

Boutros Boutro Ghali
Reforming the UN and Other International Institutions

This is a direct transcript (unedited version) of the pre-recorded speech given by Boutros Boutros Ghali that was shown at the LSE on Thursday 1 April as part of the debate entitled 'Reforming the UN and Other International Institutions'.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very sorry not to be among you to participate in this very important forum. Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa! I will talk about the reform of the United Nations and other international institutions. I believe that this reform is a must. It is a must for three political reasons, and for four legal reasons.

Let us begin with the three political reasons. One: the end of the Cold War and the necessity to manage the post Cold War. Two: the globalisation of the world. And three: the technical revolution in the field of communications, telecommunications, in different fields, in the field of armaments. So, these are the three political reasons.

Now we have legal reasons. The first one is that nation states are no longer the unique sources of sovereignty. Two: that state sovereignty exercised over a geographical territory is today under question. Three: states are no longer alone in the international scene. Other actors, other non-state actors emerge, trans-national corporations, non-governmental organisations, international terrorism. And finally: supranational legal rules have appeared, like humanitarian law, like protection of environments, like protection of human rights. So, for all those reasons, we need a drastic change in the United Nations system, and in the different international agencies related to the United Nations.

I will talk about the reform of three items. The first one is the democratisation of the UN system. The second one is the reform of the Security Council and the peacekeeping and the reform of the peacekeeping operations, which are related to the work of the Security Council. And the third basic reform is related to the economic and social cooperation.

Let us begin with the democratisation. Before I left the United Nations I published an agenda, called Agenda for Democratisation. It was the 16th of December 1996, and it was presented at the General Assembly, where I mentioned on this paper, this position paper, what are the reasons why we must do the democratisation of the international community, the democratisation of international relations, and that this democratisation begin with the democratisation of the United Nations system.

So for me the basic reform of the UN system *is* the participation of the non-state actors in international institutions, in international forums, by non-state actors, mentioning the NGO, the

non-governmental organisations, the regional organisations, the multi-national corporations, the municipality of big countries, the universities, political parties, all of them represent the international civil society.

And I would mention the three main non-state actors: the non-governmental organisation, the regional organisation and the transnational corporation. The non-governmental organisation, and today there are more than 20,000, the non-governmental organisation can bring to the international community the democratic dimension which we are advocating, NGO are proving extremely powerful in fighting isolationism, in fighting indifference, among both governments and citizens.

And, how they will be ... but how they will participate in the United Nations system is a technical problem. They can be represented according to their specialisation, NGO dealing with human rights, NGO dealing with environment, they can be represented according to the region: African NGO, Latin American NGO, European NGO. This is a technical problem, but what is important, that they must participate in the work of the United Nations. Furthermore, during the last international conferences, from Rio de Janeiro in 1992 to the Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, to the Conference of Social Development in 1995, to the Conference of Women and Development in Beijing, there were two conferences: the governmental one and the non-governmental one. So already the non-governmental organisations are participating in the elaboration of the rules of tomorrow.

Then, among the non-state actors are the regional organisations, and as you know the charter of the United Nations, mentioning Article 52, 53, 54, the presence of regional organisations, like the Arab League, the Organisation of African Unity, the European Union, the Commonwealth, the Francophone we have many inter-regional organisations. And I, as Secretary General, had two annual meetings of the representatives of those regional organisations, and my successor continues this tradition, and once a year the United Nations have a meeting with the Secretary General, the Directors, the representatives of the different regional organisations existing. And the cooperation with the regional organisations is very important because they represent the kind of decentralisation, they can cooperate with the United Nations in the field of the peacekeeping operations, they have done it in Africa with the Organisation of African Unity, they have done it in Yugoslavia with the NATO, in Kosovo where you have many regional organisations dealing with the peacekeeping operations.

And finally among the non-state actors, we have the transnational corporations. And those transnational corporations are more powerful than the majority of the member states of the United Nations. They are playing an extremely important role in the economic development. This not only occurs through foreign investments, but also through the transfer of technology and skills. So they can play a very important role, and it is important to obtain that participation in the United Nations system.

And finally the participation of non-state actors to obtain the democratisation of the United Nations system is not an innovation, the International Labour Organisation brings together at its general conference, delegate from governments, employers and workers from each member state, all of whom are entitled to vote individually on all matters. So this, this ILO was created even before the League of Nations. It is the oldest international organisation, and it is based on the participation of non-state actors, all representatives of the civil society.

