

Accepting “Our Shared Responsibility”

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Richard H. Stanley
President, The Stanley Foundation

Opening Remarks

By Richard H. Stanley

Welcome to the Stanley Foundation's 36th annual United Nations Issues Conference. This year, we meet at an especially opportune time to consider whether and how the world can be moved toward a new collective security consensus that can deal effectively with the security needs of the 21st century. We are informed by the work of the secretary-general's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, which reported in December 2004. We are informed by the January 2005 UN Millennium Project advisory report. We anticipate the March 2005 report of the secretary-general setting forth his actions and recommendations to be considered at the September 2005 special summit meeting at the United Nations in New York. The stage is set. The opportunity is at hand for

major changes in concept and practice that will bring us toward a more secure world—a world in which, in the language of the Stanley Foundation's Vision Statement, there is a "secure peace with freedom and justice."

But the time is short. The special summit meeting will convene in seven months. Much planning, preparation, and negotiation must be done if the nations and peoples of the world are to accept "Our Shared Responsibility" for this more secure world. And that is why we have invited you here. We will ask you to assess the political climate for major change in the international collective security paradigm. We will seek to identify what items on the collective security agenda will require focused attention and consensus-building in preparation for the September summit. We will explore ideas for securing the engagement and commitment of UN members and others so that bold recommendations can be seriously and favorably considered.

All of this is a part of the Stanley Foundation's continuing support of the process in which the world is engaged. Last year we held several conferences to generate ideas and suggestions for the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change. At one of these meetings, participants stressed that the panel should be bold; "Every idea whose time has come," one participant noted, "started out as an idea ahead of its time." Now that the panel has issued its report, I think we can all agree that they have indeed been bold, and here at Arden House we will talk about whether the time for their ideas has in fact come.

One of the things the panel has done so effectively is to describe the current moment—not only contemporary threats but also a very frank assessment of the limitations of the

present international political system. Allow me to quote one of the key paragraphs:

What is needed today is nothing less than a new consensus between alliances that are frayed, between wealthy nations and poor, and among peoples mired in mistrust across an apparently widening cultural abyss. The essence of that consensus is simple: we all share responsibility for each other's security. And the test of that consensus will be action.

In other words, the community of nations lacks any sufficient sense of shared purpose. The panel emphasizes that today's threats do not respect boundaries and cannot be managed by any one state, no matter how powerful; that while the perceptions of these threats vary, no state can be secure while others are not; and that security must be a shared responsibility. It raises the challenge of fashioning a new and broader understanding of what collective security means and entails.

Of course, one purpose of the panel's recommendations, together with those of the UN Millennium Project and the secretary-general's own forthcoming report, is to pull governments into closer cooperation, marshal resources, and build a working collective security system worthy of the name. The premise of this entire effort is that political leaders are acutely aware of the costs of disunity and ineffectiveness and want to do a better job at tackling the world's many problems. Whatever one's personal view of the Iraq war, it clearly drove a wedge between many UN member states, and led Kofi Annan to form the high-level panel itself.

The diplomatic process of considering the panel's recommendations is just getting under

way, and we don't really know the member states' levels of interest in a stronger, more effective international system. This is the question with which we will start our conference. Most of you are seasoned diplomats. You know what it takes to rally governments around a program of change. What is your reading of the political situation? Does there seem to be sufficient interest in world capitals? To the extent this is lacking, what will it take to build commitment?

While we want your dispassionate analysis of the prospects for change in the United Nations, we also recognize that you will be participating in the negotiation process over the coming months leading up to the General Assembly summit in September. We, therefore, will spend much of this conference discussing some of the main issues raised by the high-level panel and the UN Millennium Project, and that will probably be included in the secretary-general's report next month.

As we drew up our conference agenda, we made our own prediction, with the advice of some colleagues, as to what would emerge as the main topics of international debate: the Millennium Development Goals and financing for development, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, the responsibility to protect and the use of force, and reform of UN structure including the Security Council, General Assembly, ECOSOC, the proposed Peacebuilding Commission, and the Human Rights Commission. This daunting list might seem like an impossible agenda for our own discussions here at Arden House (never mind in the broader international community), but the two recent reports have done the great service of recommending specific steps that would make the United Nations and the international system as a whole more effective.

