

UN Reform

Restructuring for global governance

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On July 14, Kofi Annan released Maurice Strong's initial plan to begin reforming (read: restructuring) the United Nations. The 95-page document, entitled *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*, is a step-by-step program to implement many of the recommendations advanced by the UN-funded Commission on Global Governance in its 1995 report entitled *Our Global Neighborhood*. The reform plan comes as no surprise. Maurice Strong was a member of the Commission on Global Governance and a lead author of its report. He was the first appointment of Kofi Annan, just days after Annan's selection as UN Secretary-General. As Executive Coordinator for Reform, Strong was hired specifically to restructure the sprawling UN system into the mechanism for global governance described in *Our Global Neighborhood*.

The reform plan was welcomed in Washington as evidence that the new Secretary-General was serious about reducing the bloated world-wide bureaucracy. A promise to eliminate 1000 staff positions and reduce overhead costs from 38 percent to 25 percent were the plan's key features heralded in the media. Little, if any, attention was focused on the effect of the reform plan on the structure of the institution. The report itself says: "Reform is not intrinsically an exercise in cutting costs or reducing staff. It is an exercise to assure the Organizations' relevance in a changing world..."¹

Assuring "relevance" may be the understatement of the century. The plan puts into motion a fundamental shift of purpose for the existence of the United Nations. The United Nations was created, and heretofore, has functioned to serve its membership of sovereign nations. The market, or service area for the United Nations is now shifting away from sovereign nations to focus directly on the citizens of those nations. The UN is no longer limiting its activities to providing services for nations, but is now gearing up to provide "security for the people" within those nations.

The UN reform package represents the final step in the evolution of the meaning of the term "security." The UN Charter refers to "collective security" which is agreement among nations not to use force against each other and to defend each other from external attack. Collective security evolved into "comprehensive security" during the 1980s. Comprehensive security embraces the idea of disarmament, demobilization, and demilitarization. The final step in the evolution is "human security," which includes all of the above and "safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression, as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life."²

Is there a conflict between national sovereignty and the UN's determination to provide "human security" to individual citizens within sovereign states? You bet. But the UN has an answer.

Listen to Maurice Strong and the Commission on Global Governance:

- "...countries are having to accept that in certain fields, sovereignty has to be exercised collectively, particularly in respect of the global commons."³
- "...the principle of sovereignty...must be further adapted to recognize changing realities."⁴
- "...there is a need to weigh a state's right to autonomy against its people's right to security."⁵
- "It is time to begin thinking about self-determination in a new context -- the emerging context of a global neighborhood rather than the traditional context of a world of separate states."⁶
- "The concept of national sovereignty has been immutable, indeed a sacred principle of international relations. It is a principle which will yield only slowly and reluctantly to the new imperatives of global environmental cooperation. What is needed is recognition of the reality that...it is simply not feasible for sovereignty to be exercised unilaterally by individual nation-states, however powerful."⁷

To Maurice Strong, national sovereignty is an obsolete concept. Maurice Strong is the person responsible for restructuring the UN. The process is now officially underway with changes that will have immediate consequences, and others that are preparatory for more sweeping changes in the future -- as the world succumbs to the tightening grip of global governance.

Immediate structural changes include the creation of a new International Criminal Court, an "Assembly of the People," a Petitions Council, and a restructured UN Trusteeship Council. The new International Criminal Court has been under development for several years. The idea is being presented as a mechanism to prosecute war criminals. *Our Global Neighborhood* describes this new UN entity not only in the context of war criminals, but in the context of international law. The Court will have its own "panel of prosecutors," who will be free to investigate within the sovereign borders of member states -- without interference from national, state, or local governments. Considering the rapidly expanding body of international law -- ranging from the rights of children to the use of fossil fuels and the use of land -- this Court is a necessary component to give meaning to global governance. "The very essence of global governance is the capacity of the international community to ensure compliance with the rules of society."⁸

The new Assembly of the People is to consist of 300 to 600 selected representatives of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) accredited by the United Nations. The first meeting is scheduled to precede a special "Millennium" session of the UN General Assembly in the year 2000. The function of the Assembly of the People is to provide direct input to the General Assembly from representatives of "civil society."

Accredited NGOs will also supply five to seven selected representatives to serve on the new Petitions Council. Their function will be to screen petitions submitted from the network of accredited NGOs in the field -- the UN's new "early warning system" -- and route the petitions to the appropriate UN agency for response.

