

# Background

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## Enough Reports: More Action Needed on U.N. Reform

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Over the past two years, the United Nations has published an astonishing number of documents on how to reform itself. Its many reports are a welcome acknowledgment of the serious flaws and problems that plague the United Nations, and they offer many useful assessments of its weaknesses as well as recommendations to remedy those weaknesses. Sadly, however, little is being done to implement these recommendations. The timing of the reports, coming on the heels of the Oil for Food scandal, merely highlights the continuing reluctance and inability of the United Nations and many of its member states to confront and fix its internal problems before they erupt into even more scandals.

The most recent reform report, *Delivering as One*, was released on November 9, 2006. It recommends a number of steps to revamp the U.N.'s development, humanitarian, and environment activities. Some of its recommendations are useful, others less so; but it pointedly serves as a reminder of how few of the recommendations in the previous reports have been adopted. Reports are useful only if they are acted upon, and acknowledgment of problems is no substitute for resolving them.

It is past time for fundamental reform of the United Nations. The election of the new Secretary-General presents an opportunity to reinvigorate the drive to improve the hopelessly archaic and inefficient system of duplicative and outdated mandates and problems with management, oversight, transparency, accountability, human resources, and other fundamental day-

### Talking Points

- After years of talk and multiple reports on reform, the U.N. is little changed from the organization that allowed the Iraq Oil for Food scandal, the despicable peacekeeping abuses in the Congo, and the extensive cases of fraud and abuse in procurement to occur.
- New Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has an opportunity to change practices within his authority and press the General Assembly to adopt many of the positive proposals made under Kofi Annan that have yet to be implemented. The United States should support Ban in pushing for fundamental reform.
- However, if history holds any lessons, diplomacy and moral suasion will not be sufficient to achieve the reforms necessary. The U.S. should not hesitate to supplement its diplomatic efforts with financial carrots and sticks and use its voice and vote to oppose new initiatives, offices or organizations, or budget increases until reforms are implemented.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
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to-day operations. The United States should work with Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to change those practices that are within his authority and to press the General Assembly to adopt many of the positive proposals already put forth.

### The Latest Report: More Smoke Than Fire

*Delivering as One*, the latest report on U.N. reform by Secretary-General Kofi Annan's High-Level Panel on U.N. System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment, offers a lengthy list of recommendations in these areas.<sup>1</sup> Outgoing Secretary-General Annan was quick to praise the report: "We all now have a solemn obligation to seize the opportunity the panel has offered, and to take its recommendations forward with the same energy and sense of urgency that its members devoted to formulating them."<sup>2</sup> This statement illustrates that there is no shortage either of analysis of problems afflicting the U.N. or of proposals to fix those problems. There is, however, a great deficit among the U.N. member states and within the U.N. bureaucracy when it comes to implementing reforms.

Over the past several years, three major scandals—the corruption of the Iraqi Oil for Food program, sexual abuse committed by U.N. peacekeepers, and corruption and mismanagement in U.N. procurement<sup>3</sup>—spurred calls for management reforms, stronger oversight and accountability, increased

transparency, and reexamination of U.N. priorities and organization to bolster effectiveness. The scandals provoked a series of reports and resolutions identifying the problems and proposing solutions. For example:

- The U.N. High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change submitted its report, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, to the Secretary-General in 2004.<sup>4</sup> The Secretary-General established the High-Level Panel to review the capabilities of the U.N. to respond to threats in the 21st century, and the report suggests a number of reforms to better equip the organization to confront current and anticipated security challenges. Among the issues addressed were the notion of effective collective security, the identification of future threats to international peace and security, the need to promote sustainable development as an aspect of security, conflict prevention, the use of force and peacekeeping, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction.
- Secretary-General Annan issued his report, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, in March 2005 as an update on the Millennium Declaration and to serve as a follow-up to the High-Level Panel report.<sup>5</sup> This report focuses on assessing progress toward implementing the Millennium Declaration and recommends reforms to increase and

