

The following is chapter six of the forthcoming book “Choosing Wisdom Over Folly, Moving from War and Violence to Global Community” by Douglas Mattern. The article contains much reference material on the UN

STILL THE LAST BEST HOPE – THE UN

To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support—to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective—to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak—and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run

President John Kennedy

I still find it both amazing and troubling over the bad attitude of so many Americans, and elected officials, regarding the United Nations. Most of it is due to an appalling lack of knowledge about this world institution, and the rest from a limited perspective of the world we live in. Another misconception is that people often condemn the UN for votes or other actions its takes as if the UN was a separate organization divorced from national governments. This is not the case. The UN is comprised of national governments and they make the decisions for the UN to carry out. When people are displeased with UN voting, etc., they should vent their anger at the government(s) that cast the vote they disagree with and not the staff at the UN. The UN is an organization of members state to be used for the purposes it was created.

News and information about the myriad of activities of the world organization are regularly reported in the media of most countries. It's quite the opposite in the United States where very little positive news concerning the United Nations is reported in the mainstream press. In many states the United Nations is omitted from the history books. A few years ago I presented several lectures on the United Nations to several high schools and discovered that it wasn't only the students that lacked knowledge about the UN, but also their teachers. The only good news was that the majority of the students were interested and eager to learn more about this vital world organization.

In the developing world, which comprises the vast majority of humanity, the blue flag of the UN is welcomed and recognized as people helping people to resolve crucial issues. "In the developing countries, the U.N. doesn't mean frustration, confrontation or condemnation," said Ecuador's delegate to the organization, Miguel A. Albornoz, "it means environmental sanitation, agricultural production, telecommunications, the fight against illiteracy, the great struggle against poverty, ignorance and disease."

Many of the people who work for the UN in its humanitarian work often have to endure very difficult and often dangerous conditions. Many are heroic people that should be honored and recognized for their work. This might help to

overcome the superficial celebrity worshiping culture that is so dominate in our country today.

The United Nations is a vast world organization that operates in every corner of our world through its principle organs and many agencies and programs.

Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the United Nations is it universal membership, which is the first step in the difficult task of establishing a world community for the 21st century.

There is need for change and reform as with any organization over the years.

The UN's chief architect, President Franklin Roosevelt said as much in his last speech before Congress: *"No plan is perfect. Whatever is adopted at San Francisco will doubtless have to be amended time and again over the years, just as our own Constitution has been. No one can say exactly how long any plan will last. Peace can endure only so long as humanity really insists upon it, and is willing to work for it, and sacrifice for it."*

And today, reform is the chief concern with the United Nations. Secretary General Kofi Annan commission a high-level panel to recommend structural changes so the UN could be more efficient to meet the difficult challenges in the coming years. After receiving the report Mr. Annan called on world leaders to

approve the most sweeping changes to the United Nations since it was founded 60 years ago

One of the major proposals calls for the creation of a Human Rights Council to replace the Geneva-based Commission on Human Rights, which has received criticism for allowing the worst-offending countries to use their membership to protect each other from condemnation.

The most important recommendation for change is to expand the Security Council to be more representative of the world's people. The high-level panel recommended two options for change. One would add six new permanent members, and the other plan would create a new tier of eight semi-permanent members: two each from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. From the beginning there have been five permanent members to the Security Council: United States, Russia, China, France, and England. The remaining states rotate to comprise the 15-member Security Council,

The high-level report said the Security Council's decisions on whether to use force should be guided by a set of clear principles, and it urged all states to accept that in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, there is a "responsibility to protect" which requires collective action.