But to paraphrase the high-level panel quotation I cited above, the test of any new security consensus will be action. When the secretary-general announced the panel in his September 2003 General Assembly speech, he famously called the current moment “a fork in the road...no less decisive than 1945 itself.” We can now see that this was no exaggeration. The proposals before us lay out new ground rules that governments can use to act with greater unity and effectiveness. That leads us to the crucial question of whether governments will accept the new international collective security paradigm, avail themselves of these tools, and break away from many of today’s unproductive patterns.

Undoubtedly, you have all read the high-level panel’s report. So I won’t reiterate the panel’s recommendations here this evening. But I would like to talk about how we might approach them in our discussions. Experts in negotiation theory say that preparation is the most important phase of any negotiation. I hope our group can, by anticipating the coming debates, boost the prospects for success in modernizing the United Nations.

We need to ask what resistance we can expect to each of the proposals. How can concerns be met? What commitments from key countries would help other governments accept the value of the process as a whole? If we can prepare for some of these issues and debates, I think it will be most helpful.

The third major item on our conference agenda asks what processes will be most helpful in securing engagement and building consensus. What groupings of countries need to be brought together? What councils and caucuses of the United Nations itself will be important? What other fora, such as the G-8 and the regional organizations, should have UN mod-

ernization on their agendas? What is the role for civil society organizations? How can the political push from capitals be generated? And what role do those of us gathered here at Arden House expect to play in the process?

At its essence, the high-level panel report is a program for more effective response to the threats of today’s world. It is also an invitation to member states to accept a shared responsibility for dealing with those threats. The secretary-general asked the panel to assess threats and recommend action. Here, I recall the test question the panel used to arrive at their prescriptions, quoting from the report: “Does a proposed change help meet the challenge posed by a virulent threat?”

This isn’t as obvious as it sounds. Too often debates in the United Nations about threats to peace and security become political shadow plays for other issues. The panel is asking member states to keep the focus on addressing the real-world threats themselves—threats that may be taking lives or potentially destabilizing governments or entire subregions. It is asking governments to maintain such a focus and set aside narrow interests and ideological posturing. I believe this will be the cornerstone of the new consensus the panel calls for. And what can be said of the real-world threats can also be said of the panel’s own recommendations. The new security consensus will be achieved only when member states accept their shared responsibility and apply themselves to the issues at hand, preventing political maneuvering or lack of agreement on one or a few issues from sidetracking the entire effort to modernize the United Nations.

While some of these patterns persist, there are also encouraging signs. The role of the United

States is very important to this process. I am struck by the commitment President Bush expressed in his December 1, 2004, speech in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Declaring that “a new term in office is an important opportunity to reach out to our friends,” he promised to pursue three great goals. Quoting the president now,

The first great commitment is to defend our security and spread freedom by building effective multinational and multilateral institutions and supporting effective multilateral action. The tasks of the 21st century, from fighting proliferation to fighting the scourge of HIV/AIDS to fighting poverty and hunger, cannot be accomplished by a single nation alone.

This language closely mirrors that of the high-level panel, perhaps consciously.

Your presence here is also encouraging. We look to you to tell us, in practical terms, what it will take to build the new consensus. Together we can identify the actions needed in the next few months to move us toward, in the words of the title of the panel report; “A More Secure World...,” which the panel reminds us is “Our Shared Responsibility.”

I have personally been involved on foundation programming related to the United Nations for some forty years. From that perspective, this year’s confluence of events offers a rare opportunity to install a new collective security paradigm that the peoples of the world desperately need. We must not miss this opportunity. I thank you for your commitment and contribution toward this essential goal.

Conference Report

Introduction

Two recent reports to the United Nations Secretary-General, *A More Secure World* and *Investing in Development*,¹ recommend a path for transforming the United Nations to meet today's challenges and threats. In March 2005, Secretary-General Kofi Annan will release his response to the two reports and review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The priorities outlined in Annan's report will set the reform agenda leading up to the high-level meeting of member states summit in New York this September. Progress made during these six months—from the release of Annan's report to this high-level

meeting—is likely to shape the work of the United Nations for years to come.

