Report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System

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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

REPORT OF THE OPEN-ENDED HIGH-LEVEL WORKING GROUP ON THE
STRENGTHENING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

1. At the 107th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, on 14 September 1995, the President of the General Assembly introduced under agenda item 10, "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", a draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system" (A/49/L.68). The draft resolution was adopted without a vote as resolution 49/252 of 14 September 1995.

2. By resolution 49/252 the General Assembly established the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. The mandate of the Working Group is set out in resolution 49/252, which reads as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Recognizing that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations is an occasion for re-examination and strengthening of the United Nations system, as the United Nations prepares for the challenges of the twenty-first century,

"Determined to strengthen the role, capacity, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system and thus improve its performance in order to realize the full potential of the Organization, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, and to respond more effectively to the needs and aspirations of the Member States,

"Conscious of the importance of a viable financial basis and adequate and predictable resources for the effective functioning of the United Nations system,

"Encouraged by the ongoing efforts to improve the administration, management and performance of the United Nations system,

"Noting that important work is already proceeding in the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Development, the High-Level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council, the Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace and the Consultations on Prospective New Modalities for Financing Operational Activities for Development, all of which report to the General Assembly,

"Noting also that the Secretary-General and a number of United Nations bodies, as well as independent commissions, institutions, scholars and other experts, have studied the United Nations system and recommended a variety of measures designed to revitalize, strengthen and reform the United Nations system,

"1. Decides to establish an open-ended high-level working group of the General Assembly, under the chairmanship of the President of the General Assembly and with two vice-chairmen to be elected by the working

group, and that the group may establish, as necessary, sub-groups open to the participation of all Member States;

"2. <u>Decides also</u> that the working group will undertake a thorough review of the studies and reports of the relevant United Nations bodies and submissions of Member States and observers, as well as studies and reports of independent commissions, non-governmental organizations, institutions, scholars and other experts, on subjects relating to the revitalization, strengthening and reform of the United Nations system, to be selected by the working group with the assistance of the Secretariat, and, without in any way duplicating or impeding the work of the other working groups referred to above, specify by consensus those ideas and proposals drawn therefrom that it concludes are appropriate for the purpose of revitalization, strengthening and reform of the United Nations system in fulfilment of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations;

"3. <u>Requests</u> the bureau of the working group to maintain regular contacts with the bureaux of the working groups mentioned above;

"4. <u>Requests</u> the working group to commence its substantive work during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly and submit a report on its work before the end of that session;

"5. <u>Requests</u> the Secretary-General to provide, within existing resources, to be supplemented by a trust fund to which voluntary contributions could be solicited, full assistance to the working group, including the facilities and support services necessary for it to conduct its work;

"6. <u>Decides</u> to include in the provisional agenda of its fiftieth session an item entitled 'Strengthening of the United Nations system'."

3. The Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System held 3 organizational meetings from 14 September to 1 December 1995 and 44 substantive meetings from 15 January to 25 July 1996.

4. At its 1st organizational meeting, on 14 September 1995, chaired by Mr. Amara Essy, President of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, the Working Group elected Mr. Colin Keating (New Zealand) and Mr. Prakash Shah (India) Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group.

5. At its 2nd organizational meeting, on 9 October 1995, the Working Group, on the proposal of its chairman, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, decided that a paper should be prepared indicating initial areas of discussion. Accordingly, a conference room paper was prepared by the Vice-Chairmen and submitted to the Working Group (WGUNS/CRP.1). (A full list of the conference room papers considered by the Working Group appears in annex I.)

6. At its 3rd organizational meeting, on 1 December 1995, the Working Group decided that, following an orientation discussion in January 1996, the first specific areas for discussion would be:

(a)   The General Assembly;

(b)   The Secretariat.

It also decided to keep open the question of taking up other additional subjects under "Other matters".

7.   The Vice-Chairmen subsequently prepared suggestions for the programme of work of the Working Group. These were set out in conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.2 and were approved by the Working Group on 16 January 1995 at the conclusion of the orientation discussion.

8.   During its deliberations throughout the year, the Working Group was able to draw on conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.3 and its addenda, prepared by the Secretariat in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 49/252. These documents constitute a compendium of recommendations drawn from the views of Member States, the Secretary-General, and also from studies and reports on subjects relating to the revitalization, strengthening and reform of the United Nations system prepared by independent experts and commissions.

9.   At its second substantive session from 12 to 16 February 1996, the Working Group held nine meetings at which it considered issues related to the revitalization of the General Assembly. The Working Group had before it a conference room paper prepared by the Vice-Chairmen (WGUNS/CRP.4), which provided a revised and more detailed set of questions on the subject of the General Assembly, and conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.5 prepared by the Secretariat on actions taken towards the implementation of Assembly resolutions 47/233 of 17 August 1993 and 48/264 of 29 July 1994.

10.   At its 9th meeting, on 14 February, the Working Group heard statements by the President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, and the President of the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session, Mr. Samuel R. Insanally, who discussed the functions and role of the office of the President of the General Assembly. The Working Group also received a letter from the President of the General Assembly (WGUNS/CRP.11) concerning the budgetary provision for the office of the President of the General Assembly.

11.   At its third substantive session from 11 to 15 March 1996, the Working Group held nine meetings at which it considered issues related to the Secretariat. The Working Group had before it conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.6, prepared by the Vice-Chairmen, which provided a revised and more detailed set of questions on the subject of the Secretariat.

