



OCGG Government Section

Advice Program
United Nations

Implementing the 'In Larger Freedom' Report of the Secretary-General

Advice to the Governments of the
Member States of the United Nations

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MAIN POINTS

The Member States of the UN should urgently implement the recommendations in the Secretary-General's Report 'In Larger Freedom', enhancing support, accountability, inclusion, and connectivity. Further reforms are needed to improve the Security Council and the UN's support structure.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oxford Council on Good Governance presents the following priorities (P) and recommendations (R) to the Governments of the Member States of the United Nations on the implementation of the Secretary General's Report 'In Larger Freedom' (UN Report A/59/2005):

P1 Larger Support

R1 Military Resources

The Member States should respond to global peacekeeping needs, going beyond the limited proposals of the Secretary-General, by establishing a high-readiness stand-by UN force.

R2 Fiscal Resources

The Member States should pay their dues, decrease the proportion of earmarked funds while preserving the overall amount of financing, and establish a voluntary donor structure that gives special recognition to those Member States that contribute more than their dues.

R3 Organisational Resources

The Member States should support efforts to increase internal promotion in the Secretariat, although this is not addressed in the Report.

P2 Larger Accountability

R4 Legitimising Interventions Against States Threatening Citizens

The Member States should make the UN more accountable to the peoples of the world through an extension of the scope of multilateral intervention to cases where a member state poses a grave threat to its citizens.

P3 Larger Inclusion

R5 Expanding the Security Council

The Member States should expand the Security Council, noting that it is impossible to simultaneously realise all of the particular goals advocated by the Secretary General, by merging the French and British seats into a single EU seat and creating new permanent seats for India, Brazil, Egypt, Japan and South Africa.

R6 Limiting the Veto Right

The Member States should not create new veto rights. The Member States that already have veto rights should limit their use in accordance with the principle of organised self-restraint.

R7 Other Bodies

The Member States should make the policy-making process more inclusive by adjusting the relative importance of the three Councils and the Assembly within a clear frameworks of consultation and cooperation.

P4 Larger Connectivity

R8 Multilateralism and Development

The Member States should recognize the interconnectedness of development, global security, and respect for human rights and support efforts to promote all three dimensions in a holistic framework.

R9 Integrating Organisations and Tasks

The Member States should improve the institutional structure of the UN and its relationship to the wider international community while preserving the UN's impartiality.

INTRODUCTION

The Secretary-General's 'In Larger Freedom' Report is a forceful statement in favour of the United Nations at a time when the multilateral institutions of global governance are under pressure.

The Report points out the hypocrisy inherent in scapegoating the organisation while denying it adequate resources and power to act effectively.

At the same time, it directly and boldly addresses the pressing need to reform the UN itself.

This paper outlines four priorities comprising a total of nine recommendations to the Governments of the Member States of the United Nations regarding the implementation of the Report and beyond.

PRIORITY 1 LARGER SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATION 1 MILITARY RESOURCES

The Member States should respond to global peacekeeping needs, going beyond the limited proposals of the Secretary-General, by establishing a high-readiness stand-by UN force.

The Secretary-General urges Member States to develop rapidly deployable strategic reserves which UN missions could draw on as necessary and as mandated (§112). Annan's view is that the UN should develop its capacity in cooperation with existing and future regional organisations' efforts, rather than in competition with them.

The OCGG is convinced that creating a high-readiness stand-by UN force would address the global peacekeeping needs better¹. This could be equally done in cooperation with existing efforts, if this were achieved through the mandatory provision of troops of 5% or more of each state's military capacity. These troops may well have overlapping membership in other forces as well, such as the EU's Rapid Reaction force, and they would continue to serve as part of their national armies. The troops earmarked for the UN army in this manner should have a reasonably stable long-term composition to enhance the efficiency of the missions.

Member states should also contribute 5% or more of their respective military budgets, to allow for the maintenance of interoperable technical stock and for funding UN-oriented training exercises to a uniform standard.

¹ See OCGG Government Advice No 2 at <http://www.oxfordgovernance.org>



Past experience has shown the vulnerability of UN peacekeeping missions to fitful delivery on earlier promises made by member states. The OCGG's proposal carries the advantage of overcoming the pitfalls of the present system of ad hoc contributions and complete financial dependence, while allowing member states to retain a direct connection to the troops concerned in their military capacities.

RECOMMENDATION 2

FISCAL RESOURCES

The Member States should pay their dues, decrease the proportion of earmarked funds while preserving the overall amount of financing, and establish a voluntary donor structure that gives special recognition to those Member States that contribute more than their dues.