Kofi Annan also proposed a comprehensive anti-terrorism strategy, urging world leaders to unite behind a definition of terrorism and adopt a comprehensive convention against terrorism. Regarding development, Kofi Annan urged the rich countries to establish a definite timetable to reach the goal established years ago of allocating 0.7 percent of gross national product for development assistance by 2015. The United States currently has one of the lowest levels - about 0.15

At the 2000 Millennium Summit, all member States of the United Nations agreed to a set of Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by the year 2015. A summit meeting is scheduled for September of 2005 to review progress in meeting these goals. Secretary General Kofi Annan says, ***"The 2005 Summit will be an event of decisive importance. The decisions to be taken there may determine the whole future of the United Nations."***

Some of the Millennium Development Goals will be discussed later in this chapter, but first it will be useful to review the history and the structure of the United Nations.

It was President Franklin Roosevelt that first envisioned and determined the name of this world organization. In August of 1941, Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill established principles based on international

cooperation to achieve peace and security. This document became known as the Atlantic Charter, which represented a kind of blueprint for the UN.

THE HISTORY

January of 1942, representatives of 26 Allied nations fighting against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan met in Washington, D.C. to support and sign the "Declaration of the United Nations."

In a series of international conferences involving the U.S., United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and China were held in Moscow and Teheran, and later at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C. moving the plan for the UN closer to reality. And then at Yalta on 11 February 1945, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Joseph Stalin declared their resolve to establish "a general international organization to maintain peace and security". This constituted the authority to move forward to create the UN.

On 25 April 1945, delegates of 50 nations met in San Francisco and created the 111-article UN Charter, which was adopted unanimously on 25 June 1945 in the San Francisco Opera House. The next day, they signed the document in the Herbst Theatre auditorium of the Veterans War Memorial Building. Finally, on 24

October 1945 the five permanent members of the Security Council and the other signatories to bring the United Nations into force ratified the Charter.

The First General Assembly, with 51 nations represented, opened in Central Hall, Westminster, London on 10 January 1946, and on 17 January the Security Council met for the first time in London, adopting its rules of procedure.

On 24 January 1946 the General Assembly adopts its first resolution with the focus on the peaceful uses of atomic energy and the elimination of atomic and other weapons of mass destruction.

On 10 December 1948 the General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and on 24 October 1949 the cornerstone is laid for the present United Nations Headquarters in New York City.

On 27 June 1950 the Security Council calls on Member States to help the southern part of Korea repel invasion from the north. The Soviet Union was absent for the vote

In 1965 UNICEF is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

On 22 November 1967 the Security Council adopts resolution 242 as the basis for achieving peace in the Middle East.

On 12 June 1968 the General Assembly approves the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and calls for its ratification.

In 1969 The International Labor Organization (ILO) is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

On 25 October 1971 the General Assembly votes to seat representatives of the People's Republic of China.

In June 1972 the first UN Environment Conference is held in Stockholm, Sweden, leading to the establishment of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

In May-June 1978 the General Assembly convenes special session, for the first time, on disarmament.

On 8 May 1980 three years after the last case was reported, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declares smallpox eradicated.

In 1981 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the second time.

On 10 December 1982 the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is signed by 117 States and two entities -the largest number of signatures ever affixed to a treaty on its first day. The United States has not ratified this treaty,

In September 1987 the Treaty on the Protection of the Ozone Layer -known as the Montreal Protocol is signed

In 1988 the UN Peacekeeping operations awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In June 1992 the UN Conference on Environment and Development, the "Earth Summit." is held in Rio de Janeiro attended by leaders from over 100 countries, the largest intergovernmental gathering in history, resulting in Agenda 21, a plan of action for sustainable development.

In March 1995 the World Summit for Social Development -one of the largest gatherings of world leaders in history- meets in Copenhagen to renew the commitment to combating poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

On 26 June 1995 a conference is held in San Francisco, California to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter.

On 10 September 1996 the General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. This is a turning point in the history of efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The treaty was opened for signature on 24 September. This treaty has not been ratified by the United States.

On 26 August 2002 the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. This conference was attended by tens of thousands of participants, including heads of State, national delegates and non-government organizations (NGOs).