In this atmosphere of both crisis and opportunity, the Stanley Foundation brought together 15 representatives of UN member states, most of them ambassadors in New York, as well as a few key Secretariat staff and the General Assembly President to assess whether the time is now ripe for major change within the United Nations. What is the political climate for change? Which issues require the most attention? What strategies might ensure more sustained engagement by political leaders?

Participants indicated that positive outcomes will depend on three primary factors:

1. An agenda for change that is bold yet achievable.

While participants agreed on the formulation, "bold yet achievable," there was a slight tug-of-war over how high to set expectations for the September summit. On one side was the concern that the United Nations deliver quickly on a reform package substantial enough to signify a willingness to tackle problems head-on. On the other was recognition that only so much will be possible in six months time and that unrealistic expect-

tations may be harmful in the long run. The idea was put forth to launch "A Year of Reform" at the September summit that would extend into 2006.

2. The commitment of government leaders to a new collective security consensus.

The high-level panel report built on the traditional collective security concept of "A threat to one is a threat to all" in two innovative ways. First, it stressed the interconnectedness of threats; second, it broadened the defi-

¹*A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* is a 2004 report of the secretary-general's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change; *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals* is a 2005 report of the UN Millennium Project directed by Jeffrey Sachs.

The rapporteur for the meeting was Craig Cohen, researcher at the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. This report summarizes the primary findings of the conference discussions as a whole. It does not necessarily represent the views of the Stanley Foundation or the chair, individual staff, and participants.

nition of threats to peace and security by highlighting those posed by nonstate actors and those undermining human security. The high-level panel argued that collective security was impossible without a mutual recognition of threats. And yet, some participants noted a lingering hesitancy to embrace this consensus in world capitals. Some member states still seem reluctant to commit themselves to tackle the threats that other countries perceive as the gravest threats to their survival. Participants agreed that persuading capitals to buy in to this new consensus would be critical to achieve anything of significance at the September meeting.

3. Keeping current scandals from dominating perceptions of the United Nations, particularly in Washington.

The relationship between the United Nations and Washington may have improved since its low point during the Iraq war, but the dynamic remains one of impatience in some American quarters. A perception of UN incompetence and corruption still exists. Member states, for their part, resent the efforts by some in Washington to tarnish the entire UN system with too broad of a stroke. Conference participants agreed that the United Nations must deal decisively with charges of impropriety before September in order to focus the reform agenda on the future rather than on mistakes of the past.

Reports like those put out by the high-level panel and the UN Millennium Project invite member states to accept a shared responsibility in dealing with the threats and challenges facing the world today. These reports seek to pull governments into closer cooperation, organize resources, and build a working system of *collective security* worthy of the name. Meaningful change will only take place, however, if political momentum builds. It is imperative, therefore, to focus political capital where it can be of the greatest use.

The Stanley Foundation’s UN Issues Conference allowed UN delegates and outside experts to discuss how the reports were received in New York and in foreign capitals. They were asked what could be achieved on specific issues such as the Millennium Development Goals and financing for development, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, the use of force, the responsibility to protect, and institutional reform. Participants were also asked what strategies could help build a greater sense of shared purpose among member states.

Is the Political Climate Ripe for Change?

A majority of participants expressed cautious optimism that change was achievable in the coming months. Many attendees believed, though, that some of the earlier momentum for reform has dissipated. One of the participants suggested that the Iraq war had provoked a singular urgency to do something to save multilateralism in general and the United Nations in particular, but now this feeling has been tempered. A number of delegates argued against overreaching or being too ambitious in the coming months. But an equal number of participants argued that now is the time to be bold. One challenged, “We have no choice. The moment is ripe. The question is, Are we ready?”

Another participant made a similar argument, asserting that change is imminent because the structural imperfections at the base of the United Nations’ problems have yet to be fixed. “The promises at the end of the Cold War have

gone unfulfilled,” the delegate said, “and in the developing world there is a strong feeling the UN has not delivered. It’s not just the US that feels dissatisfied.” He explained away the waning support for reform as nothing more than capitals not yet having crystallized their positions.