12.   At its 15th meeting, on 11 March, the Secretary-General made a statement to the Working Group (see annex III) in which he addressed, inter alia, the important role of the Secretariat, the need to make improvements to strengthen the Organization and the measures already taken to that end. The Secretary-General also answered questions from delegations.

13.   At its fourth substantive session from 15 to 17 April 1996, the Working Group held six meetings on the subject of the General Assembly, building on the discussion at its previous sessions. The Working Group had before it conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.7, prepared by the Vice-Chairmen. The Working Group also addressed conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.8, which was prepared by the Secretariat at the request of delegations, on the feasibility of holding public hearings on issues dealt with by the Working Group. It was noted with regret by

the Working Group that limitations of time and financial resources meant it would not be possible to hold hearings for public input during 1996, but the matter will be reconsidered, if necessary, by the Working Group in its future work. In this connection, the Working Group noted that conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.3 and its addenda also contained recommendations from non-governmental sources and accordingly the Working Group had before it valuable input from the wider community.

14. At its fifth substantive session from 28 to 30 May 1996, the Working Group held five meetings at which it again considered issues related to the Secretariat. The Working Group had before it conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.9 prepared by the Vice-Chairmen.

15. At its sixth substantive session from 25 to 27 June 1996, the Working Group held six meetings at which it held further detailed and focused discussions on the subjects of both the General Assembly and the Secretariat. The Working Group had before it a conference room paper prepared by the Vice-Chairmen (WGUNS/CRP.10), which was a synthesis of previous papers and which built on earlier discussions in the Working Group.

16. At its seventh substantive session from 23 to 25 July 1996, the Working Group held five meetings and concluded its discussions for the current session of the General Assembly. The Working Group had before it the draft report prepared by the Vice-Chairmen, which reflects the progress which has been made by the Working Group to date in carrying out its mandate.

17. Annex II to the present document is a revised conference room paper (WGUNS/CRP.12) which will be the basis for further discussion in the Working Group during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. This annex, which is the latest working text of the Working Group, reflects the discussions in the Group. It indicates those issues discussed in the Working Group on which there is a convergence of views and those issues on which further discussion is required before convergence develops. However, there are variations in the extent of the convergence, which does not, at this stage, constitute consensus, nor agreement on specific language. Accordingly, during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly discussions will be based on conference room paper WGUNS/CRP.12, and on other matters which may be taken up by the Working Group in accordance with its mandate.

18. Included among the issues on which further discussion is required are four items which were referred to the Working Group by the General Assembly in resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 (see paras. 19, 73, 89 and 90 of resolution 50/227). Owing to limited time and its existing programme of work, the Working Group was not able to discuss these issues properly during the fiftieth session. They would need to be discussed in further detail at subsequent meetings of the Group.

19. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the General Assembly adopt the following draft decision:

The General Assembly, having considered the report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/252 of 14 September 1995:

(a) Takes note of the report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System;

(b)   Decides that the Working Group should continue its work on the
basis of the mandate contained in resolution 49/252 and taking into account
views expressed by Member States, submit a report to the General Assembly
at its fifty-first session.

Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening
of the United Nations system

List of conference room papers

Reference	Subject*
WGUNS/CRP.1	Initial areas for discussion
WGUNS/CRP.2	Suggestions for the programme of work from the Co-Vice-Chairmen
WGUNS/CRP.3	Compendium: Chapter I (General Assembly), Chapter II (Secretariat), Bibliography
WGUNS/CRP.3/Add.1	Compendium: Addendum to Chapter I including comments and proposals by Member States on the revitalization of the General Assembly, Addendum to the bibliography
WGUNS/CRP.3/Add.2	Compendium: Addendum to Chapter I, Addendum to Chapter II including comments and proposals by Member States on the strengthening of the Secretariat
WGUNS/CRP.3/Add.3	Compendium: Chapter III (Economic and social issues: Coordination within the United Nations system and among United Nations-related bodies)
WGUNS/CRP.3/Add.4	Compendium: Chapter IV (The United Nations, regional organizations, civil society, and parliaments)
WGUNS/CRP.4	Questions on the subject of the General Assembly
WGUNS/CRP.5	Actions taken towards the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 47/233 and 48/264
WGUNS/CRP.6	Questions on the subject of the Secretariat
WGUNS/CRP.7	The General Assembly
WGUNS/CRP.8	The feasibility of holding public hearings
WGUNS/CRP.9	The Secretariat

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*   NB: All conference room papers were not issued as official United Nations documents. The listing here is according to the subject-matter of the conference room paper, not according to its title. All conference room papers were issued under the title "Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System".

WGUNS/CRP.10	A synthesis of papers on the General Assembly and the Secretariat
WGUNS/CRP.11	Letter from the President of the General Assembly
WGUNS/CRP.12	Annex II to the report of the Working Group

Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System

Sections in this document which are indicated by underlining reflect those issues on which further detailed discussion is particularly required.

1. Purpose

- The Working Group has approached its work from the perspective that its mandate for strengthening the United Nations system, derived from General Assembly Resolution 49/252, is to better enable the United Nations to fulfil its Charter mandate and to meet the aspirations of its members. It has focussed on improving the capacity of the General Assembly to discharge effectively its functions, role and powers, and of the Secretariat to carry out effectively and efficiently the mandates of intergovernmental processes with the necessary transparency and accountability. It has not seen its mandate as responding to the current financial crisis.