September 13, 2005 the UN will hold a world summit of heads of state to review progress on meeting the Millennium Development Goals. (More on this meeting later in this chapter).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

One of the silliest comments by the uninformed is that the United Nations hasn't accomplished anything important. Below is a selected list of accomplishments over the years. The full list can be viewed on the UN website:

www.UN.org

Achievements of the United Nations

The United Nations was established in the aftermath of a devastating war to help stabilize international relations and give peace a more secure foundation.

Amid the threat of nuclear war and seemingly endless regional conflicts, peacekeeping has become an overriding concern of the United Nations. In the process, the activities of blue-helmeted peacekeepers have emerged as the most visible role associated with the world organization.

The United Nations, however, is much more than a peacekeeper and forum for conflict resolution. Often without attracting attention, the United Nations and its family of agencies are engaged in a vast array of work that touches every aspect of people's lives around the world.

Child survival and development. Environmental protection. Human rights. Health and medical research. Alleviation of poverty and economic development.

Agricultural development and fisheries. Education. Family planning. Emergency and disaster relief. Air and sea travel. Peaceful uses of atomic energy. Labour and workers' rights. The list goes on. Here, in brief, is a sampling of what the United Nations organizations has accomplished since 1945 when the world organization was founded.

1. **Maintaining peace and security** - By having deployed a total of 54 peace-keeping forces and observer missions as of September 2001, the United Nations has been able to restore calm to allow the negotiating process to go forward while saving millions of people from becoming casualties of conflicts. There are presently 15 active peacekeeping forces in operation.

2. **Making peace** - Since 1945, the United Nations has been credited with negotiating many peaceful settlements that have ended regional conflicts. Recent cases include an end to the Iran-Iraq war, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and an end to the civil war in El Salvador. The United Nations has used quiet diplomacy to avert imminent wars.

* **Promoting development** - The UN system has devoted more attention and resources to the promotion of the development of human skills and potentials than any other external assistance effort. The system's annual disbursements, including loans and grants, amount to more than \$10 billion. The UN Development Programme (UNDP), in close cooperation with over 170 Member States and other UN agencies, designs and implements projects for agriculture, industry, education, and the environment.

5. **Promoting human rights** - Since adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations has helped enact dozens of comprehensive agreements on political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.

6. **Protecting the environment** - The United Nations has played a vital role in fashioning a global programme designed to protect the environment. The "Earth Summit," the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, resulted in treaties on biodiversity and climate change, and all countries adopted "Agenda 21" - a blueprint to promote sustainable development or the concept of economic growth while protecting natural resources.

7. **Preventing nuclear proliferation** - The United Nations, through the International Atomic Energy Agency, has helped minimize the threat of a nuclear war by inspecting nuclear reactors in 90 countries to ensure that nuclear materials are not diverted for military purposes.

9. **Strengthening international law** - Over 300 international treaties, on topics as varied as human rights conventions to agreements on the use of outer space and seabed, have been enacted through the efforts of the United Nations.

11. **Ending apartheid in South Africa** - By imposing measures ranging from an arms embargo to a convention against segregated sporting events, the United Nations was a major factor in bringing about the downfall of the apartheid system, which the General Assembly called "a crime against humanity."

12. **Providing humanitarian aid to victims of conflict** - More than 30 million refugees fleeing war, famine or persecution have received aid from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees since 1951 in a continuing effort coordinated by the United Nations that often involves other agencies. There are more than 19 million refugees, mostly women and children, who are receiving food, shelter, medical aid, education and repatriation assistance.

14. **Alleviating chronic hunger and rural poverty in developing countries**
- The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has developed a system of providing credit, often in very small amounts, for the poorest and most marginalized groups that has benefited over 230 million people in nearly 100 developing countries.

16. **Promoting women's rights** - A long-term objective of the United Nations has been to improve the lives of women and to empower women to have greater control over their lives. Several conferences during the UN-sponsored International Women's Decade set an agenda for the advancement of women

and women's rights for the rest of the century. The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) have supported programmes and projects to improve the quality of life for women in over 100 countries. 17. **Providing safe drinking water** - UN agencies have worked to make safe drinking water available to 1.3 billion people in rural areas during the last decade.

