



Florida High Schools Model United Nations

FHSMUN SARASOTA 15

GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIFTH COMMITTEE

REFORMING THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Authors: Casey Morell & Brian D. Sutliff

"Everything will be all right – you know when? When people, just people, stop thinking of the United Nations as a weird Picasso abstraction and see it as a drawing they made themselves."

— Dag Hammarskjöld

"After 4 years at the United Nations, I sometimes yearn for the peace and quiet of a political convention."

— Adlai Stevenson, former US Ambassador to the United Nations

"The Secretariat building in New York has 38 stories. If it lost ten stories, it wouldn't make a bit of difference. The United Nations is one of the most inefficient inter-governmental organizations going."

— Ambassador John Bolton (Ret.), former US Ambassador to the United Nations (2005 – 2008), speaking in 1994¹

Abstract: Reforming the United Nations has been up for debate since its founding Charter was signed in San Francisco in 1945. As the UN System has evolved, grown, and changed in the 72 years of its existence, it has been criticized as being too unwieldy, too favoring to the powerful, too corrupt, unable to keep peace in certain parts of the world, and largely ineffective (among other barbs). To address these issues, a wide variety of proposals and ideas have been posited, both from within and outside the UN System, to streamline the UN's operations. This guide will outline some of the larger issues up for debate, including Security Council reform, relations between the United Nations and the Middle East, and more. By no means, though, should the topics in this background guide

¹ John Bolton (speech), as transcribed in "John Bolton In His Own Words: Bush's UN Ambassador Nominee Condemns United Nations," *Democracy Now!*, 31 March 2005, http://www.democracynow.org/2005/3/31/john_bolton_in_his_own_words.

be considered as the only ones that merit debate. Delegates should familiarize themselves with the text of the UN Charter² ahead of committee session.

Introduction

Is the United Nations broken? Has it lost sight of its original goals outlined in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter? Have bureaucracy and cronyism hijacked an organization that intended to spread peace?

Individual opinions and state policies on these topics can vary depending on geography, political affiliation as well as personal experiences and interactions with the UN and its associated personnel. Developing country governments, as well as the governments of Germany and Japan, have argued for greater representation on the UN Security Council, one of the System's most powerful organs. Common citizens have said the UN System is not built to take their opinions into consideration, instead relying on the voice of one person who is meant to represent their collective interests. Within member states, many communities express concerns about being marginalized and/or sidelined within, and even by, an intergovernmental organization created to protect and/or serve the interests of those same member states. Governments in the Middle East frequently chastise the UN for being preoccupied with their political affairs. Contrastingly, entrenched powers in the UN System are not exactly clamoring to have their roles reduced, and would argue those powers themselves are necessary given their status in other global affairs.

With this topic, there are no right or wrong answers: instead, a variety of ways to address these issues exist, and each has distinct sets of positives and negatives associated. The real questions become whether wholesale reform of the UN System is necessary, and, if so, which reforms can be the most readily implemented and/or provide the greatest net benefit to member-states and their citizens?

To formally reform any part of the UN System, the Charter itself must be amended. Amendments require the support of a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly, and the concurrence of the permanent members of the Security Council, as outlined in Chapter XVIII.³ The UN System continues to evolve, however, even without formal amendments to the Charter. The development and evolution of peacekeeping, including peacebuilding, peacemaking, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, have all transpired without any formal amendments to the Charter. Delegates to the General Assembly Fifth Committee (GA 5) may wish to examine both the importance and feasibility of a Charter review conference as well as the continuing informal evolution of the UN System.

² Charter of the United Nations (1945), <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>.

³ Charter of the United Nations, Chapter XVIII.

The Security Council

Chapter V of the UN Charter outlines the structure and duties of the Security Council. Given the Security Council's role in sanctioning peacekeeping operations, military actions and other uses of force (among other responsibilities), it often comes under criticism for not being representative of the current global landscape, for lacking power in properly addressing crises, for being late in providing solutions to international problems – or, all of the above. This section will outline potential areas for Security Council reform, and previous suggestions on how to achieve said reform.

