

July 26, 1993

SETTING PRIORITIES AT THE UNITED NATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, many world leaders have urged a large role for the United Nations in international affairs. Some have advocated a bigger U.N. peacekeeping role, while others argue for expanding the U.N.'s responsibilities for environmental protection and economic development, particularly in the Third World.¹ Rich and poor nations alike applaud a more activist U.N. In the industrialized world, environmentalists hope that the U.N. will save such natural resources as the rain forests, many of which are located in the Third World. Meanwhile, leaders of poor Third World countries are happy to see U.N. funds for environmental and development issues flow into their treasuries.

The best recent example of plans for an expanded U.N. role in environmental and developmental issues was last year's United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. One hundred and twenty heads of state attended this "Earth Summit," where they signed agreements on everything from biodiversity to global warming. Although the Bush Administration distanced itself from these unenforceable agreements, the Clinton Administration on June 4, 1993, signed the biodiversity agreement, and has otherwise endorsed the goals of the summit.²

More recently, the U.N. has found itself thrust into the role of world policeman. It has fourteen active peacekeeping missions around the world, from Angola to Cambodia. More than 80,000 troops are assigned to U.N. missions, which vary in size from 40 (India/Pakistan) to 25,000 (former Yugoslavia). The estimated cost of the Cambodia presence alone for 1993 is \$2 billion.³

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- 1 The U.N.'s peacekeeping role was examined in a previous *Backgrounder*. See Andrew J. Cowin, "Expanding United Nations Peacekeeping Role Poses Risks for America," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 917, October 13, 1992. Studies calling for an expanded U.N. role include "Rethinking Basic Assumptions about the United Nations," Conference Summary by the World Federalist Association and Johnson Foundation, February 1992; William Durch and Berry Blechman, "Keeping the Peace: The United Nations in the Emerging World Order," The Henry L. Stimson Center, March 1992. See also the final documents from the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, especially "Agenda 21."
 - 2 The agreement was signed by U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright. It awaits Senate ratification.

While there is merit to some U.N. peacekeeping role, the world body's dramatic expansion into this and other areas since the end of the Cold War demands a thorough review of U.N. goals and priorities. In general, a broad expansion of responsibilities is a big mistake for two reasons: 1) poor management, bad organization, and corruption plague the U.N., making the successful implementation of its goals unlikely; and 2) the U.N. has trouble with the far easier tasks it already handles, such as economic development assistance in the Third World. There are more than a dozen separate agencies, programs, and commissions independently assigned development responsibilities, and tangible results are hard to identify.

Before the U.N. attempts to rescue the environment and eradicate world poverty, it should put its own house in order. It can do this by eliminating the waste and fraud that have crippled many of its operations. For example, studies have shown that even basic print services done in-house at the U.N. cost 40 percent more than they would if performed by private contractors. Also, the U.N. needs to set realistic goals. In peacekeeping, for example, the unconstrained growth of operations is clearly unsustainable, yet there is no long-term program short of simply spending more money and establishing yet another bloated bureaucratic structure to "manage" unrealistic objectives. The post-Cold War U.N. should set its sights on attainable social goals like efficient international disaster relief and effective refugee assistance.

The U.S. should be a champion of reform of the U.N. It should promote reforms that eliminate waste, corruption, and mismanagement, while establishing realistic and achievable project objectives. The Clinton Administration and the Congress should adopt a five-point reform program. They should:

- 1) **Insist that the U.N. establish the position of inspector general to target waste, fraud, and abuse.** Press reports, outside audits by management consultants, and even the sporadic internal scrutiny reveal systemic waste, mismanagement, and corruption at the U.N. A permanent internal mechanism must be established to insure the U.N.'s integrity and safeguard American taxpayer contributions.
- 2) **Support merging all the U.N. economic and social committees and organs into one entity that would operate under streamlined management.** One reason the U.N. is so ineffective is that a variety of separate U.N. organizations seek to achieve identical goals in an uncoordinated manner. This causes confusion and wasted effort.
- 3) **Recognize that the U.N. has limited capabilities and redirect U.N. efforts toward attainable goals.** The U.N. should function less like an economic development agency that focuses on utopian tasks such as eradicating poverty and ending war, and more like the Red Cross, concentrating on narrower goals such as aiding natural disaster victims and refugees. Through the use of its funding lever, the Clinton Administration should encourage these more limited, measurable, and achievable objectives.
- 4) **Continue to pressure U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to live up to his promises on institutional reform.** Strong signals from Washington could encourage Boutros-Ghali to revive his interrupted reform efforts.

