the debt relief gains towards the achievement of the MDGs.

We were able to achieve impressive results: access to water increased for over 40 million people, the rate of poverty declined, primary school enrolment significantly rose

and fewer people live in slums. Service delivery institutions were strengthened and allowed for improved monitoring of development outcomes. We were also able to achieve a 30 per cent reduction in maternal mortality, more than double the enrolment of girls in school, and bolster community health insurance for pregnant women and children under five years of age, that included investments in routine immunization with a subsequent impact upon strengthening health systems.

Similar to the experience of many other countries, the MDGs gave us an opportunity to make positive substantive gains. They gave us the opportunity to go to scale with key structural, economic and social interventions to address imbalances and gaps. They supported us in building public service capacity, multi-tier government collaboration and the leverage of additional resources. They helped to put people and their immediate needs at the centre of national and global public policy.

With growing political will, media attention and a series of major donor pledges, the MDGs made a breakthrough and gained policy traction. World leaders at the 2005 United Nations World Summit underscored the need for the international community to align the MDGs with its core processes, which resulted in countries developing and implementing comprehensive national development strategies to achieve the MDGs. In addition, over US \$50 billion per year was promised by 2010 to fight poverty, and agreement was reached to provide immediate support for quick impact initiatives to fight against malaria and promote education and health.

In 2010, the MDG Summit alongside the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly provided a review of the progress and challenges in addressing poverty, hunger and gender equality, meeting the goals of health and education, addressing emerging issues and evolving approaches, with a focus on needs of the most vulnerable, and widening and strengthening partnerships. It was also a time of forward looking for the Organization that focused on how to promote sustainable development. This process set the course for the Secretary-General to lead the way for the Rio+20 Conference in 2012.

The Rio+20 Conference, drawing on the outcomes of the Rio Conference in 1992, spelled out change for the international community and began the process of metamorphosis of the development agenda. It represented the first step in a paradigm shift in development that required the integration of economic development (including the end of extreme poverty), social inclusion and environmental sustainability—through sustainable development.

Since 2012, the United Nations and its partners have engaged in an unprecedented process of inclusive consultations at the country, regional and global level, all over the world, to define the post-2015 development agenda. It has mobilized global leaders, parliamentarians, and the business, academic, scientific and civil society communities through its vast networks. Further, millions of people have expressed their priorities for

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**This ambitious agenda will be mere rhetoric if it does not foresee the necessary means to implement this vision into reality. It will remain only an aspirational set of goals if it does not mobilize and unlock the means of implementation needed—public and private—and forge principled multi-stakeholder partnerships, at all levels—global, regional, national and local—to carry out this sustainable development agenda.**

the *Future We Want*—the largest global survey ever conducted in the context of a United Nations initiative, with the majority of participants being young people, under 30 years of age.

Similar to the MDGs, the sustainable development agenda is grounded in the Charter of the United Nations with “We the peoples” at its heart. Universality is at the core of sustainable development and translates into leaving no one behind. Unlike the MDGs, the sustainable development agenda will require all countries to mobilize and contribute. All countries will need to change, although in different ways. If we are to eradicate poverty, grow inclusive economies and preserve the environment, both developed and developing countries have to do their part at home. All stakeholders—public and private—have responsibilities and need to be accountable.

A universal agenda that aims at ending poverty everywhere and irreversibly will require massive transformations. This means, first and foremost, that poverty is eradicated in all its forms, human rights are universally protected, and shared prosperity is achieved globally within the world’s planetary boundaries.

Business-as-usual will not lead the world to a sustainable development path and will not allow us to respond to the new and emerging challenges. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon phrased it in his Stanford address in 2013, “There can be no Plan B because there is no planet B. Both science and economics tell us that we need to

change course—and soon.” A paradigm shift must take place to bring about a radical change of course and action. This means decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation. In the absence of inclusive economic growth and environmental stewardship, poverty eradication and social justice will be fragile if not impossible.

This ambitious agenda will be mere rhetoric if it does not foresee the necessary means to implement this vision into reality. It will remain only an aspirational set of goals if it does not mobilize and unlock the means of implementation needed—public and private—and forge principled multi-stakeholder partnerships, at all levels—global, regional, national and local—to carry out this sustainable development agenda.

The year 2015 represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a paradigm shift in development, building and expanding on the strengths of the MDGs, to eradicate poverty in all its dimensions, preserve our environment and promote inclusive economic prosperity, and especially for women and young people. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, “We are the first generation that can end extreme poverty and the last to tackle the worst impacts of climate change.” At the end of this year, we will have seen the adoption of a set of sustainable development goals, a meaningful climate change agenda and a financing framework to provide the resources to achieve this people-centred and planet-sensitive common agenda to safeguard the environment and the future of our children and grandchildren.

As we realize sustainable development, imagine a world where a girl in Nigeria has the right to go to school and acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to attain her aspirations; where a migrant boy can travel across regional borders safely and without violence. Imagine a world where all pregnant women have access to safe conditions for child birth; a world without child labour and exploitation; a world where people with disabilities have equal opportunities. This is the world we deserve.

Since 1945, the United Nations has upheld peace and security, development and the advancement of human rights. The world has radically changed since and continues to evolve rapidly. Old challenges are intensifying and new complexities emerge every day. That is why the United Nations has also begun to take steps to change the way it operates—to be fit-for-purpose—to better serve the world, while remaining anchored by its core values.

As we mark and commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, I cannot imagine a world without it. The Charter of the United Nations is as relevant today as it was seven decades ago. As we head into a new chapter, the Organization will require the same resolve and commitment in upholding the three pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights. Let us work together to realize the future we want. 

# THE UNITED NATIONS AT 70 AND THE ONGOING QUEST FOR GENDER EQUALITY



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Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), addresses the opening of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 9 March 2015.

By PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA

**A**s we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, let us look back and acknowledge what has been achieved. During those seven decades the world has changed enormously. This anniversary is therefore also an opportunity to assess what more the international community needs to do to meet the new challenges.

Thanks to the determined contribution and vision of pioneering women (and men) throughout its history, gender equality and women's human rights have always been central to the three pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, development, and human rights. Established by the General Assembly in 2010, UN Women holds the mandate to ensure that the quest for gender equality continues to be recognized as a

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fundamental prerequisite to making progress across each of these interlinked areas.

It is remarkable that, from the outset and at a time when the global women's movement was still in its infancy, gender equality was written into the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter defined the mission of the United Nations as being "to achieve international co-operation ... in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion". There were only four women among the 160 signatories: from Brazil, China, the Dominican Republic, and the United States of America. Together they instilled women's human rights into this historic document.

Within its first year, the Economic and Social Council established its Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), as the principal global policymaking body dedicated to gender equality and the advancement of women. Fifteen

government representatives, all of them women, met for the first session of the CSW in February 1947, at Lake Success in New York. One of the first tasks of the CSW was to contribute to the drafting of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognized that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. The Declaration provided the foundation for the development of our comprehensive human rights system which, to this day, sets universal standards for building better, fairer societies, in which women and girls can play an equal part.

The CSW subsequently turned its attention to advancing women’s political rights, at a time when many Member States had not yet extended voting rights to women, and equality within marriage. Since then, there have been 59 sessions of the Commission, where Member States have come together to discuss critical issues related to gender equality, and to agree on priority actions to advance the agenda.

Fast-forward to 1975, when the General Assembly convened the World Conference on Women in Mexico City, to mark International Women’s Year. Much was achieved over the following decade, 1976-1985, which was declared the United Nations Decade for Women. In 1976, the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (which later became UNIFEM) was set up to provide financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women’s human rights, political participation and economic security.

Another major achievement came when the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. This Convention, now one of the most widely ratified of all United Nations treaties, has become known as the global bill of rights for women. On 30 April 2015, the Republic of South Sudan became the 189th State party to commit to applying the 30 legally binding articles of CEDAW, to achieve gender equality and women’s rights.

CEDAW continues to be expanded upon and clarified through “General Recommendations”. The most recent of these concern women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations; harmful practices; and gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women. Although CEDAW is one of the most widely ratified conventions, a number of reservations limit its application, particularly in relation to customary, traditional and religious laws and practices, and women’s rights within the family and marriage. The Optional Protocol to the Convention, which entered into force in 2000, significantly strengthened its impact by providing women who claim violations of rights protected under the Convention with the right to petition. It also created an inquiry procedure into situations of grave or systematic violations of women’s rights.

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**Decades of important normative advances at the United Nations have firmly established that gender equality and the realization of women’s and girls’ human rights are fundamental for achieving human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development. Creating a world where women and girls enjoy their human rights is one of the most defining and urgent challenges of this century.**

Further Conferences on Women were held in Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985), followed by the landmark Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). Gender equality advocates brought to Beijing the multitude of human rights violations experienced by women and girls. They outlined the need for comprehensive laws and policies as well as the transformation of institutions, both formal and informal, to achieve gender equality. The outcome documents of this Conference, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, remain the most comprehensive international blueprints for advancing women’s human rights. These documents firmly anchored the struggle for gender equality within a human rights framework and made a clear statement about State responsibility in delivering on the commitments that were made.

Generations have been inspired by this bold commitment, and the past two decades have brought progress on many fronts. We are seeing an increasing number of laws to promote gender equality and address violence against women and girls. Girls’ enrolment in primary and secondary education has increased. In some regions, there are more women participating in the labour force. Maternal mortality has decreased by 45 per cent since 1990 and all regions have increased women’s access to contraception. There has been a doubling in women’s representation in national parliaments from 11 per cent in 1995 to 22 per cent today. Significant normative advances have been made in

the global agenda on women, peace and security, including the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which has been further strengthened and operationalized through six additional resolutions calling for accelerated action across all pillars of the agenda: prevention, participation, protection and relief, recovery and peacebuilding.

Yet, as we mark this 70th anniversary, we must also chart the long path that still lies ahead of us.

Overall progress since Beijing has been slow and uneven, with serious stagnation and even regression in several areas. Women's increasing educational attainment and rising participation in the labour market have not been matched with better conditions, prospects for advancement and equal pay, and women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work. In some developing regions, up to 95 per cent of women's employment is informal; globally, women are paid 24 per cent less than men for the same work; and women do nearly two and a half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men. Women continue to be excluded from decision-making at all levels, including in all aspects of peace and security. At the current pace it will take another 50 years before we see the equal representation of women in politics. Deep-seated discriminatory norms, stereotypes and violence remain pervasive and violations of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights remain widespread. Progress has been particularly slow for the most marginalized women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Over the last 20 years new challenges have emerged. The global financial and economic crises, volatile food and energy prices, food insecurity and climate change have intensified inequalities and vulnerability, with specific impacts on women and girls. We are facing new and heightened threats to peace and security globally. The last year in particular has been marked by increased violence, mass displacement flows and related humanitarian catastrophes. Fragile gains towards gender equality continue to be threatened by rising extremism and a backlash against women's rights in many contexts.

In 2015, we are at a historic moment with the convergence of many different United Nations processes which provide unprecedented opportunity to advance gender equality. The 20-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action coincides with the target date of the Millennium Development Goals and the deliberation of the post-2015 development agenda. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the preparations of a new climate agreement and the high-level reviews of the United Nations peace operations and peacebuilding architecture and of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) provide further opportunities for progress, which must be seized.

This year, UN Women published its flagship report *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. It shows us what the economy, too long designed by and for men, would look like if it were fit for women, and provides concrete recommendations for action. Through improved economic and social policies, Governments can generate decent jobs for women and ensure that unpaid care work is recognized and supported. The business community is another key partner, to ensure the full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels, to enact flexible leave policies and to close the gender pay gap. Civil society, including women's organizations and trade unions, must act as a "watch dog" and continue to place women's rights on the agenda. And the media must take responsibility for accurately representing women's lives, for giving equal time and consideration to their stories and perspectives, and for not perpetuating stereotyped and objectified images.

Gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of women and girls must be a central priority in all aspects of the post-2015 development agenda. Our aim is nothing less than full equality, a Planet 50-50 by 2030, with substantial progress made over the next five years. If we are to achieve this goal, the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities that perpetuate gender inequality must be changed. This requires a shift from dominant economic models which narrowly focus on increasing gross domestic product to alternative approaches that emphasize development, the realization of human rights and sustainability. Significantly increased resources and strong accountability mechanisms are needed at all levels to ensure that decision makers are delivering on their commitments.

Decades of important normative advances at the United Nations have firmly established that gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights are fundamental for achieving human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development. Creating a world where women and girls enjoy their human rights is one of the most defining and urgent challenges of this century. This daunting, yet achievable task demands a change from business-as-usual with renewed political leadership and a commitment to real transformation. It also demands that we undertake this task with the full cooperation and solidarity of our partners in progress: the men of this world.

In this light, Eleanor Roosevelt, who played a critical role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, inspires us to continue the struggle: "Surely, in the light of history, it is more intelligent to hope rather than to fear, to try rather than not to try. For one thing we know beyond all doubt: Nothing has ever been achieved by the person who says, 'It can't be done.'" 