- The Working Group has proceeded on the assumption that adequate resources will continue to be provided to support the United Nations system. It has also proceeded on the assumption that any Secretariat resources that are freed up as a result of strengthening measures proposed by the Working Group should be reallocated according to priorities set by the General Assembly, particularly to the economic and social areas.

2. Report of the Secretary-General

- The Secretary-General's report should be available not later than 30 days prior to the opening of the General Debate in all official languages of the organisation so as to permit due consideration.

- The introduction to the report of the Secretary-General on the "Work of the Organisation" should be in the nature of an Executive Summary highlighting the main issues.

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* The present annex is being published as previously circulated in document WGUNS/CRP.12

- The Secretary-General's report should be discussed in the Plenary immediately after the General Debate. The debate should be used as an opportunity for an assessment of the extent to which mandates have been fulfilled as well as for priority setting by member States in the context of major political, economic and social, administrative, and financial issues on its Agenda.

- The Secretary-General should incorporate a new forward looking section in his report on the "Work of the Organisation". It could describe the political and economic objectives for the Organisation in the year ahead in the context of the work plan for the Secretariat in the coming year bearing in mind that responsibility for establishing priorities rests with the member states.

- The President of the General Assembly should assess the debate on this item. In the light of that assessment informal consultations should be held, under the Chairmanship of the President or one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, to discuss the required action by the Assembly on the basis of the debate on the report.

- The Plenary could refer some areas of the Report for more detailed consideration in some of the Committees.

- <u>The question of requesting the Secretary-General to orally introduce the Report needs further consideration bearing in mind Rule 70 of the Rules of Procedure.</u>

3. **General Assembly Consideration of Reports of other Organs including the Security Council**

- The item "Report of the Security Council" should continue to be considered in the Plenary.

- The President of the General Assembly should assess the debate on this item and consider the need for further consideration of the Report of the Security Council. In the light of that assessment informal consultations should be held, after the Plenary debate, under the chairmanship of the President or one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, to discuss the need and content of any action by the Assembly based on the debate.

- The item would not be closed but would remain open to enable further discussion as necessary during the year, bearing in mind, inter alia, the possibility of additional reports.

- The monthly Forecast of the Programme of Work of the Security Council should be

circulated for the information of the General Assembly.

- Taking into account Resolution 48/264 the possibilities for stimulating a more interactive relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly need to be further considered.

- Similar arrangements should be used for consideration of reports of the ICJ.

4. Timing of the Plenary Session

- The previous session would be formally closed each year in the first week of September. The new session would be formally opened in the same week with the election of the President, Vice Presidents and Chairs of Main Committees (the General Committee). The General Committee would then meet as soon as possible after its election and would present its report to Plenary in mid September.

- The General Committee should each year prior to the closure of the session prepare recommendations based on its experience for the incoming General Committee.

- The Plenary would reconvene in mid September to consider the report of the General Committee.

5. The General Debate

- There would continue to be only one General Debate each year, beginning, as at present, in the third week of September.

- The preparation of the Speakers' List for the General Debate would be based on the following principles:

  a. the General Debate should be organised over a period of two weeks so as to maximise possibilities for inter-ministerial contacts;

  b. member states would be invited to indicate four preferences for speaking times;

  c. member states wishing to organise and participate in group meetings during the General Debate period should be encouraged to coordinate their responses to the request for preferences and to indicate this transparently in their response;

  d. the Secretariat would be requested to prepare a Speakers' List based on existing traditions and expressions of preferences to best accommodate Members needs;

e. at any meeting priority would be Heads of State, Heads of Government, Ministers, others;

f. the Speakers' List for each day would be completed and no speakers would be rolled over to the next day notwithstanding the implications for hours of work.

6. Time Limits

-   There would be no time limits or specified themes for the General Debate but the General Assembly would indicate a voluntary guideline of up to 20 minutes for each statement.

-   Outside the General Debate there would be a 15 minute time limit in Plenary and in the Committees.

7. The Agenda

-   The procedure for inscribing or removing an item from the Agenda should continue to be as at present.

-   Bearing in mind Rule 81 of the Rules of Procedure the requirements for reopening an agenda item which the General Assembly had decided was completed would continue to be as at present. However a clear statement of the process which delegations should follow was thought desirable. In particular a delegation wishing to reopen an agenda item should approach the President of the General Assembly with a written request. The President would then undertake soundings to ascertain whether the request enjoyed wide support. It would be for the President to decide in the light of these soundings whether to schedule in the Journal a meeting of the General Assembly to consider the question of reopening the item bearing in mind the requirements of Rule 81.

-   The Plenary should take further steps to rationalise and streamline the agenda based on the Guidelines on the Rationalisation of the Agenda of the General Assembly agreed to in Annex I of Resolution 48/264, and in particular greater use of clustering, biennialisation or triennialisation of Agenda items should take place and items that could be considered at a later session should be identified.

-   Agenda items which could be considered in Committees should be referred to main committees rather than Plenary.

-   Main committees, at the time of preparing their reports to the Plenary, should give specific attention to rationalising their future agenda and consider recommending any

possible clustering, biennialisation or triennialisation of items.

8. Organisation of Work

- The General Assembly is the highest political body of the Organisation, where all Member States are represented. Consideration of items directly in Plenary should be reserved for urgent issues or issues of major political importance bearing in mind paras 1 and 2 of Annex I of Resolution 48/264.