3 CIA Directorate of Intelligence, *Worldwide Peacekeeping Operations, 1993; The Washington Times*, July 13, 1993, p. A8.

- 5) **Threaten to withdraw U.S. funding from U.N. economic and social programs if U.N reforms are not forthcoming.** America pays about 25 percent of the regular budgets of U.N. economic and social programs, or about \$640 million in assessments for 1993, plus another \$200 million to those agencies which subsist on voluntary contributions from member states, such as the United Nations Development Program. By failing to reform, the U.N. wastes money provided by American taxpayers.

MISMANAGEMENT AND CORRUPTION AT THE U.N.

The U.N. is a poorly managed institution plagued by corruption. It is a haven for political patronage and suffers from a lack of management oversight. Moreover, because the U.N. has played only a marginal role in world affairs for forty years, member states have had little incentive to press for management reforms.

U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali claims to understand these problems. He acknowledges that: "Duplication is widespread; co-ordination is often nominal; bureaucratic battles aimed at monopolizing a particular subject are rife, and organizational objectives are sometimes in conflict."⁴ But when it comes to management reform, Boutros-Ghali complains of battling his own staff when he tries to "restore discipline in an organization where the negligence and fragmentation are widespread."⁵ While once visiting the U.N. offices in Geneva, where he was championing management reforms, Boutros-Ghali ran into a bureaucratic wall. As he said, "I was attacked. There are thousands of staff. Half of them do no work."⁶

An experienced diplomat like Boutros-Ghali should not be surprised by this resistance to reform. According to Ronald Spiers, an American who served as U.N. Under Secretary General, "There has never been efficient management [at the U.N.]."⁷ Indeed, a complete list of serious management failures and corruption at the U.N. would be quite long. Some of the more serious are:

Item # 1: Widespread Management Deficiencies. Despite a long history of persistent corruption and mismanagement, the U.N. lacks an independent inspector general. Instead it relies on a Board of Auditors, a group of three high-level government financial auditors from member states, who periodically examine the U.N.'s books and operations. This group in June 1992 compiled a long list of management problems in operations run by the U.N. Secretariat.⁸ Among them:

- ✓ Experts and consultants have been hired without receiving the required approval of supervising U.N. officials. This has made it possible for U.N. bureaucrats to hire their friends without proper authorization.

4 Quoted in "Report to the Secretary General of the United Nations by Dick Thornburgh, Under Secretary General for Administration and Management," March 3, 1993, p. 26.

5 "As UN Expands, So Do Its Problems," *The Washington Post*, September 20, 1992, p. A26, quoting an interview from a London-based Arabic newspaper *Asharq al-Awat*.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements for the Biennium ended 13 December 1991 and Report of the Board of Auditors*, United Nations, 1992.

- ✓ In violation of U.N. rules and good management practice, from 1990 to 1991, 83 percent of purchases costing \$20,000 or more were made without competitive bidding. The Board of Auditors report states, "...bidding has become the exception rather than the general rule." The report warned that this "has been a recurring audit observation, yet not much has been done to reverse the trend."
- ✓ For some 70 percent of the goods and services purchased by U.N. Headquarters there is no documentation to prove that the goods and services actually were received. The report points out that many of these purchases involved very expensive items. From 1990 to 1991, in fifteen cases lacking documentation, the U.N. spent a total of \$8,643,146, or an average of more than \$576,000 per undocumented item.
- ✓ U.N. office managers have been instructed by superiors to forego taking an inventory of items costing less than \$1,500. As a result, tables, chairs, filing cabinets, typewriters, photocopiers, cameras, and televisions have not been inventoried. Lacking a documented record of their whereabouts, the U.N. has no way of accounting for these items.
- ✓ Millions of dollars in cash are left in the equivalent of checking accounts instead of being invested in short-term instruments that would considerably increase interest income.
- ✓ A separate, costly, and "unnecessary" secretariat was established for the International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction (the 1990s), when the same task could have been handled through the already established U.N. Disaster Relief Office.
- ✓ Supervisors regularly fail to obey U.N. rules that call for a performance review after a staffer's first five years.
- ✓ Temporary staffers often continue collecting salaries without the required periodic review of their contracts.

