

The Historical Development of Efforts to Reform the UN

THE notion of 'UN reform' has several meanings, and use of the term has varied according to the mood of public opinion concerning the world organization. These meanings are:

1. Tinkering with the structure of the Secretariat, i.e. changing the organization-chart, eliminating the 'dead wood', reducing the number of posts, particularly the number of top posts.

2. Defining priorities, i.e. suppressing obsolete programmes, in order to concentrate resources on the most important ones. The idea of a better coordination of the UN system can be associated with this usage.

3. Reorganizing the intergovernmental machinery, in order to render it more efficient or more representative of the international community. A very important distinction has to be made between:

(a) Reorganization without reforming the Charter, e.g. 'revitalizing ECOSOC' by modifying its agenda or its relations with the General Assembly, increasing or reducing the membership of various committees, creating new committees or merging existing ones, streamlining the whole intergovernmental machinery.

(b) Restructuring the main organs – i.e. the Security Council, ECOSOC, the General Assembly – which implies Charter reform. Reforming UNCTAD (which does not imply Charter revision) can be included in this category, because of the taboos concerning the existence of this organization.

Those who believe that the efficiency of the UN is a question of management, give to the words 'UN reform' the meanings nos. (1), (2), and (3a). This has long been, and still is, the American and more generally the Northern (including East and West) understanding of the problem. The representatives of developing countries, while sharing parts of the Northern understanding, insist generally on enlarging the membership of committees, including ECOSOC and the Security Council. They have succeeded twice in changing the Charter: by enlarging the membership of the Security Council from eleven to fifteen; and that of ECOSOC from eighteen to twenty-seven, and then to fifty-four.¹ Finally, some people use the meaning (3b) when recommending a partial or complete restructuring of the Charter, for example reducing the membership of ECOSOC, merging ECOSOC and UNCTAD, creating an 'Economic Security Council', changing the relationship between the UN and its specialized agencies, or enlarging the number of Permanent Members of the Security Council. Germany and Japan began to advocate this last idea with vigour from about 1992.

For a correct understanding of the historical development of efforts to reform the UN, a few preliminary remarks are necessary. One of the most important changes in UN activities is a result of the invention of peace keeping forces (blue helmets) in the field of security, on the initiative of Lester Pearson and Dag Hammarskjöld in 1956. This has been, without touching the Charter, a fundamental reform of the UN. Nevertheless the word reform has never been used in this connection.

Implementing fully the provisions of the Charter has also never been considered as a reform. For example, Article 43 provides for 'special agreements' on assignment of military forces to the Security Council; and Article 47 assigns major responsibilities to the Military Staff Committee. Any implementation of these articles, as proposed by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, would represent an important reform of the UN as it has operated since 1945. Yet such proposals have been described as 'revitalization' rather than 'reform'.

We are now witnessing a slow but fundamental change in the conception of UN reform. Since the origin of the UN (and even since the founding of the League of Nations), understanding of the reform of the world organization has been (with rare exceptions) a mixture

¹ Amendments to Arts. 23, 27, and 61 were adopted on 17 Dec. 1963. A further amendment to Art. 61 was adopted on 20 Dec. 1971. See Appendix B to the present volume.

of meanings (1), (2), and (3a). Since 1985 the meaning (3b), i.e. the notion that the UN should undergo a far more important restructuring, and that the Charter could be changed, has been gaining ground.

(a) The Traditional Conception of UN Reform

The major world organizations have since their inception been periodically submitted to examination. Studies, reform projects, and restructuring operations are permanent items on their agendas.

1. The League of Nations

In the League of Nations, established in 1919, the need continually to adapt the structure of the political international organization was recognized from the outset. The last study bearing on reform of the League of Nations became famous, probably due to the date at which its conclusions were published. The group of experts chaired by the Australian Stanley Bruce finalized its report in 1939. It recommended the creation of a central committee for economic and social questions, with the mission to direct and control the 'technical activities' previously addressed by the Council and the Assembly of the League. It envisaged participation of states which were not members of the League, and decision-making by majority. This audacious reform project-which six years later suggested to the fathers of the UN Charter the idea of the Economic and Social Council-was the outcome of reflections which had continued throughout the League's life: the Brussels Conference of September-October 1920; the preparation for the establishment of the Economic and Financial Committee by the Under-Secretary-General Jean Monnet.² the Geneva Economic Conference of 1927; and the work of the Committee of Twenty-Eight in 1936.