# SECRETARIES-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS



**Trygve Lie**

Term of Office: 1946-1952



**Dag Hammarskjöld**

Term of Office: 1953-1961



**Javier Pérez de Cuéllar**

Term of Office: 1982-1991



**Boutros Boutros-Ghali**

Term of Office: 1992-1996



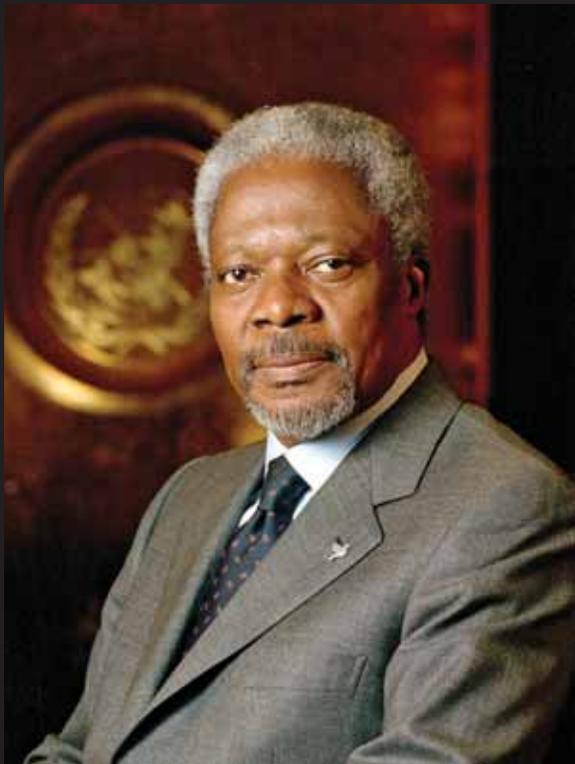
**U Thant**

Term of Office: 1961-1971



**Kurt Waldheim**

Term of Office: 1972-1981



**Kofi A. Annan**

Term of Office: 1997-2006



**Ban Ki-moon**

Term of Office: 2007-Present

## PRESIDENTS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SESSION	YEAR	NAME	COUNTRY
70th	2015	Mr. Mogens Lykketoft	Denmark
69th	2014	Mr. Sam Kutesa	Uganda
68th	2013	Mr. John W. Ashe	Antigua and Barbuda
67th	2012	Mr. Vuk Jeremić	Serbia
66th	2011	Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser	Qatar
65th	2010	Mr. Joseph Deiss	Switzerland
64th	2009	Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki	Libya (formerly Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
63rd	2008	Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann	Nicaragua
62nd	2007	Mr. Srgjan Kerim	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
61st	2006	Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa	Bahrain
60th	2005	Mr. Jan Eliasson	Sweden
59th	2004	Mr. Jean Ping	Gabonese Republic
58th	2003	Mr. Julian Robert Hunte	Saint Lucia
57th	2002	Mr. Jan Kavan	Czech Republic
56th	2001	Mr. Han Seung-soo	Republic of Korea
55th	2000	Mr. Harri Holkeri	Finland
54th	1999	Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab	Namibia
53rd	1998	Mr. Didier Opertti	Uruguay
52nd	1997	Mr. Hennadiy Udoenko	Ukraine
51st	1996	Mr. Razali Ismail	Malaysia
50th	1995	Prof. Diogo Freitas do Amaral	Portugal
49th	1994	Mr. Amara Essy	Côte d'Ivoire
48th	1993	Mr. Samuel R. Insanally	Guyana
47th	1992	Mr. Stoyan Ganev	Bulgaria
46th	1991	Mr. Samir S. Shihabi	Saudi Arabia
45th	1990	Mr. Guido de Marco	Malta
44th	1989	Mr. Joseph Nanven Garba	Nigeria
43rd	1988	Mr. Dante M. Caputo	Argentina
42nd	1987	Mr. Peter Florin	German Democratic Republic
41st	1986	Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury	Bangladesh
40th	1985	Mr. Jaime de Piniés	Spain
39th	1984	Mr. Paul J. F. Lusaka	Zambia
38th	1983	Mr. Jorge E. Illueca	Panama
37th	1982	Mr. Imre Hollai	Hungary
36th	1981	Mr. Ismat T. Kittani	Iraq

SESSION	YEAR	NAME	COUNTRY
35th	1980	Mr. Rüdiger von Wechmar	Federal Republic of Germany
34th	1979	Mr. Salim A. Salim	United Republic of Tanzania
33rd	1978	Mr. Indalecio Liévano	Colombia
32nd	1977	Mr. Lazar Mojsov	Yugoslavia
31st	1976	Mr. H. S. Amerasinghe	Sri Lanka
30th	1975	Mr. Gaston Thorn	Luxembourg
29th	1974	Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika	Algeria
28th	1973	Mr. Leopoldo Benítez	Ecuador
27th	1972	Mr. Stanislaw Trepczynski	Poland
26th	1971	Mr. Adam Malik	Indonesia
25th	1970	Mr. Edvard Hambro	Norway
24th	1969	Miss Angie E. Brooks	Liberia
23rd	1968	Mr. Emilio Arenales Catalán	Guatemala
22nd	1967	Mr. Corneliu Manescu	Romania
21st	1966	Mr. Abdul Rahman Pazhwak	Afghanistan
20th	1965	Mr. Amintore Fanfani	Italy
19th	1964	Mr. Alex Quaison-Sackey	Ghana
18th	1963	Mr. Carlos Sosa Rodríguez	Venezuela
17th	1962	Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan	Pakistan
16th	1961	Mr. Mongi Slim	Tunisia
15th	1960	Mr. Frederick Henry Boland	Ireland
14th	1959	Mr. Víctor Andrés Belaúnde	Peru
13th	1958	Mr. Charles Malik	Lebanon
12th	1957	Sir Leslie Munro	New Zealand
11th	1956	Prince Wan Waithayakon	Thailand
10th	1955	Mr. José Maza	Chile
9th	1954	Mr. Eelco N. van Kleffens	Netherlands
8th	1953	Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit	India
7th	1952	Mr. Lester B. Pearson	Canada
6th	1951	Mr. Luis Padilla Nervo	Mexico
5th	1950	Mr. Nasrollah Entezam	Iran
4th	1949	Mr. Carlos P. Rómulo	Philippines
3rd	1948	Mr. H. V. Evatt	Australia
2nd	1947	Mr. Oswaldo Aranha	Brazil
1st	1946	Mr. Paul-Henri Spaak	Belgium



Aïchatou Mindaoudou Souleymane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), briefs the Security Council on the situation in that country, January 2015.

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## FROM INDEPENDENCE TO LONG-TERM STABILITY UNITED NATIONS EFFORTS IN AFRICA

By AÏCHATOU MINDAOUDOU

Over the past 70 years, the scope of the work of the United Nations has expanded greatly, to include issues such as climate change, sport for development and peace, and road safety. When I look back however, I feel that the United Nations has played the most significant role in those areas that are at the core of the Charter of the United Nations: the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of human rights for all and self-determination of peoples, and other economic, social and cultural issues including governance and development-related concerns. It has also proven itself relevant in providing hubs aimed at mobilizing and harmonizing efforts of Member States towards achieving its thematic goals.

AÏCHATOU MINDAOUDOU is Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

This is probably nowhere more true than in Africa. Following the establishment of the United Nations and the adoption of the Charter in 1945, various peoples in Africa gained awareness of their fundamental rights and felt empowered in their respective struggles for self-determination. Article 73 of the Charter, calling for “self-government” and “the progressive development” of “free political institutions, according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples” gave African peoples new hope to be masters of their own future. The United Nations General Assembly gave them a forum in which their political aspirations could find voice and support.

The year 1960 was crucial for both Africa and the United Nations with 15 African countries gaining independence. In September of that year, 17 new States were admitted to the United Nations, 16 of which were from Africa. Also in

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**The “upgrading” of peacekeeping operations from an essentially interposition force to an entity that is responsible for promoting long-term stability, including through the strengthening of national institutions, represents a major development in the history of the United Nations over the past two decades.**

1960, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, a landmark document which states that all people have a right to self-determination and proclaimed that colonialism should be brought to a speedy and unconditional end. Beyond self-determination legislation, the United Nations General Assembly was looking for a comprehensive and efficient framework that could lead new independent African countries to effective political and economic sovereignty, as illustrated by the adoption in 1962 of the resolution on “permanent sovereignty over natural resources”.<sup>1</sup>

The post-colonial era, however, proved a challenging time. Newly independent States lacked strong democratic institutions, and became the theatre of civil conflicts whereby rival ethnic, religious or other groups fought for access to power and resources. Aware of the threat such conflicts posed to regional peace and security, the United Nations sought to address them, including through the good offices of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys and through the deployment of increasingly complex peace operations.

A key moment in the history of Africa and of the United Nations is the establishment of the first peacekeeping operation on the continent, that is the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), on 14 July 1960 (by Security Council resolution 143 (1960)). Deployed in response to the political upheaval and conflict that marred what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the dawn of its

independence, the operation counted, at its peak strength, nearly 20,000 troops.

Fast-forward 55 years and West Africa has the highest concentration of United Nations actors of any region of the world, including four peacekeeping operations (in Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Mali and until recently Sierra Leone), a peacebuilding office (in Guinea-Bissau), a regional operation addressing the Ebola outbreak (United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER)), a Special Representative for West Africa and a Special Envoy for the Sahel, and a wide range of United Nations regional and country offices. The region also hosts the United Nations Department of Political Affairs-led regional office, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the first of its kind, to harmonize and enhance efforts towards conflict prevention and peace consolidation within West Africa.

It has been said that the “promise of West Africa has fallen short”, due to a series of civil conflicts that have affected most countries in the region. I believe that the enormous challenges facing the region are sometimes overlooked. The strategic position of West Africa—on the Atlantic for relatively easy access to the Americas and yet close to Europe—has made it an area over which international geopolitics has significantly impacted the situation in several countries. Its vast natural resources—including cocoa, diamonds, gold and oil—have attracted foreign investors with the intent to exploit them. In order to strengthen their influence in the region, various foreign actors have lent support—be it political, military or financial—to local groups, changing the internal dynamics and often fuelling conflict within countries and the West African subregion. In fact, civil conflicts in West Africa typically have a regional as well as international dimension, as a result of the political, ethnic and religious ties that span the region’s porous borders.

Over the past 20 years, the United Nations has played an important role in helping address the challenges facing West Africa. In countries where conflict escalated posing a major threat to peace and stability—as in Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and, more recently, Mali—the United Nations assisted the parties to the conflict in negotiating a peace agreement and provided support for its implementation, which culminated in the deployment of a peacekeeping operation. Throughout the process, the United Nations worked closely with Member States concerned and regional organizations, such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which often provided the first response to the crisis.

Through the deployment of a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, the United Nations sought to assist the host country beyond the direct provision of security support. Instead, United Nations peacekeeping operations in West Africa have, among others, facilitated dialogue among all

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**If the Security Council chooses to deploy a peacekeeping operation, a more effective mechanism needs to be in place to ensure that funding is readily available to cover all aspects of the mandate.**

parties to the conflict, helped strengthen national security and defense forces as well as democratic institutions, supported the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and promoted human rights, social cohesion and reconciliation at both the national and local level. The “upgrading” of peacekeeping operations from an essentially interposition force to an entity that is responsible for promoting long-term stability, including through the strengthening of national institutions, represents a major development in the history of the United Nations over the past two decades.

With the establishment of multidimensional peace operations and political missions, the United Nations has not only contributed to the gradual stabilization of the entire West Africa region, but has greatly influenced the course of regional dynamics, politics and policies. Regional infrastructure for peace evolved to adapt to the security context and take ownership of United Nations values, principles and strategies. These were done through continuous reforms of ECOWAS and the progressive developments of its legislation and diplomatic practices, in close cooperation with the United Nations and with the support of international bilateral and multilateral partners. Not only has ECOWAS adopted a Conflict Prevention Framework, and expanded the competences of its community courts to include human rights protection, but it has also developed its ability to perform preventive diplomacy solely or jointly with the United Nations on the basis of new thematic protocols.<sup>2</sup> ECOWAS Commission is currently running the most advanced, ambitious and integrated regional early warning system on the African continent. The same progress could be cited on collective efforts for the ownership of the United Nations thematic agenda including on governance, human rights, drug and human trafficking, organized crimes, corruption, women issues, peace and security. On most of these issues, the United Nations has closely cooperated and/or supported ECOWAS

in the development of subregional and integrated approaches. The adoption of ECOWAS strategy and action plan against drug trafficking and organized crimes was a result of joint efforts between ECOWAS, UNOWA and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). More examples could be cited to illustrate the collaborative efforts of the United Nations and ECOWAS but none of them could be more visible than the achievements reached in Sierra Leone, which is now stable after a decade-long civil war and is making significant economic progress with double-digit gross domestic product growth rates.

However, the strategic position and porous borders of West Africa, coupled with generally weak institutions and political instability among other things, have also led to a proliferation of illicit activities, such as arms smuggling and narcotics trade, which have in turn promoted insecurity and instability. The increased presence of terrorist groups in Mali and the Sahel region can be linked, to a large extent, to their involvement in drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime. In order to counter such illicit activities, the Security Council of the United Nations has sometimes imposed embargoes on countries in the region, and established related monitoring mechanisms. The Group of Experts on Côte d’Ivoire is a case in point, helping to shed light on illicit activities that can undermine the fragile peace in the country.

In addition, one must not forget that large swathes of West Africa remain significantly underdeveloped and affected by recurrent humanitarian crises caused by population movements, food insecurity, epidemics, drought and other natural disasters. The recent Ebola epidemic has not only resulted in deaths and suffering, but also had disastrous effects on the economies of the three most affected countries and highlighted the inadequate health infrastructure, which impeded efforts to fight the disease. Through the work of its specialized agencies and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations has been a major advocate for the provision of humanitarian and development assistance to West Africa, raising international awareness for the sometimes “forgotten emergencies”, as in the case of the Niger famine of 2005-2006.

Despite all United Nations efforts targeting West Africa and the continent as a whole, a lot remains to be done, which calls for additional measures that could enable the United Nations to be more effective in the subregion and overall.

In several parts of Africa, the Security Council with its five permanent members has contributed to a perception of the United Nations as promoting the interests of a few super-Powers and, more specifically, the former colonial powers. Large sections of the population in African countries feel somewhat detached from the United Nations. A few armed groups, of which Boko Haram is but one glaring example, display an increasingly defiant attitude vis-à-vis the United

Nations. A Security Council in which African countries have a more entrenched role—if not a permanent seat—may help bridge the gap between the United Nations and the people whom it is called upon to assist. Alternatively, the United Nations should further enhance and institutionalize its cooperation with regional organizations, such as ECOWAS and the African Union, helping them to increasingly take the lead and responsibilities in resolving conflicts in Africa. The operationalization of the projected standby forces, early warning mechanisms and the existing infrastructures for peace for each of the five African regional groupings should be accelerated and resourced by concerned Member States.

The defiant attitude of some groups towards the United Nations may also be due to the Organization being perceived as generally weak. United Nations peacekeepers are often seen as passive, unable or unwilling to use force in response to attacks. In this context, the establishment of a direct intervention brigade in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is a welcome development, which may help change this perception. If possible, this measure could be applied in other places, such as Mali, where the United Nations has recently become a target of attacks, and where greater use of force may be required to protect both United Nations staff and the local population.

Moreover, it would seem important that the political commitment of Member States to address a crisis is accompanied by the required financial commitment. Today, the Organization is asked to achieve more with less. Member States want the peacekeeping budget to stay the same even as new large peacekeeping operations are established, as in Mali or the Central African Republic. This is not a realistic approach. Peacekeeping efforts do not come cheaply. If the Security Council chooses to deploy a peacekeeping operation, a more effective mechanism needs to be in place to ensure that funding is readily available to cover all aspects of the mandate.

Related to the above is the need to acknowledge that peacekeeping takes time and peacebuilding takes even longer. As new peacekeeping operations are established, there seems to be an urgency to downsize or close other missions (e.g. in Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Liberia), even when the situation in those countries has not fully stabilized. It is important that the end of the mandate of the mission is carefully thought through so as to minimize the risk of a slide back into conflict following the mission's departure. As a lesson learned, it should be recalled that in some of these countries, such as Haiti and Liberia, the United Nations has already deployed twice following a return to conflict, while Burundi is sliding towards trouble and instability less than a year after the United Nations departure.

In fact, the United Nations must make greater efforts at preventing crises before they erupt. Some progress has been made over the past decade to strengthen the preventive

diplomacy tools and conflict prevention capacities of the United Nations. Yet, it remains difficult for the United Nations to find political space for early engagement, due to concerns over sovereignty and interference in internal affairs. The United Nations should consider the possibility of setting up a robust early warning mechanism that shall include, among others, an improved intelligence system. Conflict prevention including human rights and political functions, expertise and resources should also be mainstreamed into United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in a more coherent manner so that timely responses can be devised with regard to emerging causes of conflicts, opening opportunities for early engagement in favour of the peaceful settlement of eventual sources of tensions.