18. **Eradicating smallpox** - A 13-year effort by the World Health Organization resulted in the complete eradication of smallpox from the planet in 1980. WHO also helped wipe out polio from the Western hemisphere, with global eradication achieved by the year 2000.

19. **Pressing for universal immunization** - Polio, tetanus, measles, whooping cough, diphtheria and tuberculosis still kill more than eight million children each year. In 1974, only 5 per cent of children in developing countries were immunized against these diseases. Today, as a result of the efforts of UNICEF and WHO, there is an 80 per cent immunization rate, saving the lives of more than 3 million children each year.

20. **Reducing child mortality rates** - Through oral rehydration therapy, water and sanitation and other health and nutrition measures undertaken by UN

agencies, child mortality rates in the developing countries have been halved since 1960, increasing the life expectancy from 37 to 67 years.

24. **Reducing the effects of natural disasters** - The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has spared millions of people from the calamitous effects of both natural and man-made disasters. Its early warning system, which utilizes thousands of surface monitors as well as satellites, has provided information for the dispersal of oil spills and has predicted long-term droughts.

25. **Providing food to victims of emergencies** - Nearly 815 million people are currently suffering from chronic malnutrition, including 300 million children. In 2001, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed 4.2 million tons of food to 77 million people in 82 countries for a total operational expenditure of \$ 1.74 billion. 20 million people received, through development projects, aid in food-for-work projects to promote agriculture, improve the environment, and in school feeding, health, and nutrition projects, and 57 million people were offered assistance through short- and long-term operations.

26. **Clearing land mines** - The United Nations is leading an international effort to clear land mines from former battlefields in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Rwanda and Somalia that still kill and maim thousands of innocent people every year.

29. **Preventing over-fishing** - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) monitors marine fishery production and issues alerts to prevent damage due to over-fishing.

30. **Limiting deforestation and promoting sustainable forestry development** - FAO, UNDP and the World Bank, through a Tropical Forests Action Programme, have formulated and carried out forestry action plans in 90 countries.

31. **Cleaning up pollution** - UNEP led a major effort to clean up the Mediterranean Sea. It encouraged adversaries such as Syria and Israel, Turkey and Greece to work together to clean up beaches. As a result, more than 50 per cent of the previously polluted beaches are now usable.

33. **Reducing fertility rates** - The UN Population Fund (UNFPA), through its family planning programmes, has enabled people to make informed choices, and consequently given families, and especially women, greater control over their lives. As a result, women in developing countries are having fewer children - from six births per woman in the 1960s to 3.5 today. In the 1960s, only 10 per cent of the world's families were using effective methods of family planning. The number now stands at 55 per cent.

36. **Promoting economic reform** - Together with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations has helped many countries improve their economic management, offered training for government finance officials, and provided financial assistance to countries experiencing temporary balance of payment difficulties.

37. **Promoting worker rights** - The International Labour Organization (ILO) has worked to guarantee freedom of the right to association, the right to organize, collective bargaining, the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, promote employment and equal remuneration and has sought to eliminate discrimination and child labour.

39. **Promoting stability and order in the world's oceans** - Through three international conferences, the third lasting more than nine years, the United Nations has spearheaded an international effort to promote a comprehensive global agreement for the protection, preservation and peaceful development of the oceans. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which came into force in 1994, lays down rules for the determination of national maritime jurisdiction, navigation on the high seas, rights and duties of coastal and other states, obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment, cooperation in the conduct of marine scientific research and preservation of living resources.

40. **Improving air and sea travel** - UN agencies have been responsible for setting safety standards for sea and air travel. The efforts of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) have contributed to making air travel the safest mode of transportation. To wit: In 1947, when nine million traveled, 590 were killed in aircraft accidents; in 1993 the number of deaths was 936 out of the 1.2 billion airline passengers. Over the last two decades, pollution from tankers has been reduced by as much as 60 per cent thanks to the work of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

43. **Improving global communications** - The Universal Postal Union (UPU) has maintained and regulated international mail delivery. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has coordinated use of the radio spectrum, promoted cooperation in assigning positions for stationary satellites, and established international standards for communications, thereby ensuring the unfettered flow of information around the globe.