Reforming membership

Articles 23 and 27, concerning membership and voting rights respectively, largely attract the most criticism for being antiquated and unrepresentative of the current global political structure. One-third of the Security Council consists of Allied-aligned powers that won World War II; these countries have been given an effective veto⁴ over any resolutions that come before the body, much to the chagrin of others. The other two-thirds of the Council's members rotate biennially, based on geography.

A variety of proposals have been floated to change the membership structure of the Security Council; largely, these center around increasing the number of permanent members and/or increasing the number of non-permanent members in order to have a more representative body. According to the Center for UN Education Reform, during the opening sessions of the 70th General Assembly, nearly 40 countries voiced their views about Security Council and 24 directly discussed the use of the veto power.⁵ What follows is a non-exhaustive list of proposed means to reform the body in recent history.

The Annan Plan (2005)

In his capacity as Secretary-General, Kofi Annan put forth a proposal to the United Nations involving various ways to not only increase participation and capacity within the organization, but also to reform it. Annan proposed increasing the size of the Security Council by nine members, to a total of 24. The increase would be accomplished by one of two means: the first suggested adding six permanent members lacking the "veto" held by the already extant permanent members and three non-permanent, rotating seats while the second called for adding eight, non-permanent seats serving four-year terms, alongside another non-permanent seat with an indeterminate term length.⁶ Annan's plans were not implemented.

⁴ The term "veto" is not in the Article in question; rather, Art. 27, sec. 3 states "Decisions of the Security Council on all other matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members *including the concurring votes of the permanent members*," (emphasis added), effectively giving them veto power.

⁵ Jessica Kroenert, "UN Reform at the 70th Session of the General Assembly" Center for UN Reform Education October 29, 2015. Found at: <http://www.centerforunreform.org/?q=node/680>

⁶ *The Economist*, "Love at second sight," 23 March 2005, <http://www.economist.com/node/3793408>.

Uniting for Consensus (mid-2000s)

On July 21, 2005, a group of 12 countries including Argentina, Pakistan and Korea (Republic) submitted a proposal⁷ to the General Assembly calling for expansion of the Security Council. The so-called Uniting for Consensus group called for 20 non-permanent members to the Security Council to meet alongside the extant permanent members, thereby expanding membership to 25 nations. The proposal stated preference for non-permanent membership be given based on geography, in hopes of maintaining a balance of countries from different regions in the world, as well as preference based on financial contributions made to the UN System. A call for restraining use of the veto was also placed in the proposal, which would have seen affirmative votes in the Security Council needing a three-fourths, or 75 percent, majority to pass. The proposal was not adopted, though the Uniting for Consensus group continues to meet.

Expansion from the G4 (late-2000s)

The G4 set of nations (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) have consistently lobbied for permanent membership to the Security Council, either with or without a "veto," given their economic power and their relative contributions – both financial and of materiel – to the UN System. Some current permanent members support the individual bids of certain G4 members – for example, the United States backs Japan's inclusion,⁸ while Russia supports India.⁹ Their efforts have been criticized, however, by the Uniting for Consensus group, many of whose members see the G4 as natural geopolitical and economic rivals (e.g., Pakistan and India; Korea [Republic] and Japan, etc.).

Criticisms of the criticisms

Not all observers believe that the Security Council's membership needs reform, despite its imperfections. For example, following the body's debates over military action in Iraq and the efficacy of a peacekeeping mission in Darfur in the mid-2000s, *The Economist* opined that any reforms

"[...] do not—indeed cannot—solve the underlying problem. To see why, just ask what would have happened if the debate that took place in the Security Council before the Iraq war had taken place in an expanded council applying Mr. Annan's new principles. The answer is: the same thing. The permanent five did not fall out over Iraq because they could not agree on the rules. They fell out because America and Britain claimed to have a different view from Russia, France and China about precisely the questions Mr. Annan would like them to pose in future: the seriousness of the threat, proportionality, chances of success and so on. Nor, of course, would embracing a 'responsibility to protect' ensure UN intervention in a future Darfur. The council could sanction military force right away

⁷ A/59/L.68 (2005).

⁸ Joel Brinkley, "As nations lobby to join Security Council, the U.S. resists giving them veto power," *The New York Times*, 15 May 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/politics/as-nations-lobby-to-join-security-council-the-us-resists-giving-them-veto-power.html?_r=0.

