

**SECRETARY-GENERAL'S Q&A
AT THE UNA-USA NATIONAL CONVENTION**

9 March 1999

Q. You had mentioned that the United States is behind in paying their bill to the United Nations. I would like to know if there are any other nations that are behind.

A. There are many other countries which owe. There about 70-90 countries which owe, but some of them pay very little. In fact, the US owes about two-thirds of the bill owed to the United Nations. But the US is not alone. There are many other countries, and in fact, a few have lost their votes because they are two years in arrears.

Q. Mr. Secretary-General, I beg this group's indulgence, because they heard me ask this question last night of Mr. David Welch, who did not give me a satisfactory answer. My students have asked me to ask you on what compelling source of international law does the United States Administration claim that conditionality is appropriate to pay US arrears?

A. It is an interesting question. If you asked someone from the State Department and you did not get a satisfactory answer, I'm not sure that I should be his lawyer.

[LAUGHTER FROM AUDIENCE]

Let me say that, from the UN point of view, we consider these dues a legal obligation, and that Member States should pay them in full and on time and without conditions.

Q. We hear a lot about reform, and I'd sure like to hear some of the things you've done to reform the United Nations in the last couple of years.

A. Thank you very much. We have undertaken quite a lot of reform in the past two years. To begin with, we have restructured the organization to make it more cohesive and to get it to focus on its core activities, which I will define as peace and security, human rights, humanitarian affairs, economic development, and social and economic affairs. We have grouped the organization into four

executive committees, with human rights cutting across the other four. The heads of departments and programs and funds in these activities meet regularly to discuss their issues. We meet--the heads of departments, heads of UNICEF, UN Development Programme, UNFPA, and our colleagues in Geneva, Nairobi and Geneva meet once a week (those outside New York via teleconferencing)--to discuss issues, share information, and pull the organization together. So we have brought some coherence into the organization. We have also, in the process of reform, reduced 1,000 positions, and over the past six years we have put in a zero-growth budget. Of course, as we go on to the seventh and eighth years, it is going to be difficult to maintain that level.

In addition to that, we have attracted some outstanding leaders into the UN system. We have some great ones. You have Mrs. Nafis Sadik here with you. In addition to that we have Mary Robinson, Grö Brundtland, who is now with the World Health Organization. We have some dynamic leaders in UNEP in Nairobi: Klaus Toepfer, the former German Minister of Environment. We have crime prevention and the fight against drugs being led by Pino Arlacchi, a famous Italian crime fighter. So, we have tried not only to reform our structures and bring cohesion, but also to energize the organization by bringing in dynamic leadership, which I see as part of the reform.

We are also reaching out to work with civil society, with the private sector, with foundations and universities. It is only by working in partnership that we can get our huge agenda accomplished.

These are some of the things that we've done, and next year we will have the Millennium Summit, where we will bring together heads of state and government to discuss the future and what sort of UN they would want to see, and to set themselves to identifying achievable tasks that we can implement in the next 20 years or so. Alongside that we will have a people's forum, where NGOs will come together earlier in the year, also to discuss the same issues, and we hope, feeding into the Summit in the Fall.

Q. If you dream and have your dreams come true, what would you like to see happen in the next three years?

A. I think what I would like to see in the next three years would be a revitalized United Nations, a United Nations that functions well, a United Nations that is responsive to the challenges that we face, a United Nations that has the support and the confidence of the people, a United Nations that is able to get the governments to work together on multilateral issues. Governments, big and small,

coming together to recognize that we have only one world--ours--, and that in today's interdependent world, we all need to work together to tackle the issues that we face. There are issues out there that no government, however powerful, can tackle alone. And I think we've already seen the beginnings of this sort of new diplomacy, where the United Nations, governments, NGOs, and grassroots movements, have come together to achieve great things. One was the landmine ban, the other was the establishment of the International Criminal Court. And there will be other areas. It would be a dream that I would cherish if we all banded together and accepted that we live in one world and what happens in another country, maybe far away, could have an impact on us. I think the Asian economic crisis has brought that home. But I don't think we understand it in other fields.

Q. We understand that economic sanctions imposed on many countries are affecting their human rights issues. Why doesn't the United Nations impose economic sanctions on China, which has a very serious human rights crisis?

A. I think when you look at the sanctions which have been imposed by the Council, they have been imposed for very specific reasons. In the case of Iraq, it followed the invasion of Kuwait. After Iraq was pushed out of Kuwait, the international community, that is, the Security Council, decided that Iraq should be disarmed and that Iraq should cooperate with its own disarmament. The sanctions were imposed to ensure disarmament of Iraq, to oblige Iraq to return stolen Kuwaiti property, and to release Kuwaiti prisoners of war. So, it was a pressure, it was carrots and sticks--you disarm, you deliver, and we lift the sanctions. In Libya, it followed the shooting down of the Pan Am plane over Lockerbie.

All of these sanctions have been imposed for very specific reasons--not for abuse of human rights, as you seem to imply, in the case of China. But I do admit, and I think the Council members would be the first to agree, that sanctions are a blunt instrument and tend to hurt the population. There has been quite a lot of talk recently about "smart" sanctions--sanctions that would be targeted against the leaders whose behavior we seek to change. If we can target it to the leaders by preventing them from travelling, freezing their bank accounts, and that sort of thing, and really let them feel the pain, it may ease the suffering of the people. It is with this concern in mind that the Security Council set up the "Oil for Food" scheme in Iraq, to be able to give assistance to the Iraqi people, who are not the target of the sanctions.

Q. I read a statistic somewhere that under 5% of UN staff is under 35. Is this statistic correct, and if so, how do you plan to recruit young people into the UN system,

many of them sitting here in this room?