2. The UN's first forty years

As for the United Nations, it would be overly fastidious to enumerate all the intergovernmental committees and groups of experts which have examined such issues as methods of work, financial difficulties, personnel policy, salaries, budgets, plans, economic and social programmes, decentralization, coordination, structure of the Secretariat, functioning of the intergovernmental machinery, and evaluation of results.

Initiatives of this type for reform of the UN fall into two distinct periods. In the first, which lasted until the mid-1960s, initiatives for reflection and change mainly came from the Secretary-General, who proposed that the General Assembly create committees to help him in his task: for example the Group of Three Experts appointed by Trygve Lie in 1954, the Salaries Survey Committee of 1957, and the Group of Eight Experts approved by the General Assembly in 1960 to help Dag Hammarskjöld to define the Secretariat's structure. This Group of Eight, chaired by Guillaume Georges Picot, considered and rejected Khrushchev's proposal for a 'troika' of three Secretaries-General.³

The second period began some years after Hammarskjöld's death. Henceforth the initiative was taken by member states, and the process of reflection and reforms became a permanent function. From that time onward the number of committees and surveys on reform increased exponentially. In 1966, as a consequence of the financial crisis which resulted from

² Jean Monnet (1888--1979) was one of the main initiators of the European Economic Community. After leaving the League of Nations in 1923, he was in private business until 1938. In 1939 he was chairman of the Franco-British Economic Coordination Committee, and later served as a member of the French Committee of National Liberation in Aigiers. From 1947 to 1952 he was Commissioner of the first French Development Plan. He originated the Schuman Plan (1950), and was first president of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community. In 1956 he became chairman of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, which helped to prepare the Treaty of Rome of 1957.

³ 'Review of the Activities and Organization of the Secretariat: Report of the Committee of Experts Created by Resolution 1446 (XIV)', UN doc. A/4776 of 14 June 1961. Khrushchev had made his 'troika' proposal at the General Assembly in 1960.

the refusal by the USSR and France to pay their share of the expenses of ONUC in the Congo, a report of the Committee of Fourteen proposed measures concerning planning, programming, monitoring, evaluation, budgetary presentation, economic and social programmes, and so on.⁴ In 1969 a study on the capacity of the UN development system, concentrating on UNDP⁵ was completed. In 1975 the report of a Group of (twenty-five) Experts on the Structure of the United Nations System recommended the creation of the post of Director-General for Development, and the extension of the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC).⁶ Finally, throughout the whole period, numerous other studies by various special committees dealt with the financial situation and other administrative problems.⁷

In 1968 the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) embarked on its never-ending task of considering how to improve the functioning of all the agencies of the UN system.⁸ In its first twenty years the JIU published well over 200 reports, dealing with administrative, financial, and structural aspects of the activities of these organizations. The JIU has secured implementation of a number of recommendations for reform, particularly in the recruitment of personnel, the adoption of medium-term plans and programme budgets, and improvement of methods of monitoring and evaluation.

By the mid-1980s the lessons to be drawn from this experience were clear: discussion of reform had been largely driven by the UN's financial difficulties, the cyclical worsening of which is a permanent feature of the life of the organization. Reform proposals had always been vigorously resisted by the Secretariat. Some measures aiming at modernization had been attempted,⁹ but any limited results of these efforts had rapidly been eroded. It had never really

⁴ 'Second Report of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies' (Committee established by resolution 2049 (XX) of 13 Dec. 1965), UN doc. A/6343 of 19 July 1966.

⁵ A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System, vols. 1 and 2 (UN, Geneva, 1969), sales no. E. 70.1.10. The main author of the study was Sir Robert Jackson.

⁶ 'A New United Nations Structure for Global Economic Cooperation: Report of the Group of Experts on the Structure of the UN System', UN doc. BAC.62/9 (New York, 1975).

