

**SPEECH BY U.S. AMBASSADOR SHIRIN TAHIR-KHELI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF THE UK
Foreign Press Association
10 March 2006**

A COMMON AGENDA FOR UN REFORM

U.S. Priorities for United Nations Reform

The American people and the United States Government believe we must work together to ensure the United Nations is a vital and effective component in addressing the international problems facing all of us. We want the UN to be a respected forum for diplomatic discussions. We want the UN to be able to facilitate international burden sharing in times of crisis. We expect the UN to be a positive force in the global fight against poverty, disease, and hunger. And we expect the United Nations to be a leader in the fight to protect the human rights of all people.

In the face of these needs and expectations, the United Nations is currently engaged in one of the most important debates in its history: how to reform itself, strengthen itself as an institution, and ensure that it addresses effectively the threats and challenges of the 21st century. We want to support efforts that make the UN into an effective, strong and accountable institution worthy of respect from its Member States and the world community. From the early days of this latest reform effort, well over a year ago now, the United States has been committed to helping the UN reform itself. Beginning with the report of the High Level Panel and the Secretary General's own report "In Larger Freedom...", the process took another step forward in New York last September.

At the High Level Event of the United Nations 60th General Assembly, heads of state and government adopted a UN Summit Declaration on September 18, 2005. The final Declaration was the product of nearly five months of negotiations under the leadership of the UN General Assembly President. The United States is now engaged in the process of negotiating and refining these reforms. A positive first step was the successful establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which will hold its first meeting this month. We have also seen initial progress in management reform, including the establishment of an independent ethics office, the addition of temporary resources for the Office of Internal Oversight Services' audit and investigations divisions, and the decision to extend the Secretary General's authority to re-deploy personnel. But the reform process has only just begun. We must encourage Member States to build upon this initial momentum by pursuing further management reforms and the establishment of a credible Human Rights Council. And as we see progress in these other areas, the United States also looks forward to renewed and constructive discussion among Member States about how best to move carefully forward on reforming the UN Security Council.

At the Summit, world leaders also renewed their commitments to cut hunger and poverty rates in half, promote freedom and protect our world from its current greatest threat – terrorism. The U.S. will continue to work diligently with other Member States to implement the Monterrey Consensus toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In New York, President Bush celebrated the launch of the UN Democracy Fund with key democratic partners, and welcomed their generous support of the Fund. Now, we must work together as democracies to expand the reach of freedom by promoting sound and constructive programs that help others seeking to strengthen democratic institutions in their own countries and around the world. Finally, the U.S. was encouraged by the condemnation of terrorism for any reasons by our leaders in September. We must continue to work together to reach agreement on an instrument that will clearly reject terrorism.

Management, Budget and Administrative Reform

Management reform, including Secretariat reform, is the highest priority for the United States, as demanded by our Congress and the American people who have been disheartened by the scandals and mismanagement of the UN. We know that most other countries share our concerns about management of the UN system. True management reform is necessary to ensure that all Member States receive the greatest benefit from resources and that UN personnel are held to the highest standard of ethical conduct and accountability. Serious and meaningful reform of management, budget and administrative issues is in the interest of all Member States, especially those that rely on the UN to provide important assistance related to economic development, peace and security, and democracy and human rights. We all need the UN to use money well on the issues of greatest importance to its Member States. In short, this is not about saving money; it is about delivering UN programs more effectively and addressing current and emergency needs.

The Secretary-General's efforts in this area have been encouraging, but more needs to be done. The U.S. was pleased by the General Assembly decision to approve the immediate establishment of the Ethics Office by including resources for it in the 2006-2007 biennium. We were also pleased by the decision to approve extending the Secretary-General's limited authority to re-deploy staff. Such authority is an integral part of the Outcome Document's commitment to the revitalization of the Secretariat, and we need to expand this authority further so that the Secretary-General has the flexibility needed to carry out his managerial responsibilities effectively.

The U.S. and other Member States are also looking forward to reaching agreement soon on other measures of priority, including:

- (i) Approving permanent resources and greater operational independence for the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) audit and investigation functions so that it can better fulfill its mandate.
- (ii) Submission of a proposal by the Secretary General as soon as possible to the General Assembly for the terms of reference of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, so that Member States can amend the 2006-2007 budget to include resources needed to establish the Committee prior to authorizing the full UN budget.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the UN needs to prioritize its programs and resources; otherwise we risk spreading scarce resources too thinly. A review of mandates older than 5 years, which Member States are expected to begin this month, will enable the UN to analyze the delivery of its core mandates, identify overlapping mandates, and determine whether any mandates have outlived their relevance. The purpose is not to cut spending but rather to prioritize among scarce resources and shift resources to the most important, effective programs. Following this review, it will be important to act swiftly to make appropriate programmatic shifts.

Human Rights Council

The protection of human rights is a key principle contained in the UN Charter. The UNCHR was intended to and has advanced human rights protection by producing key standards, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and key treaties like the ICCPR. However, it sadly lost its credibility when it allowed the election of some of the worst human rights violators to its membership.

The United States supports the Secretary General's initiative to replace the Commission on Human Rights with an action-oriented Human Rights Council. The U.S. and others strongly urge that the new HRC membership not include states with a record of abuse. The creation of a credible Human Rights Council

would represent the achievement of a long-standing goal to ensure that the protection of human rights gets the immediate and effective attention that it deserves. The U.S. is pleased the Outcome Document endorsed a replacement for the discredited Commission, and calls on the new Council to “promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms,” including grave human rights situations anywhere in the world. The Council’s mandate should address the most egregious human rights abuses, provide technical assistance to build capacity, and promote human rights as a global priority. The U.S. has appreciated the leadership shown by the South African and Panamanian permanent representatives in New York in managing the working group negotiations on the new Council. Protection on human rights is too important for us to simply change the name of this body from Commission to Council – we must see real reform.