One participant questioned whether the problems under discussion lie with the United Nations as an institution. He argued that the Iraq war exposed not an institutional crisis at the United Nations, but a political one. The great majority of the high-level panel recommendations demand action not of the UN staff, but of member states.

Discussion focused on four primary themes. Participants agreed that progress on all four issues is necessary to create a political climate hospitable to change. Participants differed, though, on where each issue stands at present.

- **New consensus on collective security.** A few participants called for a grand alliance or bargain in which countries of the industrialized North would recognize the importance of development spending if developing countries of the world recognize the dangers of terrorism and proliferation. Others rejected this notion, arguing that it oversimplifies the many issues under discussion, each with their own political dynamic. One delegate warned that if there is too much horse trading, the opportunity to build consensus around a holistic concept of security may be lost. Even among participants themselves, it was evident that some continued to see the threats their own countries face as primary, and those faced by others as less vital to international security.
- **Bringing the United States on board.** Participants expressed a range of views on whether the United States would play a con-

structive role in the run-up to September. Some were optimistic that Washington could be brought in, while others warned of a crisis as the US commitment to the United Nations shrinks, particularly when considering congressional distrust of most UN reform efforts. One participant noted this effort should not be pitched as “UN reform,” but instead that participants had to focus on the security and development benefits the United Nations could offer. Most agreed that the position of the United States would be of “paramount importance” to successful change.

- **Leadership.** Everyone agreed that leadership would be *the* critical factor in setting the reform agenda and building support. There was disagreement, however, on where leadership should come from specifically and whether it is already being provided. A few participants voiced their concern that leadership is lacking and that it should come more strongly from the secretary-general, who has been preoccupied with defending his office from critics. Others argued that the secretary-general is thoroughly engaged in this reform effort and that leadership “needs to start with the SG, but can’t end there.” Most agreed that while active support from governments will be essential, the secretary-general should serve as the catalyst for these reforms.
- **Momentum.** Most recognized what a major setback it will be if real change is not delivered based on these reports—“We need to reform now or risk being pushed aside,” argued one participant. Participants hoped this sense of urgency and opportunity could help sustain the momentum required for UN reform. “Reform, after all, is a process, not an event,” said one participant, arguing that effort must be maintained for it to be of any use.

What Can Be Achieved on the Specific Issues Raised in the Reports?

The following issues were discussed in the conference sessions: the Millennium Development Goals and financing for development, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, the use of force, the responsibility to protect, and institutional reform. Security Council reform, a key issue on the minds of many delegates, was not addressed at length in the formal discussions, and thus not tackled here in this report.

Millennium Development Goals and Financing for Development

There was broad consensus that little can be achieved on any issue unless progress is made regarding how to finance development. Securing increased financial support for development was perceived as a “red-flag issue” and a “fundamental requirement” for overall progress. Participants expressed concern that a lack of support for meeting the Millennium Development Goals will deepen a North-South divide and make any cooperation on security issues impossible.

Many were optimistic, however, that progress is possible if a process for moving the issue forward in the coming months is agreed upon. It was also suggested that the increased awareness and solidarity between industrial nations and developing countries in the wake of the tsunami must be sustained. Other participants were less optimistic, despite the existing structure and momentum. A few voiced concern that commitments in the past by industrialized countries have still not been met, making it more difficult to trust any new promises. Others rejected the idea that increased funding should come as part of any bargain, considering development is a right that should require no concessions.

Participants agreed that this issue is broader than just meeting the millennium development goals or increasing the resources directed toward development. These are only basic requirements, “more like intensive care measures,” and not sufficient to sustain countries over time. A number of delegates argued for the need to link official development assistance to debt relief and fairer trade practices. Although the United Nations is limited in terms of its role on trade, it could help highlight the harm agriculture subsidies have on the developing world. The September summit could be used to give momentum to these issues at the December World Trade Organization’s negotiations in Hong Kong.

Participants differed in their appraisal of the practicality of identifying “fast-track” countries as destinations for increased official development assistance in 2005, as well as in the efficacy of launching a group of “quick-win” actions to save and improve millions of lives, both recommendations of the Millennium Development Report. Some delegates argued “quick wins” are not sustainable and that both ideas would act more as band-aids, while others thought they could play an important role in demonstrating success, particularly in education and health.

