

WORLD GOODWILL

NEWSLETTER

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The United Nations and the Path to Unity and Right Relations

Anniversaries give a chance to review the past and look towards the future. In the case of the UN's fiftieth this is especially poignant because what is being reviewed is the first real experiment in global co-operation for peace and well-being. On April 25th, 1945 delegates of 50 nations met in San Francisco to prepare a Charter for a general "international organisation for the maintenance of international peace and security".



There is no doubt that the Charter that emerged from the San Francisco Conference marked a new chapter in human history. Governments did not suddenly become the agents of a higher purpose. Loyalties did not suddenly swing from a national flag to the blue flag of the United Nations. Yet the world did change with the Charter.

For the first time there was agreement by powerful and not-so-powerful governments to begin an era of international relations based on: a maintenance of peace and security; respect for the "equal rights and self-determination" of states; and co-operation in the solution of international problems "of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character". The Charter laid down a structure within which governments could begin to learn a new diplomacy of co-operation. As former senior UN civil servant Erskine Childers writes, the Charter, together with the constitutions of the various elements in the UN system, "gave humanity a comprehensive international social contract for the first time". It was as if the organic wholeness and inseparability of humankind was now an accepted part of the environment within which nations and peoples would relate to each other.

Fifty years on, the framework established to tackle humanity's problems has not been used to anything like its potential. Governments, in particular those of the richer, industrialised countries, have failed to keep the promises they made when signing the Charter. Rather than co-operate wholeheartedly in long-term programmes for peace and security, sustainable development or equitable trade, governments have approached global issues in terms of self-interest.

However, this is only one side of the story. In spite of indifference and, at times, hostility from some governments, in its first fifty years the UN has been *the* pioneering force for unity in a divided world. Through legal agreements, innumerable meetings and a vast array of action-oriented programmes, the UN system has established an architecture and a political culture within which a new interdependent world order can now take shape. In the chequered history of these last five decades, the Organisation stands out as a potent force for positive change.

Much has been achieved. There are sensational successes such as the elimination of smallpox – a disease which, in 1967, affected 15 million people. The World Health Organisation, co-operating with other UN agencies, wiped out smallpox in ten years. UNICEF's achievements have been

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no less startling. Its universal child immunisation programme now saves the lives of 10,000 children a day. At the World Summit for Children in 1990, 71 nations set detailed targets for reducing child deaths, halving child malnutrition and providing basic education for at least 80 per cent of all children.

Some of the less sensational successes of the UN are certainly as significant. The many international agreements on human rights are a phenomenal achievement. Historically there has been no universally accepted standard. Now governments are to be judged by internationally agreed treaties and conventions to which they are party. The global conferences on issues as diverse as the status of women and the pollution of the environment have been enormously influential in shaping global opinion and ultimately, action. The Law of the Sea applies universal principles to the management of the world's oceans. The UN has played a pivotal role in bringing about the independence of 80 countries, and since 1945 has been credited with negotiating 172 peaceful settlements to regional conflicts.

Over 50 years one of the least recognised but none-the-less significant achievements of the UN system is that, through its research initiatives, conferences and programmes, we now know so much more about the state of humanity and of the earth.

Knowledge brings with it responsibility. And it is the awakening amongst "we the peoples" of a will for action based on a recognition of human and planetary unity that can be expected to characterise the next chapter in the story of the UN. People's movements are beginning to play an unprecedented role in national and global affairs.

They are now key players in the political scene and there is ample evidence to suggest that the powerful environment and development bodies are ready to mobilise support for government action in line with UN objectives.

With notable exceptions, governments, too, are taking a new interest in the Organisation. The fiftieth anniversary marks a timely occasion for people of goodwill to press their governments to fulfil the terms of the "social contract" made when they signed the Charter.

Since the earliest days of the United Nations, World Goodwill has consistently voiced its support for the Organisation as the hope of humanity. We were among the first people's organisations to be granted 'Associative Status' with the Department of Public Information. In 1988 the Lucis Trust (the organisation which administers the work of World Goodwill) was placed on the Roster of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is through ECOSOC that the UN has established a forum for consultation with international organisations, and groups are placed on the Roster when it is recognised that their field of expertise enables them to contribute from time to time to the work of the UN. World Goodwill's support is rooted in the belief that the UN represents the single most outstanding opportunity for humanity to move forward on the path towards an era of unity and right relations.

As Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali writes: "The realisation is dawning that for human beings around the world ... the United Nations is even more than an instrument of peace, justice and co-operative development among nations; it is the repository of hope for humanity and the future. That hope deserves our deepest continuing commitment."

