



The G20 at the Leader's Level

## The L20 and UN Reform

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The Centre for International  
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### ***Edward C. Luck, Mock Communiqué on United Nations Reform from a Hypothetical Leaders-level G-20 Meeting L20 Project Meeting Briefing Note***

**Edward C. Luck,  
Professor of Practice in International and Public Affairs and Director, Center on International  
Organization School of International and Public Affairs Columbia University**

As the leaders of the G20 countries, we decided to meet at this critical juncture – July 2005 – to provide support and impetus to the historic efforts that are now underway to renovate, reform, and reinvigorate the United Nations. Last month, the distinguished President of the 59th General Assembly, Jean Ping of Gabon, took the helpful step of highlighting some of the priority areas in which reform steps may be politically feasible in the coming months. His conclusions were drawn, in large part, from six months of informal deliberations within the General Assembly and a wide range of consultations among the UN Member States. These discussions focused on scores of proposals raised in the landmark report of the Secretary-General, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, of 21 March 2005 (A/59/2005). The Secretary-General's report, in turn, found nourishment in the reports of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and of the Millennium Project, which sought to develop a plan of action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We recognize the value of these seminal contributions to international thinking about how to strengthen the world body. But we also understand that, as always, the responsibility for choosing the UN's future path lies with the Member States.

We are convinced that the L20 can make a unique and valuable contribution to the process of UN reform and renewal. First, each of our countries, in its own way, has sought to bolster UN capacities and performance in critical aspects of its vital work. Second, our ranks span each of the major geographical groups in the world body and include countries in different phases of economic and political development. Third, while diverse, we are also small enough in number to have a reasonable chance of being able to agree on a relatively deep and broad set of reform measures. Fourth, and finally, to date the reform process at UN headquarters has made uneven progress at best, auguring the very real possibility of disappointing results when the heads of state and government of the 191 UN Member States convene in New York from September 14 to 16. Given the elevated public expectations that have been engendered by the highly visible reform process and the evidence of sagging public support for the UN in many parts of the world, it is critically urgent that the L20 play a catalytic role at this point in helping to focus attention on a finite menu of important and doable steps and to accelerate their achievement and implementation.

It is time, in other words, for our countries to demonstrate leadership by presenting a united front in the effort to strengthen the United Nations so that it can perform the increasingly ambitious tasks entrusted to it in as effective, equitable, transparent, and accountable manner as possible. In our view, reform is not a punishment for bad behavior, but a sign of vitality and dynamism, a process both of programmatic renewal and of recommitment on the part of the Member States. We seek to reform the UN because we value what it does and what it stands for. In that spirit, we offer the following fourteen proposals for renovating the world body in four dimensions: 1) peace and security; 2) economic and social development; 3) management practices; and 4) renewal of the principal organs. We do not place a higher priority on some of these measures than on others, nor do we suggest that they be pursued in order or sequence. Rather, we believe that agreement among the Member States on all of

these proposed measures should be sought in tandem, so that as many of them as possible will be ready for adoption at the September summit.

### **Peace and Security**

Step One. We support the Secretary-General's call for the establishment of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission and a Peacebuilding Support Office within the UN Secretariat (paras. 114-119 of A/59/2005). It is essential that such a Commission have ties both to the Security Council and to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It should be able to draw on the international financial institutions, relevant UN agencies and programs, and regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as on independent sources of expertise, for information, analysis, and perspectives on countries sliding into conflict or trying to recover from prolonged violence and devastation. We pledge to assist the development of such capacities and to work diligently with the Commission once it is established.