Item #2: Corruption at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A bureaucracy set up to assist international refugees, the UNHCR, long has suffered from corruption and mismanagement. One official was alleged to have run a call girl ring at U.N. Headquarters in Geneva in the early 1980s.⁹ He subsequently was transferred to Uganda, where he became chief UNHCR representative in June 1983. An internal U.N. investigation later concluded that after the U.N. official's arrival in Uganda, some \$400,000 worth of food was sold on the black market instead of being distributed free to the hungry. Moreover, while this official was in Uganda, more than \$1 million worth of goods disappeared from U.N. warehouses, and more than \$670,000 of agency vehicles were either sold or given away. This one individual is believed to be responsible for an estimated loss of \$2.4 million.¹⁰

⁹ William Branigin, "Refugee Official Kept Job for Years Despite Allegations, Inquiries," *The Washington Post*, September 21, 1992.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

He denied that he profited from these management lapses or intentionally engineered them. During the U.N.'s internal investigation, the official was suspended with full pay.

Despite these alleged transgressions, the official enjoyed the support of U.N. associates. One colleague reportedly threatened to kill an American U.N. official if the American investigated too deeply.¹¹ Apparently as a result of a well-known "good old boy" network, the UNHCR official was reinstated and assigned in 1989 to head the UNHCR office in Djibouti.

In 1991, Djibouti became the center of aid programs for refugees from civil wars in neighboring Somalia and Ethiopia. The pattern of irregularities recurred. Massive shipments of food aid disappeared before they could be distributed to starving refugees. A U.N. Board of Auditors report indicates that the Djibouti office was responsible for mismanagement and misappropriation of \$689,359, including seven payments worth \$346,000 to fictitious companies.¹²

This example of U.N. corruption is disturbing. Not only were hundreds of thousands of dollars wasted because of corruption. In addition, poor management and corruption at UNHCR certainly led to unnecessary deaths by starvation in Ethiopia and Somalia.

Item #3: Corruption and Mismanagement at the Economic Commission for Africa. There is a plethora of U.N. organizations, commissions, and subdivisions with murky mandates and elusive goals. Among these is the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which is supposed "to initiate and participate in measures for facilitating concerted action for the economic development of Africa."¹³ With such an ambiguous mission, it is little surprise that the U.N. Board of Auditors has documented egregious mismanagement and outright corruption at the ECA.

For example, the Board of Auditors found:

- ✓ That an ECA officer amassed at least \$125,000 by breaking U.N. rules and the laws of his host country regarding currency transactions.
- ✓ A lack of any system for evaluating the staffing needs of the ECA. Thus "neither the management nor the staff responsible for budget approval... has a reliable basis for determining appropriate staffing levels."
- ✓ A hopelessly tangled bureaucracy. The auditors noted that ECA is subdivided into ten divisions, and eleven additional organizational units, creating an unwieldy and inefficient bureaucratic structure. They recommended that the units be incorporated into the divisions, and "the number of divisions should be reduced dramatically."
- ✓ Unproductive employees. ECA translators work at two-thirds to one-half the efficiency of other translators within the U.N. system.
- ✓ Unsubmitted annual inventory reports, making it difficult to monitor whether property is being stolen.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 *United Nations Handbook 1991*, p. 73.

- ✓ That most reports issued by ECA programs are worthless because they contain only well-known data and because they lack an assessment of existing problems or suggestions for remedial action.

