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## **A Glass At Least Half Full**

*By Kofi A. Annan*

The “outcome document” adopted last Friday, at the end of the United Nations world summit, has been described as “disappointing” or “watered down”. This is true in part – and I said as much in my own speech to the summit on Wednesday. But, taken as a whole, the document is still a remarkable expression of world unity on a wide range of issues.

And that came as welcome news, after weeks of tense negotiations. As late as last Tuesday morning, when world leaders were already arriving in New York, there were still 140 disagreements involving 27 unresolved issues. A final burst of take-it-or-leave-it diplomacy allowed the document to be finalized, but so late in the day that reporters and commentators had no time to analyze the full text before passing judgment. It is no criticism of them to say that many of their judgments are now being revised, or at least nuanced.

Indeed, I would not wish to criticize them, since most were very kind to me. They blamed the alleged failure on nation states – who, supposedly, failed to embrace the bold reform proposals that I had made. It is only fair that I set the record straight.

In March, when I proposed an agenda for the summit, I deliberately set the bar high, since in international negotiations you never get everything you ask. I also presented the reforms as a package, meaning not that I expected them to be adopted without change but that advances were more likely to be achieved together than piecemeal, since states were more likely to overcome their reservations on some issues if they saw serious attention given to others which for them were a higher priority.

In the end, that is precisely what happened.

The outcome document contains strong, unambiguous commitments, from both donor and developing countries, on precise steps needed to reach, by 2015, the development goals agreed on at the Millennium Summit five years ago – an achievement sealed, as it were, by President Bush’s personal endorsement of the goals in his speech on Wednesday.

It contains decisions to strengthen the UN’s capacity for peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding, including a detailed blueprint for a new peacebuilding commission, to ensure a more coherent and sustained international effort to build lasting peace in war-torn countries.

It includes decisions to strengthen the office, and double the budget, of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; to create a worldwide early warning system for natural disasters; to mobilize new resources for the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria; and to improve the UN's Central Emergency Revolving Fund, so that disaster relief arrives more promptly and reliably in future.

It lacks the clear definition of terrorism that I had urged. But it contains, for the first time in UN history, an unqualified condemnation, by all member states, of terrorism "in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes", as well as a strong push to complete a comprehensive convention on terrorism within 12 months, and agreement to forge a global counterterrorist strategy that will weaken terrorists while strengthening our international community.

Perhaps most precious to me is the clear acceptance by all UN members that there is a collective responsibility to protect civilian populations against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, with a commitment to do so through the Security Council wherever local authorities are manifestly failing. I first advocated this in 1998, as the inescapable lesson of our failures in Bosnia and Rwanda. I am glad to see it generally accepted at last – and hope it will be acted on when put to the test.

My proposal for a new UN Human Rights Council is also accepted, though without the details that I hoped would make this body a clear improvement on the existing Commission. These are left for the General Assembly to finalize during the coming year. Nations that believe strongly in human rights must work hard to ensure that the new body marks a real change.

Member states have accepted most of the detailed proposals I made for management reform. In the near future we should have more independent and rigorous oversight and auditing of our work; a cull of obsolete tasks and a one-time buy-out of staff, so that we can focus our energies on today's priorities and employ the right people to deal with them; and a thorough overhaul of the rules governing our use of budgetary and human resources.

But they held back from a clear commitment to give the Secretary-General the strong executive authority that I and my successors will need to carry out the ever-broadening range of operations that the UN is tasked with.

I had also suggested a reform of the Security Council, making it more broadly representative of today's realities. Here too there is agreement on the principle, but the devil is in the detail. The document commits nations to continue striving for a decision, and calls for a review of progress at the end of 2005.

By far the biggest gap in the document is its failure to address the proliferation of nuclear weapons – surely the most alarming threat that we face in the immediate future, given the danger of such weapons being acquired by terrorists. Some states wanted to give absolute priority to non-proliferation, while others insisted that efforts to strengthen the Non-

Proliferation Treaty (NPT) must include further steps towards disarmament. Thus the failure of the NPT review conference in May was repeated.

Surely this issue is too serious to be held hostage to such an Alphonse-and-Gaston act. I appeal to leaders on both sides to show greater statesmanship, and make an urgent effort to find common ground. Otherwise this summit may come to be remembered only for its failure to halt the unraveling of the non-proliferation regime – and its other real successes would then indeed be overwhelmed.

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