- The President of the General Assembly, with a view to ensuring that there is a systematic and transparent process for participation by delegations in discussions on action to be taken on items considered directly in Plenary should assess the debate in plenary and, where appropriate, organise informal consultations under the Chairmanship of the President or one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly to discuss the need for and content of any action.

- The Secretariat would ensure, in consultation with the President, that priority is accorded to the availability of a meeting room and services to facilitate these consultations.

- All Main Committees would hold brief organisational sessions in mid September once the Plenary had taken decisions on the Agenda. Bureaus of the Main Committees would meet earlier to draw up recommendations on organisation and programme of work.

- The Main Committees should meet in substantive session only after the end of the General Debate.

- The number of reports requested should be rationalised where possible so as to permit more focussed consideration of issues. All bodies should exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports, bearing in mind paragraphs 6 and 7 of resolution 50/206 C, and should consider integrating biennialising or triennialising the presentation of reports.

9. The General Committee

- The organisational principle of the General Committee should be participation. Accordingly the General Committee should allow for more effective participation by non-members in its deliberations. The process of decision making would continue to be as at present.

10. Subordinate Machinery

- The question of subordinate machinery requires further discussion. There were different views on merging the First Committee and the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee. A possible compromise might be for these two Committees, during the fall session of the General Assembly to meet in a sequential manner.

- Whether the Special and Ad Hoc Committees should continue or be subsumed in the relevant Main Committee should be further considered during 1997.

- Through its Resolution 50/227, adopted on 24 May 1996, the General Assembly directed that "The Role and working methods of the Committee for Programme and Coordination should be considered by the High-Level Open-Ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System within the context of General Assembly decision 47/454 of 23 December 1992, with a view to finding ways of improving programme coordination functions throughout the United Nations system. In this context, consideration needs to be given, inter alia, to the roles and responsibilities of the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination with respect to coordination". There was some discussion in the Working Group during its meeting from June 25-27, based, inter alia, on the experience of the June meeting of CPC. More detailed discussions are necessary in the future meetings of the Working Group, including on the manner in which report of CPC could be acted upon in ECOSOC and the General Assembly.

- In light of the recent expansion of the Conference on Disarmament the role and timing of meetings of United Nations Disarmament Commission may need to be discussed further.

- UNSCEAR should be asked to submit its report to IAEA and WHO as well as UNGA. UNGA would discuss its report along with any IAEA and WHO evaluation of the report.

11. Role of the President of the General Assembly

- In order to assist the President in the discharge of his responsibilities, the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General after consultation with the President, to include in the next programme budget a proposal for adequate resources to be made available to the President, particularly through enhanced administrative and personnel support in the President's office.

- The President of the General Assembly should be encouraged to take appropriate opportunities to utilise the potential of the Office of the President, consistent with the

Charter and the mandates of the General Assembly, to advance the purposes and principles of the Organisation including regular consultations between the President of the General Assembly and Presidents of other organs, particularly the Security Council and ECOSOC.

12. Technology

- The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to pursue an Information Technology Plan with a range of options for providing all Missions and wider public on-line access to documents and appropriate United Nations information. Further efforts in this direction could be pursued, within a specified time frame, in the context of the Ad Hoc Open Ended Working Group of ECOSOC on the need to harmonise and improve United Nations information systems. Developing countries, and other interested countries, should be assisted in making full use of this potential access. Adequate provision should be made for training of delegates. Facility for such access by delegations within the UN premises should also be explored. Availability of information in this manner would need to be ensured in all official languages of the UN.

13. Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society

- The United Nations is an intergovernmental organisation and this is reflected particularly in its decision making. However, the achievement of its purposes would benefit from increased interaction with nongovernmental organisations and civil society.

- The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to develop further the cooperation with the International Parliamentary Union and report to the General Assembly.

- The question of giving practical effect to links between Civil Society and the General Assembly needs further discussion, including the establishment and manner of administration of a voluntary Trust Fund to facilitate participation by NGOs from developing countries so as to enable a more balanced NGO participation.

- By its Resolution 50/227 adopted on 24 May 1996, the General Assembly encouraged the High-Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System to consider, in the context of the debate on all the Main Committees of the General Assembly, promoting the use of innovative mechanisms, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, such as panel discussions with delegations, and interactive debates, with the active participation of Secretariat and agency representatives, as well as outside experts. This needs to be further considered in

<u>future meetings of the Working Group.</u>

- <u>In the context of innovative mechanisms consideration might be given as a first step to requesting the Secretary-General to convene a Civil Society Forum which would be an informal gathering. It could be chaired by the President of the General Assembly or the Secretary-General or his representative. NGOs from each member state might nominate a limited number of participants. NGOs would be encouraged to establish a transparent process for nominating these participants and would inform the Secretary-General of the processes utilised. A Trust Fund could be established for funding NGO representatives from developing countries. Interested donors and NGOs from developed countries would be encouraged to contribute to the Trust Fund. Statements to the Forum might be made by representatives of the Bureaus of main committees. The participants of the Civil Society Forum might select a fixed number of representatives to observe the open sessions of all the main committees of the General Assembly. The Bureaus of the main committees would be encouraged to facilitate appropriate informal arrangements, perhaps in a seminar environment, for the observers to be invited to present NGO views to delegations in each main committee.</u>

14. System Wide Coordination

- The Secretary-General's report on the "Work of the Organisation" should contain an annex elaborating the costs and activities of all bodies of the United Nations System located both at and outside New York to assist member states' understanding of system wide issues including fulfilment of mandates and opportunities for maximising results through enhanced interaction between different parts of the system.

