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Responses by the Secretary-General to questions posed by *Akher Saa* magazine:

The UN, hampered by its own culture and by the slow reflexes of its members, doesn't appear to be up to the job of regulating the new transitional culture of a global village where there is a civil society without borders, with its freer flow of goods, information and people... do you agree?

regulate global village

I am often asked about the inefficiency of the United Nations, but rarely does a reporter mention the "slow reflexes of its members". I think this is an important point that you have raised. When I came to office, I recognized that the UN was tarnished by instances of inefficiency and even downright incompetence. In response, I launched a major programme of reform and renewal. I began by doing all in my power, as Secretary-General, to improve the United Nations so that it can meet the challenges of today's world and indeed the future. I also asked Member States to support proposals which only they could decide on. For example, I proposed the establishment of a post of Deputy Secretary-General, but this required approval by the General Assembly. I'm happy to say that the Member States did allow me to appoint a Deputy Secretary-General. Since accepting the job, Louise Fréchette has been an enormous help not only in moving the reform process forward, but also in promoting the goals of the United Nations, especially in the area of economic and social development.

UN reform

Deputy-Secretary-General

GA
Louise Fréchette

Among the positive initiatives we have taken is the establishment of a Department of Disarmament Affairs. We have also established the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention in order to better address the interrelated issues of drug control, crime prevention and international terrorism. *- Drug Control*

This rationalization has extended to other areas as well, including humanitarian affairs, human rights and economic and social affairs. We're doing this after cutting the staff significantly – barely 10 years ago the United Nations staff was at 12,500 and today we are at 8,800 – while at the same time saving money on administrative costs.

staff cut

Ultimately, however, the United Nations is not about departments and structures, but about people. If we are to respond to the challenges you mentioned, we must have the right people with the right skills in the right job at the right time. So now, we are carrying out a major reform of the way we manage our human resources, looking at how we recruit, train and promote our people and much, much more. Overall it is more than fair to say that we have demonstrated our seriousness about reform for everyone to see. There has been more reform, and more significant change, throughout the United Nations in the two years than in the Organization's

entire 53-year history.

UN Charter reform

No Palestine

Some circles say that UN Charter needs to be modified regarding sweeping developments on the international theatre?

Any decision to change the Charter is, of course, a matter for the Member States. As Secretary-General, I could offer my personal opinion, but I could not effect any changes on my own authority.

Does the Security Council need to be updated, noting for example that China, permanent member, has one of the worst human rights records in the world, and the five permanent members – the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain – reflect the geopolitics of 1945, not 1999?

I consider that, at the end of the day, we must have a reform that will strengthen the authority of the Security Council by making it both more efficient and more representative of the realities of the 21st century - thereby giving it greater legitimacy. The Member States must, therefore, come up with an approach that will achieve this goal. For my part, I believe that sooner or later the Council can be changed and reformed, and possibly enlarged. But if there are to be new permanent seats, Member States must decide which States should occupy them. For some regions, that is very difficult.

Sec Council Reform

It seems that the UN is under siege of the Americans. How could you manage to diminish the U.S. influence that controls the international organization too much?

Of course the United States is an important country, both politically and, for the United Nations, financially. The fact that the United States now owes the Organization over \$1.6 billion in unpaid dues – some of them going back over a decade – certainly has a negative impact on our work. In order to make up for the shortfall, we have been forced to borrow funds from our peacekeeping budgets, which means that we cannot reimburse the countries which contributed peacekeeping troops and equipment. The result is that some smaller and less economically secure countries, including Egypt, are involuntarily doing more than their share to

-UN US debt

Can't reimburse peacekeeping countries

help us meet our immediate financial needs. I am very grateful for their patience and their support.

But I have always emphasized that the United Nations needs the ~~United States~~ ^{US}, just as the ~~United States~~ needs the United Nations. In today's globalised world, no country, no matter how powerful, can solve its problems on its own. Drug trafficking, environmental pollution and contagious diseases are just some of what I call "problems without passports" that don't respect national boundaries. ^{problems with pass} The international community must co-operate in responding to these challenges, and the United Nations provides the ideal forum for fostering essential partnerships, not only among nations, but also between governments and non-governmental organizations, and between international institutions and the private sector, to do just that.