⁹ "Putin backs India's UN seat bid," *BBC News*, 4 December 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4069453.stm.

(as it did, after the fact, when NATO intervened in Kosovo) if its members had the political will. It is the absence of that will, not some legal quibble, that is holding them back now.¹⁰

To wit, adding additional members to the body may make it more difficult to achieve consensus on many issues, notwithstanding whether any new permanent members are afforded a "veto" over issues brought before the Security Council. Additionally, the current membership structure requires 60 percent of members to agree on substantive issues, while alternative proposals increase that threshold while simultaneously increasing membership; though the end goal of such a move may be to ostensibly attempt to create an environment more conducive to consensus-driven debate, it may backfire and lead to more paralysis in a body pilloried already for its seeming inaction.

Additionally, critics of the Security Council's current membership can likewise criticize some of the aforementioned reform programs. Expanding the permanent membership to include the G4 still does not give Africa a permanent representative in the Council, nor does it provide one to a Muslim majority country. The Annan Plans were intentionally left vague in hopes they would help foster a common opinion, but instead are subject to the same critique of thinly worded talking points that befall much of the UN's work.

Increasing representation

A secondary criticism of the UN System is its seeming lack of representation for the average citizen. Civil servants working within the UN System often come from their respective countries' civil service programs, which in turn may not be fully representative of their home countries. An immediate rejoinder, largely accurate on historical grounds, is that the UN System was designed to be managed by, and operated for the benefit of, its member states.

Issues of gender

Since the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 gender-mainstreaming has been the main method of increasing gender equity in the United Nations. The Mainstreaming Mandate is supported by resolutions and communications from ECOSOC, the Secretariat, and the General Assembly.¹¹ Recent UN data show just over one-third of full-time UN Secretariat staff are female, which is a slight increase over the past five year period, but there is room for substantive improvement.¹²

¹⁰ *The Economist*, "Love at second sight."

¹¹ "Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality" from Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, revised August 2001
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet1.pdf>

¹² A/69/292 (2015).

"Speak now, about something"

Others have argued the UN does not do enough to engage the public in its processes. Unlike in most democratic governments, citizens of UN member-states do not have a directly elected representative voicing their interests before the General Assembly or any other constituent body. Instead, they rely on their elected governments to appoint an ambassador, and on the various government employees working for their countries' respective foreign ministries to represent their governments' interests.

A way to, in theory, improve this situation is to create a way for citizens to be more directly represented at the UN. One such proposal is to establish something akin to a parliamentary assembly, not unlike the European Parliament or the Mercosur Parliament: in these bodies, citizens living in those specific political zones elect parliamentarians to represent them at a supranational level and hold them accountable for crafting policy. A leading group supporting the establishment of a UN parliament argues its creation would help increase transparency within the UN System because its meetings would be televised and/or streamed online, its members could be directly elected by citizens and not appointed by governments — thereby being ostensibly free of government influence, or affected by changes in government — and would by default increase representation among minority groups currently lacking substantive voices within the UN.¹³

One criticism of this plan is just how much of a voice this body would have, and how it would act: maintaining the General Assembly's system of one country, one vote would mean that each country would have an equal representation in a hypothetical UN parliament, potentially limiting representation from certain heterogeneous countries and over-representing others in mostly homogenous countries. Similarly, such a system would give member-states with incredibly small populations — like Monaco, or Tuvalu — the same weight in a parliamentary assembly as India or the People's Republic of China, the two most populous member-states. Membership could be proportionally allocated, but depending on how that takes place, it could be seen as unfair. If done strictly by population, just six countries (Brazil, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, the People's Republic of China and the United States) would control 50 percent of the available votes.¹⁴ If allocated by contributions to the UN budget, as some have suggested, the United States would have roughly 22 percent of votes available based on pledged contributions for FY 2015 (though whether these representatives would be allowed based on budget commitments or actual contributions may impact such).¹⁵ Figuring out how the puzzle of representation would be a major factor in determining how to establish and operate a UN parliamentary body.

¹³ "About the UNPA proposal," Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, 2016, <http://en.unpacampaign.org/about/unpa/index.php>.