Interview with Robert Muller

Dr. Robert Muller, author, Chancellor of the UN University for Peace in Costa Rica and former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations has written and spoken of the significance of the United Nations with passion and vision for many years. He kindly agreed to share the following thoughts with World Goodwill.

World Goodwill: In your view, how important is goodwill in the life of humanity?

Robert Muller: Interest and/or goodwill are the main steps to the solution of conflicts, from the family to the entire world community. Goodwill, namely to be open to a solution, is the first step necessary to solve a conflict. The earlier there is this goodwill, the quicker the conflict can be resolved. I would recommend the development of a science of goodwill, so that people would be more aware of its potentialities.

World Goodwill: From your experience of the UN can you give one or two outstanding examples where goodwill

enabled a problem to be solved?

Robert Muller: I could give dozens of examples. I was personally involved in the creation of eleven specialised agencies and world programmes of the UN. At the beginning there was always opposition from the big powers, and they were created only when we proved that it was in their interest to do it, or when there was a sudden goodwill, after many debates and negotiations, to go along. In the economic and social field we found more goodwill than in the political one.

World Goodwill: If human consciousness is evolving what in your view is the role of the UN in this process?

Robert Muller: Year after year I increase my respect for the United Nations, to the point that I consider it now as one of the greatest institutions ever created by humans, a true meta-organism for the evolution of the human species and of the planet. In it converge all aspirations, dreams, differences, problems perceived by humans. These are being resolved sooner or later thanks to the global consciousness which has now grown world-wide as a major new evolutionary phenomenon. The UN is humanity's incipient global brain, and it is part of its global nervous system (media, NGOs, etc.). We still need a global heart (goodwill is an important element of it, because it starts in the heart) and we still need a global soul, namely our consciousness and fusion with the entire universe and stream of time.

World Goodwill: In this post cold-war situation, what do you see as the most significant opportunities for humanity to progress towards peace?

Robert Muller: To celebrate the year 2000 and think about our future in the third millennium. To place the

interests of humanity and of the planet above the interests of nations and of any other groups or entities.

Your questions remind me of the following: During the 25th anniversary of the UN, U Thant was asked by a journalist what he considered to have been the single most important event in this century. He answered: "The creation of the United Nations on 24 October 1945". I thought that he was exaggerating, but today, 25 years later, I would say that he was right and that history will bear him out. Also he often said to me: "Robert, the world will not change and there will be no peace if there is not a new education". Here, too, his statement seems to me today prophetic and entirely right. The world would be well advised to listen to him. The anniversary of the UN is an opportunity for the first, and the *World Commission on Education in the 21st Century*, established by UNESCO, is the second.

Note: A World Goodwill booklet, *Techniques of Goodwill*, is available on request. This booklet explores the scientific use of the energy of goodwill – the most abundant energy available to humanity.

The UN and the Spiritual Dimension

"Spirituality is essentially the establishing of right human relations, the promotion of goodwill and finally the establishing of a true peace on earth, as the result of these two expressions of divinity."

Alice Bailey

In her writings Alice Bailey urges a truer understanding of the meaning of the word "spiritual". To tread the spiritual path is to live by such values as love, compassion, justice – to practise these values in daily life and relationships. From this holistic perspective, those thoughts, words and deeds which foster right relations and goodwill and which demonstrate in the advancement of human unity, rights and freedoms, are spiritual.

It is not surprising, then, that Alice Bailey should refer to the UN as "the hope of the world". She saw it as "a great field of experimentation" in which the world's people, influenced by an awakening sense of the synthesis of life, would begin to work together for the common good. But she warned of the need to strengthen the spiritual values upon which, ultimately, the success of the UN depended. Writing two years after the UN was founded, she described the problems confronting the Organisation, "with rapacious demands from all sides, with the angling of the nations for place and power, and for the possession of the natural resources of the Earth ... and also with the underground activities of the great Powers and of the capitalists which they all create". She exhorted people of goodwill not only to support the UN, but also to "let this group of world leaders know what is needed" if the UN were to evolve in accord with the high ideals on which it

was founded.

A number of visionary thinkers at that time shared her concerns. The Christian philosopher, Teilhard de Chardin, was one. He declared that, while he "shall always rejoice unreservedly" in the existence of the UN and UNESCO, "we must realise that we shall be forever building on shifting sand so long as bodies of this kind are not agreed on the basic values and purpose underlying their projects and decisions.... What good does it do to discuss the ripples on the surface while the under-tow is still uncontrolled?"