Now let us talk about the second reform. The second essential reform is, and we have been discussing this in the last twenty years, the reform of the Security Council. And, the present Security Council should be reformed. With the composition representing the different regions of the world, the composition of the Security Council was done after World War 2, it met in 1945. We are in 2004. The equilibrium of forces have changed. We must admit that the Security Council don't represent the international community and need a change. It needs a change in its composition, I don't want to enter in the details, but there is a consensus that it needs a basic change, to *represent* the international community. To represent the family of nations.

Then, I believe it is important that the right to use the veto must be restricted to certain issues. We know we need the big players and we will not have the big players in the game without the right to veto, but, what happened was that there was an exaggeration in the utilisation of the right of veto. So our problem is, which was discussed in 1955, ten years after the creation of the United Nations, it is important to have a restriction whereby the use of veto can be used only in the case of military action in a case of question but not in all the other fields related with the work of the United Nations.

Then we must discuss something very important, is the reform of the peacekeeping operations. They must be based on the creation of permanent brigades and as a step towards the establishment of permanent UN military forces. And when the Security Council had its first meeting on the 31 January 1992, at the level of Head of State and Head of Government, it was just one month after I took the job of Secretary General, he asked me to present a paper based on the reform of the new role of the Security Council, and I mentioned in Agenda for Peace the importance of having a permanent presence of military forces at the disposal of the United Nations. And this is why it is important, because we need a rapid deployment of forces, because the first week, the first weeks after the ceasefire represent the most dangerous period and we need to have a rapid deployment of blue helmets to maintain the peace.

And finally, as I mentioned before, I believe it is important to have a closer cooperation with the non-governmental organisations, this could be done by giving a mandate to a regional organisation like the NATO, like the Commonwealth, or to give a mandate to an arrangement, an ad hoc arrangement like it may happen just to take a case where we have multi-national forces on the Sinai between Egypt and Israel which don't depend, er, which is not a UN operation, it is a

purely multinational force composed of a certain number of countries who have accepted to put troops at the disposal of the two former, or the two countries which have signed a peace treaty, Egypt and Israel.

Let us talk to the third reform, which is essential for the United Nations, which is the reform of social and economic cooperation. The UN role in economic and social development is made more complicated by the split between the north and the south. Developing countries continue to press for the extension of the UN economic and social programmes. Why rich countries have little interest in more economic and social activities within the framework of the UN. They prefer to back the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, or even bilateral assistance or assistance through the Commonwealth or through the European Union.

And here we have to overcome this basic contradiction. According to some scholars, UNCTAD should forward an arrangement where trade, development and environment issues are formulated and interpreted by a wider body of global organisation. UNCTAD for them should become the world parliament of economic globalisation. There is another school of thought saying forget about UNCTAD, what about the social and economic council, it is important to transform this social and economic council which is a weak organisation, into an economic and social security with effective authority over all the UN agencies, funds, programmes, and on the IMF, the World Bank and the different other economic organisations.

Those are in a certain way the three basic reforms which we need if we want a new United Nations, a new United Nations which will help us to cope with the problem of globalisation, the problem of the post Cold War, the problem of the technical revolution. And, the above analysis suggests that obstacles to the large scale United Nations reform reside above all in the split between the north and the south, between rich country and poor country, and, in a second split, between the superpower, the United States, and the international community. The United States consider that the UN should serve as an extension of the foreign policy of the most powerful nation, and since the end of the Cold War the United States being the only superpower, the United Nations should become a mere extension of the policy of the superpower.

The Third World, the developing countries, and a group of European countries, on the contrary, stress the democratisation of the United Nations and their own demands for development and assistance. Here we can say for the pessimists there is little evidence that the United States will accept *any* reform which may decrease their power within the United Nations system. Ever since the events of 11 September there is a more ... a more tendency to reinforce unilateralism at the expense of multilateralism. They do not believe that the role of the United Nations is even *more* important now than it was in 1945 at the end of World War 2.

But you have the optimists, and I belong to the optimists, reform leaders and activists should keep up the mobilisation on the pressure for the final objective of building an international

democracy. They believe it is possible to create the political will necessary to achieve a real reform of the UN, to achieve global democratic governments within the UN system. They dream, and I dream, about a possibility that the coalition of developing countries, along with progressive nations of the developed world, might arise to counter the unilateralism of the United States. Further, they believe that the American diplomacy, that the American democracy, who gave birth to President Wilson, the father of the League of Nations, and president Roosevelt, the father of the United Nations, will be able to provide a leader with a transcending vision with imagination, generosity and the will to create a new United Nations organisation, able to respond to the needs of humanity, able to force the renewed dialogue between north and south and to promote the democratisation of globalisation before globalisation destroys democracy. Thank you.