¹⁴ Data from the respective census agencies of each country; calculations by WolframAlpha, <http://www.wolframalpha.com>.

¹⁵ ST/ADM/SER.B/910.

The global poor

"Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society... It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation."¹⁶

Since the creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty in developing countries has been a centerpiece of the policy agenda in several UN bodies including the General Assembly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNWOMEN, and others. In September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the MDGs as the post-2015 development agenda, leading world leaders to consider new development strategies. Now is a time to reflect on these strategies and improve upon them as the United Nations and the world move into this new era.

Although absolute and overall poverty are well-defined and quantified by institutions (like the World Bank, which reports as of 2012 that 12.7% of the global population lives at or below US\$1.90/day and 2.1 billion people in developing countries sustain themselves on US\$3.10/day), poverty is very much a social construction and the ramifications vary from community-to-community and country-to-country.¹⁷

Developmental anthropologists like Akhil Gupta are highly critical of this static idea of the "global poor" that permeates discussions of anti-poverty legislation in the United Nations. The circumstances of the impoverished change radically when factors like religion, gender, caste, and ethnicity. One-size-fits-all approaches to anti-poverty agendas have a high potential to increase rather than decrease inequality. Additionally, Gupta and others argue that this extensive focus is regressive and distracts from sincere discussion of the severe inequalities that they believe are inherent to neoliberal globalization.¹⁸

One of the most significant barriers to effective anti-poverty policy is absence of information. Capacity-building in regards to data and statistics acquisition is a significant challenge for the United Nations. The success of the previous MDGs and the contemporary SDGs cannot fully be measured due to the difficulties of data collection. Censuses are expensive and difficult to conduct, thus making it nearly impossible to have a full understanding of the situation on the group especially in rural areas which are difficult to reach. In response to this, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for a "data revolution" to help governments better track their progress towards the SDGs.¹⁹

¹⁶ David Gordon, "Indicators of Poverty and Hunger," 2005, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/ydiDavidGordon_poverty.pdf

¹⁷ The World Bank, "Poverty Overview" <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

¹⁸ Gupta, Akhil, "The construction of the global poor: an anthropological critique." UNESCO World Science Report 2010, (pp. 13-16), http://unescore-clic.org/system/files/upload/wssr_13-16.pdf.

¹⁹ Harris, Rich and Claire Provost, "Millennium Development Goals: big ideas, broken promises?" *The Guardian*, 24 September 2013,

Delegates to this committee should take into consideration the centrality of poverty to a number of the UN bodies, funds, and agencies and work together to reconsider how the world stages poverty.

The Trusteeship Council and the Palestinian question

Critics of the UN System like to point out the UN's relative lack of success in solving the question of what do with respect to Israel and Palestine. While Palestine has observer status in the UN, and the UN System has various missions to assist Palestine and its people, like UNRWA, there is still no concrete system in place to further craft a two-state solution or two resolve differences between Israel and Palestine. The early 2000s saw the development of the so-called Road Map for Peace, which called for the creation of an independent Palestine alongside Israel, along with terms and conditions for both entities to abide by to foster a lasting peace. The plan, introduced in 2002, quickly became a nonstarter for Israel due to the provision of freezing settlement development in the Occupied Territories.²⁰

One potential way to address the topic has been to revive the UN Trusteeship Council as an organ dealing with the Palestinian question exclusively. Originally founded as a means for the UN to provide means for trust territories established after World War I to reach self-determination, the Trusteeship has remained dormant for more than 20 years following Palau's transition to self-rule in 1994.²¹ The Trusteeship can meet at the request of the General Assembly or the Security Council, and could, in theory, be asked to take on the Palestinian question given its previous work. A similar proposal — placing Palestine under a UN trusteeship mandate — was first proposed in the late 1940s, following the British declaration of abandoning Mandatory Palestine ahead of Israel's creation.