The Presence of Consciousness

Today, 50 years after the birth of the UN, our world has changed in remarkable ways. There is wide acceptance of our interdependence and of the interconnectedness of the major world problems. The UN and its 32 agencies play a significant role in human affairs, with strong arguments being made that the UN should be helped to become increasingly influential. And now there are many who speak or write about the need for the UN to be more spiritually awake and aware. At a UN briefing of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) last year, Samuel R. Insanally, past president of the General Assembly, made the statement: "Old policies and strategies, which we have promoted in the

past at the United Nations, have led us nowhere. Although I am not a 'religious' person ... I do believe that the construction of a new world order requires a sense of moral obligation on the part of all nations, both developed and developing, which will give flesh to the concept of interdependence. We need in effect a spiritual catalyst to bring about change. The ethic of national self-interest must yield to the ethic of co-operation within the larger family of nations." Juan Somavia, Chile's permanent representative to the UN, has called for the presence of consciousness as an important ingredient in the UN's attempt to ease the suffering and the injustices in the world.

In his new book, *United Nations: A Working Paper for Restructuring*, Harold Stassen, the last living United States member of the original UN Charter Commission, presents his vision of the UN of the future: a place not only for meetings on political, economic and social issues, but rather a creative centre, where ideas on religion and philosophy are exchanged; a place where cultures and religions from all over the world could understand each other and have a common spiritual foundation, creating the intellectual tools with which to build the future.

Intrinsic Goodness

There have been a number of initiatives specifically focused on the spiritual vision offered by the UN in the lead-up to the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March this year. To mention but two:

- A seminar on the "ethical and spiritual dimensions of social progress" was held in Bled, Slovenia in late October 1994. The seminar included in its objectives

the task of clarifying the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the Summit's three central themes.

- *Toward Deeper Values and Fuller Development: A Plea to the World Summit for Social Development* is a paper jointly prepared by "The Group of Reflection" – a multi-faceted group, including members of the UN Secretariat, scholars, NGOs and religious leaders. The Preamble includes the following thoughts: "The spiritual dimension, the deeply moral dimension, needs to be included forthrightly in United Nations documents and activities.... There is an inner dimension of human experience from which individuals derive their appreciation of these values. Let us call this dimension of the human being intrinsic goodness. Development of this dimension must never be overlooked when addressing social, cultural and economic development. When we fail to nurture and rely on the potentials inherent in this intrinsic goodness we allow ignorance in varied forms – injustice, poverty, war, and ecological and human degradation – to survive and even thrive...."

Although the actual word "spiritual" is not so often used in the halls of the United Nations, it is increasingly accepted that the future of the Organisation depends upon the development of universal values in the minds and hearts of the peoples of the world. This is a point powerfully made by the Commission on Global Governance. The Commissioner's report devotes a whole chapter to the task of fostering commitment to "core values concerned with the quality of life and relationships", which are to be expressed through "a global civic ethic of specific rights and responsibilities".

Key Issues Facing the UN in the 1990s

The founding of the UN in 1945, and the very significant contribution it has made to human and planetary progress in its first fifty years, are clear signs that, as a species, we have set our feet upon the path that leads towards unity and managed interdependence. In 1995, as we look towards the UN's second fifty-year cycle, we may well be about to take our next step on this path.

Wholeness & Separation

No-one should be surprised that the path to unity is characterised by a tension between wholeness and separation. It is inevitable that there should be a tension between the visionary goals of the UN Charter and the egoistic politics of nation states; between the recognised realities of interdependence and what has been called "the massed

self-centredness" of the peoples who constitute the nations of the world and "their instinct to self-preservation". The ethic of solidarity has been outstandingly affirmed in resolutions, charters and conventions covering areas as diverse as human rights, the environment and peace and security. And that ethic has led to some vigorous action by the global community – notably in such pioneering agencies for human betterment as UNICEF and the UNHCR. Yet the overall picture of world affairs shows that there is a lack of resolve to act in accord with the vision of unity.

The power that the separative vision continues to hold over national governments is best reflected in the lack of resources they allocate to the UN. The UN is grossly under-funded and on the verge of bankruptcy. The main,

regular budget comes from dues paid by governments. The amount is assessed by the General Assembly on the basis of a government's ability to pay. Governments have consistently kept the budget low and, what is worse, they have, in many cases, been notoriously late in paying their dues. "In recent years, arrears owed to the UN as late as the third quarter of any budget year have amounted to three-quarters of its entire budget for that year."¹

The UN is often criticised for the lack of co-ordination between various agencies, particularly when dealing with a humanitarian crisis or in adopting a common UN approach to sustainable development. Yet the real problem lies with a lack of commitment to co-ordination by national governments. Every UN agency is controlled by governments. Policy for the World Health Organisation (WHO), for example, is set by ministers and officials from departments of state and ministries of health in the member countries. What is needed is for governments to adopt integrated policies for the entire UN system.