A. We are looking out for young people. Your statistics are not wrong. In fact only a week or two weeks ago, I had a meeting with the Cabinet. I think Mrs. Sadik, who is here, will confirm that. One of the issues we discussed was, how do we achieve our objective gender balance of 50/50, which we have set for ourselves, and how do we rejuvenate the organization by recruiting and promoting younger people, to make sure that, as the older ones retire, there are competent young ones coming behind them to take up the baton. We do have a substantial number of post vacancies coming up, and we are marking out a strategy to look for younger people and women and people from countries which are not represented, to be able to correct the imbalance you referred to in your question. Thank you.

Q. Robert Muller had a great vision for the world and the UNA. What influence has Robert Muller had on you personally?

A. I know Robert Muller, and we were friends when he was here. Of course, he is now in Costa Rica and has been very much involved with the Peace University. I haven't heard from him lately. But I can tell you that, when he was here, no one could miss Robert, and Robert was always ready to share his views and advice. We all had the chance to hear him share some of his ideas with us. And as I said, he has also been very active in the work of the UN University, which we are also seeking to reactivate. Thank you.

Q. How many staff members have been relieved over the last years, and how is the present staff covering the workload? That's my first question. The second question is, what is the future of UN peacekeeping operations in view of the fact that perhaps it's better--I don't know--, that those functions are covered by regional organizations such as NATO and the African Unity Organization?

A. Thank you very much. I think, on the staff issue, I indicated that as part of the reform, we shed about 1,000 positions. But to put into perspective, in the last decade, the UN staff has dropped from 12,500 to 8,800 today. Are we able to cover the same programs with a reduced number of people? To some extent we have, but we are stretched. We are trying to offer better value for the dollar. We are doing more with less. And this is why, in an earlier question, I implied that we need to be careful not to cut to the bone, and that we've really not only reduced but lived on zero growth for the past six years. As you get into the seventh and the eighth year, it does become difficult. So that is the answer to your staffing question.

We have also tried in some ways to get the governments to drop some of the programs, particularly some that may be marginal or obsolete, so that we don't have to devote scarce staff resources to those. It's not always easy to get the governments to modify the programs.

On the future of UN peacekeeping, let me say that our Charter itself expected the regional organizations and arrangements to play a role in the settlement of conflicts. So I'm not displeased to see regional organizations play a role in this area. It was also to be expected that the UN peacekeeping operations would go through peaks and troughs. At its peak, we had 80,000 troops deployed in 17 operations. Today we have about 14,000 troops deployed. But we are looking at areas that may require fresh deployment of peacekeepers. Once a UN peacekeeping operation has dropped to 14,000, the number of peacekeeping troops around the world remains roughly around 80,000--that we had about five or six years ago. The difference is that it has been diversified. About 30,000 under NATO, another 15,000 under CIS of the former Soviet Republics. You have ECOMOG in West Africa also with several thousand. But when you add it all up, you're still around 80,000.

But I think that some of these organizations, like NATO, cannot operate outside their own region. So if there were to be a problem in other parts of the world and the UN were to decide to get involved, it would be UN peacekeepers, not the others, who should go. And we also have to be careful in that, apart from NATO, none of the other regional organizations have the capacity that NATO has to deploy quickly and in the numbers required to make a difference. Often, when the regional or subregional organizations have gotten in, they run into financial and logistical difficulties, and come to the UN, or in some cases the governments themselves will become embroiled in the conflict. Therefore, it's better to bring people from further afield who are perceived as neutral, to carry on these operations. UN peacekeeping is at a low point in terms of numbers, but it is alive and well and will continue.

Q. I wanted you to say something about the makeup of the organization since it was formed in 1945. I know that the committees studying the size of the Security Council, for example. It seems to be terribly important to enlarge the permanent members or the Council itself, but I know the problem you have doing that. So I'd appreciate your talking about what you would do to change the makeup and enlarge the Council.

A. Let me say that, you are right. We find considerable difficulty reforming the Security Council. Most Member States admit that the Security Council, as it is

constituted today, reflects more or less the geopolitical realities of 1945, and that it should be brought in line with today's reality. On that point, there is unanimous agreement amongst the membership. Beyond that, we cannot get agreement on anything else. What the size should be--whether it should be 20, 21, 24, or 26, and once you've agreed on the numbers, which Member States should join the expanded Council? There has been a general discussion that there should be five additional permanent members: two for the industrialized countries, and three for the Third World--for the developing countries. One for Asia, one for Latin America, and one for Africa. Let's focus, for the moment, on the last three. The one for Asia. Given the size of India, India believes it should be a natural candidate for the Asian permanent seat. But Pakistan and others have views, and they do not accept India as a natural for the seat. You look at Latin America. Brazil would want to fill that seat. Argentina says we have good relations in Latin America today. An offer of a permanent seat will divide our region, and we don't want a permanent seat. So Brazil cries foul--you're saying this because you don't want us to have the new seat. And Mexico then reminds everybody, we are also here, and we may also be interested. You have a similar problem in Africa. Will it go to South Africa, Nigeria, or Egypt? These are tough issues. At the end of the day, the membership at large will have to decide.

I share these with you to give you an idea of the difficulties we have in reforming the Council. So, when you put out a number, whether it's 21 or 26, most of the key members who have aspirations will not commit themselves until they are sure that they will get one of those new seats. It becomes a really difficult issue. The discussions are going on. I cannot promise you that it will be resolved by the end of this year. And if not by the end of this year, when will it be resolved? I really do not know. But we do require creative thinking and a sense of compromise to move forward in this critical issue. Thank you very much.

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