

**A fork in the road or a roundabout?**  
**- A narrative of the UN Reform process 2003 – 2005**  
**Part I – The internal process**

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*Preface*

*The principal organs of the United Nations have not altered in their fundamentals since 1945, while the world they are intended to manage has changed almost beyond recognition.*

– Kofi Annan, 1 October 2003.<sup>1</sup>

This report is an independent narrative review of the UN reform process that culminated with the High-Level Summit in New York, 14–16 September 2005, plus its ongoing implementation. The purpose of the project has been to gather relevant material, and to find, systematize and maintain knowledge and experiences from the reform process. The general thrust of the report derives from interviews with 45 respondents in and around the UN Secretariat, the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and its Secretariat, the Office of the President of the General Assembly, as well as with representatives from selected Member States. Most respondents were directly involved in the reform process; however, for methodological and substantial reasons, interviews were also made with a selected number of respondents who had been observing the process from the outside. In addition, our report also draws on statements, speeches, reports and articles where these have specific relevance for explaining or shedding light on issues pertinent to the overall process. The current report is intended as the first phase of a larger project on regional perceptions of the role of the UN, covering the views and experiences of Member States more thoroughly.

For the sake of brevity, this report focuses on the Secretariat and the reform process debate that followed from the Iraq War in 2003, channelled through the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which submitted its report, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*<sup>2</sup> in December 2004. The Millennium Project, commissioned by the Secretary-General in 2002 and headed by Jeffrey Sachs, ran parallel to this process, delivering its report, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*<sup>3</sup> in January 2005. The latter report dealt solely with development, whereas the former focused on security but also incorporated elements of development and institutional reform. This fact, combined with time constraints, has led us to focus primarily on the processes surrounding the High-Level Panel. However, the two reports were synthesized in the Secretary-General's report, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*<sup>4</sup> issued in March 2005. Thus, the chapters that deal with the period from early 2005 until the High-Level Summit in September 2005 encompass the outcome of both processes, and consequently cover more issues than the earlier chapters.

Most interviews were conducted jointly by the research team, face to face with respondents, in New York, 17–21 October 2005. A few interviews were conducted singly, also face to face, during the same week, and the remainder were conducted singly face to face or by telephone in the following weeks. Apart from two interviews that were conducted simultaneously, all interviews were recorded to ensure the internal reliability of the data. All respondents were provided with a set of ethical guidelines<sup>5</sup>, and while some comments made were understood to be off the record, no respondent refused to be recorded. As soon as the report had been written up, all recordings were erased.

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1. *Setting the stage: Tensions at the turn of the millennium*

*In a world that has become unipolar, what role should the United Nations play?*

– Kofi Annan 2004<sup>6</sup>

Reform is a constant in the UN system. It has largely been incremental and, to some extent, continuous. During the Cold War, most reforms concerned the rapid decolonization of the 1950s and 60s, with the expansion of the Security Council and ECOSOC. Due to superpower tensions, the security field remained largely static. On other issues, like development and humanitarian affairs, donor countries were gradually shifting attention towards UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies. Lacking a formal voice in the Security Council, major financial contributors focused increasingly on those agencies where they could better influence the use of means. Then, with the end of the Cold War came a host of new challenges – but these were not mirrored in institutional reform of the UN, nor did they prompt a reassessment of the role of the UN in a rapidly changing world.

When Kofi Annan was appointed Secretary-General (SG) in late 1996, he brought along a wide-ranging reform agenda which he envisioned as ‘the most extensive and far-reaching reforms’ of the UN system to that date.<sup>7</sup> Annan’s two periods as Secretary-General have been viewed by many as a continuous push for internal reform. Whereas the reform movement of the late 1990s could be seen as a response, delayed by organizational inertia, to the end of the Cold War, the years around the turn of the century showed the need to go a step further in dealing with an international environment where norms of sovereignty and non-intervention were under pressure. Kofi Annan came to personify this shift, through what has later been described as the ‘Annan doctrine’, a doctrine with profound implications for international relations in the new millennium. The air strikes against Yugoslavia, the SG declared on 7 April 1999,<sup>8</sup> showed that the world would no longer permit nations intent on committing genocide to ‘hide’ behind the UN Charter, which has traditionally safeguarded national sovereignty. He indicated a change in the views on national sovereignty and collective security and highlighted the need for reflection and re-evaluation in and of the UN. Protection of human rights, Annan said, must ‘take precedence over concerns of state sovereignty’. He also acknowledged that ‘this developing international norm will pose fundamental challenges to the United Nations’. Annan also wrought change by showing courage in commissioning reports on the UN’s role in the Srebrenica disaster and in Rwanda. According to David Malone, veteran expert on the UN and former head of the International Peace Academy in New York, the way the SG assumed ‘personal responsibility as well as responsibility for the Secretariat for its role in Rwanda, is nothing short of revolutionary at the United Nations’.<sup>9</sup>

John Bolton, then at the American Enterprise Institute, agreed that changes were taking place, but questioned the right of the SG to criticize member governments: ‘All international civil servants in the UN system are employees of member governments’, he explained. ‘They have no authority to act outside a very limited scope of responsibility. [Annan] is well beyond pushing the envelope on that score.’<sup>10</sup> A few months earlier, Bolton had taken the then President of the USA, Bill Clinton, to task

for his implicit endorsement of the ‘Annan doctrine’.<sup>11</sup> Bolton concluded his invective against Annan by stating that ‘if the Annan doctrine is left unanswered, we will soon hear about “emerging new international norms” that will make it harder and harder for the US to act independently in its own legitimate national interest’. Tensions between international norms and US independent action over Iraq were at the heart of the reform process of 2003–2005. The tensions were further escalated, especially in the eyes of conservative Americans, when Anna said in a BBC interview just before the US presidential election that the invasion of Iraq was “illegal”.<sup>12</sup> And at the critical end-game negotiations of the World Summit Outcome document on UN reform, the US Ambassador to the UN was none other than John Bolton, who had a history as the harshest critic of the UN within the Bush Administration.

### 1.1 Three pillars of reform? Security, development and internal restructuring

Regardless of differing opinions on the appropriate role of the UN, the agenda underpinning the Millennium Assembly and consequently its Declaration, adopted in the autumn of 2000, indicated a new and expanded role for the organization. In short, the UN was to change from an organization that *is* to an organization that *does*. A year later, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 redrew with a stroke the security agenda for much of the world. The ensuing US-led ‘war on terror(ism)’, with the attack on Iraq in March 2003, hot on the heels of a confusing and ultimately unsatisfactory process in the Security Council, led to a call for even more thorough thinking about the role of the UN in the world.

The pervasiveness of reform and the many roots of the current challenges were to a large extent reflected in the interviews conducted for this review. The immediate focus of the interviews was the process that was perceived as starting with Kofi Annan’s address to the General Assembly on 23 September 2003, and concluding with the World Summit of 14–16 September 2005. Nevertheless, when asked when the reform process started, our respondents provided widely differing dates. One even professed not to understand the question, as reform had been underway for decades. Another commented that reform is ongoing, with reference to the ‘open-ended working groups’ of the 1990s. A third centrally-placed respondent commented that reform meant different things to different people, and that insiders were not at the time thinking of the process that started in the spring and summer of 2003 as a ‘reform’. To them, reform indicated the introduction of results-based budgeting and ‘sunset clauses’ – in other words, reform of the UN Secretariat procedures – while many outsiders automatically equated reform with Security Council reform. Speaking to the General Assembly in 2003, the Secretary-General seemed to associate reform with the rules governing the use of force. Yet another key respondent indicated that it would have been better to avoid the use of the word ‘reform’ altogether, feeling that the word implied that this was something new, whereas reform in fact was a constant of the UN system.

The main body of answers can nonetheless be grouped into three clusters. A few respondents, who in one way or another associated themselves with the Secretary-General, stressed that he had been appointed as a reformer, and that the current reform process thus started in 1997.

A second and much larger cluster, mainly respondents who geographically or professionally had a background in the developing world, tended to emphasize the Millennium Summit and the related processes – the Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Project, commonly referred to as the Sachs Report<sup>13</sup>, and saw reform, even of the UN apparatus, as an offshoot of the agenda adopted during the Millennium Summit in 2000. For example, the Millennium Declaration called for intensification of ‘efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects’.<sup>14</sup> These priorities were echoed when the Secretary-General addressed the Millennium Assembly on 12 September 2000 and argued that the broad consensus among the Member of States on ‘what needs to be done’ should lead to agreement on ‘the means of doing it’ and ‘the right tools’, turning the UN into ‘a more effective instrument’.<sup>15</sup> These respondents who focused on the process that started in 2000 emphasized how the 2005 summit was initially planned as a five-year follow-up; quite a few of them complained that the focus on security and ‘Western issues’ had supplanted development issues in the process. Given the attention paid to the Millennium Development Goals in the years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, such a reaction is quite understandable. Furthermore, in his speech to the General Assembly on the opening of the 55<sup>th</sup> Assembly, the Secretary-General listed the fight for development and the fight against injustice above classical security threats.<sup>16</sup> It should nonetheless be noted that the Millennium Declaration itself listed the objectives relating to peace, security and disarmament first, above the objectives related to development and poverty eradication, and all the other objectives. Thus, security issues were always implied in the Millennium process. As many respondents also noted, with the ‘9/11’ terrorist attacks on the USA and the ensuing wars against Afghanistan and Iraq in particular, and the acrimonious arguments preceding the latter, security issues were by necessity moved to the top of the agenda.

By far the largest cluster of respondents was the third: those who had been closely involved with setting up the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, or the ensuing panel process, as well as some people with a primary focus on the security issues facing the UN, predominantly from the Western world. They all subscribed to a time-line that started sometime in 2003, unequivocally referring to ‘Iraq’ as implicit shorthand for the perceived failure of the collective security process and the ensuing US-led war against Iraq in the spring of 2003. The Iraq War led to what was described in the interviews as a ‘great feeling of fragmentation’, and even ‘trauma’ and ‘inertia’ in the UN. The chronology of events offers strong support to such an account, as exemplified by the SG’s public statements.<sup>17</sup> ‘We are living through a crisis of the international system [...] forcing us to ask whether the institutions and methods to which we are accustomed are really adequate’.<sup>18</sup> The shock of Iraq came in the midst of the steady deterioration in US/UN relations that had started in the wake of Washington’s launch of its national strategy that claimed the right of pre-emptive strikes.<sup>19</sup> At the time, Annan tried to downplay this friction, noting: ‘If there is a tension, it is temporary. There is a dynamic tension of sorts, which is fine’.<sup>20</sup> By the spring of 2003, however, tension had reached crisis levels.

During the spring of 2003, the SG also received concerned phone-calls from a group of heads of state, including Brazil and South Africa, urging him to address the issues deriving from the Iraq invasion and implications for the global order.<sup>21</sup> It was even suggested that if the Security Council was deadlocked, there should be the possibility

of calling on other organs. After some deliberation it was decided that the problem had to be handled in a different manner, without creating the perception of a rival institution to the Security Council. At the same time there were also discussions between the heads of the organization, thinking strategically about the role of the UN in the world, and discussing what action could and should be taken. Key figures here were SG Kofi Annan himself, the Under-Secretary for Political Affairs Sir Kieran Prendergast, with some input from the Chef de Cabinet, Iqbal Riza, and in some aspects the SG's Deputy Madame Louise Frechette. In the main however, the generation of ideas and organization took place within the DPA, where Prendergast came up with the idea of discussing the use of force and the role of the Security Council in handling threats and challenges at the annual Security Council Retreat to be held in the US (Providence, Rhode Island) in May 2003. For political reasons Iraq could not be discussed in direct terms, but the suggested theme created the possibility of discussing something related and relevant. Within the DPA, Thant Myint-U, Chief of the Policy Planning Unit, prepared a background paper, and the overarching theme for the retreat was: 'Meeting the new challenges to international peace and security: current experiences'. Under this heading, there were specific discussions on five sub-themes: civil wars and complex emergencies; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; terrorism; organized crime; and strengthening of collective mechanisms.<sup>22</sup> The members of the Security Council were generally positive, and on 13 May agreed on a Presidential Statement dealing with 'The Role of the Security Council in the Pacific Settlement of Disputes', which, although non-binding, at least reaffirmed the interest and goodwill of the Council.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. *Setting up a High-Level Panel (summer 2003 – December 2003)*

*We have come to a fork in the road. This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded. [...] History is a harsh judge: it will not forgive us if we let this moment pass.*

– Kofi Annan, 23 September 2003<sup>24</sup>

*The organisation has come to something of a fork in the road – with one path leading towards true effectiveness, and the other towards an unacceptable status quo.*

– Kofi Annan, 5 November 2003.<sup>25</sup>

Due to the tense political situation deriving from the Iraq situation, further concrete initiatives had to come from the Secretariat. Discussions between Annan and Prendergast during the early summer of 2003 focused on initiatives intended to address why some Member States felt so threatened, and how this required a new look at how old threats were interconnected – as Annan was to put it, ‘In some parts of the world, the dominant threats to peace and security are seen as new and potentially more virulent forms of terrorism, the proliferation of non-conventional weapons, the spread of transnational criminal networks and the ways in which all these things maybe coming together to reinforce one another. But for many others around the globe, poverty, disease, deprivation and civil war remain the highest priorities.’ The goal was thus to ‘ensure that we have the rules, instruments and institutions to deal with all these threats – not according to some hierarchy of “first order” and “second order” issues, but as a linked set of global, cross-border challenges that affect, and should concern, all people’. The SG continued with an implicit reference to the disagreements over Iraq: ‘the divisions of the past year have raised doubts about the adequacy and effectiveness of those rules and tools’.<sup>26</sup> The question was raised whether the Charter-based rules were accepted by all, and this became a main theme, the other being the need to identify the threats and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This eventually led to the idea of establishing a High-Level Panel, a joint initiative by Annan and Prendergast. The latter initially wanted a panel to focus on ‘rebalancing the organs’ but this proved too narrow a focus, and with a cumbersome title. The Secretary-General was, for his part, interested in how ECOSOC might be involved in reconstruction issues, in addition to the Security Council. The idea was for a panel to look at collective security, and to produce ideas for that broad problematic area.

### 2.1 *Thematic scope*

The practical task of defining and planning what a panel could do and what it should look like was informally delegated to Under Secretary-General of the Department of Political Affairs Sir Kieran Prendergast and a few selected members of his staff. From the outside they brought in Bruce Jones, who at the time was Deputy Director of the Centre on International Cooperation at New York University, working on relevant issues that included a large project on global perceptions of threat.

A paper underpinning the idea of a panel, with draft terms of reference, was prepared in late July 2003, with an initial focus on thematic analysis. The draft terms of

reference defined a broad set of issues, and suggested that the panel should analyse threats and challenges, assess how existing international institutions had handled them, and as a third step propose how to deal with the problems – if needs be through institutional reforms, and not necessarily restricted to the UN. The decision to focus on an analysis of specific issues rather than overall UN reform was a deliberate choice, intended to prevent the panel from becoming hostage to political sensitivities in later stages of the process. Much to the surprise of those who drafted the paper, these terms of reference survived, albeit in modified form, throughout the process.

