



Empowering the Peoples in their United Nations

Symposium on the United Nations at Fifty:
Creating a More Democratic and Effective UN

Erskine Childers

December 2, 1994

When he was opening the Dumbarton Oaks Conference that began the shaping of the United Nations Charter, Secretary of State Cordell Hull said, "No institution will endure unless there is behind it considered and complete public support". It tells us something that, fifty years later, we have to gather like this in the UN's Host Country to discuss the need for greater public support for it.

My first recommendation in this regard is that we must be conscious at all times of a problem that has long affected support for our world organization: when someone says "the UN", what are we really talking about? The UN is as amorphous, as difficult to "freeze" for disciplined analysis and debate as national government and national perspectives on the world multiplied 184 times, and it is infused with all the cultures and bears all the accumulated burdens and syndromes of humankind.

The greatest of these syndromes is now the North-South abyss: the most dangerous frontier in all human history so far is the line between the Southern majority of humankind and the Northern minority. Its role in the issue of "a more effective" UN was vividly illustrated during the Gulf Crisis and War: when orthodox opinion in the North was hailing the "re-birth" of the UN in that crisis, among the majority of humankind in the South there was outrage and despair for it.

Never forgetting this, because it pervades everything at the UN today, let me try to build at least a rudimentary definition of what it is that we want to make more democratic and effective -- working from its core outwards into the world.

In whole, the UN System comprises 16 separate organizations, in what Belgium's representative early on described as "a new system of a planetary type: a central organization, the United Nations, around which gravitate independent agencies linked with the former by special agreements". This planetary system has at its core, on one hand its international civil service headed by the world's chief public servant, the Secretary-General, and on the other the national representatives of member-governments at the UN and its agencies. Therefore, the least of it is that when someone says "the UN" they need to be clear whether they are referring to the Secretary-General and the secretariats, or to the sum (or the conflict) of the policies of governments in the UN System's fora; and very often what they are really talking about are the policies of a handful of so-called major powers.

But even this is an inadequate delineation; because the sad reality is that governments often disunite themselves in the United Nations. The same governments that express one policy in the UN at New York not infrequently express the opposite in the governing bodies of agencies.

Let me give one concrete illustration of this syndrome. It is appropriate to recall in this distinguished place of teaching that the colonial empires denied their captives -- most of humankind -- the development of the educational capacities that contemporaneously set the Western world in progress. In 1960 Ghana was left with 95 university graduates among over 9 million people. The same ratio of graduates to population would in 1960 have given Britain only 600 graduates; the United States would have had only 2,500 graduates -- the graduate output of this one university here in less than two years. It is instructive to contemplate where Britain and the United States would be 34 years later.

Trying to meet this enormous problem, the UN Development Programme with that scurrilous organization UNESCO trained over a million teachers between 1965 and 1985, over half in African developing countries. But the same donor governments that fund UNDP, including the United States, authorised the International Monetary Fund -- supposedly also a part of the UN System -- to require the same African developing countries to slash their new teacher payrolls by as much as 30 per cent. That is certainly not co-ordination; it is the destruction of development. How can we make the UN "more effective" if its longest-established and best-endowed member-governments cannot co-ordinate their own policies?

My second recommendation is therefore what Finland said last year in the General Assembly, that "the best gift Member-States could give the United Nations for its Fiftieth Anniversary would be more co-ordinated and coherent national policies towards the UN and the specialized agencies". Speaking of accountability, scholars and NGOs should ensure that it begins at home.

When they do manage to co-ordinate their policies, members do fulfil their commitment under the Charter to make the UN "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations" -- and often achieve marvellous things. But what needs to be harmonised is brought there in the baggage of the Delegations, packed with each country's cultural heritage, array of national interests and needs, coherence or incoherence in expressing those interests, and outlook upon the rest of the world at that moment in time ...

