

Gingrich-Mitchell Report: A Viable Approach to UN Reform

What is the report about?

In December 2004, Congress called for a 12-member bipartisan taskforce to review prospects for reform of the United Nations. The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) coordinated the taskforce, which included participants from the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Heritage Foundation, and the Hoover Institution. The members of the taskforce came from diverse backgrounds and political affiliations to produce a consensus report entitled "*American Interests and UN Reform*." The report offers an American perspective on UN reform and America's international responsibilities. It is a balanced and thoughtful analysis of the UN's current challenges and presents constructive recommendations.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell headed the panel, which presented its report on June 15, 2005. The report recognizes that:

- In today's interconnected world, global problems require global solutions;
- American leadership and participation at the UN summit in September is crucial to making the United Nations an effective institution for the 21st century;
- The United Nations is a body composed of individual nation-states; too often, member states have found it convenient to blame the UN when they themselves blocked collective action.

This bi-partisan effort illustrates the right approach to UN reform. Both the USIP report and *In Larger Freedom*, the reform plan released in March by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, incorporate many of the U.S.'s top priorities. The upcoming UN summit, to be held in New York in September, provides an historic opportunity for the Bush Administration to aggressively advance UN reform.

Recommendations

The report focused on five main themes:

- **Preventing Genocide and Human Rights Abuses**
 - *American Interests and UN Reform* endorses the principle of a "responsibility to protect" as a basis for countries to work together against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It states that although every country is sovereign, if a government fails to protect its people from massive human rights violations, the UN Security Council or the international community can intervene diplomatically and, if necessary, militarily.
 - The report takes a strong stance on Darfur. It urges the United States to assemble a package of assistance with NATO for the deployment of a larger African Union presence and assist in the establishment of a "no-fly" zone over Darfur.
 - The Gingrich - Mitchell task force recommends that the United States encourage the African Union (AU) and other regional bodies to develop their own capabilities to prevent and halt genocide, mass killings and human rights violations.

SUMMARY

- The report also urges the United States to support a restructuring of personnel, such that the the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) and the Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide (SAPG) report directly to the Security Council. This restructuring will ensure timely reporting in a crisis. The taskforce recommends that that the special advisor position should be made full-time and the two offices should be given sufficient resources to be more effective.
- It is no secret that the current Commission on Human Rights is flawed, allowing countries such as Liberia and Sudan to cover up their own poor human rights records instead of exposing the worst violators. The report supports Secretary General Kofi Annan's recommendation to replace the current dysfunctional Commission on Human Rights with a Human Rights Council whose members would be elected by the General Assembly based on their respective human rights records. Ideally, the Council would be composed of democracies with a strong commitment to human rights.
- The report recommends that the Human Rights Council coordinate its efforts with the Democracy Fund and Democracy Caucus. The Fund, which was proposed by President Bush at the UN General Assembly on December 21, 2004, "would help countries lay the foundations of democracy by instituting the rule of law and independent courts, a free press, political parties and trade unions. Money from the fund would also help set up voter precincts and polling places, and support the work of election monitors."
- The taskforce did not reach an agreement on how to expand the Security Council but states that it is important that any expansion should enhance the effectiveness of the Council, not hinder it.
- **Development and Humanitarian Assistance**
 - The taskforce agrees that addressing the needs of the developing world is important and recognized the important role the UN plays in such efforts. It recommends that the Department of State take the lead on U.S. development and humanitarian assistance policy in the U.S. government. It also suggests that the State Department facilitate burden-sharing by coordinating its efforts with multilateral organizations such as the UN.
 - The taskforce agrees that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed to in September 2000, are ambitious but attainable targets for the year 2015 in the global effort to address poverty, hunger, disease, and other development challenges. In the report he published in March, Secretary General Kofi Annan emphasized that "humanity will not enjoy development without security, or security without development."
 - The Secretary General has long held that countries must commit 0.7% of their gross national incomes in order to achieve the MDGs. The taskforce did not reach an agreement whether or not to endorse this proposal; however, it stressed the need for the UN to ensure that countries invest their aid efficiently and implement legal, economic and political reforms to achieve sustained economic growth and development.
 - The report advocates that the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) should direct its efforts towards crosscutting issues like the MDGs, good governance, rule of law, and anticorruption. It also suggests that ECOSOC should eliminate the practice of secret voting by members.
 - The taskforce urges the UN to strengthen its relationship with the World Bank.
 - The report strongly recommends that the UN rationalize and simplify the funding of its programs
 - The report urges the World Health Organization (WHO) to take the lead role in combating infectious diseases.
 - It also recommends that United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) lead global efforts for child survival and against hunger & nutritional deficiency diseases.
 - The taskforce states that the U.S. should lead a high-level effort to re-engineer the current UN relief architecture to avoid overlapping responsibilities and inefficient competition.