The idea of a panel was then floated to selected heads of state and academics, but there seems to have been little unanimity on the need for and merits of such a panel. On the other hand, heavy pressure for a panel came from developing countries that wanted development issues covered. The exchanges served to refine ideas about the panel, and a final decision to establish it was made by the Secretary-General following consultations with his senior management. In discussions with both member states and UN senior management, the first signs could be seen of what was to become a recurrent theme in the reform process: the tension between security and development, or between hard and soft threats, played out as a series of ‘turf battles’. The industrialized countries, as well as the DPA, wanted to focus on weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and the use of force, while the developing world, the UN agencies and Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Frechette, wanted more focus on the issues covered in the Millennium Development Goals. Thus the terms of reference were modified somewhat, in a compromise that stated that the panel was to focus on hard threats, as well as on soft threats insofar as these had an effect on hard threats. This apparently modest shift meant that the mandate for the panel became something different from what Annan and Prendergast had imagined; they had wanted a relatively narrow focus on security, but the panel mandate ended up implicitly covering most of the whole UN agenda.

The terms of reference were approved in a key meeting in early August 2003, at which the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, Prendergast and the SGs Chief of Staff Iqbal Riza were present. As finalized in the statement made when the panel was announced 4 November 2003, the purpose of the panel was, specifically, to:

- a) Examine today's global threats and provide an analysis of future challenges to international peace and security. Whilst there may continue to exist a diversity of perception on the relative importance of the various threats facing particular Member States on an individual basis, it is important to find an appropriate balance at a global level. It is also important to understand the connections between different threats.*
- b) Identify clearly the contribution that collective action can make in addressing these challenges.*
- c) Recommend the changes necessary to ensure effective collective action, including but not limited to a review of the principal organs of the United Nations.*

*The Panel's work is confined to the field of peace and security, broadly interpreted. That is, it should extend its analysis and recommendations to other issues and institutions, including economic and social, to the extent that they have a direct bearing on future threats to peace and security.<sup>27</sup>*

Although the panel's mandate had become broader than the SG had originally intended, he vigorously supported the adoption of these terms of reference.



An important catalyst for the role that Annan took in the panel process in the late summer of 2003 was the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August, which killed 23 people, including Sergio Vieira de Mello, UN Special Representative to Iraq. The bombing created profound grief in the UN, and initiated a period of acute reflection upon the role of the UN as a global actor, and in a sense made the process personal for the Secretary-General. It also directly affected the process in the DPA, as one of the key staff members involved in the the early conception of the reform initiative were among those killed.

The discussions of the spring and summer, coupled with the Baghdad bombing, formed the backdrop for the speech of the SG to the General Assembly on 23 September, a speech that throughout the interviews was referred to as ‘the fork-in-the-road speech’.<sup>28</sup> It succinctly drew together the frustrations stemming from Iraq, the grief following the Baghdad bombing, and the various themes debated within the Secretariat and with Member States. Several of our respondents commented how this speech and the terms of reference together contained all elements of the reform process that culminated in September 2005.

After an introduction relating to Iraq, the SG asserted that there were ‘new threats that must be faced – or, perhaps, old threats in new and dangerous combinations’, specifically hard threats. He then went on to discuss different soft threats, adding that ‘The United Nations must confront all these threats and challenges – new and old, “hard” and “soft”’. Special attention was paid to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>29</sup> The SG’s speech then focused on how the threats were to be met, and what the role of the UN should be. Annan suggested that all the major organs of the UN could use an overhaul and ‘realignment’, but singled out the Security Council as particularly important and in need of asserting its ‘ability to deal effectively with the most difficult issues’ and ‘becoming more broadly representative of the international community as a whole’. If implemented before the Iraq crisis, such reforms would have meant that the decision of the Council not to endorse the war would have ‘had greater validity, and added greater pressure on those countries that wanted to go to war’.<sup>30</sup> Annan concluded by announcing that his contribution to the process was the establishment of a High-Level Panel ‘of eminent personalities’ to examine the current challenges, consider how collective action could deal with the challenges, review the functioning of major organs of the UN, and recommend ways of strengthening the organization. In light of the later process, it is important to note that the SG at this stage intended the High-Level Panel to report back in time for him to make recommendations to the 59<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2004. This was his decision, and it was explicitly stated in the speech.<sup>31</sup>

The Executive Office of the Secretary-General, led by Edward Mortimer, was largely responsible for drafting the speech, but there was major input from the other key players. The one image that affixed itself more than anything else – the fork-in-the-road – can be attributed to Prendergast. The phrase came up in a quest to find striking images, and the direct inspiration was Robert Frost’s poem ‘The Road Not Taken’.<sup>32</sup> It nonetheless came as a surprise to those involved that this phrase was to attract more attention than other elements of the speech. To observers the speech captured ‘an idea ahead of its time’. Later it would be commented that Frost’s title bore further relevance as the speech came to represent a road *not* taken with regard to reforming the UN.

## 2.2 *Selecting panel members*

Along with the terms of reference, the DPA team produced a short-list of panellists. The basic idea was to select a cross-section drawn from government, business, media, academia, and international organizations. The drafters envisioned a dynamic panel bringing in new thinkers: the original list did not include a single person over the age of 50. The need for balance with regard to gender and geography was also stressed. The actual selection process changed things considerably. Several respondents who had not been close to the selection process voiced the opinion that the selection was rather haphazard, one even commenting that the panel must have been selected in ‘a fit of absence of mind’. Insiders, however, recount a different story: a deep and thorough, if at times frustrating, process. Starting with the meeting in August, the Secretary-General became actively involved in the selection process, and he made the final decision on each member. He specifically wanted a representative from every permanent member of the Security Council on the panel. There ensued a drift from youth and apparent dynamism, and the initially intended cross-section, towards the idea of more established older statesmen, almost exclusively from a government background. The Panel was initially planned to have two chairs, one male and one female, one from the developed world and one from the developing world. This was, however, not attainable. Anand Panyarachun, who became the Chair,<sup>33</sup> was one of the last suggestions for the panel; unlike the case with the other members, the SG had never even met him before settling on him as sole chair. To this day, Panyarachun, who had not been involved in UN affairs since the 1970s, does not know why he was chosen. The outcome of the selection process disappointed quite a few people, both inside the UN and outside; these people found the members to be a rather boring crowd of old-timers. Even panellists would reflect that they were in truth ‘old’, in the sense of being no longer in the loop on many issues.

Within the Secretariat, there was some resentment to the idea of a crowd of outsiders assessing the work of the organization, since it was felt that they could not possibly know enough about the issues and problems at hand. Others felt that the choice of panel members simply reflected the issues the Secretary-General wanted the panel to discuss. Some respondents, however, pointed out that the choices proved quite shrewd – in that the members were clearly selected from the ‘real’ world; that it was thus virtually impossible to ridicule the panel; and that the members should be able to draw on experience from the various governing positions they had held and bring their own perspectives. The panel was also geographically well-balanced.

Given the weight Annan had assigned to Security Council reform in his speech on 23 September, it should come as no surprise that states aspiring to permanent membership of the Security Council were intent on being represented, even if the panel was supposed to be neutral. As soon as it became known that a panel was being established, the Secretariat, and the SG particular, became the target of intensive lobbying from interested parties – not only states, but also concerned individuals. In particular, aspiring Security Council members made demands for positions. The Secretary-General, in a speech in Baden-Baden in January 2004, felt compelled to ask Germany ‘not to focus on the nationality of the individual Panel Members, or even on whether Germany may become a permanent member of the Security Council’.<sup>34</sup> Germany did not get a member on the panel. The composition of the panel was announced on 4 November 2003.<sup>35</sup>

As the panel had become less of a cross-section than anticipated, the DPA team thought that with such a group of people there was a need for a Panel Secretariat strong enough to provide the group with ideas. The need for a research director had already been established, and several names had been discussed. Amongst the final candidates proposed to the Secretary-General and the Panel Chair were Steve Stedman, a US based academic. Anand Panyarachun had no firm views on either one of the candidates, except that the person should be a good drafter and have mastery of the English language. When the Secretary-General finally opted for Stedman, most of those involved felt that the choice came down to the fact that Stedman was willing to relocate to New York, and perhaps his being an American and thus in some sense a confidence-building choice vis-à-vis Washington DC. Stedman, when asked about the genesis of his new appointment, responded that he had ‘developed relations with a set of people at the United Nations during the last six years’ and ‘a lot of the work I’ve done has had resonance in the U.N. [...] Policymakers read it and they understand I have sympathy for people who have to make tough decisions.’ Stedman further stated that his biggest challenge would be producing a report ‘that is both hard-hitting and has the potential for leading to change. There is a general sense within the U.N. that, basically, the effectiveness and legitimacy of the organization has been called into account. When Kofi Annan announced his intention to create the panel, he declared that the U.N. was at a crossroads where it needed to rethink how it can effectively provide collective security in today’s world’<sup>36</sup>.

Stedman brought in a group of relatively young researchers from varied geographical backgrounds. Continuity of the process was ensured by hiring Bruce Jones as Stedman’s deputy and by Thant Myint-U from the DPA, working 50% in the DPA and 50% in the Panel Secretariat, reporting solely to Stedman on panel matters. The remaining composition of the Panel Secretariat (herein referred to as the *research team* to clarify its distinct nature to that of the UN Secretariat) created three problems. The first was gender balance. Despite efforts apparently made to recruit women, there were none in the team. The second problem was to ensure a representative team in terms of regional balance, which brings us to the third problem (as with the Panel itself) related to aspiring Security Council members making demands for positions<sup>37</sup>.

The research team, finally constituted in January 2004, rented offices in the Chrysler Building in New York. They were supposed to report only administratively to the Secretariat, otherwise being completely independent. The physical and administrative separation between the research team and the Secretariat was intended to protect the Secretary-General, and to absolve him of responsibility in case the team (or the panel) should come up with propositions that were politically unacceptable – in addition to providing the research team with the necessary level of independence. In practice, there was to be constant dialogue with the Secretary-General.

### 2.3 *Perceptions, objectives, goals*

As mentioned above, the debates and initiatives of the spring and summer of 2003 must be understood in the context of the war in Iraq. It totally dominated the agenda: ‘people did not think of anything else’. There was a need to address somehow the challenges raised by the war, without dealing directly with it. Among our respondents there was virtual unanimity on the need for a UN initiative in 2003. This seems to

have been the overriding concern. Even with the hindsight of an outcome that according to many respondents left much to be desired, there was in 2003 broad agreement that a reform process was necessary. Given this consensus, it might have been expected that the material would indicate retroactive attempts at streamlining the process, presenting it as clearly goal-driven and explicitly managed. This was not so. To the question of what was the most important goal of the process, the response closest to a common denominator was that the setting of an agenda was most important. Even centrally-placed respondents painted a picture of a set of initiatives in which the process was more important than the end-goals. There might have been agreement on what the immediate problem was, and which broad themes should be covered, but this did not mean there was agreement on what the process would be like, what it would lead to, or what the end-goals would be. Thus, the fall-out over Iraq should be seen as an enabling, perhaps even necessary, cause of reform. It does not seem to have been a sufficient cause, at least not given how the process went. This means we must examine the varying aspirations and goals that went into the process.

At the structural level, it was argued that the fall-out over Iraq indicated a need to look at how the UN conducted its business at the intergovernmental level, the Security Council included. One goal was therefore a comprehensive rethinking and restructuring of UN organs. Others commented that the UN up until then had only *added* tasks, and that the time had come for streamlining the organization. Even more important was the concern over the big powers' level of commitment to the UN in the wake of Iraq, where it was felt that the credibility of the organization itself was at stake. Of particular significance here was the relationship between the US and the UN. Annan and Prendergast reportedly concluded that it was necessary to re-establish the ties between the UN and Washington, and that this would have to happen through a process in which the UN demonstrated its relevance to the one remaining superpower. Such a re-engagement would also have to draw in the major countries in the developing world, creating a new grand bargain in the UN. The research team agreed to some extent, but went even further. In their view, the challenge was to reorganize collective security at large, in a post-9/11 context where the USA had effectively broken with the UN. What Iraq had thrown into sharp relief was, as they saw it, the misalignment between the UN and the USA on security priorities. Thus the panel was in part meant to bring Washington and the UN back into alignment, but also in part to address the increasingly evident divisions over Iraq, manifesting themselves over a wide range of issues worldwide. In one of his first speeches in January 2004, Kofi Annan noted: 'we also witnessed sharp divisions among our leading Member States – perhaps the most acute and acrimonious we had seen since the end of the Cold War. Consensus seemed to shatter, even on points of fundamental principle that we thought all nations shared'.<sup>38</sup> The media, he felt, had focused exclusively on Iraq, whereas the actual division ran even deeper. While the Secretary-General's line of thought went generally along these lines, he also wanted more thinking on the general structure of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, in addition to the pursuit of what had become the characteristic of his tenure as SG: internal reform. Annan had launched efforts at internal reform during his first months as SG in 1997 and continued to press the issue until his final year in office. The research team found both institutional and organizational reform largely irrelevant at the time, and not ranked as a priority; however, as the process moved forward, the focus was expanded to include both these issues.

In addition to the structural and organizational driving forces, the need to assert initiative was the next significant aspiration. It was important for the Secretary-General to be seen as leading a constructive debate, or at least as being part of the discussion. A major objective was to show that the UN was still relevant after Iraq, and to demonstrate the Secretary-General's own resolve. On a more psychological level, it was suggested that the SG felt lonely in his denunciation of the Iraq War, and that he wanted more people to share his view, and possibly come up with some relevant ideas. At the very least, a panel could serve to move focus away from his person towards a broader discussion on the future role of the UN.

Several respondents suggested that much of the in-fighting and turf battles over the mandate and outcomes had to be understood in the context of legacy. It was believed that Annan, Frechette and Prendergast, with long and distinguished careers at and around the UN, wanted to leave legacies. In that light, the panel (as well as the Millennium Project) could be seen as tools to achieve such a legacy – be it on internal UN reform, development issues or security issues. The fierce debates over the terms of reference, as well as the very careful selection of panellists, suggested that legacy might indeed have been an important factor in the process. However, the fact that the Secretary-General had never met Anand Panyarachun, and barely knew of the man before appointing him, also indicates that the quest for legacy cannot have been the overriding aspiration in the autumn of 2003.

### 3. *The work of the panel (December 2003 – December 2004)*

*What is needed today is nothing less than a new consensus [...] The essence of that consensus is simple: we all share responsibility for each other's security.*  
– *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, 2004<sup>39</sup>

*We must make 2005 a year of bold decision.*  
– Kofi Annan, 2 December 2004.<sup>40</sup>

The High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change had six full meetings between December 2003 and November 2004, and dozens of regional and bilateral consultations. Issue workshops were arranged during the same period. Although many people were involved, the core group was remarkably small. The panel itself had 16 members, while the entire research team, researchers as well as regular secretaries, consisted of 11 people.