The UN Charter commits governments to work through the United Nations for "economic and social progress and development". Yet, throughout the first fifty years, efforts in the UN to distribute resources and promote just and fair relations between North and South have been vigorously opposed by the governments of industrialised countries. The result is that the gap between the wealthy and the poor is getting progressively worse. And this divide between rich and poor is *the* major cause of not only political instability, but also the population explosion, mass migration of peoples and threats to peace and security around the world. The most commonly cited example of northern governments protecting their advantages vis-a-vis the south is in their use of two UN bodies, the World Bank and the IMF. Unlike the rest of the UN, these economic and development agencies are controlled by the industrialised powers. While they disburse over US\$30 billion annually in loans, the entire UN budget amounts to around US\$ 8 billion.²

Goodwill Perspective

It is tempting in a publication such as this, which takes as its theme the empowerment of the forces of goodwill in the world, to gloss over these points of tension. But a goodwill perspective needs to take a realistic view – both of positive, progressive developments (which are often ignored in the media and hence need support) and of the forces that inhibit the expression of goodwill. The UN's difficulties are simply the tests and trials of moving towards an era where the forces of unity play a more dominant role in human affairs. And these tests and trials have to be faced. The problem is not, as the media often likes to tell us, with the UN; it is with the governments which make up the UN.

We should not be surprised that national government

policies prevent the world community from doing all that can be done to implement the United Nations' Charter. The problems of both the under-funding of socially beneficial policies, and the lack of co-ordination among different departments are frequently found in public bodies. Strong action on politically sensitive issues is difficult and rare enough in nation states, let alone in the international arena.

Grounds for Optimism

Yet there are signs that the UN is about to be given a new lease of life, and that "we the peoples" may well be ready to choose to make better use of the Organisation than we have in the past.

Governments have been allowed to pursue policies of national self-interest at the UN in part because, as the Commission on Global Governance reports, "the people of the world never developed a sense that the UN was theirs". It is this fundamental issue of "ownership" of the UN which may well be about to change.

People's organisations have always played a vital role in UN affairs. They have been the source of new insights and vision – pioneering, for example, the recognition that it is the empowerment of peoples' will-to-change and to improve their lives which lies at the very heart of the development process. Often it has been their campaigns on such issues as human rights, the status of women and sustainable development that have forced governments to act in the international arena. Yet these movements for goodwill have largely been outsiders in UN politics – influencing the agenda but with little real clout when it comes to what is decided behind closed doors by governments. In many cases movements for development, disarmament and human rights have been happy with this arrangement. The UN has been perceived as bureaucratic and involvement in UN processes as too time-consuming.

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio in 1992, this has begun to change. Final decisions on UN policy continue to be made by governments. However, at Rio and at subsequent major conferences, people's organisations have been recognised as significant players at the UN. They have acquired new diplomatic and negotiating skills. They now take part in setting the agenda for conferences and have input in the declarations and conventions agreed to by governments. They have become a part of the negotiating process, along with other 'major groups' of civil society (professional organisations, business representatives, local government, etc.).

People's organisations, which are strongest at the national and local level, often influence the domestic political agenda. The likelihood is that, as they become more involved in UN negotiations at an international

level, so will their national and local campaigns put pressure on home governments to ensure that commitments made in UN declarations are followed through with adequately funded action on a national level.

New developments in the UN will reinforce this. One result of UNCED was an agreed plan of action, *Agenda 21*, and the establishment of a *Commission on Sustainable Development* (CSD) to assess and encourage progress by the UN and by individual nations in implementing *Agenda 21*. The CSD is charged to positively encourage dialogue with citizens' groups. John Gordon, former Deputy and Policy Director of the Global Environment Research Centre, writes that this challenges environment and development movements to "bring UNCED home".³ They need to "generate the political awareness and energy necessary" to ensure that national strategies for implementing *Agenda 21* are brought into "the heart of the domestic political process".⁴

The UN is currently reviewing its long-standing system of consulting with non-government organisations (NGOs) – the "major groups" of civil society. Organisations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and on the ECOSOC Roster must, at present, be international in their scope. But in recent global conferences local, national and regional bodies have often played an important role. Organisations from the South have been especially influential. The UN is exploring options to ensure that input from major groups is, in future, open to a much wider range of groups wishing to be involved.