1. See Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment, *Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel*, November 9, 2006, at [www.un.org/events/panel/resources/pdfs/HLP-SWC-FinalReport.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/panel/resources/pdfs/HLP-SWC-FinalReport.pdf). Cited hereafter as *Delivering as One*.
2. "Annan Welcomes High-Level Coherence Panel's Blueprint for Sweeping UN Overhaul," UN News Centre, November 9, 2006, at [www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=20554&Cr=&Cr1=](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=20554&Cr=&Cr1=).
3. For information on these issues, see Independent Inquiry Committee, "Documents," at [www.iic-offp.org/documents.htm](http://www.iic-offp.org/documents.htm); U.S. Government Accountability Office, *United Nations: Lessons Learned from Oil for Food Program Indicate the Need to Strengthen U.N. Internal Controls and Oversight Activities*, GAO-06-330, April 25, 2006, at [www.gao.gov/new.items/d06330.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06330.pdf); U.S. Government Accountability Office, *United Nations: Procurement Internal Controls Are Weak*, GAO-06-577, April 27, 2006, at [www.gao.gov/new.items/d06577.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06577.pdf); and hearing, *United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A Case for Peacekeeping Reform*, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, 109th Cong., 1st Sess., March 1, 2005, at [www.house.gov/international\\_relations/109/99590.pdf](http://www.house.gov/international_relations/109/99590.pdf).
4. U.N. High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, 2004, at [www.un.org/secureworld/report2.pdf](http://www.un.org/secureworld/report2.pdf).
5. "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All," A/59/2005, March 21, 2005, at [www.un.org/largerfreedom/contents.htm](http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/contents.htm).

enhance the capacities of the U.N. in the areas of development, security, and human rights by making specific recommendations on good governance, the rule of law, democracy promotion, development assistance, trade, debt forgiveness, collective security, terrorism, weapons proliferation, the use of force, human rights, U.N. Security Council reform, and the establishment of a Human Rights Council.

- Former General Assembly President Jean Ping released a draft outcome document in June 2005 that includes various portions of the preceding reports on U.N. reform by the Secretary-General and his High-Level Panel.<sup>6</sup> The document incorporated some of the comments, objections, and demands voiced by member states in reaction to the reports of the High-Level Panel and the Secretary-General. Negotiations resulted in a document that sought to provide something for everyone rather than a focused effort to consider the weaknesses of the organization accompanied by targeted reforms. In particular, numerous proposals that would dramatically expand U.N. authority over a broad array of issues and increase the financial obligations of developed countries, such as adopting an economic assistance target of 0.7 percent of GDP for developed countries, raised concerns in the U.S. A revised document was released in August 2005.<sup>7</sup>
- The General Assembly adopted a consensus resolution on U.N. reform as the 2005 *World Summit Outcome Document* in September 2005.<sup>8</sup> The General Assembly approved reforms that had been under discussion since 2004 and pledged support for reforms aimed at enhancing “the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and credibility of the United Nations system.” The *World Summit Outcome Document* was light on detail but accepted in principle a number of overdue reforms, including replacing the discredited Human Rights Commission with a new Human Rights Council and asking the Secretary-General to propose improvements in U.N. management, programs, personnel, oversight, transparency, and accountability.
- The Secretary-General proposed a resolution, “Investing in the United Nations: For a Stronger Organization Worldwide,” in April 2006 in response to the request by the General Assembly for detailed proposals on improving U.N. management, programs, personnel, oversight, transparency, and accountability.<sup>9</sup> The resolution proposed substantial reform of staffing, service delivery, governance, and budget matters, as well as a more integrated information and communications system and outsourcing of services.
- The Secretary-General also established an expert panel to examine the U.N.’s internal justice system. The resulting *Report of the Redesign Panel on the United Nations System of Administration of Justice* was released in July 2006 and concluded that the “United Nations internal justice system is outmoded, dysfunctional and ineffective and that it lacks independence.”<sup>10</sup> The panel recommended a series of proposals to redesign and improve the current system.

6. “Draft Outcome Document of the Millennium+5 Summit,” posted by Global Policy Forum, June 3, 2005, at [www.globalpolicy.org/msummit/millenni/draft\\_outcome.pdf](http://www.globalpolicy.org/msummit/millenni/draft_outcome.pdf).

7. U.N. General Assembly, “Revised Draft Outcome Document of the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005,” August 5, 2005, at [www.un.org/ga/59/hlp\\_m\\_rev.2.pdf](http://www.un.org/ga/59/hlp_m_rev.2.pdf).

8. “2005 World Summit Outcome,” U.N. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1, 60th Sess., September 15, 2005, at [www.un.org/summit2005/documents.html](http://www.un.org/summit2005/documents.html).

9. *Investing in the United Nations: For a Stronger Organization Worldwide: Report of the Secretary-General*, General Assembly Document A/60/692, March 7, 2006, at <http://www.un.org/reform/reform7march06.pdf>.

10. *Administration of Justice at the United Nations: Report of the Redesign Panel on the United Nations System of Administration of Justice*, General Assembly Document A/61/205, July 28, 2006, at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/449/11/PDF/N0644911.pdf>.