- The report of ECOSOC to the General Assembly should contain a detailed evaluation of the report of the ACC.

15. Public Image of the United Nations

- The Committee on Information along with the DPI, and the ACC and its component institutions and organisations, should discuss and submit to the General Assembly concrete plans and recommendations for enhancing the public image of the United Nations in all countries highlighting in particular its achievements in the area of social and economic development, peace and security, international law, communications, promotion and protection of human rights.

16. Mechanisms for the General Assembly to Ensure Oversight and Accountability of the Secretariat

The Secretariat should be held more strictly accountable for achievement of mandates within allocated budgets. In order to achieve this:

- Instead of one programme performance report in every biennium, currently brought out by the Secretary-General, the Secretariat should be directed to present separately for each programme area an annual performance report clearly bringing out targets and achievements, work that remains to be done, and also accounting for expenditure under the relevant budget areas. The main committees would assess the fulfilment of mandates by the departments servicing their substantive work with reference to the medium term plan and on the basis of these performance reports. The reports would be considered initially in the relevant main committees along with relevant JIU, OIOS and External Audit Reports and then coordinated in the Fifth Committee and reported to Plenary. A consolidated budget performance report would continue to be required each year as at present for consideration by the Fifth Committee.

- There should be more detailed and structured examination in the main committees of the relevant reports of the Board of Auditors/JIU and OIOS.

- Accountability and intergovernmental oversight would be facilitated by periodic coordination meetings between the Board of Auditors, the ACABQ and the JIU with input from the Office of Internal Oversight Services

- Question time opportunities in all Main Committees would enable a dialogue with responsible Secretariat officials to enable assessment of fulfilment of mandates, productivity and related issues.

- for the Secretariat to operate efficiently in fulfilling mandates, micromanagement of the Secretariat by the General Assembly should be avoided;

17. The Budget Process and Fulfilment of Mandates

- to ensure better transparency and accountability the Medium Term Plan should be linked to the budget process;

- the basic framework of the present budget process as agreed in GA resolution 41/213 should remain unchanged.

- The Secretary-General should have authority without prejudice to fulfilment of mandates to redeploy, as necessary, within budget areas to be defined the human and financial resources necessary to fulfil mandates.

- There is need for further discussion on whether the budgetary process could focus on determining priorities at a higher level of generality by allocating financial resources to a fewer number of major budget areas which should correspond to the major structural clusters in the organisation. The Working Group would concern itself with deciding the major points of principle leaving various technical details to be finalised in the Fifth Committee.

18. **Areas for More Intensive Work by Oversight Machinery**

- the relevant bodies should request the external and internal oversight machinery to give early attention to the following areas and report thereon periodically to the General Assembly;

a. practice and procedures in employment of consultants;

b. practice and procedures in short term contract employment;

c. practice and procedures with respect to recruitment;

d. productivity gains actually achieved from investment and technology and the impact of postponement/deferral of technological systems upgrade on long term functioning of the Organisation;

e. practice and procedures for senior level appointments;

f. practice and procedures for procurement and award of contracts;

g. an evaluation of conflict of interest issues particularly for personnel dealing with employment decisions and award of procurement and contracts.

19. **The Secretary-General**

- the process of selection of the Secretary-General should be made more transparent;

- the role of the General Assembly in the selection process should be enhanced;

- decisions regarding the manner of selection of the Secretary-General and term of office should not apply this year.

- The proposal for a short-list of potential candidates to be established before discussion in the Security Council of a recommendation to the General Assembly, for regional rotation in the appointment of the Secretary-General to be formalised and

suggestions regarding amending Article 97 of the Charter, non-use of veto by the Permanent Members of Security Council in the selection of the Secretary-General, establishment of a search committee comprising both the General Assembly and the Security Council need to be discussed further.

- The length of the term or terms of office of the Secretary-General needs further discussions including suggestions regarding the need for a mechanism to do mid-term assessment of a Secretary-General's performance.

20.   Senior Management including the Question of Deputy Secretaries-General

- the shape of Senior Management structure cannot be considered in isolation from the overall structure of the organisation, desired lines of authority and decision- making.

- The organisation should have a clear pyramidal structure. To this end, the functions and number of USGs, SRSGs and ASGs should be reviewed by the Secretary-General and streamlined, and lines of authority and decision-making made transparent.

- A Senior Management Group should be constituted and institutionalised for coordination and decision-making.

- The Charter principle of equitable geographical representation, which is applied to the organisation in overall terms, should also be reflected in appointments to senior positions.

- The GA decision that no member states have a right for their nationals to hold particular senior positions in the Secretariat should be reiterated.

- Without implying the creation of any formal role of Acting Secretary-General the Secretary-General should be requested, when absent from Headquarters, to designate one USG as responsible for Headquarters coordination and for this to be notified to delegations.

- There is no agreement regarding the establishment of an additional layer of Deputy Secretary-General, or the number of such posts. There seems to be interest in an approach based on clustering departments under senior managers. Particular support exists for an enhanced high level role for a senior manager responsible for International Economic Cooperation and Development, but interest was also expressed in other such roles. The number, specific scope and designation of senior managers need to be further discussed, including the various proposals for one, two or four Deputy Secretaries-General.