One reason why NGOs are now about to play a more critical role in humanity's path to unity is that the information revolution has produced a large, globally aware, well-informed body of opinion. This wasn't the case in 1945. The major UN conferences held since the seventies have helped enormously in educating people around the world about planetary concerns. So, too, have goodwill movements played a vital role through publications, conferences, campaigns and the circulation of a wide range of teaching materials in schools.

The Climate is Now Right

Three additional factors suggest that the climate is now right for the UN to be used to greater effectiveness. First is the fact that the ending of the Cold War has brought hidden frustrations and conflicts to the surface. Horrendous levels of irrational violence have been unleashed. Long-term problems of poverty, deprivation and environmental decay are threatening peace and security throughout the world. This unprecedented violence and instability lends an urgency to demands to make the UN more effective as a vehicle for deciding and implementing global action.

Second is the mood of governments at the United Nations. The end of the Cold War brought with it a waning of the ideological thinking that had conditioned government delegations for four decades. There is now a new openness to debates about fundamental issues – crystallised around the Secretary-General's *Agenda for Peace* and *Agenda for Development*. Governments from small nations and large, from North and South, are taking the discussions extremely seriously. The General Assembly is refusing to be ignored by the super-powers in the Security Council. There is a transparency about these debates which bodes well for the future.

Proposals for Reform

The third element creating a new climate of hope for the future of the UN is the widespread discussion involving governments, political parties, goodwill movements, academics, religions and others about UN reform. A host of proposals are under review. They come from governments and independent bodies including: the Commission on Global Governance; the Ford Foundation and Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation⁵; the group of eminent financiers chaired by Shijuro Ogata and Paul Volcker who, in 1993, prepared an influential report on UN financing problems; the network of organisations forming the Campaign for a More Democratic United Nations (CAMDUN)⁶; and the Global Commission to Fund the United Nations⁷ (including commissioners Bella Abzug; Jacques Cousteau; Hazel Henderson; Ashok Khosla); the four Nordic governments which spent several years preparing the Nordic UN Project with proposals for reform of UN activities in development; and Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, whose influential book *Cooperating For Peace* was launched at the UN as a contribution to the debate on *An Agenda For Peace*.⁸ Key debates centre around reform of the Security Council (with substantive proposals to include Germany, Japan and representative nations of the South as 'permanent' or 'long-term' members); proposals for an Economic Security Council as "a global forum that can provide leadership in economic, social and environmental fields"; suggestions that governments which are late in paying their dues be fined, and that the UN be funded by international taxes on arms trade, air travel and foreign currency transactions; and various proposals for a directly elected people's assembly and a 'Forum of Civil Society' representing goodwill movements and other major groups in society.

In the light of these grounds for optimism the United Nations is now, more than it ever has been, "what we choose to make of it". It is up to people of goodwill to call their governments to account. To adapt John Gordon's phrase, the next step is to "bring the UN home and generate the political awareness and energy necessary" to

ensure that our home governments vote in the General Assembly, and in UN agencies, with the interests of the common good in mind, and that they carry their votes through into prioritised action.

¹ Erskine Childers (ed). *Challenges to the United Nations*. p.20

² John Gordon, *The Centre for the Study of Global Governance, Discussion Paper 12: Green Knight to the Rescue? UN Reform and the UNCED Process*. Centre for the Study of Global Governance, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK, 1994. p.6.

³ *ibid* p.21

⁴ *ibid* p.1

⁵ Erskine Childers with Brian Urquhart, *Renewing the United Nations System*. Uppsala, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1994.

⁶ CAMDUN, 308 Cricklewood Lane, London NW2 2PX, UK & 301 E. 45th St., New York, N.Y 10017, USA.

⁷ Global Commission to Fund the United Nations, 1511 K St., NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036, USA.

⁸ Gareth Evans, *Cooperating For Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond*. St Leonards, Australia, Allen & Unwin, 1993.

“The United Nations is now and increasingly will be what we choose to make of it.”

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

A Time to Dream

Ben Okri

Human desires are many, but there should be one directing centre – the soul, the heart, reason, or a great vision. The many should have their places. All tribes, all nations should celebrate their uniqueness. But a beautiful vision should direct our sense of a universal goal. And that universal goal could be the realisation of the human potential, the eradication of poverty, the enhancement of liberty, and the triumph of justice.