Item #4: Mismanagement at the Office of Conference Services. At the behest of former U.N. Under Secretary General Dick Thornburgh, one of the few U.N. officials who pushed for real reform, the respected international management consultancy McKinsey & Co. audited the U.N.'s Department of Administration and Management. In the six divisions which comprise this department, McKinsey found that the Office of Conference Services had the worst management problems.

The Office of Conference Services (OCS) manages the U.N. printshop and arranges meetings, conferences, translations, and transcribing. The printshop's problems were found to be so serious that McKinsey recommended removing it from the OCS altogether. They also proposed contracting out much of the U.N.'s printing operation to private companies. McKinsey found that costs at the U.N. printshop are as much as 40 percent higher than those at comparable facilities. An explanation for this inefficiency is not difficult to find. Workers at the U.N. printshop take almost five times as many sick days, are given twice the amount of vacation, and take twice as much break time during the day than do workers at other print shops. Despite their poor work ethic, they earn 40 percent higher wages.¹⁴

BOUTROS-GHALI DASHES HOPES FOR REFORM

When he became U.N. Secretary General in January 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali claimed to be a reformer, and in the months following his appointment, seemed to be moving in that direction. He reduced the number of departments within the Secretariat from nineteen to five and appeared to be willing to cut the size of U.N. bureaucracy and impose a more disciplined work ethic. But a rebellion from within the ranks of the U.N. bureaucrats, caused by their fear of job cuts, quickly bogged down Boutros-Ghali's reform efforts. To placate his workers, Boutros-Ghali promised that all staff reduction goals would be reached through attrition.

In December 1992, Boutros-Ghali weakened his only major reform—cutting the number of U.N. departments—by creating three new departments out of the Department of Economic and Social Development. Taken in response to Earth Summit resolutions which left room for flexibility in staff allocations, Boutros-Ghali's action unnecessarily added to the already sprawling U. N. bureaucracy. This will increase confusion at the U.N. and make reform more difficult.

Even if the U.N. were efficiently managed and there were no corruption, its loose and redundant bureaucratic structure still would undermine its ability to function well. The overlapping responsibilities of the U.N.'s various agencies and organs lead to wasted spending, duplication of effort, and a reduction in the number of projects the organization can undertake effectively.

14 Memorandum from McKinsey & Co. to Under Secretary General Dick Thornburgh, "Improving DAM's Performance within the UN Secretariat," June 5, 1992.

For example, to spur economic development, the U.N. has created the U.N. Development Program, the U.N. Industrial Development Organization, the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, the Sustainable Development Commission, the Department for Development Support and Management Services, and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, as well as a plethora of regional commissions, such as the Economic Commission for Africa. In addition, agencies such as the World Food Program, whose activities are not explicitly geared toward development, often undertake development projects such as building dams and roads. Furthermore, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, U.N.-affiliated agencies that also provide funding for economic development, run separate and distinct operations that coordinate with other U.N. bodies only occasionally. None of these bodies can be forced to work with the others.

One drawback to these overlapping responsibilities is that Third World governments seeking U.N. development aid for projects approach one organ or agency after another until they find one that approves their request. For example, if a country wants to build a road, it can go to the United Nations Development Program looking for development assistance, or to the World Food Program claiming the road is needed to haul agricultural products.

The welter of U.N. agencies, bodies, and organs leads to an overwhelming number of meetings at which decisions must be made. Even well-organized and well-staffed missions to the U.N. sometimes take conflicting positions on the same issue in different committees. For example, the American mission is probably better financed and better staffed than any other. Nevertheless, sometimes the American representative to the economic and social committee of the General Assembly argues in favor of certain programs, while the American representative to the administrative and budgetary committee demands cuts in the same programs.