A few participants stressed the importance of building the absorptive capacity of developing country governments, since increased funding means little if not put to good use. Others argued that industrialized governments could play a more constructive role in helping countries develop, both by increasing the coordination of aid efforts and by increasing domestic support for foreign aid.

Participants agreed that a great deal of choreography is needed in the coming months to

push this effort in the right direction and build trust on all sides. The secretary-general will have to take the lead, but he will require assistance from many different actors, both inside and outside the United Nations. Success will depend on the ability to consider these issues holistically and to define development broadly and in relation to security.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

While many participants viewed financing for development as critical to the overall success of reform efforts, others believed weapons of mass destruction is the “emergency issue,” at the “top of the agenda,” and the one which—if not confronted—could lead “the entire body of multi-lateral mechanisms to break apart.”

Some delegates were less convinced, arguing that too much is made of the threat of proliferation at the expense of other threats. This prompted one delegate to charge that countries in the South are not “scared enough” at the prospect of nuclear weapons in the hands of both state and nonstate actors. Another responded, “We are scared, but we can’t throw everything else out just because we are scared.”

Discussion centered on two main issues: non-proliferation versus disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Some participants contended that the high-level panel report gives too much weight to proliferation in relation to disarmament, while others argued that disarmament does not carry the same urgency as the risk of proliferation. Participants reached a consensus concerning the need to transcend the traditional disarmament/nonproliferation dialectic, while acknowledging that without concrete action toward disarmament, it will be difficult to take action on nonproliferation. “If you combine them both, you will move,” said one participant.

Doing so may not guarantee success, however. The danger, as one participant saw it, is that certain countries will comply with the terms of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) right up to the point where they can easily transform their peaceful-use systems to weapons production systems. This prompted one delegate to insist that non-nuclear weapon countries would never give up their peaceful use of nuclear energy. Other problems were highlighted, including the weakness of IAEA monitoring and the lack of strategies for restricting a country’s access to nuclear technology in the event that an autocratic regime takes power in a country that possesses nuclear technology for peaceful use.

Discussion moved on to varying interpretations of the NPT. Some participants argued for strengthening the treaty, while others felt it should be torn up. One participant argued that the problem is not just with those countries pursuing nuclear weapons but those expanding the technology. Participants doubted a fissile material cut-off treaty could be accomplished in the near future.

Some participants argued that it is difficult to address weapons of mass destruction without linking the issue to either use of force or terrorism. One delegate suggested that, given the interconnection of the issues, a broader agreement on the use of force could have a positive impact on nonproliferation. Some delegates fear that not enough attention is being paid to the role of nonstate actors. Consensus appeared possible on extending the Bush administration’s Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to prohibit shipments that may be destined for nonstate actors, but some participants questioned how PSI’s membership requirements could be extended.

Participants acknowledged that the cases of Iran and North Korea are especially disconcerting, and could soon find their way onto the United Nations’ agenda. These cases also illustrate that coordinated pressure from key governments could be more important at key times than the international instruments at hand.

Consensus was reached on the suggestion that improving public health in local communities around the world could diminish the consequences of a potential biological attack.

Terrorism

More than with nonproliferation, there was a sense among participants that “we are all in the same boat” with terrorism and that terrorists are challenging everything the United Nations stands for. The criteria included in the definition of terrorism put forward by the high-level panel were quickly agreed upon by participants, who agreed that the panel “did us a great favor” with their definition. A few delegates cautioned that consensus in Harriman, New York, should not be confused with consensus among member states, but others believed that broad international agreement on a definition is within reach.

Participants discussed whether a comprehensive terrorism convention encompassing the 12 existing treaties could be an outcome of the September summit. Some believed it was possible, others that it is too soon, but a few participants argued that a convention would be meaningless without genuine conviction behind it. One participant charged that countries continue to think “terrorism is okay so long as it’s used against their political opponents,” despite their signing on to existing conventions.

A number of participants agreed that the main counterterrorism objective of the United Nations should be to assist countries in build-

ing national capacities to fight terrorism. One argued that regional organizations should play a greater role in this effort, but others protested that these organizations lack the capacity to provide significant assistance. One participant called for efforts to be focused on increasing the capacity of governance rather than intelligence. Another participant argued that more thought should be put into the coordination of different pieces comprising the counterterrorism framework, including strengthening the Counterterrorism Committee.