21. General Staffing Issues

a. the value of the career international civil service for professional staff should be reaffirmed;

b. the role for term contracts for certain categories of staff should be confirmed;

c. The Secretary-General should be encouraged to ensure a judicious mix of contract and tenure appointments so as to have an appropriate balance between institutional memory, long-term commitment and independence, and ability to bring in fresh insights, and expertise, and dismiss non-performing staff.

d. concern exists about short term appointments being used as a back door entry to career positions and this category of staff should be reviewed;

e. staff development and training should be encouraged along with a cost-effective common training system be developed for the Secretariat and Funds and Programmes;

f. consistent with the provisions of the Charter gender balance should be established as an equal priority within the organisation with geographical representation and in achieving gender balance, equitable geographical distribution should also be ensured and vice versa. The requirements of the Charter should be implemented at all levels, including at the senior levels;

g. the importance of ensuring that the quality of language services does not deteriorate and is enhanced, should be reiterated.

22. Personnel Management and Individual Performance Appraisal

- The Fifth Committee should be informed annually of comparative statistics relating to the performance appraisal process.

- The system of in-career promotion should be made more transparent. To this end a planned process of rotation between different Departments, where appropriate, and between Headquarters and the field level, to enhance experience and skills should be developed.

- The Secretary-General could also be encouraged to consider an annual statement on staff productivity, including the impact of technological improvement on such productivity.

23. Secretariat Remuneration

- the General Assembly should complete its consideration of the recommendations of the ICSC as soon as possible;

- all future increases in remuneration for staff should be linked to performance. Remuneration should not increase for any reason for any staff member not performing at or above the average level as identified through the performance evaluation process;

- the integrity of the performance evaluation process should be subject to audit from time to time and comparative statistics should be maintained for review by the UNGA if requested; and

- the General Assembly should reiterate that topping up of remuneration of their nationals in any way by member states is not acceptable and encourage OIOS to report on this matter.

- the question of competitive remuneration in general requires further discussion as does the question raised by the General Assembly in Resolution 50/227 (para 90) of uniform and maximum terms of service for heads of programmes and funds and other bodies.

24. Independence of Secretariat

With regard to the composition and independence of the Secretariat:

- there is need for on-going efforts consistent with Article 101 to broaden geographical representation, including at senior levels.

- compliance with Article 100 (2) is of fundamental importance and it would be timely to call on member states scrupulously to observe Article 100 (2) and request the Secretary-General to prepare guidelines on what constitutes acceptable representations to him and his staff on appointments.

- Secretariat guidelines for staff members on financial interests should include a requirement at all levels from Director and above for specified financial disclosures upon appointment.

- positions funded from extra budgetary resources or personnel with personnel on loan from member states are only acceptable on temporary basis for specific short term projects or pending a transition, which should be accomplished promptly, to budgetary posts funded from assessed contributions. Guidelines to ensure that such staff arrangements maintain consistency with Articles 100 and 101 should be developed.

Statement by the Secretary-General to the Working Group
on 11 March 1996

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to address this Working Group as part of a dialogue that I hope we will continue in the months ahead.

The task before you - and the other Working Groups of the General Assembly charged with various aspects of reform and restructuring - is a crucial one. It is, in the words of the Heads of State and Government who gathered in New York to mark the fiftieth anniversary, to "give to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established".

The challenge is, in the first instance, political. The process must be driven by substantive rather than procedural considerations.

For 50 years, the peoples of the United Nations have sought progress through their world Organization. Today's United Nations is the product of generations of work by dedicated men and women. It is the practical manifestation of a dream of universal solidarity and progress for all peoples.

Today, the process of globalization is accelerating. The forces of fragmentation are at the same time intensifying. These phenomena, and the new opportunities and new global problems they are creating, make the need for an effective United Nations greater than ever.

Our agenda - containing conflicts, redressing inequalities, combating poverty - is crucial. The United Nations will be increasingly important in addressing this agenda. But change is needed because we have learned that:

- we must be clear about our priorities;

- we must shape our missions to our means;

- we must not spread ourselves too thin; and

- we must act not only on the symptoms but also on the root causes of problems.

Change should be perceived:

- not as an imposition;

- not as compromising objectives of the United Nations Charter;

- not as affecting basic directions;

- but as adapting structures and methods to the new global environment we have helped to bring about, and in the light of the lessons we have learned in the process.

To be effective, reform must be rooted in consensus on the role of the Organization and its priorities in this new global environment. I believe such a consensus is beginning to emerge.

In the political and security area, the process of reflection, to which I sought to contribute through "An Agenda for Peace" and the Supplement I issued in January 1995, appears to be gaining momentum.

In the economic and social area, the continuum of major global conferences is forging a new consensus on global challenges and the role of the United Nations in addressing them. These conferences are giving impetus to the intergovernmental discussions on "An Agenda for Development", under the aegis of the General Assembly.

Building on this emerging vision for a United Nations of the future, I want to share with you my assessment of the situation as I see it.

We need a streamlined, more coherent and responsive <u>Secretariat</u>. It must possess the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. It must be structured to provide the most integrated and effective support possible to Member States and the intergovernmental machinery.

We need <u>intergovernmental machinery</u> that is less fragmented, better able to affect global forces, and more open to civil society. It should operate consistently at the political level, which ultimately shapes all areas of the Organization's mandate.

And we need an <u>Organization</u> in which all principal organs function in the balance and harmony envisioned by the Charter. This means an Organization with a clear sense of its comparative advantages and priorities, conscious of the linkages among all dimensions of its mission, and where tasks and means, mandates and resources, are effectively matched.