"The UN" is thus quite as much perception as institution. Creating a more democratic and effective UN therefore begins in perception and policy at home, within each member-state -- from the point closest to the UN, which is national executive government, across to national legislatures, then the citizens and their NGOs, and the media that inform or disinform, motivate or demotivate about the UN. And a whole portion of our problem is ignorance and disinformation about the UN in the oldest-established democracies, despite their education and information capacities. If we do not clean off the perceptual canvas the shabby epithets that have been splattered on it down the years by ideologues and lazy media editors, the 50th Anniversary reflection will be a polite sham. As has happened before, the wrong reforms may be proposed from the North, will again be resisted by the rest of the membership, and if nevertheless bludgeoned through by economic intimidation, will only hasten the UN's loss of support in most of the world, and its ultimate collapse.

Let me therefore begin with the presently installed staff and financial capacities of what everyone here has read and heard umpteen times is "a vast, sprawling swollen bureaucracy". What are the actual facts against that insidious imagery?

For the UN itself -- for all its peace, political, legal, economic and social and human rights work, at New York and Geneva and Vienna and the regional commissions -- governments have authorised some 3,000 professionals (800 of whom are interpreters for all the meetings in six languages), and some 6,000 support staff. The total UN civil service of 9,000 is smaller than the staff of the international advertising firm of Saatchi and Saatchi -- or than the civil service of the provincial city of Winnipeg in Manitoba. You may know that Amnesty International has more paid staff than the United Nations has for Human Rights work.

Now let us take the UN System -- the UN together with its grant development and humanitarian funds, and 13 specialised agencies, excluding only the World Bank and the IMF whose staff are financed and salaried in totally different ways, and of course temporary peacekeeping forces. The UN System's staff of all grades from drivers to directors, world-wide, numbers a little less than 52,000. Again, for some rough comparisons, this staff to serve 5.7 billion people is less than the District Health staff of Wales in Britain -- or than the civil servants in the State of Wyoming with population of under half a million.

It has also been said for years that the UN staff is now "Third World dominated". Three decades after the Third World entered the UN the 22 per cent minority North still has a 55 per cent majority of all regular professional posts, and over 50 per cent of all senior political positions. The 22 per cent minority North holds 68 per cent of all extra-budgetary professional posts.

Now as to budget: in 1992 this "vast, sprawling, swollen bureaucracy" had from governments a total of \$10.5 billion to expend for everything. This included all peacekeeping costs, all humanitarian relief, all grant development assistance through the UN Development Programme, the Population Fund, UNICEF and so on, and to name only a fraction of the other work, research and gathering the statistics of Planet Earth in every field, running the 24-hour World Weather Watch and FAO's early-warning system for drought and crop disease, organising the world's telecommunications channels and civil aviation routes, developing the first new Law of the Sea in 300 years, trying to assure women their human right to control their own fertility, and planning world conferences like the one on Environment at Rio and on Women at Beijing next year.

For all this, ten and a half billion dollars for the whole world. That is less than Americans spend in a year at barbershops, beauty parlours and health clubs. It would only keep Britain in alcoholic beverages for 15 weeks. It would pay for only half of the accessories that Western teenagers buy for their clothes in a year. It amounts to two dollars per human being alive on Planet Earth. Governments are still spending over one hundred and fifty dollars per capita on the world's military.

A great deal can and must now be done to improve the use that is made of these, the UN's actual human and financial resources. But the truth behind the cynical sneers, lies, and distortions that have so discouraged citizens and that have given licence to the constant effort of a few powers to keep the UN weak, is that the United Nations is a perilously under-resourced organization -- and I emphasise, deliberately so. The industrial powers succeeded in cutting the UN's staff by no less than 13 per cent only eight years ago -- and five years later complained when it didn't have enough to handle the sudden surge in peacekeeping that they began demanding of it.

A word about the dreadful, draining cost of this monstrous bureaucracy to the taxpayers of the United States: this country's total assessed contribution to the UN would currently be about 1 billion dollars if it decides some time to pay it; meanwhile it is making more than 1 billion dollars a year out of the UN, in income from UN headquarters expenditure and in UN procurements of American goods and services. Who needs greater "accountability", to whom, in the UN?

