

FACING THE FUTURE: BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO THE UN SYSTEM

The “UN family” suffers from serious shortcomings and a major overhaul has been long overdue. Although there has been an acute lack of media and public participation in this unprecedented reformation the question is can these organisations be revived and will the proposals for reshaping the United Nations and its specialised agencies meet the challenges of the twenty-first century?

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IS THERE A “UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM”?

The idea is not “to bury or to praise” (*The Economist*, October 21, 1995) but to appraise and change the United Nations. On a number of occasions Britain, the USA and others have called for a drastic rethinking of the UN for the next century. The call applies equally to more than a dozen other Specialized Agencies. Over a decade ago, using the expression a “United Nations System” the first attempt was made by the UN and the Specialized Agencies to look for ways of reducing duplication and show that they were still efficient and effective. In reality, the “system” is limited solely to common procedures for administration, personnel, salaries, allowances, and benefits. The intention was good, but it helped only to camouflage the non-existence of a system and lack of inter-agency co-operation in the so-called “UN family.” It is more correct to group these organisations under the heading “Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) than to use the misnomers “UN System” or “UN family.”

For a long time it had been realized that to transform the IGOs into a system was an extremely difficult, if not impossible, task. Each agency had come into existence for different reasons at different times to meet different political, technical and socio-economic needs. Each one evolved independently, guided by its sacrosanct mandate, a charter or convention, into a fossilized structure, generally ending up with an uninspiring programme. Internationally agreed decisions taken after the Second World War to demarcate activities of all these bodies were so general that duplication was unavoidable. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is supposed to co-ordinate the activities and programmes of all IGOs, has neither the means nor the capacity to do so effectively because it does not have authority over the budgets of all IGOs. All endeavours by governments during the last five years to revitalize ECOSOC have failed. The same governments wonder why they are contributing to more than 30 different budgets.

Governments are often unaware of the cut-throat inter-agency competition existing in a number of vital fields. To justify itself in the face of mounting criticism from many quarters, each agency expends considerable resources to defend its own incompetence, interest, and standing as if it were a “government” by itself. The numerous inter-agency co-ordination mechanisms, alive, dormant, or dead, have rarely functioned durably. They have been partly successful in the exchange of information, but have not been effective in achieving concrete results through joint action. Frequent co-ordination meetings have helped to whitewash the glaring defects; sometimes they have deliberately tied up the possible solutions into a formidable Gordian knot. We are faced with “a tangled set of organizations and missions within the UN” and cannot expect “to produce sound organisational decisions” simply on the basis of conventional diplomatic bargaining and a “confusion of meetings that are all too often nothing more than factories for rhetoric about reform”. (*The Economist*, letters, March 1, 1997)

INITIATING CHANGE

Should we disband the IGOs and start all over again? International pacts have traditionally been signed to avoid wars and conflicts. However, when international peace accords failed to accommodate national commercial and political ambitions, the result has usually been bigger wars, invariably culminating in further armistices, peace treaties and agreements. Out of the debris of the First World War arose the League of Nations, which was scuttled by the conflicting interests of the European nations terminating in a wider conflagration: the Second World War in 1939. Fortunately, another peace-keeping mechanism arose like a phoenix from the ashes in the form of the United Nations Organisation, an institution that has succeeded for more than fifty years in restraining political conflicts from turning yet again into global-scale slaughter. During the same period, a number of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) were transformed into IGOs and most of the previously existing IGOs were given a hurried face-lift: old wine in new bottles. Must the warring sword be used to cut the Gordian knot in order to create another group of IGOs, capable of meeting the requirements of the rapidly changing world? Or, has past experience given us the wisdom to proceed?

To untie the knot three tools are needed:

- Reorganisation of IGOs into a “confederation” of sector-umbrellas for specialised functions and common functions;
- Revision of mandates of all IGOs and increasing participation of civil society;
- Curbing the proliferation of meetings.