The integration and harmonization of United Nations conflict prevention strategies and plans ranging from economic development and human rights protection, to governance and democracy will be key to efficiently supporting Member States and regional organizations in tackling key issues that lead to conflicts. To this end, lessons learned should be drawn from experiences derived from regional offices of the Department of Political Affairs, such as UNOWA and the United Nations Office in Addis Ababa with the view to explore future prospects regarding a United Nations-wide approach and strategy for conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Africa, one which delineates roles and responsibilities of regional partners and the scope of their strategic cooperation with both the United Nations Secretariat and the Security Council in the implementation of Chapters VI and VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Finally, as Head of a United Nations operation, I cannot help but wish for measures in place that allow for a more immediate United Nations response to crises and developments on the ground. United Nations responses are largely hindered by the Organization's complex procedures that govern, among others, the use of funds and recruitment, and deployment of its personnel. In fact, there seems to be a growing trend towards the regulation—possibly “micromanaging”—by Member States of the use of funds and resources by United Nations departments, offices, and peacekeeping operations. Undoubtedly, the United Nations would be much more effective if Member States were ready to place more trust in the ability of the Secretary-General and his senior officials to make the strategic and tactical decisions required to translate their political objectives into effective action on the ground. unc

## Notes

- 1 A/RES/1803/XVII.
- 2 Economic Community of West African States, Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security A/SP1/12/01, Dakar, December 2001.

# THE UNITED NATIONS AT 70



United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Dr. Fatoumata Nafou-Traoré at an event hosted by the Roll Back Malaria Partnership in Brussels, April 2014.

*Working as One  
to Deliver  
a Healthy Future  
for All*

Although it has protected hundreds of thousands from danger and violence, too often its core tenets are overlooked and people continue to be left behind.

In 2000, the world's leaders once again came together, with a focused determination to eradicate disease and poverty through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed upon by all the Member States of the United Nations. In

2015, as their deadline looms, global poverty continues to decline, more children than ever are attending primary school, child deaths have dropped dramatically and targeted investments in health have saved millions. Since 2001, more than 4 million lives have been saved from malaria alone, and under-five mortality is decreasing faster than at any time in the past two decades.

Our collective efforts are working, but as we transition to an ambitious set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) that will guide our actions through 2030, we must revisit the spirit of Ms. Roosevelt's conviction to ensure that we enlist a truly people-centred approach to continue achieving progress against some of our most pressing challenges and deliver on the promises we have made to the people of the world, once and for all, for everyone.

Take health as an example. Health is fundamental to global development, with even small investments spurring progress against other areas of development, such as education and poverty reduction. We cannot dream of achieving a more prosperous world without improving health outcomes. Healthy communities create more stable societies and vibrant economies; but for that equation to fully work, we have to ensure affordable and equitable access to quality services for everyone.

In 2012, the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously endorsed a resolution urging Governments to ensure that all people have access to quality health care without financial hardship. This idea remains a central pillar to future development efforts, and in the fall of 2015 Member States of the United Nations will adopt a set of SDGs that will likely include a "health for all" goal. As a global community, we must commit ourselves to guarantee universal health coverage so that health improves for all people.

By FATOUMATA NAFO-TRAORÉ

In December 1948, following years of war and violence of previously unimaginable proportions, the world came together in Paris, where the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Under the driving force of the formidable Eleanor Roosevelt—widow of former President of the United States of America, Franklin D. Roosevelt—this Declaration complemented the relatively new Charter of the United Nations and guaranteed the rights of all individuals everywhere.

As the United Nations celebrates its 70th anniversary and we reflect on its associated impact, we would be remiss to not consider the power of this singular moment in 1948. Just years after the creation of the United Nations itself, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights capitalized on one of the darkest periods of our global history and unified the world around a commitment to certain universal human rights and placed people at the very centre of the narrative. With its adoption, leaders made a resounding vow to protect all people from atrocities such as those seen during the Second World War.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has provided an influential reference point for development discussions across the board—from security and conflict prevention and resolution, to health, trade and the ongoing dialogue on climate change.

FATOUMATA NAFO-TRAORÉ is Executive Director of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership. She was awarded the national distinction of *Chevalier* and *Officier de l'Ordre national du Mali*, in 1996 and 2007, respectively. She is a member of numerous professional associations and has authored a significant number of technical publications and studies.

This will require us to shift our thinking about health to a broader, more systems-wide approach, rather than the vertical, siloed perspective we have traditionally taken. Smart and comprehensive investments in health-care systems, including primary health-care facilities, community clinics and community health workers, will be critical to ensure quality care across the board. Entire systems must be enabled to respond to traditional communicable diseases common in developing communities and non-communicable diseases, such as stroke, cancer and heart disease that are becoming increasingly prevalent in lower- and middle-income countries. As the health landscape shifts, we must adapt our frameworks for service delivery.

Targeted investments in certain health areas will continue to play a role and will certainly lessen the disproportionate burden that diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria place on often already struggling national health-care systems. Malaria, for example, accounts for as much as 40 per cent of public health expenditure in high-burden countries and can be responsible for up to 50 per cent of inpatient admissions and 60 per cent of outpatient visits. When we invest in programmes that combat malaria and reduce that burden, we unlock financial and human resources that can be redirected towards other issues, including preventive treatment and crises.

The recent Ebola outbreak that devastated parts of West Africa taught us an important lesson: health-care systems must be capable of responding to emergencies at any given moment to reduce the shock waves felt system-wide. The global community rushed to the aid of Ebola-affected countries, showing the need and importance of a unified response by the United Nations, including its many sister agencies and Member States. In the face of an historic number of crises—from natural disasters to violence and conflict—in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, we must carry the lessons we have learned from the Ebola outbreak forward, acting as one United Nations to achieve health, safety and prosperity for all.

The good news is that health is an incredibly cost-effective investment, with relatively small expenditures often yielding significant results across the board. In Ethiopia, where I served as the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Representative for a number of years, promising results were achieved against many leading health challenges with just under 15 per cent of total government expenditure. Malaria mortality decreased to 936 reported deaths in 2011, and maternal mortality decreased by 200 per 100,000 live births between 2005 and 2010. With an increased national health expenditure of less than US \$20 per capita between 2002 and 2011, World Bank figures show that the Government of Ethiopia not only prevented disease and saved lives, but also offered hope to communities and helped create a more vibrant society.

In my view, health is a universal human right, and universal health coverage is by nature an obvious extension of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By affording quality health care to

all people, at all ages and socioeconomic levels, we offer a basic standard of protection and ensure increased equity in health outcomes that will help us achieve greater progress with the development agenda. It's my belief that universal health coverage is just as economically sound as it is morally compelling.

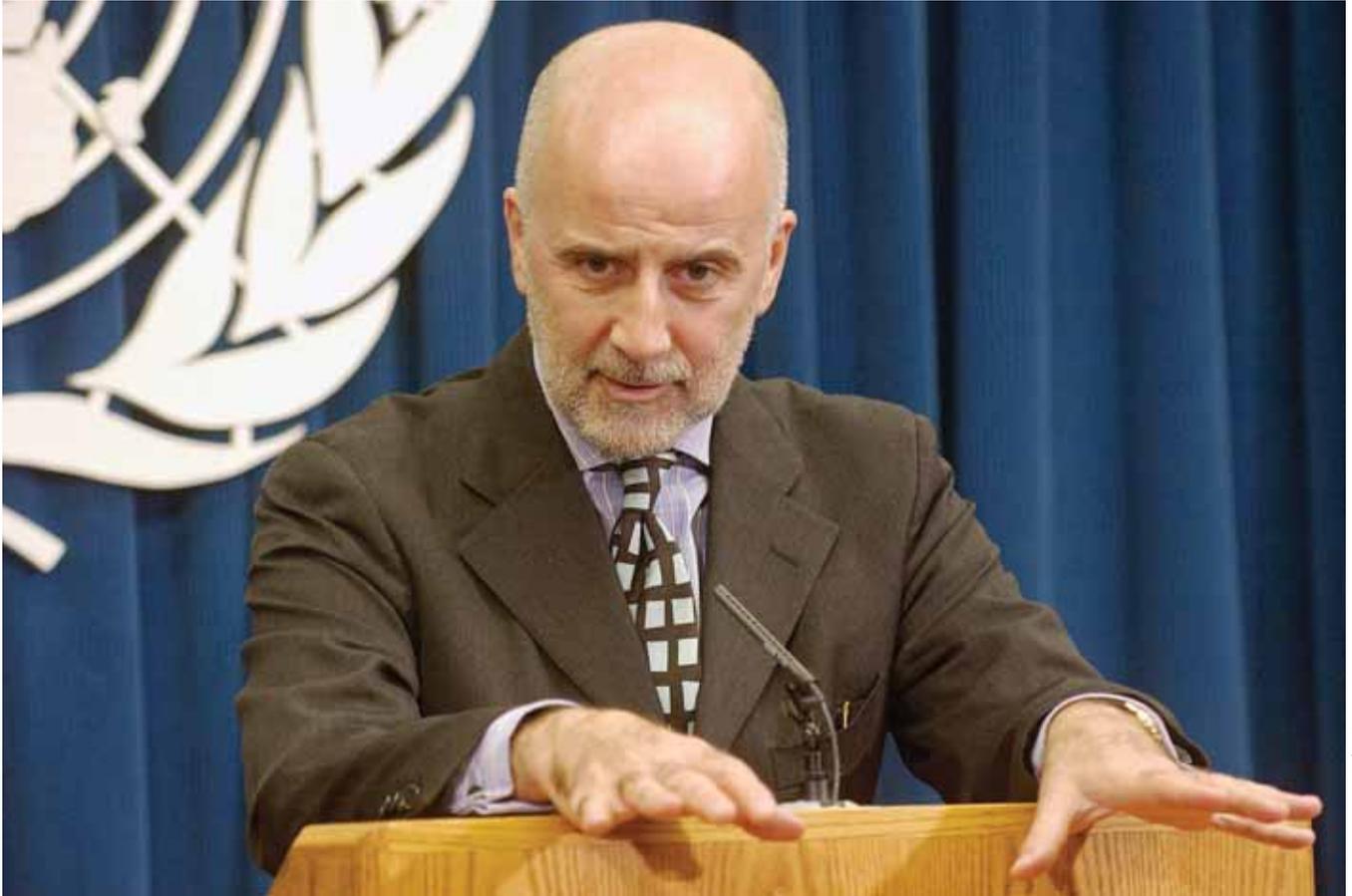
Good health cannot be achieved in a vacuum, however. If we are to truly create a healthier world, we must employ a "health for all" mentality and work across sectors to fully understand and respond to all social and environmental determinants of health. Organizations, foundations and other partners that combat malaria have long enjoyed a positive relationship with the private sector, leveraging its skill sets to expand markets and increase access to life-saving interventions. Time and time again, we have seen private sector engagement in health yield considerable gains with investments resulting in healthier communities, a more productive workforce and more vibrant economies that lead to sustainable progress in achieving the global health and development targets for entire societies. At this critical juncture, the United Nations community must capitalize on these important lessons learned and expand relationships with the private sector so we can increase the value of our investments, optimize efficiencies, expand our reach and maximize the impact of our efforts.

In December 2014, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon published his *Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda*, highlighting, among other things, six essential elements to frame and reinforce the universal, integrated and transformative nature of the SDGs and ensure that the ambition behind them translates to effective implementation at country-level. Among these critical elements is the need to frame the goals around people to ensure healthy lives, education and the inclusion of women and children. With the global population at 7 billion and rising, we must anchor our efforts on behalf of the people they are meant to serve. Through health systems, we not only offer financial freedom and opportunity; we also allow greater participation in the development process itself.

In this context, the Roll Back Malaria Partnership will soon launch the second generation of its Global Malaria Action Plan: *Action and Investment to Defeat Malaria 2016-2030*. Anticipating the SDGs and in alignment with the *Global Technical Strategy for Malaria (2016-2030)* of the WHO, this strategic plan provides a framework for transformative, people-centred and multisectoral approaches needed to achieve ambitious malaria elimination targets and unlock economic potential in countless communities.

In a matter of months, the United Nations will formally transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, marking another milestone in its remarkable history. As we make this leap and continue along the path to success, one thing is clear: we must carry everyone into this next phase of development with us, leaving no one behind, so that we can all walk proudly, equally and in good health across the finish line. Until then, we must do everything we can to ensure universal access to quality care through capable health systems. It's a simple thought, really, and I think Ms. Roosevelt would agree. 

# A KEY UNITED NATIONS MOMENT AND ITS LESSONS



Álvaro de Soto, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cyprus, briefing correspondents at a press conference at United Nations Headquarters, 13 February 2004.

By ÁLVARO DE SOTO

**T**he recollection of United Nations moments that tends to crowd out all others in my mind took place at midnight on the last day in office of then Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, 31 December 1991, at the initialing of the agreement to end the 12-year war in El Salvador—the first United Nations mediation of an internal conflict. I may be accused of blowing my own trumpet because of my own role in it, but so be it. Beyond the specifics of the El Salvador accords and how they were achieved, it was not just a moment of substance and transcendence, pregnant with hope and promise for the people of that beleaguered country and for the United Nations writ

ÁLVARO DE SOTO, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General, mediated the 1992 peace accords that ended the 12-year war in El Salvador. He put together the comprehensive plan for Cyprus reunification submitted to referendum in 2004. He has also served as the Secretary-General's chief envoy for the Middle East Peace Process.

large; it was also the culmination of the astonishing series of peace achievements, unparalleled before or since, that marked the final three and a half years of the fifth Secretary-General's decade in office.

Pérez de Cuéllar had spent most of the decade prior to his appointment at the United Nations as an ambassador and as a senior Secretariat official. He had earned a reputation for cool, sound analysis, sage counsel and a clear sense of reality. When the seemingly endless deadlock between Kurt Waldheim and Salim Ahmed Salim to succeed the former was overcome, Pérez de Cuéllar was pressed to become a candidate, but he agreed only that the Security Council should be made aware that he was available. He would not campaign or request anyone's support. He did not travel to New York. Yet the Council quickly turned to him.

He came without illusions as to what he could achieve. He had a clear idea of the limitations and possibilities of the office—what might work and what wouldn't. The danger of nuclear annihilation had receded but all the other features of the cold war persisted: the arms race, the geopolitical and ideological competition for spheres of influence and the proxy wars that were often a part of it. At the United Nations, the collegiality among the five permanent members of the Security Council on which the collective security system was premised remained absent. The super-Powers' leaders, foreign ministers and representatives at the United Nations boasted impeccable cold warrior credentials.

Pérez de Cuéllar had a marked style all his own, of which he showed a sample in his race against the clock to defuse the clash between Argentina and the United Kingdom in the South Atlantic. He set about probing ongoing conflicts to see whether his skills and the particular advantages of the United Nations could be applied. Counter-intuitively for the leader of a marginalized United Nations, he was cautious about what he took on. Brian Urquhart's admonition, "don't jump into an empty pool," was a sort of leitmotif; he did not offer his good offices lightly. He operated best in the penumbra surrounding the floodlights rather than at the centre; the glare was a hindrance to his notion of effective diplomacy. Thus gingerly, even diffidently, he probed the Iran-Iraq war, the Afghanistan conflict in its Soviet phase, Western Sahara and Central America.

Where others were in the lead, as in Angola and Cambodia, he did not attempt to supplant, compete or otherwise interfere, let alone try to join their collective efforts. This did not prevent him from lending assistance, sometimes crucial, for their efforts. They were in charge and played the role they had undertaken; he played his. A firm believer in what he called the "unity and integrity" of good offices or mediation efforts—conducted by him or others, but not both, and certainly not jointly—he bided his time.