The UN Trusteeship Council, created originally to oversee the transition of colonies to independence, is to become the trustees of the global commons. Global commons is defined to

be "The atmosphere, outer space, the oceans beyond national jurisdiction, and the related environment and life-support systems that contribute to the support of human life."⁹ The United Nations Center for Human Settlements (HABITAT) is being incorporated into the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The restructured UNEP will administer all environmental treaties, more than 300 currently, and will become the implementation and enforcement arm of the UN Trusteeship Council. Programmatic activity is being shifted to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), into which will also be folded the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The reform program now underway is committed to reducing staff by 1,000, and reducing the overhead costs from 38 to 25 percent. The reduced costs are not to be returned to the contributing states, but instead, are to be used to supplement development activity in developing countries. "Reform is not an event; it is a process. And the process will not end with the present report."¹⁰

The reform process, initially, reorganizes the work of the United Nations into five areas that are "the core mission of the United Nations: peace and security; economic and social affairs; development cooperation; humanitarian affairs; and human rights."¹¹ Executive Committees have already been organized for each of four areas. The fifth area, human rights, is considered to cross all areas and is therefore represented on each of the other Executive Committees. Virtually every one of the more than 130 UN agencies, commissions, committees, and funds, has been assigned to one or more of these four UN "Departments." The heads of these new departments, along with several selected senior staff, constitute the new Senior Management Group.

In every nation where there is a UN presence, all UN activity will be consolidated under the authority of a "Special Representative of the Secretary-General." All UN activity will be headquartered in a single, special facility to be known as "UN House." All services will be delivered under a single flag -- the UN flag. South Africa is designated to receive the first UN House, with six other nations scheduled to follow shortly.

The Peace and Security Department includes three sub-departments: Political Affairs; Peacekeeping Operations; and Disarmament and Arms Regulations. Presently, the UN Charter does not authorize the UN to maintain its own standing army. Troops must be provided by member nations. This situation is untenable to the UN. "Troops...are, in some cases not made available by member states or made available under conditions that constrain an effective response." Amendments to the UN Charter are being prepared. "Stronger cooperation" is required from nations that have "relevant capabilities" and "regional or sub-regional organizations" such as NATO. "Global security can be said to exist only if the [Security] Council can dispatch military forces rapidly and with the requisite predictability and reliability."¹²

The UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the UN Conference on Disarmament, which meets three to four months each year in Geneva, will be consolidated into the new Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, headed by an Under-Secretary-General located in Geneva. Their objective is to ultimately control all firearms. "The production and trade in arms should be controlled by the international community. Military force is not a legitimate political instrument, except in self-defense or under UN auspices."¹³

The expanded and restructured UNEP will function under the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which will also oversee the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); the Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention; the United Nations University and several commissions of various sorts. This consolidation provides straight-line administrative authority from the Secretary-General to dozens of agencies and hundreds of programs. It is a reform that has nothing to do with reducing costs and everything to do with the consolidation of power.

These restructuring steps are preparatory for the implementation of the new concept of security of the people. "The concept of global security must be broadened from the traditional focus of security of states to include the security of people and the security of the planet."¹⁴ The United Nations, through its program of reform, is becoming both the protector and provider for the world.

The United Nations has concluded that it is the institution of governance that must be responsible for the security of people and it is preparing to redefine national sovereignty, demilitarize national capabilities, and disregard the protest of uncivil society -- read: organizations not accredited by the United Nations.

The new reformation is underway. It is a reformation, not only of the United Nations, but of global societies. It is occurring daily with the blessings and staunch assistance of the Clinton/Gore Administration and many members of Congress. The reformation is not accompanied by black helicopters delivering UN soldiers. It is being actively promoted through the UN Convention on Climate Change; the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Law of the Sea; the Convention on Chemical Weapons; the Convention on the International Criminal Court; the Convention on the

Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women; The Convention on World Heritage Sites; the UN World Wide Biosphere Reserve Network; the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; the Ecosystem Management Policy; the American Heritage Rivers Initiative; the Sustainable Communities Initiative -- and a host of other UN policies that now dominate domestic policy in the United States. These policies -- initiated, implemented, and enforced -- by the United Nations, are defacto global governance. Global governance is not an event; it is a process. It is a process that has been underway for years. By the year 2000, enough of the policies will be in place, and sufficient restructuring of the UN will have been accomplished, to claim that global governance is the new reality. A reality from which there is no escape.

Endnotes

1. *Renewing the United Nations: A Program for Reform*, Report of the Secretary General, (A/51/1950), July 14, 1997, p. 87.

2. *Our Global Neighborhood: Report of the Commission on Global Governance*, (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 80.

3. *Ibid*, p. 70.
4. *Ibid*, p. 71.
5. *Ibid*, p. 71
6. *Ibid*, p.337
7. Maurice Strong, "Stockholm to Rio: A Journey Down a Generation," (on file).
8. *Our Global Neighborhood, Op. Cit.*, p. 326.
9. *Ibid*, p. 251.
10. *Renewing the United Nations, Op. Cit.*, p. 14.
11. *Ibid*, p. 15.
12. *Ibid*, p. 37.
13. *Our Global Neighborhood, Op. Cit.*, p. 338.
14. *Ibid*, p. 338.