

# A PEACEFUL GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH A REFORMED UNITED NATIONS

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## **Abstract**

The need for a Reformed United Nations is very glaring today bearing in mind the realities on ground. There are so many intractable problems that weigh down the United Nations, which only meaningful reforms would reverse. Financial problems, autocracy in voting pattern in the security council, lack of dedication and commitment of members, poverty in the third world, redundancy of some organs such as the trusteeship council etc are good examples. This paper highlights specific areas of reform for the UN to meet the challenges of the twenty first century.

## **Introduction**

When in 1945, people assembled in San Francisco, to finalise the United Nations Charter, it was their hope to create an organization and structure that would transform international relations in the world to that of peaceful co-existence. This desire was predicated on the hard lesson of the carnage and destructiveness of the Second World War, which the World was just emerging from.

The World Was determined to learn the lessons of the league's failure and to create an institution that would be more effective in maintaining peace than its predecessors. A lot of glaring conclusions had been drawn from the sorry records of the League particularly as it relates to its management and composition. It was therefore, resolved that the new world body should be comprehensive, as the league had never been. For example, the USA was never a member and countries like Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union, and Japan were members only for limited period. The charter should equally recognize the special responsibility of the larger powers for maintaining world peace and security, (Evan Luard, 1989). This could be done by according them permanent membership in the body mainly responsible for security - the security council.

The council should have greater authority than its predecessor, the League Council. According to Evan Luard (op cit), they would also exercise a veto when issues appear unacceptable to them. The United Nations would be endowed with the 'teeth' that the League had lacked. Apart from maintain peace it was hoped that the new organization would assist in securing human rights and socio-economic development in the areas that are in need.

In contemporary period it is pitiful to note that the United Nations is far from realizing the noble objectives set above. The veto had been used in most cases for selfish reasons rather than the well being of the organization. There are so many areas of conflicts and wars in the world, where the United Nations had not been able to address. Above all, there is growing criticism particularly in Europe and America that the United Nations had become increasingly bureaucratic and inefficient. A lot of members are becoming more disillusioned about the competence of the United Nations to cope with the challenges of the modern world.

In Africa and some part of Asia, poverty is on the increase. Since its inception, a lot of wars had been fought, both national and international with the United Nations watching helplessly. Although some are quick to say that the world had not witnessed any major or World War since 1945, the teeming criticisms and inefficiency witnessed within the organization are pointers to reform imperatives within the United Nations. Secondly, the reality and challenges of the world in the twenty first century shows, that the present structure of the world had changed from what it used to be in 1945 and hence demands immediate reforms and reorientations to cope with the present realities.

Thirdly, in the area of stature, it is generally believed that the founders were too optimistic about the potency and capability of the organization such that it set unrealistic targets which now have proved unachievable, for example the assumption that permanent members of the Security Council would be able to agree on the creation of a collectively controlled International force that could influence events. It was also unrealistic to believe that member states would always be willing submissively to obey as they undertook to do - example to send forces to far away crisis states. According to Evan Luard, these were unrealistic expectation.

## **Flaws that Calls for Reform in the United Nations Operations**

Apart from the few cases of flaws already mentioned in the introductory section, some other areas deserve to be mentioned. According to the report of the Group of Eighteen, there is the problem of abusive practices and mismanagement in the conduct of the affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations. It is argued that there is the harmful proliferation of the posts of Under Secretary - General and Assistant Secretary General, inadequacy of qualifications of staff, particularly the top hierarchy.

The group of eighteen, went further to say that "the diagnosis of the UN Crisis has three components (i) the crisis of multilateralism i.e the lack of political will of member states (ii) Lack of effective management (iii) the UN suffers from some structural deficiencies - i.e. the problem of coordination" (Bertrend, 1989). Some other areas include the fact that the UN is biased in its approach to World problems, the Statute states that members should be neutral. Critics claimed the UN is biased in favour of the West and USA - a thesis a lot are quick to debunk as false and empty.

There is equally the charge of financial irresponsibility. It is said that small countries votes for ambitious programmes of expenditure. Another criticisms of the UN is that, it's a talking shop in which small states says things that are irrelevant to world affairs. It is equally said, according to Simpson (1991), that the distribution of votes within the organization bears no relation to effective power. The fact that a state like China has equal votes with Dominica, devalues the votes in the General Assembly. Particularly, when the little states contributed very little. Finally, and the most common criticism is simply that it is ineffective in fulfilling its primary responsibility to maintain world peace. All these have justified the need and cry for immediate reforms.

## **Contemporary Reform Imperatives**

Perhaps the most important area that deserves the most urgent reform in the United Nations is in the area of finance; the increasing call by the American Congress for the United States to slash down its contribution is the greatest pointer to reform imperatives. If the world body is truly to be as international and able to operate as an impartial arbiter in crisis situations, only one country - the United States, should not be allowed to contribute a third of its budget.

The logic of America disallowing the candidature of Boutros Ghali for a second term as Secretary - General in 1996 follows this trend. It is a case of who pays the piper dictates the tune. The United Nations should be reorganized such that no single country will have excessive financial responsibility than others, to give it far an edge over other countries in the daily running of the organization. Close sources to the United Nations headquarters in New York said that the problem Boutros Ghali had was that he refused to be dictated to by America; and that cost him a second term as Secretary General of the organization. An organization of the standing of the United Nations deserves better than this if it would be able to cope with the future challenges of the world. The present financial crisis plaguing the organization results from the non payment of contributions by some powerful countries particularly the United States.