It is, however, unhealthy that the United Nations be dependent upon any one country -- tomorrow it could be Japan or Germany -- for as much as a quarter of its budget, because it leaves it at all times subject to the political ransom that it now experiences. But here, too, we have gross contradiction. As the clamour in the US Congress against the allegedly exorbitant cost of the UN reached its most shrill levels, in 1985 the late Prime Minister of Sweden Olof Palme proposed a cap of 10 per cent on any country's contribution. But from Washington there was resounding silence. The US Government evidently wanted to keep its financial stranglehold on the UN, while telling American citizens that it cost too much.

President Clinton has, however, now said that the United States wants its share of peacekeeping costs reduced.

My third recommendation is that Americans work to get the US arrears paid up and then the US share of the UN's regular budget reduced and the shortfall redistributed among capable countries. Fourthly, I urge imaginative development of additional funding for the UN System, such as a tax on international air travel, or a day a year's world-wide proceeds of postal mails and other communications, all of which are organised by the System.

In the direct context of this Symposium I would submit a fifth, overall recommendation about all this: that it is a primary responsibility of everyone who wishes to engage in debate about improving the UN for its next fifty years, first to make clear the real size and cost of the organization that should be improved. It is the height of hypocrisy to talk about making the United Nations more democratic while in democracies themselves citizens are undemocratically deceived about and demagogically provoked against it by their very own leaders and media.

Bearing the real facts in mind, then, about the civil-service core and the budget, let me turn to the intergovernmental decision-making machinery, because it, too, is clouded in mis-information and distortion. Let us first look at issues of democracy in the General Assembly, where one-nation one-vote applies.

In the UN's first decade and a half the General Assembly may not have enjoyed avid media attention but comment on it was benign.

Those, of course, were the years when there was so comfortable an American-led majority that a young Burmese delegate named U Thant observed that "it was like a one-party system". But when the "new majority" arrived, the General Assembly became a "useless talking shop", and has been so dismissed in orthodox Western comment ever since.

I could expend my entire time discussing the merits -- and the real problems -- of the General Assembly; but to illustrate with one example, this "useless talking shop" has adopted some 70 detailed instruments of Human Rights -- an achievement that would be regarded as truly extraordinary if it had been made by one legislature in one relatively homogeneous country. And over two-thirds of these Conventions, Covenants, Protocols, and Declarations on Human Rights have been adopted under the "irresponsible" Third World majority.

It is also said almost daily in this part of the world that the Assembly cannot be taken seriously because so few of its majority delegations come from democratically elected governments. I yield to no one in wishing for the day when they all will -- and it will come. But Australia's last Ambassador to the UN, the late Dr. Peter Wilenski, correctly observed that "there is not much difference in the voting patterns of democratic and non-democratic states". And Northern officials know very well in how many Third World countries the intelligence agencies of the powers, above all the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States, installed dictators, financed and armed them, trained their secret police and torture and death squads, and saw to their sustained corruption by corporations ... or arranged for the destabilization of countries through neighbouring client dictators, or settler regimes ... and in other countries tried to overthrow popular leadership, constantly building a siege authoritarianism.

This further ravaging of a major proportion of the peoples of this earth, even as they only began trying to recover from the ravages of colonialism, now joins other, socio-economic causes of instability and upheaval in the South. But speaking again to the issue of "effectiveness", the powers now call upon the UN to cope with the consequences of what they wrought -- not only without reparations, but without even proper support for the UN to try to care for the victims and at last help them to create stable society. I would cite to you as just one example the failure to resource the UN in an Angola bloodily torn apart by a gang directly sponsored by the United States and covertly armed by it through arrangement with the former South African apartheid regime and that long-nourished client, Mobutu of Zaire. Typically, it is now said that "the UN" failed in Angola.

As a sixth recommendation, I would therefore urge that all who wish to improve public education about the UN bear in mind that citizens need truthful accounts of the origins of and sources of responsibility for the upheavals and mass misery

which the UN is now expected to resolve "effectively". Here is a rich field for collaboration between scholars and NGOs like, for example, the Global Policy Forum.