#### 3.1 *Organization of work: competencies and themes*

When the panel convened for its first meeting in Princeton, 5–7 December 2003,<sup>41</sup> everything about it was essentially still unsettled. The research director had a strategy ready, but the panellists had their own ideas. Various sources have described the meeting as ‘pretty tense’, with many high-profiled people sizing each other up and trying to establish agendas. A few panel members voiced the opinion that there would be no need for the involvement of the research team: *they* were the experts, *they* already knew everything there was to be known and would handle the writing themselves. Others argued that the research team was a vital necessity for research, note-taking and drafting on the basis of discussions in the panel. By writing a ‘test draft’ of the first day’s discussion on that same evening, the research team proved its worth to the panellists, and by producing longer analytical papers in preparation of the second meeting of the panel, the team managed to establish itself as indispensable to the work of the panel.

Regarding the competence and relevance of the panel members and their input, opinion varies somewhat. This is especially so about the Chair, although opinion seems to differ according to whether the respondents generally prefer leaders who act as facilitators and arbitrators, or leaders who are goal-driven visionaries. Quite a few respondents were sceptical to Panyarachun, particularly at the outset, seeing him as having more style than substance, and as being overtly cautious, preferring deferral to conflict. Others stressed how he spent considerable time, both during the meetings and outside, getting to know the panellists and gaining their confidence and trust. What some respondents saw as lack of engagement, others saw as a conscious attempt not to dictate any agenda. Panyarachun did make it known that he wanted a consensus report, not a majority report, and since it was understood that the panel would be most effective and have the greatest impact if it indeed operated as a team and reached consensus, it was seen as necessary to have an open-minded chairperson. When tempers flared and debates degenerated into personal hostility, Panyarachun would try

to ensure that the debate was kept open, comprehensive and candid in order to reach consensus, rather than offering substantive comments of his own. Whereas his style might have been too hands-off for some panellists and observers, it was widely held that he was crucial in reaching consensus in the final negotiations of the panel.

As for the other panellists, there was wide agreement among respondents that the central contributors numbered four or five. Everyone mentioned Gareth Evans and Lord David Hannay as the two members who had key intellectual input, pushing the agenda and driving the process forward; they even spent a weekend acting as a sort of 'editorial committee' for the final draft. Other frequently mentioned names were Gro Harlem Brundtland, Brent Scowcroft and Amre Moussa. Brundtland was seen as a truly independent thinker, but also significantly cooperative. Scowcroft won wide respect for the way in which he was able to present and create understanding for US views without actually endorsing them, and was seen as representing a balance of US views, rather than any particular view emanating from Washington DC. Moussa was by many seen as being opposed to numerous initiatives. He was nevertheless also considered to be willing to debate and to find pragmatic solutions. But in general, it was noted that the panel was less independent than had been envisioned, and that several panellists obviously stayed in close contact with their capitals. Several respondents also commented that the quality of panellists from developing countries was not as high as from the developed world, as regards both substantial issues and skills like drafting, and that the ideas from 'the south' were thus represented inadequately. This might imply that the panel lost some legitimacy, and that the report could be seen as less balanced.

One effect of the presence of those many panellists who admitted that they had been 'out of the loop' on many issues was that they could not be expected to display any deep background knowledge, or generate many new ideas. This inevitably gave to the research team a central role. They came to carry out much of the work, although they actually steered the panel less than they might have envisioned.

Once initial disagreements over scope and process had been settled, panellists reported that contact with both the research director and his team was excellent. The research team forged unity through repeated drafts. They first wrote brief analytical papers, partly as surveys for panellists and partly as a confidence-building measure. They later wrote papers discussing background and offering the panellists a menu of recommendations. However, one problem that was repeatedly mentioned was that the team did not know exactly *what* the job was going to be. Research was thus to some extent 'at random'.

While there was unanimous praise for the professionalism and capacity of the research team, as with the panel itself, views on the team's composition varied. A majority of respondents found it a good thing to have an American as research director, as this was seen to lead to greater engagement on the part of the USA. Stedman's familiarity with the US system and the relevant figures was felt to legitimize the process in the USA. Some, however, felt that having an American research director led to some scepticism from the developing world. Such concerns were only exacerbated by the fact that the research team was seen as less than ideally internationally representative, with so many members born, educated or living in North America.

Respondents who were involved in the panel process indicated there was also considerable uncertainty about management and goals. This was something both the panel and the research team had to handle. They had only the broad terms of reference as a thematic guideline, and did not know at the outset what exactly would happen with the report, even though it was assumed that states might be asked to act on the recommendations. These respondents agreed that the process was only partly managed, if at all. As one commented, this was a stimulated process, not a managed one, where the Secretary-General merely said ‘someone give me some solutions’, and indicated a framework and a need for consensus. Since the goals were not clearly set out, an unforeseen report resulted – due in part to the choice of persons and their fields of expertise, as we examine in greater detail below.

To the extent that there *were* attempts at managing the process, these came from various sources. Within the panel, the research team did some managing, particularly if the debate took a turn that was seen as unrealistic. The research team also managed the repeated drafting discussed above, and had particularly strong – in some cases decisive – input on themes where there were no experts among the panellists.

In the UN, the research team reported to Prendergast, and at key moments – as when crucial issues had to be resolved – to the Secretary-General. Annan was generally kept well-informed of all important developments, by the panel chair and, through Prendergast, by the research team. Sometimes he even knew things about panel business before the panellists themselves did. Most respondents agreed that to the extent that the SG intervened in the proceedings, he was not trying to lead. He was, however, seen as expressing his views on what he expected. First and foremost, Annan encouraged crisp, clear and bold actions; although he presented no blueprint, he explicitly wanted outcomes. Otherwise, apart from the contacts with Annan and Prendergast, and Frechette as appropriate, all of whom were by now comfortable with the broad approach, the panel and the research team did not spend much time with UN senior management. In fact, the rest of the UN Secretariat was somewhat deliberately kept out of the picture. There was not perceived to be much research capacity to draw on within the UN, and there was a desire to avoid getting bogged down in unnecessary bureaucratic turf battles. During the panel process there was little worry about the attitudes of the UN Secretariat; what was seen as necessary was that the senior management of the UN would accept the recommendations.

What, then, would the recommendations be? As indicated, both Annan and Prendergast, and later Stedman and Jones, had the initial idea that the panel would cover a rather limited agenda, focusing on collective security and the use of force. This soon proved mistaken. Some expansion in scope took place during the negotiations of the terms of reference, and more followed in the panel. As described by respondents, the first meeting of the panel, at Princeton, was crucial in breaking down the mental barriers between hard and soft security issues. The research team brought in specialists on both sets of issues, with the intention of showing adherents of both kinds of security that the issues were intertwined. The briefings and the following interaction created a common baseline, and the first meeting decided the focus and scope of the rest of the process.



Further work went into the second meeting. The research staff prepared a comprehensive paper on trends and patterns of threats, identifying 27 threats, subdivided into the six categories that can be found in the final report. Following detailed threat analyses, case by case, the Research team made the point that the policy recommendations should be grounded in research. It also presented a model for evaluating the historical efforts at countering these threats, based on ethics, efficiency, equity and effectiveness. The intention of this exercise was to show that the evaluation would have to be multi-faceted, opening up many issues from their deep politicization. The first step was for the panellists to reach some conclusion on the evaluation of each threat and how it had been met – only then could they discuss recommendations. This basic model was then followed at most meetings. The general feeling among respondents was that the panel worked relatively well after the second meeting, in Switzerland in February 2004, but some respondents opined the panel did not really get down to business until its fourth meeting, in Austria in July 2004.

With regard to specific themes, some were emphasized and new ones were added, according to the fields of expertise of those panellists keen on specific sectors. Brundtland, for example, agitated for health issues, Badinter argued strongly for including organized crime, and Evans' contribution was central to the idea of 'Responsibility to Protect'. In such thematic areas, the Research team mainly ordered and structured debates and text, and had less influence on outcomes. Furthermore, just as the panel was starting to work, the oil-for-food scandal erupted, and with it came a massive desire for Secretariat reform. In the panel, the Chair was the most active advocate of internal reform, but to most respondents the outcomes seemed hesitant on this matter. There was, however, a recommendation about a second DSG on peace and security. Although this did not materialize, the recognition of problems relating to accountability, strategic coherence and direction on cross-cutting issues pertinent to peace and security eventually led to the creation of the Policy Committee in the Secretariat. In this committee, policy papers with proposed decisions are presented, and the Secretary-General, along with a selected group of his senior managers, has to make a decision and sign it. Several respondents commented that this has worked remarkably well, increasing both efficiency and transparency dramatically. On the general issue of institutional reform, it has been argued that it was a tactical mistake not to limit the scope to the Security Council and the Secretariat. However, several panellists, supported by Frechette, wanted to look at all the UN institutions. While this was indeed the outcome, it has been argued with hindsight that neither the panel nor the research team had much expertise on the other institutions, and that the resultant recommendations proved rather anaemic.

Although the panel processes bred consensus, there were four contentious issues. On weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, there was disagreement between the haves and the have-nots, e.g. on the closing of the fuel cycle. Agreeing on a definition of terrorism also proved troublesome, due largely to disagreement about the situation in the Middle East. Another area of disagreement was 'Responsibility to Protect'. Although it was generally seen as a good thing, views varied as to what it entailed, with the division on this issue largely one between developed and developing countries.

The all-important issue, at least to outsiders, was – not unexpectedly – Security Council reform. The Secretary-General had himself emphasized that 'it is generally

agreed that the Security Council today does not reflect the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and more or less reflects the power structure of 1945, and that the world has changed'.<sup>42</sup> Thus, he would argue, reform of the Council was arguably one of the most critical issues on the reform agenda. On this issue there is disagreement among respondents, not only about the subject matter, but about how the panel came to discuss it. Some have argued – it would seem with sound basis in the ‘fork-in-the-road’ speech – that the panel was always expected to say something on Security Council reform, but that there was a conscious decision to discuss it at the end. After all, the issue had been around for decades, and following some rather fruitless discussions about it at Princeton, it was feared that the rest of the reform would be held hostage to Security Council reform. Key countries like Germany, India and Japan, for example, focused almost solely on Security Council reform throughout the entire reform process. As the composition of the Council was seen as only part of the bigger problem, it was decided to deal with the major issues first. There was also the tactical issue of using Security Council reform to create a ‘buzz’, and thus to save it until close to the end. Other respondents claim that the panellists would have preferred not to deal with the issue at all, but that Member-State expectations, particularly from those states pushing for Council membership, made it clear by the third meeting in Ethiopia in April–May 2004 that it could not be avoided. Although the issue was a potential show-stopper, it would have to be dealt with if this process were to be seen as modern and relevant. Brent Scowcroft in a televised interview when asked about the work of the panel said: ‘It’s a very broad panel. And yet we came together on about 98-99 percent of the issues, and that gives me a lot of encouragement – I was pessimistic when we first started – that we can take some useful steps, not revolutionary steps, to improve the effectiveness of the UN’.<sup>43</sup>

It should be noted that there was overwhelming agreement among respondents about the *necessity* of discussing Security Council reform, even if almost everyone found it deeply divisive and ultimately harmful. One respondent pointed out the ambivalence, in both the panel and the research team, about Security Council reform being on the agenda because of the Secretary-General (he had singled it out in his fork-in-the-road speech): there was a feeling that it would detract from achieving other goals. Lord Hannay succinctly commented: ‘We must not allow this great white whale of international diplomacy to displace all the water in the sea, though it is particularly important’.<sup>44</sup>

Regardless of how the panel came to discuss Security Council reform, at the fourth meeting (in Austria), it was clearly on the agenda, with a basic set of principles and two different options for membership. Much to everyone’s surprise, consensus among the panellists seemed within reach. However, in contrast to all other issues, consensus was not seen as advantageous on this particular issue. Agreeing on one specific solution would set the panel up for massive critique from any state that felt slighted, and would put the Secretary-General in the impossible situation of having to accept or reject such a recommendation. Thus, at the request of the research team, Annan himself came to the meeting, where he said that it would be acceptable for there to be more than one recommendation on Security Council reform. The panel report thus offered ‘two formulae for consideration, both of which would expand membership to 24, and would have the same goals: to bring into the councils deliberations those who contribute most to the organization financially, militarily and diplomatically; to ensure that the council broadly represents the membership of the UN as a whole; and

not to expand the veto, which would render decision making more difficult'.<sup>45</sup> That made it possible for both the panel and the SG to defer the question to Member-State negotiations. What the panellists then agreed in their final report was that both options were viable, although some members preferred the one, and some the other.

### 3.2 *External relations*

Security Council reform provided the most spectacular case of the external world intervening in the work of the panel, but there were clearly other instances as well. As one respondent mentioned, there was some 'stage management' of both processes and issues by some capitals, most notably Washington, London, Paris, Cairo and New Delhi. The one ongoing concern was the oil-for-food scandal. With both a US congressional inquiry and the UN-commissioned Volcker inquiry,<sup>46</sup> the focus on the reform of UN management became intense. As one centrally placed respondent argued, the panel report would simply not be credible if it failed to include anything on institutional reform. The issue thus became a necessity and not part of the grand design; it was removed from the ambit of strategic choice.

The key country pushing for management reform was the USA, and relations with Washington clearly preoccupied both the panel and its Research team. At the very first meeting, Scowcroft voiced the opinion that to present a report in August 2004 would be bad timing. If released at that time, it would feed directly into the US presidential election campaign, and most likely be shot down by both sides of US politics. The panellists and the Secretary-General agreed, but even though such concerns seemed valid, they could not be presented as the panel positioning itself tactically in relation to the US elections. Thus, the panel decided that the Chair would write a letter to the Secretary-General, requesting postponement because of the workload. A postponement to December was promptly granted. It does not seem to have been immediately clear to the central players at the time, but this postponement meant that the recommendations of the panel would be discussed in parallel with the follow-up on the Millennium Project, unlike the intentions of the SG's original plan.

The importance of relations with the USA continued to loom large throughout the panel process, and in the summer of 2004 the Research team initiated talks with Annan, Frechette and Prendergast about the strategic and tactical follow-up to the policy recommendations. At the time, the research team argued that even if the recommendations were presented as a conceptual package, one did not need to (and perhaps should not) follow a 'take it or leave it' strategy. On the other hand, the recommendations should not, in their view, be presented as an *à la carte* menu: Member States should be encouraged to adopt it as a package rather than 'cherry-picking' specific proposals. The argument was that by acknowledging the utility of a global deal that took into account 'the needs of others', all – including the USA – would be better served in their efforts to promote national objectives. At the same time, such a broad deal would reassert the common interests of the world community, as would later be outlined in *In Larger Freedom*.

It was furthermore argued that choices on specific tactics should await the outcome of the US presidential election. From the signals the Panel Research team got from the US State Department, it was assumed that a package deal would be off the table if

President Bush were re-elected, but very much on the table if Senator Kerry won the election. What complicated matters were that both the different camps in the UN Secretariat and the Member States became engaged in the tactics of how the recommendations were to be presented.