Much has been said about this, and little has been achieved. It is a banal, but telling indicator of the UN's fiscal situation that the Hammarskjold library has had to limit its subscription to major international newspapers because it could not afford the fees. The OCGG is in no minority position when it feels that Member States ought absolutely to deliver their proportionally calculated contributions promptly and fully.

Beyond the issue of the absolute size of fiscal contributions, the ability to dispense with available funds to the best effect is equally indispensable. "In Larger Freedom" calls for Member States to decrease the proportion of earmarked funds, and therefore free up the organisation to regroup budgets as is necessary (§200). The OCGG is only concerned that such a shift in emphasis do not decrease the overall amount of financing available to the UN. The United Nations could perhaps consider establishing voluntary patron categories where undertaking to contribute at higher levels would be rewarded with high prestige.

RECOMMENDATION 3

ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES

The Member States should support efforts to increase internal promotion in the Secretariat, although this is not addressed in the Report.

In part, the Secretariat reforms proposed by Annan call for increasing the accountability of staff to the UN inter-governmental bodies (§186). In fact, beyond the obvious merits of this proposal, such a measure would also strengthen the hand of the Secretariat management to pursue organisational objectives more effectively. The practice of “parachuting” many of the professional grade staff from outside by member states has, on occasion, meant that staff who have failed to fulfill the nominal criteria for holding their posts have nevertheless enjoyed immunity, as their position is often seen as a matter of national interest and sensitivity. This is as true for developing countries as for the developed. Increasing transparency and personal accountability would mean that performance on the job would count more and job security would be conditional on this.

Annan does not directly address the question of utilising the expertise of “internal staff”, that is, the career international civil servants of the UN, as compared to the authority enjoyed by “external”, parachuted staff. However, internal staff, even at the lower grades, can represent a significant under-utilised resource. They are a depository of living institutional memory, yet often the UN does not profit as much from their expertise as it could be the case. The OCGG recommends that the passage from lower grades to the higher professional grades be made more accessible for the internal staff, and that the institutional structure of the organisation be adjusted towards a less hierarchical form.

PRIORITY 2 LARGER ACCOUNTABILITY

RECOMMENDATION 4 LEGITIMISING INTERVENTIONS AGAINST STATES THREATENING CITIZENS

The Member States should make the UN more accountable to the peoples of the world through an extension of the scope of multilateral intervention to cases where a member state poses a grave threat to its citizens.

Annan has continued the theme of drawing attention to the opening words of the UN Charter – “We the peoples...” – to press for significant changes in the role of the United Nations and the scope of its operations. While the UN continues to be an organisation of sovereign member states, it is also now recognised that the organisation ultimately exists to serve the needs of the peoples of these states (§12).

In the area of peacemaking, “Chapter VII” interventions have been previously mandated on the basis that the domestic action of the targeted states threatened international peace and stability. The OCGG fully supports extending the recognition of the legitimacy of multilateral intervention under UN auspices where a member state, through action or inaction, poses a very grave threat to its own citizens. A precise definition of “a very grave threat” and strict voting rules should be agreed upon to guard against abuses of this option.

Expanding the scope of mandatable UN peace operations in this manner would signal radical change. It would also bring the organisation closer to acting for the good of “the peoples” and being accountable to them in the spirit of the Charter’s preface, and in line with humanitarian ideals.

PRIORITY 3 LARGER INCLUSION

RECOMMENDATION 5 EXPANDING THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The Member States should expand the Security Council, noting that it is impossible to simultaneously realise all of the particular goals advocated by the Secretary General, by merging the French and British seats into a single EU seat and creating new permanent seats for India, Brazil, Egypt, Japan and South Africa.

Reforming the Security Council has been one of the most burning issues on the UN reform agenda. The need to make the SC more representative has become widely accepted; the way in which this should be achieved has been all the more controversial.

The criteria which Annan proposes in guiding this process are individually sensible, but collectively too numerous and, to a degree, self-contradictory. Making the Security Council "broadly representative of the realities of power in today's world" (§169), if anything, would shrink its current membership. Military, financial and diplomatic contributions should be recognised, but treating contributions along all of these dimensions as necessary would, again, be likely to limit the pool of candidates beyond what is desirable. Conversely, taking significant contribution in just one of these fields as sufficient would expand membership in the Security Council exponentially. On top of all these, according to the report, Security Council reform should leave us with an organ that is more representative of the developing world, more democratic and accountable, and at the same time, maintains at least the current level of effectiveness. In the OCGG's view, it is clearly impossible today to realise all of these goals.