SUMMARY

- **Integrity, Transparency, Accountability, Effectiveness**

The taskforce recommends that the UN:

- Establish an Independent Oversight Board that will monitor UN activities, deter corruption and ensure efficient use of resources.
- Create a senior official position in charge of daily operations filling the role of Chief Operating Officer.
- Implement a modern personnel system that can evaluate performance, provide promotional opportunities, recruit highly qualified employees, and remove unneeded or unprofessional staff.
- Establish effective protection mechanisms for employees who come forward & report misconduct.
- Establish a system to ensure that UN procedures, including financial mechanisms, are conducted openly & according to rules.
- Develop a new standard of personnel ethics and promote them within the organization.

- **Preventing and Ending Conflicts**

- The report recommends that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) become a more independent program with its own staff and distinct rules and regulations. This will allow peacekeeping operations to be comprehensive and more effective.
- *American Interests and UN Reform* also recommends that peace operations develop broad strategies combining the need for security with economic and political development.
- The taskforce supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to establish a Peacebuilding Commission and a peacebuilding support office to enhance the UN's ability to support states and societies as they rebuild their communities, economies and government institutions. Roughly half the countries that emerge from conflict revert back to conflict within five years. Therefore, a permanent office would identify states on the verge of collapse, provide assistance to prevent such collapses, and sustain the efforts of the international community in post-conflict peacebuilding.
- The UN should commit to ending sexual exploitation in peacekeeping missions and ensure standards of conduct for civilian and military personnel. The report states that if countries are unwilling or unable to ensure discipline among their troops, they should be barred from peacekeeping missions.
- Although the taskforce did not endorse a standing UN military force, the report urged member states to increase the availability of trained and equipped forces for rapid deployment in peace operations.
- The report recommends that the Bush Administration step up training efforts for African troops through the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) announced at last year's G8 (Group of Eight) meeting. It also states that the Department of Defense should prepare policy options for the U.S. to support and engage in peace operations that are consistent with U.S. national interests.
- The taskforce advocates the use of sanctions. The report further supports the establishment of sanctions committees by the Security Council to monitor and ensure that sanctions are effective and that they consider humanitarian impacts.

- **Preventing Catastrophic Terrorism**

- The taskforce recommends that the Security Council play a more assertive role in ensuring that member states fulfill their obligations to prevent the spread of deadly weapons. It urged the Council to develop penalties for future consideration in individual cases of violations.

SUMMARY

- The report concludes that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should be more proactive in promoting nuclear nonproliferation and increase efforts to prevent threats from non-state actors. It also recommends that the United States continue to press for the establishment of a committee of the IAEA board to review the agency's role in monitoring and promoting nonproliferation obligations.
- *American Interests and UN Reform* supports President Bush's proposal that countries and companies selling nuclear material and equipment should not assist in the development of new nuclear processing facilities in any country that does not already have them.
- The taskforce strongly recommends that the General Assembly adopt a clear definition of terrorism as any intentional attack on civilians and noncombatants by non state actors for political purposes. This would defy the notion of some member states that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" and allow the General Assembly to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism.
- The report urges the United States to work within the UN to strengthen the Democracy Caucus and make it capable of organizing strong political action to counter violations of human rights and save lives.
- The taskforce suggests that the World Health Organization (WHO) should be strengthened to prevent terrorists from acquiring or constructing biological weapons.
- *American Interests and UN Reform* recommends that the permanent five members and the Security Council as a whole should meet regularly on proliferation and terrorism issues.

Resources

Read this report in full at <http://www.usip.org/un/report/index.html>

Read Secretary General Kofi Annan's "In Larger Freedom" at <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/contents.htm>

Last December, a blue-ribbon UN panel released a report on reforming the UN for the 21st Century, "A more secure world: Our shared responsibility." To learn more visit http://www.globalsolutions.org/programs/intl_instit/UN_ref/HLP_home.html

In January 2005, the Millennium Project report was released which outlines practical plans for halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015. To read the full report, visit http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/index_overview.htm

For information about UN Reform legislation recently passed in the House of Representatives go to http://www.globalsolutions.org/hill/UN_reform_guide.html

About Citizens for Global Solutions

Citizens for Global Solutions envisions a future in which nations work together to abolish war, protect our rights and freedoms, and solve the problems facing humanity that no nation can solve alone. This vision requires effective democratic global institutions that will apply the rule of law while respecting the diversity and autonomy of national and local communities. We work to build political will for our vision in the United States by educating Americans about our global interdependence, communicating global concerns to public officials, and developing proposals to create, reform, and strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations.

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