Next, there is the perennial talk about some new system to replace one-nation one-vote in the UN and give greater decision-making weight to what are called "the countries that contribute most" to the UN budget. This was one of the demands behind the treaty-violating refusal of the US Congress to pay this country's full dues, keeping the organization on the brink of bankruptcy, until today it owes \$1.5 billion, equivalent to half the UN's entire operating costs for a year, or some two-thirds its current peace-keeping costs.

The system of assessed contributions to the budget of the UN (and the main Agencies) was fully accepted by all the founding members including the United States. It is grounded in the democratic principle of relative capacity to pay. This fundamental precept of democratic revenue-raising and governance holds that, since it is as difficult for the poorer citizen to find his or her smaller money amount of tax as it is for the wealthier citizen or corporation to find larger money amounts, the wealthier should not have any special voice or voting strength in government.

In the United Nations System, it is at least as difficult for Jamaica, or my country Ireland, or Tanzania or Australia to find their smaller money amount of assessed dues as it is for, say, Germany or the United States to find their larger money amount.

My seventh recommendation is therefore that we must restore public understanding of the original Charter principle -- that, for all we want the UN to achieve, everyone "pays most". There is little use discussing democracy in the UN if powerful groups are trying to subvert it with demands for totally undemocratic special influence which they would not dare suggest be installed in their own countries.

It is often also claimed that those contributing the larger money amounts are justified in demanding special voice and voting strength, because the UN secretariats don't handle funds well. First: assume for a moment that there was a serious problem of mis-handling of funds: why should the major powers have a special voice over this? The Irish Pounds or Nepali Rupees are just as precious, just as burdensome to contribute. In reality, the total volume of malfeasance in the UN System in a year could not even be registered on a bar-chart of a year's corruption in any major Western city government. In one country whose officials constantly lecture the UN about "fiscal responsibility", citizens recently lost the equivalent of 250 years of UN budgets through mis-management and corruption in their public savings and loan organizations. The UN's management certainly

needs improvement; but let us improve it, not surrender it to pre-democratic and semi-feudal control on the basis of allegations against an international civil service that has a remarkable record of probity.

There is also the perennial criticism that one-nation one-vote involves incredible disparities. Of course it does. But the ugly underside of this issue was well exposed some years ago when an American television anchorman, interviewing that year's President of the General Assembly asked him, "Isn't it absurd when some small weak country has a vote equal to that of a powerful and large country like the United States?" The President of the Assembly paused, and then replied, "I am not sure I understand your question: I am the Prime Minister of Luxembourg". One small, weak but white and Western nation with one vote equal to the big ones isn't ever a problem; equal votes for peoples of colour and of other cultures is.

My eighth recommendation is accordingly that public education and action for a more democratic UN must include public education to lift the North out of its centuries-old racism and cultural bias towards the vast majority of our sisters and brothers.

One day, a more representative voting formula may be achieved. Meanwhile, I offer another fact that is seldom mentioned in this part of the world: the proportion of votes held by the industrial North and the low-income South in the UN System's one-nation one-vote governing bodies almost exactly reflects the respective Northern and Southern shares of world population. That rough equity in representation should be enough for us to get on with. And quite frankly it will have to be, because the changed voting systems advocated by entirely well-meaning people do not stand the remotest chance of acceptance, while the attempts of elites within a minority of humankind to retain total control of the UN provokes such profound distrust among the majority.

If, however, we are serious about democracy in the UN we must recognise something much more fundamental. The citizens of the UN are kept institutionally remote from the very organization which they themselves did titularly establish. The drafters of the Charter did indeed make it begin with "We, the Peoples of the United Nations" enunciating its *raison d'être* and its noble goals. But unlike the unqualified sovereignty of the people in the United States Constitution, who directly establish their government, in a trice the Peoples of the United Nations were made to delegate all authority to "our Governments" to establish the organization, and are never heard from again in the ensuing document.