Pérez de Cuéllar's first term yielded little by way of tangible results, but enhanced confidence in his handling of the issues and generated a certain momentum. He had an unusual gift for timing and balance. He could be almost excruciatingly patient if that was required, and sensed when the timing was off and pressing matters might be counterproductive. He did not believe that persistence was a virtue per se: throwing fruit repeatedly at a wall does not lead to its ripening. He was hard to fluster and had an outsized tolerance for frustration. You wouldn't see him flailing about or losing his temper.

Just as he didn't seek to become Secretary-General, he shunned a second term. In a major lecture at Oxford University titled "The Role of the Secretary-General" in

May of 1986, the fifth and last year of the term for which he had been appointed, he said that impartiality was "the heart and soul of the office of Secretary-General," and suggested that in order to ensure it, the healthy convention that no person should ever be a candidate for the position should be re-established. "It is a post that should come unsought to a qualified person. However impeccable a person's integrity may be, he cannot in fact retain the necessary independence if he proclaims his candidacy and conducts a kind of election campaign..."

In October 1986, undaunted by his unequivocal declaration of independence, the permanent members of the Security Council went to see him at his residence, together, in what was perhaps their first joint démarche since the onset of the cold war, and asked him to accept a second term.

Pérez de Cuéllar acceded, but, using the first press conference of his second term, he quickly staged a public appeal to the Permanent Five (P5) to lead the Security Council to come to a new meeting of the minds regarding how to solve the Iran-Iraq conflict, which required setting a new framework that would repair its grievous mishandling of the conflict at the outset. Sure enough, his appeal spurred the P5 into action. With his advice, they led the Council to drawing up a new blueprint which down the road led to the end of the bloodshed.

Before that the United Nations brokered a carefully negotiated plan for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan—a negotiation for which Pérez de Cuéllar himself had laid the foundations as his predecessor's personal envoy. Not long thereafter an agreement on the withdrawal of all foreign military personnel from Angola was brokered by the Western Contact Group, thus removing the main obstacle—de facto if not de jure—for the long postponed self-determination of Namibia. He claimed a role for the United Nations in Western Sahara, arranging for a ceasefire so that a referendum on self-determination, still pending today, could be organized. When the Contadora Group terminated its efforts in Central America, he received a mandate from the Security Council to pursue them. The United Nations played an important role in ending the Contra War and monitoring early elections in Nicaragua, something which it had never done in a Member State. Negotiations to end the conflict in El Salvador began early in 1990, and a few months later in Guatemala.

There was nothing inevitable about the El Salvador peace accords. They involved deep reforms, including to the constitution, as well as a fundamental overhaul of the armed forces and the creation of a new National Civil Police that effectively removed them from the maintenance of internal public order. Political space was opened up and a solid framework to ensure respect for human rights was put in place.

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**The Secretary-General must play a crucial role as a partner of the Council if the system is to work; they should work hand in glove, and their overriding joint role is the one that appears first in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations which states the purposes of the Organization: the maintenance of international peace and security. We will not get the right person to work with the Council if it is handled almost as an election.**

That the flurry of peacemaking successes should have been crowned with agreement to end the 12-year war in El Salvador provided a metaphor of sorts: with it the United Nations moved seamlessly from its focus on maintaining international peace and security to its current preponderant task, solving internal conflict.

Some say the United Nations accomplished these things because the cold war had come to an end—the United Nations simply settled details and mopped up—as if one event had occurred first, then the other. The array of phenomena that together formed the cold war didn't end abruptly after a conclusive Waterloo-like battle. They gradually unwound in a series of actions and decisions, by major Powers, by the United Nations and by others, over a period of years. They were intertwined in a mutually reinforcing dynamic in which it is difficult to disentangle authorship, ownership or to decide which of the developments came first. There are many who helped it unwind. Future historians unravelling the chain of events to understand how it came about will find, I have no doubt,

significant evidence of the genome of the United Nations and something of Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's DNA in it.

The main lesson to be drawn from the emblematic moment that I identified at the outset is that the Security Council has to go seriously about selecting a person to recommend to the General Assembly for appointment. In the spirit of the times, something of a clamour for transparency and participation is rising. That is understandable, but it reflects a misunderstanding of the nature and texture of the position and the role of the Security Council. The Secretary-General must play a crucial role as a partner of the Council if the system is to work; they should work hand in glove, and their overriding joint role is the one that appears first in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations which states the purposes of the Organization: the maintenance of international peace and security. We will not get the right person to work with the Council if it is handled almost as an election. I doubt that either Pérez de Cuéllar or Dag Hammarskjöld—the other non-candidate for Secretary-General who famously learned that he had been chosen only after the Council had decided to recommend him to the General Assembly—would have held the office if that had been a requirement. It's not about transparency: it's about due diligence.

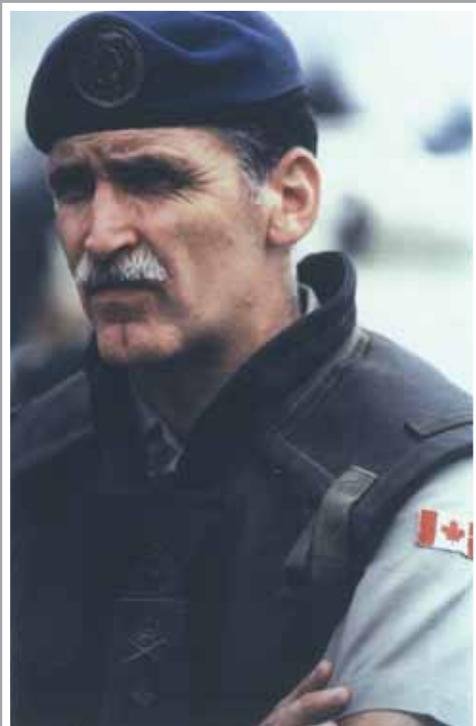
In the Charter, the United Nations membership at large has accepted the Security Council's primary role in choosing the Secretary-General; it is warranted to expect that the Council will do more than give the nod to the person of least resistance among those seeking the position. A corollary to Pérez de Cuéllar's 1986 Oxford plea might have been that wanting the position should be a disqualification. All we need to know from the Security Council is that it is taking its role seriously. Setting up a search, drawing up a short list and grilling those on it would be good, without going about it publicly.

The key is to change the vector—the direction—of the process. The Charter makes clear that the Secretary-General is appointed as opposed to, say, the members of the Economic and Social Council, who are elected. The Secretary-General can only be a worthy partner of the Security Council in the maintenance of peace and security, if Article 100 is respected. The Council may sometimes not like it, but it needs a Secretary-General who tells it what he thinks independently. Such as when Pérez de Cuéllar prodded the Council into rectifying its stance on the Iran-Iraq war, or when (sorry to reinsert myself), in response to what was in essence a demand that he remove his representative in the El Salvador negotiations, he pointed to the problem elsewhere, told them what it was, and persuaded them that he was right and they were wrong. That kind of independence can only be ensured if the position “comes unsought to a qualified person”. unc

# Preventing CHILD the Use of SOLDIERS

# Preventing GENOCIDE

By ROMÉO DALLAIRE and SHELLY WHITMAN



Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire, pictured in 1994.

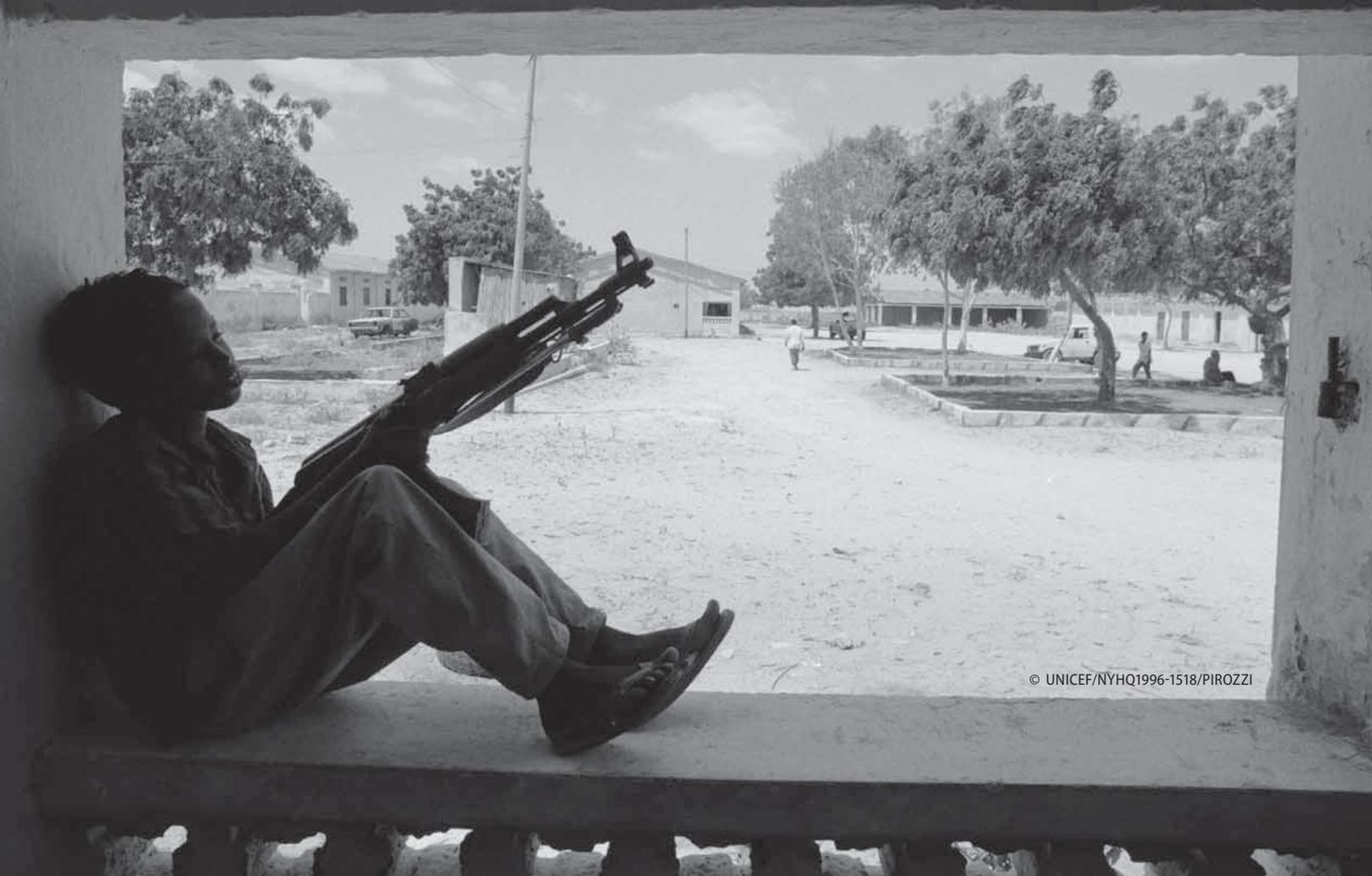
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**W**e are living in an era in which the level of human suffering as a result of intra-State conflict seems to be escalating exponentially. The essential challenge remains how to create the political impetus for timely, non-selective responses to human suffering (MacFarlane and Weiss, 2000). At the very heart of the human suffering we are witnessing the plight of vulnerable populations, and most notably children. Of all the threats that define contemporary conflict, the use of child soldiers presents one of the farthest-reaching and most disturbing trends today. If in the past children were made to fight in spite of their youth, they are now being made to fight because of their youth.

New approaches to conflict prevention must include how we prioritize the protection of children. As Graça Machel stated: “Our collective failure to protect children must be transformed into an opportunity to confront the problems that cause their suffering” (2001, p.XI). It is possible that our failure to prevent and react to conflict is directly correlated to our failure to protect children and prevent their deliberate use in armed conflict.

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In 1996 in Somalia, an AK-47 gun in his hands, a 13-year-old boy rests in the shade on the concrete ledge of a building at a checkpoint set up by one of the warring factions in the old section of Mogadishu, the capital. He began his military training in 1992 at the age of 9.

## EARLY WARNING

Since its introduction in 2005, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine has attempted to promote prevention of conflict. Using the idea of early warning indicators, R2P aims to compel the global community to take action early to prevent mass atrocities. The United Nations intended to establish “an early warning capability’ to inform timely and decisive action” (Guéhenno, Ramcharan and Mortimer, 2010). If we can understand and recognize when this mobilization towards mass atrocities occurs at its earliest stages, we can use this critical opportunity to create more effective responses.

“There is an apparent failure within the United Nations system to fully appreciate that the character and urgency of situations leading to genocide requires a unique analysis and approach, justifying a mandate narrowly tailored for this purpose” (as cited in Akhavan, 2011, p.21). R2P is specifically designed to prevent mass

atrocities crimes and genocide by engaging a “narrow but deep” approach as outlined by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon:

Our conception of R2P, then, is narrow but deep. Its scope is narrow, focused solely on the four crimes and violations agreed by the world leaders in 2005. Extending the principle to cover other calamities, such as HIV/AIDS ... would undermine the 2005 consensus and stretch the concept beyond recognition or operational utility. At the same time, our response should be deep, utilizing the whole prevention and protection tool kit available to the United Nations system, to its regional, subregional and civil society partners and, not least, to the Member States themselves (2008).

There needs to be a comprehensive list of early warning indicators that the global community can draw on in order to justify action. The recruitment and use of child

soldiers falls under the mandate of R2P, but has yet to be used as an early warning indicator. It has the potential to galvanize global support, while at the same time achieving Ban Ki-moon's call for a "narrow but deep" approach.

In April 2012, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established an Internal Review Panel to examine United Nations actions in Sri Lanka. The report of the Panel concluded that there had been a "systemic failure" of United Nations action. It also stated that some of the failings were similar to those that had occurred in Rwanda. As a result of the recommendations of this Panel, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson led work to design a plan to carry out the recommendations—referred to as the Rights up Front Action Plan. It now must be translated into action. The Rights up Front initiative seeks to prevent large-scale violations of human rights.

With the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 2171 (2014), the Security Council "committed itself to better utilizing all tools of the United Nations system to ensure that warning signs of impending bloodshed translated into 'concrete preventative action'" (United Nations, 2014). Such action may be illustrated in prioritizing the protection of children on the peace and security agenda, which could warn us of possible genocide.

#### A PRIORITY SECURITY CONCERN?

The shortcomings of the current efforts to address the use of child soldiers is evidenced by the lack of attention paid to child protection, and prevention of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict within peace agreements: "Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, 180 peace agreements have been signed between warring parties. Of these, only ten contained specific provisions for child combatants" (Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, 2014). Prioritizing the prevention of the use of child soldiers, versus overall child protection, is critical to understand because of the connection of child soldiers as an early warning indicator.

While the focus of the global community has been largely reactive to situations where children have been used as soldiers, a larger focus needs to be placed on prevention. In fixating upon disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration and not upon the eradication of the use of child soldiers, the international community has merely attempted to fix the broken, rather than to protect the whole. Until this issue is elevated within the security agenda, the international community will continue to squander excellent opportunities to prevent the recruitment of children as soldiers (Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, 2014).