During the 1984 Ethiopian famine, this systemic lack of coordination proved tragic. At least four U.N. entities became involved in the famine relief effort: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Program (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Bank. All of these were to be coordinated by a new layer of bureaucracy, called the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa, set up solely to deal with the Ethiopia famine. Unfortunately, the head of FAO, Edouard Saouma, disliked others encroaching on his bureaucratic territory. He particularly disliked sharing responsibility with WFP, with which he had a tense relationship. As a result, when WFP urgently requested 26,000 metric tons of food from FAO, Saouma withheld his approval for twenty days. During the delay, at least 34,000 Ethiopians died from starvation.¹⁵

BEYOND UTOPIANISM: FOCUSING ON ATTAINABLE GOALS

Beyond mismanagement and corruption, though, lies a more insidious problem that further limits the U.N.'s effectiveness: its inability to establish limited, attainable goals. One utopian goal set for the 1992 Earth Summit was "to eradicate poverty." This is reminiscent of some of the more grandiose missions adopted by certain U.N. agencies at their inception. UNESCO, for example, was established "to remove the causes of war from the minds of man," while the

15 William Branigin, "FAO: Length, Style of Long Reign at Issue," *The Washington Post*, September 22, 1992, p. A14. See also Doug Williams, *The Specialized Agencies and the United Nations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 111.

World Health Organization set the patently unrealistic goal of "health for all by the year 2000."

Contrary to these overblown objectives, the best organizations within the U.N. system are those that accomplish clearly defined tasks, satisfying achievable goals in a professional manner and without controversy. Many of these are the technical organizations for which the community of nations found a need before it even developed the U.N. These organizations, since subsumed into the U.N., include:

The Universal Postal Union (UPU), established in 1875 to promote the organization and improvement of world postal services;

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), established in 1934 (replacing a similar organization founded in 1865), which allocates radio frequencies and maintains a registry of radio frequency assignments;

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), founded in 1947, which establishes air safety and navigation standards, among other tasks; and

The World Meteorological Association, set up in 1951 to replace the International Meteorology Organization (founded in 1873), which has developed a network of weather stations around the world to improve global forecasting.¹⁶

Most of these organizations have been successful because they have set clear and measurable goals: delivering the mail, establishing rights to radio frequencies, drawing aviation maps, and reporting the weather. Each of these functions is of sufficient importance in the modern world that politics rarely interferes.

By contrast, the economic and social entities at the U.N. address controversial political issues. Debates over economic philosophy, for example, have paralyzed the U.N. In the 1970s, poorer countries wanted to impose a New International Economic Order on the world. This scheme would have called for a huge transfer of wealth from the rich countries to the poor. Relying on socialist economic theories, the Third World countries argued that "sharing the wealth" was the best way to end poverty. The U.S. and other Western countries strongly opposed the New International Economic Order, arguing that U.N. agencies should support free market solutions. This distracting debate paralyzed the U.N. without yielding tangible benefits.

The U.N. should focus its efforts and resources in areas where there is international consensus for U.N. involvement. Obvious areas of emphasis are natural disaster relief, refugee assistance, and the distribution of medicine in poor countries. Measuring achievement of these goals should be relatively easy. Observers can determine success by asking very concrete questions: Are all the refugees sheltered? How many vaccines have been administered? Once these questions are answered, the U.N. (and the world's nations supporting it) will know how effective the programs are.

The U.N. has a long way to go before it earns the world's confidence and respect. It suffers from corruption, mismanagement, poor organization, and an inflated sense of its own potential. Before giving the U.N. any additional authority, particularly sweeping responsibility for such areas as peacekeeping, the environment, and economic development, Americans should

16 For more information on the technical organizations, see Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-39.

insist that the U.N. address its own problems. Thus, the Clinton Administration, with the support of Congress, should:

1) Insist that the U.N. establish the position of inspector general to target waste, fraud, and abuse.

Despite decades of U.N. mismanagement, corruption, and waste, the world body still lacks any independent investigative officer. Shortcomings are revealed by enterprising news reporters, the occasional aggressive U.N. official like Dick Thornburgh, sporadic reports from the Board of Auditors, and ad hoc investigations when circumstances get so bad that the need for review cannot be ignored.

This must change. The American taxpayer funds 25 percent of U.N. operations. That money is being wasted. Until the U.N. has an independent inspector general, President Clinton should consider saving taxpayer money by slashing the American contribution to the U.N. by 10 percent a year until the inspector general is appointed. Under no circumstances should he contemplate increasing the budget or the power of the U.N. before an inspector general is appointed.