Most participants disagreed with the idea put forth in the high-level panel report that the Security Council should devise a schedule of predetermined sanctions for state noncompliance. One participant stressed that the root causes of terrorism should also be addressed, and that any antiterrorism strategy must be in step with human rights observation and the rule of law.

Use of Force and the Responsibility to Protect

Difficult questions surrounded both of these issues. Should the Security Council be the sole authority for determining when force can be used? What type of international action is possible when governments fail to protect their own citizens? Participants felt that recommendations on these issues were the “weakest part of the chain” and would not stimulate action in September. There was no consensus and few concrete proposals for how to approach the use of force or what deliverables could be expected in time for the summit.

Participants appreciated the high-level panel’s suggestion that it may be necessary to counter some threats forcefully even before they are imminent, though clearly the issue of whether Security Council approval is needed remains divisive. One participant explained that the question of imminence has been the subject of

lengthy debates within the Non-Aligned Movement. Most agreed that these issues are best dealt with in informal debate rather than on the formal intergovernmental agenda.

Similarly, there was no consensus on how to approach the responsibility to protect, although more ideas were offered than with use of force. On one hand, many participants argued that effective multilateralism today should maintain the ability to intervene in order to stop genocide and ethnic cleansing, and to assist civilians in need of protection. This is particularly true because too often the international response comes too late, or is not unified in confronting the offending government. A few participants stated that this responsibility is not a new concept and is widely accepted for combating genocide and massive human rights violations. The general feeling among participants was that the world's lack of an effective mechanism to confront the worst abuses leaves a gap the United Nations could fill.

And yet, the question persists: How should the United Nations confront the worst abuses, and how should the decision be taken? Participants agreed that many countries distrust the motives behind industrialized states' support of the responsibility to protect, fearing humanitarian pretexts may mask self-serving intentions. One participant explained that there is tremendous opposition from those who "fear it is a back door to intervention," while another termed it a "contaminated issue." One participant suggested that humanitarian intervention could require approval from both the Security Council and the General Assembly or ECOSOC as a way of ensuring the principle would not be abused for narrow interests.

Some participants used this discussion to focus attention on the sexual exploitation by UN

peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They urged delegates to hold peacekeepers and troop-contributing countries more accountable, and to make the process of accountability more transparent. While everyone agreed that there should be zero tolerance for peacekeeper abuse, a number of delegates took exception to the insinuation that the UN writ-large is to blame. They reminded participants that peacekeepers in Africa were playing a vital role no one else was willing to play. Three concrete recommendations arising from this discussion were the need for the United Nations to clearly demonstrate its efforts to stop future abuse, the use of female ombudspersons in the field, and increasing the secretary-general's management capabilities.

A number of participants highlighted the structural constraints on the secretary-general's ability to manage the organization, including difficulties in hiring and firing staff. Member states have a heavy hand in staffing issues—one participant called the secretary-general "the most micromanaged CEO in the world." In the case of the abusive peacekeepers, it was noted that their governments would most likely cite diplomatic immunity to bring them home for trial and possible punishment. Even so, one participant encouraged governments to be transparent and make public the extent of the disciplinary action taken.

Institutional Reform

Peacebuilding Commission

Participants expressed a general sense of excitement about the proposed Peacebuilding Commission. It is an idea "whose time has come," one most countries could support, particularly in Africa. It was also a clear deliverable that would improve UN operations in the field. There was considerable discussion about the details of the commission.

Where does it sit? Who is responsible? What are its powers? Some participants believed it might be difficult to reach agreement on these questions by September.

Although the question of where the Peacebuilding Commission would sit dominated discussion, participants believed it was important to first decide on the commission’s function. “We should put the problem at the center and not the organizational questions,” said one participant. Participants agreed it should function as an advisory body rather than a decision-making organization, and that its primary competency should be post-conflict peacebuilding.