45. **Establishing "children as a zone of peace"** - From El Salvador to Lebanon, Sudan to former Yugoslavia, UNICEF pioneered the establishment of "Days of Tranquility" and the opening of "Corridors of Peace" to provide vaccines and other assistance desperately needed by children caught in armed conflict.

47. **Improving education in developing countries** - As a direct result of the efforts of UN agencies, over 60 per cent of adults in developing countries can now read and write, and 90 per cent of children in these countries attend school.

48. **Improving literacy for women** - Programmes aimed at promoting education and advancement for women helped raise steadily the female literacy rate in developing countries from 36 per cent in 1970 to 56 per cent in 1990 and to 72 per cent in 2000.

49. **Safeguarding and preserving historic cultural and architectural sites** - Ancient monuments in 81 countries including Greece, Egypt, Italy, Indonesia and Cambodia, have been protected through the efforts of UNESCO, and international conventions have been adopted to preserve cultural property.

How the UN works.

The principle organs of the United Nations are the Security Council, the General Assembly, International Court of Justice, the Economic and Social Council, and the Secretariat. In addition there are over 40 Specialized Agencies and Programs. A thumbnail description follows:

SECURITY COUNCIL

The responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security. Currently structured with five permanent members that have veto power over all issues brought before the council. The permanent members are U.S., Russia, China, France, and UK. The council has 10 rotating member state to complete the 15 total. The presidency of the Council rotates monthly.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly is composed of representatives of all member states, each of which has one vote. This is the main deliberative organ of the United Nations. Decisions of crucial issues, such as peace and security, the admission of new members and the UN budget, require a two-thirds majority. A simple majority is required on other issues.

SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat has an international staff working in stations around the world with the duty of carrying out the day-to-day work of the organization.

The secretariat services all the principal organs of the United Nations and administers the programs and policies. The secretariat is led the Secretary General, who is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a five-year term. The secretariat has a staff of roughly 9,000 international civil servants.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

This is the principle judicial organ of the United Nations and is located at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). The court has two roles, the first of which is to settle in accordance with international law the legal disputes submitted to it by States, and second to give advisory opinions of legal questions referred to it by duly authorized international organs and agencies. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by the General Assembly and Security Council sitting independently of each other.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The Economic and Social Council is the principal organ to coordinate the economic, social, and related work of the UN specialized agencies, functional commissions and five regional commissions. The Council serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system. With its broad mandate the Council's purview extends to over 70 per cent of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

The ICC is not part of the United Nations Organization, but it was created through the United Nations; therefore a description of the court follows.

The ICC was established by a treaty called the Rome Statute, which entered into force on July 1, 2002. By 2004, 97 countries ratified the Rome Statute and joined the ICC, including most all the democracies in the world. The ICC has the purpose of ending the cycle of impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern, and will decide on the criminal responsibility of individuals and act as a deterrent for possible future criminal acts. The ICC will prosecute the worst crimes of humanity identified as Genocide, War Crimes, and Crimes Against Humanity. The ICC has 18 judges who serve nine-year, non-renewable terms. President Clinton signed on to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on December 31, 2000. The Bush administration is totally against U.S. participation in the ICC and nullified the U.S. signature by sending a letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on May 6, 2002, expressing its intention not to be bound by the treaty.

SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The UNDP is the UN's global development network with programs in 166 countries working with the people to achieve their development goals. UNDP publishes the annual Human Development Report that provides analysis on global issues of all member states.

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATION, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

UNESCO promotes international cooperation among its 192 Member States and six Associate Members in the fields of education, science, culture and communication. UNESCO has trained teachers and built schools around the world, protects our human heritage, and conducts important scientific conferences.