#### RWANDA 1994

In 1994, I was the Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). While I have written extensively on the genocide that ensued over that period, I have not detailed the connection between my witnessing the recruitment and use of child soldiers and the build up towards the Rwanda genocide. Much like the rest of the international community, I did not make the connection about the recruitment and use of child soldiers as an early warning indicator for mass atrocities or genocide, until I began to look at this phenomenon through the lens of my work with the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative.

On 4 August 1993, the Arusha Peace Agreement was signed. My first duty was to collect information and report on the implementation of the peace agreement. Looking back now, as we conducted our first visit to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the first thing that struck me was how young the soldiers were. As of 1990 the RPF only had 3,000 troops, but by 1993 they had swollen to 22,000. In large part this could be understood due to the sheer need for human resources and the small size of the available population for recruitment by the RPF. The child soldiers all appeared to be disciplined, well fed and appropriately treated. We did not file reports specifically on the recruitment and use of child soldiers, but we did state in the technical report of 1993 that the soldiers appeared "very young". In addition, we did not have any training or awareness to raise this issue.

The *Forces armées rwandaises* (FAR) had grown from 5,000 to 28,000 troops from October 1990 to August 1993. Migrant labour and unemployed men were easily picked up to be recruited by the FAR at that time. By November 1993 we began to witness men marching through the streets, not in uniform, but wearing baggy pants and shirts in the colours of the *Mouvement républicain national pour la démocratie et le développement* (MRND)—the *Interahamwe*. The *Interahamwe* was the youth movement of the extremist MRND party. You would expect them to be under 18 years of age as in any political youth movement, but there were lots of people in it that seemed to be older. We would later come to understand that the older people were the "leaders".

In December 1993, I received a letter signed by members of the FAR, which referenced the warning about youth movements. In January 1994, as street demonstrations increased, we observed children being used increasingly by the *Interahamwe*. An informant by the name of Jean Pierre told us his job was to train the *Interahamwe* to kill. He explained that one could witness children being taken for recruitment and trained to kill Tutsis. He came

to UNAMIR to arrange for the arms caches to be seized so that they could not be distributed. Once they were distributed, he indicated that they could not stop the killing.

Guns were distributed to the hardcore *Interahamwe* who gave the orders, while children were given machetes. It would be much easier to get back machetes than guns; also, children were used to machetes in agricultural work. We then visited some of the training sites. At that time we witnessed many children around, all in civilian clothing.

In addition, one of the military observers with UNAMIR reported in January 1994 that he observed teachers telling children that they had to go home to ask their parents what ethnicity they were. Teachers stated their concern with this new directive, which was preparing their students for the genocide. Children under 14 years of age did not have identity cards, and this new directive allowed everyone to see who the Tutsis were in class. That should have signaled a warning bell, but nothing was made more of this at the time.

By the time the genocide was in full swing by mid-April 1994, the *Interahamwe* were very visibly using the children to commit acts of killing and man roadblocks. The use of children was a deliberate tactical and strategic plan by the extremists. Had this alarm bell been raised as a critical early warning factor that could have been addressed, it may have been possible to mobilize support to put resources towards protecting the children, and to have possibly prevented or greatly reduced the capacity of the *génocidaires*.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the use of child soldiers as a precondition for mass atrocities also allows more room to address the issues through structural measures. In weak and fragile States, children are more easily swayed into participating in criminal activity. The factors that render them vulnerable to such work are extremely similar to those faced by child soldiers: they are plentiful and readily available, financially desperate, under or uneducated, have little expectation of finding gainful employment, and are continuously exposed to the violence and degradation that is endemic to failing States.

The evidence of children participating in mass atrocities and genocide has occurred from the Hitler Youth of the Second World War, to the killing fields of Cambodia, and to the genocide in Rwanda. It is not a new phenomenon, however understanding the connection between child soldier use and recruitment and the potential for more effective early warning mechanisms has yet to be put into action. This approach can lead to actions that place emphasis on the protective mechanisms being strengthened for children—from the education processes, to community sensitization, to security sector reforms, and rethinking the most cost-effective investments for communities at risk. Expanding the list

of early warning mechanisms to recognize, prioritize and prevent the use of children as soldiers may be that tangible action which has eluded the global community and yet has the power to create long-term systemic change. unc

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# FOR WE, THE PEOPLES...

*Revisiting Dag Hammarskjöld's legacy in applying and adapting the Charter for a stronger and more effective United Nations*



Portrait of Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 1 June 1959. United Nations, New York.

By HENRIK HAMMARGREN

In October 2015, the United Nations commemorates its 70th anniversary, and on this occasion it is appropriate to consider the relevance of the founding document, the Charter of the United Nations. The Organization has evolved with a changing world and it is up to Member States to keep strengthening its capabilities and recommit to the purposes and principles of the Charter. The visions and values articulated by the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, are still relevant for this purpose.

The Charter is a brave declaration, exceptional in content and aspiration, and its purposes and principles remain

relevant in addressing today's complex global challenges. In his Introduction to the Annual Report presented to the United Nations General Assembly on 17 August 1961, less than five weeks before his tragic death, Hammarskjöld summarized the document's relevance in the following way:

"[I]n the Preamble to the Charter it is stated to be a principle and purpose of the Organization 'to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained.' In these words... it gives expression to another basic democratic principle, that of the rule of law."<sup>1</sup>

HENRIK HAMMARGREN is Executive Director of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.

While the Charter is unique, it has not been applied even-handedly to its full potential and meaning by the Member States. The 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations provides an important opportunity to take stock and reaffirm commitment to the Charter. A discussion on how to revitalize the Charter will need to both address how commitments to its purposes and principles can be reaffirmed and realized; and to identify to what extent amendments are needed to adapt to the demands of a changing world.

Dag Hammarskjöld's integrity, determination and tireless work to adapt the Organization and find solutions through constructive application of the Charter remains a source of inspiration and a guiding compass. In his last Annual Report to the General Assembly in 1961 Hammarskjöld argued that the objectives of the Charter should be progressively achieved through the realization of four fundamental principles:

-  Equal political rights, both in terms of sovereign equality and individual respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
-  Equal economic opportunities, thereby promoting higher standards of living through the creation of conditions conducive to development and economic and social advancement.
-  A firm rule of law framework underlying the actions and activities of the international community.
-  The prohibition of the use of force contrary to the common interest of the international community.<sup>2</sup>

In many ways Dag Hammarskjöld was both an idealist and a realist—an idealist in believing in the possibilities of the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the Charter, a realist in understanding the limits of the Organization and those of its Member States that are guided mainly by national interests. In a speech in 1956 Hammarskjöld commented on the divide between idealism and realism. Considering assertions that the United Nations had failed as often misleading, he said:

“Do we refer to the purposes of the Charter? They are expressions of universally shared ideals which cannot fail us, though we, alas, often fail them. Or do we think of the institutions of the United Nations? They are our tools. We fashioned them. We use them. It is our responsibility to remedy any flaws there may be in them.”<sup>3</sup>

In the context of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, we can reflect on the words of Hammarskjöld that remind us that the Charter of the United Nations cannot fail us, but it is the responsibility of Member States to remedy any flaws. All sections of the Preamble of the Charter are inter-linked and interdependent—as Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Jan Eliasson, articulated at the thirteenth annual Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture in 2011:

“...lasting solutions require that the pursuit of peace, development and human rights must take place in parallel. There is no peace without development; there is no development without peace; and there is no sustainable peace and development without respect for human rights. If one of these three pillars is weak in a nation or a region, the whole structure is weak. Therefore, walls and barriers between these areas must be taken down.”<sup>4</sup>

The following eight statements, inspired by Hammarskjöld's vision and legacy, could inform the dialogue and process for a stronger and more effective United Nations:

-  The Charter should be enforced and Member States should reaffirm and recognize that its implementation remains their responsibility. The 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly should pave the way for a joint declaration on reform discussions focusing on the implementation of the pillars of the Preamble and a time-bound process for decision on amendments.
-  The United Nations must ensure the people-centric dimension of the Charter. The opening line of the Charter—“We the peoples” must be placed at the centre of the Organization and its operations, and the United Nations as a whole needs to revisit its ideological basis to ensure inclusivity.
-  United Nations leadership and the integrity of the international civil servant should be reinforced. The Charter provides—as repeatedly stressed by Dag Hammarskjöld—for a strong and independent role for the Secretary-General who should remain loyal only to the principles of the Charter. The election of the next Secretary-General provides an important opportunity to further enhance transparency and accountability. The United Nations also should revitalize the principles of impartiality, integrity and ethics of the international civil servant, as enshrined in Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter. The United Nations should move to ensure a twenty-first century Secretariat with greater integrity, and with a professional, dynamic and more mobile staff.
-  The Security Council must be democratic and expanded to reflect geopolitical realities of today's world. The stalemate regarding reform efforts must be broken and a clearly defined process for reaching agreement with a set date for completion should be established. If we fail to reform the Security Council, it will continue to lose authority and increasingly be ignored, and thereby risk losing its role in the safeguarding of international peace and security. A proposal to limit the use of the veto, for instance in cases of grave atrocities or massive human rights violations, should be considered. Enlargement of the Council will require amending the Charter. This can be done—it has

been amended three times before—with the first set of amendments changing the composition of the Council.

 Efforts to maintain peace and security must involve new methods and improved instruments to promote prevention and peacebuilding: the United Nations has not been able to live up to its purpose of saving future generations from the scourge of war. United Nations peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations must be reconsidered. Articles 34 and 41, which refer to measures not involving the use of armed forces, should be further explored and applied to recognize the need for prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts. Greater efforts are required to ensure that the participation of women in peacebuilding is guaranteed. The use of Chapter VIII provisions of the Charter should be enhanced to clarify and increase cooperation with regional organizations.

 Human rights must be respected, applied and defended. The United Nations is instrumental to the development and promotion of international norms and standards. Member States must recommit to protecting and promoting human rights, including those of women and girl children, and respect and implement the fundamental values and principles as defined and endorsed in the global legal treaties and frameworks, which require compliance by all Member States.

 Justice and respect for international law should be expanded to include a provision on gender justice and environmental law. We must give broader acknowledgment to and develop new approaches regarding gender justice. We must integrate environmental law across the United Nations work on the rule of law and ensure that it is made an integral part in the development of sustainable development goals.

 Social progress must be reoriented towards global sustainable development and addressed as a responsibility for all. The Charter must be amended to include sustainability.

Dag Hammarskjöld was instrumental in identifying and setting agendas for reform. But he was also acutely aware of the limits and the need for pragmatism in pursuance of such reforms. After only a year in office, he paraphrased Henry Cabot Lodge Jr.:

“It has been said that the United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell. I think that sums up as well as anything I have heard both the essential role of the United Nations and the attitude of mind that we should bring to its support.”<sup>5</sup>

Hammarskjöld embodied and lived up to many of the principles of the Charter as expressed in his personal virtues, ethics and beliefs. But he was aware of the time required for the

endeavour of building a truly united world to bear fruit. As he stated in his address at New York University on 20 May 1956:

“...we are still seeking ways to make our international institutions fulfil more effectively the fundamental purpose expressed in Woodrow Wilson’s words—‘to be the eye of the nations to keep watch upon the common interest’. I have no doubt that forty years from now we shall also be engaged in the same pursuit. How could we expect otherwise? World organization is still a new adventure in human history. It needs much perfecting in the crucible of experiences and there is no substitute for time in that respect.”<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding, Hammarskjöld had no doubt that the United Nations, despite all its limitations, is an Organization of which humanity is in need:

“We need it for the constructive additions it offers in international attempts to resolve conflicts of interest. And we need it as a foundation and a framework for arduous and time-consuming attempts to find norms in which an extra-national—or perhaps even supranational—influence may be brought to bear in the prevention of future conflicts.”<sup>7</sup> 

## Notes

- 1 *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixteenth Session, Supplement No. 1A (A/4800/Add.1)*, p. 2.
- 2 Hans Corell, “Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations and the Rule of Law in Today’s World”, lecture at Dag Hammarskjöld University College of International Relations and Diplomacy, Zagreb, 29 November 2011.
- 3 Dag Hammarskjöld, “Address at New York University Hall of Fame Ceremony on the Unveiling of the Bust and Tablet for Woodrow Wilson, New York, 20 May 1956”, *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of The United Nations, vol. III: Dag Hammarskjöld 1956-1957*, Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote, eds. (New York and London, Columbia University Press 1973), p. 145.
- 4 Jan Eliasson, *Peace, Development and Human Rights. The Indispensable Connection. The Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture 2011* (Uppsala, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2011), p. 12.
- 5 Dag Hammarskjöld, “Address at University of California Convocation, Berkeley, California, 13 May 1954”, in *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of The United Nations, vol. II: Dag Hammarskjöld 1953-1956*, Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote, eds. (New York and London, Columbia University Press 1972), p. 301.
- 6 Dag Hammarskjöld, “Address at New York University Hall of Fame Ceremony on the Unveiling of the Bust and Tablet for Woodrow Wilson, New York, 20 May 1956”, p. 145.
- 7 Dag Hammarskjöld, “Do We Need the United Nations?”, Address Before the Students’ Association, Copenhagen, 2 May 1959”, in *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of The United Nations, vol. IV: Dag Hammarskjöld 1958-1960*, Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote, eds. (New York and London, Columbia University Press 1974), p. 374.

# YOUNG AT 70

## THE PROMISE OF THE UNITED NATIONS WORK WITH AND FOR YOUTH

By AHMAD ALHENDAWI



Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

© UN PHOTO/MARK GARTEN

**S**eventy years ago, a revolutionary idea to change the landscape of a fragile multilateral scene was introduced. Establishing the United Nations was the necessary response for a world recovering from the devastation of two world wars. The idea was simple, yet very bold; a global body to promote the principles of “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person...

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and to promote social progress and better standards of life”. Looking at the world today, we see that the United Nations has done justice to most of its responsibilities in upholding these principles. However, much work remains, particularly in regard to the inclusion of the world’s youth in development and decision-making processes.

The 70-year old world body is embarking on a new promise for the people and the planet with the adoption of a new generation of development goals and a climate change agreement by the end of the year. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the climate agreement offer the unique opportunity to change the course of history by putting the planet on a sustainable path and unleashing the potential of its people. But ahead of the adoption of these landmark agreements, and while celebrating the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, the international community has to reflect on the unprecedented challenges it faces today from the rise of extremism and the mushrooming of conflicts, the evident threat of climate change, human rights violations and the situation with gender equality, as well as the lack of inclusive governance structures. However, core to all these issues and one of the most notable challenges that test our commitment to the United Nations principles is that of the surging youth population, with currently nearly half the global population under 25 years of age.

The challenges that face this large generation of youth are unparalleled, but with them comes a wealth of opportunities. Young people have the ability to organize and take individual and collective action on issues that matter to them. We have seen this over and over as young people garner greater attention and lead large-scale projects and initiatives at the grass-roots and global levels.

Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations has increasingly recognized the unique role that youth can play in development. This has been specifically reflected over the past two decades, as the United Nations has shifted to depend more on youth to advance its mission and values. With these advancements, we have witnessed a global shift in the perception of youth in policymaking and programming, with youth issues gradually becoming the focus area for many global development agencies and within United Nations Member States.