- The Secretary-General submitted a report, *Human Resources Management Reform: Report of the Secretary-General*, to the General Assembly in August 2006. It follows up on previous reports by providing an overview of actions taken and proposes additional reforms to improve U.N. human resources practices.<sup>11</sup>
- Another August report, *Investing in People: Report of the Secretary-General*, offered additional details on the Secretary-General's proposed human resources reforms.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, the report clarifies proposals for an improved recruitment system, staff mobility, career development, reformed employment contracting, reorganization, and the staff buyout.

Like most U.N. documents, these reports reflect the differing priorities and concerns of the now 192 member states. They contain a mixture of initiatives, including overhauling management practices, improving oversight and accountability, calling for aid targets, creating a new Human Rights Council, and granting the U.N. greater authority over international policy.

Many of these reform proposals are designed to solidify and expand U.N. authority. Such proposals should raise questions, given the poor performance of the organization in meeting its current mandates. However, the various reports also contain a number of recommendations focused on improving the performance and effectiveness of the institution, particularly reforms proposed by the Secretary-General to overhaul management, oversight, ethical, and transparency practices. These types of reform must be adopted before serious

consideration can be given to expanding the U.N.'s authority and responsibilities.

Yet very little progress has been made in implementing these fundamental reforms over the past two years.<sup>13</sup> Significant among the few measures adopted are new international accounting standards, a new ethics office, a whistle-blower protection policy, and new financial disclosure requirements. While these reforms should not be dismissed, they comprise only a small portion of the reforms proposed in the above-listed documents. The vast bulk of reforms—particularly the critical management and oversight improvements that would undergird other initiatives and reorganization and make them effective—remain stalled due to opposition in the General Assembly, which must approve most reforms governing U.N. management, oversight, transparency, and accountability.

Despite the General Assembly's support for the *Outcome Document* last fall, a draft resolution introduced in early spring by South Africa on behalf of China and the G-77 delayed and blocked the Secretary-General's proposals to implement many of the reforms approved in the document. In April, the 5th Committee approved the South African resolution by a vote of 108 to 50 with three abstentions.<sup>14</sup> On May 8, the General Assembly passed the resolution by a margin of 121 to 50 with two abstentions.<sup>15</sup> Opponents of the resolutions, including the United States and most other major donors like Japan and most of the European countries, contribute over 85 percent of the U.N. regular budget.

The successful resistance to reform precipitated a showdown over the U.N. budget. Following the

11. *Human Resources Management Reform: Report of the Secretary-General*, General Assembly Document A/61/228, August 7, 2006, at <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/459/50/pdf/N0645950.pdf>.

12. *Investing in People: Report of the Secretary-General*, General Assembly Document A/61/255, August 9, 2006, at <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/463/17/pdf/N0646317.pdf>.

13. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *United Nations: Management Reforms Progressing Slowly with Many Awaiting General Assembly Review*, GAO-07-14, October 2006, at [www.gao.gov/new.items/d0714.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0714.pdf), and Brett D. Schaefer, "The Status of United Nations Reform," Heritage Foundation Lecture No. 966, October 3, 2006, at [www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/hl966.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/hl966.cfm).

14. Most of the major donors to the United Nations, including the United States, Japan, and most European countries, voted against the resolution. Armenia, Norway, and Uganda abstained. Press release, "Budget Committee Approves Management Reform Text by Vote of 108 in Favour to 50 Against, with 3 Abstaining," GA/AB/3732, U.N. General Assembly, Department of Public Information, April 28, 2006, at [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/gaab3732.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/gaab3732.doc.htm).

General Assembly decision to adopt the *Outcome Document*, the U.S. led a campaign to cap the U.N. assessed regular budget at \$950 million as an incentive for the General Assembly to adopt the Secretary-General's reform proposals. The cap was projected to be reached at the end of June 2006. The United States and Japan, which together provide nearly 42 percent of the U.N.'s regular budget, opposed approving more budgetary funds unless the General Assembly made progress toward adopting the Secretary-General's reform proposals. Again led by the G-77, the cap was eliminated, and the remainder of the U.N. budget was approved without adoption of the reforms sought by the U.S. and other major contributors.<sup>16</sup> Although the U.S. did not vote against the resolution, it disassociated itself from the consensus position. Without the pressure of the budget cap, the urgency of adopting reforms evaporated, and the current session of the General Assembly has seen negligible progress toward management and administrative reform.<sup>17</sup>

After years of talk and multiple reports on reform, the U.N. is little changed from the organization that allowed the Iraq Oil for Food scandal, the despicable peacekeeping abuses in the Congo, and the extensive cases of fraud and abuse in procurement to occur.<sup>18</sup> The credibility of the U.N. cannot be restored simply by publishing documents espousing dedication to reform or outlining intent. Reforms must be implemented.