⁷ Among others: 'Report of the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat' (Committee of Seven), Nov. 1968; 'Report of the Special Committee on the Financial Situation of the UN' (Committee of Fifteen), 1972; 'Report of the Working Group on the UN Programme and Budget Machinery', 1975; 'Report of the Negotiating Committee on the Financial Emergency of the UN' (Committee of Fifty-Four), 1976; 'Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the UN System' (Committee of the Whole), Dec. 1977; 'Report of the Committee of Governmental Experts to Evaluate the Present Structure of the Secretariat in the Administrative, Finance and Personnel Areas' (Committee of Seventeen), Nov. 1982. For details of these reports see the relevant volumes of the Yearbook of the United Nations.

⁸ The Joint Inspection Unit was established on an experimental basis by GA resolutions 2150 (XXI) of 4 Nov. 1966, 2360 (XXII) of 19 Nov. 1967, 2735 (XXV) of 17 Dec. 1970, and 2924 B (XXVII) of 24 Nov. 1972. It was established on a permanent basis, from 1 Jan. 1978, by GA Res. 31/192 of 22 Dec. 1976, the annexe of which contains the Statute of the Unit. The JIU is composed of eleven Inspectors, who have the status of officials of the UN but are not staff members. The Inspectors 'have the broadest powers of investigation in all matters having a bearing on the efficiency of the services and the proper use of funds'; 'they make on-the-spot inquiries and investigations ... as and when they themselves may decide, in any of the services of the organizations' of the UN system; they 'may propose reforms or make recommendations they deem necessary to the competent organs of the organizations'; they 'draw up, over their own signature, reports for which they are responsible and in which they state their findings and propose solutions to the problems they have noted ... Upon receipt of reports, the executive head or heads concerned shall take immediate action to distribute them, with or without their comments, to the States members of their respective organizations.'

⁹ For example, the development of a sophisticated system of planning, programming, budgeting, and evaluation, the adoption of precise regulations and rules on this topic, and the establishment of competitive examinations for recruitment of junior professionals. In each case, despite unanimous approval by member states, implementation was greatly hindered by resistance from the Secretariat. On programming cf. JIU report 79/5 (UN doc. A/34/84) of 26 Mar. 1979, on 'Medium-term Planning in the United Nations'; and UN doc. A/36/171 'The Setting of Priorities and Identification of Obsolete Activities in the United Nations'. On personnel matters, see the first, second, and third reports of the JIU on the implementation of the personnel policy reforms approved by the General Assembly in 1974 (UN doc. A/31/264; JIU report 78/4; and UN doc. A/35/318); and the JIU report on 'Competitive Examinations in the United Nations' JIU report 84/11 of Aug. 1984).

been possible to revitalize the organization, which – buffeted by successive crises and efforts at reform – had become more and more marginalized.

(b) Diagnoses and Proposals in the 1980s

In the mid-1980s the UN entered a period of acute crises, in significant part the result of an anti - UN mood in the US Congress. This mood led in particular to the Congress's approval of the Kassebaum Amendment in 1985, which, combined with other US legislation adopted that year, threatened severe financial difficulties for the UN.¹⁰ During this period of crises, the proposals for reform were not very different from those put forward in the past. It would be hard to present the creation in 1986 by the General Assembly of a new group of experts, the Group of Eighteen, as an exceptional phenomenon. Its report, presented the same year, contained numerous recommendations that were simply repetitions of past proposals on intergovernmental organs, personnel policy, coordination methods of inspection, planning, programming, and evaluation.¹¹

Nevertheless, a relatively new tone was identifiable in the consensus report of the Group of Eighteen. Several abusive practices and problems of mismanagement affecting the Secretariat were confronted directly for the first time, including the harmful proliferation of the posts of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General; the inadequacy of qualifications of staff, particularly in these top posts; and the complex, fragmented, and top heavy structure of the Secretariat. The report represented a sincere effort to reverse past tendencies in recommending reducing the number of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General posts by 25 percent over a period of three years, and in acknowledging the necessity of pursuing in-depth studies of the structure of the intergovernmental machinery, a subject until now shielded from critical investigation.