When the United Nations first formally recognized the importance of youth as a unique demographic segment with the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples in 1965, youth priorities were virtually unheard of, let alone addressed in a meaningful manner. Three decades later, the international debate and discussions involving youth reached an apex with the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) in 1995, which to date remains the leading global policy framework on the promotion of youth development. Its adoption was an indication of the global community's commitment to address the challenges of youth development in a comprehensive and collaborative manner. While this was a significant step in the promotion of youth development, it has become apparent that additional improvements are needed in order to fully implement the objectives of this framework.

As of October 2014, 127 countries have an adopted national youth policy, up from 99 the previous year. This rise in youth policies indicates that Governments are increasingly aware of the power that young people have to impact change, as well as of the unique role that they will play in the future development agenda. While these developments have proved to be monumental in promoting the involvement of young people, many countries have not yet operationalized their youth policies with the necessary supporting laws and appropriate funding mechanisms. After visiting over 60 countries and having reviewed the youth policies of many others, I can confidently say that at the global level, as well as at the national levels, the rhetorical commitment to the youth agenda has not been coupled with adequate investment in youth.

Our first task as we transition to the SDGs must be to harness the massive potential of the ever-growing youth population. We must recognize their capabilities in addressing the major world challenges, including poverty, climate change and countering violence, among others. Young people are up to the task and can provide innovative solutions to these unique challenges, if given the space and investment needed to do so. We need to shift the mindset of how we position this generation of young people and promote a partnership approach, highlighting youth as opportunities, not liabilities of their societies.

Over the past decade, for example, the world's attention has increasingly shifted to terrorism and violent extremism. This growing challenge, which remains one of the top priorities of the United Nations, has often falsely fuelled the negative stereotypes about youth around the globe. These stereotypes have resulted in a misguided and false perception of youth as a "threat" to national security and the global community as a whole.

Labelling young people as a problem or potential threat is not only wrong, but also counterproductive in our efforts to counter violence. It also is grossly detrimental to development efforts.

Secondly, we must shift the debate on development and peace and security into one space—as there is an obvious correlation between the two fields. We must push for a greater understanding of linkages between policy areas and expand that focus to include young people's role in development alongside countering violent extremism and the promotion of peace. Whether approaching this task from a development perspective or that of peace and security, we need to prioritize youth in order to create innovative solutions needed to adequately address these enormous challenges.

Finally, we must bolster efforts to provide education for all and address youth unemployment. Some 69 million young people of lower secondary school age remain out of school, 74 million youth are unemployed, and more than 600 million jobs need to be generated globally by the year 2030. This is a daunting task, which requires improving access to post-primary and higher education, and vocational training. It also implies making youth work competitive in the job market and providing young entrepreneurs with access to finances, training and support when they set up and manage their own businesses.

The year 2015 is critical. We must continue to build upon the momentum to promote youth priorities and increase investment in young people worldwide. We are already seeing remarkable improvements in these efforts as reflected in numerous events and initiatives, such as the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD). For the first time ever, a Financing for Development conference outcome document includes a reference to youth—recognizing that investment in youth is critical to achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for present and future generations.

This increased recognition will offer us all an opportunity to elevate the central issue of youth development in order to further enable young people to be agents of change in their communities. So let us get the math right here: we never had this many young people and this is a demographic reality that will not last for long; we never had the opportunity to eradicate extreme poverty and reverse climate change in just 15 years, and this opportunity may not arise again; and we never have been better equipped with the tools and technologies to get this mission accomplished. Today the convergence between the people and the planet agenda could be fuelled by the energy and innovation of young people, so let us get the job done that will realize the United Nations promise to youth. 

# THE UNITED NATIONS AND ITS DISCONTENTS AN ACADEMIC VIEW

By DAVID M. MALONE



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**F**or most people, reaching 70 allows them to look back on accomplishments and hopefully provides some reprieve from worrying about the future. For the United Nations, there is no such luxury.

Despite having achieved an enviable milestone, the 70th anniversary of the United Nations is coloured by dissatisfaction among Member States and the charge of unmet expectations from various quarters.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon swore in David M. Malone (pictured), as Rector of the United Nations University, on 13 March 2013.

This brief essay cannot disentangle truth from perception. It aims instead to highlight key elements of the United Nations track record in its main areas of work (development, peace and security, and human rights) and to identify challenges to its global authority that it must address to survive another 70 years.

Among these are questions surrounding the future leadership and constitution of the Organization, and its management culture.

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## DEVELOPMENT

During the era of decolonization the United Nations had to support newly independent countries that had been pauperized and misgoverned by colonial powers. The legacy of this trauma produced megalomania, kleptocracy and, most often, disregard for sound administration in several among the first generation of post-independence Governments. The results in many cases were dire.

The modest efforts of the United Nations at programming are not what distinguishes the Organization in the area of development. There are two exceptions to this. First, highly specialized United Nations entities with both technical expertise and operational depth, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme, are leaders in their areas. Second, in fragile conflict-affected States, the United Nations and the development assistance channelled through its agencies play a vital role.

However, the greatest contributions of the United Nations to development remain arguably at the level of ideas, from the notion of targeting a campaign to end smallpox to the emergence of the concept of human development. A well-conceived attack on the Washington Consensus highlighted the need for social policies and programmes to be given equal weight alongside fiscal and monetary ones, a view now widely shared within the international financial institutions themselves. It resulted in "Adjustment with a Human Face", a formulation that originated in UNICEF.

The United Nations leadership in the area of ideas—hard-won territory—is at some risk. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) exercise, initiated at the 2012 Rio+20 Conference, has yielded distressingly expansive results, enshrined in a draft list of goals and targets (more a catalogue than a reasoned effort at an achievable plan of action) that Member States are expected to officially adopt at a summit in September 2015. When that happens, parliaments and Governments the world over may be surprised to find themselves committed to up to 169 development targets. This outcome reflects a pattern of depressingly confrontational intergovernmental debates at the United Nations on development. Even as billions have grown out of poverty in Africa and Asia, and as Latin America's social policy innovations have spread around the world, delegations in New York have mostly articulated political grievances rather than bold ideas. From their debates, one would fail to grasp just how impressive development performance has been across much of the global South in recent years. Nor would one seize the depth of the financial and economic crisis in many industrialized countries since 2008.

A more constructive approach eschewing vapid resolutions, otiose speeches and unmanageable processes is called for. If Governments can find within the SDGs a few priorities to pursue, and civil society can be energized as a consequence, it may not be too late.

## PEACE AND SECURITY

Created to save the world "from the scourge of war", the mere existence of the United Nations has demonstrably helped to avoid nuclear catastrophe. During the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the most dangerous flash-point in super-Power relations since the Second World War, the United Nations Security Council served as a shock absorber, inducing restraint in both Moscow and Washington. Largely forgotten today, then Secretary-General U Thant's behind-the-scenes diplomacy provided both John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, and Nikita Khrushchev, Premier of the Soviet Union, with a ladder that allowed them to climb down from maximalist demands, thus helping to de-escalate the crisis. On other occasions, the United Nations proved a useful forum to help the super-Powers avoid direct confrontation in regional conflicts in which they had competing interests.

With the end of the cold war, the possibilities for the United Nations seemed nearly infinite. Therein may lay the seeds of its current discontents. At the behest of an activist Security Council, the United Nations was given tasks for which it was underprepared. In response, it heroically improvised at times, fully succeeding only occasionally. In the euphoria that followed the end of the cold war, the hyperactivity of the Security Council amidst general goodwill and a desire to end conflict generated a great deal of news.

However, the reach of the United Nations Security Council too often exceeded its grasp. The 1995 Srebrenica massacre, resulting in part from the lack of sufficient resources at the United Nations or a realistic strategy in Bosnia, remains a stain on the Organization today. Counter-intuitively, the refusal of the Security Council in 2003 to endorse plans of the United States and the United Kingdom for an invasion of Iraq, while accurately reflecting global public opinion, was unable to prevent these two countries from seeing through their attack. This led to disastrous consequences for Iraq and the region. The United Nations was blamed in the crossfire, rather than admired for the stance of the Security Council, which was forgotten in the muddle. Perhaps perversely, its reputation has still not fully recovered.

Today, the relevance of the United Nations in international security is increasingly measured by how effective

it is in preventing genocide and all-out civil war. The Organization's failure to devise meaningful responses to the crisis in Syria is thus a serious threat to its overall credibility and should give rise to serious introspection within the Security Council.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a stunning breakthrough when adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1948, vastly more sweeping in scope and ambition than any text before or after. Rather improbably, particularly given the cold war climate, the United Nations was able to agree in 1966 on two groundbreaking treaties addressing key rights in the civil and political, as well as economic and social fields, with each entering into force in 1976 (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Meanwhile, treaty-making on specific human rights has proliferated from the prohibition of torture (the United Nations Convention against Torture, 1984) to the elimination of discrimination against women (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979).

In an effort to bolster its support of human rights activity, the United Nations appointed the first High Commissioner for Human Rights in 1994. Several High Commissioners since then have lent a forceful and authoritative voice to global rights advocacy, including the recently-appointed Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (successor to two exceptional women High Commissioners, Navanethem Pillay and Louise Arbour). Advances in human rights, while often challenged by discouraging developments on the ground, have proved one of the United Nations most signal accomplishments, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's focus on individual rights, including those of same-sex partners, as well as his activism against the death penalty, may represent his most compelling legacy.

## MANAGEMENT

The United Nations is neither better nor worse managed than most large organizations. It faces challenges arising from its global deployment, but so do many global private and public sector organizations.

Quality oversight must be made the priority, rather than micromanagement, as is sometimes the case. This proposition is not fully grasped at the United Nations, even after 70 years of experience. The staff of the United Nations will never attain its full potential unless the

Member States can bring themselves to invest more confidence in it.

The United Nations has been most successful when it adopts a pragmatic approach to management, centred on time-honoured "work-arounds" that allow staff to rise above the straitjacket of rules in order to achieve often excellent results, sometimes against formidable odds and in difficult local circumstances. Nowhere is this tested more sharply than in the extensive field operations of the United Nations including those of peace missions, frequently deploying to singularly uncompromising terrain. Peacekeeping operations support a force of approximately 120,000 troops—more than twice the size of the Canadian Armed Forces. United Nations Headquarters and staff in the field often need to improvise because necessity and the absence of rules appropriate to every situation require creativity, risk-taking and courage. Happily, none of these qualities is in short supply within the United Nations.

And contrary to widespread perception, United Nations staff remuneration is not particularly generous. However, it is structured in ways that create "golden handcuffs" for many staff members. This may encourage staff to hang on to their jobs much longer than many should or would normally want to, causing some parts of the Organization to congeal dangerously. An overall approach to remuneration based on local cost of living and conditions would seem better suited to our times, and might induce greater staff mobility.

Ban Ki-moon, to his credit, has sought to tackle aspects of the staffing problem, notably the reluctance of United Nations staff assigned to comfortable headquarters jobs to move to more challenging positions in the field. That he has been only partially successful after titanic battles suggests how resistant to change the United Nations can be.

## LEADERSHIP

As Ban Ki-moon's second term as Secretary-General draws to a close (at the end of 2016), the membership has grown increasingly febrile over the choice of his successor. Attention has focused on gender, with many favouring a woman. Ideally (s)he will be selected well ahead of the term's start on 1 January 2017, thus allowing time to shift from campaign mode to careful planning.

Two key sets of relationships always require attention. First, the Secretary-General needs to nurture close links with the Member States, which are in charge of the United Nations, but need to trust the Secretary-General to manage and, at times, to lead it. Their trust is not easily earned, and can be quickly lost. Once their support is alienated, it rarely returns fully. Second is the relationship

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**However, the mood brightened dramatically when, in late 2014, China and the United States reached a bilateral agreement to offer significant voluntary (versus binding) commitments to curb emissions, without having to rely on vetoes to assert their leadership. This initiative set the negotiations for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in December 2015 in Paris, on a more hopeful track, with other countries offering commitments throughout that spring.**

with United Nations staff members. While often derided, many display singular dedication and effectiveness in service to the Organization, for which they are sometimes called upon to take altogether exceptional risks with their personal safety and health, all the while seriously compromising work-life balance. They look to the Secretary-General for leadership but also for support. Secretaries-General have varied in their ability to telegraph empathy for their colleagues, some primarily seeking simply to be served. This does not work well when calling for significant sacrifices and risk-taking.

A Secretary-General who winds up losing the confidence of staff is unlikely to prosper, while one losing the confidence and respect of Member States can only fail.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Caucusing among Member States over the selection process for the Secretary-General, widely seen as overly centred on the Security Council and its members, reflects

the growing chasm between them and the membership at large. The balance of power has shifted significantly since 1945, in spite of the wishes of the permanent members to maintain the status quo, characterized by two membership categories, the Permanent Five (the P5) veto-holders and the rest.

The truly powerful need hardly rely on vetoes to assert leadership or even to protect critical interests. Engaged diplomacy usually does the trick, while a veto, often cast in frustration, is merely an easy way out that leads to lasting diplomatic scarring. The United States would have gained much from heeding the majority in the Security Council on Iraq in 2003, foregoing a reckless military adventure that has cost it and others dearly.

If relations among United Nations Member States become much more dysfunctional than they seem at times today, not only will the United Nations no longer be able to do its several essential jobs, but key decisions will simply shift to other multilateral formations. The P5 and the rest of the membership must face up to the need for constitutional change at the United Nations to reflect the contemporary geostrategic and economic reality. Are they up to it?

While the next Secretary-General will face serious leadership challenges in nourishing the Organization and keeping it agile, the critical determinants of the future for the United Nations remain the Permanent Five, each of which may or may not be willing to face the urgent need for meaningful change.

There are some reasons for optimism as I contemplate the Organization's anniversary. One area in particular that inspires some optimism is climate change. The process of devising a global approach to the fight against climate change has frustrated many. After the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, which was reasonably successful, support weakened for its binding provisions (to which the United States had never signed on, and which several Member States, including my own, never credibly honoured). As the price of carbon credits, reflected through the Kyoto-related Clean Development Mechanism, collapsed, drift ensued in the endless climate change negotiations at the United Nations.

However, the mood brightened dramatically when, in late 2014, China and the United States reached a bilateral agreement to offer significant voluntary (versus binding) commitments to curb emissions, without having to rely on vetoes to assert their leadership. This initiative set the negotiations for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in December 2015 in Paris, on a more hopeful track, with other countries offering commitments throughout that spring.

More such pragmatism, and more widely practiced, would be greatly welcomed by the world's populations. 

# THREE SIMPLE FIXES FOR THE NEXT 70 YEARS

By IAN RICHARDS



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Ian Richards, Executive Secretary of the Staff Coordinating Council, United Nations Office at Geneva.

In 2014 I celebrated the 69th birthday of the United Nations in a temple in Bhutan. Speaking to an audience of monks, ministers and staff, the United Nations Country Representative to this mountain kingdom in the Himalayas described how the global Organization had helped set up the country's first airline and had at one time fed a large part of its population.

Bhutan isn't the only country to have benefited from the United Nations presence.