### More of the Same

The U.N.'s response to the lack of progress toward reform has been to release another report on how the organization should be reformed. *Delivering as One*, the final report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on U.N. System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment, like the earlier reports, is mixed in its recommendations: Some are good, some are questionable, and others are misguided.

**The Good.** *Delivering as One* notes accurately that "without ambitious and far-reaching reforms the United Nations will be unable to deliver on its promises and maintain its legitimate position at the heart of the multilateral system."<sup>19</sup> The report sensibly endorses the Secretary-General's call to modernize and reform U.N. business practices, overhaul the processes for planning and allocating funding and resources, pursue internal evaluation and coherence in the U.N. system, enhance staff mobility, and implement results-based management.<sup>20</sup> The repeated scandals, corruption, and ineffective use of resources at the U.N. have been well documented over the past few years,<sup>21</sup> and reforms to address these shortcomings are long overdue. Indeed, these proposals, along with a review of existing mandates, should be the first priority of reform because failure to address them undermines the organization's effectiveness in

15. Most of the major donors to the United Nations, including the United States, Japan, and most European countries, voted against the resolution. Norway and Uganda abstained. "Investing in the United Nations: For a Stronger Organization Worldwide," U.N. General Assembly Resolution A/ C.5/60/L.37, April 18, 2006, at [www.eyeontheun.org/assets/attachments/documents/draft\\_res\\_fifth\\_comm\\_4-18-06\\_G-77\\_strengthening\\_UN.doc](http://www.eyeontheun.org/assets/attachments/documents/draft_res_fifth_comm_4-18-06_G-77_strengthening_UN.doc), and United Nations General Assembly, Department of Public Information, "Acting on Budget Committee Recommendations, General Assembly Adopts Text on Management Reform Proposals by Vote of 121-50-2," GA/10458, May 8, 2006, at [www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2006/ga10458.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2006/ga10458.doc.htm).

16. United Nations General Assembly, Department of Public Information, "General Assembly Lifts Spending Cap, Allowing United Nations Operations to Continue for Remainder of 2006, 2007," GA/10480, June 30, 2006, at [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ga10480.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ga10480.doc.htm).

17. Schaefer, "The Status of United Nations Reform."

18. A November 2006 report by the BBC revealed that years after the revelation of abuses by peacekeepers in the Congo, the United Nations remains unable or unwilling to prevent repetition of such abuses and seemingly powerless to discipline U.N. peacekeepers who are perpetrating rape and sexual abuse on children in Haiti and Liberia. See BBC, "UN Troops Face Child Abuse Claims," November 30, 2006, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6195830.stm>.

19. *Delivering as One*, p. 1.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.

meeting its existing responsibilities and mandates, much less the additional tasks that some seek to assign the world body.

*Delivering as One* pertinently observes that many U.N. bodies claim custody over the same issues, thus clouding overall accountability, creating overlap, and undermining effectiveness. For example, the report notes that “there are a large number of overlapping functions, failures of coordination and policy inconsistency within the UN system.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover:

In some sectors, such as water and energy, more than 20 UN agencies are active and compete for limited resources without a clear collaborative framework. More than 30 UN agencies and programmes have a stake in environmental management.<sup>23</sup>

The report rightly urges consolidating or eliminating duplicative U.N. funds, programs, and specialized agencies in order to clearly assign lines of responsibility, reduce duplication, and “significantly reduce the burdens it currently places on recipient and donor governments.”<sup>24</sup> It recommends establishing an independent task force to examine possibilities for consolidating and eliminating duplication within the U.N. system. Undermining this proposal, however, is the report’s call for multi-year funding for U.N. programs. Such a funding mechanism would weaken efforts to allocate funding according to priorities by locking in funding for existing programs and making it more difficult to consolidate duplicative programs.

Regrettably, the report does not explain that a great deal of redundancy and inefficiency also could be resolved if the U.N. General Assembly would conduct a comprehensive mandate review and adopt sunset clauses for mandates. Secretary-

General Kofi Annan missed an opportunity when he ignored the instruction in the *Outcome Document* to propose U.N. mandates for elimination. That failure and the lack of progress on mandate review greatly inhibit the U.N.’s ability to allocate funds according to priorities and eliminate unnecessary tasks, personnel, and functions that drain and divert scarce resources. Complaining about a lack of resources for important priorities does little good when the General Assembly resists reviewing existing U.N. mandates and reallocating resources from low to high priorities.