The close contact between the Panel Research team and Washington did not go unnoticed. Some respondents argued that such visits clearly had an impact on what was put on the panel agenda and what was not, and that the visits led to suspicion from other Member States, even though the research team in fact held strongly disagreeing views with the US government on several issues.<sup>47</sup> More generally, it has been indicated that the panel and the research team might have spent too much time engaging with people who were favourably disposed to the project, rather than engaging possible opponents, and that panel consensus might have been overestimated as an indicator of UN consensus. Such criticism should be tempered by two qualifications. Firstly, a great many respondents stressed that, in the aftermath of Iraq and the oil-for-food scandal, there was a general perception of there being a crisis, and US involvement was seen as necessary. As the strained relationship between the UN and the USA was viewed as a challenge to be overcome at the outset of the process, it was seen as important to keep close contact with Washington. Secondly, it also seemed to most respondents that real progress could not be made without US commitment, and that the price to be paid for such commitment might be simply to allow for some US privileges. Furthermore, at a meeting that the research team organized with previous UN reformers, all participants agreed that it was of vital importance to ensure US interest and investment in the process.

The panel and its research team did not confine themselves to contacts with the US government. Through regional consultations and issue workshops around the globe, external actors were brought into the process. In addition, actors such as the International Peace Academy, the Centre of International Cooperation, the United States Institute of Peace, the Council of Foreign Relations and the Stanley Foundation provided important informal forums in New York that enhanced understanding and most likely created greater buy-in. At the same time, the research team was openly briefing the Member States on its work. A conscious decision had been made: to be open about the work of the panel and the research team, to bring the Member States along throughout the process, rather than springing the whole package on them at the end of the process.

One example can be cited to indicate that such efforts might not satisfy everyone. Quite early in the process, the research team arranged a workshop where individuals who had been involved in previous UN reform processes were asked for advice on how to proceed strategically and tactically so as to ensure the best possible outcomes. It should perhaps come as no surprise that quite a few of the participants later felt that the Research team had ignored all their advice.

#### 4. *From High-Level Panel to 'In Larger Freedom' (December 2004 – March 2005)*

*To achieve its potential and another San Francisco moment, the United Nations must win back the trust of the American public and world public opinion.*

– Mark Malloch Brown, 16 January 2005.<sup>48</sup>

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*There is a yearning in many quarters for a new consensus on which to base collective action [...] A desire exists to make the most far-reaching reforms in the history of the United Nations, so as to equip and resource it to help advance this 21<sup>st</sup> century agenda [...] whatever threatens one threatens all.*

- In Larger Freedom, April 2005<sup>49</sup>

The report of the High-Level Panel was presented on 2 December 2004, amid much media fanfare. It was well received, even though comments on its relatively 'grand nature' were made. As the process moved from the independent panel into the UN, events initially external to the reform package became increasingly salient. Even more than before, relations with Member States now had an influence on the process. The time that had to be invested in handling events extraneous to the reform process inevitably detracted away from the time that could be put into strategic planning and preparation. The overriding theme was the oil-for-food scandal.

##### 4.1 *Process and key players in the Secretariat*

Oil-for-food hit the headlines in January 2004. Allegations and criticism mounted steadily throughout the year, leading to calls for Annan's resignation and widespread distrust of the UN. Troubling revelations on oil-for-food and related findings of the Volcker panel were coupled with US congressional probes and reports of sexual exploitation and abuse in some of the UN peace operations to create an atmosphere of ongoing crisis. Centrally placed respondents commented how the oil-for-food-process demanded massive attention, completely dwarfing any other theme. Most of the special assistants were entirely caught up in putting out fires and helping the SG to survive. Even though the Office of the Secretary-General tried to carry on business as usual, preparing the World Summit and the follow-ups to the panel report and the Millennium Project report<sup>50</sup>, oil-for-food had to be dealt with continuously. It created what was referred to as a sense of 'impending doom'. Several respondents commented how the entire month of December 2004 and most of January 2005 was lost for follow-up work due to on-going crisis management, even though oil-for-food also in a way sharpened attention on reform, increasing the perceived need for management reform of the UN.

In late December, Chef de Cabinet Iqbal Riza announced his retirement, described by some respondents as unexpected but not surprisingly in the context of the oil for food investigations and the SG's need to be seen as taking action within his own ranks<sup>51</sup>. Riza was soon followed by his deputy Elisabeth Lindenmayer.<sup>52</sup> In January, Riza was succeeded by Mark Malloch Brown, who brought with him Mark Suzman. In other

goings, Ms. Lindenmayer was replaced by the then Director of Peace and Security in the SG's office, the longer serving UN civil servant, Mr. Michael Møller<sup>53</sup>. The latter was given the task of coordinating how the UN would manage and deal with the outcome of the Volcker inquiry and the oil-for-food investigation. With these changes at the top of the organization, there was considerable uncertainty and insecurity in the circles closest to the Secretary-General, again diverting attention from reform. Malloch Brown nevertheless came in with a stated goal of changing the discourse, and shifting the focus away from oil-for-food and back to the reform agenda. His background from turning around the UNDP was clearly one reason why he had been brought in. As Malloch Brown said himself, 'it was that kind of management turnaround success at UNDP, combined with the development agenda, that he [Annan] wants to see brought into the United Nations proper. And the emphasis I've given at the UNDP on communications. It's those things that we've had success [with] at the UNDP, and we will see if we can repeat the trick at the United Nations'.<sup>54</sup>

Malloch Brown also made a historical link to the very creation of the UN, stating to the *New York Times* just as he entered into his new post in January 2005, 'To achieve its potential and another San Francisco moment the United Nations must win back the trust of the American public and world public opinion'.<sup>55</sup> The Secretary-General consolidated this link in April the same year, by defining the Summit as a 'new San Francisco moment', urging a recapturing of the spirit of San Francisco by giving the organisation its largest overhaul since its creation.<sup>56</sup> Malloch Brown additionally argued for a stronger UN, one that could be able to 'escape the busy hands of too many governments seeking to micromanage [...] where all our management decisions are subject to review by intergovernmental panels, and therefore, subject to political horse dealing by those panels [...] oil-for-food showed this'.<sup>57</sup>

The planning of the follow-up to the panel had begun during the summer of 2004. It was then decided that Steve Stedman would join the executive office of the Secretary-General after the report had been published, as special advisor with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General. He brought with him some members of the research team. Their main contacts were Annan, Frechette and Prendergast. Bob Orr was brought into the Secretariat in August 2004, as Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning, specifically charged with planning and carrying out the larger reform process and the 2005 summit. The Strategic Planning Unit was deemed to be too small and too neglected to be able to do much strategic planning. So, as Stedman did, Orr put together a team of relatively young people to steer the process. Several of these were outsiders, as capacity within the Secretariat for doing research and policy analysis on security issues was felt to be insufficient.

There were then two teams at work at the same time, with partly overlapping areas of responsibility and no clear division of labour or hierarchical chain of command. This might have made things difficult enough, but many respondents also noted that there was no detailed strategy on how to deal with the outcome of the High-Level Panel, and furthermore no consensus on what the summit should cover and how, even at the start of 2005. They commented that the manner in which development, security and management reform would fit together based on the Panel report and the Millennium Project report was being thought out more or less on the fly. Oil-for-food clearly contributed to any lack of a coherent strategy, and even if the arrival of Malloch Brown and Suzman implied that people like Bob Orr and Edward Mortimer were then

able to focus more on reform, it seems there was not enough time to think strategically about the follow-up process.

The media also played a critical role in building expectations and an image of the process. Several times, the Secretary-General spoke out against the media's and the anti-UN movements' coverage of the reform process. With regard to the oil-for-food scandal he stated: 'Of course the UN is far from perfect – even if some of the recent allegations made about it have been overblown. The interim report of Paul Volcker's independent inquiry has helped put the oil-for-food programme in perspective. Some of the more hyperbolic assertions about it have been proven untrue'.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.2 *Creating a blueprint for reform*

It had been decided in the summer of 2004 that the High-Level Panel report and the Millennium Project report would be synthesized into a common report from the Secretary-General, to be presented as a 'blueprint for the most far reaching reform of the international security system since the establishment of the United Nations',<sup>59</sup> because it had become apparent that all the issues would be handled at the 2000+5 summit. The actual work of researching, drafting and pushing this process forward was carried out by the two above-mentioned teams, led by Stedman and Orr respectively. They did not technically join or fuse, but as soon as the areas of responsibility had been sorted out, they worked together reasonably well, emerging as something that looked like a strategic planning unit. The Stedman group had responsibility for most of the hard security issues coming out of the High-Level Panel, as well as internal affairs, while the Orr group covered most other issues, as well as external relations, i.e. contact with UN Member States. A division of labour was thus accepted, but the chain of command remained split. The Stedman team reported to Prendergast and through him to the Secretary-General, while the Orr team reported to Frechette. Most observers attributed the relatively smooth cooperation between the teams to compatible personalities, while describing the absence of guidelines or a clear chain of command as an extreme lack of organization.

Since the reform process had been initiated by Annan, it had been expected that he would take the lead in driving it forward. However, with the ongoing concerns over oil-for-food, the SG's attention became diverted. Thus it fell to Frechette to hold the reins,<sup>60</sup> particularly from January to March 2005, a period which several respondents identified as a critical stage, when the process lost its focus and got bogged down in inertia and conflicting ambitions.

#### 4.3 *Steering the reform process*

The organizational set-up for coordinating the leadership of the process was a Steering Committee on Reform and Management Policy chaired by Frechette, in which all Under-Secretaries General were present. Several respondents complained that this steering group had no clear instructions or guidance, nor any clear view of what the objectives were. The effect was described as generally demoralizing. A few respondents noted with curiosity the SG's decision to give the DSG the lead on this, as her role as the Chair of the Steering Committee on Iraq had come under great scrutiny. The investigations into the bombing of the UN Headquarters, led by *The Security in Iraq Accountability Panel* attributed several serious failures to the work of

the Steering Committee on her watch. 'In light of the above findings and conclusions of the Panel, the Deputy Secretary-General tendered her resignation to the Secretary-General [...] The Secretary-General, taking into account the collective nature of the failures attributable to the Steering Group on Iraq as a whole, declined to accept the resignation'.<sup>61</sup> No reason beyond stating the collective responsibility was ever given.

Concerning the actual work and impact of the Steering Group, respondents fall mainly into two camps when commenting on the internal exchanges of information and the overall buy-in from the rest of the Secretariat. What could be understood as the 'party line' holds that the steering group led to good exchanges of information back and forth, and that the entire process was quite collegial – indeed surprisingly so, particularly considering that the process was driven from outside the departments. According to this view, everybody in the Secretariat was kept updated, and there was a clear policy of information-sharing. Some inter-departmental problems over input were acknowledged, but it was recognized that people will always be sceptical if they feel that their livelihood might be at risk. Such unease and also ownership issues were seen as stemming mostly from mid-level and junior personnel, and as the steering group brought together the senior actors, the protests trailed off. Through the steering group, all were at the table giving input. Through weekly briefings of key personnel from the departments, it was also intended that ideas and information would filter out to the rest of the Secretariat, while the departments would send information to the people running the process. However, there does not seem to have been much input from the departments through this channel, even when senior actors were present in the steering group. It was believed in the departments that the issues were joint issues, not department issues, and that the comprehensive process should be seen to be led by the Secretary-General. No formal communication was made stating that the Orr team was in charge.

The second set of respondents stressed that information-sharing and communication with the departments were limited. Some respondents indicated that this was a deliberate choice. The question of whether the SG should accept the recommendations of the High-Level Panel was never, for example, put before the Under-Secretaries General; it had been argued that if the process were to be finalized in time, the Office of the Secretary-General would have to do it alone. Among respondents not privy to the deliberations within this Office of the Secretary-General, there were several complaints about the lack of buy-in. Many departments felt that they had not been warned about the substance of the High-Level Panel's report, and that they were not really consulted in the follow-up. They felt that they were given very short notice, and that attention was not necessarily paid to their comments. Criticism was particularly directed against the Stedman team, who were responsible for writing strategies for the SG, and for providing input to his articles, speeches and public appearances. As the team tried to create consistency, they often overruled the departments and, since they were outsiders, this was not well received. Also by making the Secretary-General take a stand on issues about which he had been mute, the team inevitably made itself unpopular in internal turf battles. Ultimately, however, the team would leave the UN at the conclusion of the process, and thus were free to engage in substantive disagreements and challenge perceived notions.

Many of the outsiders to the process complained that there seemed to be no strategy for information-sharing, and no engagement with the Secretariat. This meant, for



example, that the departments had no idea about the relative importance of the many recommendations in the Panel report. Unlike earlier processes,<sup>62</sup> this was not a *participatory* process. Even if there was a steering group, it did not work as a policy committee. Thus, according to some respondents, the Under-Secretaries General had no common view on the reform process, and disparate forces were not brought together. Some respondents stressed that the mistake here was the strategic decision not to include the departments, while others saw the problem as a failure of management and a lack of a clear and communicated agenda.

There was more agreement about the lack of time and resources. In the midst of surviving oil-for-food, a small group of people were trying to put together the biggest World Summit ever, with follow-ups from the High-Level Panel and the Millennium Project, while debate raged about Security Council reform and reform of the Secretariat. As one insider put it, they were ‘scrambling every step of the way’. Even if the end-product might have been better, there was simply not enough time to bring more people into the process. There was also a fairly widespread perception that the actual drafting of *In Larger Freedom* had been a secret exercise involving minimum consultation with the rest of the Secretariat.

In addition, there were continuous turf battles within the leadership. The UN had no clear division of decision making, and the turf battles that had been present at the outset of the reform process in 2003 were even more evident two years later. Whereas Prendergast and the DPA had been central in focusing the panel process on security issues, Frechette, Malloch Brown and Orr, the central players in the early months of 2005, were strongly inclined towards the development side. Moreover, the Secretary-General was never presented with a set of strategic choices or list of priorities on what should be done and should not be done. The result was a process that has been described as muddled, confused and dysfunctional, where attempts at management were made but were not necessarily successful.

The lack of overall guidance and the incessant turf battles also affected the substance of the discussions and the direction of the follow-up process. As noted by one of the centrally placed respondents, it ‘turned into a smorgasbord of initiatives’. The Secretary-General in his covering note generally endorsed the report. He nevertheless felt he had to focus on six central issues, to establish some sort of priority. He also voiced disagreement on the way human rights issues were covered, stating that they should be accorded a higher priority. On this specific issue, many respondents freely suggested that the High-Level Panel had not produced anything substantial.

Security and development were supposed to mesh, and in this process both the High-Level Panel report and the Millennium Project report were made to appear to be inputting to *that* task, rather than being seen as reports to be evaluated. Thus the Millennium Development Goals and the new security agenda became wedded to one another.