More than ever, a world body is needed to harmonise and to resolve, to mediate between nations, between contending dreams and claims and angers. More than ever, a world body is needed to bring nations together, away from their self-obsessions, and into a universal arena of co-operation and mutual transformation. Till a new world body can be dreamt into being, the United Nations remains the only organisation still vaguely capable of articulating the notion of one world, a sort of symphony of humanity.

The United Nations may be powerless to stop wars, to halt famine, to drive out tyrants and dictators, to ensure that human rights be rigorously maintained globally, but it can still bring relief to refugees, feed the starving in war-ravaged states, and bring aid to drought victims.

The trouble with the United Nations is not that it has failed, but that it has not been bold enough. It is not independent enough. And it has lost sight of the clarity of its great original dream. And it too, mirroring the world, has become an arena of contending voices, some more powerful than others and therefore more capable of sabotaging the splendid idealism of its founding vision.

The United Nations must be stronger, at heart, than any of its member states, or any alignment of its members. It shouldn't be a hostage to this or that world power. It should be economically more independent. It should be militarily stronger: for peace-keepers and the peace-loving spirit must also wear a war-like countenance when necessary – or else peace-keeping degenerates into impotence and becomes the unwitting handmaiden of genocide and endless wars.

If anything, its timidity is the cause of its perceived failures. The United Nations should dare to have a greater vision, a truly world dream and goal – and the fearless courage that goes with such passionate dreaming. It should dream more intensely on behalf of us all.

As the millennium draws to a close we must not succumb to the notion that we have failed, and therefore must retreat into ever smaller spaces of self-definition. This is precisely the time to dream the best dream of them all: that no peoples will know starvation, that no nation will be oppressed by another, that tyranny will not be able to exist unpunished, that liberty be given a more glorious song, and that the human race – after so long standing in shame at its failed possibilities – should now move towards a new millennium where, overcoming our pettinesses and our fears, we might begin to astonish even the gods.

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Interview: Erskine Childers

After 22 years as a UN Civil Servant, Erskine Childers retired in 1989 as Senior Advisor to the UN Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. World Goodwill recently spoke with Erskine Childers about the UN.

World Goodwill: It seems remarkable what the UN achieves, considering the fact that it is so under-staffed and under-funded.

Erskine Childers: I agree with you absolutely. For example, historians of the future will consider it an extraordinary achievement for the UN to have drafted and negotiated on behalf of the whole of humankind, with all its cultures, some seventy instruments of human rights. This was achieved by a smaller human rights staff of the UN than that of Amnesty International. I told a meeting at Oxford, UK, last week that the staff of the UN Secretariat, of UNESCO and of the World Health Organisation world-wide and for all purposes, is less than the civil service of Oxford County Council. Year after year the same myth – that the UN is a vast sprawling bureaucracy and that it is spending fortunes of the tax-payer's money – is recycled by lazy editors and journalists.

Today the United Nations, after being kept weak throughout the Cold War, is confronted with the challenges of peace-keeping, with the consequences of the neglect of the causes of poverty, with the resultant deterioration of the overall condition of our human family and with the widening of the North/South gap. The UN has got to be equipped to address these causes wherever they lie,

whether in politics, in tensions between different cultural groups or in the aspirations of millions of people searching for some identity. And the UN has to be equipped to deal with the consequences of these causes.

World Goodwill: What is the most important thing that individuals or groups who want to support the UN can do? What should they do now?

Erskine Childers: I think they can work in two directions. First they can undertake to increase knowledge about the UN amongst some identified group of their fellow citizens. Don't pick too ambitious an area to start with or you might find that unmanageable. Take a shire, or a county. You might find out how the UN is taught in schools in the area. Just asking questions about teaching on the UN in schools can bring about change. An academic in Oxford asked me: "Are you suggesting that the UN ought to be part of the curriculum"? I was amazed. "My God" I said, "isn't it part of the curriculum now?". The other direction: Ask questions of your local representatives, your Member of Parliament or Senator about the UN. Do they ever ask questions of government on UN matters? If enough groups explore these two avenues of helping the UN, even within their own local area, then the critical mass that develops will be very important.

UN50 Events

A great number and variety of commemorative events will be held throughout the entire world to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. As of February, 1995 all but a handful of countries had made their planned activities known to the UN 50th Secretariat. The high point of these events will be a special, solemn, commemorative meeting to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York City, October 22-24, at which an unprecedented 150 Heads of State are expected to attend, sign and adopt a 50th Anniversary Declaration currently being drafted.