**The Questionable.** *Delivering as One* recommends consolidating the authority and enhancing the accountability of United Nations activities by giving additional authority to the Resident Coordinator. Under the proposed “One Country Programme,” the Resident Coordinator would strengthen the policy coherence and coordination of U.N. activities in the country. Certainly, in many cases, centralization of U.N. offices could reduce administrative costs and aid cooperation. It makes little sense to have many small, individual U.N. offices in one city when costs could be reduced by renting office space and sharing support staff to serve the entire U.N. presence. Similarly, the U.N. should close remote offices unless objectives could not be met without an immediate presence. It likewise makes sense to apply consistent definitions of regions and review mandates of regional institutions to avoid duplication and overlap.

However, while lack of coordination is indeed a problem within the U.N. system, placing a U.N. administrator as the Resident Coordinator of the One Country Programme to oversee and direct the wide variety of U.N. tasks in each country would not necessarily improve effectiveness.<sup>25</sup> The more important issue is the lack of leadership and clear

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21. For information on these issues, see Independent Inquiry Committee, “Documents”; U.S. Government Accountability Office, *United Nations: Lessons Learned from Oil for Food Program Indicate the Need to Strengthen U.N. Internal Controls and Oversight Activities*; U.S. Government Accountability Office, *United Nations: Procurement Internal Controls Are Weak*; and hearing, *United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A Case for Peacekeeping Reform*.

22. *Delivering as One*, p. 3.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–14.

direction by U.N. member states. Member states oversee and approve the budgets and programs of individual U.N. programs, funds, specialized agencies, and the U.N. regular budget. In many ways, the lack of coordination lies not with the lack of U.N. leadership in a country, but with the competing priorities of member states. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does often create problems of coordination and overlap, particularly when the same member state presents competing messages at different U.N. institutions. Elevating the authority of the Resident Coordinator will not resolve this problem and would be largely unnecessary if the member states could identify policy priorities more clearly and consistently.

Another questionable proposal is the recommendation to cede overall responsibility for U.N. country coordination to the United Nations Development Program.<sup>26</sup> In recent months, disturbing reports of favoritism and mismanagement at the UNDP have cast doubt over the soundness of proposals to place that organization in the powerful position of managing virtually all U.N. activities at the country level.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the UNDP lags behind the U.N. in a key area of transparency: Unlike the Office of Internal Oversight Services, whose audits must now be shared with member states upon request, the internal audit reports of the Office of Audit and Performance Review at the UNDP are not available to the public or to member states.

However, even without these concerns, placing the broad array of U.N. activities performed in individual countries under the narrower rubric of development risks undermining effectiveness. Moreover, a large portion of the report makes recommendations that would establish a far more robust role for the U.N. in development. These recommendations contravene another dominant theme

in the report: removing duplication and overlap. The World Bank would be more appropriate as an overall development coordinator in each country based on expertise, in-country presence, and resources. Indeed, it makes far more sense to eliminate or consolidate the UNDP and regional economic commissions in favor of the international financial institutions like the World Bank, regional development banks, and the International Monetary Fund to avoid duplication and lack of coordination. The U.N., with its same resources, could then address complementary issues, such as political transformation, post-conflict stability, disease and other health issues, humanitarian assistance, or institution building in coordination with the international financial institutions.

**The Misguided.** *Delivering as One* strongly suggests that a lack of coordination extends beyond the U.N. system and urges donors to let the U.N. have overall say in and control of all development assistance funds and projects at the country level. It calls on donors to “increasingly refrain from funding country-level interventions by the UN system outside the One Country Programme.”<sup>28</sup> This proposal could limit development only to U.N.-approved projects, initiatives, guidelines, philosophies, and practices, which often focus disproportionately on income transfers.<sup>29</sup>

This recommendation would elevate a U.N. development agenda that contravenes evidence that foreign assistance alone cannot increase economic growth and development. Rather, success in development ultimately depends on developing countries’ adopting and implementing policies that promote economic freedom, good governance, and the rule of law.<sup>30</sup> Competition in development strategies is a strength, not a weakness, when consensus on development would eliminate or inhibit innovative

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 14, 17–18, 33–34, and 39.

27. Matthew Russell Lee, “UNDP Sources Say Dervis Fires Malloch Brown-linked Officials, Then Offers Hush-Up Jobs,” Inner City Press at the UN, November 29, 2006, at [www.innercitypress.com/undp112906.html](http://www.innercitypress.com/undp112906.html).

28. *Delivering as One*, p. 38.

29. Brett D. Schaefer, “The U.N.’s World Summit Is Wrong on Development Assistance,” Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 1881, September 26, 2005, at [www.heritage.org/Research/TradeandForeignAid/bg1881.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/TradeandForeignAid/bg1881.cfm).