My ninth recommendation is therefore that we at last heed Britain's Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, whom no one ever called a utopian dreamer. In the first

House of Commons debate on the new United Nations 49 years ago, he called for the "completion" of the UN design with "a world assembly elected directly from the people (to) whom the governments who form the United Nations are responsible". I call this the UN Parliamentary Assembly. The proposal has now been endorsed by the European Parliament, and Canada's House of Commons foreign affairs committee is offering to host a first preparatory conference.

How a UN Parliamentary Assembly would be developed, and what its functions would be alongside the existing Assembly of executive governments, has been well discussed by the World Federalists, especially in Dieter Heinrich's paper, and by the Conferences for a More Democratic United Nations (CAMDUN); I have also discussed it in detail in a study this year with Sir Brian Urquhart. I understand that the Commission on Global Governance will recommend a "Forum of Civil Society Organizations" to be held before the General Assembly every year. This is commendable, but I do not myself believe that the NGO community could ever -- or indeed should ever try to claim to -- be properly representative of the citizenries of all countries. If we are serious about extending democracy outwards from national society and into our world public- service institution, we have to go all the way, and the time to start is now.

To be sure it will be a gigantic task to organise free elections of people's representatives to the UN in every country. But India for 46 years has run a pluralistically elected parliament among rising 900 million in no way homogeneous citizens. Electing one among some 7 times that number from around Planet Earth is not beyond the wit and will of caring world democrats. No one institutional innovation would so assuredly build real connections between "We, the Peoples", and the world body that belongs to them, not to governments.

In truth, however, the Charter itself contains some fundamental violations of democratic principles. It is in most respects a supremely ethical document; a marvellous enunciation of humankind's first-ever international social contract. Yet it was crudely sullied at San Francisco. Amid iteration of social- democratic principles and goals that could scarcely be improved on today, the Charter reads like a magnificent constitution abruptly amended in a fascist coup d'etat, as we find that 5 out of 184 members of this polity arrogate to themselves violations of the very fundamentals of democratic decision-making.

The five can veto the admission of any new member (Article 4), and have done so 59 times, 21 per cent of all vetoes up to 1990. This veto power is not as redundant as the UN's present seemingly universal membership might suggest. In decades ahead there will be enormous changes in the structure of nation-states and thus of UN membership: there will be amalgamations of present member-states, including a confederate United States of Africa; and entire

peoples today unknown to Northerners will seek international identity (1 in every 18 of us alive this evening is a member of a suppressed indigenous people). An institution in which a tiny minority of members can block such new admissions can never be democratic.

Next, the five can veto nominations for the world's chief public servant (Article 97) and they have done so 43 times, 15% of all vetoes, but they have blocked many more candidatures again by the mere threat of vetoing them. We have got to get rid of this and all other veto powers, but we have also got to get all member- governments to behave more responsibly in their selection of the executive heads of the System.

My tenth recommendation is accordingly another veritable foundation stone in the building of a truly democratic and accountable UN. The selection of its Secretary-General is a disorganised, half-secret fumbling around within the diplomatic old-boy (very much old-boy) network. It should be an orderly and transparent process based upon the kind of organised candidates- search that even the smallest college anywhere in the world undertakes to find a new President or Chancellor. Citizens of the UN who wish to see it made more democratic should make this a priority campaign for 1996.

My eleventh recommendation is that every effort should be made to find an eminently qualified woman as our next Secretary-General, for a world in which the performance of men in the management of social justice and peace has been pretty deplorable.

My twelfth recommendation also goes to the heart of accountability: the Charter must be amended to provide that the Secretary-General, as the head of a Principal Organ, can request an advisory opinion of the World Court on any legal question concerning the Organization. Without this, we shall always lack an instant guardian of the Charter, as we did so lamentably in the Gulf Crisis.