To commemorate the historic signing of the Charter, the UN50 Committee and the city of San Francisco are planning a broad array of events. These celebrations will culminate with a con-

ference on 26 June 1995, the anniversary of the signing of the Charter. Coinciding with this event, thousands of activists, academics, policy-makers and students will participate in a conference – "We the Peoples ... The Role of Civil Society in the History and Future of the UN" – which will focus on the critical role that non-government organisations (NGOs) played in the founding of the UN as well as the important contributions which they have made over the past fifty years. It will pay special attention to the explosion of NGO activity in the UN over the past five years as well as to the current debate within the UN regarding proposals which could significantly expand the capacity of NGOs to participate in UN decision-making processes.

Among the numerous events taking place around the world are the following: **China** – The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing to be held in September (see World Goodwill Newsletter 1994, No 3); **UK** – London, host city to the first session of the UN General Assembly which was held at Central Hall, Westminster, from 10 January to 14 February 1946, will hold a commemorative ceremony at which the Secretary-General will be present; **Croatia** – The Croatian Club for the UN will mark the UN 50th Anniversary and the 10th Anniversary of International Youth Year (IYF) by hosting a World Youth Conference: "Youth in an Interdependent World"; **Côte d'Ivoire** – About 500 representatives of youth NGOs will meet to observe the 10th Anniversary of IYF.

A “World Youth Programme of Action” will be adopted; **Argentina** – The UN50 Committee of Argentina will host an international conference in Buenos Aires on “United Nations – Present and Future”; **Japan** – A Unesco-sponsored symposium to be held in Tokyo on “Science and Culture: Common Path for the Future”; **Australia** – The Australian National

Committee for UN50 will host “The United Nations: An International Conference” on the changing nature of the UN in response to the contemporary transformations in world politics; **Greece** – Statesmen, scholars, diplomats and politicians will gather in Athens for an assessment of the state of the world beyond the year 2000 in the context of the objectives of the

UN; **Switzerland** – In Geneva several conferences and events are planned including displays of human rights banners and photos along the city streets; **Global Tour** – the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of the UK will launch a world tour to commemorate its own Fiftieth Anniversary and that of the UN. Included will be performances in up to fifty cities worldwide.

Image and Reality

The realities of the UN are often very different from popular myths....

- The UN uses some 2,500 tons of paper a year – less than *The New York Times* uses for one Sunday edition. The UN paper recycling programme, begun in 1988, has become one of the most successful of its kind in New York State.
- All states that belong to the UN system pay for it. The USA makes the largest contribution, although it is estimated that the UN generates spending in the New York City area equal to around 65% of this amount. If ranked in terms of the percentage of national income that their contri-

bution represents, fifteen developing countries are among the top twenty donors. If looked at on a per-capita basis, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and the Netherlands are the top contributors.

- The UN spends some \$1.2 billion per year under its regular budget, the whole UN system – including voluntary funds – about \$7.5 billion. By comparison expenditure of the Commission of the European Communities in 1992 amounted to an estimated \$2.4 billion; Tokyo City spends about \$2 billion a year on its fire department; Paris spends about \$2.2 billion to keep the city streets clean. The money the world spends on arms in a single year – an estimated \$1 trillion

– would pay for the entire UN system for 133 years.

Adapted from *Image & Reality*, a UN publication that answers a wide range of questions about the UN and how it works (figures given are valid as of 30th April 1993).

- The United Nations employs 51,000 people. However, the staff of the United Nations proper numbers only 14,000 worldwide.... To put this point of view into perspective, the US civil service employs more than 2 million people; IBM employs over 300,000; in Sweden, 65,000 public servants are employed to serve the needs of the relatively small city of Stockholm....

Guy Sneyers, General Secretary, Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, Geneva. From a 'letter to the editor' in the *International Herald Tribune* 20/1/95.

Recommended Reading

The following books and magazines, used in preparation of this Newsletter, provide valuable sources for reading more about the achievements, challenges and opportunities facing the UN in its 50th year. Please also see other titles cited and reviewed in this and in the previous issue of the Newsletter – especially the *Human Development Report* and *The Progress of Nations*.

Winds of Change – The United Nations at 50, *The New Internationalist*, Issue No 262, December 1994. *The New Internationalist* is a monthly magazine reporting on issues of world development. *The New Internationalist*, P.O. Box 79, Hertford SG14 1AQ, UK; 35 Riviera Drive, Unit 17, Markham, Ontario, L3R 8N4, Canada; P.O. Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092, USA; 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, SA 5000, Australia; P.O. Box 4499, Christ-

church, New Zealand; Freepost JH125, P.O. Box 32797, Braamfontein 2017 South Africa.