How do we go forward on all of these fronts?

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A look at the record will reveal that significant reforms have been taking place within the Secretariat over the past four years. Advancing and managing this process of change has been a key objective since I took office.

Early in 1992 I initiated a process of consolidating related Secretariat functions and activities. This reduced the number of high-level posts by 23 per cent, from 48 to 37.

I pursued this effort to create a simpler structure and clearer lines of responsibility in the reorganization which I proposed to the General Assembly in 1993. In the political area, the diffused structures existing at that time were simplified and reorganized in two departments: political affairs and peace-keeping operations. Reorganization in the economic and social area enhanced the capacity of the Secretariat for data gathering and analysis. Integration of economic and social work enhanced the coherence of substantive support to the intergovernmental machinery. And the technical cooperation work of the Secretariat was reoriented to become more focused.

In both the political and the economic and social areas, the reorganization was built around basic Secretariat functions, rather than the evolving structures of the intergovernmental machinery. It was designed to facilitate further streamlining and consolidation in the future.

The reorganization did not affect the basic structure of United Nations programmes and funds. It did, however, unlike previous restructuring exercises, involve relocating offices between United Nations centres in order to consolidate related activities or to create new synergies among them.

During this period, the General Assembly took the initiative to establish new high-level posts in priority areas such as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Notwithstanding these additions, such posts now number 33 per cent less than 10 years ago.

The dramatic increase in peace-keeping and other United Nations operations has required the services of a number of special envoys or representatives. To minimize the establishment of high-level posts, I have endeavoured to make term appointments so that these posts do not, as often happened in the past, become part of the basic Secretariat structure.

These measures have been accompanied by the development of a comprehensive management plan aimed at enhanced performance, greater productivity and increased cost-effectiveness. The plan is designed to create a new management culture conducive to innovation and change. It strengthens the management of human resources, technology and the Organization's cost structure.

By incorporating important efficiency gains, I was able to propose a programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 which represented a significant reduction compared with previous budgets, including a reduction of some 200 posts. The total number of staff is now 17 per cent smaller than it was 10 years ago.

I am currently examining ways to make the significant additional reductions required by the General Assembly. As I indicated in my statement to the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations, this will involve staff reductions and reductions in non-staff costs. Spending will be reduced by more cost-effective ways of implementing mandates, by rationalizing work programmes, and by technological innovations. An Efficiency Board, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, is working to identify further opportunities for reducing costs. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is contributing to more effective and efficient programme management.

Today, even the harshest critics of the United Nations must acknowledge that serious Secretariat reform is well under way.

Carrying this process forward will require mutually supporting actions by the Secretary-General and the Member States. We must be clear as to where the main responsibilities lie. We must be clear about where the main leverage for positive change can be found. And we must be clear about the main obstacles to progress.

The first and greatest obstacle is the financial crisis. The statement I made to the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations describes the magnitude of the situation. The facts and figures are well known to all.

Day-to-day management of the cash-flow crisis is diverting attention and resources that instead should be devoted to the efficient management of the Organization and to carrying forward the reform effort.

Consolidation and integration are key not only to greater effectiveness, but also to greater efficiency and savings. But reform cannot ultimately succeed unless it is rooted in a predictable and assured financial basis. Unless a comprehensive solution is found, the progress already made on many fronts will be jeopardized.

Another major obstacle is the complexity and rigidity of the budgetary process. Programme budgeting should be - for both Member States and the Secretary-General - a key instrument for priority-setting, for adapting the Organization to changing requirements. It should serve to match agreed tasks with the requisite resources. It should be one of our principal means of managing change.

But as currently functioning, the process does not provide an effective instrument for policy direction and management for either the Secretary-General or Member States. I believe we must simplify the process and ensure a genuine policy discussion on the budget that addresses both programmatic and resource aspects.

The budget process needs to be more flexible. This is essential if I am to be able to make the best use of the staff at my disposal. Once the size of the staffing table is decided upon, I need the flexibility to redeploy staff among domains of activity, subject, of course, to effective _ex post facto_ controls. When I took office, I experimented - successfully, I thought - with utilizing a limited number of vacancies to redeploy posts on a short-term basis to meet priority or unexpected needs. But I was unable to get from the General Assembly the latitude needed to continue this practice. Subsequent developments, including growing budgetary constraints, have made the need for such flexibility even more pressing.

A fundamental obstacle to further rationalization is the multiplicity of separate programmes and funds in the economic, social and humanitarian sectors.

According to the original conception of the Charter, the responsibilities of the Organization in those sectors were to be carried out primarily through coordination _vis-à-vis_ the specialized agencies. The General Assembly established separate programmes and funds in response to a perceived need for additional instruments to fulfil the economic and social responsibilities of the Organization. In most cases, these programmes were called upon to address intersectoral issues, thus supplementing the sectoral-based structure of the specialized agencies.

These programmes have been a source of strength and vitality for the Organization. They have diversified the sources of funding for development work. Their sheer number, however, has created, over time, definite problems in terms of policy coherence and the span of control of the Secretary-General.

We must preserve the advantages sought by the General Assembly in establishing these programmes, while at the same time correcting the policy coordination problems that have arisen.

Another key issue in advancing the reform agenda is the capacity of the intergovernmental machinery to provide clear and coherent policy direction.

There is a need for better balance in the functioning, responsibilities and authority of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as required by the Charter. The Advisory Committee on

Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee also should seek a more effective relationship.