Closely associated with the above is the need to urgently cut down the number of staff of the organization. The huge staff strength is one of the reasons for the financial crunch. It is equally necessary to coordinate the huge proliferation of economic and social activities now undertaken not only by the main organs of the organization but by the specialized agencies. If the number of operations that they put their hand in are streamlined it would increase the financial situation of the organization.

Members must as a matter of urgency, particularly the most powerful members must be ready to make the organization work. According to Michael (1988), the political will must be there even to accept decisions that are contrary to their own desires and interests. If this is accomplished, it would reduce the selfish nature in which the veto is used and the overall interest of the organization would be foremost in the minds of the members strong or weak, big or small.

The Security Council should equally be restructured. Since 1945, there has been only one minor adjustment in its membership in this case only the non-permanent members were affected. A particular concern is in the area of its composition; according to Ingvar (1995).

"It is not reasonable to suggest that the five winners of the second World War, with the assistance of ten additional rotating member states compromise a representative, legitimate or authoritative voice for a UN membership of 185. Without reforms in both areas, the council cannot hope to win broad consensus in its necessary role as custodian of peace and security."

The suggested reform should not reduce the effectiveness and political vitality of the council, on the nature of composition the Commission on Global Governance suggested an additional five permanent members, without a veto. Two would be drawn from the industrialized world, reflecting new alignments in economic power and three from the larger members of the developing world drawing representation from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The non permanent members should be raised from 10 to 13, giving the reformed Security Council a total membership of 23 - a number not too much to mar effective decision making. Council decisions would now require 14 votes for a decision instead of 9 (nine), (Ingval, 1995). For fairness and equity, the five new permanent members of the security council should have veto power like predecessors.

On security still, a standing military force should be provided for a rapid response to security threats. On the issue of veto, the contemporary clamour for democracy have made the issue of veto a paradox that is difficult to reconcile, particularly, if one remember the position of countries like Britain, France and United States on global democracy. The continued existence of veto is a negation of democratic ethics which these powers particularly America claims to uphold and defend globally.

Added to the above, there is the need to think of an Economic Security Council, to address the contemporary economic crisis plaguing the world and the developing world in particular. According to Momah (1995), the African continent appears to be on reverse in terms of development. It appears Africa is being marginalized continuously despite the progress being made in the different regions of the world. It is only in sub-Saharan Africa that poverty is on the increase; in the whole world. According to Peter Sutherland (1991), founding head of World Trade Organization (WTO) "we have, in short a structural deficit in the world economy, in terms of making policies and their execution". He pointed specifically to the international community's failure to come up with effective joint action to help sub-Saharan Africa join the world economy as a participant rather than a dependent one. A situation where the developed world controls almost 80% of global resources with less than 30% of global population and the rest 70% controlling only 20% of global income cannot bring genuine peace and harmony in the world which the United Nations stands for.

The Trusteeship Council as it is now is highly redundant. According to Leland (1975), the organization was supposed to take care of the mandate territories inherited from the League of Nations and administer them for independence. Since these territories had become independent new responsibilities should be given to the organ. The Trusteeship Council should now be assigned trusteeship over the 'global environment'. That is, the Trusteeship Council would become the Chief forum on global environmental and related matters. Administering environmental treaties in areas such as climate change, biodiversity, outer space and law of the sea. These matters were not on the agenda in 1945 and are not mentioned in United Nations Charter. But today issue of sustainable global environment is quite a serious one.

The General Assembly: This is an organ that discusses virtually all issues of concern to the world. It is a forum where every country has a seat. The reality has not always matched the expectations from the Assembly, as it is now its more or less a talking shop. Its procedures should be streamlined, its agenda should also be slim down and the committee structure should be rationalized, (UN, 1991).

The International Civil Society should be encouraged also to make inputs and suggestions towards the functioning of the United Nations. According to Ojo (1991), prior to the annual meeting of the General Assembly a meeting of NGOs could be called where about 300 to 600 representatives would be in attendance. They would have the opportunity to influence the activities of the United Nations directly.

The Secretariat and post of the Secretary - General should be reformed to meet the challenges of the time. Gone are the days when the Secretary General should be seem only as the head of the Secretariat, he should be seen as the worlds number one Diplomat with immense responsibilities. The

crisis of poor management calls for immediate need to reinforce the power of the Secretary - General. Added to this he needs better sources of information and advice to be better equipped for the task than he is today.

Finally and closely associated with the Secretariat is the management of the U.N itself. According to Ankiel (1982), some basic management and business principles are a necessity in shaping the U.N to the world's needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Improved management and cost effectiveness are crucial to help develop the political support necessary to see through the essential changes being urged for the United Nations.

### **Conclusion**

The ascendancy of Dr. Koffi Annan as the Secretary - General of the United Nations is a pointer to imminent reform imperatives. His inaugural speech touched on this specifically. The American rejection of Boutros Ghali centers on his being obstinate to reform, although a lot of people opined that that could not be the only reason or in fact the major reason for America's action. Be that as it may, the truth of the twenty first century is that trends are pointing to the need for reform.

The new wave of democratization across the world justifies the need for reforms. According to Ali (1977), the present composition of the Security Council does not portray any democratic ethic. The way and manner the veto is being used conforms to autocracy, which the states using it claims to be against. The Trusteeship Council has become almost irrelevant in contemporary world, as all the Trust Territories are now independent sovereign states. There is the need to invest it with new roles and challenges such as the ones already suggested in the course of this paper.

This is the time for profound reforms of the U.N if the organization would be able to withstand the spate of attacks it currently receives for being a redundant world body. One would only expect that the organization would see the glaring signals for reforms and put them in place and make the UN a better organization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Anything short of this will only contribute to the irrelevance of the organization in the future world.

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