30. Brett D. Schaefer, “How Economic Freedom Is Central to Development in Sub-Saharan Africa,” Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 922, February 3, 2006, at [www.heritage.org/Research/TradeandForeignAid/hl922.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/TradeandForeignAid/hl922.cfm).

development initiatives like the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account.

In several instances, the report supports calls for the U.N. to assume a much stronger role over international responses to various issues, such as humanitarian assistance and environmental governance.<sup>31</sup> The U.N.'s past performance in addressing these areas greatly undermines the credibility of assigning it such a position of responsibility. For example, within days of the December 2004 Asian tsunami, U.S. military aircraft were conducting aerial reconnaissance and transporting supplies and wounded victims; American ships began providing fresh water, carrying supplies, and transporting helicopters; and over 12,000 American military personnel were in place to help assist the victims of the disaster.<sup>32</sup> The U.N. was much slower to act. In the succeeding months, the U.N. assumed a greater role, but if the initial response had been left to the U.N., many people would have been condemned to an unnecessary death. Moreover, as an investigative report by the *Financial Times* revealed, over a year after the tsunami, U.N. relief agencies resisted public disclosure of how they had used funds for the tsunami.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, the report recommends strengthening U.N. governance over the environment and environmental activities by granting the United Nations Environmental Program "real authority as the environmental policy pillar of the UN system."<sup>34</sup> Yet the most ambitious U.N.-led effort to address a global environmental concern—the Kyoto Protocol on global warming—would do little to deal with global warming while imposing enormous economic costs on the citizens of developed countries.<sup>35</sup> The

Kyoto fiasco exemplifies the politicized nature of U.N.-led environmental policy and underscores the need to keep environmental regulatory initiatives in the hands of national governments, which must answer to their citizens for the economic and political consequences of action or inaction, rather than in the hands of comparatively unaccountable international organizations.

In a related observation, the report inexplicably concludes that "sustainable development" is insufficiently incorporated into the deliberations and programs of the U.N. and should be elevated within the U.N.'s "institutional architecture." In reality, "sustainable development" is a ubiquitous term and objective throughout U.N. documents, programs, resolutions, and statements. The report also fails to clarify exactly what benefit would result from establishing a new "Sustainable Development Board" to oversee U.N. activities on the country level—other than to establish a new layer of bureaucracy to micromanage the Resident Coordinators and proposed One Country Programme. Indeed, much confusion and lack of coordination would be resolved through the report's other proposals to consolidate U.N. funds, programs, and specialized agencies in order to clearly delineate roles and responsibility. Further improvement in U.N. coordination should be the responsibility of the existing U.N. Chief Executives Board and the individual member states.

Another extremely questionable plan is the recommendation to consolidate "three of the UN's existing gender institutions [Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), the Division for the Advancement of

31. *Delivering as One*, pp. 5–6, 15–16, and 18–22.

32. Brett D. Schaefer, "Unilateralism' Saved Lives in Asia," *Heritage Foundation Commentary*, January 11, 2005, at [www.heritage.org/Press/Commentary/ed011105d.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Press/Commentary/ed011105d.cfm).

33. Shawn Donnan, "Little Clarity on How Aid Gets Spent," *Financial Times*, December 23, 2005, at [www.ft.com/cms/s/1/b4f5583c-7358-11da-8b42-0000779e2340,dwp\\_uuid=d0b36f4c-4c8d-11da-89df-0000779e2340.html](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/1/b4f5583c-7358-11da-8b42-0000779e2340,dwp_uuid=d0b36f4c-4c8d-11da-89df-0000779e2340.html). See also Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., "Congress Should Investigate the United Nations Tsunami Relief Effort," *Heritage Foundation WebMemo* No. 952, December 28, 2005, at [www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm952.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm952.cfm).

34. *Delivering as One*, pp. 5 and 18–22.

35. See Bjorn Lomborg, "The Dodgy Numbers Behind the Latest Warming Scare," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 2, 2006, at [www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110009182](http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110009182), and Iain Murray, "Global Warming FAQ: What Every Citizen Needs to Know About Global Warming," *Competitive Enterprise Institute*, May 16, 2006, at [www.cei.org/pdf/5331.pdf](http://www.cei.org/pdf/5331.pdf).