An important sign of a sincere desire for change was the particular attention paid by the Group of Eighteen to reform of the intergovernmental mechanisms which prepare the decisions on budgets, even if the Group was not able to reach a consensus on this subject. Many experts advocated the creation of a Committee of Programme and Budget, with a limited membership, a geographical distribution ensuring that the 'major contributors' would have reasonable representation, consensus decision-making, and a mandate to advise the General Assembly on the content of the UN's programme and the size of the budget. Despite the fact that such a proposal had often been made in the past and would have been the logical conclusion of the

¹⁰ The Kassebaum Amendment, adopted by the US Senate in August 1985, was intended to force a 20% cut in the US contribution to the UN budget, unless a system of weighted voting for financial decision-making was introduced. This would have entailed a reduction in the US contribution to the UN budget from 25% down to 20%. The Sundquist Amendment of October 1985 was intended to deny the US contribution to the salaries of Soviet bloc UN staff members, in protest against their having to relinquish part of their pay cheques to their own governments. Another piece of legislation bearing on the level of the US contribution to the UN was the Gramm-Rudman Act (the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act) of Dec. 1985 which provided for reduced federal deficits over the following five years, with the intention of achieving a balanced budget in 1991. This Act provided that, if deficits were expected to be higher than those specified, starting in the 1986 fiscal year, funds were to be cut from most federal programmes, including those concerning payments to the UN regular budget and to forty-three other international organizations. The combination of these measures led to a reduction of approximately 50% in the US contribution to the UN in 1986. The large-scale withholdings of assessed payments by the US over several years precipitated the UN financial crisis. Already by the end of 1985, eighteen member states, including four of the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, had combined withholdings of about \$US 120 m.; overall, unpaid dues for 1985 and earlier years had reached a grand total of \$225 m. The UN regular budget was then approximately \$800 m. per year. The only flexibility was provided by the UN's working capital fund of \$100 m., and this was quickly exhausted. The UN has no borrowing power, if not expressly authorized by the General Assembly. On withholdings, see also Zoller, *American Journal of International Law*, 81 (1987), p. 610. Since 1986 the USA has softened its policy in principle, and authorized some payments of part of its contribution: see below, n. 13.

¹¹ Report of the Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the UN', UN doc. A/41/49 (1986).

adoption in 1974 of medium-term planning and programme budgeting, even the 1986 reforms did not put it fully into effect.¹²

The Group of Eighteen's report, and the ensuing debates in the General Assembly, reflected the then current diagnosis of the UN's crisis. This diagnosis had three main components:

1. The prime cause of the crisis was thought to be the general 'crisis of multilateralism', in other words the 'lack of political will' of member states.

2. There was a lack of effective management, a problem which could be rectified mainly by 'reinforcing the power' of the Secretary-General.

3. The UN suffered from some structural deficiencies, mostly in the Secretariat and in some subsidiary intergovernmental organs dealing with programme and budget, which could be greatly ameliorated by the creation of a special committee to deal with these problems.

Such a diagnosis led naturally to the conclusion that some minor changes and improved management could solve the UN's crisis, but that a change in the political climate was needed before a real revitalization of the UN could be achieved.

(c) New Approaches since the Late 1980s

Since the crisis of the mid-1980s, the conception of UN reform has begun to change. But this evolution has not yet been fully achieved, and it is premature to predict its final result. It is only possible to analyse the reasons for this change and the various types of new approaches.

First, of course, the UN environment, that is, the international landscape, has been transformed. Beginning with the Gorbachev era, changes such as the success of the 1986 CSCE negotiations in Stockholm on the development of confidence-building measures, the conclusion of arms reduction agreements (the 1987 Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces, the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, and the 1991 and 1993 Strategic Arms Reduction treaties), the destruction of the Berlin wall, the reunification of Germany, the changes of regimes in eastern Europe, the collapse of communism in the USSR, and the emergence of the Commonwealth of Independent States have put the UN in a totally different situation.

The main direct consequences for the world organization were the complete change of attitude of the USSR and then Russia toward the UN, the agreements between the USA and the USSR to put an end to numerous local and regional conflicts, and the decision to request the UN to help in various ways to this end. Consequently peace keeping operations have been developed, notably in Yugoslavia and Cambodia, and the five Permanent Members of the Security Council have found themselves able to agree on numerous problems. This permitted, in particular, the authorization by the Security Council of the use of force in the 1991 Gulf war, and in Somalia in 1992.