International Documents Review. Describes itself as “The Weekly Newsletter on the United Nations”. The annual subscription of US \$200 (plus \$50 airmail post outside the US and Canada) and the detail of the contents makes the Review more suited to libraries than to most individuals. Available from, 318 Edgewood Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666, USA.

Erskine Childers with Brian Urquhart, *Renewing the United Nations System*. Available from: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Övre Slottsgatan 2, S-753 10, Uppsala, Sweden or Ford Foundation, 320 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Erskine Childers (ed), *Challenges to the United Nations: Building A Safer World*.

London, Catholic Institute for International Relations & New York, St. Martin's Press, 1994. One reviewer has written of this book that it is “a thoughtful, outspoken and carefully documented challenge to those who despair of the UN”.

Robert Muller, *My Testament to the UN*. Available from World Goodwill (London) & World Happiness and Cooperation, PO Box 1153, Anacortes, WA 98221, USA.

Patricia M. Mische & Rosamond C. Rodman (eds), *The United Nations in an Interdependent World: Past, Present, Future*. New York, Global Education Associates, 1995. A report from a six day symposium organised by the Global Education Associates with the support of 15 UN agencies and 10 NGOs. Available for \$7.00 (including post) from: Global Education Associates, 475 Riverside Drive, #1848, NY, NY 10115-1022., U.S.A.

Our Global Neighbourhood

In January of this year, the 28 leaders from all parts of the world who make up the independent Commission on Global Governance issued their long-awaited report. A wide-ranging document, its numerous proposals for reform and for “freshness and innovation in global governance” are likely to be taken extremely seriously by governments and key pressure groups. One of the delights of the report is that it is written with clarity and a visionary quality. Our Global Neighbourhood is a book for “we the peoples” of the UN to read, discuss and act on – and it makes a very good read. The concluding section of the report is a call for leadership “infused with a sense of caring for others, a sense of responsibility to the global neighbourhood”:

“To a very particular degree today, the need for leadership is widely felt, and the sense of being bereft of it is the cause of uncertainty and instability. It contributes to a sense of drift and powerlessness. It is at the heart of the tendency everywhere to turn inwards. That is why we have attached so much importance to values in this report, to the substance of leadership and the compulsions of an ethical basis for global governance. A neighbourhood without leadership is a neighbourhood endangered.

“International leadership is a quality easy to identify by its presence or its absence, but extraordinarily difficult to define, and even more difficult to guarantee. Political differences and conflicts between states, sensitivity over the relationship between international responsibility and national sovereignty and interest, increasingly serious national domestic problems, and the somewhat disorderly nature of the international system of organisations and agencies – all these constitute considerable obstacles to leadership at the international level.

“Such leadership can come from a number of possible sources and in many different forms. Governments, either singly or in groups, can pursue great objectives. The American-led post-war planning that produced the new international system based on the United Nations was a classic example of such leadership. Individuals can put their reputation on the line for international innovation,

as Lester Pearson of Canada did for UN peacekeeping. Specific governments can create a constituency for an international initiative – Sweden on the environment, for example, or Malta on the Law of the Sea.

“In the UN itself, international leaders may also emerge. Ralph Bunche pioneered trusteeship and decolonisation and set up a new standard for international mediation and, indeed, for international civil service in general. Dag Hammarskjöld was the dominant, and the most innovative, international leader of his time. Maurice Pate and Henry Labouisse spearheaded the drive to make the world’s children an international concern. Halfdan Mahler led the World Health Organisation into a vital international role.

“By leadership we do not mean only people at the highest national and international levels. We mean enlightenment at every level – in local and national groups, in parliaments and in the professions, among scientists and writers, in small community groups and large national NGOs, in international bodies of every description, in the religious community and among teachers, in political parties and citizens’ movements, in the private sector and among the large transnational corporations, and particularly in the media. NGOs can be of crucial importance in developing support and new ideas for important international goals. Recent examples have included the environment, women’s rights, and the whole broad area of human rights world-wide....

“Enlightened leadership calls for a clear vision of solidarity in the true interest of national well-being – and for political courage in articulating the way the world has changed and why a new spirit of global neighbourhood must replace old notions of adversarial states in eternal confrontation....”

Our Global Neighbourhood: The Report of The Commission on Global Governance. London & New York, Oxford University Press, 1995. A booklet, *Our Global Neighbourhood: The Basic Vision*, summarising the report is available from: The Commission on Global Governance, 11 avenue Joli-Mont, P.O. Box 184, CH-1211 Geneva 28, Switzerland.

The goal of the United Nations is human harmony. And goodwill is the principal means to achieve harmony.

Robert Muller

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