Some scholars say the idea of modernizing the Trusteeship Council to tackle Palestine would not be difficult to implement. The UN Charter gives the Trusteeship broad ranging powers in its role to assist territories achieve independence, and could theoretically operate work to that aim with Palestine:

"The UN Charter articles dealing with the Trusteeship System are at least cognisant of the 'principle' of self-determination. Article 76(b) states that the progressive development of Trust Territories towards self-government and independence should take into account 'the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.' Furthermore, the Charter does not apparently see any conflict between trusteeship and self-determination, on the contrary the implication from Article 76(b) would seem to be that trusteeship is a vehicle through which this right can be realised. It would therefore appear that as with the notion of sovereignty, in Trusteeship Territories self-determination is a right held in suspension or

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/interactive/2013/sep/24/millennium-development-goals-data-interactive>

²⁰ Reynolds, Paul, "Powell visit highlights problems," BBC News, 12 May 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3020335.stm.

²¹ United Nations Trusteeship Council, <http://www.un.org/en/mainbodies/trusteeship/>.

abeyance until the Administering Authority can create the circumstances in which it can once more receive expression."²²

What could be considered tricky, though, is who exactly would allow the mandate to happen. As the terms for placing territories under trusteeship require the agreement of not only the people in said territory but also those who are administering the territory at that moment. Because Israel and the Palestinian Authority are at odds over which entity controls certain parts of land, it could be a lengthy process for the two to agree to placing specific parcels under trusteeship. Similar processes took place during the Timor-Leste's transition to democracy, wherein the United Nations was responsible for the administration of the country during an interim period following its separation from Indonesia and Portugal. Parker (2003) also notes that, in theory, a sovereign state could, in effect, "commit suicide" by voluntarily relinquishing sovereignty and placing itself under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, though for Palestine to willingly become a trusteeship in this manner seems unlikely.²³ Furthermore, Israel has never been elected to the Security Council and the treatment of the State of Israel appears at times to be quite different from the treatment of many other countries, including its neighbors. If ensuring proper geographic representation on the Security Council and throughout the UN System is vital to the successes of the UN itself, then improving the representation of Israel needs to be addressed in a timely manner.

"It's payback time at the United Abominations"²⁴

While it may seem immediately intuitive that international organizations composed of member states are inherently political entities, expectations for the UN System often seem to assume that politics will be left behind once delegates enter the building. While the preamble to the Charter begins with the famous phrase "We the peoples," the reality is that the UN System was founded by states and designed to meet the interests of states. The selection of a new Secretary-General frequently turns into a process dominated by the interests of the Permanent 5 (P-5) members of the Security Council. In the case of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, clearly stated US and related opposition to his reelection ultimately led him to not pursue a second term. Then US Secretary of State Madeline Albright famously quipped "that the United Nations wanted a secretary, not a general."²⁵ Referring to Kofi Annan, Boutros-Ghali's successor and the previous head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), including during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the wars in the former Yugoslavia, *The Economist* praised Annan for his collegiality, contrasting that with the "totalitarianism" of Boutros-Ghali.²⁶

²² Parker, Tom, "The ultimate intervention: revitalising the UN Trusteeship Council for the 21st century," 2003, http://www.bi.edu/ccfFiles/CEAS-Files/03-03The_Ultimate_Intervention.pdf.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Megadeth, *United Abominations* Roadrunner Records 2007.

²⁵ James O.C. Jonah, "Ki-moon as Key Player: The Secretary-General's Role in Peace and Security" *Harvard International Review* Spring 2011 p. 61.

²⁶ *The Economist*, "The best world club we have" November 20, 1997.

Selecting the Secretary-General

One way the United Nations has sought to reform itself is through the selection of its organizational head and most visible presence: the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General is elected to five-year terms, which are traditionally renewable for one additional term. Once nominations are solicited, the candidates are interviewed and feted by the Security Council. Candidates require nine votes from Security Council members, along with the concurrence of the permanent members, in order to move to the next round of selection by the General Assembly.²⁷ Historically, the Security Council selects one candidate it favors the most and advances that person to the General Assembly for selection; in a *de facto* sense, the Security Council selects United Nations secretaries-general insofar that no candidate the Security Council has presented has been lost an election in the General Assembly, and because all qualifying candidates require the, at least tacit, support of all of the Security Council's permanent members. In a typical election, member-states would nominate persons, typically men, for the role; usually, their nominees would be career diplomats or other government officials from their own countries. A lack of transparency was often associated with the election process: the Security Council's selections would be made following closed deliberations, and the General Assembly would simply be presented a candidate for approval. Nominally, geographic regions rotated the position between them to allow for greater representation at the top of the Secretariat.