I come next to the management of peace, and the Security Council. It is not some sort of separate UN, as those who worship great-powerdom frequently imply. The membership as a whole explicitly delegates to -- the actual Charter verb in Article 24 is "confers" upon -- it only "primary" responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The presence in this organ of permanent, un-elected self-named members who can veto even any proposed conciliatory, as well as any police action to protect the community or to enforce its laws is, in a very real sense, an anti-democratic self-violation of the whole rest of the Charter. They have done so 171 times, for 61 per cent of all vetoes, and by threat of veto many more times. As we are now tragically witnessing in former Yugoslavia, their prevention of early UN peaceful-settlement initiatives has again and again resulted in countries being plunged into devastation,

whereupon when they do finally allow UN action it is ten times more difficult, and the UN is then denied remotely adequate resources to deal with the size of the problem which their delaying has allowed to be unleashed. Once again, it is "the UN" which is then said to have failed.

In the current debate on an "Agenda for Peace" and reform of the Security Council the vast majority of members -- North as well as South -- have made very clear their dislike of permanent membership and veto powers, and their distaste for the way three Western powers behave in the Council, like a private club of hereditary elite-members who secretly come to decisions and then emerge to tell the grubby elected members that they may now rubber-stamp those decisions. In terms of accountability, we have up to five members who are at present not accountable to the rest of the membership. This perverts the entire organization, threatens its credibility in the world almost by the week, and erodes the potential of all other democratic improvements.

My thirteenth recommendation is not surprisingly that if we do not want to be grossly hypocritical in discussing a more democratic UN, we have got to campaign for the total elimination of permanent seats and vetoes.

Of course, we are all under constant psychological programming to be what is called "realistic" about such issues. An honest translation of "be realistic" is, accept the dominance in all crucial world concerns of a handful of states whose only claim to such power can be that they have grossly abused science to develop the most efficient means to incinerate, and the most cruelly painful devices to dismember and disfigure, the largest number of human beings in the shortest possible time. This thesis of realism is the antithesis of democracy. It dismisses any ethic in international relations as irrelevant. It has been responsible for vast tolls of death and human misery. I plead that the discourse of this Symposium about the UN's democratic and effective discharge of its highly ethical mandates not be riddled with this psychological poison.

It is promising that the current debate at the UN on reform of the Security Council is taking place under the General Assembly, and thus engages the whole membership. The world-wide demand for reform away from permanent and veto-wielding memberships, however, is coming head to head with the demands of Germany and Japan now to be given the very same status. There is some danger that, in the anniversary momentum for reform, the powers will economically intimidate the general membership into a quick fix solution, whereby Germany and Japan are accommodated in return for a few large Third World countries being corrupted into joining this reliquary cabal and thus extending its sordid existence.

My fourteenth recommendation is therefore that we should oppose Security Council reform being rushed into any dirty compromises. It will be quite enough of an achievement to set in motion processes of reform during the 50th anniversary, not try to wrap them up by its end. The anniversary should be used to start to relieve the UN of special privileges that were already grotesquely anachronistic in 1945: not to extend such privileges to others and thereby prolong them for decades more. Let there be deadlock and stalemate, until a formula is evolved for a moderately enlarged, veto-free Council, with all members to be elected by the General Assembly based on regional representation that will always include most of these powers. If one or two are suffering excruciating agony in temporary rotation out of an elected seat, they can use Articles 31 and 32, which all the mere ordinary rest of the world has to use; namely that a country not on the Council but with a clear special interest in a crisis can attend and exert its persuasive influence. It is high time these power-elites got off their high horses and tried working their way in the real world solely by argument. That is democracy in the UN.

My fifteenth recommendation addresses the original intention in the Charter, which was that UN military force should be the absolute last, and tragic resort. The Secretary-General's early-warning capacities must be improved, and prompt use made of eminently trustworthy Fact-Finding Missions.