Because of the close interaction among various U.N. entities, the inspector general should have system-wide powers. This would require that each specialized agency agree to cooperate with the inspector general. The inspector general should be given a staff of 150 officials who enjoy complete access to all U.N. records and bookkeeping materials, along with the power to question all U.N. officials.

The inspector general should report to the Secretary General and the Security Council, keeping them informed about problems in program administration and operations. He could investigate and publicize sweetheart contracts between U.N. officials and U.N. vendors, and expose violations of U.N. hiring rules. He could thus ensure that U.N. funds are spent as intended.

2) Support merging all the U.N. economic and social committees and organs into one entity that would operate under streamlined management.

The current profusion of U.N. entities causes needless duplication of effort and expense. At the same time, it inhibits rational organization and prevents the U.N. from accomplishing its goals. The more than a dozen economic and social organs should be merged into one body, and administered in accordance with modern management principles.

This would put an end to the current situation in which many agencies share a common mission, but none is held responsible if the mission fails. This could prevent the type of bureaucratic in-fighting that needlessly cost thousands of lives in Ethiopia.

Rather than dividing responsibility for the U.N.'s economic and social policy among a myriad of organizations, each mission—health, refugee relief, and disaster assistance—should be coordinated by a single official who would report directly to one U.N. official responsible for economic and social programs. The lack of clear dividing lines and hierarchy has allowed too many U.N. officials to expand their fiefdoms while evading blame for their failures.

Another advantage of merging all the economic and social entities into one body is that the member states, which theoretically control the U.N., would be better able to keep an eye on what U.N. bureaucrats are doing. The number of important budget and policy meetings would be reduced, saving time and streamlining the work of the various delegations. Moreover, the lines of responsibility would be clearer, and funding requests could be better coordinated. No

longer would U.N. development agencies and programs be an overlapping tangle of independent fiefdoms. Ultimate responsibility would rest with one person answerable to the member states.

3) Recognize that the U.N. has limited capabilities and redirect U.N. efforts toward attainable goals.

Some specialized agencies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Telecommunication Union are assigned mundane tasks: setting air safety standards and allocating radio frequencies. These agencies accomplish their goals and serve useful purposes. The U.N. should abandon unreachable utopian goals such as "eradicating poverty" and "health care for all by the year 2000." Instead, the U.N.'s economic and social programs should concentrate on useful but limited activities. Some of these would include efficiently dispensing vaccines, effectively assisting refugees, and competently providing disaster relief.

4) Continue to pressure U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali to live up to his promises on institutional reform.

Boutros-Ghali has managed to talk like a reformer but act like the Egyptian bureaucrats he so often decries. Worse, he regularly insults the U.S. by complaining publicly that Washington pays its U.N. dues late and plays too small a role in U.N. peacekeeping operations. This criticism comes despite the fact that the U.S. contributes 25 percent of the U.N.'s regular budget and has provided most of the support for high-visibility U.N. operations in Iraq and Somalia.

5) Threaten to withdraw U.S. funding from U.N. economic and social programs if U.N reforms are not forthcoming.

If the U.N. and its specialized agencies fail to accept the authority of a system-wide inspector general, and if they refuse to reform by consolidating redundant departments and programs, America should cut back its contribution by 10 percent a year until the reforms are accomplished.

The U.S. will spend about \$840 million in 1993 on social and economic programs. With this money America can accomplish more to assist the economic development of the Third World by acting on its own, through the Agency for International Development (AID), than by participating in U.N. development programs. Funneling money directly through AID, the U.S. would retain complete control over projects and receive full credit from the aid recipients.

Another alternative would be to cut U.N. funding and give the savings back to the taxpayers in the form of fewer government expenditures and lower taxes.