Leading into the 2015 selection for a successor to Ban Ki-moon, to take office at the start of 2016, both groups inside and outside the UN called for a more open process to selecting a Secretary-General, as well as for women to be included amongst the candidates.²⁸ To that end, both the president of the General Assembly and the president of the Security Council wrote to every member-state, encouraging them to nominate candidates – especially women – for the role of Secretary-General ahead of the selection process.²⁹ Accordingly, seven of the 13 candidates nominated for consideration in the 2016 selection were women, including various foreign ministers, former prime ministers & veterans of the United Nations system.³⁰ In a break with tradition, candidates then embarked on a series of public events to make their cases to member-states, including hustings before the General Assembly³¹ and a number of televised debates, including one transmitted internationally by Qatari broadcaster Al Jazeera from the floor of the General Assembly.³² The Security Council then conducted a series of straw polls, where members

²⁷ A number of UN resolutions and documents take up the matter of appointing a Secretary-General; for reference, consult Chapter XV of the UN Charter and the most recent General Assembly resolution on the topic, A/RES/69/321 (2015).

²⁸ Somini Sengupta, "Secrecy reigns as U.N. seeks a new Secretary-General," *The New York Times*, 21 July 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/world/americas/united-nations-secretary-general.html>.

²⁹ Mogens Lyketoft and Samantha Power, to Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations, 15 December 2015, http://www.un.org/pga/70/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2015/08/15-Dec-2015_Appointment-of-Secretary-General-15-December-2015.pdf.

³⁰ "Portugal's Antonio Guterres set to be UN secretary general," *BBC News*, 5 October 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-37566898>.

³¹ "United Nations begins informal briefings to select next Secretary-General," *UN News Centre*, 12 April 2016, <https://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53662#.WYova4TytaR>.

³² "First ever UN Secretary General debate," *Al Jazeera*, 14 July 2016, <http://aljazeera.com/UNdebate>.

gauged relative support for the candidates on offer: members either could encourage, discourage or offer no opinion for a candidacy, with a "discourage" from a permanent member effectively sinking a nomination. The six straw polls, while technically informal, took place behind closed doors as had been done in years past; this led to consternation from General Assembly President Lykketoft, who had implored the Security Council to be more transparent in its dealings.³³ Eventually, the Security Council's deliberations led them to select Antonio Guterres, a former prime minister of Portugal, to serve as the next UN Secretary-General.³⁴ He was confirmed by acclamation by the General Assembly following, and took office on 1 January 2017, serving until 31 December 2021.³⁵

Despite falling short of one of its original goals – appointing a woman as Secretary-General – the movement to open up the process for the 2016 selection of a Secretary-General can widely be seen as a success. More candidates were made available to the Security Council for review, with more than half of them being women. Candidates could address member-states in open sessions of the General Assembly, and were able to make their cases to the international public in unprecedented ways. However, the selection process seen was not as transparent as some advocates would like, and was still quasi-democratic in that the Security Council by practice dictates the System's head. Further explorations in opening the selection process could take place, such as making the Security Council's straw polls public, by encouraging further debates & meetings as seen in the 2016 selection or by perhaps reforming the process in which the position is selected. However, as secretaries-general commonly serve two consecutive terms (with apologies to Boutros Boutros-Ghali), the earliest opportunity to see such changes may not come until 2026.

At least they can set a bad example...? The UN Human Rights Council

Arguments about the ineffectiveness and hypocrisies within the UN System often include criticisms of the Human Rights Council (HRC). Composed of 47 countries that serve staggered 3-year terms, the Human Rights Council serves as the perfect vehicle against which countries can launch their rhetorical broadsides about the lack of commitment by the UN and by various member states to upholding and protecting human rights. Saudi Arabia's recent election to the Human Rights Council is being derided both for criticisms of Saudi Arabia's human rights policies and record as well as the apparent vote-trading between Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.³⁶ In recent months, human rights groups and various governments have also condemned the elections of Kyrgyzstan, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela to the Human Rights Council (HRC).³⁷ In turn, many of these governments have criticized the human rights records of Western

³³ Mogens Lykketoft, to Permanent Members and Permanent Observers to the United Nations, 21 July 2016, https://www.un.org/pga/70/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2015/08/20-July_Security-Council-Straw-Polls-on-SG-candidates.pdf

³⁴ S/RES/2311 (2016).