The shift towards the original goals of the World Summit was, however, indicated much earlier by the Secretary-General, who stated in a speech in January 2004:

Last year we let ourselves be distracted [...] We were concerned – and rightly so – with issues of peace and security. But there will be no peace and no security, even for the

most privileged amongst us, in a world that remains divided between extremes of wealth and poverty, health and disease, knowledge and ignorance, freedom and oppression [...] So our first great task for 2004 is to re-focus the world's attention on development. The second is to start re-building our system of collective security'.<sup>63</sup>

The SG also noted that some might view the panel on threats, challenges and change as 'a panel on UN reform' but he underlined that whatever proposals or recommendations for change they might make, 'those changes will be a means to an end, not an end itself'.<sup>64</sup> The panel report, according to Annan, should thus 'reinforce the 2005 review' of implementation of the Millennium Declaration.<sup>65</sup> On the day of launching *In Larger Freedom*, Annan, recapping what made him issue the report, said that he did not think that a 'mere review' of the Millennium Declaration

...would have done justice to the present world situation. I feel strongly that there are decisions which urgently need to be taken in the areas of development, security, human rights, and changes that need to be made in the structure of the United Nations itself [...] this report is the programme of action I have been working towards over the past two years.

On the security issues, the Stedman team remained in charge of drafting, based on their own work for the High-Level Panel. Since they were also in charge of internal relations in the Secretariat, they were in a position to guide closely what went into the draft. Therefore, the relevant part of the Secretary-General's final report, *In Larger Freedom*, was rather tightly written, and followed smoothly from the work of the panel. On other issues, the turf battles were to have more influence on the outcome.

On the development side, it proved impossible to overcome the various internal turf battles, and the development chapter was described by an insider as a 'laundry list' of issues. There were also quite substantial changes on humanitarian issues, seen to be an orphan in the Panel report, where OCHA took part in the drafting. Unlike the case with other issues, the agenda here was based on prior discussions with donors and agencies. Strengthening human rights issues was, as noted, initiated by the Secretary-General, but according to some respondents, these issues were less thought through. Nevertheless, strengthening the human rights chapter in the final report created a tripartite division of recommendations: development, security and human rights, with UN reform as a by-product. That might have been artificial, but it helped to grab people's imagination and better even, link it to the actual preamble of the UN Charter. Whereas some viewed the title as a rather courageous choice, encouraging comparisons White House political rhetoric at the same time, the Secretary-General stressed how it was related to the UN Charter by insisting that security, development and human rights are intrinsically linked.<sup>66</sup> As the headings in the report read, the goal was to create 'freedom from want', 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom to live in dignity'. The SG added a sobering note: 'the UN often falls short of these noble aspirations, since it reflects the realities of world politics, even while seeking to transcend them.'

The report was presented on 21 March 2005, and while several respondents outside of the Secretariat praised the High-Level Panel report as a succinct and thorough document, *In Larger Freedom* was seen by some others as a disappointing document. The internal reasons for what were seen as dramatic changes have been discussed above, but, as noted, external affairs increasingly fed into the process as well.

### 4.3 External relations

In January and February 2005, the General Assembly (GA) had meetings on the Panel Report and the Millennium Project Report individually, as well as jointly. In the Office of the Secretary-General these meetings were seen as a way of creating some sense of what the Member-State reaction would be. Initial reactions were positive, although there was criticism from G77 countries that the agenda was too Western, and fears were voiced that the report would divert focus from the development debate. Regardless of the mixed reception, the report created massive expectations for the rest of the reform process.

Opinion differs on how external relations were planned and handled in the Secretariat. Among respondents who had been working on the reform process since 2003, and particularly those who had worked mainly on security issues, the inclination was to keep the process within the Secretariat as long as possible. From lessons learned from previous reports, as well as discussions with people who had been involved in previous attempts at reform, the strategy was to delay GA involvement as much as possible. The thinking was that to move too quickly from the Secretariat to the GA would kill off most of the recommendations, whereas keeping the process in the hands of the Secretary-General would leave some room for manoeuvring and negotiation. It was assumed that the longer a document stayed in the General Assembly, the more it would get watered down. The same logic lay behind the decision to keep the bar high in *In Larger Freedom*. Since it was assumed that the GA process would water down the recommendations, they had to be made as pure as possible before the process moved out of the control of the Secretariat.

On the other hand, among respondents who had been brought in at later stages (many from the development side), there was a desire to bring the Member States into the process as soon as possible. Frechette in particular pushed this line. These respondents worried that, given the way discussions among Member States were going, there would not be enough time to influence the agenda, because it was mandated that the Secretary-General was to present his report by June. For the report to help in forming summit discussions and provide a final push for the summit, March 2005 was the latest possible date of publication. When launching the report Annan stated: 'I am giving world leaders six months to consider and debate it with their peoples'.<sup>67</sup>

The view is widely held that the process was complicated because neither the Secretary-General nor the Member States asserted control. The SG and his immediate staff were distracted and hampered by the oil-for-food debacle and demands for resignation, the aftermath of the Asian tsunami and lack of continuity at the top of the organization. On the other hand, no Member State came forward to take charge of the process, preferring instead to await publication of the SG's report. Thus the period from January to March was, in the view of some respondents, lost as regards meaningful debate between the Secretariat and the General Assembly.

As elsewhere throughout the process, the most important external player was the USA. As noted, publication of the panel report had been postponed so as to not have it killed off by the presidential campaign. What, however, was underestimated was the fact that the higher echelons of all US departments (ministries) are absent after an election, pending reappointment. That meant that many of the most critical positions

in the US administration were not filled when reform issues were discussed, so no-one really knew what the US views were. Added to this was a phenomenon typical of inter-agency process in Washington: official responses often conflicted with what had been suggested informally.

The mixed messages were also a result of the fact that US–UN relations were particularly bad at the turn of the year, more so than generally understood. With Annan having made some comments during the presidential election campaign that had been interpreted very negatively in the USA, and with the ongoing oil-for-food investigations, Republicans in Congress were seriously out to get the UN. In the week before the panel report was presented, Senator Coleman (R-MN) even called for Annan's resignation.<sup>68</sup> Even if parts of the US bureaucracy might have been positively inclined towards the report, widespread US hostility towards the UN made it impossible to endorse it strongly.

This situation led to considerable frustration and misunderstanding, but the outcome may have been a blessing in disguise. Given G77 suspicions towards the USA, and their branding the reform package as being an essentially Western project, firm endorsement from the USA might well have ruined any chance of success. Likewise, outright dismissal would have stopped reform in its tracks. The lukewarm response that came may well have been the most beneficial for the ensuing process.

Inside the Secretariat, the decision to bring in Malloch Brown as Chief of Staff seemed intended to placate the USA, to have someone on board who would be able to negotiate with and be taken seriously by Congress. In fact, almost all his public appearances since he took up the position were directed towards a US audience, amounting to a veritable charm offensive on behalf of the UN.<sup>69</sup> That charm offensive was later critized by the Group of 77 in a letter to the SG where they sought 'clarifications as to whether it is now the practice of senior officials of the Secretariat to report directly to national parliaments on actions taken by the membership of the United Nations' and 'reaffirm that the Secretariat is accountable to the General Assembly and to individual Member States'.<sup>70</sup>

It is also worth noting that the US Congress commissioned a separate task force to look into some of the very same issues addressed in the High-Level Panel report and *In Larger Freedom*. The task was handled by an all American cast of notables, led by former Speaker Newt Gingrich and former Senator George Mitchell and assisted by experts from leading US public policy organizations.<sup>71</sup> The report was appropriately entitled *American Interests and UN Reform*.<sup>72</sup> Though somewhat different in design and content from *In Larger Freedom*, the overall conclusion supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to tackle internal management reform was welcomed by Annan.<sup>73</sup> A few months later, the final and most critical part of the Volcker report was issued, also pressing for wide ranging institutional reforms. What seems clear in retrospect is that the relationship between the SG and the US administration – the State Department and the White House in particular – was not as bad as appeared in discussions in the media during the early months of 2005. During the late stages of the reform process, the earlier animosity seems to have been replaced by a focus on broadly similar goals. However, it was also to become clear that John Bolton, now nominated as US Ambassador to the UN, had not moved from his 1999 invective against Kofi Annan and that the process thus had an element of personalized animosity.

In the course of gaining US support, management reform became even more important than before. Critics among the respondents claimed that the Office of the Secretary-General had been placing too much faith in broad US acceptance, and that there were further changes made in *In Larger Freedom* due to US pressure. For example, one centrally placed respondent, who was not involved in the drafting of that document, professed to be shocked when reading the repeated references to ‘freedom’: whatever the intention was, this was seen as a ‘US-supporting exercise’. The suspicion of pro-US bias was also felt in a less specific sense: as noted, the staff was heavy on Americans and completely dominated by Westerners, so even if there was more of a focus on possible opponents in this phase of the process than earlier, the ‘south’, already sceptical towards the substance of the reform process, could hardly be expected to embrace such a team driving the process forward. However, the fact that the US Congress felt the need to commission an independent report on UN reform suggests that the process was not as US-driven as some critics would have it. In addition, Congress arranged several meetings with key people within and outside the UN to provide their personal observations on the reform process.<sup>74</sup>

## 5. *The home stretch – Member-State negotiations (March 2005–September 2005)*

*Obviously, we did not get everything we wanted, and with 191 Member States it's not easy to get an agreement. I recall once telling the press.... When I first initiated reforms, and I was accused of not reforming the UN in six weeks – and I shared with them an experience at a Security Council lunch, when the Russian Ambassador said, ‘but what are you complaining about? You’ve got more time than God’. And I explained to him that God had one big advantage: He worked alone, without the General Assembly and the Security Council and the Committees.*

*-Kofi Annan, 13 September 2005<sup>75</sup>*

With the presentation of *In Larger Freedom*, the reform process officially shifted to the UN Member States, while the Secretariat kept working on reform issues, directly and indirectly.

### 5.1 *The work of the Secretariat*

It have been expected that the finalization of *In Larger Freedom* would ease the burden on the Secretariat, but respondents still complained that the months from April to July were marked by a shortage of time, resources and planning ability. At every turn there seemed to be a new tactical manoeuvre without an overall strategy. One outside observer commented that ‘the orchestra [was] in place but no conductor’. For a host of reasons, Annan was absent from the process during these crucial months. Furthermore, no government took a lead, with the notable exception of Canada, which took upon itself to further the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ agenda. Malloch Brown then came up with the idea of envoys, appointed by the Secretary-General in early April.<sup>76</sup> The role of the envoys was to ‘explain Annan’s proposals throughout the world and

promoting the reform proposals'.<sup>77</sup> Respondents, predictably, differed on their views as to the usefulness of such envoys. Most observers felt that Ali Alatas was indeed useful, but many felt the others were practically useless. To the extent that they were indeed doing good work, they still faced the problem that some Member States misunderstood, believing that the envoys would conduct negotiations outside of the General Assembly, while their function was only to disseminate information.

The Orr and Stedman teams also continued their work, following discussions in the GA, and making soundings on the various issues. The Stedman team also continued to work with the Secretary-General, for example by giving input for speeches and providing talking-points for him and the envoys, working closely with the speechwriters' office. Although the main process had moved to the Member States, there was also still a need for Secretariat participation. When reviewing the period from March until September, it was nevertheless noted as a problem that the goals and processes of the negotiation process were not clear. It was hard to lobby or put resources to use when it was not known what the process would be like, and it was difficult even to think strategically until September.

## 5.2 *Facilitation*

Preparations for the 2005 summit had started in 2003, and by the summer of 2004 it had been decided that the negotiation process, like that preceding the 2000 summit, would follow the facilitation model, with the incoming President of the General Assembly, Jean Ping, appointing a diverse group of facilitators.<sup>78</sup> The SG stated in his report to the Member States that 'To prepare for an effective summit, the preparatory process would need to adhere to a number of general principles. First, the process must be open, inclusive and transparent. Second, it must bring together various contributions and produce a single integrated package of decisions to be presented at the high-level plenary meeting. Third, the process must be flexible and efficient, making as much use of existing meetings and mechanisms as possible. Last, but not least, given the importance and scope of the agenda, the preparatory process must be led with a view to achieving *consensus* and results'.<sup>79</sup> The process has been referred to as 'intense and all consuming' covering a reform programme considered to be 'the most ambitious and wide ranging since the formation of the UN'.<sup>80</sup>

It also became clear that the office of the President hardly knew what they needed to take on. Security Council reform swamped the early agenda, and the lack of trust between Member States and the Secretariat – mistrust from the G77 in particular – generally increased the workload. When *In Larger Freedom* was presented, it was not clear how the GA should respond: by welcoming the report, or simply taking note of it. The compromise was that the GA welcomed the *submission* of the report, which in retrospect served as an early manifestation of the growing division in the General Assembly between the reformists and the protectors of status quo.

The Security Council issue was of all-consuming interest, and the emergence of two different proposals in the High-Level Panel report heightened attention. The fact that in *In Larger Freedom* the SG urged that a decision, if necessary, should be made by majority voting largely upset the consensus agenda. Member States further resented that the Secretariat presented a timeline for Security Council reform, and some states were ready to collapse the entire process. There were also calls for an entirely

intergovernmental process, with line-by-line negotiations. Nevertheless, negotiations started out as a facilitation process, with facilitators who were to engage in discussions with other Member States, and to help draft outcome documents based on *In Larger Freedom* and perceived consensus in the discussions. They were chosen to be broadly representative as to both geography and gender, and did not include any permanent members of the Security Council or aspiring permanent members.

Views of the facilitation process differ somewhat. Quite a few respondents saw the facilitators as important to the overall efforts of Ambassador Ping. However, even those respondents who were positive made the argument that the facilitators were a motley crew with a mixed record: while some of them were very helpful, others were not particularly adept at drafting, and yet others confused the role of facilitator with the role of ambassador, and started pushing personal or national agendas. Thus there were examples of ‘national language’ to be found in the draft versions of the outcome document in addition to the many written proposals for amendments to the outcome document (by the USA, Cuba, the Non-Aligned Movement, Venezuela, Russia, Colombia, Kenya, Australia, the EU, Spain, Uganda, Nigeria, Tuvalu, Mexico, Dominica and Singapore). As the process went on, altogether four official versions of the draft outcome documents were distributed among member states (15 Sept.[Final document] | 10 August | 22 July | 3 June)<sup>81</sup> in addition to numerous versions of the outcome document during the final negotiations. The main problem, according to positive respondents, was that facilitation should have started earlier: that would have made it possible, for example, to discuss the UN funds and programmes. Half a year was not enough for the complex issues at hand, and many issues were not discussed, which in turn caused considerable dissatisfaction.

According to other observers, the time issue was a decoy: the real problem was that issues were given attention by member states too late, because of holidays. In addition, facilitators failed to make much progress on contentious issues, and the entire process seemed to reveal the flaws of the consensus-driven operation of the UN, always working towards the lowest common denominator. Even some respondents involved in the facilitation saw it as an unpleasant exercise, with arguments dragging on for months. According to the harshest critics, the facilitators added nothing; they helped to water down the initiatives needlessly, created antagonisms, gave contradictory and incoherent advice, and made the draft outcome document too lengthy by allowing Member States to keep or add pet topics rather than enforcing priorities. This frustrated many Secretariat respondents. They had intended that the broad agenda set out in *In Larger Freedom* should lead to trade-offs, with some parts accepted as pay-offs for other parts. During the facilitation process, the Member States themselves did not do trade-offs, but approached every issue separately. The subsequent drafts from Ping included many implicit trade-offs, but these were made by him rather than the Member States.