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CHILDRENS EMERGENCY FUND (UNICEF)

Probably the best known of all the UN's specialized agencies, UNICEF is the world's leading organization working specifically for children, working with communities and governments in 158 countries to aid children with emergency relief and long-term programs in health, education, and child protection, UNICEF'S programs have saved the lives of millions of children around the world.

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

UNHCR leads and coordinates international action to protect refugees and resolve their problems worldwide. In the past 50 years this agency has helped an estimated 50 million people restart their lives. UNHCR is working in over 100 countries to help some 17 million refugees.

UNITED NATIONAL FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES (UNFPA)

UNFPA is the world's largest international organization for population and reproductive health programs, working with governments and non-government organizations in over 140 countries. The world population in 2005 is 6.4 billion and growing rapidly at 76 million persons per years. The UN estimates the world population by 2050 will be about 9 billion.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

WHO is active in countries around the world in combating disease and to attain the best possible level of health for all people in the world.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION (ILO)

ILO promotes social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights, including setting minimum standards of basic labor rights, freedom of association, the right to organize, collective bargaining, abolition of forced labor, and other standards regulating conditions of work related issues.

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION (WMO)

WMO has membership in 187 countries and issues over 100,000 weather forecasts every day all around the world contributing substantially to the protection of life and property against natural disasters.

UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION (UPU)

Ever wonder why you feel secure in sending mail to remote parts of the world? It's UPU that gives you comfort by working with all countries to ensure that mail is delivered, and what a gigantic task. UPU reports there are 700,000 post offices in the world. Mail is handled by 6.2 million postal workers, and they carry over 400 billion letters every year.

There are a great many other important UN agencies that benefit people every day, including regulating and providing safety issues for civil aviation, ships at sea, and telecommunications. There is also the United Nations University, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and much more. The reality is that the UN plays an important role in our everyday life and only a minority of people is aware of it.

THE FORK IN THE ROAD

This is how Secretary General Kofi Annan describes the present status of the United Nations and why he states that the UN Summit Meeting of heads of State in New York in September is so crucial. The secretary General states:

The 2005 Summit will be an event of decisive importance. The decisions to be taken there may determine the whole future of the United Nations

The meeting is to review the Millennium Development Goals that were agreed by the consensus of all member State in 2000. Below are some selected Millennium Goals of the Millennium Declaration of 2000. The full declaration can be read on the UN website: www.un.org

I. Values and Principles

* We, heads of State and Government, have gathered at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 6 to 8 September 2000, at the dawn of a new millennium, to reaffirm our faith in the organization and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.

* We are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter...

* We consider certain fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century: Freedom--Equality--Solidarity--Tolerance--Respect for nature-Shared responsibility.

II. Peace, Security and Disarmament

* We will spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States, which has claimed more than 5 million lives in the past decade. We will also seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

* To make the United Nations more effective in maintaining peace and security by giving it the resources and tools it needs for conflict prevention, peaceful resolution of disputes, peacekeeping...

* To strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim... note that this commitment was made more precisely in Article IV of the Non-Proliferation Treaty:

"Each of the parties to the treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

III. Development and Poverty Eradication

* We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected...

* To implement the enhanced program of debt relief for the heavily indebted poor countries without further delay and to agree to cancel all official bilateral debts of those countries in return for their making demonstrable commitments to poverty reduction...

* To halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, at the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach safe drinking water...

* By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers...

IV. Protecting our Common Environment

* We must spare no effort to free all humanity, and above all our children and grandchildren, from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoiled by human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs...

V. Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance

* We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms...

* To respect fully and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

* To work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries...

* To ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information...

VII. Meeting the Special Needs of Africa

* We will support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy.

* To help Africa build up its capacity to tackle the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases.

VIII. Strengthening the United Nations

* We will spare no effort to make the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing all of these priorities: the fight for development for all the peoples of the world; the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease; the fight against injustice; the fight against violence, terror and crime; and the fight against the degradation and destruction of our common home...

