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HEADLINE: The Unpaid Bill That's Crippling the U.N.

BYLINE: By **Kofi Annan**; **Kofi Annan** is Secretary General of the United Nations.

BODY:

I will be traveling to Washington on Wednesday to meet with President Clinton and members of his Administration, to discuss not only Iraq but also the debilitating problem of the \$1.3 billion in back dues that the United States owes to the United Nations.

When I became Secretary General in January 1997, I pledged that I would revitalize the role of the United Nations and undertake top-to-bottom organizational reforms. I have kept my pledge.

Yet the United Nations, for all practical purposes, remains in a state of bankruptcy. Our doors are kept open only because other countries in essence provide interest-free loans to cover largely American-created shortfalls -- not only NATO allies like Britain, France, Italy and Canada, but also developing countries like Pakistan and even Fiji.

The United States has not paid its United Nations dues in full and on time for some years. In 1995, it paid less than half its total assessment. These gaps have never been closed.

Who benefits from a cash-starved United Nations? The aggressors of the world whose designs we seek to foil; the violators of human rights whose abuses we endeavor to curtail; the drug dealers and international criminals whose dealings we reveal; the arms merchants whose traffic in deadly weapons our conventions help stop. Also impeded is our humanitarian work, against hunger, deprivation, the loss of homes and livelihoods.

The Iraq crisis demonstrates how indispensable the United Nations can be in the areas of peace and security. If honored, the agreement I negotiated in Baghdad will allow United Nations weapons inspectors to expand their search for and elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction -- an outcome that alternative courses of action might not have yielded.

The public becomes aware of United Nations contributions to conflict resolution only occasionally, when a crisis erupts that thrusts us onto television screens and into newspaper headlines. My recent trip to Baghdad was such an occasion.

But we have been there all along. As President Clinton has stated on numerous occasions, unarmed United Nations inspectors have destroyed more weapons of mass destruction in Iraq during the last six years than Operation Desert Storm did.

United Nations Security Council resolutions have kept sanctions in place. The "oil for food" program administered by the United Nations has sought to reduce the suffering of Iraqi civilians, especially women and children.

And when the international community determined that diplomacy in Iraq deserved one last chance, the eyes of the world instinctively turned to the United Nations.

Institutional reforms are more difficult to portray to the public than crisis management. Under

my reform package, we have achieved an actual decrease in the United Nations budget, down to \$2.53 billion for the 1998 and 1999 biennium. Nearly 1,000 posts have been cut outright, bringing the staff size below 9,000, and other jobs are being held vacant. Administrative expenditures are being cut to 25 percent of the budget, from 38 percent.

Our leadership and management structure has been tightened, making it more coherent and more responsive to the needs of the world. And the General Assembly is debating my recommendations for streamlined legislative processes, sunset provisions for new mandates and a new efficiency-inducing budgetary system.

Of course, people are more important than organizational structure. My recent appointments include Louise Frechette, Canada's Deputy Minister of Defense, as the first Deputy Secretary General; Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland, to lead our human rights efforts; Pino Arlacchi, a Mafia-busting Senator from Italy, to head our drug and crime prevention programs; Klaus Toepfer, German Environment Minister, to direct the Environment Program, and Jayantha Dhanapala of Sri Lanka, an arms control expert, who will head disarmament affairs and lead the special inspectors for presidential sites established in the Baghdad agreement.

There is an American saying that all politics is local. But increasingly, all local politics has global consequences. And those global consequences, in turn, affect the quality of local life everywhere.

A renewed partnership between the United Nations and the United States is, therefore, as much in the interest of the United States as the United Nations. But it has to be paid for. To paraphrase what Winston Churchill said to Franklin Roosevelt, "Give us the tools and we will do the job."

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