CONCLUSION

For 45 years, the United Nations operated in the shadows of world affairs, eclipsed by the East-West confrontation. Now that the Cold War has ended, many people want to see the U.N. strengthened and assigned broader responsibility around the world. These expectations are premature. The U.N. is not prepared to handle the open-ended missions that some in the diplomatic community want to foist upon it. The U.N. can do many things, but it cannot alone stop civil wars, create economic development, or free the globe of pollution.

Indeed, the U.N. has a long way to go before it lives up to even its limited potential. The primary impediments are sloppy management procedures and a haphazard, overlapping organizational structure. These prevent the U.N. from efficiently accomplishing many simple tasks, let alone making a lasting contribution in such complex areas as economic development or environmental protection.

Sound management practices need to be established at the U.N., beginning with the acceptance of a system-wide inspector general. The world body needs to be reorganized along lines that make sense. All the committees, commissions, programs, and other related entities that deal with economic and social issues should be rolled into one body with streamlined management.

For the time being, many are withholding judgment on the U.N.'s role in the post-Cold War world. If the organization can reform itself, reduce its economic and social missions to a manageable size, and accomplish its tasks efficiently, then its stature in world affairs would be enhanced. If not, the U.N. is doomed to permanent irrelevance.

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APPENDIX

THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

According to the U.N. Charter, the economic and social work of the U.N. is supposed to be coordinated by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Fifty-four countries are members of ECOSOC, with eighteen sitting on the governing council at any one time. The United States always has been a member.

ECOSOC is an umbrella organization with little authority. It interacts with two distinct types of organizations: 1) specialized agencies and other autonomous organizations, and 2) organs and programs related to ECOSOC.* The nebulous nature of its coordinating power and lack of explicit authority means ECOSOC's governing council has little direct impact on what the U.N. accomplishes in the economic and social fields.

The Specialized Agencies.

The specialized agencies are part of ECOSOC only in a formal sense. Many of them, including the World Bank and the International Labor Organization, were formed before the U.N. was founded and were absorbed by it in an attempt by the founders to place all intergovernmental organizations under one roof. Thus, the specialized agencies are part of the "U.N. system" only in a technical sense. They submit regular statements to ECOSOC, enact similar staff rules, send representatives to ECOSOC meetings, and exchange information with ECOSOC staffers. Also, most agencies agree to consider recommendations by the U.N. General Assembly, but are not bound by them.

Each specialized agency was formed in much the same manner as the U.N., with formal, signed agreements between government leaders. Like the U.N., the specialized agencies receive funding from assessments imposed on agency member states. Some agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, receive additional funds through voluntary contributions made by wealthier member states. Funding also comes through contracts to render services for the U.N.

Organs and Programs Related to ECOSOC.