As far as U.S. influence goes, I can say with confidence that we are working with the current Administration, not against it, so we have been able to share ideas and achieve many common goals.

Concerning the Palestinian cause, should the atrocities of those who fight for occupation be treated the same as actions of those who fight against it?

There is no distinction when it comes to those who commit atrocities – atrocities are always unforgivable, no matter who commits them, and no matter what the circumstances. They are a violation of the standards of human rights and international law which the United Nations has helped to develop and pledged to protect.

With specific reference to the ^{Palestine} (issue of Palestine), I have spoken out on a number of occasions expressing my concerns about the actions of all who would jeopardize the lives of civilians. You will find this to be my central message – that civilians on all sides should be immune from fighting. Beyond that, it is my hope that a negotiated solution can and will be achieved, which will both bring an end to the suffering of the Palestinian refugees and provide lasting security for the State of Israel.

Do you think that military strikes against Iraq reflect the Washington's Middle East policy and what could be done to ease the sufferings of the Iraqi people after eight years of international inspections?

*Iraq.
weapons inspection*

It is not for me to comment on the Middle East policy of the United States or any other country. What I deeply regret is that the Security Council has not yet been able to agree on the best way to verify the disarmament of Iraq and to bring that country and its long-suffering people back into full membership of the international community. I hope that the members of the Council will make every effort to overcome their differences on this burning issue.

Meanwhile, we are working energetically to reduce the suffering of the Iraqi population by improving the oil-for-food scheme.

Oil for Food

There are leaders who made a difference to the world in 1998 – whom they are from your point of view?

That is a very invidious question. Perhaps I could mention John Hume and David Trimble, who deservedly won the Nobel Peace Prize for leading their communities towards peace in Northern Ireland; General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who started Nigeria on its road back to democracy; and President Mohammed Khatami of Iran, who proposed a "Dialogue Among Civilisations" in a memorable speech to the United Nations General Assembly?

Have you ever been thinking of quitting because of pressures or despair and what is the difference between you and former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali?

never

I have never thought of quitting, but I must admit that the task of Secretary-General can be frustrating. Sometimes I am tempted to give in to my feelings of personal outrage at a specific situation, but I must be guided by the larger obligation to prevent aggression and preserve the peace. Giving in to my feelings is a luxury I cannot afford. The integrity, impartiality and independence of the office of Secretary-General are too important to be so easily sacrificed.

I will leave it to historians to make comparisons between my predecessor and myself. But as you may know, I served under him for his entire five-year term, and I considered it a privilege to do so.

What will the UN look like 10 years or so from now and what kind of justice can the UN deliver?

The UN of the future is extremely important to me, so I'm glad that you have raised this question. I do not presume to know all of the answers, but I am delighted that the General Assembly has approved my proposal to designate its session next year as the Millennium Assembly. This will include a Millennium Summit, with the participation of Heads of State and Government from all over the world.

↓ Mill. Ass. Mill Summit

That should provide an opportunity for all Member States to re-think their priorities, and to decide together how the purposes and principles laid down in the United Nations Charter can best be furthered in the new circumstances of the new century.

In preparation for this event, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, we are convening regional hearings with the participation of representatives from governments, the private sector, academia and civic groups, to discuss how the Organisation can best shape itself to respond to the challenges ahead. Those in the Middle East, Africa and Europe have already been held. Others will follow in Asia and South and North America before the end of the year. With such a broad-based planning process, we hope to gather many exciting new ideas that can really transform the international landscape.

On your second point, I am happy to say that governments have already laid the groundwork for the United Nations to prevent the most egregious crimes known to man – genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity – through the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. When 60 countries ratify the Court's Statute it will enter into force. At that time, which I hope will not be long from now, the United Nations will be able to deliver justice which until then would have been carried out only on an ad hoc basis, that is to say under certain circumstances and in certain countries. Perhaps more importantly, the Court will have a deterrent effect, preventing these horrendous crimes before they even occur.

But of course justice is not only criminal justice. Even more important, to the great mass of our fellow citizens is economic and social justice. All of us should be ashamed to be entering the new millennium with three billion people living in absolute poverty, and two billion young people unable to find productive work. Only when we have changed those scandalous facts can we speak without

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embarrassment of the just and peaceful world which the United Nations was founded to help bring about.