Step Two. We applaud the Secretary-General's enunciation of a comprehensive strategy for countering the scourge of terrorism, as delivered in Madrid on 10 March 2005 (SG/SM/9757). We support his call for the further internationalization of the Proliferation Security Initiative and appreciate the General Assembly's acceptance of the draft international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. These steps encourage our belief that the UN can, and will, take a more prominent place in the global efforts to defeat terrorism. At the same time, we urge greater attention to correcting the following deficits in the UN approach to date:

- The General Assembly should not relent in its efforts to find a definition of terrorism that can win the agreement of almost all of the Member States;
- The implementation of the Secretary-General's "5-Ds" strategy will require concerted work, by the secretariat and Member States alike, in the coming months; and we are committed to monitoring and assisting these implementation efforts;
- The fourth D in the strategy involves developing the capacity of individual states to prevent terrorism, an area in which there has been more progress in identifying gaps and needs than in filling them; here we pledge to do more individually and collectively to boost the capacity of states that are willing but unable to take the essential steps;
- The proliferation of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council devoted to counter-terrorism has raised serious questions of overlap, duplication, and lack of coherence, problems that we will address energetically in the months ahead; and
- Concerned that international counter-terrorism tactics not infringe unnecessarily on core human rights, we will work with the UN secretariat and with the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Security Council to insure that appropriate procedures and guidelines are put into effect to protect human rights without compromising the effectiveness of efforts to stem terrorism, itself a threat to a range of human rights, including importantly the right to life.

Step Three. The L20, which includes both the largest financial contributors and some of the largest troop contributors to UN peacekeeping missions, places a high priority on improving the capacity, readiness, and effectiveness of the UN's blue helmets. It is our expectation that more UN peacekeepers will be deployed next year than ever before, yet we are concerned by recent abuses of the very people the blue helmets are supposed to protect and by the uneven results of recent operations. We support the measures outlined in the Secretary-General's report (paras. 111-113), but are convinced that more needs to be done to bring the UN's peacekeeping system up to par, given the growing demands being placed upon it.

- The L20 will develop and identify national strategic reserves, as called for by the Secretary-General;
- Working with other major troop-contributing countries and the UN secretariat, the L20 will develop common training manuals and doctrines to ease their common participation in UN-authorized peacekeeping missions;

- The L20 will select military officers for participation in joint planning exercises and consultations on logistical and doctrinal issues involved in UN peacekeeping operations; and
- The L20 will explore ways of enhancing the cooperation among global, regional, and sub-regional peacekeeping efforts and of boosting the readiness and capacity of the African Union to engage in effective peacekeeping missions.

### **Economic and Political Development**

Step Four. The L20 places an equally high priority on attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. We reaffirm our support for the principles agreed at Monterrey and Johannesburg and for the global partnership for development they define. In order to enhance opportunities for deeper, more interactive, and more sustained dialogue among countries at different stages of economic and political development, we propose:

- That the L20 establish a continuing forum for informal discussion among its members (and others as needed) on some of the issues, such as agricultural subsidies, debt, terms of trade, transparency, and governance, that are either not yet ripe for international negotiation or are proving divisive in more formal inter-governmental negotiating fora;
- That the L20 invite the heads of the international financial institutions, the WTO, relevant UN agencies, the UN Secretary-General, and leading independent experts for annual discussions of progress toward the MDGs and of ways obstacles could be overcome; and
- That the L20 review past and current proposals for strengthening the development programs and fora of the United Nations system and consider possible steps to increase their capacities, coherence, and effectiveness.

Step Five. We support the Secretary-General's call for a democracy fund at the United Nations "to provide assistance to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy" (A/59/2005, para. 151), as well as his proposals for giving greater coherence to the UN's operational activities in this sphere.

Step Six. We support the Secretary-General's proposals for strengthening the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including enhancements in its staff resources and funding. We agree with the Secretary-General that the Commission on Human Rights is in need of radical reform or replacement by a more effective and smaller body, but we also believe that more study is needed of possible options. To that end, the L20 will undertake a six-month review of various options for replacing or strengthening the Human Rights Commission, consider the results at a special meeting in early 2006, and report any agreed conclusions to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly.