Sixteenth, the UN must be enabled to differentiate its responses to crises, by having a distinct and separate United Nations Humanitarian Security Police, at ready-to-move status in contributing countries, to protect civilians and their relief supplies. Such a force, moved rapidly enough, would often avert need for full-scale military interposition; but seventeenth, where UN troops are still needed we must campaign for capable countries to commit the logistical resources needed in long-distance troop transport aircraft. It is not known, because it would be inconvenient, that African countries were ready to move troops into Rwanda to prevent genocide, but they didn't have such aircraft, and countries that did wouldn't provide them.

Many of our problems of public support for the UN involve little-known factors that go to the heart of accountability. One that is an utter travesty of democratic decision-making is the bribing or brutal intimidation of impoverished member-countries into surrendering their voting rights. Again and again in recent years, on any issue judged by the powers to require the obedience of the rest of the world, Third World governments are informed that if they do not vote the right way in the Security Council, or if they do not at least abstain or stay silent, they will lose aid, not get debt relief, not get sound credit-rating through the IMF, even not get emergency IMF credit to pay last month's oil bill. "Realists" call this "hard ball diplomacy". Its real name is extortion, and it is a criminal offense in democracies.

My eighteenth recommendation -- and I make this seriously, not in any way polemically -- therefore has to be that American NGOs wishing to advance democracy in the United Nations should form a consortium Blackmail Watch there. For nothing will halt this disguised state terrorism except the vigilance of decent citizens of the countries practicing it.

Such extortion was not foreseen by the founders at San Francisco; they did not envisage that members of the UN would ever be as deeply impoverished, and thus vulnerable to such dictation. And this brings me to the most crucial issue of all over making the UN more effective in its peace and security mission, human rights efforts, and development work.

When the Charter was being drafted, the then independent smaller and middle countries fought hard to make the UN not merely a "peace and order" body, but a world organization also mandated to tackle the economic and social root causes of conflict. They insisted that the UN itself must be the commanding centerpiece where macro-monetary, -trade and -finance policy for "the advancement of all peoples", as the Charter pledges, would be formulated. The General Assembly was to adopt and coordinate these macro policies, and the Economic and Social Council to co-ordinate their implementation by the specialized agencies. These would include an International Monetary Fund as the emergent central bank of the world community, working closely with an International Trade Organization to intervene equitably against either surplus or deficit countries, and to promote open but fair trade.

Instead, the United States smashed all hope of an equitable world trade system - - the key to advancement of all peoples -- by blocking the creation of the International Trade Organization. All we got instead was GATT, which should have been called the Specific Agreement to Continue the Imperial Trading System, and which has never covered trade vital to the poor countries. As a result, where two decades ago, 80 per cent of humankind at least had a 28 per cent share of world trade, today they have only 18 per cent.

The Northern industrial powers have also refused to accept the UN as the economic centerpiece, insisting that monetary and finance policy-issues belong in the IMF and the World Bank, which they control and which they then make sure do not address such issues. Conservative media regularly report that the annual G-7 summits deal with the issues of "the global economy". This is outright fiction. Their "global economy" is only the North-North economy -- Japan, North America, and Europe, less than a quarter of humankind. So we have no macro-policies that address the needs of all humankind on an all-gain basis; and again, the certainty of conflict increases.

UNDP now calculates that the North's protectionist barriers against attempted Southern exports to the North, combined with manipulated interest rates and other imposed inequities, are depriving the countries of the South of more than 500 billion dollars of income that they could be earning every year. Thus, Northern refusal to address all-win structural solutions at the UN is preventing the South from earning every year nearly ten times all the North's "aid" to the South. That is, quite simply, stupid.

Astonishingly mendacious invocations of growth inside a handful of countries are purveyed to suggest that Northern economic policies imposed through the IMF and the Bank are working for the South. The North-South disparity has in fact widened enormously. In 1960 the richest one-fifth of humankind was earning thirty times what the poorest one-fifth could earn; now it earns over sixty times what the poorest one-fifth can. The indebtedness of the South has increased 14 times since 1970, to now some 1.4 trillion dollars. The number of people barely surviving in absolute poverty has increased by 40 per cent in only the last 15 years, to some 1.4 billion. The present policies of the Northern powers guarantee that soon, 1 in every 3 human beings alive on this planet will be only existing on the very margins of daily survival. When comparable conditions existed in Europe there was bloody revolution.