The General Assembly is the symbol of the universality of the Organization. I see the Assembly performing on a continuing basis the role that the special world conferences have been playing in recent years. I see the Assembly addressing comprehensively, and at the highest political level, the major global issues facing the international community. I see the Assembly fostering national and international commitments. The Assembly's role should be one of synthesis and overall policy assessment and coordination vis-à-vis the membership, as well as the United Nations system. The length of its agenda and its committee structure and procedures are increasingly proving to be impediments to the effective performance of this role.

The strengthening of the Economic and Social Council has been a long-standing item on the reform agenda. It received special attention in the G-7 Halifax Summit Communiqué and currently is being considered by two working groups. I see two priority requirements here: ministerial participation, and increasing involvement of the new players on the global scene, in the high-level segment; and a decision to bring the reforms initiated so far in relation to operational activities a step further, so as to enable the Council to exercise an effective role of governance over all the operational funds and programmes of the Organization.

A related issue to be addressed is how best to provide - in the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council - for the governance of the emergency relief activities of the United Nations, including its programmes and funds.

There is little doubt that the subsidiary machinery of both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council is in need of further serious streamlining. The current structure is not conducive to coherent policy development. Member States speak with different voices in different forums. And demands on the Secretariat for servicing and documentation often duplicate each other.

These reforms would provide a strong basis for further streamlining and consolidating secretariat structures. I consider it essential that the next steps to be taken in this direction should encompass not only the central Secretariat, but also the secretariats of the programmes and funds of the Organization.

Subject to progress in intergovernmental reform, a new framework built on previous restructuring and based on clear, Organization-wide clusters of activities is possible. Such clustering should serve to reduce the lines of reporting to the Secretary-General while at the same time preserving the institutional integrity of each programme and fund. It could also contribute to a further reduction of high-level posts throughout all secretariats.

Clusters should be constructed from the bottom up. They should serve to eliminate, not add to, layers of bureaucracy. They should help to do away with duplication in administrative support services and overlapping in programmes. They should serve to create critical masses of capacity and expertise for the Organization as a whole. The sphere of responsibility involved in each cluster should be manageable and bridge basic dimensions of the functions of the Organization. Each must be built on a solid policy foundation.

The next programme budget, on which work will begin soon, can be the context for placing a new framework before the membership for review and approval.

Meanwhile, in order to move ahead promptly, I have directed that a number of management reviews directly relevant to this process be accelerated. Mr. Connor will provide you with details of these reviews.

* * *

Together with structural reform, a key requirement for a stronger and more effective Organization is a Secretariat with the highest standards of "efficiency, competence and integrity". There has been excessive, often ill-informed, criticism of the Secretariat. Frequently no distinction is made between the functions and responsibilities of the Secretariat and those of the other principal organs.

In fact, Member States have in the Secretariat a unique international civil service. Its geographic, ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity cannot be matched by any other work force in the world. The overwhelming majority of United Nations staff are highly qualified, bring to the Organization a wealth of experience and diverse perspectives. And, in recent times, very small staffs in many parts of the Organization have taken on significant additional responsibilities, with little or no reinforcement.

As international civil servants, United Nations staff do not have the protection enjoyed by many national public service employees. Nor do they have the advantages of most diplomatic staff working for national Governments. My experience, and that of my colleagues in the Administration Committee on Coordination, is that conditions of service are no longer competitive. The International Civil Service Commission has now concluded that they are not in accordance with the Noblemaire Principle. As Secretary-General, I need your support to ensure that conditions of service are such that we can continue to attract and retain highly qualified personnel.

Efforts at organizational reform will be successful only if accompanied by strong political support for the integrity and independence of the staff. Article 100 of the Charter is highly relevant in this regard. In the same context, I reiterate my belief that the practice of national subsidies paid to some staff members is unethical and unacceptable. The highest standards of integrity should not be compromised, even by implication.

I believe that the Secretariat of the future must be comprised of a core international civil service - which constitutes the independent heart of the Organization and provides experience and continuity - and short-term staff with the particular skills needed for a certain time-frame or specific set of tasks. I have a strong commitment to training as a crucial component of improved management and performance. I need the support of Member States in supporting this critical investment for the future. In an Organization whose staff is its major asset, the quality and motivation of its personnel will be an important factor in effectiveness of the reform effort.

* * *

I am convinced that more coherent and streamlined central intergovernmental machinery, and a streamlined and better coordinated Organization, can go a long way towards advancing policy coordination throughout the system. At the same

time, we all know that reform is on the agenda of virtually every agency of the system. I have recently intensified my personal contacts with the heads of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, as well as with other executive heads. A key objective of these consultations, and of ongoing discussions in ACC, is to ensure that these processes build on each other and result in a more effective and coherent United Nations system.

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I believe that we can create a United Nations that is truly universal in its outlook, and more participatory in its methods. A United Nations with a clear mission and a well-defined scope. An Organization whose operations are streamlined and efficient. An Organization whose approach is coherent, and whose activities are well coordinated. An Organization whose structures are responsive, and whose administration is flexible. An Organization whose objectives are concrete, and whose activities produce tangible results. An Organization whose financial basis is solid, and whose public and political support is secure.

For all of its imperfections, the United Nations has served humanity well in dangerous and difficult times. Let us now move forward in the spirit of partnership that is required, and in the shared belief that the future requires a strengthened United Nations system.