³⁵ A/71/L.4 (2016).

³⁶ Sharri Markson, "UK deal to back Saudi Arabia for the UN Human Rights Council Exposed" *The Australian* September 29, 2015.

³⁷ Lucy Westcott, "Rights Group Criticizes Election of UAE, Venezuela, and Kyrgyzstan to UN Human Rights Council" *Newsweek* October 29, 2015.

governments, including France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In early January 2016, the UN special rapporteur for human rights in the Palestinian Territories, Makarim Wibisono, submitted his resignation, effective March 31, 2016, from the post to the Human Rights Council because Israel refused to grant him a visa and access to the Gaza Strip and West Bank; the Israeli government praised Wibisono's "personal integrity" but criticized the Human Rights Council (HRC) as being highly biased and lacking an appropriate sense of "balance" in its investigations and resolutions.³⁸

Other issues

Two other criticisms that are largely leveled at the UN deal with its record of transparency and the actions of UN System employees while in the field. All too often, allegations of misconduct are levied against UN employees, ranging from the spread of cholera in Haiti³⁹ to sexual assault and abuse⁴⁰ to corruption and money laundering.⁴¹

Reporting mechanisms for whistleblowers could be enhanced, with protective measures put in place for those reporting misdoings. Agencies could work toward increasing transparency of their practices, making financial statements and meeting minutes more readily accessible. Disciplinary procedures for employees who have broken policies and procedures, both internally and externally, could be clearly spelled out both for those inside and outside the UN System. UN officials could cooperate with local law enforcement and judicial systems when allegations of criminal or otherwise untoward conduct are made, and could not seek to obstruct investigations thereof.

Conclusions

Delegates to the General Assembly Fifth Committee may wish to analyze the most recent "Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly" prior to and during their deliberations.⁴² Paraphrasing Churchill's quoting of a predecessor, it could be said the United Nations is the worst system for solving the world's issues — except for all others that have been tried before it. The UN System is imperfect, but there are ways for it to be reformed in a positive way to improve its functions and its mandates to assist those in need. Figuring out what reforms are most pressing — and the most advantageous way to make those reforms happen — is the challenge.

³⁸ Isabel Kershner, "UN Rights Monitor for Palestinian Territories Resigns" *New York Times* January 4, 2016.

³⁹ Roos, Robert, "Cholera has struck more than 6% of Haitians," CIDRAP, 9 January 2013, <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2013/01/cholera-has-struck-more-6-haitians>.

⁴⁰ UN News Centre, "Fresh allegations of sexual abuse made against UN peacekeepers in Central African Republic," 5 January 2016, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52941#.VoweSPkrJaR>.

⁴¹ *The Economist*, "Rolling up the culprits," 13 March 2008, <http://www.economist.com/node/10853611>.

⁴² United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly" A/71/1007 August 7, 2017. The full report may be accessed at: <https://undocs.org/A/71/1007>

Guiding questions

Has your country taken any specific stance on UN reform? What areas of focus has it sought to address?

Has your country sought to expand and/or enlarge the Security Council? What changes to the Security Council membership and/or powers does your country believe to be most needed and plausible?

What kinds of contributions does your country make to the UN System, in both financial and personnel terms?

What are the priorities for your country as well as for the UN System and the global community at large in selecting the successor to Ban Ki-moon?

Resolutions

UN General Assembly (UNGA), "Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly" A/RES/71/323 September 8, 2017.

UN General Assembly (UNGA), "Revitalizing the work of the General Assembly" A/RES/69/321 September 22, 2015.

UN General Assembly (UNGA), "Revitalizing the work of the General Assembly" A/RES/68/307 September 8, 2014.

UN General Assembly (UNGA), "Strengthening of the United Nations System" A/RES/51/241 August 22, 1997.

Reports

UN General Assembly (UNGA), "Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly" A/71/1007 August 7, 2017.

UN General Assembly (UNGA), "Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly" A/69/1007 September 3, 2015.