Tony Blair, prime minister of Great Britain, is relentlessly putting into practice the promises by his party in the Labour Manifesto. One item which he has not yet touched is “Leadership in the international community” and the promise that his government “will use Britain’s permanent seat on the Security Council to press for substantial reform of the United Nations, including ... the protection of human rights and safeguarding the global environment”. The manifesto attaches “much higher priority to combating global poverty and underdevelopment.” The action it proposes to take is

simply to “strengthen and restructure the British aid programme.” This approach is wrong, because it has been well proven that aid does not usually lead to development. The traditional type of aid can continue to serve a very useful purpose in the short term to help people in distress resulting from famine, floods, earthquakes, civil wars, and epidemics. The long-term solution to the development problems of the third-world countries lies in generating income-producing programmes for the poor, leading to the enlargement of a stable middle class, the real motor of development. In this context, the British Government should give first priority to the idea mentioned later in the manifesto: “We will work for greater consistency between the aid, trade, agriculture and economic reform policies of the EU.” If Britain can take the lead in initiating integrated holistic, investment-related programmes, and can “ensure that the developing countries are given a fair deal in international trade,” Tony Blair will have extended his motto of “social justice” and “progress” beyond the United Kingdom and the European Union, and thus become the hero of the Third World.

When Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN, started his policy review, Sir John Weston, Britain’s UN Ambassador, in his speech to the British-American Chamber of Commerce in New York, (July 1997) charted a course whereby the UN should be subjected to the same trends of downsizing and decentralization that have swept through national governments. Old mandates should be slashed, meeting hours halved and outdated bodies dissolved. Organization should become more flexible and less bureaucratic, adjusting the balance between “inter-governmental activity at the centre and operational services delivered at the grass-roots in the field”. If, by the year 2002 some of the “social justice” is to be shared with 200 million people, the two foremost measures that Tony Blair should promote are:

- Empowerment of the poor: enabling them to improve their quality of life themselves;
- Management of globalisation: establishing equitable commercial codes and reducing trade barriers, problems that handicap developing countries in exporting their products.

In order to materialise this dream, Tony Blair will have to face, in addition to the UN, a number of deeply entrenched IGOs which consider themselves as the leaders of international economic and social development.

WHY CHANGE?

For a number of years, IGOs followed the course of righteousness. They have spent the best years of their life trying to maintain peace, assist the less fortunate countries, and promote improved conditions of labour. Above all they have acquired a vast amount of information and a storehouse of invaluable experience which all too often lies unused and wasted. These days are over: now, the entire effort is spent on running the unproductive IGO “machine”. The attachment to this machine is so strong that those representing the governments cannot even see the road to salvation or nirvana. International civil servants have become devotees of self-promotion and owe little to the ideals of the organisations and the good of countries. They have managed to create a philosophical attitude to irregularities, and continue to operate with little regard for integrity and no particular sense of guilt; so the situation continues.

The sumptuous diplomatic parties and reception circuits organised are well known. But more serious is the culture of conferences, meetings, and task groups, which by itself constitutes a vast industry. Delegates get invited to world and regional conferences, spiritless seminars and endless workshops on any conceivable topic on earth. At cocktail parties and dinners one rubs shoulders with journalists, political party workers, bureaucrats, more journalists, middlemen and their wives, editors, itinerant intellectuals, correspondents, diplomats, students, chronic party-goers, and of course counterparts from other IGOs.

IGOs now form a group that has become one of the world's most unprofitable but booming businesses. The system is no longer a meritocracy but an ossified and inflexible bureaucracy manned not by top-notch intellectuals, as is often claimed, but by mediocrities safeguarding their posts remunerated at rates better than those of the best-paid civil services in the world. It is not uncommon for temporary consultants, usually friends of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and his senior staff, do their work. In the 80s, consultants, often unsuccessful professionally and out of pocket, were like court jokers and were paid fat fees by IGOs for preparing bulky reports to say loudly and openly what their employers did not dare say themselves. On frequent occasions a sincere consultant has made a genuine penetrating inquiry into the level of the IGOs' productivity and usefulness; but international bureaucracy has managed to camouflage the facts in glossy brochures.

Staff morale has plummeted in every IGO including the World Bank. The causes are not only thriving "cronyism" and the inability to face the situation of "no war", but also the new accelerating process of globalisation, which is a product of forces not well understood by them. They are out-classed.

Governments themselves must bear considerable blame for demoralizing international civil servants. Delegates bicker, jockey for posts and hinder progress by introducing political dispute in technical and humanitarian issues. For example, governments have used the IGO trust-fund facility to disburse their own aid money to finance their own nationals or to purchase their own goods for projects. The downward slide of the IGOs could well result in their extinction or at best redundancy. Major and rapid changes are indispensable.

The IGOs can be classed into two categories:

- UN and its 17 sector-programmes (including UNDP, UNEP and UNICEF); two convention secretariats (climate and desertification); five regional commissions, five training and research institutions (including a university), eight co-ordination committees; and a number of internal boards and units;
- Specialized and autonomous agencies (including WTO), a total of 19, and a number of sub-programmes.

Most of these units operate almost independently, hence considerable duplication and wastage. For example, UNEP duplicates the programmes of a number of Specialized Agencies and programmes of the UN itself (e.g. WHO; FAO; WMO; Global Environment Facility; Commission for Sustainable Development; Secretariats for Climate Convention, Biodiversity, Desertification, Toxic Wastes, and others). It cannot operate by itself. Five years after the Earth Summit, the spirit of Rio has lapsed and the UN itself has realized that the environmental stakes have crashed. The strongest driving force of governments being commerce and trade, catchwords such as "liberalization" and "globalisation" have taken precedence over "sustainable

development” and “protection of the environment” because the latter do not bring immediate economic rewards. Criticism from many influential quarters, resulting in serious budget cuts and internal conflicts, has paralysed UNEP. In June 1997, Great Britain, the USA and Spain announced the suspension of their contributions. National interest is pushing two European countries to uproot UNEP from Kenya in the hope of reviving it in their own countries. The real victim is the environment itself. Such power games are still being tolerated because governments do not have any overall co-ordinated control over IGOs as a group.

UNICEF competes with WHO and FAO in rural water supply and child health. Climate Convention overlaps with the activities of WMO and UNEP. UN Desertification is lost among programmes of FAO, UNEP, WMO, HABITAT and UNESCO. Co-ordination is equally unsatisfactory between WTO and a multitude of other programmes for trade and commerce, e.g. UNCTAD and ITC. The five regional Economic Commissions have become toothless and meaningless even in the regional context.

REVIVE THE MARSHALL PLAN SPIRIT

After the war, while the great powers were preoccupied with reconstructing their respective countries and implementing the Marshall Plan in Europe, the IGOs began to play a useful role in what we now call the third-world countries and became agents for the rich countries providing technical assistance. Being of a highly fragmented nature, this aid did not necessarily lead to the development of productive forces in the same way as the comprehensive all-compassing Marshall Plan package did for Europe. In this package, America channelled, between 1948 and 1952, more than one percent of its output (amounting to \$13 billion, equivalent to \$88 billion today), to permit the resurrection of its cultural and ethnic homeland (16 European countries).

The Marshall Plan was conceived and run on robust moral principles. George Marshall worked hard to convince the American people that the Plan was “not a give-away program. Countries that wanted financial support had to come with feasible plans for economic recovery. The aid had a fixed time and a fixed cost ceiling; it would be administered by an American businessman, not a bureaucrat, and there was plenty of accountability. Without a thriving Europe, who would we buy from and sell to? Without parliamentary democracy on the Continent, what chance was there for continued peace? Twice in 50 years, America had gone to war to keep Europe free of *single-power domination* (italics added), clear proof of how much Europe mattered to America He noted that modern communications ... had made the difference between rich and poor nations more glaringly visible than in the past, a recipe for future trouble unless something could be done about the disparity.” (*The Smithsonian*, August 1997: *George C. Marshall, the last great American*, by Lance Morrow).

Can all parties in the present-day aid programmes meet the far-seeing criteria of the Marshall Plan? Have Marshall’s ideals, a certain kind of American virtue, been totally forgotten? How much do third-world countries matter to the USA or Europe? Are we sliding towards single-power domination? Are technical and humanitarian programmes run by businessmen or bureaucrats? IGOs, donors, and receiving countries give only lip service to Marshall’s remarkable ideals. The IGO bureaucrats have succeeded in keeping the “untrustworthy businessman” at arm’s length. Hence the need to change and to revive the vision and the spirit in which the UN was

founded. Whatever the political motives of the Marshall Plan, its ideals remain valid for the challenges of the new century.

It is difficult to counter the entrenched interests of various groups and individuals within and outside the IGOs. Evidently, the IGOs have lost their way of righteousness or *dharma*, which is the source of success and happiness, the essence of the world, what life is all about, the holding together the natural order. Righteousness, not conflict, must be the principle underlying the new “UN System”, so that it is durable and flexibly strong enough to mitigate the woes of the world.

IGO'S LOSE THEIR GLITTER

The fifties saw the launching of benevolent aid for development of the third-world countries. IGOs expanded mainly because of this aid. But after three decades of glamorous aid programmes, IGOs began to lose their glitter. Usefulness of their role as agencies was short-lived. Many reports by the UN itself and others have shown that the manner in which external aid was dispensed left a lot to be desired and often generated negative results, especially in African countries, which became incurably infected with “dependency syndrome”. Completion of the Marshall Plan rejuvenated the productive forces of Europe and transformed it into a formidable export and consumer market, whereas technical aid had the inverse end-impact on many developing countries. This trend was confirmed in a recent UNCTAD report (September 1997), which reveals that the average *per capita* GNP of the richest countries (representing 20% of the world population) has doubled from 30 times in 1965 to more than 60 times that of the poorest aid-receiving countries (also 20% of the world population). Has the UN failed in its role of promoting social and economic equalities? Do the third-world leaders realize that the well being and development of their countries largely depend only on their own people and institutions?

SMALL IS NOT ALWAYS BEAUTIFUL

Once elected, a chief executive officer usually replaces his laudable sentiments for global well-being, peace, co-operation and development with anxiety for self-preservation and re-election. He offers “lollypops” of aid and tempting perks to the permanent representatives of the countries with his organization, in order to seek their support. The productive energy of his staff is unashamedly diverted away from the programme approved by the governments to his personal election campaign. In 1994, Boutros Boutros Ghali, launched “the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa” to catch the African vote for his re-election. Thousands of man-days were spent by all IGOs in the preparation of this initiative when it was known that the existing Africa Development Decade was sliding fast towards failure. Mr Ghali claimed that he could raise \$25 billion at a time when the donor countries had already lost faith in the IGOs as efficient disbursers of aid. Another flash in the pan

The quarrelling of IGOs in fields such as water resources is no less acrimonious than that of India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue since 1947. One cannot imagine how much damage they might have done in generating disruption in aid-driven development in the third-world countries. Catty, cutthroat yet spineless

senior managers are unable to make constructive decisions. They measure their worth by the number of meetings and missions they have scheduled for themselves. Continuing with the example of the water sector, IGOs have been able to defend their failures in aid projects with the argument that there was lack of co-ordination among numerous national institutions. The fact is that each country has one water resources development programme drawing from one budget. This sector is co-ordinated far better at the national level than it is among over 20 IGOs, each claiming leadership. IGOs have often undermined co-ordination safeguarding their own interests. For example, two different IGOs executed two separate hydrological projects in the same national water unit in Bangladesh. Both projects were UNDP-funded. It is difficult to believe that the experts of the executing agencies of the two projects were not on talking terms.

Heads of small IGOs exert considerable power concentrated in their field of speciality, which is often not of major importance within the national socio-economic programme. The cutting of the aid funds has deflated their pride to such an extent that they have become hypersensitive to any criticism, self-protective, and very nervous indeed of losing their small kingdoms. In this situation, being small is not beautiful but potentially dangerous and could mislead prioritising process.

IGOs have two main fears:

- Their decreased importance and loss of socio-economic impact on the national development activities of their specialized services and of the associated funding, both of which could be provided through alternative channels;
- Their future in the process of restructuring of the UN.

As an example, millions of dollars were channelled through an IGO over the last forty years to help African weather services, yet African countries still lack the capacity to manufacture a simple thermometer to equip the weather stations. Any initiatives by countries have been systematically strangled. Experience in the rest of the world has shown that development of Africa and of its weather services will start when an African four-dollar thermometer measures temperatures in Africa and elsewhere. Propose reformation on these lines to a CEO, and he squirms in his chair and screws up his face as if he's swallowed a bad oyster. His staff is caught between the oath to the organisation and loyalty to the CEO. Naturally the fear of losing one's post takes priority over duty to member states and the needs of the people of the world.

INCREASED INVESTMENT

In the G7 meeting in Denver, USA (1997), France had insisted on the continuation of aid in the traditional way. Does she want to maintain Africa's dependency syndrome? All of the other big powers had endorsed President Clinton's contention that increased investment was the best form of aid. Aid was useful in the early years, when it filled small gaps in countries' budgets; but over the last decade it has come to represent a large proportion of these budgets, which have suffered every time external support has been delayed or discontinued. The fact is that the institutionalisation of aid, especially in the IGOs and also within the ministries of External Affairs of donor countries (e.g. USAID, ODA, CIDA, and NORAD), is not beneficial in the long term. On the other hand, many would be indignant if the aid agencies were dismantled. A number of the

latter treat aid like a private business: they fund their own pet projects, often ignoring the priorities of the receiving countries. According to the Organization for Economic co-operation and Development (OECD), development aid represents only 0.27 % of the GNP of the richest countries. Donors are tired and have lost faith in the traditional approach. In recent years there has been a marked increase in the flux of both governmental and private funds towards charitable organizations.

The time has come to visualize the development of the third-world countries in the same way as that of countries in Eastern Europe. It is not through the “UN-type” aid programmes that the rich countries are helping Eastern Europe to restructure and develop, but through direct investments and collaborative programmes. Volkswagen has taken over Skoda in the Czech Republic, regenerating the productive power of the country, utilizing the locally available skills, and creating employment. On the other hand, the UN, UNDP, and most of the Specialized Agencies are not permitted to adopt such a course of action. Equipped with 50-year-old structures, they are unable to keep pace with the realities: rapid globalisation of political conflicts, commercial interests, technological advances, and human resources. More important is the doubling, since 1989, of the flux of private capital towards developing countries, carrying with it more tangible economic growth. Although 80 per cent of these funds go to 12 rapidly emerging economies, this illustrates the point that the role of traditional aid has become insignificant. Figures for sub-Saharan Africa, which continue to receive massive aid funding in proportion to their national income or internal investment, indicate a possible negative impact of aid. Per capita income, which represented 60 per cent in 1965, has plummeted to 35 per cent today. Does this imply failure, particularly of the IGOs, the principal agents of aid implementation?

Hopefully, President Clinton will resurrect Marshall’s criteria for giving aid and has a genuine desire to help third-world countries to break the dependency syndrome. If so, fragmentary aid must be replaced by long-term investment, thus deliberately encouraging entrepreneurship and mobilisation of productive technological forces and industrial resources, and advancement of local expertise, the true type of capacity- building.

The conventional type of aid might be replaced by philanthropic aid from wealthy individuals like Ted Turner and Bill Gates. Such donors are expected in America alone to increase funds from 10 per cent of their income to more than 25 per cent. A number of charities of this kind are now managed by big financial institutions such as Merrill Lynch, which has taken in \$2.2 billion in charitable assets in two years. By specifying how his donation of \$100 million annually to the UN should be spent, Ted Turner has given a clear indication that he is not prepared to spend on administration. Some moneyed individuals have set up their own aid programmes. It is difficult to imagine what will happen to the IGOs when these philanthropists start to apply the energy, tactics and network skills they honed in business to aid coupled with investment in the third world. The goal of all international institutions set up in the recent past is linked to economic growth and profit. Does this mean that IMF, the World Bank, European Union, WTO, NAFTA and others are promoting plundering of the planet and its people for the benefit of corporations? Beware: in the name of “philanthropy”, individuals and corporate bodies could be dangerous. The time has come to reconcile the multitude sources of funds with their efficacy. This is where the IGOs must play their primordial role in safeguarding the planet in a cost-effective manner, which can be achieved only through an holistic approach and integration of the activities of IGOs into a “United Nations System”.

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

For the time being the USA is the unrivalled world power. No super-power conflict is anticipated in the foreseeable future. The world trusts that wisdom will prevail; and the heads of governments must find durable political solutions as regards the reconstitution or restructuring of the UN itself without resorting to or even contemplating seeking solutions through another global war. The Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, has already drawn up a strategy to reform that organization. He has asked Maurice Strong of Canada to develop specific proposals. Are we falling into the 1948 trap – that of fixing the political component (UN-New York) and assuming that the rest will automatically fall in line? Are governments going to let the other IGOs continue unchanged when the need to reform them is equally important for economic and social development, international co-operation and inter-sector co-ordination? A system that is alive and functioning tends to be complex, and complexity is a factor of stability. Such a system functions because it is a whole and not “made of independent parts.” Each single IGO has to relate to all others and has no meaning in isolation.

The functioning and management of these IGOs is highly political. Annan is very right in stating that a ministerial-level commission should revise the mandates of all IGOs. For this, he and the Commission need a team of competent management experts as well as the support of the public in general and of the media in particular. Surely NGOs, numerous other institutions, media, and individuals have constructive ideas for reforms. People have the right to be informed regarding their governments’ activities in each of the IGOs. This is an opportunity to become transparent. Open the debate to the people of the world.

The Ministerial Commission should therefore restructure the IGOs with the aim of creating a real UN System, perhaps complex and with many parts but bound by friendship, compassion and collaboration instead of hostility, intolerance and rivalry.

Transformation of society is not only rapid but highly non-linear. Some experts identify it in terms of a “collapse” of industrial civilization, which amounts to a negation of society. Positive thinkers call it a “rebirth of society”. The role of a new UN System would be to reinforce society and assume greater responsibility in securing social justice in terms of the basic needs of life: water, food, clothing, shelter, education, etc.

In the process of globalisation, the delimitation between an individual state and the world has become less sharply defined; at the same time, there is clear intimation of oneness or synchronicity. The term of “*unus mundus*” denotes a state in which all forces coexist and individual nations and the world are one. To realize this level of awareness should be the aim of reforming all IGOs. Can we this time create a UN System with a soul, a “world-soul,” possibly heralding a “world government”, one step further than an intergovernmental forum? Yet evolution of old institutions does not occur in leaps; it is through shocks and crises that they develop. The end of the cold war has indeed caused a significant wave of disequilibrium, but one not powerful enough to alert the public. Nor has globalisation caused much concern. But people do sense a strong fear of *single-power domination* in a new disguise. Can this fear become the driving force for reformation?

A SPREADSHEET FOR RESTRUCTURING

Let us assume that the UN secretary-general is the political head of the new UN System, a status similar to that of a Prime Minister in a country. Unlike the prime minister, the secretary-general does not have any control over policy, budget, staff and programmes of the “ministries” responsible for health (WHO), food (FAO), weather (WMO), labour (ILO), communications (ITU), trade (WTO), funding (IMF), and so on. Within UN he has several parallel units, which are a serious source of duplication of programmes of other IGOs. It is not proposed that the “world government” should have a structure similar to that of a national government. But the comparison does expose the vital missing link of political commitment and goodwill to support all sector (ministry) programmes of other IGOs.

The first step of the ministerial commission in transforming the IGOs into a new UN system is to use a spreadsheet to scrutinize and understand the political basis, mandates, structure, programmes, and activities of the IGOs and point out inconsistencies and duplication at the very source. Strategic planning must be applied, just as in companies, in order to eliminate the frequently large gap between what the IGOs (governments) set as programmes and policies and the actual workings of the organisations. The twofold objective of the exercise should be:

- Reformulation of responsibilities/mandates, which must correspond to a suitably empowered ministry/department/institution at the national level. It should be carefully examined whether some of these responsibilities might be best carried out by NGOs, particularly activities pertaining to research, information exchange, scientific evaluations, culture, technology transfer, public education and participation, etc.;
- Restructuring (sorting, grading, merging, streamlining, closing) the IGOs and their empowerment: the level must be commensurate with the level of government representation, or the status of the activity in the national structure. For example, an IGO, in which the national representation is at the level of a department/institute, should not have its governing bodies and the CEO at the same level as those of an IGO, in which representation is at ministerial level.

The key words should be slimming, effectiveness, and a high level of programme co-ordination. As a general guideline, the United Nations (General Assembly) with a CEO (secretary-general) should concern itself with the overall international political issues and policy pertaining to peace and security. It should shift its priorities towards humanitarian interventions dealing with human rights, drug trafficking, disarmament, terrorism, organized crime, economic and social issues arising from peace-keeping and peace-building activities, such as post-conflict relief. It should also monitor abnormal economic inequalities, develop policies, and promote international political goodwill. It must transfer its sector development initiatives and projects to relevant Specialised Agencies. The UN itself, UNDP and even the World Bank have gone beyond their fields of competence in undertaking technical and scientific activities duplicating the programmes of SAs. For example, in recent years, the World Bank, normally a funding agency, obtained base funds from UNDP and executed a multi-million “Sub-Saharan Africa Hydrological Assessment” project

which has produced attractive country reports of varying quality, good only for decorating a bookshelf. The Operational Services Unit of UN executes development projects in all sectors by contracting consultants and companies whose work it cannot supervise competently. These organizations are committing a strategic sin of undertaking tasks that the private sector could easily do itself. Perhaps the toughest nut to crack is the vested interests of the well-entrenched IGOs themselves. Only political goodwill, determination, and farsightedness of governments can ensure that the IGOs do not sidestep the new proposals. What the CEO of UN will need is a “ministerial” cabinet, possibly composed of the CEOs of all IGOs, thus ensuring effective inter-sector co-ordination within the UN System at least at the same level as that within national governments. Such an arrangement should strengthen UN’s paramount role of seeking political and financial support for initiatives and projects of Specialized Agencies.

LIBERALISE IGO’S

Another issue that will require special attention of the Ministerial Commission is curbing the increasingly “centralized” or “socialistic” management of IGOs. States (governments) as members subscribe funds, influence appointment of secretariat staff, and control implementation of programmes. Participation of non-governmental bodies and public is not tolerated. The public continues to be fed with propaganda that the UN and its associates can do no wrong. The bubble of false pride must be exploded. The IGOs must not be allowed to continue duping conferences and meetings, for example, with claims that their programmes have led to major improvement of the water supply and sanitation in the third-world countries when it is well known that as much as 95 per cent of development was due to national effort. One way of rectifying this shortcoming is to make provision for participation of other partners e.g. representatives of civil society, non-governmental organisations, private sector, trade unions, academics.

In a number of rich countries the private sector has been very dynamic. It has successfully lobbied the respective government and obtained in the form of contracts a large slice of the country’s (and other) contributions to UNDP, the World Bank, or funds such as the Global Environment Facility. Japan and now the European Union and its member states implement their aid programmes largely through their own private sector and are very reluctant to channel their funds through the IGOs.

Bilateral input to third-world countries is expected to expand further. It is difficult to see why the IGOs should not interact closely with the private sector, and steer investment and aid to benefit the receiver. If paternalistic and anachronistic IGOs cannot face the liberalisation process, they must undergo drastic surgery and must be trimmed down to basic operations, such as those requiring only formal governmental endorsements.

NEW UN SYSTEM

Solutions to complex problems usually lie in simplicity. The new UN System could well be composed of sector-umbrella bodies (ministries) covering eight areas of

responsibility. A proposed regrouping of IGOs and UN programmes follows, indicating specific functions and some selected structural changes. (The present structure and level of national representation are given within square brackets).

I POLITICAL AND LEGAL

Peace, security and economic and social justice fall under the UN [UN General Assembly, Ministry (Foreign)]. The main specific functions are:

- Peace and security [Security Council; Ministry (Foreign)];
- Disarmament [UNDC, Commission; Ministry (Foreign)];
- Human rights [UNHCHR, Commission; Ministry (Foreign)];
- Rehabilitation and refugees [UNHCR, Executive Committee; various];
- Law [ICJ, Court/Tribunal; various].

Reforming of this sector is currently being undertaken.

II TRADE, INDUSTRY AND FUNDING

(a) Economic development, which falls largely within the ambit of WTO [Ministerial Conference; Ministry (Trade)]. Related functions are:

- Equitable pricing and commerce [WTO, Committees; various];
- Industrial development [UNIDO, General Conference; Ministry (Industry)];
- Equitable trade development [UNCTAD and UNCTC, Intergovernmental Meetings; Ministry (trade)];
- Implementation of agreements and legal instruments [WTO, Committees; WIPO, General Assembly; various].

In order to remove duplication and improve co-ordination, UNIDO should become a Committee, and UNCTAD, UNCTC and WIPO should be transformed into Commissions, all within WTO.

(b) Funding, which is the principal function of IMF [Board of Governors; Ministry (Finance)]. IMF also tries to maintain international financial balance. The others are:

- Project funding [IBRD (World Bank), Board of Governors; Ministry (Finance)];
- Technical assistance [UNDP and UNOPS, Executive Board of ECOSOC; Ministry (Planning)];
- Insurance [MIGA (World Bank Group); various].

In the face of new economic developments and international commercial relationships, technical assistance through UNDP and UNOPS has become relatively less important in the global perspective. This function should be transferred to the UN Regional Commissions.

III FOOD AND FORESTRY

Food production and protection of forests should remain the responsibility of FAO [General Conference, Ministry (Agriculture)]. Two other separate functions are:

- Funding [IFAD, Governing Council; Ministry (Agriculture)];
- Emergency food [WFP, Intergovernmental Committee of ECOSOC; Ministry (Agriculture)].

It is proposed that IFAD and WFP should be transformed into Committees of FAO.

IV EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE

Promotion of education, research, and safeguarding cultural heritage should remain the main function of UNESCO [General Conference; Ministry (Education)]. In addition, the UN has three other programmes:

- University education [UNU, UN Board of Trustees; various];
- Training [UNITAR];
- Research [UNICRI].

It is proposed that these three functions should be amalgamated and placed under a UNESCO Board.

V HEALTH

Promotion of health services and welfare should remain with WHO [WH Assembly; Ministry (Health)].

UNAIDS [UN Committee, Health Department] should be transferred to WHO.

VI SOCIAL WELL-BEING, EMPLOYMENT

Promotion of social justice and equity is at present split among a number of IGOs as follows:

- Labour/employer [ILO, Conference; Ministry (Labour)];
- Children [UNICEF, Executive Board; Ministry (Planning/Health)];
- Women [UNIFEM; various],
- Population [UNFPA, Executive Board of ECOSOC; various];
- Drug control [UNDCP; various];
- Research [UNRISD; various];
- Habitat [UNHABITAT; Ministry (Local)];
- Migration [IOM, Council; various].

All these functions should be placed under ILO.

VII NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

This very broad sector covers sustainable development and the protection of the environment. Its functions are distributed as follows:

- Environment [UNEP, Governing Council; various];
- Sustainable development [UNCSD, Commission; various];
- Meteorology [WMO, WM Congress; Department/Service];
- Assessment and development of water resources-supply, sharing and protection [24 agencies and programmes; various];
- Power production [IAEA, General Conference; Department/Service];
- Implementation of agreements and legal instruments: climate [UNFCCC]; desertification [UNCCD]; biodiversity, etc.

This sector has the greatest duplication, the least co-ordinated sub-sector being that of water resources. Consequently, it is here that the need for restructuring is most obvious.

It is proposed that UNEP and UNCSD should be merged into one organization: "Environment and Sustainable Development Organization (ESDO)". In order to cover the current functions this body should be composed of three commissions dealing with: meteorology, water (new), and energy. In addition, ESDO committees should be responsible for: climate, desertification, biodiversity, etc. (Other similar commissions and committees could be set up if required.)

VII TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Co-ordination and promotion functions are distributed as follows:

- Telecommunications [ITU, Plenipotentiary Conference; various];
- Post [UPU, UP Congress; Department/Service];
- Aviation [ICAO, Assembly; Ministry];
- Maritime affairs [IMO, Assembly; Department/Service].

Each sector-umbrella body (ministry) would cover relevant aspects of:

- *Science, technology, research, technology transfer, environmental implications, training and information/data base;*
- *International co-operative functions;*

- *Legal aspects of implementing and monitoring international accords and agreements;*
- *Investment/financing and fair trade (world-wide social justice and equity in the quality of life).*

One of the main outcomes of this exercise would be the saving of funds required for productive activities, e.g. those for helping children, the poor, refugees, and for protecting the environment. It is of interest to note that thirteen IGOs, excluding the World Bank, have over the last ten years spent US \$2 700 million annually. Of this about 80 per cent covers staff and secretariat costs and a large part of the remainder goes towards the cost of meetings, conferences, and travel.

The new UN System could well consist of eight sector-umbrella bodies (ministries). The intention of this idea is to minimise failures in co-ordination by interlinking programmes both within and among sectors, as development programmes usually cut across IGO mandates and sectors. The spreadsheet evaluation should enable the Ministerial Commission to place the existing IGOs under the appropriate sector-umbrella at the level that each one deserves. However, serious hurdles will surely be encountered in fixing the accompanied political component. Many compromises will be necessary, especially at the national level. The idea of sector-umbrellas cannot be implemented unless political divergences are resolved. This is probably the only way of eliminating policy contradictions frequently introduced by national delegations representing different national institutions.

The setting up of sector-umbrellas should permit governments to have a clear overall view of the functions of the IGOs and enable them to apportion their total country-contribution to the UN System in an equitable manner according to their national economic, social and environmental priorities. IGOs should be able to execute their redefined responsibilities more liberally, co-operatively, and with more precise targets, while retaining their budgetary and programming independence. Opening the door to inter-supporting programmes under each sector-umbrella should create the missing tenuous links between aid, trade and investment, revitalising the catalytic role of IGOs in multilateral aid for well-targeted projects.

If governments demonstrate their goodwill, it should be possible to establish a new UN System embracing Marshall's approach to economic aid, Blair's bid for social justice and Clinton's concern for global security. Through the reformed UN, they would be able to fulfil the aspirations of their people, rich and poor, without recourse to war.
