

In Larger Freedom: Secretary General's Report Sets Agenda For UN Reform

The UN Secretary General's report

The UN Secretary General's report, "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all," is a response to the high-level panel report released in December and the Sachs report on the Millennium Development Goals. It sets the agenda June G8 meeting and the September Millennium +5 meeting at the UN, which will also mark the organization's 60th anniversary.

The report provides an opportunity not to be missed. It sets out clear changes that need to be made at the United Nations to ensure that the UN can effectively and efficiently meet the challenges of the 21st century world. The report states: "Humanity will not enjoy security without development, it will not enjoy development without security, and it will not enjoy either without respect for human rights." The report goes on to say "The United Nations must be reshaped in ways not previously imagined, and with a boldness and speed not previously shown."

The Secretary-General's report endorses many recommendations favored by the U.S., such as:

- A Peacebuilding Commission as well as a Peacebuilding Support Office within the UN Secretariat to help nations emerging from conflict, transition effectively to peace;
- A Human Rights Council to replace the Commission on Human Rights which would be smaller in size and elected by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly; and
- A Democracy Fund at the UN to provide assistance to countries transitioning or wanting to transition to democracy.

The report also includes recommendations the U.S. may not support such as:

- A resolution that sets out principles to guide the Security Council in its decisions to authorize force; and
- A repeated call for all developed countries to increase their foreign aid (Official Development Assistance) allocations to 0.7% of their respective GDPs by 2015.

Moreover, it lays the groundwork for the United States to engage in a constructive dialogue about what security means in the 21st century, and how to deal with global issues like terrorism, poverty, disease, transnational crime, and nuclear proliferation in an interconnected world. The U.S. cannot effectively meet these challenges alone, nor can the UN successfully function without U.S. leadership. It is time for the U.S. to step up, move beyond micro-management, and champion a package of meaningful reforms to create a better and more secure world.

Key Recommendations

Strengthening the United Nations

The Secretary General proposed several reforms to strengthen the institution:

- a. The structure of the Security Council should be altered to be more representative of the international community. Member states should adopt Security Council model A or B which as presented in the High-level Panel Report.
- b. The dysfunctional Commission on Human Rights should be replaced by a Human Rights Council as a principal organ of the United Nations, whose members would be directly elected by the General Assembly by a two-thirds majority vote.
- c. Member States should give authority to the Secretary-General to restructure the Secretariat in order to meet current needs of the organization, as well as commission a comprehensive review of the Office of Internal Oversight.
- d. Economic and Social Council should be reformed so that it can effectively assess progress in the UN's development agenda and coordinate various efforts by intergovernmental bodies working on economic and social issues in the UN system.

Other proposals were categorized into three areas:

I. Freedom from Want

- a. The right to development should be realized so that the entire human race can be free from want. It is important that the international community dramatically accelerates action to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Developed countries should establish timetables for reaching a level of Official Development Assistance equal to 0.7% of their respective GDPs.
- b. By 2006, developing countries dealing with extreme poverty should adopt and begin to implement a national development strategy bold enough to meet the MDGs by 2015.
- c. Countries should develop an inclusive international framework beyond the Kyoto Protocol to address climate change and other global environmental threats.

II. Freedom from Fear

- a. Meeting the threats in the 21st century requires a broad vision of collective security that takes into account broad and diverse factors as international war and conflict, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, organized crime, civil violence, poverty, deadly diseases, and environmental degradation. They all have catastrophic consequences and the capacity to undermine stability.

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- b. Member states should agree on a clear definition of terrorism that would include any attacks on civilians, even when they are part of nationalist movements. States should commit to a comprehensive anti-terrorism strategy based on five points:
 - Dissuading people from resorting to or supporting terrorism
 - Denying terrorists access to funds and materials
 - Deterring States from sponsoring terrorism
 - Developing State capacity to defeating terrorism
 - Defending human rights
- c. Member states should establish a Peacebuilding Commission and a Peacebuilding Support Office within the UN Secretariat to enable the UN to assist war-torn countries in their transition to peace. States should also strengthen the UN's capacity to employ the tools of mediation, sanctions, and peacekeeping, and adopt a "zero tolerance" policy on sexual abuse.
- d. The Security Council should adopt a resolution to set guidelines for decisions regarding the use of force.

III. Freedom to live in dignity

- a. The international community should embrace the "responsibility to protect" as a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Any existing treaties regarding the protection of civilians should be ratified and implemented and efforts should be taken to strengthen the International Criminal Court.
- b. More resources and staff should be committed to strengthen the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. That Office should also play a more prominent role in the Security Council and the proposed Peacebuilding Commission.
- c. A Democracy Fund should be created at the UN to assist countries taking steps toward democracy.

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.