Opinions also differ on the evaluation of the GA President, but they seem to have changed during the process. Some respondents reported that they initially had a negative impression of Ping, but most of them went on to revise that opinion. There were still some that felt that the office of the President could have done a much better job, particularly by thinking through what the outcome of the process would be. Although it was generally agreed that Ping was a man of considerable personal charm,

quite a few respondents thought that he never really led the process, never setting or summing up agendas.

The majority of respondents were more positive, both towards the GA President and his office, particularly his deputy, Parfait Onanga. These respondents stressed how Ping deployed his singular inter-personal skills to great effect, how he exerted good leadership, particularly in finalizing the outcome document, and how he was able to convince the opponents at the end. Several observers noted that, being an African, he was able to alleviate some of the fears and suspicions of the developing countries.

Regardless of the opinion of the GA President and his office, it was believed by everyone that such a small office, with so few professionals, could not be expected to drive the process forward. The facilitators helped out, as did the UN Secretariat.

The latter provided the secretarial function in essence, distilling discussions and making it easier for Ping to make decisions. Although many Member States were suspicious of the Secretariat, seeing it as too US-oriented, Ping made a point of always having representatives of the Secretariat present in discussions. Several respondents, among Member States and in the Secretariat as well, pointed out that this collaboration between the GA President and the Secretary-General through his Secretariat was crucial for the outcome of the process. However, due to the necessary split between the offices of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, this was not a thoroughly managed process, nor could it be.

Other dynamics were also at play during the summer of 2005. First of all, the issue of the Security Council petered out as the African Union decided not to endorse the proposal of the aspiring permanent members. Secondly, the ‘pivotal’ G8 meeting at Gleneagles, 6–8 July 2005, created a dynamic of its own. Some observers felt that it created a momentum that would carry on until the summit, while others saw major disagreements and US resistance. According to one respondent, the meeting left ‘blood on the floor’: the USA had not yet committed itself fully to general reform. Thus, many of the later US amendments could have been anticipated by a more careful political assessment of the international environment. Most would agree that some room for manoeuvre was narrowed, as debt relief and other development issues were settled, thereby reducing incentives for developing countries to make compromises.

### *5.3 Old paths reopened*

The negotiations changed course from 5 August, with the arrival of John Bolton as US Ambassador to the UN. On 17 August he presented a list of around 750 amendments to the current draft outcome document, and refused to continue with facilitation. The process thus moved to line-by-line negotiations, in successively smaller groups of countries, known as the group of 30, the group of 15 and so on. Respondents disagreed as to the effect of this move, with those supportive of the facilitators’ work generally feeling that Bolton’s initiative wrecked the chances of a better outcome. The sceptics argued that the criticism of Bolton was unfair: he did not throw the negotiations into disarray, since there were no ‘real’ negotiations going on. However, by doing it line-by-line, all the spoilers were admitted into the process. Nevertheless, many argued, there had to be real negotiations sooner or later, and the



main problem was Bolton's late arrival. When asked if he was angry about the US effort of 'hijacking' the process the SG responded:

I think it's unfortunate that these proposals came this late. Because, when you are in negotiations, if one party makes a move, the dynamics are such that it affects the others, and they either consider that the floodgates are open and they can come with their own amendments or they should hold the line and not move. And so they place tactical blocks on key aspects of the proposal.<sup>82</sup>

The negotiations reached a full stalemate towards the end of August, whereupon the Secretary-General discontinued his holiday and returned to New York 'to throw his support behind efforts to produce a comprehensive document for the September World Summit [...] And to support the President of the General Assembly in his efforts to ensure a successful Summit'.<sup>83</sup> Two weeks before the Summit commenced, there was still no agreed document on the table. The stalemate was partly caused by the USA wanting to expunge from the outcome document the phrase 'Millennium Development Goals', which it saw as being 'solely a Secretariat product'.<sup>84</sup> However, at his address to the Summit, George W. Bush stated: 'We are committed to the Millennium Development Goals'.<sup>85</sup> Delegates and UN officials alike had not expected Bush to publicly endorse the goals; according to Malloch Brown, 'that was a big deal...they (the USA) are not standing in the way of it, and that is real progress'.<sup>86</sup> One veteran journalist in the UN implied that 'perhaps Hurricane Katrina made him (Bush) suddenly aware of the dire effects of poverty'.<sup>87</sup>

The fortnight prior to the Summit has been described by all respondents involved in preparations for the event as critical to the overall process. Not only was the USA trying to change the draft outcome document dramatically, but the process was starting to unravel and there was talk of a potential 'failure' of the Summit itself. Furthermore, the delayed fourth interim report into the UN oil-for-food scandal, meant to be issued well in advance of the World Summit, was due only one week before the Summit. The Secretary-General was under heavy pressure professionally and personally, and the general climate among Member States was very tense and somewhat pessimistic. At the same time, the media started creating a negative spin around the whole Summit. However, when the Volcker report was presented to the Security Council and the Secretary-General on 7 September, it proved much better than expected. Even though the SG was held accountable on several issues, the report in many ways served to restore his credibility rather than, as had been feared, undermine it altogether.<sup>88</sup> The timing, although not the most fortunate, actually strengthened the SG's argument about the need for thorough cross-cutting reform of UN management – or, as expressed in the report: 'Reform is imperative if the United Nations is to regain and retain the measure of respect among the international community that its work requires'.<sup>89</sup> The relative restoration of his credibility also made it possible for Annan to get personally involved in the final, very tricky, negotiations.

On 12 September 2005, the Summit was two days away and the outcome document was still littered with a myriad of unresolved clusters of issues and brackets. GA President Ping, assisted by his own staff and staff from the SG's office and not least the General Assembly Core Group set up by Ping, continued their marathon sessions towards a final outcome document. At Tuesday 13 September, one day before the Summit, there were still 140 disagreements involving 27 unresolved issues to be dealt

with.<sup>90</sup> The SG had already voiced his worry about the slow progress in negotiations, and expressed grave concern only days before the Summit that ‘the negotiators are leaving it perilously late [...] we are getting to the wire [...] I expect more give and take [...] there is a grave danger that the opportunity will be missed. I hope I’m wrong’.<sup>91</sup> At the 11th hour ‘a final burst of take-it-or-leave-it diplomacy allowed the document to be finalized’. This was unfortunate, because as the SG commented, ‘so late in the day that reporters and commentators had not time to analyse the full text before passing judgement’, and the media in many ways shaped the world perception of the outcome document. The actual document was reportedly brought into being by the SG himself and his immediate team, with the knowledge and assistance of the office of GA President Ping.<sup>92</sup>

Whereas some respondents complained that the negotiations started remarkably late, others commented that intergovernmental negotiations *always* happen up to the last moment. The last negotiations took place in a group of 15 states, and in this final phase it became obvious that the small President’s Office would not be able to take on the continual revisions and produce a final outcome alone. Thus, the Secretariat was called in again, with Orr and Ping bringing the processes together. The final outcome document that was presented to Member States was not ready until the morning of the Summit, after Ping had decided on what to do with the remaining brackets, in light of discussions with Member States. As one observer saw it, the Member States wanted a compromise but were unable to make it themselves. Thus Ping, with the support of the SG and his office, produced the final outcome document. According to media reports on the morning of the Summit ‘in the middle of the night (Tuesday), UN experts unilaterally created a new document they hoped everyone could agree on and later Tuesday told negotiators to take it or leave it. They accepted it.’<sup>93</sup>

Despite the suspicions that many Member States had towards the Secretariat, its involvement in the last phase was widely seen as beneficial and necessary. Several respondents from the Member State side commented that the Secretariat played an appropriate role, as the Member States themselves were unable to manage anything. Orr was generally viewed as a remarkably neutral international civil servant, never pushing a US agenda, but cautioning on US red lines. A few less positive words were uttered, though: according to the Cuban Ambassador, ‘it took a last-ditch, undemocratic, non-transparent act to bolster the UN’s aspirations toward democracy, transparency and efficiency’.<sup>94</sup>

The final outcome document was adopted by consensus vote, with one reservation (Venezuela) which in the last hour threatened to open Pandora’s Box again. The SG intervened himself and settled the differences, and Venezuela opted for a reservation. Several respondents described the final document as ‘watered down’, weak and disappointing. Even the SG later said there was ‘no denying that on some issues the outcome of the Summit was a disappointment and a missed opportunity’.<sup>95</sup>

## 6. Overall Assessment

*At this defining moment in history, we must be ambitious.*  
- In *Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, March 2005.<sup>96</sup>

*We did not achieve everything – after all, we were ambitious, and set the bar very high. But by tackling a range of issues together, we clearly achieved a great deal’.*  
– Kofi Annan, 17 September 2005.<sup>97</sup>

On what basis should the current round of UN reforms be assessed? What is the yardstick if any? The interviews that form the basis of this report reveal a striking disparity of views on the process and its outcomes. There is no broad agreement on when the process started, why it was started, what the main themes were or what they should be. As for the outcomes, not only are there disagreements as to whether the proverbial glass was half full or half empty, but opinions differ as to the shape and size of the glass, and with what it should be filled. At opposite ends of the spectrum, we have two representatives of two different Member States – the one held that the outcome document was the best and most thorough baseline for reform since 1945, while the other called the summit a failure and thought that the outcomes were derisory. One obvious shortcoming of the ongoing reform process has been the failure to create a common understanding of the reasons behind the process, what the themes were to be, what the final goals were, and what constituted success.

Several critics, most of them outside the UN, have argued that the agenda for 2005 was too ambitious, covering too many issues. Two points are noteworthy in that respect. First, it was stated policy from the Secretary-General and his closest advisors to keep the bar high and to be ambitious:

In March, when I proposed an agenda for the Summit, I deliberately set the bar high, since in international negotiations you never get everything you ask. I also presented the reform as a package, meaning not that I expected them to be adopted without change but that advances were more likely to be achieved together than piecemeal, since states were more likely to overcome their reservations on some issues if they saw serious attention given to others which for them were a higher priority. In the end, that is precisely what happened.<sup>98</sup>

Such an ambition was echoed even by some Member-State representatives. This was also presented as part of the reasoning for delaying the transfer of the process from the Secretariat to the Member States: as long as the Secretariat was in control, the bar would be kept high. The underlying logic was that the bar had been set high because compromises were expected, but this was not something that could be said out loud. Creating a ‘grand bargain’ or a package deal of issues was also seen to increase the possibility of getting more issues through the process. Those involved in thinking through and drafting both *A More Secure World* and *In Larger Freedom* knew that their wording would not be adopted as presented. They were also aware that sometimes goals could not be stated too clearly. Flexibility had to be maintained, and if the end goals were stated, the brakes might be applied.

Nevertheless – and this is the second point – the bar was *not*, in the eyes of most respondents, set too high. Both in *A More Secure World* and *In Larger Freedom* the drafters took care to vet every single recommendation. If the predictions were bold, they were also intended to be practical and at least theoretically feasible in Member-State negotiations. However, as several respondents pointed out, the plan backfired. Discussing everything at the same time should ideally have led to broad compromises, where all issues would be brought forward. This did not really happen; there were no real trade-offs. This should not have come as a surprise though, as member states as early as April when considering of the follow-up of the outcome of the Millennium Summit, in particular *In Larger Freedom*, questioned ‘the possibility of package adoption of reform proposals’<sup>99</sup>. The US representative, quite unlike her successor, stated that the US ‘remained open to considering all proposals [...] would like to move forward on the basis of broad consensus, along the lines previously stated [...] Given the historic significance and the complexities of the overall reform enterprise, it would be unrealistic to adopt a “package approach” to UN reform and development goals. Instead the approach should be pragmatic, building consensus around reform on which everyone agreed and, then, progressively working to achieve the more difficult changes’. Other member states expressed similar sentiments<sup>100</sup>.

An alternative might have been to focus the process more clearly on a narrower set of achievable outcomes. On the other hand, even if a smaller agenda might have been easier to manage, given the ‘fork-in-the-road’ speech the process had to be complex. It turned out to be perhaps more complicated than anyone, particularly the Secretary-General, had anticipated. According to Stephen Schlesinger, long-term UN expert and the author of ‘Acts of Creation’ about the founding of the UN: ‘Kofi was doing it out of the noblest of motives, but didn’t have the moral authority to carry it out [...] He needed to do the political groundwork first, but he just threw the reforms out there, thinking the moral imperative would be enough’<sup>101</sup>.

One inherent risk in raising the bar high and tackling a broad set of issues was that perceptions and outcomes might not match. This proved to be the case, as the media and many outsiders came to see the process as having failed, since the outcomes fell short of the highly ambitious goals stated in *A More Secure World* and *In Larger Freedom*. Insiders claim that they had known all along that the outcome document would not look like the original reports, and most likely would also differ from what they themselves expected, but this was not understood by the media. Journalist wrote themselves into the mood that the outcome was a massive failure, and those who filed their stories the night before the summit reported that there was no agreement. Even as an agreement was reached on the very morning of the summit, many in the media had already made up their minds on what their story was. Following the initial bad press, it proved very hard to get the media, and thus the broader public, to understand what had actually been achieved. Further complicating the picture was the fact that the media, as well as most others involved in the public debate, tended to focus on Security Council reform, to the detriment of other issues and possible achievements.

The prevailing misperceptions in the press and the public and the failure to sell the outcome document as a success seem to be related to the lack of internal agreement about the process. Taken together, they indicate that the failure of perception management is perhaps the most striking organizational shortcoming of the entire

reform process. A central respondent in the Secretariat acknowledged as much, commenting that the Secretariat had not been good enough at ‘marketing’ reform.

### *6.1 Achievements*

Most respondents, however, did see some positive outcomes from the process, even if they might agree with the respondent who claimed that the really meaningful parts were buried under masses of rhetoric. As several key people pointed out, setting an agenda might have been the most important goal, and indeed also the most important outcome of all. That the different documents triggered or facilitated a process that in time might become a catalyst for change was to many an achievement in and of itself. Change, as many pointed out, is bound to take time, and the Panel report and the World Summit could not be a panacea. Setting an agenda cannot be done overnight, and change is incremental. What may be the outcome, though, is a definition of what the UN has to do over the next 10 years or so, and of what can become accepted in multilateral diplomacy.

Also at a general level, a few high-ranking members of the Secretariat independently made strikingly similar comments about the direction of the UN. Assessing all the decisions taken together, they believed the summit made it clear that the Member States prefer an operational organization that will take care of issues in the field, rather than a convening organization heavy on headquarters. Whereas this change *has* been taking place slowly in the organization, they believed the summit marks a first step in making the rules and regulations follow suit. Even if there are still unresolved issues, not least as to funding, the trend seems clear. It was also noted that security, development and human rights are now placed at the same level conceptually.