The primary debate concerned whether the Peacebuilding Commission should come under the Security Council or ECOSOC. No consensus was reached, but a number of participants voiced support for the idea of having the commission comprised of representatives from the Security Council, ECOSOC, the World Bank, IMF, and UNDP. There was concern over putting it under the General Assembly or ECOSOC because neither body has played a strong operational role in the past.

The importance the Peacebuilding Commission could play in synchronizing the World Bank’s economic role with UN political activities was a key issue highlighted by many participants. One person noted the Bank’s enthusiasm for the proposal.

Human Rights Commission

Participants had mixed feelings regarding the overall situation of human rights. On one hand, there has been a clear evolution in which human rights have become a part of the United Nations’ day-to-day work. On the other hand, in the words of one participant, the Human Rights Commission today is a political “disas-

ter.” Participants were not optimistic that much progress could be made on the basis of the high-level panel’s report recommendations.

The challenge, as one delegate saw it, is not to develop new machinery, but to fix what exists and provide it proper resources. A number of delegates believed that the United Nations’ role in human rights should not be to name and shame, but to encourage and promote a greater respect for human rights worldwide. The institution should thus be charged with capacity-building and promoting good practices. Some participants thought such a role could minimize the politicization of human rights within the United Nations, while others thought that human rights were, by definition, a politicized endeavor regardless of the context.

Discussion centered on whether to open the Human Rights Commission to universal membership. The immediate concern of some participants was that doing so could result in Washington withdrawing from the commission. Few participants saw universalizing the commission as a real solution.

Another recommendation was for the Human Rights Commissioner to issue an annual report. Some participants thought this was a waste of resources, or could lead to an erosion of the commissioner’s authority, while others thought a report could be useful if it focused on the five worst offenders as well as examples of progress countries had made.

What Strategies Could Ensure Continued Engagement?

Participants agreed that only so much can be accomplished between now and September, but a significant outcome is necessary to ensure continued momentum for change. Attention

should therefore be focused on how meaningful action can be taken on the most vital issues.

One participant argued that all issues should be taken on board, if not prioritized—even those most difficult to achieve. A “Year of Reform” continuing through the General Assembly session could reinforce the notion that change is a process rather than an event. But the key will be to focus on steps that defuse threats rather than to merely tinker with structures. “Substance is salvation,” said one participant.

The suggestion was made to list “what’s workable, what’s possible, and what’s out.” Green lights could be anticipated for the definition of terrorism and the Peacebuilding Commission. A red light was evident for use of force, which is likely to be debated gradually over time. Issues such as Security Council enlargement and financing for development face yellow lights, but are two of the most vital issues in the entire reform process. Participants agreed it is critical to provide a path that keeps stalled issues under active discussion. Without such a path, the entire process of reform could be derailed. One participant contended this was a role nongovernment stakeholders could play.

Participants agreed that the main challenge is to convince world leaders to buy into the new consensus on collective security, and to sell the reforms as improvements in security and development, rather than as “UN reform.” The process should also be owned by member states, or it will risk further alienating countries that are looking to the reforms as a way to bring them into closer cooperation with the United Nations. Participants agreed on the importance of mobilizing public opinion to convince heads of state to attend the September summit.

Two issues are considered paramount. The first is leadership. Participants agreed that the process must start with the secretary-general and his forthcoming report. But he is not the sole leader, and he must ask heads of state, regional organizations, and civil society to deliver outcomes on specific issues.

The second is the necessity to get past the perception of impropriety and gain the trust of the American body politic, in particular. This meant the Volcker report on Oil-for-Food and the United Nations’ detractors have to be dealt with in a manner that restores the institution’s integrity, or else the United Nations must forgo any possibility of meaningful change. The examples of freedom on the march that President Bush often cites—elections in Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq, for instance—are United Nations successes as well. The United Nations needs to do a better job of making sure the world, and the US Congress in particular, recognizes this.

Chairman’s Observations

The Arden House discussions were enlightening and productive. Participants urged the Stanley Foundation to convene a similar informal discussion soon after the anticipated report and recommendations from the secretary-general are available. Planning for this is under way.

Conference participants considered the information and recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change as well as the UN Millennium Project advisory report. They looked forward with anticipation to the secretary-general’s report, expected to be available in late March. Participants considered how to advance the process of building a new understanding of the collective nature of threats and challenges in the twenty-first century.