### **Management Reform**

Step Seven. The UN needs a chief operating officer who will be responsible for its day-to-day management, subordinate only to the Secretary-General and the Member States. To that end, we recommend 1) the abolition of the post of Under-Secretary-General for Management and Administration and 2) having a single Deputy Secretary-General as a full-time chief operating officer.

Step Eight. We urge the overhauling of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), which should be upgraded into a world-class auditor for the world body. The head of the OIOS should be appointed by and be responsible to the General Assembly, not the Secretary-General.

Step Nine. It is our view that the Secretary-General has insufficient management flexibility in terms of his/her ability to hire, fire, and move personnel laterally within the secretariat. The General Assembly's Fifth Committee and ACABQ have engaged in too much micromanagement, in the process crippling both the organization's capacity for shifting resources and personnel from less to more urgent matters and the Secretary-General's sense of responsibility and accountability for the management of the world body. We urge a review of these relationships and the development of a more flexible and accountable management system.

Step Ten. We urge a radical rethinking of the UN's antiquated, arbitrary, and dysfunctional personnel system. Given the importance of the issues addressed by the world body, it is paramount that it have a highly skilled, mobile, and motivated staff. They should be rewarded for initiative, enterprise, and fresh thinking.

- Whistleblowers should be encouraged and managers accountable for their treatment of their staff. The Secretary-General has pledged to protect whistleblowers, to root out corruption and malfeasance, and to eliminate deadwood. But close oversight by Member States and independent observers will be required to insure that such promises are carried out fully and fairly this time around.
- In the past, lateral movement of UN staff was discouraged both by the decentralized nature of the UN system and by the negative effects such mobility had on one's career. We believe that new rules, incentives, and attitudes are needed to encourage headquarters staff to spend more time in field operations, in other agencies, and in partner institutions in the independent sector. Given the cross-cutting nature of most of the policy challenges facing the world body, diverse experience and inter-disciplinary skills, particularly analytical ones, are needed on the part of the secretariat.

Step Eleven. The United Nations continues to suffer from a reluctance to make hard choices, to set clear programmatic priorities, and to eliminate outmoded mandates, committees, and programs.

- We urge the General Assembly to be much bolder in purging agenda items that are redundant or out of date and subsidiary bodies that are no longer essential.
- We urge the General Assembly, as well, either to conduct the kind of review of older programs and mandates recommended by the Secretary-General and/or to attach a sunset clause to new mandates, as proposed by the Secretary-General in his 1997 reform plan.

### **Reform of Principal Organs**

Step Twelve. We are disappointed that the Secretary-General and his High-level Panel have had so little to suggest in the way of renovating and redirecting ECOSOC. In conjunction with the six-month review of the Human Rights Commission described in Step Six above, the L-20 will conduct a parallel review of the functions and structure of ECOSOC – the parent body of the Human Rights Commission – with an eye to developing some fresh ideas for its reinvigoration. These findings will be reported to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly, as with the human rights review.

Step Thirteen. While many of our members still place a high priority on enlarging the Security Council, differences remain on how this should be done. Moreover, some of our members are concerned that too great an expansion could hinder the Council's effectiveness. Either way, we believe that a careful review of the Council's working methods should be completed before enlargement is undertaken. Flaws regarding the accountability, inclusiveness, representativeness, and transparency of the Council's work cannot be addressed through enlargement alone. We recognize that valuable steps towards improving working methods have already been taken, but we are confident that further progress could be made along these lines, particularly concerning the transparency of the growing array of subsidiary bodies, without impairing the Council's effectiveness.

Step Fourteen. We endorse the suggestions by the Secretary-General and his High-level Panel for clearing up certain anomalies in the UN Charter, including 1) eliminating the so-called enemies clauses, 2) doing away with the Trusteeship Council and the Military Staff Committee, and 3) amending Article 23(2) by deleting its last two sentences, so that returning members of the Security Council will be eligible for immediate re-election.

Though some of these steps may seem modest when seen in isolation, taken together they would constitute the most significant and far-reaching renovation and revitalization of the world body since the founding conference in San Francisco six decades ago.