The one outcome mentioned by most respondents as a success, invariably topping the list of achievements, was ‘Responsibility to Protect’. It was seen as a clear indication of the move towards a field-based ‘doing’ organization. Having the Member States sign up to this was seen as a major step forward, and as a ‘remarkable’, ‘great’ and ‘surprising’ achievement by insiders who believed that it would never come to pass. The concept had first been mentioned by Kofi Annan in 1999, but had at that time been rejected as unacceptable by several states. That it became part of the outcome in 2005 was attributed to Annan’s personal engagement, deft negotiations and the engaged diplomacy of the Canadian government and Gareth Evans, a member of the High-Level Panel, all of whom had consistently argued in favour of the concept over the last four years. Even some highly negative respondents agreed that including ‘Responsibility to Protect’ was indeed an achievement, and that it implied a first step towards undermining a rigid notion of sovereignty. Others stressed that the repercussions of the concept are still unclear; as yet it exists only at the notional level, and no-one knows how the UN is to actually fulfil the responsibility of *how* to protect, or who should decide when and where and how to protect. Most respondents nevertheless ranked it as the major achievement, even if only as marking the beginning of a longer process.

The two other achievements that were mentioned by most respondents entail institutional innovation: the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. Whereas most would see them as valuable in principle, there was less enthusiasm over the configuration agreed in the outcome document. A recurrent answer was that these innovations might be important achievements ‘I guess’, but that

it would be necessary to wait for a few years to evaluate them. Several respondents mentioned the many unresolved issues relating to both institutions, not least their ownership. One even commented bluntly that there was no need for any more debating societies; as long as these institutions have not been given any mandate or power, they will do no good. As with several other issues, it was pointed out that part of the problem was related to perceptions, with earlier drafts being very ambitious and much detail being sacrificed to obtain unanimity. According to several respondents, the alternative was not a stronger outcome, but losing the two institutions altogether.

Some of those working on development and humanitarian issues, particularly the more positively inclined individuals, also mentioned that the reform process created a huge dynamics in the development agencies. The basic message of the Millennium Project is still intact; moreover an EU commitment to fulfil the 0.7% target would, for example, most likely have been off the agenda had it not been for the reform process. Added to that was broad acceptance of the Millennium Development Goals, stricter measures against corruption, the doubling of the UNHCR budget and the creation of a humanitarian relief fund.

Quite a few respondents mentioned the clear and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism as an achievement, where even the US State Department was said to see the outcome as a step in the right direction. Where the Millennium Declaration had one sentence on terrorism, the 2005 outcome document had 10 substantive paragraphs.

Of the less spectacular issues, several respondents commented that some things not noticed so much at the moment will probably become the most significant in the long run. Several smaller reforms have been made in the Secretariat, and there was an agreement in principle on moving forward in the streamlining of UN agencies.

Among the consequences that were not part of the outcome document, many respondents pointed out that re-engagement between the UN and the USA had actually taken place, and that the alternative situation to this would have been substantially worse. President Bush's speech in the General Assembly in 2005<sup>102</sup> was generally seen as the most positive he had made since taking office in 2000. Following the same line of argument, the point was made that the reform process actually created considerable attention around UN issues in general, ensuring the continued relevance of the organization. Even with the flaws, the process had at least given a clearer picture of challenges and opportunities.

## 6.2 *Disappointments*

Even the most positive among the respondents were not completely satisfied, and brought up the issue of Security Council reform. Some believed that there was a momentum for it, and that the opportunity was there, while others held that it was never realistically possible, at least not by majority vote, with all the related calamities that would entail. There was also broad agreement that discussing Security Council reform was largely distractive and divisive, sapping considerable energy that could have been put to use elsewhere. On the other hand, most respondents also maintained that the issue *had* to be discussed, even if they might have disagreed with the rationale for bringing it up. The issue could have been handled differently, for

example it could have been de-coupled from the rest of the process, but leaving it off the agenda was not considered to have been an option.

A further major disappointment was the lack of progress in disarmament and non-proliferation. Some respondents complained of a long history of disappointments, going back to 2003. Whereas *A More Secure World* was considered to handle these issues well, a step back was seen to have been taken with *In Larger Freedom*. The failed non-proliferation talks and the lack of an outcome in the final negotiations added to the disappointment. Several respondents mentioned the lack of consensus on weapons of mass destruction and the ensuing failure to include anything on these issues in the outcome document as the most disillusioning failure of the entire process.

At the organizational level, it was noted that there had not been time to look more closely into the intergovernmental process or the specialized agencies. It was claimed, for instance, that the offices of the UN and its agencies in Geneva had lost interest in the reform process, as it was seen to be heading nowhere, and that the agencies seemed quite satisfied that there were no clearer attempts at more coordination.

Complaints about the attitude of the Member States were heard from both the Secretariat and some Member State representatives. Quite a few respondents pointed out that there had been a lack of engagement from the Member States, even as it became clear that the Secretary-General was too weakened by the oil-for-food scandal to be a driving force in the process. Additionally, it was said, the large majority of Member States allowed a small group of spoilers to run away with the process, and consistently block progress on several issues, believing that they were better served by no change than the sweeping reforms proposed. Finally, the lack of a 'southern' agenda was lamented. Allegations of a pro-Western bias were made both before and after the summit, but to many respondents it was never clear whether there was any alternative southern agenda, or what that might indeed be. It was found hard to negotiate when there was no stated baseline against which to negotiate.

### 6.3 *The process*

Given the broad agreement that there were substantial shortcomings in the final outcomes, we need to return to the process to identify what went wrong and what could have been handled otherwise. One senior respondent in the Secretariat might have put it best when, citing the proverbial Irishman, he said that if one plans a reform, 'I would not start from here'. Or, as another respondent pointed out, it would probably be easier to have a reform if one were not in the midst of a raging crisis. The extent, to which the crisis was conducive to, or even necessary for the reform, will be discussed below.

As noted above, a major problem at the outset in 2003 was that there was no clear idea about the direction of the process. The perceived need to do something – indeed anything – trumped the careful consideration of exactly what was going to be done. This basic uncertainty persisted throughout the process, and was only exacerbated by the fusion of security issues and institutional reform on the one hand, and development issues on the other during 2004–05. There was a distinct lack of

perception management, where agreements on what to achieve and how to achieve it were random at best.

Starting with the High-Level Panel and its research team, the most frequent criticism was that the global south was inadequately represented. The panellists from the south were seen as weaker than their northern counterparts, and the research team consisted almost exclusively of people who were educated or living in North America. Resentment within the Secretariat against ‘outsiders’ had to be expected, but seems to have had little impact on the final outcomes. Such resentment might, however, impede implementation of the reforms. Complaints that the panellists were old or insufficiently representative should to be taken seriously, as they affected how people perceived the legitimacy of the panel and its recommendations, but such complaints were more frequent during the panel period than afterwards. The quality of the recommendations seems to have blunted much criticism, although some respondents remarked that the final report merely proved that the composition of the research team was more important than the composition of the panel. The few criticisms that were voiced against the panel mainly concerned what was seen as an excessive number of open recommendations, and a few respondents felt that the panel had wasted too much of the time available. With the massive set of complex issues facing the Member States, it was felt that at least one year should have been set aside for negotiations.

Whereas the High-Level Panel generally was positively reviewed, some respondents pinpointed the process in the Secretariat in the four-month period between the presentation of *A More Secure World* in December 2004 and the presentation of *In Larger Freedom* in March 2005 as the weakest link in the entire reform process. Indeed, some even considered those four months as ‘lost’. Part of this weakness was related to external pressure, with oil-for-food exploding and the Secretary-General, for personal and professional reasons, being unable to take charge. Neither did Member States step in. Other problems were internal, with persistent in-fighting and turf battles in the core management of the UN. The tension between security and development was tangible, and some respondents even questioned whether Riza and Frechette had bought into the High-Level Panel process at all. At best they seemed lukewarm, and thus there was no engagement or focus to the process. In the end, Bruce Jones and Steve Stedman, both technically outsiders, ended up in charge of the process, and even they were not sure about the level of support they could expect from senior management. With Malloch Brown came a change for the better. While he was seen to be specifically pro-development, no-one questioned his importance as a driving force in the reform process, or his commitment to the entire agenda. Even that impact was tempered, though, by the need for him to stay in constant touch with Washington D.C. to fend off criticisms over oil-for-food. While *A More Secure World* was generally praised as a bold and visionary report, most respondents felt that *In Larger Freedom* read more like a typical UN report, with many half-baked issues haphazardly thrown together under a common heading.

In retrospect, most respondents felt that there should have been much more thorough strategic planning for this phase and during it too, involving serious efforts by the senior management team to work the politics of the UN and build coalitions. Support and commitment from Member States should have been ensured, but the Secretariat seems to have been unable to gauge the political complexities of the external world.



The idea to employ the envoys in March, while generally lauded as a smart move, seemed to most observers as being too little, too late. As was the case during the previous phase, neither senior management nor Member States took the lead in creating input and maintaining progress. And again, there was criticism over the pro-Western bias of the personnel.

The move to a Member State process again provided ample ammunition for critics. According to most respondents, the first draft outcome document was too long, and the ensuing ones just kept getting longer. At a stage where most felt that a focus on essentials was called for, the document seemed to be growing less focused day by day. Thus the momentum was lost in minutiae, and it became easier for the spoilers to hijack the process. Even though coordination between the Secretariat and the Office of the President of the General Assembly was quite smooth, respondents were pointed out that a better strategy and even greater unity might have helped, since no-one had ever before attempted to negotiate on all issues simultaneously. The teams that had been carrying forward most of the process might have been perfectly adept at drafting documents and playing the internal politics of the UN, but, according to insiders, no-one had a serious vision of the endgame.

Several respondents, both in the Secretariat and among the Member States, felt that the Member States should have had more time. However, a surprising number of respondents, again both in the Secretariat and among Member State representatives, disagreed. They argued that there was more than enough time – and, according to insiders, time as a problem was never really discussed among those in charge of driving the process forward. As noted, Member States would have dragged things out anyway, and negotiations at this level always continue to the very end. According to these respondents, facilitation would never produce a consensus outcome document, so the real problem was that line-by-line negotiations started too late.

Thus, the late appointment of John Bolton as US Ambassador was seen as damaging, even if many respondents pointed out that his major reservations were known before he arrived. Even so, it was argued, a clearer US position at an earlier stage would have enabled a more thorough and cleaner document. As it turned out, most respondents pointed to the process leading up to the final outcome document as messy, or indeed a veritable shambles.

Added to these frustrations was the fact that ambassadors were either detached from their capitals or given far too much leeway, or they were too strictly instructed to make true negotiations feasible. As for heads of state, it was argued that most of them had not even bothered to read the relevant documents, and that their presence at the Summit was due to peer pressure rather than the call of duty.

As a way of summing up, a substantial number of respondents argued that the process could have been jump-started by taking issues to a vote at some stage. That could have happened if the Secretary-General or key Member States had said ‘enough is enough’ earlier on. In that case, several of the ‘big ticket’ items could have been accepted in a broader form, or, as in the case of non-proliferation, saved from oblivion. Such a procedure could also have circumvented Bolton’s late amendments. According to some, the consensus system is a curse on the UN, and there is a need for more majority decisions. Annan himself stated, just as the Summit was about to

commence, that the UN culture of consensus caused the most problems, allowing ‘spoilers’ with special interests to hold the whole process hostage. In his view, the General Assembly should make more decisions by vote:<sup>103</sup> ‘There is an unwillingness to do that and as long as you do not want to do that, you are either going to be negotiated down to the lowest common denominator or you don’t get a decision at all’.<sup>104</sup> However, arguments in favour of majority voting tend to rest on a certainty of being in majority. Even if it falls outside the timeline of this narrative, the SG’s effort at getting his management reform proposal adopted in May 2006 proves this point. The process of majority voting that he encouraged proved counterproductive, when the Group of 77 (in real terms the Group of 132 relatively poorer nations) broke a 19-year tradition of consensus-based decisions and forced a vote on a resolution in the General Assembly’s main budget committee. The Group of 77, being in majority in the General Assembly, dominated the vote with 108 to 50, with three abstentions<sup>105</sup>. The SG consequently expressed that he ‘deeply regretted’ the failure of the UN membership to rally around a common approach to changing the organization.<sup>106</sup> The Deputy Secretary General went even further: ‘I completely agree that the universality of the United Nations is the single greatest comparative advantage -- and universality means that everybody has a say in decision-making [...] But if it breaks down, you end up with a much more crude confrontation, which is damaging to the institution’.<sup>107</sup>

Arguments in favour of taking issues to a vote seem to stem from frustration rather than calculation, as a majority of respondents argued that the results of a vote would most likely have been to make the outcomes useless, and might well have been catastrophic. It was pointed out that UN reform without the support of China, India, or indeed the USA is simply not viable. The costs associated with loss of unity and intense levels of dissatisfaction made a vote unlikely. Even disregarding the major players, the level of suspicion surrounding the process, the growing division between the ‘North’ and the ‘South’ over the role of the UN and the balance of power, made it virtually impossible to have such a vote. While the composition and mandate of a Human Rights Council might indeed be put to the vote, this was not considered to be the right way to deal with issues of collective security.

Looking into the future, several respondents bemoaned the lack of robust follow-up procedures. There was not much pre-planning of implementation, even if Jan Eliasson, the incumbent president of the General Assembly, became involved in the process during the summer of 2005, while Ping was formally still GA President. Leading up to the summit, there was a drive to have a result, and organizational requirements had to come later. That meant there was less focus on implementation.

A recurrent theme in these assessments has been the lack of perception management, but among the core personnel the opposite seems to be true. Whereas most members of the media, as well as several of our respondents, saw the reform process as essentially a failure, those who had been closely associated with the process were actually positively surprised at the result. Their argument was that if, in light of the political situation in the USA, the scandals, the Volcker reports and the tensions and suspicions in the Secretariat as well as among Member States, the outcome was unexpectedly good. The flipside of this position is a pronounced defeatism, where the argument goes that it was unlikely that *anything* would have made a difference at all: in such a political environment, the process could hardly have been otherwise.

On the whole, a striking feature of the interviews was the level of self-reflection and engagement with outside critics. Many respondents, totally unprompted, brought the arguments of outside academics – particularly Mats Berdal and Edward Luck – into the discussion. Thus, the assessments of many insiders explicitly dealt with issues raised by outsiders, to some extent more so than internal problems. We have already mentioned the criticism, expressed most clearly by Edward Luck, that there were too many issues on the agenda. It makes sense now to look at the criticism voiced by Mats Berdal, that the reform process was an exaggerated response to an ‘unnecessary crisis’.

The overwhelming majority of respondents disagreed, explicitly or implicitly, with Berdal’s assessment, and argued that a reform process was absolutely necessary. It might be tempting to see such answers as retroactive attempts at streamlining the entire process, were it not for the wildly diverging answers the respondents provided to most other questions. It would seem far-fetched to argue that respondents who had no common perception of when the process started, of what the most important issues were or of what the major outcomes were, should have shared a ‘common wisdom’ about the necessity of reform. Factually, some respondents pointed out that when the US President refuses to speak with the UN Secretary-General, as was the case in 2004, this surely constitutes a crisis.