The public mood vis-à-vis the UN has followed these trends. The UN has suddenly become popular in the West, and the prestige of the Security Council and of the UN Secretary-General has greatly increased. However, this new fashion has not extended to finding a durable

¹² By its resolution 41/213 of 19 Dec. 1986, the General Assembly finally approved, with a number of reservations, the recommendations of the Group of Eighteen concerning the structure of the Secretariat, reduction of staff, personnel policy, inspection, coordination, etc. On the budgetary process, the General Assembly decided to request the Secretary-General to prepare an outline of the programme budget one year in advance, and to give the existing Committee for Programme and Coordination the mandate to consider this outline. The CPC was to 'continue its existing practice of reaching decisions by consensus', and to transmit its conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly. The General Assembly would continue to decide on the programme budget in conformity with Arts. 17 and 18 of the Charter. In response, the US administration indicated that it would recommend to Congress that it be more positive in its financial support of the UN. Overall, the passage of GA Res. 41/213 did not represent real progress in the direction of better mutual understanding of the role of the UN; it did not alleviate the financial and political crisis.

solution to the financial crisis.¹³ Nevertheless, ideas for reform are still numerous, and it is possible to discern various contradictory trends.

The management approach is still alive. There is persistent pressure from the USA and even from the majority of member states, at least in the North, for the UN to continue to streamline the Secretariat and to reduce the budget. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali decided, within two months of taking office, to suppress some fourteen posts of Assistant Secretary-General and of Under-Secretary-General in the Secretariat. These measures concerned only the economic and social departments, not the administrative ones, but were nevertheless welcomed by the main member states. Further measures were foreshadowed.

proposals for reform concerning the main organs, i.e. implying Charter reform, have developed significantly since 1985. They are following three different trends.

(i) *Economic and social reform.* The first trend reflects concern with the economic and social part of the UN: mainly with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which has for decades been in a state of permanent crisis. To give ECOSOC some credibility and authority, it has been proposed either to reduce the number of its members, or to enlarge it to include all member states; to suppress at the same time the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly (which fulfil practically the same functions); and to create an 'Economic Security Council' of a very limited membership. This Economic Security Council would include the richest and the most populated member states, the other ones being represented on a regional basis. This type of proposal was made in 1985 by a JIU report;¹⁴ in 1987 by the UNA-USA's 'Panel of 22' in a report entitled *A Successor Vision*;¹⁵ and in 1992 by UNDP in the Third Human Development Report, which contained even more drastic proposals.¹⁶

(ii) *Reform of Security Council membership.* The idea here is to make this organ more representative. Two main conceptions exist. The first (an old claim of the developing countries) is to end the veto privilege of the Permanent Members and to increase the total membership; the second is to permit other member states to enter the list. This latter conception is supported by Germany and Japan; and countries such as India, Brazil, and Nigeria are also possible candidates.

(iii) *Enhancing effective power of the Security Council.* The third approach to structural reform also addresses security matters, but in a different way. It would put at the disposal of the Security Council a military force, and revitalize the machinery foreseen by Chapter VII,

¹³ On 31 Dec. 1991 the members who had not paid their dues owed to the regular budget and peacekeeping operations a combined amount of SUS 900 m.: \$439.3 m. to the regular budget and \$463.5 m. to the peacekeeping budget. The US was the greatest debtor, being responsible for \$407.3 m., of which \$266.4 m. was to the regular budget. By 31 Dec. 1992 the overall figure for unpaid dues had increased to \$1,265 m.: \$500 m. to the regular budget (equal to 42% of the regular budget for 1992), and \$765 m. to the peacekeeping budget. The US debt to the regular budget (largely comprising dues unpaid before 1990) had been reduced to \$240 m., and was being paid off progressively. Eighty-seven other states were in arrears to the regular budget.

¹⁴ 'Some Reflections on Reform of the United Nations' by Maurice Bertrand, esp. paras. 65-70 on 'Nature of the Activities of the System and the Notion of a World Consensus' UIU report 85/9), UN doc. A/40/988 of 6 Dec. 1985.

¹⁵ UNA-USA, *A Successor Vision: The United Nations of Tomorrow* (New York, 1987).