During South Africa's first multiracial elections in 1994, many of my colleagues were deployed as monitors, helping

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to ensure a free and fair result. It was a highlight of their career.

More recently in Guatemala, a team of two United Nations staff members installed a website ([minegocio.gt](http://minegocio.gt)), to allow entrepreneurs to officially register their businesses online, avoiding long journeys and queues in government offices. In the space of two years, over 3,000 businesses had been established through the service and the country jumped from 172 to 98 in the relevant Doing Business rankings.

These are some examples, and there are many more, of achievements for which United Nations staff members can be proud, and which to citizens, voters and entrepreneurs across the world show the United Nations at its best.

The United Nations first 70 years have certainly been productive, though not perfect.

The next big test for our Organization is a newly agreed set of targets called the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Over the next 15 years, they aim to eradicate extreme poverty, fight climate change, prevent conflicts and protect those caught in the crossfire.

Tasked with reaching those goals are my colleagues, the Organization's 75,000 staff members. Many are hard-working, smart and well-intentioned. But the Organization we work for belongs to an era when politics mattered more than results.

In 2015, at the 70th anniversary of the birth of the United Nations, it is time to change that and to create a workplace in which talent, skill and

determination can translate more easily into meaningful results. Here are some thoughts how.

Firstly, recruit some younger staff. The average age of staff members recruited to the United Nations is 41. Three per cent of United Nations staff positions are at the graduate entry grade called P-2 and only 0.3 per cent of all staff are aged under 25. Mid-career experience from outside can be useful, and there is no reason for good staff to have to retire at 62. But by reducing junior posts during cutbacks and adding senior posts in times of growth, the United Nations effectively cuts itself off from recent university graduates.

Between 2015 and 2030, the deadline for reaching the SDGs, the United Nations will not benefit from the latest means of mastering information technology and

analysing big data. It will also lack the institutional skills to communicate with the 15 to 25 age group, which makes up a third of the world's population and whose restlessness the United Nations has linked to the current rise in political conflict.

Yet managers still need younger staff, so they fill the gap with consultancy contracts. According to the United Nations internal review body, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), 45 per cent of the workforce across the United Nations common system serves as consultants, including in administration. Not only does this reduce the professionalization of staff, it also, according to the JIU, brings "reputational risks, high turnover, a lack of stable and motivated personnel and a potential increase in legal challenges". Furthermore, it puts the United Nations on the wrong side of youth unemployment. So next time new posts are created, let's make sure they are at the junior level, not the senior level. Member States will also appreciate the lighter bill.

Secondly, make promotion depend on good performance. Under the United Nations current rules, outside candidates must have the same access to advertised United Nations vacancies as staff members—we are probably the only large organization that has such a policy. To ensure equal consideration of internal and external candidates, the United Nations has decided that performance grades, which could favour a good internal candidate, should be excluded from consideration.

With performance and competence now counting less than other factors, a disappointingly large number of staff and outside candidates enlist their ambassadors and foreign ministries to lobby hiring managers on their behalf. The results are predictable. At best frustrated colleagues with no career prospects; at worst an organization exposed to serious operational risks when, and it happens, unsuitable candidates are placed in key posts.

The answer is to rule that a staff member with a strong record of performance will be preferred over an equally qualified outsider—and what would be wrong with that? It will upset the few who unfortunately see the United Nations as a politically expedient job agency. But this must be a price worth paying if we can better motivate the staff we have to help eliminate extreme poverty.

Thirdly, improve staff safety. As the United Nations former Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, recently noted, "attacks on humanitarian workers have increased every year for more than a decade." Twenty thousand United Nations staff now work in peacekeeping or field operations, and on average 25 die each year. Unlike military personnel, my colleagues didn't train to fight, and are not paid on the understanding that they should lay down their lives for the United Nations flag.

Yet the United Nations now expects its staff to serve in war zones and counter-terrorism operations, in spite of the fact that it was criticized for this practice in a recent report on peacekeeping reform by José Ramos-Horta, former Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and former president of Timor-Leste. It should therefore come as no surprise that the United Nations has become a target of Al-Qaida, Al-Shabab and the Islamic State.

What does surprise is that these attacks, while reported, are hardly commented on. They seem almost taken for granted. Further, no body exists to identify the perpetrators of attacks on United Nations staff or hold them accountable. An airline losing passengers at this rate would struggle to remain in business. The United Nations has committed to "stay and deliver," even in the most challenging environments. It should then also commit to providing the same quality of security in the field as it does at Headquarters. While United Nations security is more expensive than local private security companies, our officers come screened, trained and tested. And what's more, a safe staff can also do more to help the most vulnerable people in the most difficult and dangerous locations.

The 70th birthday of the United Nations is an important milestone. It is in itself an achievement, and one we and Member States can be proud of. However, it's also an occasion to rethink how we work, especially with the new goals that have been set.

Now is the time to do this and to fix things properly. Bring in younger staff, link promotion to good performance and improve the safety of our colleagues. 

# THE FIRST 70 YEARS OF THE UNITED NATIONS ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

By EDWARD MORTIMER



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## THE COLD WAR PERIOD

Perhaps inevitably, the United Nations started on a steep downward trajectory from the high expectations that surrounded it at its birth. The global security organization envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations, based on a perpetuation of the victorious alliance against Nazi Germany, was stillborn because of the rapidly developing rift between the Soviet Union and its Western allies. The Security Council of the United Nations, entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, was soon paralysed by the inability of its permanent members to take decisions on any issue where they perceived their interests to be in conflict.<sup>1</sup> The fact that this “cold war” did not develop into a hot one is generally attrib-

Edward Mortimer, then Head of Speechwriting Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, monitors the recording of the United Nations Day Video Message, October 2004.

uted not to the United Nations, but to the “balance of terror” between nuclear-armed super-Powers, both of which were likely to be destroyed by any direct conflict. The role of Secretary-General U Thant in helping to prevent such a conflict during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis has been too widely overlooked, even though at the time both super-Powers acknowledged it in writing.

The development of the role of the “good offices” of the Secretary-General in preventing conflict through quiet diplomacy—not mentioned in the Charter, though perhaps implicit in Article 99—was certainly one of the achievements of the United Nations during the cold war period, although by its nature, it is seldom publicized, and its efficacy is hard to measure or even prove. Prevention can never be proved, since

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counterfactual outcomes are inherently uncertain. Another was the improvisation of the peacekeeping role of the United Nations—often an important element enabling warring parties to agree and observe a truce or ceasefire, since it built confidence on each side that the other could not launch a new attack without being detected.

The super-Powers were also able to agree, from time to time, on Security Council resolutions aimed at stabilizing parts of the world where they could not be confident of controlling their respective allies, notably the Middle East, where such resolutions enshrined the terms of ceasefires, and laid down the principles for an eventual political settlement, in 1967 and again in 1973.

Another widely cited achievement of this period is decolonization, although arguably this owed more to the determination of the colonized peoples, and to the colonial powers' gradual acceptance that the physical and moral price of continued dominion was too high to be worth paying. What is certain is that United Nations membership became an important badge or certificate of a country's independence, and a valuable diplomatic card in the hands of any State whose territorial integrity was threatened, whether by external aggression or internal secession (or indeed a combination of the two). This was made possible by a prior agreement, reached in 1955, on "universal membership", which effectively protected candidate members from seeing their applications vetoed on ideological grounds by either super-Power. As a result, by the 1970s the great majority of the world's peoples were represented in the United Nations by independent Governments, and developing countries formed a large majority of the membership. As an indirect consequence, communist China took its place as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

Finally, there were significant achievements outside the immediate domain of peace and security: notably the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, followed by the two international covenants of 1966 (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights); and the creation of funds and programmes specialized in various kinds of humanitarian and development work (the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, etc.).

## THE POST-COLD-WAR WORLD

In the late 1980s, the charm offensive of Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Soviet Union, heralded the end of the cold war and a brief period in which great hopes for a peaceful and stable world were again placed in the United Nations. In 1998, United Nations peacekeepers were awarded

the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 1990 the Security Council adopted a series of resolutions in response to the seizure of Kuwait by Iraq, culminating in the authorization of "all necessary means" (i.e. including the use of force), which led to the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty and integrity by a United States-led coalition in February 1991. This appeared clearly within the spirit, if not the letter, of the Charter, and inspired United States President George H. W. Bush to proclaim a "new world order". Meanwhile, many postcolonial conflicts which had been kept alive by super-Power rivalry were wound down, usually through negotiated agreements which involved the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping missions—no longer as passive monitors of a ceasefire between two regular armies, but rather as partners undertaking a wide variety of tasks (disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, election monitoring, judicial and security sector reform, etc.) in the context of complex peacebuilding operations to which the parties (usually rival factions within a single Member State) had agreed in advance. The Security Council also showed impressive flexibility in this period, allowing the Russian Federation to take the place of the Soviet Union among the five permanent members, and increasingly accepting its responsibility to deal with conflicts within Member States as well as between them.

The 1990s witnessed a series of impressive global conferences which agreed on norms and targets in many areas of social and economic development, from human rights through population to the status of women, culminating in the Millennium Summit in 2000 and the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals. But in the peace and security domain the record was much more mixed, as the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a "unipolar moment" in which the United States was increasingly reluctant to pay attention to the views of other powers. The Security Council, no longer stymied by antagonism between super-Powers, struggled to contain ethnic conflicts in various parts of the world, often passing unrealistic resolutions which assigned ambitious mandates to United Nations peacekeepers without providing the necessary resources. This led to a series of disasters in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, which badly tarnished the image of the United Nations. The "new world order", in the opinion of many, had proved in fact to be a "new world disorder".

Yet after a brief eclipse United Nations peacekeeping again came into its own in 1999, when two territories—Kosovo and East Timor—were actually placed under temporary United Nations administration, pending a resolution of their political status. And the following year a thorough review of United Nations peacekeeping operations, chaired by Lakhdar Brahimi, provided a more robust and realistic basis for the future mandates of such operations, as well as their organization and rules of engagement.

**“The humanitarian challenges continue to be daunting, especially with the rising number of people displaced not only by conflict, but by a complex range of factors including climate change. Yet, whatever their criticisms, few see any body other than the United Nations capable of leading and coordinating the response.**

Undoubtedly the worst setback in the recent history of the United Nations was the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in March 2003, together with its sequel, the destruction of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, in which several outstanding international civil servants lost their lives. The decision of two permanent members of the Security Council to take military action without due authority, ignoring the views of their colleagues and indeed of the vast majority of States, has led not only to an ever-deepening crisis in the Middle East, characterized by venomous sectarian conflict, but also to lasting mistrust between “the West and the rest”—which, while not as structural or systemic as the cold war, has brought about a similar inability to act decisively in crises where global Powers take sharply differing views of local actors. The permanent member attracting most opprobrium may vary from case to case (in Gaza, the United States; in Syria, Russia), but the feeling of mistrust and acrimony is omnipresent. Meanwhile it is clear that the United Nations flag no longer adequately protects those serving the Organization, whether as peacekeepers or humanitarian workers. A range of non-State actors—mainly but not exclusively in the Islamic world—now see the United Nations as part of the unjust world order against which they have taken up arms, and have no compunction about targeting its representatives.

#### WAYS FORWARD

All is not lost. The five permanent members of the Security Council remain willing to work together in areas where they perceive a common interest—for instance, in the nuclear negotiations with Iran, or in sub-Saharan Africa, where United Nations peacekeeping missions continue to

be set up by unanimous Security Council resolutions, many of which continue to invoke the Responsibility to Protect, despite the acrimony that followed the NATO action in Libya, perceived by many as abusing the authority given under this heading in Security Council resolution 1973 (2011).

The humanitarian challenges continue to be daunting, especially with the rising number of people displaced not only by conflict, but by a complex range of factors including climate change. Yet, whatever their criticisms, few see any body other than the United Nations capable of leading and coordinating the response. Similarly, while humanity as yet has by no means found an adequate response to the threat of climate change itself, the United Nations is still generally seen as the inevitable forum within which such a response must be hammered out and coordinated. Furthermore, the sustainable development goals due to be adopted in autumn 2015 will provide the essential framework for the world’s joint efforts to achieve economic and social progress over the next 15 years.

It is in the peace and security field that the need to strengthen the Organization is most glaring. The agony of Syria especially, continuing year after year, makes a mockery of the founders’ determination “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”; and the role of the five permanent members seems increasingly anachronistic to the vast majority of other Member States, and indeed of the world’s people. Reform of the Security Council is a more urgent matter than many inside the New York “bubble” seem to realize. However, given the difficulties that the founders put in the way of Charter amendment, it cannot be achieved without a compromise, which will involve painful concessions both by those who aspire to become new permanent members and by those who seek to deny them that status.

Such a compromise will need to be negotiated by Heads of State and Government, and will therefore take time. Meanwhile, as suggested by The Elders, the membership can make small adjustments which do not require Charter amendment. The existing Permanent Five can resolve to work harder for agreement on effective action, in cases where the lives and well-being of entire populations are at stake. The members of the Security Council can give a hearing, at the highest level, to representatives of civil society in countries or regions directly affected by its decisions. Perhaps most important, the General Assembly can insist on a fairer, more transparent method of choosing the next Secretary-General, on whose leadership the success of the United Nations in the years ahead will crucially depend. 

#### Notes

- 1 The main exception to this—the decision to use force in response to aggression by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea against the Republic of Korea in 1950—was an anomaly, made possible only by the absence of the Soviet delegation from the Security Council at the time.

# FROM WORLD HEALTH TO WORLD HERITAGE 70 YEARS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

By HEIDI J. TWOREK



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Heidi J. Tworek at Harvard University.

In a pedestrianized area in the midst of San Francisco, a United Nations flag flutters alongside an American one. Granite columns flank the plaza bearing the names of United Nations Member States and the year in which they joined the Organization. There is a sunken fountain designed by Lawrence Halprin to symbolize the seven continents of the world tied together by oceans. Designed in the mid-1970s to commemorate 30 years since the creation of the United Nations, the plaza raised controversy among architects and San Francisco residents, including for the plaza's addition into the non-profit group Project for Public Spaces' Hall of Shame. Though the group criticized the placement of the fountain, it simultaneously praised the plaza's potential to foster thriving and dynamic community interaction on market days and to provide an entrance to the Civic Center. The Project for Public Spaces called for the United Nations Plaza to "stay true to its name and do all it can to showcase the assets of the multiple cultures that are part of the market".<sup>1</sup>

What does it mean to stay true to the name of the United Nations? The term, United Nations, first emerged from a declaration signed in January 1942 by 26 allies fighting against Germany and Japan. The signatory Governments pledged not to sign separate peace agreements and to commit themselves to a maximum war effort. Twenty-one more countries would sign the declaration by the end of the war. Only States that had signed the United Nations Declaration received an invitation to the United Nations Conference on International Organization in the San Francisco Civic Center that began on 25 April 1945.

Although the war was not yet won, delegates from the Allied nations gathered in San Francisco to create the Charter of the United Nations. The United States covered the expenses of the San Francisco Conference and was one of four sponsoring

Governments. (The others were the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and China). The Conference closed on 26 June 1945 when the Charter was opened for signature. The Conference built on previous meetings between the four sponsoring Governments held at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944 and in Moscow and Tehran in 1943.