Peacebuilding Commission

United Nations peacekeeping is a unique and specific tool available to the international community to help resolve conflicts and prevent wars and destabilization. UN-led peacekeeping operations provide a mechanism to share financial, material, and personnel costs. There are 16 current PKO’s in places like Kosovo, Congo, Liberia, Haiti and Sudan. The United States welcomed the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission by concurrent UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. These resolutions acknowledge that the Peacebuilding Commission must take into account the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, which includes its role in the coordination of efforts to maintain peace and security on the ground. At the same time, the resolution recognizes the role of other UN organs, funds, and programs, and other international institutions in the overall response of the international community to post-conflict situations.

UN members must now turn our attention to ensuring that the Peacebuilding Commission realizes its potential to make an important contribution to sharpening the capacity of the UN to build stability and a sustainable peace in the immediate aftermath of conflict. The new Commission must serve effectively as a mechanism that promotes international security while coordinating closely with well-established UN institutions responsible for development over the long-term. Discussions are underway that will determine the founding members of the Commission’s Organizational Committee. The Organizational Committee will play a pivotal role in the future effectiveness of the PBC as it establishes the rules of order for the Commission and its country-specific subcommittees, selects the first focus countries for the PBC, and defines the role of the PBC relative to the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Support Fund. Many Member States have expressed an interest in participating on the Peacebuilding Commission, for example through membership in the Organizational Committee and country specific subcommittees, and I believe this level of interest reflects the importance of the Commission and the importance of its work.

UN Security Council

While the United States’ key reform priorities are those I have just outlined, we recognize that other Member States have different priorities and we stand ready to discuss other issues. The U.S. supports efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Security Council and is open to various options to realize such reform. The world has changed since the United Nations’ founding in 1945, so too must the Security Council. However, given the Security Council’s critical responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, we must approach UNSC expansion carefully and in a way that produces broad consensus on the framework of expansion. We also must ensure that new permanent members are supremely qualified to undertake the tremendous duties and responsibilities they will assume. They should have a demonstrated commitment to democratic principles, economic and military strength, and a readiness to play a constructive global role. Japan, for instance, clearly meets those tests.

Economic Development

The United Nations makes great contributions to economic development globally. With a focus on democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, energy, the environment, and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, UNDP is helping people in 166 countries build better lives. UN specialized agencies and funds provide a platform for the development of world health standards and practices to eliminate diseases, to regulate the mail, to make air and ocean travel safe, to protect intellectual property, and to maintain fair labor practices.

The United States supports the Millennium Development Goals as laid out in Millennium Declaration, and President Bush has made it clear that expanding the circle of freedom and prosperity is a fundamental interest of the United States and has doubled aid to developing countries. The Outcome Document recognizes actions and commitments made by donors since the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey Consensus. It calls on all countries to promote the rule of law and good governance, improve investment climates, encourage business formation, and protect property rights. This is consistent with the underlying principle of the Monterrey Consensus—that each country bears primary responsibility for its own development and that these efforts at the national level need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment.

UN Democracy Fund

The United States is a strong supporter of the UN Democracy Fund, which will provide grants to non-governmental organizations, governments, and international organizations to carry out democratization projects, particularly those that help develop a vital civil society, rule of law, and emerging democratic institutions worldwide.

The Democracy Fund now has received commitments of \$44 million from 19 different countries. Another \$8 million (in addition to an earlier \$10 million) is on the way from the United States. We look forward to seeing these funds go to effective democracy promotion programs so that more of the world may enjoy freedom and all its benefits. The U.S. supports the launch of the work under the Fund because we believe that building capacity of states through democratic institutions expands freedom's reach.

I am pleased that the UN Democracy Fund Board has now been named. The Board includes the six top donors (US, India, Australia, Qatar, France, Germany), five additional Member States (Chile, Benin, South Africa, Indonesia, Hungary), two NGOs (International Commission of Jurists and Civicus) and three individuals chosen by the Secretary General (Ms. Rima Khalaf Hunaidi, the editor of the ground-breaking UN Arab Human Development Reports; Professor Michael Doyle; and Professor Guillermo O'Donnell). Amir Dossal, Executive Director of the UN Fund for International Partnerships, also sits on the Board in an *ex officio* capacity. The Board will meet on March 6 to consider operational issues such as strategies for grant-solicitation and determining programmatic priorities, with a focus on strengthening civil society, civic education and press freedom.

Terrorism

UN agencies help prevent the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and the UN plays a valuable role in the War on Terror. Member States should unequivocally outlaw acts of international terrorism, and it is time to reach agreement on an international legal instrument to do this. The Outcome Document stresses the need to conclude a CCIT and contains a strong condemnation of all forms of terrorism. Adopting the CCIT would be an important achievement in the UN's global effort to counter terrorism. We must not let our commitment to this effort be derailed – those of us in the world community who truly oppose terrorism must move forward to outlaw all acts of international terrorism.

Conclusion

For nearly a year, the United States has worked diligently with Member States in New York and in capitals on UN Reform. The U.S. will continue to work tirelessly during the 60th session of the General Assembly to implement the priorities outlined above. Secretary Rice has called for a “lasting revolution of reform.” The Summit Declaration of September 2005 represents an important first step, and the United States looks forward to working with friends and allies to implement these important reforms. As the President said, “...the process of reform begins with Member States taking our responsibilities seriously.” We are committed to a reform process aimed at strengthening the United Nations to ensure it is effective in its efforts around the world and we look forward to working with our friends around the world on this noble project.