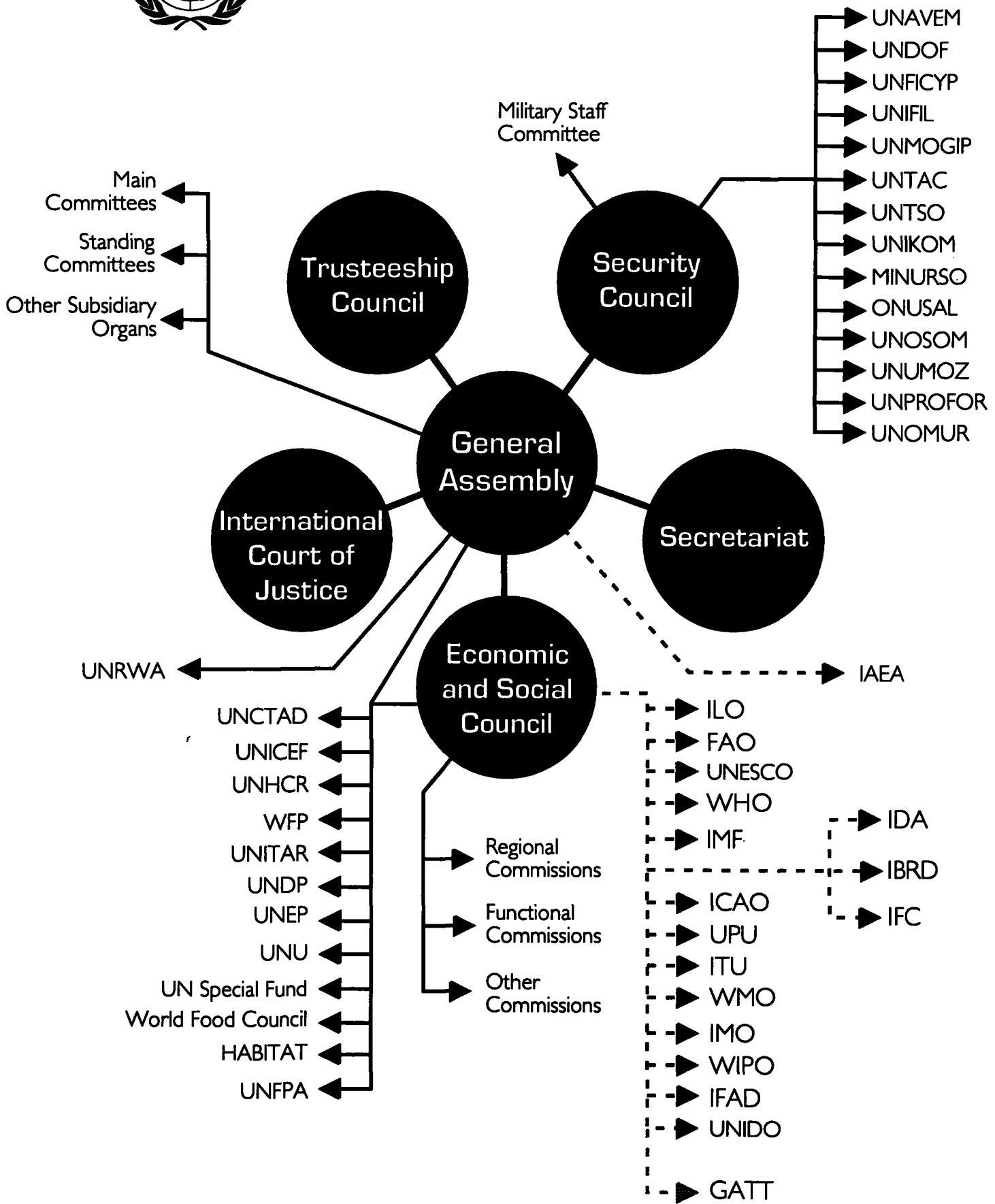
These organs and programs, such as the United Nations Development Program or Economic Commission for Africa, are established by ECOSOC or General Assembly resolutions. They do not have their own constitutions and can be abolished by a resolution of the body that created them. Funding for these entities comes from the regular U.N. budget, voluntary contributions from wealthy U.N. member states, or other sources such as private charities.

The heads of ECOSOC organs serve at the pleasure of the Secretary General. They typically retain enormous independence, however, because the number of bodies, committees, commissions, and other organs within the U.N. make it difficult for the Secretary General, General Assembly, or member states to exercise adequate oversight. Many are shrewd politicians and have found ways to cement control over their organizations and increase their budgets. Tactics include: actively courting important contributing states, establishing a support network throughout the powerful U.N. bureaucracy, and promoting oneself as a representative of a regional or ethnic bloc.

* A minor third category, "special bodies," also exists. It encompasses entities such as the U.N. think tank called the U.N. Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR). These special bodies are of little practical importance. Aside from UNITAR, they are: U.N. International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); U.N. University (UNU); U.N. Volunteers (UNV); Office of the U.N. Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO); U.N. Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR); United Nations Center for Human Settlements (HABITAT)



THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION



Source: *The United Nations Handbook*, The United Nations.

U.N. Agency Acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
HABITAT	United Nations Center for Human Settlements
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IDA	International Development Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
ONUSAL	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
UNAVEM	United National Angola Verification Meeting
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFICYP	United Nations Force in Cyprus
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNIKOM	United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNMOGIP	United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
UNU	United Nations University
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNUMOZ	United Nations Operation in Mozambique
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNOMUR	United Nations Observer Mission in Uganda-Rwanda
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization