

Notes for an address to the:

**World Federalist Movement-Canada
Conference 2004
Prospects for Reform of the United Nations**

**Experts Seminar:
“United Nations Reform to Address the Responsibility to Protect”**

**“How might the High-level Panel on UN Reform address
non-military (economic and social) threats
to peace and security?”**

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*McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec
May 7, 2004*

Introduction

I would like to engage with you regarding three questions:

1. is there any appetite, any opportunity for reform?
2. what role might the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel play in issues of reform which inter-related security and socio-economic dimensions
3. what next – including does the G-20 compute?

My answers in all three cases are rather tentative and open-ended.¹

Appetite for reform?

Since the unseemly demise of the Commission on Global Governance in 1995 the issue of global governance reform has been rather storm-stayed.

The current atmosphere – multilateralism under threat – may encourage the raising of significant questions but in a defensive and hostile climate.

There is some sense among those that would like to encourage positive reform which is similar to that among a number of women's organizations regarding the prospect of a Beijing +10 event in 2005, a sense that it is better not to review existing commitments for fear they might be rolled back.

So, the immediate answer to my question is “no!”

But, somewhere “below the radar” there is considerable ferment about reform.

- The Helsinki Process: initiated by the Presidents of Finland and of Tanzania is attempting to encourage a North-South. Dialogue about reform in the way in which earlier East-West Efforts led to the CSCE in Europe and contributed to the end of the cold war. This enterprise includes Human Security, the Global Economic Agenda and Global Problem Solving in its considerations, and involves academics, civil society organizations as well as official participants.²
- UBUNTU – which, despite its Swahili name, is a project based on Catalonia – is a network of civil society organizations and networks seeking a deep reform of global institutions. Begun by former UNESCO head Federico Mayor, it has a greater emphasis on socio-economic and cultural questions and is a non-governmental not a governmental initiative. It will sponsor a significant conference on global governance in Barcelona in late September, 2004.³
- A number of international NGOs following the UN Financing for Development process launched a paper on the reform of global governance at

¹ Deep background for this address can be found in Foster, John W. and Anand, Anita, eds. (1999) *Whose World Is It Anyway? Civil Society, the United Nations and the Multilateral Future*. Ottawa, UNAC, and Martens, Jens (2003) *The Future of Multilateralism after Monterrey and Johannesburg*, Berlin, FES.

² See www.helsinki.fi/

³ See www.ubuntu.upc.es for further information. We might also mention a parallel effort under taken by the “Club of Athens: Global Governance Group” initiated in Montreal by former Amb. Kimon Valaskakis. www.paricenter.com

the High-Level Session of the General Assembly in October, 2003. This initiative, *A political agenda for the Reform of Global Governance*, addresses the socio-economic dimensions and includes the WTO, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the United Nations in its recommendations.⁴

- The Global Governance 2005 Conference planned for May, 2005 up the hill at McGill University. This civil society event organized by the Forum International de Montreal will build on the very successful GO2 conference held in Montreal which brought together more than 300 civil society representatives from around the world to address reform of global governance.⁵
- The ongoing and diverse debates about global reform occurring in the annual and the regional meetings of the World Social Forum (WSF) in Mumbai (2004) and Porto Alegre (2001, 2002, 2003 and projected 2005).⁶

To this we might add the considerable investment of diplomatic and political energy being placed by the Martin government in the proposal for a G-20.

Of course the continued work of the World Federalists on issues of global governance reform, must be included.

Thus, there is considerable activity and perhaps more openings than ever for discussion, debate the development of proposals and advocacy about reform of international institutions.

More directly relevant to the considerations of this Conference is the civil society response to the Secretary-General's call for a Conference on Civil Society and the Prevention of Armed Conflict in summer, 2005. This process, organized by teams in New York and Utrecht includes more than a dozen regional preparatory conferences. There is a clear link between this work and the emphasis which has emerged from our discussions at this Conference on "prevention, prevention, prevention."

The Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change

In May, 2003 the Secretary-General announced the appointment of a 16-member group of eminent persons to examine international threats, analyze future challenges and recommend changes necessary to ensure effective joint action. The panel is not to formulate policies on specific issues or situations, but it is asked to do a "thorough assessment of existing approaches, instruments and mechanisms, including the principal organs of the United Nations. The panel is chaired by former Thailand Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, includes such familiar names as Gro Harlem Brundtland, Gareth Evans (a direct link with the Responsibility to Protect), Enrique Iglesias, Yevgeny Primokov and Brent Scowcroft.⁷

⁴ Adaba, Gemma; Caliarì, Aldo; Foster, John; Hanfstaengl, Eva; and Schroeder, Frank, (2003), *A political agenda for the Reform of Global Governance*.

⁵ See www.fimcivilsociety.org

⁶ see, for instance, www.wsfindia.org

⁷ see www.un-globalsecurity.org/

There has been some debate over whether the panel would consider so-called “soft” security issues, the broader human security agenda. There are those who think it might be better if they didn’t, raising a number of concerns:

- The panel has very limited time and must make a concise report, would exploration of the broader canvas mean that it has little of significance to say on anything.
- Apart from an initial “mail box” approach, the panel lacked a strategy for engaging civil society organizations. Recent initiatives by the Non-Governmental Liaison Service of the UN, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Stanley Foundation, among others, have gone some way to correct this.
- The panel has been staffed largely by hard-security academics.
- The panel may feel that it has to bow too deeply to the need to be “heard” in Washington.

The research director of the panel has indicated that they will not use hard and soft security language, but ensure that everyone’s collective security threats are addressed. The panel has just completed a meeting in Addis Ababa and it appears that, in fact, they will explore a broad agenda. The panel has six “baskets” of issues, including internal violence, civil war, human rights abuses, genocide, etc.; inter-state conflict, pre-emptive use of force; *economic and social issues focusing on poverty, infectious diseases and environmental degradation*; weapons of mass destruction; terrorism; organized crime. It will consider institutional reform issues not in a general way, but as they emerge from particular issues or challenges. The evaluation of the various mechanisms available will be done on a “public health” basis, in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, equity and ethics.

The panel is soliciting written inputs and a number of short and readable papers can be found on the relevant website. Papers can be submitted, and a number of the studies shared at this Conference would be relevant contributions.

In one of those papers, a veteran and well-respect UN officer, Richard Jolly, suggests that there are criteria by which the success or failure of such panels and their recommendations may be ensured:

“Critically important for positive results are at least four conditions: 1) to ensure that in each area one or two UN agencies have main responsibilities, clearly defined, for follow up in the key areas of action, with the leadership and resources required and strong support from their Boards for the necessary action 2) that the focus is put on country level action with all parties being clear about this 3) that donor countries provide sustained support on a sufficient scale 4) that monitoring is public and transparent.”⁸

Thus, the panel will venture in the broader terrain of human security, and it may be up to the influences of people like those at this Conference as to the extent to which it emerges with relevant and effective ways forward.

⁸ Jolly, Richard “UN Reform and Human Security – The Need for Broad Perspectives” found at www.un-globalsecurity.org/

Reform dealing with economic and social dimensions

[Let me interject here a brief comment reflecting on the issue of state sovereignty, the responsibility to protect and related matters. It is easy to understand why the governments of developing and vulnerable countries might react strongly to limitations of sovereignty related to the responsibility to protect. After all, that sovereignty is ruptured regularly as the Bretton Woods Institutions exercise significant influence over national priorities, budgetary expenditures and planning, and national trade and investment policies are reviewed by the WTO with a view to coherence with the agreements it administers. Why not resist yet a further intrusion on what's left of national autonomy?

But viewed from another angle, these intrusions can be argued to be part of the problems leading to failed or instable states, so much a pre-occupation in the debate over the responsibility to protect. Small governments, privatization, reduced public sector investment have all been objectives of Bretton Woods policy prescriptions for governments, reducing their ability to assure services and reduce internal inequities among their populations, both seeding and reducing the ability to deal effectively with conflict.]

As mentioned earlier, I believe that there is a need for a comprehensive issue-driven high level global conversation, and that there is, thus, some will to develop a new form.

The G-20, proposed by Prime Minister Martin, involves the meeting of an invited group of 20 national leaders, free of institutional limits and the assumptions governing debates in such forums as the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. The outlines of the proposal can be found in the Prime Minister's speech at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington on April 29.⁹ Getting the "boys" together behind closed doors could contribute significantly to solving the world's problems. It's the sort of approach that would appeal to business leaders at the World Economic Forum, or to our own Tom D'Aquino, provided they were among the invited.

The proposal can be viewed as a recognition of the increasingly questioned legitimacy of the G-8 Summits, as well as the road blocks to their agenda which have emerged from the Southern G-3, and those erected by what we might call the Southern G20 + or -, at the Cancun WTO Ministerial, and, in part, at the Miami FTAA Ministerial.

The proposal requires scrutiny, and, I would argue, critique and either radical amendment or rejection.

This is a matter we could debate extensively, but let me suggest two or three concerns:

- The proposal is for yet another international body outside the UN, to whom is it accountable?

⁹ Address by Prime Minister Paul Martin on the occasion of his visit to Washington, D.C. found at <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news.asp?id=192>

- The proposal is for a coalition of the invited. Who decides who is on the guest list? What of smaller and weaker or less-developed states?
- The forum would exist outside the normative framework of the UN whether of human rights, peace and security, environment, labour or gender.
- The forum lacks assurance of transparency and multi-stakeholder participation already embodied in a number of UN forums.

It would seem that as Canadians we have some “responsibility to protect” the world from this proposal if it is so flawed?

However,

The G-20 responds to a need, to identifiable needs. A number of the initiatives listed above also wrestle with how to address these needs.

If social, economic, environmental and “development” factors are intimately connected with conflict prevention, reduction and recover, we need to pursue the quest.

Some of the evident flaws in the G-20 proposal would be reduced were it to be merged with a proposal put forward for the reform and strengthening of the UN General Assembly. This proposal – the G-29 initiative, making use of the existing General Committee of the General Assembly – would combine several elements, the permanent members of the Security Council, members elected annually by the regional groups, the chairs of the Assembly’s six main committees, its president and the Secretary General. This body could meet in an annual heads of government summit debating and defining a global agenda.¹⁰ It could have the effect, essentially, of bringing the G-8 into relationship with the UN, and provide a legitimacy that the current G-20 proposal lacks.

There is a further proposal that addresses the specific need for a comprehensive debate on macro-economic policy and its social and environmental implications. In its most developed form it is the proposal for an Economic, Social and Environmental Security Council which might replace the ECOSOC.¹¹

More immediately the proposal would be to strengthen a new forum that emerged from the process of the 2002 Monterrey UN Conference on Financing for Development (FFD). The forum is the annual high-level meeting between the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton Woods Institutions, UNCTAD and the WTO. This meeting was held April 26 at the UN and deals with broad development financing issues, including debt, levels of aid, trade and investment. It also raises a number of governance and governance reform issues.

This modest initiative has a number of positive dimensions:

- Representatives of all regions and countries at all levels of development are engaged.
- The major institutional actors – the UN, the Bank, the Fund, UNCTAD, various UN agencies, and the WTO – are involved.

¹⁰ The proposal was developed by Inge Kaul, of the UNDP Office of Development Studies. See Kaul, Inge et al. (Eds.) (2003) *Providing Global Public Goods. Managing Globalization*. New York. Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Adaba, Gemma et al. p. 13, and Martens, Jens. p. 32

- It is a multi-stakeholder process, involving governments, agencies, business association and civil society representatives.
- It has a comprehensive agenda
- Its process is relatively participatory, including hearings in which detailed civil society and private sector proposals can be launched, roundtables as well as general sessions.

Of course this initiative still has a long way to go. It remains brief (one-day), comes after rather than before Bank/Fund meetings and the WTO is only marginally present. Further the process has yet to effectively engaged with the normative standards developed through the UN – environmental, labour, human rights and gender.

Nevertheless the initiative has already demonstrated potential and should be pursued, deepened and made more thorough.

In Conclusion

2005 promises to be a year of opportunities. The General Assembly has just decide to hold a high-level review of the Millennium Declaration (including the Millennium Development Goals) at the inception of its 2005 session. This event, and the preparation for it, offer opportunities to “connect the dots” between security and economic, social and environmental dimensions. Civil society initiatives like GO5 here in Montreal and the Civil Society and Prevention of Armed Conflict Conference at the UN offer opportunities to refine proposals and build coalitions for advocacy.