We are still in the early stages of a process that offers a new paradigm for collective and cooperative action, strengthened and more effective international institutions, and improved security prospects. This will unfold in the months ahead, including a significant milestone at the high-level portion of the 60th General Assembly meeting in September. This rare opportunity for positive change and enhanced security for people everywhere warrants dedicated and constructive support by all. All can contribute, including governments, business enterprise, and civil society.

Even at this stage, the Arden House discussions provided several observations.

First, the President of the General Assembly and his successor are fully engaged and providing leadership. The appointed facilitators are also fully engaged. Four “baskets” of issues have been defined to help channel and focus future deliberations. All of this is encouraging.

Second, while the United Nations in New York will be the center of much of the deliberations, it is vitally important that leaders in world capitals be involved and engaged. Adopting and acting upon a new collective security paradigm will require policy decisions at the highest levels.

Third, the timeline for “bold yet achievable” change should not be limited by the calendar of the 59th General Assembly. We should accomplish as much as possible before and during the General Assembly session beginning this fall, yet we should think in terms of a season of renewal and change that continues into 2006 and perhaps beyond. Time and schedule are important, but real progress is more so.

Finally, it would seem useful to sort the many proposals into categories:

- Readily and easily achievable.
- Achievable in the near term with intense effort.
- Requiring continuing effort beyond this year and next.

With many varied recommendations under consideration, prioritization will maximize progress.

We have a rare opportunity to advance peace, security, freedom, and justice in a twenty-first century world in which the nations and peoples continue to become more interconnected and interdependent. In the months ahead, the Stanley Foundation will continue to devote significant efforts toward encouraging and facilitating progress at the United Nations. I encourage others to do so too.

Participant List

Chair

Richard H. Stanley, President, The Stanley Foundation

Rapporteur

Craig Cohen, Researcher, Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Participants

Ricardo Alberto Arias, Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations

Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations

Elizabeth Cousens, Vice President, International Peace Academy

John Cecil Dauth, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

Jean-Marc de La Sablière, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations

Jan K. Eliasson, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to the United States

Saturnin Epié, Counselor, Office of the President of the General Assembly, United Nations

Paul S. Foldi, Republican Professional Staff Member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Bruce Jones, Senior Officer, Office of the Special Adviser on Follow-up to the Report of the High-level Panel, United Nations

Roman Kirn, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations

Dumisani S. Kumalo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations

Laxanachantorn Laohaphan, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations

Ellen Margrethe Løj, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations

Edward C. Luck, Professor and Director, Center on International Organization, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

Johanna Mendelson-Forman, Senior Program Officer, Peace, Security and Human Rights, United Nations Foundation

Vanu Gopala Menon, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations

Tommo Monthe, Special Adviser to the President of the General Assembly, United Nations

Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Chef de Cabinet, Office of the President of the General Assembly, United Nations

Robert C. Orr, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning, United Nations

Toshiro Ozawa, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

Jean Ping, President of the General Assembly, United Nations

Nicholas Rostow, General Counsel, US Mission to the United Nations

Nirupam Sen, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

David Shorr, Interim Director, Policy Analysis and Dialogue, The Stanley Foundation

Wolfgang F. H. Trautwein, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

Dirk Jan van den Berg, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations

The Stanley Foundation Staff

Susan R. Moore, Conference Management Associate

Keith Porter, Director, Communication and Outreach

The Stanley Foundation

The Stanley Foundation, a nonpartisan, private operating foundation, is focused on promoting and building support for principled multilateralism in addressing international issues. The foundation is attracted to the role that international collaboration and cooperation, reliance on the rule of law, international organizations, cooperative and collective security, and responsible global citizenship can play in creating a more peaceful and secure world.

Consistent with its vision of a secure peace with freedom and justice, the foundation encourages public understanding, constructive dialogue, and cooperative action on critical international issues. Its work recognizes the essential roles of both the policy community and the broader public in building sustainable peace.

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The Stanley Foundation
209 Iowa Avenue
Muscatine, IA 52761 USA
563-264-1500
563-264-0864 fax
info@stanleyfoundation.org

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