Instead, the OCGG proposes a simple but appealing formula. Dominant polities from all continents should be given permanent seats, with two seats available for each continent and three for Austral-Asia (home to a quarter of the Earth's population). It is also desirable that one of these members be a Muslim country which satisfies as many of Annan's above criteria as possible. In the spirit of these restrictions, the OCGG proposes the following changes for a reformed SC: the French and the UK seat should give way to a merged EU seat; and new permanent seats should be allocated to India, Brazil, Egypt, Japan and South Africa².

² See OCGG Government Advice No 2 at <http://www.oxfordgovernance.org>

RECOMMENDATION 6 LIMITING THE VETO RIGHT

The Member States should not create new veto rights. The Member States that already have veto rights should limit their use in accordance with the principle of organised self-restraint.

Annan's Model A (Box 5) calls for, among else, the creation of six new permanent seats with no veto rights. The OCGG agrees that the creation of further veto rights should be avoided, in order to make the proposed changes more palatable for the current permanent members, and in order to minimise the chance of future deadlocks. In the case of the proposed new EU seat, this would mean that the EU would collectively wield one vote, while Britain and France could be compensated for relinquishing their own veto rights through reserving the top EU foreign affairs post for British and French nationals for a specified period of time.

Further, the OCGG proposes that those members with veto rights should accept the principle of 'organised self-restraint' in the exercise of veto powers³. This is a formal understanding among the members who have the veto right that they would abstain from exercising this right unless directly concerned with a breach of the peace.

³ http://www.un-globalsecurity.org/pdf/Pellet_legit_use_of_force.pdf

RECOMMENDATION 7 OTHER BODIES

The Member States should make the policy-making process more inclusive by adjusting the relative importance of the three Councils and the Assembly within a clear frameworks of consultation and cooperation.

The dominance of the Security Council vis-à-vis other bodies in the policymaking process is also identified in 'In Larger Freedom' as an aspect of the system that is ripe for change. Annan undoubtedly recognises that Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence tend to be the departments wielding the greatest prestige and power in national states as well, and that the UN is unlikely to become an exception to this rule.

Nevertheless, adjustments in the relative stature of the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the Assembly would still be possible through adding weight to the presently more marginalised bodies. Expanding the inclusiveness of the policy-making process in this manner should increase the overall effectiveness of the UN apparatus. It should also correct the popular misperception that the UN is mainly there to impose peace on warring factions, a task which it has been accused of having failed magnificently.

The task is easiest accomplished in the case of the Trusteeship Council, which Annan proposes should be replaced with a council for human rights, simultaneously abolishing the Commission of Human Rights.

The exact relationship of the various intergovernmental bodies still needs to be specified. The OCGG advises that the frameworks of mutual consultation and cooperation be established very clearly. Else, the creation of a human rights council could perversely lead to a diminished integration of these concerns into particular operations, with the danger of other bodies taking it as a pretext for not treating human rights issues as an integral part of their own business any more.

PRIORITY 4 LARGER CONNECTIVITY

RECOMMENDATION 8 MULTILATERALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

The Member States should recognize the interconnectedness of development, global security, and respect for human rights and support efforts to promote all three dimensions in a holistic framework.

The interconnectedness of the modern world has long become a true cliché. In the context of peace and security, the recognition of this fact has driven many operations with the objective to prevent conflict spillover. Amplifying this effect, the post-9/11 world is ever more conscious of the need for concerted global action to address new security threats and challenges.

"In Larger Freedom", however, goes further in this direction than most policymakers have dared to, above all in the United States. It maps out an even more delicate and densely woven web of relationships between conflict in one part of the globe and security threats in another, and between development and security, while tracing the impact of respecting human rights on all of these (§17). In this fashion, Annan continues to promote the two-pronged agenda of multilateralism and development with a skillful simultaneous appeal to the interests of the developing world and the developed, to those of Europe and of America.

RECOMMENDATION 9 INTEGRATING ORGANISATIONS AND TASKS

The Member States should improve the institutional structure of the UN and its relationship to the wider international community while preserving the UN's impartiality.

The theme of larger connectivity also carries into the restructuring of the institutional apparatus of the UN itself, as well as the relationship between the UN and other regional and global institutions, and between the UN and civil society (§20, 21). Improving the integration of the humanitarian response system (§§202-211) and increasing coordination in the governance of the global environment (§212) are singled out for particular attention. Carried out appropriately, these reforms would surely enhance the effectiveness of the UN system.

The OCGG, nevertheless, wishes to sound a note of caution. Trying to incorporate every major aspect of the global system into the framework of the objectives of this report can undermine the whole mission. Particular attention must be paid to the maintenance of the appearance as well as the reality of impartiality.

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