However, the San Francisco Conference would be different from those previous meetings, for it soon highlighted many of the hallmarks of the new United Nations Organization, including its flexibility and inclusivity. At the first steering committee meeting, the Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden disagreed about how the committee's chairmanship might rotate between the four sponsoring Governments. It seemed that the sponsors might dominate the conference from the start. Yet the next day, Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King seized back the initiative. King declared that this conference was different. "Power, however, is not exclusively concentrated in the hands of...four or five states," declared King, and "the Conference should not act on the assumption that it is."<sup>2</sup> King and other delegates were determined that San Francisco would not become another Versailles.

At key moments, mid-size nations like Canada played a vital role in shaping the workings of the United Nations. The Organization depended upon more than just the power of the permanent members of the Security Council. Mid-size nations often steered the United Nations behind the scenes, reconfigured the dynamics of decision-making, and acted as crucial intermediaries to unite nations.

Mid-size nations even proved vital in sowing the seeds for United Nations specialized agencies at the San Francisco Conference. Only three medical doctors attended the conference as delegates: Karl Evang from Norway, Geraldo de Paula Souza from Brazil and Szeming Sze from China. The three physicians struck up a friendship over the course of the Conference and agreed, often over lunches, that the United Nations should also incorporate an agency to coordinate disease prevention and health work across borders and continents. Such an organization was not on the American or British agendas, however, and the three doctors did not manage to push through a resolution calling for one. Yet they persisted and changed their political tactics. Rather than a resolution, the three physicians managed to pass a declaration calling for the establishment of an international conference on health. Over the next few years, that conference developed into the World Health Organization (WHO), officially founded in 1948 and headquartered in Geneva.

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Palais des Nations, Geneva. The flags of the 193 United Nations Member States fly at the Palais des Nations, seat of the United Nations Office at Geneva,

By the time that the United Nations Plaza in San Francisco was designed in 1975, the Organization had expanded from 51 original Member States in 1945 to 144. Decolonization and the admission of countries defeated in the Second World War tripled the number of nations united, vastly increasing the number of mid-size States. For the first time, a new United Nations agency would even be headquartered outside of Europe and the United States, when the United Nations Environment Programme, founded in 1972, was principally located in Nairobi, Kenya. Mid-size nations have supplied all the Secretaries-General. These countries have often played a central role in peacekeeping and they helped to initiate vital reforms in the peacekeeping process in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The inclusion of mid-size nations into the United Nations has contributed to the surprising adaptability of the Organization. Its other distinctive feature has been the ability to incorporate new agencies, goals and ideals. The proliferation of United Nations agencies dealing with the world's problems might seem like breeding a bureaucratic behemoth, yet these new agencies and initiatives often found inventive ways to address critical issues.

One ubiquitous example is United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World

Heritage Sites. In 1959, the Governments of Egypt and Sudan turned to UNESCO for help in preserving monuments and sites endangered by construction of the new Egyptian Aswan Dam. It particularly threatened the monuments of Nubia and the Director-General of UNESCO launched an international campaign in 1960 to save the sites. The campaign ended successfully in 1980. By then, UNESCO engagement with international heritage sites had expanded beyond a single campaign. The United States proposed the World Heritage Convention to UNESCO in 1972 and became the first State to ratify it. Mesa Verde and Yellowstone National Parks in the United States were the first sites included in the World Heritage List in 1978. The World Heritage Convention spread the concept of national parks around the globe from Simien National Park in Ethiopia to Sangay National Park in Ecuador. Today, there are over 1,000 World Heritage Sites in 161 nations, and 191 States have ratified the Convention. It stands out as one of the most observed international agreements. The Convention developed out of a solution to a local problem, which UNESCO turned into a global opportunity for conservation.

The first three years of the existence of the United Nations stand out as a time of great flexibility. To commemorate this, starting in April 2015, the United Nations History Project has



after completion of the renovation of the entrance path to the Palais, known as "Allée des drapeaux" (meaning "Flags Way"). © UN PHOTO/ JEAN-MARC FERRÉ

launched an initiative on Twitter to live tweet the founding of the United Nations—70 years later. The Twitter handle is @UN\_History. During these early years, the United Nations did not just establish a General Assembly and agencies of its own. It also incorporated the experience of other international organizations that in some cases had emerged as far back as the mid-nineteenth century. The live tweeting project began with the opening of the San Francisco Conference on 25 April 2015. It will continue until 2018 to chronicle the establishment of other United Nations agencies, such as WHO in 1948, and the inclusion of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) as a United Nations specialized agency in 1947. ITU was established in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union. As one of the first international organizations, it coordinated telegraphy across borders. In 1932, when it incorporated radio into its remit, it became the International Telecommunication Union. Only after the Second World War did the agency come under the umbrella of a larger international organization. The United Nations adapted the pre-existing landscape of international organizations to include these bodies under a broader initiative of uniting all international agencies.

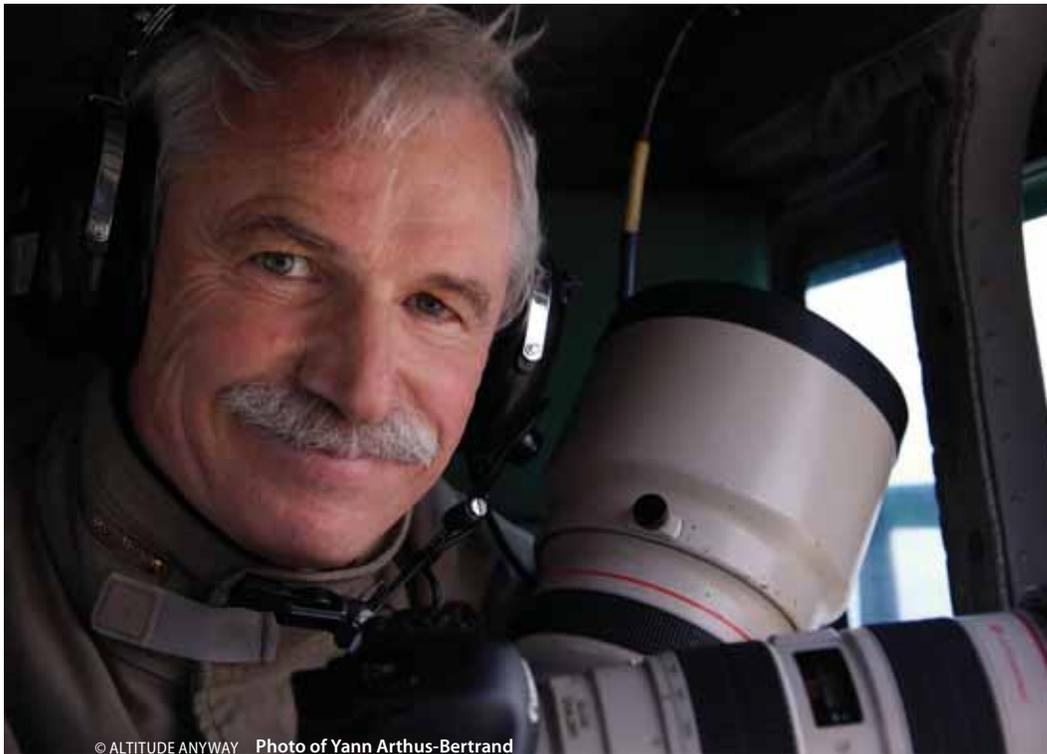
The Twitter account can give followers a sense of the drama behind the birth of the United Nations. The project

provides a short, snappy and vivid narrative of the events as they unfolded in real time. It brings the United Nations into homes and offices of people around the world for a few minutes every day, just like in newsreels and radio programmes 70 years ago. Finally, the project vividly depicts the creation of the United Nations as a lived experience shaped by every delegation, not just by the members of the Security Council.

The history of the United Nations tells us more than just how the Organization emerged. It shows the dynamics of the Organization and its ability to adapt swiftly to changing circumstances. It is a story of cooperation across traditional enmities, which often played out behind the scenes and through little-known individuals. Over the past 70 years, the United Nations has stood out for its surprising flexibility and adaptability. May those qualities continue to strengthen the Organization in the future. [unc](#)

## Notes

- 1 Project for Public Spaces, "Hall of Shame, UN Plaza, San Francisco, California". Available from [http://placemaking.pps.org/great\\_public\\_spaces/one?public\\_place\\_id=910&type\\_id=2](http://placemaking.pps.org/great_public_spaces/one?public_place_id=910&type_id=2).
- 2 *Documents of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, San Francisco, 1945*, vol. I, General (London, New York, United Nations Information Organizations, 1945), p. 194.



© ALTITUDE ANYWAY Photo of Yann Arthus-Bertrand

# Living Together

By YANN ARTHUS-BERTRAND

**T**he Charter of the United Nations, signed in 1945, did not address concerns for the natural environment. Neither the word itself, nor a doctrine of environmentalism appears in the founding document. Yet the protection of the environment affects the preservation of the entire planet. It is also a subject closely related to provisions of the Charter, since a sustainable environment decidedly contributes to the assurance of the well-being of its inhabitants. United Nations initiatives are thus critical to finding solutions to most environmental challenges. Over the years, this question has become increasingly important in General Assembly deliberations and has been featured in its resolutions—a development I very much welcome.

A series of conventions addressing the environmental issues have followed, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, 1973), the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (1989), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

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Change (UNFCCC, 1992), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD, 1994) and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001), to name a few. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established in 1972, and in 2009 I was honoured to become its Goodwill Ambassador. The number of such conventions and their importance illustrate how the United Nations has successfully managed to take the situation under control.

In my opinion, the best example and the most pronounced success of the United Nations initiative in the sphere of environmental protection are embodied in the history of the Montreal Protocol on Substances

that Deplete the Ozone Layer, signed in 1987. After a series of international negotiations, which proceeded at an exemplary pace over just a few years, the United Nations put in place measures to phase out most of the gases contributing to the thinning of the ozone layer and provided mechanisms to oversee their implementation. There is no doubt that ozone depletion threatens nothing less than the existence of life on our planet. Today, the “ozone hole”, as it is called sometimes, is slowly recovering, and there is hope that the solution to this problem is found. As many as they are, these achievements, however, must not divert our attention from the two major persistent problems.

Obviously, our first challenge is climate change. A groundbreaking summit, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, will be held in Paris in December 2015. Everyone’s hopes and efforts are aimed at the success of this milestone event. Previous meetings, however, were rather disappointing, at least in regard to the issues addressed and the inability of the global community to find solutions to existing problems. Still, climate change clearly remains the environmental challenge of the twenty-first century. Whatever the outcome of the Paris Climate Conference, it will be only a beginning, a step in a process which must continue through the coming decades.

There are several explanations of why negotiations on climate change have proceeded with so much difficulty. Among them are the changing geopolitical situation, as well as certain economic conditions and their major implications. These challenges arise largely from the fact that climate change affects

almost all aspects of the life of our societies. This should force us to rethink, in my opinion, our approach to environmental protection. The task is not simply to conserve flora and fauna, but to assure the best possible conditions on our planet for a thriving humanity—which brings us back to the founding of the United Nations and to the content and meaning of the Charter. This is where the second problem, perhaps even more imperative than the first, comes to mind.

To an extent, the true challenge of this century is finding a way to live together. It begins with becoming acquainted with one another and embracing our differences. Hatred and conflict feed off of false images of the Other. Therefore, when we become acquainted with the Other, recognizing his or her essential humanity, we take a further step towards reconciliation, tolerance and peace. In this regard, the United Nations plays a crucial role in creating space for continuing dialogue.

Bringing people together is also one of the objectives of my own rather modest efforts. This is particularly true with my latest film, HUMAN, which can be seen as a culmination of my work. The film touches upon the history of the United Nations, featuring its two turning points, the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000.

In fact, HUMAN draws upon Earth from Above, an aerial photography project, designed to capture the planet's beauty, that I began 20 years ago, following the first summit in Rio de Janeiro. It is for that work I was nominated UNEP Goodwill Ambassador. As we all know, that summit laid the foundations for sustainable development and outlined a strategy for environmental struggle for years to come. Although overly used, the term "sustainability" defined in a fundamental way the interdependence between environmental and social matters. Sustainable development is not just about saving butterflies and flowers, it is about securing a sustainable existence for the men and women who inhabit the planet—men and women who are both the cause of and solutions to the problems that afflict humanity.

Similarly, HUMAN draws inspiration from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These fundamental goals, facilitated by Kofi Annan on the eve of the twenty-first century, resolutely introduced the United Nations initiative into the daily life—one of worries, difficulties and hopes—of (at the time) 6 billion inhabitants of our planet. I wanted to give these 6 billion people a face, a voice. This was the beginning of my project, entitled 6 billion Others (now called 7 billion Others), that features testimonials of thousands of people from every continent, creating a living portrait of humanity.

To an extent, HUMAN is the synthesis of these two projects. It appears at a time when the MDGs are evolving into the sustainable development goals (SDGs), as the United Nations attempts to integrate environmental issues with the social and development agendas. They are not mutually

exclusive, but rather complement one another. I am convinced that environmentalism is a new form of humanism.

In the process of adopting and implementing the MDGs and SDGs, I have noticed a growing concern for how to engage more people to participate in United Nations initiatives. In my opinion, this is one of the major issues for the years to come. I hope that the United Nations will find a better, more direct way to reach out to the billions of inhabitants of our planet—although I understand how challenging this task might be.

The conversation should not be limited to negotiations between leaders and "decision-makers", it should include everyone. Yet often, we hear only from those who have the knack or the social standing to be heard. How many other voices remain silent? How many will succeed in being heard? In HUMAN, as in 7 billion Others, my goal is to give a voice to people we don't usually hear from—the voiceless, the nameless, people who don't make it onto magazine covers, but who are nevertheless exceptional. Often, although underestimated—or rather because of that—they carry a powerful message, which is as genuine as their true selves, since their words have not yet been eroded by the media filter.

For these testimonials not to vanish, they need to reverberate. We must make an effort to grasp each of these pronounced statements and reflect upon them, repeat them, respond to them, or maybe even refute them.

I also hope that all of us will continue these conversations with actions, by committing ourselves, each in our own way, to a better world, in which we all can live together. Each of us can do this in our own way, by smiling at strangers, by speaking to one's elderly neighbours or helping them to carry their groceries, by financially supporting one cause or another or by becoming involved in an organization. The United Nations is also undergoing a fundamental evolution, particularly by increasingly liaising with civil society and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). By recognizing their expertise, role and importance, the United Nations helps to invigorate an essential sector of our society, enabling new voices to become stronger and to be heard. I have been able to see this phenomenon in all the work that my foundation has conducted in conjunction with the United Nations, and I am convinced that this relationship with NGOs is going to only strengthen in the years to come.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Paul Claudel, who wrote, "It is not my thorns that protect me, says the rose. It is my fragrance." In the same way, it is not the dire predictions of environmental Cassandras that will save the world. It is our ability to be moved. It is also our ability to see the beauty that lives in each one of us and, sometimes, to let it blossom by opening ourselves to others and leaving our hearts to speak of love. Love, broadly understood as a form of empathy and benevolence, is the foundation of all social life, the cornerstone of "living together". Love is revolutionary. It is love that will change our world. That is what I am trying to say in HUMAN. That is what I have always tried to say. 