- We solemnly reaffirm, on this historic occasion, that the United Nations is the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development. We therefore pledge our unstinting support for these common objectives and our determination to achieve them.

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is one the great milestones in human history. The full text follows:

PREAMBLE

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political,

jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any

discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10.

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11.

(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international

law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14.

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15.

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16.

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17.

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in

community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20.

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21.

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22.

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25.

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26.

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27.

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28.

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29.

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the

just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30.

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein

Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

This covenant describes the basic economic, social, and cultural rights of individuals and nations, including the right to:

- * self-determination
- * wages sufficient to support a minimum standard of living
- * equal pay for equal work
- * equal opportunity for advancement
- * form trade unions
- * strike
- * paid or otherwise compensated maternity leave
- * free primary education, and accessible education at all levels
- * copyright, patent, and trademark protection for intellectual property

In addition, this convention forbids exploitation of children, and requires all

nations to cooperate to end world hunger. Each nation which has ratified this

covenant is required to submit annual reports on its progress in providing for these rights to the Secretary General, who is to transmit them to the Economic and Social Council.

The text of this covenant was finalized in 1966 along with that of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

UN peacekeeping is one of the most important UN operations, and yet one that is often belittled, misunderstood, and unknown to most Americans. In its history the UN has conducted 59 peacekeeping operations and 16 are in operation today, keeping the peace in areas that would otherwise be engaged in war.

From the UN Website:

Peacekeeping is a way to help countries torn by conflict create conditions for sustainable peace. UN peacekeepers—soldiers and military officers, civilian police officers and civilian personnel from many countries—monitor and observe peace processes that emerge in post-conflict situations and assist ex-combatants to implement the peace agreements they have signed. Such assistance comes in many forms, including confidence-building measures, power-sharing

arrangements, electoral support, strengthening the rule of law, and economic and social development.

The Charter of the United Nations gives the UN Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security. For this reason, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorize peacekeeping operations. Most of these operations are established and implemented by the United Nations itself with troops serving under UN operational command. In other cases, where direct UN involvement is not considered appropriate or feasible, the Council authorizes regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Economic Community of West African States or coalitions of willing countries to implement certain peacekeeping or peace enforcement functions.

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

“If the UN’s global agenda is to be properly addressed, a partnership with civil society at large is not an option, it is a necessity.”

Kofi Annan Secretary-General of the United Nations

A non-government organization (NGO) is a non-profit volunteer organization comprised of people with a common interest or purpose.

Peace and human rights organizations are typical NGOs. About 1,400 NGOs from all regions of the world are associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI). NGOs offer analysis and expertise and help monitor international agreements, and they provide an invaluable service in educating the general public on the role and activities of the United Nations.

Over 2,600 NGOs have consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This status is granted on the recommendation of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, which is comprised of 19 Member States, and is based on Article 71 of the UN Charter. NGOs participate in ECOSOC through attending meetings and providing ideas on agenda items. Some NGOs are invited to attend international conferences called by the UN General Assembly and other agencies. NGOs have performed an important role in the Earth Summit

International meetings organized by the UN.

Many NGOs perform a vital role in UN Specialized Agencies and programs. Some NGOs are also in the forefront in working and pushing for UN reform programs and providing much needed suggestions for change. This includes attaining a large role for NGOs at the UN, perhaps at some point to include a Peoples Parliament within the General Assembly. In 1995, former UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar's World Commission on Culture and Development

recommended that a "two-chamber General Assembly could be considered, one with government representatives as at present, and the other representing national civil society organizations". In the same year, the Commission on Global Governance proposed "an annual Forum of Civil Society (to) consist of representatives of organizations accredited to the General Assembly as Civil Society Organizations" (CSOs).

In 1995, the world governments approved the following UN Declaration:

"We recognize that our common work will be more successful if it is supported by all concerned actors in the international community, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multilateral financial institutions, regional organizations and all actors of civil society. We will welcome and facilitate such support, as appropriate".