Thus, most of humankind has emerged from the Cold War era economically prostrated; politically ravaged; artificially divided by imperial frontiers imposed without any consultation with people on either side of them; filled with long-suppressed movements of aspiration and anger; and strewn with the abandoned weaponry of a meaningless North-North ideological contest. Northern political and economic policies are prescriptions for further mass unrest, the rise of so-called fundamentalist movements, and more and more open conflict which may coalesce into open North-South confrontation early in the next century. Even if this is avoided, given present Northern policies there will be upheaval on such a scale that the most perfect improvements in UN peace-restoring and peacekeeping capacities will be overwhelmed. We therefore have no choice now but to enable the UN to tackle the neglected causes as well as already to try to cope with their consequences in conflict.

My nineteenth recommendation is a composite one covering what we need to advocate if the UN is to be more effective, not merely in trying to tamp down fire when it is already blazing but, as the Charter always intended, to go to cause.

We must demand that the mandates in the Charter to make the UN the centrepiece for genuinely global, all-gain economic policies are now implemented before the world divides irrevocably and violently. To gear up the UN for its originally intended economic leadership role the Secretariat's economic staff capacities, deliberately weakened in favour of the World Bank, must be restored,

under a Deputy Secretary-General for International Economic Co-operation and Sustainable Development to help the Secretary-General present coherent macro-policy proposals towards global equity.

The governance of the IMF must be overhauled: an agency 74 per cent of whose membership has only 34 per cent voting power has no place in a democratic UN System. We must get a proper, genuinely global organization for fair trade, because no amount of "aid" could enable three-quarters of humankind to earn their way, and a rigged trading regime makes it impossible for them to do so.

To address the ethnic and cultural causes of conflict I believe we should convert the now unused Trusteeship Council into a Council on Diversity, Representation, and Governance. This should be a quite different type of UN organ: not trying to fashion universal policy, but serving as the world's open think-tank and source of wise counsel on the enormous problems of the obsolescent nation-state, and the aspirations of hundreds of millions for greater expression of their ancestral identity but not necessarily in traditionally conceived nation-state sovereignty. This Council should command the respect and actively draw upon the knowledge and insights of social scientists throughout the world. Traditionally trained diplomats more and more readily admit that they are not equipped to deal with this range of problems.

Fifty years ago we decided to make a new effort to create world community, with a better instrument than any we had attempted before. We must be impatient with our progress because in the meantime all that we have neglected, and all that has been exacerbated, has made our world a more, not less dangerous place. But laid on the great canvas of all human history, what we have already does not deserve despair, and should make those who vent their cynicism upon it feel unworthy.

For the first time in the human story we have an echo-chamber of all of us on Planet Earth. In the standards of behavior the UN has enabled us to agree we have a moral mirror to hold up before ourselves in every land. And from the research and analysis organized by the UN's great world conferences on every aspect of society and environment, we have lost the last excuse for not attending to how the majority of our sisters and brothers have to live out their lives -- the last excuse, of ignorance.

Yet I hope I have brought into bold relief the enormous irony -- that the United Nations itself, which has made all this possible, is wrapped in public ignorance and nearly strangled in the coils of ideologically driven disinformation, and above all in its very Host Country.

For my final recommendation, I would hope that scholars and NGOs would form a national commission to report to the American people on the performance by their government of this country's unique privilege and responsibility as Host to the United Nations for all of its first fifty years.

Let us use these precious hours here at a great place of learning to fashion programs that can bring the real UN into the sight of all its citizens, so that they can exercise their full, democratic responsibilities in its governance and development.

Our children will thank us if we care enough for what is already their United Nations to rescue it from cynicism and elitist manipulation.

They will never forgive us if, failing to strengthen their United Nations, we leave them the most unthinkable bequest of all - - a world we would not wish to live in ourselves.