Sixteen Policy Recommendations on Sanctions

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1. Sanctions should be resorted to with caution
Sanctions cause considerable damage and even suffering, so they must not be seen as an early-response, but rather as a late-resort, after preventive and diplomatic means have been exhausted.

2. Sanctions should be applied under laws, rules, guidelines or binding criteria
Sanctions should be applied under predictable and roughly similar circumstances (no double standards). Sanctions should be incorporated into (and subject to) international law, possibly through a treaty or other instrument. Short of a formal treaty, the Security Council should develop and publish rules or guidelines for its own reference.

3. Sanctions should have clear, precisely-defined objectives and termination criteria
Sanctions when applied must have very clear objectives and well-defined criteria for termination. When the target country meets these criteria, and the objectives are met, sanctions should be lifted. In some types of cases, when criteria are partly met, sanctions could be partly lifted as a means of encouragement for further progress.

4. Sanctions should expire at the end of a specified term unless renewed
UN sanctions now continue until a decision is taken to lift them. In the Security Council, this means that a single Permanent Member can veto the lifting, against the will of a large Council majority. Sanctions should instead require a "green light" for renewal, even though the initial term could be set for a lengthy period.
5. **Sanctions must always exempt food, medicines and other humanitarian supplies**

General trade sanctions, such as those in place against Iraq, now often block humanitarian supplies including food and medicines. Rules for sanctions must allow clear exemptions for virtually all foods, medicines and other humanitarian supplies. Sanctions must also provide for delivery of these supplies and for their financing.

6. **Sanctions aim to modify behavior, not to punish or exact retribution**

Sanctions should not be confused with criminal law that results in a punishment. Sanctions must not punish or ostracize, but rather they must encourage a change of policy that leads to compliance with standards of international law.

7. **Sanctions should be subject to pre-assessment**

The effect of particular types of sanctions on a targeted population should always be subject to a pre-assessment study. Such a study would advise the Security Council on the probable impact of the proposed sanctions from a humanitarian point of view, as well as from the point of view of enforcement and efficacy.

8. **Sanctions should be subject to monitoring and regular review**

Sanctions must be reviewed on a regular and pre-established basis by the Security Council, and they must be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Secretariat. The monitoring process should employ regular indicators, to assess the humanitarian impact and other aspects of impact. Monitoring reports should be made public.

9. **Sanctions regimes must take full account of "collateral effects"**

Sanctions can have serious negative effects in nations that are neighbors or major trading partners of the target. Sanctions should seek to minimize such effects. When sanctions are put in place, they should provide for measuring collateral effects and allocating compensation, especially compensation to poor and vulnerable groups. Compensation funds must be fully and adequately financed.

10. **Bodies imposing or supervising sanctions must have maximum possible transparency and accountability as well as improved working methods**

The Security Council and its committees must have greater transparency and accountability in the matter of sanctions. This means regularly-scheduled meetings of the sanction committees, public reports on the work of the sanction committees, open debates (not closed consultations) on the occasion of the imposition of the sanctions and the periodic reviews, open reports on the monitoring process, and so forth.
11. UN Secretariat budgeting and staffing on sanctions needs to be strengthened
The budgets and staffing of the Secretariat must be sufficient to carry out the pre-assessments and regular monitoring, provide services for more frequent and regular sanction committee meetings, oversee enforcement, and fulfillment of other tasks not now sufficiently provided for.

12. Improve substantially the means of sanction enforcement
Sanctions are now very inadequately enforced and the UN has virtually no enforcement role. Sanctions must in future be enforced within the most multilateral possible framework. The UN should have sufficient naval and other inspection forces to be able to play a major role in enforcement. Minimally, the UN should have a fully-funded compliance-monitoring capability, free from member-state pressure and able to issue periodic reports that could mention member-states (including Security Council Permanent Members) that are not complying with the sanctions.

13. Unilateral sanctions must be eliminated
While regional bodies as well as the United Nations should be authorized to impose sanctions (if they use an established international code), individual states, sub-national entities or ad hoc coalitions should be forbidden from imposing sanctions. Only sanctions that command broad support at the regional or international level should be tolerated. Unilateral sanctions might themselves be considered a breach of law that might provoke sanctions by the international community!

14. Sanctions that don't hurt the general population succeed better
It has been assumed that sanctions should be designed to hurt the general population of a country, who then are expected to bring pressure to bear on the political leadership to change policy. But this doesn't work with non-democratic regimes, against whom sanctions are normally imposed. Such regimes are not open to such pressure from the public and they typically mobilize even stronger mass support when faced with a foreign challenge.

15. Develop targeted sanctions as the most effective and least harmful option
By contrast with general trade sanctions, targeted sanctions have a narrower focus and seek to minimize negative humanitarian effects and collateral damage while maximizing pressure on leaders. Targeting can aim at many possible items, including weapons trade. But more effort should be devoted to bringing pressure on decision-makers by targeting their travel, their personal assets and the like. Especially promising would be sanctions that freeze personal bank accounts and other assets like real estate.
16. Sanctions should not be considered alone, but as a last step in a broad process of prevention
Security crises and violations of international law typically arise in conditions of poverty and unjust development. Weapons trade and intelligence operations, based in northern countries, often worsen crises as means to gain geostrategic or corporate advantage. Those who aim for greater justice must look beyond sanctions towards preventive measures of a more fundamental and lasting type. The UN's own initiatives for "prevention" can be strengthened as one part of this larger process.