¹⁶ This UNDP report, in its chapter V entitled 'A New Vision for Global Human Development', lists reform proposals made (1) in 1989 by the World Institute for Development Economic Research, part of the UN University, for the establishment of a World Economic Council; (2) in 1991 by the Nordic UN Project for a 'high-level International Development Council'; (3) in 1991 by the Group of Fifteen comprising the largest developing countries, at its summit meeting in Caracas. The report says (p. 82): 'Economic and social issues are supposed to be coordinated by the Economic and Social Council. In practice they are not. ECOSOC's fifty-four member structure is too large and unwieldy, and the most powerful industrial countries have regarded this and other UN fora as unmanageable and unprofessional. Effective economic management would require a much smaller and more tightly organized forum, a Development Security Council.' The proposal is for a Council of twenty-two members, eleven permanent and eleven on the basis of rotational election. Other proposals are the creation of a global central bank, for international taxation with a system of progressive income tax, an international trade organization, and a transitional strategy with reforms of the IMF, the World Bank, and GATT.

with its system of identification of aggressors by the Security Council (Articles 39 and 40), economic and military sanctions (Articles 41 and 42), the provision of military contingents by member states according to special agreements (Article 43), and the establishment and exercise of responsibility by the Military Staff Committee (Article 47).

The implementation of this full system of collective security as envisaged in 1945 was in large measure recommended by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali in 1992 in *An Agenda for Peace*. The report adds candidly: 'Forces under Article 43 may perhaps never be sufficiently large or well enough equipped to deal with a threat from a major army equipped with sophisticated weapons. They would be useful, however, in meeting any threat posed by a military force of a lesser order.'¹⁷ It is also proposed to complement these military arrangements by 'peace-enforcement units', more heavily armed than peace keeping units, that could be called upon to restore and maintain cease-fires, when such agreements are violated.

Thus Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali argues that the UN should have at its disposal a full range of military forces of various types. The hypothesis is the same as those of 1919 and 1945: that a definitive consensus exists among the great powers, enabling them to constitute a military alliance able to impose their conception of international order on the whole planet. The passage quoted above, concerning the improbability of the international force controlled by the Security Council being able to oppose a 'major army', shows clearly which political philosophy inspires the whole scheme. The objective is to repress small aggressors; it is not envisaged that one of the great powers could be opposed to the others. If accepted, this version of full implementation of the Chapter VII of the Charter would represent a complete change in the character of the UN.

(d) The Prospects for Real UN Reform

The renewal of interest in improving the UN's efficiency through fundamental structural reforms may seem encouraging. The fact that the taboo against touching the Charter is apparently fading could be considered as especially positive. But the prospects that a comprehensive conception of UN reform will gain acceptance in the near future remain slight.

The various existing proposals are inspired by different visions of the future and of the role of a world organization. There is no consensus of any kind among specialists, diplomats, governments; and public opinion does not seem to be much concerned. This absence of consensus has different consequences in the economic/social and in the security fields.

1. Economic and social issues

In economic and social matters there is still a split between North and South. The diplomats of developing countries continue to press for the enlargement of all committees in the UN and for the development of the economic and social programme. The countries of the North are not much interested in most of the UN's economic and social activities and prefer to rely upon the IMF and the World Bank. The so-called North-South dialogue has stopped. The situation could seem paradoxical since acknowledgement of interdependence has now become a commonplace. Since the first oil crisis in 1973, governments and public opinion have learned to recognize that there is no way to establish independent national strategies in the economic and social fields, or to ignore the strategies, methods, and principles accepted by the rest of the world. Third World debt, international migrations, nuclear accidents, ozone layer depletion, climate change, the spread of international terrorism, drugs, exchange-rate variations, and the activities of transnational corporations have permanently demonstrated that countries are no longer protected by their borders.

Even more important, the good fortune of any country can no longer be built exclusively on the misfortune of others, and the need for economic solidarity has become more significant than the advantages of competition. The prosperity of the USA is indispensable for the

¹⁷ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, June 1992, para. 43. (Below, Appendix A.)

prosperity of Europe and Japan, and the reverse is also true. No major creditor-country, international bank, or large corporation can accept the bankruptcy of a major debtor. The principles on which international economic relations were based are in a process of radical modification. The priority that a government is ready to accord to obtaining the establishment of, and respect for, common rules-for arms control, or for the equilibrium of external trade-is now often higher than the one it attaches to monopolizing its own resources to ensure its security or its prosperity.