A few respondents made qualifying statements. While they did not see the reform as absolutely necessary, they still saw it as the smart thing to do. They argued that several factors came together, with Iraq, oil-for-food and so forth, and that such events became opportunities. While not ‘the perfect storm’, there was sufficient shake-up to make something out of the situation. The reform initiative served to galvanize support on issues that would never have achieved consensus any other way. Even if the process was imperfect, through it the USA re-engaged with the UN, the organization proved its value in a changing world, and new confidence was bred inside the organization.

The SG’s left no doubt, at his year-end press conference in 2005, that he saw the events of the previous two years as a very real crisis for the UN. ‘If I go back in recent years, I think one thing I would have liked to see done is for us to have done everything we could have done to avoid a war in Iraq that has brought such division within this organisation and the international community [...] But we were not able to do that’.<sup>108</sup> From the top down, to the actors involved, this was clearly not an unnecessary crisis. In fact, under intense pressure, the Secretary-General replaced his chief of staff in January 2005 with Malloch Brown – in the words of the SG, in order to convince insiders that the crisis was real and to persuade outsiders that the UN was ready to reform.

The outcomes of the World Summit may have left much to be desired. Still, to the extent that the reform process managed to gather support and bring focus to critical issues, inside and around the UN, it at least must be regarded as a qualified success.

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> UN Document SG/SM/8912 of 1 October 2003

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/secureworld/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/fullreport.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>

<sup>5</sup> Ethical Guidelines as of September 2005: We, Anja Kaspersen and Halvard Leira, are researchers at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). The UN programme at NUPI is, with the cordial encouragement of the UN Secretary General's office, the Department of Political Affairs and the President of the General Assembly's office, conducting an independent narrative review of the UN reform process. The purpose of the project is to gather relevant material in the secretariat and Member States, to find, systematize and maintain knowledge and experiences from the reform process.

We are the principal investigators of this project, but we work closely with the rest of the UN team in NUPI's department of international politics, headed by Espen Barth Eide. If, upon conclusion of the interview, you have any further questions, we can be reached at [atk@nupi.no](mailto:atk@nupi.no) and [hl@nupi.no](mailto:hl@nupi.no) respectively, and Mr. Barth Eide can be reached at [ebe@nupi.no](mailto:ebe@nupi.no).

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. Your participation is very much appreciated. Just before we start the interview, we would like to reassure you that as a participant in this project you have several very definite rights.

- First, your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary.
- You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.
- You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time.
- This interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to members of the research team.
- We make an audio recording of the interview strictly for reasons of reliability, and the recordings will be erased upon conclusion of the project. If at any time you request otherwise, we will immediately cease recording. Excerpts of this interview may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in this report, unless you explicitly consent to this in writing.

<sup>6</sup> 'A Way Forward on International Security' by Kofi Annan, *International Herald Tribune*, 3 December 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Presented as *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*, UN Document A/51/950.

<sup>8</sup> Statement by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights 7 April 1999. UN Document SG/SM/99/9

<sup>9</sup> David Malone, cited in Barbara Crossette's 'Kofi Annan Unsettles People, As He Believes U.N. Should Do', *New York Times*, 31 December 1999.

<sup>10</sup> John R. Bolton, in Crossette above.

<sup>11</sup> *The Weekly Standard*, 4 October 1999, Vol. 5, No.3

<sup>12</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/3661134.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3661134.stm)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/fullreport.htm>

<sup>14</sup> UN Document A/55/2.

<sup>15</sup> UN Document A/55/PV.10. Cf. UNIS/SG/2663.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. 'Keep the U.N. united', Kofi Annan, *Wall Street Journal*, 11 March 2003

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in by Mark Turner, *Financial Times*, 6 September 2003

<sup>19</sup> National Security Strategy 2002, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>20</sup> UN Document SG/SM/8397, 23 September 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Secretary-General's interview with Barbara Crossette at the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the UN System, New York, 12 June 2003

<sup>22</sup> UN Document S/2003/826

<sup>23</sup> UN S/PRST/2003/5.

<sup>24</sup> UN Document A/58/PV.7

<sup>25</sup> UN Document SG/SM/8987 of 5 November 2003

<sup>26</sup> UN Document SG/SM/8879/OBV/372 of 17 September 2003

<sup>27</sup> UN Document SG/A/857.

<sup>28</sup> The Secretary-General's Address to the General Assembly, New York, 23 September 2003, UN Doc. A/58/PV.7

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<sup>29</sup> The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest. For further information see <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<sup>30</sup> Quoted by Mark Turner, *Financial Times*, 6 September 2003

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/58/statements/sg2eng030923>.

<sup>32</sup> Available at <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15717>.

<sup>33</sup> Chaired by Anand Panyarachun (Thailand), the panel had the following members: Robert Badinter (France); João Clemente Baena Soares (Brazil); Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway); David Hannay (United Kingdom); Mary Chinery-Hesse (Ghana); Gareth Evans (Australia); Enrique Iglesias (Uruguay); Amre Moussa (Egypt); Satish Nambiar (India); Sadako Ogata (Japan); Yevgeny Primakov (Russian Federation); Qian Qichen (China); Nafis Sadik (Pakistan); Salim Ahmed Salim (Tanzania), and Brent Scowcroft (United States). For further information see UN Document GA/10314.

<sup>34</sup> UN Document SG/SM/9124

<sup>35</sup> UN Document SG/A/857

<sup>36</sup> Stanford Report, November 19, 2003

<sup>37</sup> The Panel Secretariat consisted of Mr. Steven Stedman (US), Mr. Bruce Jones (Canada) Mr. Muhammad Zeeshan Amin (Pakistan), Mr. Tharun Chhabra (India), Mr. Graham Maitland (South Africa), Thant Myint-U (Burma) and Sebastian Graf von Einsiedel (Germany). In addition the Panel Secretariat was supported by three administrative staff: Ms. Lorraine Rickard-Martin, Angelica Malic and Maria Zaroui.

<sup>38</sup> UN Doc. SG address on accepting the 2003 Deutscher Medienpreis, Baden-Baden, 21 January 2004

<sup>39</sup> At pp. 2, 10.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Courage to fulfill our responsibilities’ *The Economist*, 2 December 2004 and

<sup>41</sup> UN Document SG/SM/9051

<sup>42</sup> Kofi Annan, ‘Questions and Answers session with journalist and others following SG statement to the Council on Foreign Relations’, Washington DC, 16 December 2004

<sup>43</sup> Public Broadcasting Services, News Hour Transcript, Margaret Warner interviewing Brent Scowcroft, 7 December 2004

<sup>44</sup> Lord David Hannay quoted by Paul Reynolds in ‘Time to turn talk into UN reform’, BBC News website, 21 March 2005

<sup>45</sup> Kofi Annan ‘Courage to fulfil our responsibilities’, *The Economist*, 2 December 2004

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.iic-offp.org/>. An independent inquiry, established by UN Secretary-General Annan in April 2004, to collect and examine information relating to the administration and management of the Oil-for-Food Programme, including allegations of fraud and corruption on the part of UN officials, personnel and agents, as well as contractors, including entities that have entered into contract with the UN or with Iraq under the programme. See also S/RES/1538 of 21 April 2004

<sup>47</sup> Warren Hoge, ‘Secret Meeting, Clear Mission: “Rescue”, UN’, *New York Times*, 2 January 2005

<sup>48</sup> Kofi Annan quoted by Judith Miller in ‘Annan Planning Deep Changes in U.N. Structure, Aide Says’, *New York Times*, , 17 January 2005 .

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>

<sup>50</sup> UN Document A/59/545

<sup>51</sup> UN Document SG/SM/9656 of 22 December 2004.

<sup>52</sup> UN Document SG/SM/9712 of 08 February 2005

<sup>53</sup> Highlights of the Spokesman's noon briefing by the spokesman for the Secretary-General, UN headquarters, New York, Tuesday, February 8, 2005

<sup>54</sup> ‘The Last Word: Mark Malloch Brown’, *Newsweek International*, 17 January 2005

<sup>55</sup> ‘Annan Planning Deep Changes in U.N. Structure, Aide Says’, *New York Times*, Judith Miller, 17 January 2005

<sup>56</sup> ‘In Larger Freedom: Decision Time at the UN’, Kofi Annan, *Foreign Affairs*, 25 April 2005

<sup>57</sup> National Public Radio, Transcript of Neal Conan interviewing Mark Malloch Brown on the ‘state of the UN’, 3 March 2005

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- <sup>58</sup> 'Our mission remains vital', Kofi Annan, *Wall Street Journal*, 22 February 2005
- <sup>59</sup> UN Doc. SG/SM/9732/DC/2946 of 23 February 2005
- <sup>60</sup> She held this position as Deputy Secretary General. The DSG position came about as a direct result of the Annan-initiated 1997 reform; ever since, part of the DSG portfolio has been to oversee and direct all reform efforts in and at the UN. See Louise Frechette, address at the University of Waterloo, 'The UN: Adapting to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', 3 April 2005.
- <sup>61</sup> New York, 29 March 2004 - Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the Report of the Security in Iraq Accountability Panel
- <sup>62</sup> Respondents described for example the Brahimi process (A/55/305-S/2000/809) as being more inclusive both in design and process
- <sup>63</sup> Baden-Baden, 21 January 2004. See also UN Doc. SG/SM/9179 if 2 March 2004.
- <sup>64</sup> Baden-Baden, 21 January 2004; New York, 18 February 2004, Remarks to the Int. Ass. of Perm. Rep. to the UN, New York 4 February – SG remarks to the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters
- <sup>65</sup> UN Doc SG/SM/9584 of 10 November 2004
- <sup>66</sup> 'An aspiration to a larger freedom', Kofi Annan, *Financial Times*, 21 March 2005
- <sup>67</sup> Excerpts from press conference by Secretary-General Kofi Annan at UN Headquarters, 21 March 2005.
- <sup>68</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, 1 December 2004. Likewise, In H.Res.869, introduced 6 December 2004, 60 US members of Congress called for Annan to step down.
- <sup>69</sup> See e.g. NPR, 3 March 2005 (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4519875>), House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, 19 May 2005 (<http://www.un.org/french/reform/mallochbrown.htm>), House of Representatives International Relations Committee, 28 September 2005 ([http://www.house.gov/international\\_relations/109/bro092805.pdf](http://www.house.gov/international_relations/109/bro092805.pdf)).
- <sup>70</sup> Group of 77 Letter to Secretary General Kofi Annan, 6 October 2005 (Letter available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/msummit/millenni/2005/1006g77letter.htm>)
- <sup>71</sup> Including 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.
- <sup>72</sup> Task Force on the United Nations: *American interests and UN reform*, report of the task force on the United Nations, released on 15 June 2005. The report was complemented by an assessment published in December 2005 addressing of how and if the outcome document met the recommendations made in the task force report.
- <sup>73</sup> UN Doc. SG/SM/9935 of 15 June 2005
- <sup>74</sup> [http://www.house.gov/international\\_relations/](http://www.house.gov/international_relations/)
- <sup>75</sup> Transcript of Press Conference by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, 13 September 2005 (<http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2005/sgsm10089.doc.htm>)
- <sup>76</sup> Press Release SG/A/913, 4 April 2005.
- <sup>77</sup> Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman's Noon Briefing, UN HQ, 19 May, 2005 ([http://www.un.org/News/press/docs/2005/hilites/hilites\\_arch\\_view.asp?HighID=303](http://www.un.org/News/press/docs/2005/hilites/hilites_arch_view.asp?HighID=303)). The envoys were Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Dermot Ahern, Ernesto Zedillo, Joachim Chissano and Ali Alatas.
- <sup>78</sup> UN Doc. A/RES/59/291, A/58/291, A/59/145 and A/59/545
- <sup>79</sup> UN Document A/59/545 of 1 November 2004, page 4, Para 23.
- <sup>80</sup> Jan Eliasson, Statement by the President of the UN General Assembly at the opening of the 60<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, New York, 13 September 2005
- <sup>81</sup> For an interesting analysis and comparison of the changes made from the 3 June draft to the final version of the outcome document see <http://www.reformtheun.org/index.php/articles/1662>
- <sup>82</sup> Transcript of BBC interview with Kofi Annan, 6 September 2005, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)
- <sup>83</sup> UN News Service, 30 August 2005
- <sup>84</sup> Cf. Letter from Ambassador Bolton on Millennium Development Goals, 26 August 2005
- <sup>85</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050914.html>
- <sup>86</sup> Mark Malloch Brown, quoted in Maggie Farley, 'Bush, Annan Tout the Role of the UN', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 September 2005
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>88</sup> The UN and the SG also gained respect for being fully forthcoming. Volcker acknowledged this in a public statement in February 2005: 'few institutions have freely subjected themselves to the intensity of

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scrutiny entailed in the Committee's work... I don't know of any other institution that has been scrubbed quite as hard as this one'. See [http://www.oilforfoodfacts.org/volcker\\_summary.aspx](http://www.oilforfoodfacts.org/volcker_summary.aspx).

<sup>89</sup> Independent Inquiry Committee into the United Nations Oil-for-Food programme, p. 12

<sup>90</sup> 'A Glass At Least Half Full', Kofi Annan, *Wall Street Journal*, 19 September 2005

<sup>91</sup> UN Doc SG/SM/10078 of 7 September 2006, Remarks to the closing session of the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual DPI/NGO conference of 9 September 2006, UN News Service 10 September 2005

<sup>92</sup> Maggie Farley, 'UN Reform Bid Exposes Its Woes', *Los Angeles Times*, 14 September 2005

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Secretary-General's Keynote speech at Conference on Reforming the UN, Columbia University, New York, 17 October 2005

<sup>96</sup> In Larger Freedom, p. 7, Para 53.

<sup>97</sup> Statement to the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly.

<sup>98</sup> 'A Glass At Least Half Full', Kofi Annan, *Wall Street Journal* 19 September 2005

<sup>99</sup> UN Press Release GA/10338 of 7 April 2005

<sup>100</sup> UN Press Release GA/10338 of 7 April 2005

<sup>101</sup> Quoted by Farley, Maggie 'UN Reform Bid Exposes Its Woes', *Los Angeles Times*, 14 September 2005

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050914.html>

<sup>103</sup> Farley, Maggie 'UN Reform Bid Exposes Its Woes', *Los Angeles Times*, 14 September 2005

<sup>104</sup> Secretary-General Kofi Annan, quoted in Farley (as above)

<sup>105</sup> UN Document GA/AB/3732

<sup>106</sup> UN Document GA/AB/3727 and GA/AB/3732

<sup>107</sup> Quoted by Thalif Deen in "Rich vs Poor in Power Struggle, Says Top UN Official", IPS, May 31 2006 (IPS)

<sup>108</sup> UN Secretary General Kofi Annan year-end press conference (unofficial transcript), 21 December 2005