

## Summing Up the Summit

This September, more than 150 Heads of State came to New York City in efforts to modernize the United Nations. The diligence with which the negotiators struggled over the “Outcome Document” was commendable. Although this “once in a generation” opportunity to build a stronger, more effective UN has been reported to have fallen short of expectations, the Summit generated more positive reforms than any other event in the UN’s 60 year history. What follows is an account of what was, and was not, accomplished:

### **GAINS**

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While at the Summit, World Leaders agreed upon a number of provisions, including:

- Creating a new Peacebuilding Commission to keep nations from falling back into conflict once a peace agreement has been achieved;
- A standing police capacity for UN peacekeeping;
- A collective international responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity;
- An agreement to take action, through the Security Council, when peaceful means prove inadequate and national authorities fail to protect their citizens;
- A strong call for a comprehensive convention on terrorism within a year and support for the new Nuclear Terrorism Convention;
- The creation of an independent oversight committee and ethics office to oversee the workings of the UN.
- An agreement to review all UN mandates older than five years;
- A one-time staff buy-out to ensure the UN employs people based on merit;
- The doubling of the budget of the High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- The establishment of a stronger and more effective human rights body at the UN;
- The reaffirmation of democracy as a universal value and the initiation of a Democracy Fund;
- A recommitment to an additional \$50 billion a year to fight poverty;
- An agreement by developing nations to adopt plans to achieve Millennium Development Goals by 2015; and,
- An agreement to update the UN’s Charter by eliminating the outmoded Trusteeship Council which oversaw decolonization and by deleting references to enemy states (which referred to Germany and Japan during WWII).

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## LOSSES

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While at the Summit, World Leaders failed to address a number of provisions:

**Disarmament or non-proliferation:** Secretary-General Kofi Annan called the omission of a provision on disarmament a “disgrace”, and proclaimed that,

*“...progress in disarmament and non-proliferation is essential to strengthening international peace and security. [The world must] explore effective measures to prevent and combat the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, ... as well as to ban their transfer to non-State actors.”*

**A clear definition of terrorism:** The lack of a clear definition fails to pull the rug out from under terrorists masquerading as ‘freedom fighters’. Most conspicuously deleted was the statement that

*“...any action intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population or to compel a Government or an international organization to carry out or to abstain from any act cannot be justified on any grounds and constitutes an act of terrorism.”*

**A section on impunity:** Member States failed to commit to ending impunity for the world’s worst crime offenders. They rejected language that would have committed nations to

*“...end impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, such as crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes”*

The United States refused to allow for any mention of the International Criminal Court in the document. Ambassador Bolton would not accept a compromise that calls for cooperation with the ICC *“in accordance with our respective legal obligations.”*

**Human Rights Council:** Although the final document includes a resolution to create a Human Rights Council, lost was the condition that the Council’s members should be evaluated to ensure that they,

*“...abide by human rights standard in their respect, protection and promotion of human rights.”*

**Management Reform:** One of the United States’ primary goals for the summit was adoption of management reforms to make the UN more effective and transparent. One important measure lost, was a commitment

*“to ensure that the Secretary-General has sufficient authority and flexibility”*  
to hire and fire staff, something any effective boss needs.

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**Citizens for Global Solutions** is a grassroots membership organization that 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.