The direct consequence of these new principles is the need for reliable political institutions at the international and global level. Such institutions have to provide for medium term commitments to implement common economic policies, for example those agreed in the decisions of the Western summits. The collective decisions of such institutions tend to be more credible than the resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

In other words, as the phenomenon of interdependence gains greater acceptance, there is more need for a solid world political framework. Such a framework does not exist at present. It is in the process of being established, but outside the UN. The rapid development of international intergovernmental organizations, which began in the middle of the nineteenth century, has spawned many institutions outside the UN. Despite their theoretical membership in the UN system, the financial world organizations – the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and GATT – have in fact operated as independent entities, in which a country's ministries of Finance, Economy, and Trade are represented without being really connected with its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For the major powers, the growing emphasis, particularly in western Europe and North America, on economic cooperation and progressive integration at the regional and even the intercontinental level has reduced considerably interest in the UN as a forum for discussing economic matters. Finally, particularly since 1970, regular summits have been instituted between the major Western powers-the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan-to address the harmonization of their monetary and economic strategies. The experimental meeting at Cancun (Mexico) in 1981, which involved fourteen developing countries and eight industrialized states, indicated a possible future model for such consultations.

Clear trends which can be identified in these new political institutions include representation at the highest level;¹⁸ and the limitation of membership to the most important countries-which means the exclusion of small countries and (despite the fleeting exception of Cancun) of the Third World.

In these circumstances it does not appear that the UN as presently structured is likely to play a major role in the economic and social fields; nor does it appear that the UN will soon be reformed in order to contribute more effectively in these fields.

2. International security

In the field of security, the situation is different because there has been since 1987 an illusion of consensus. The agreement of the five Permanent Members on authorizing the 1991 Gulf war, on trying to end regional conflicts, and on supporting a larger use of peace keeping activities created the idea that the Co Id War had been the only reason for the absence of consensus, and that a real system of collective security was now possible.

The philosophy underlying the approach of An Agenda for Peace is based on the following hypotheses:

- the existing consensus among the Permanent Members of the Security Council on the conception of international relations, which seemed to exist during the 1990-1 Gulf crisis, will exist for a long period

¹⁸ The main levels of representation one can distinguish are: prime minister and heads of state (as in the Western and European summits, etc.); ministers (as in the Council of the European Community); ambassadors (as in the Security Council); and diplomats below the rank of ambassador (as in the majority of the UN committees, ECOSOC, the Trade and Development Board, and the Main Committees of the General Assembly).

- this consensus will be strong enough to overcome any reluctance on the part of the great powers to send their armed forces to a war to impose peace, anywhere in the world, even if their national interests are not directly threatened
- the great majority of small and middle powers will support in all circumstances the policy defined by the great powers and their conception of international order.

Such a philosophy, which seems to forget the lessons of history, is more apparent than real. The Secretary-General's proposals to create an international army have not received very much support in the Security Council. Everyone knows that a system of collective security is conceived for inter-state conflicts and is not able to deal well with internal ones. The traditional kind of disputes between states are not frequent today, and will not be so. The present security threats are those occurring largely within a single country or former country, as shown by too many examples: Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Somalia, and Yugoslavia; or they involve non-state actors such as terrorists and ethnic groups.

The idea of 'peace-enforcement units' that was a tentative response to these problems has not generated much enthusiasm because of the risks such a creation would entail. It is more likely that this philosophy, which remains verbal without any general commitment to its implementation, is designed to allow the great powers, or the hegemonic one, to use the UN when necessary for supporting their national interests or their conception of international order. This is in line with the repressive conception of security which is developing in the countries of the North with respect to the troubles that could occur in the South, as demonstrated by the setting up of various long-distance intervention forces by NATO and some great powers.

In these circumstances, prospects for a real reform of the UN in the security field are hardly any better than in the economic and social fields. The debate on the possible enlargement of the Security Council will contribute to deeper reflection on the type of world organization which is needed at the beginning of the third millennium. But it will take time.

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