Women, and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)] as a consolidated UN gender equality and women's empowerment programme." Although consolidating three institutions addressing the same broad issue to remove overlap, reduce unnecessary costs, and enhance accountability does make sense, it is unclear why this consolidated entity must be "enhanced" and elevated within the U.N. system. Gender inequity is certainly rampant among many U.N. member states, particularly those in the Middle East that deny women the right to vote or participate in society with the same privileges as men. However, the U.N. is dedicated to "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."<sup>36</sup> The report's recommendation would create a major U.N. institution to serve half the world's population—people clearly already included and addressed in the U.N. Charter and much of its work. Gender equity should be a goal of the United Nations, but it would be better handled within the context of existing human rights institutions rather than as a new stand-alone organization that would actually work against mainstreaming the issue within the U.N. system.

Finally, the report refers repeatedly to "unpredictable" voluntary funding of many U.N. activities as a key factor undermining long-term planning and effectiveness. The report notes:

[There is] too much earmarked funding and too little funding for the core budget of UN organizations. Moreover, funding is unpredictable, and burden-sharing procedures are unclear. So UN organizations are only to some extent masters of their own budgets, *with donor priorities rather than multilateral mandates determining some of their actions.*<sup>37</sup>

Based on this statement, one would assume that the U.N. assessed budget has been greatly constrained. Quite the opposite is true: The U.N. regular assessed budget has increased by about 45 percent from the \$2.625 billion 2002–2003 biennial budget to the \$3.799 billion 2006–2007 biennial budget.<sup>38</sup>

While it is true that assessed budgets for many funds, programs, and specialized agencies have plateaued, they have not declined. The report claims, "Even in specialized agencies, assessed contributions have not increased for years, leaving them to rely on voluntary funding for core activities."<sup>39</sup> This claim raises the question of where those assessed funds are going if not to core activities, but the report fails to answer it. Voluntary funding from donors does not threaten U.N. activities. Voluntary funding for U.N. funds, programs, and specialized agencies actually remains fairly stable from year to year with donor nations consistently and reliably providing funding for activities they support. Indeed, in many cases, voluntary funding has increased sharply. Only voluntarily funded activities that fail to meet donor expectations of performance see reductions in funding levels.

The report glosses over the real reason why donors increasingly rely on voluntary funding: the failure of U.N. regular assessed budgets to fund donor priorities. In essence, voluntary funding has risen to address failures of the U.N. system, not (as the report states) to "constrain the UN and recipient countries from making strategic choices for the use of funds and in contributing to the [Millennium Development Goals] and other internationally agreed goals."<sup>40</sup> It is a reaction to the disproportionate influence over the assessed budget of countries that contribute little to the U.N. and recognition that donor nation priorities are likely to be better addressed through voluntary contributions.<sup>41</sup>

36. Charter of the United Nations, at [www.un.org/aboutun/charter/index.html](http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/index.html).

37. *Delivering as One*, p. 38. Emphasis added.

38. "Programme Budget for the Biennium 2002–2003," General Assembly Document A/RES/56/254 A–C, February 12, 2002, at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/497/12/PDF/N0149712.pdf>, and "Programme Budget for the Biennium 2006–2007," General Assembly Document A/RES/60/247 A–C, February 1, 2006, at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/502/42/PDF/N0550242.pdf>.

39. *Delivering as One*, p. 38.

40. *Ibid.*

This is as it should be: Activities that fail to deliver do not deserve long-term, inviolate funding streams. Assured funding through assessed contributions is one of the reasons why some U.N. mandates and activities continue after their relevance declines; their purpose is overtaken by events, other institutions, or mandates; and support by most member states evaporates. Instead of increasing assessed funding or moving toward multi-year funding, the U.N. system should be moving toward increased voluntary funding to impose a stronger market incentive for programs to meet their goals and justify continued funding.

### What Should Be Done

Supporters of the United Nations often describe the organization as an “indispensable instrument” or as possessing a “unique legitimacy.”<sup>42</sup> These claims are more wishful thinking than reality. The U.N. is fraught with outdated mandates, antiquated management and business practices, and ineffectual oversight, all of which waste resources and undermine its effectiveness in discharging its responsibilities. These failings greatly sully the reputation of the U.N. and call into question proposals to give the U.N. more authority or a more central role in addressing international problems.

The United Nations does, however, possess advantages and resources that make it useful in addressing many international problems. These advantages and resources could be utilized even more if the organization could be reformed to address the flaws that keep it from fully meeting its responsibilities. It is in the interest of the U.S. to have an effective United Nations and engage the organization to advance its priorities and facilitate cooperation with other nations in addressing common problems.

To be useful, the U.N. must carry out its responsibilities competently, and the organization as it currently exists falls short. It is past time for the

U.N. General Assembly to move forward on adopting the fundamental reforms necessary to make the organization more relevant and effective.<sup>43</sup> Specifically, it should:

- **Make implementation of the Secretary-General’s reform proposals on management, oversight, human resources, transparency, and accountability the first priorities in U.N. reform.** *Delivering as One* notes accurately that “without ambitious and far-reaching reforms the United Nations will be unable to deliver on its promises and maintain its legitimate position at the heart of the multilateral system.” Repeated scandals, corruption, and ineffective use of resources at the U.N. have been well documented, and reforms to address these shortcomings are long overdue. Indeed, these proposals should be the first priority of reform because failure to address them undermines the organization’s effectiveness in meeting its existing responsibilities and mandates, much less the additional tasks that some seek to assign the world body.
- **Conduct a comprehensive review of U.N. mandates and eliminate outdated, duplicative, or unnecessary mandates.** A great deal of redundancy and inefficiency could be resolved if the U.N. General Assembly would conduct a comprehensive mandate review and adopt sunset clauses for mandates, some of which date back to the 1940s. Secretary-General Kofi Annan missed an opportunity when he ignored the instruction in the *Outcome Document* to propose U.N. mandates for elimination. The G-77 is resisting efforts to eliminate older or duplicative mandates. While an ad hoc Informal Working Group on Mandate Review has been created, it has focused only on the 399 mandates of the General Assembly—only about 4 percent of all U.N. mandates.<sup>44</sup> The lack of

41. Brett D. Schaefer and Janice A. Smith, “The U.S. Should Support Japan’s Call to Revise the UN Scale of Assessments,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1017, March 18, 2006, at [www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1017.cfm#\\_ftn2](http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1017.cfm#_ftn2).

42. *Delivering as One*, Transmittal Letter and pp. 1 and 9.

43. For more information on progress on specific U.N. reforms, see Schaefer, “The Status of United Nations Reform.”

progress on mandate review greatly inhibits the U.N.'s ability to allocate funds according to priorities and eliminate unnecessary tasks, personnel, and functions.

- **Move toward increased voluntary funding for the U.N. and its funds, programs, and specialized agencies.** *Delivering as One* refers repeatedly to “unpredictable” voluntary funding of many U.N. activities as a key factor undermining long-term planning and effectiveness. Nothing could be further from the truth. Increased reliance on voluntary funding is a reaction by major donors to the failure of U.N. funds, programs, and specialized agencies to address donor priorities through the regular budget. Assured funding through assessed contributions is one of the reasons why some U.N. mandates and activities continue after their relevance declines; their purpose is overtaken by events, other institutions, or mandates; and support by most member states evaporates. Instead of increasing assessed funding or moving toward multi-year funding, the U.N. system should be moving toward increased voluntary funding to impose a stronger market incentive for programs to meet their goals and justify continued funding.
- **Resist efforts to invest greater authority, resources, and responsibilities in the U.N. until the organization adopts the reforms necessary to ensure that it can discharge those tasks effectively and efficiently.** Many reports considering U.N. reform contain proposals to expand U.N. authority. Such proposals should raise questions, given the organization's poor performance in meeting its current mandates. Initia-

tives to overhaul the management, oversight, ethical, human resources, and accountability and transparency practices of the organization must be adopted before serious consideration can be given to expanding its authority and responsibilities. Publishing repetitious reports and fatuous proposals to expand the size and responsibilities of the U.N. is no substitute for reform. Until management and administrative reforms are implemented and existing activities and mandates are reviewed for their relevance and importance, all existing and new U.N. initiatives and proposals will be undermined.

## Conclusion

The election of a new Secretary-General presents an opportunity to reinvigorate the drive for U.N. reform. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has an opportunity to change practices within his authority and press the General Assembly to adopt many of the positive proposals made under Kofi Annan that have yet to be adopted. The United States should support Ban in pushing for fundamental reform.

However, if history holds any lessons, diplomacy and moral suasion will not be sufficient to achieve the reforms necessary. The U.S. should not hesitate to supplement its diplomatic efforts with financial carrots and sticks and use its voice and vote to oppose new initiatives, offices or organizations, or budget increases until reforms are implemented.

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44. For a searchable database of all U.N. mandates, see United Nations, “Mandate Registry,” at <http://webapps01.un.org/mandatereview/searchStart.doc.htm> (September 25, 2006). For an overview of the mandate review process, see Irene Martinetti, “Sluggish Progress on U.N. Mandate Review,” *U.N. Reform Watch* No. 18, August 16, 2006, at [www.centerforunreform.org/textpages/unreformwatches/unreformwatch18.htm](http://www.centerforunreform.org/textpages/unreformwatches/unreformwatch18.htm).