



Dialogue **on** Globalization

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Sustainable Global Governance for the 21st Century

The United Nations confronts
economic and environmental crises
amidst changing geopolitics

Dialogue on Globalization

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Preface

On 7 December 2009, the world will gather in Copenhagen to negotiate an agreement designed to combat the deleterious effects of climate change. Whatever the outcome, the United Nations will play a critical role—for better or worse—in managing these challenges, as well as those on the rapidly expanding menu of other issues confronting world politics and global governance.

Against this backdrop, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies of The Graduate Center of The City University of New York brought together experts from the UN Secretariat, diplomatic missions, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and academia in 2009 to reflect on current and future political, economic, social, and environmental conditions of the world—and how they are interrelated—as well as to formulate new ideas and suggestions and, if possible, to articulate a new conceptual framework for UN and multilateral efforts. The extensive discussions form the basis for an agenda of action and reform for the world body following the Copenhagen Summit.

The planners of the seminar series decided to concentrate on the ongoing crises in the economic, financial, and environmental arenas amidst rapid geopolitical change, already an enormous task; and so they set aside considerations of international peace and security as well as human rights and humanitarian action. Conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, disarmament, human rights, humanitarian action, and terrorism remain key issues of global governance. At the same time, we believe that the topics of our seminars provide a new, rapidly changing global context as well as an interrelated framework within which the challenges for security and human rights could be better understood.

We convened six sessions in winter, spring, and summer 2009—each of the first five geared to examine a particular theme and introduced by two leading experts: the role of the UN in a new financial architecture (*James Galbraith and José Antonio Ocampo*); shifting geopolitics of power in the world (*Mathew Burrows and Alvaro de Soto*); the interrelated challenges of climate change, food and water security, energy, and changing financial and economic policies (*Adnan Amin and Jim Harkness*); food and water security and increasing potential for conflicts over resources (*Adil Najam and Michael Klare*); and the energy crisis and reorganization of economic and social policies (*Ian Dunlop and Christopher Flavin*). The summaries of these lively discussions are found in Chapter 3 and in more detail in Annexes 1–5.

The contents of this report are the exclusive responsibility of the authors: *Thomas G. Weiss, Tapio Kanninen, and Michael K. Busch*. The authors have attempted to summarize points of concern and consensus in the first four chapters of the report, and have sought to capture the fuller range of views for each session in the annexes. They proposed a series of recommendations to address the issues and concerns

raised during the discussions, which were then considered by a group of participants who met in July 2009. The present report takes into account many suggestions from that meeting, but the final recommendations were not formally endorsed by the participants and should not be seen as reflecting their priorities or perspectives.

Substantial time was devoted to planning this seminar series and to bringing together senior and mid-level UN staff, diplomats, representatives of civil society, and academia for discussions around very broad subjects. A core group attended most of the sessions and brought continuity and focus to the discussions. We believe the experiment worked well and is worth repeating in the future. We would like to thank speakers and participants for their contributions, commitment, and enthusiasm.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to two individuals who—besides the authors and the hardworking teams of our organizations—helped formulate the concept of the series and its implementation through their unusual combined experience at the UN and in academia: *Georgios Kostakos*, who is Senior Adviser to the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), has worked in the UN Secretary-General's Office and in many UN departments and field missions as well as a scholar in Greek think tanks; and *James Sutterlin*, who after being a diplomat and Director of the Policy Planning Staff in the US State Department as well as in the UN Secretary-General's Office, became Chair of the Academic Council of the UN System and took up teaching at Yale and Long Island University.

We hope that this publication contributes to a critical debate of our time: how best can the United Nations position itself to manage the most vital issues mankind has to face amidst turbulent world politics and unprecedented global change?

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Director
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RBIIS

August 2009

1 Executive Summary

Time is running out for the United Nations to position itself to effectively manage emerging issues in the midst of dramatically changing world politics and new global challenges. This occasional paper and the seminar series which informed its findings discuss some of the complexities of the challenges facing the United Nations today. The report covers five of the most critical issues on which the world body must take action: the ongoing economic and financial crisis; the changing nature of the geopolitical order; the interrelated challenges of climate change, food, and water security, and the need to reconfigure energy policy; the threat of conflict over diminishing finite resources; and the reorganization of socioeconomic policy in the face of energy crises. Responding to the dialogue and discussions of the seminar series, the authors offer their analysis and a set of recommendations on steps that the world body could take in order to exert meaningful influence over what promises to be a complex and ever-expanding array of socioeconomic, environmental and political challenges in the twenty-first century.

This report argues that in order to situate itself appropriately in the new century of world politics, the UN ought to tackle certain shortcomings immediately, look to continuously strengthen itself in a host of areas over the course of the next decade, and set a course to achieve long-range objectives in the fundamental transformation of global governance. Thus, it proposes steps that could and should be acted upon in the short to medium term (i.e., before the end of the current Secretary-General's first term) as well as in the long term.

The section below first summarizes the general thrust of the discussions in the seminar series and then outlines three sets of recommendations. The first, "Intellectual Leadership Can Make a Difference," is based on the firm belief that the members of the United Nations system, and especially its Secretary-General, have key roles to play in exerting intellectual leadership. The second, "Structural Integration Can Make a Difference," contains specific suggestions about moving ahead to make better use of internal capacities and also to understand better the comparative advantages of universal versus regional organizations. The third, "Thinking Big," reflects the authors' conviction that periodic tinkering is inadequate to make the United Nations capable of responding to the current interconnected problems that were the basis for the seminar series.

General Conclusions

Virtually all the seminar presenters called attention to the precarious state of the world on the issues that they were discussing, a sentiment shared by many if not the majority of participants. A "global emergency" seems to be the most accurate way to describe the current and certainly the future situation of our planet. UN member states, its organizations and agencies, as well as its Secretary-General all have vital roles to play; and many recommendations were advanced to drastically enhance their ability to address the global interdependency and unprecedented and deepening threats of the twenty-first century.

The UN ought to tackle certain shortcomings immediately, look to continuously strengthen itself in a host of areas over the course of the next decade, and set a course to achieve long-range objectives in the fundamental transformation of global governance.

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Recommendations

INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Recommendation 1:

Transforming Human Resources and Providing Finance for UN Research

The United Nations should drastically improve its capacities to manage critical global issues in a comprehensive and credible way and, in particular, to exploit its often neglected comparative advantages in information gathering, conceptual thinking, problem solving, and policy analysis. Making better use of its competitive edge in producing and nurturing world-class thinkers and practitioners on critical global issues requires not only dramatic changes in human resources policy but also more appropriate financing.

Recommendation 2:

Policy Leadership by the Secretary-General during Crises

For the ongoing global economic and financial crisis as well as for other potential major emergencies, the Secretary-General should appoint a world-class thinker on economic and financial issues as part of his inner circle. He should also have the capacity to recruit a similar adviser on short notice for other emergencies (such as a nuclear disaster or new pandemic) that require immediate global responses.

Recommendation 3:

Establishing Independent Analytical Capacity

The United Nations should have available an independent institution capable of pulling together and synthesizing the host of relevant research and analysis being produced by universities and think-tanks on global issues and of undertaking its own focused research on complicated risk scenarios of the future.

STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Recommendation 4:

Making Better Use of the UN System's Policy Planning and Research Capacities

The UN Secretary-General and the UN system as a whole should build on the potential of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to respond quickly with new policies in future global crises.

Recommendation 5:

A Better Division of Labor between Multilateral Organizations

An independent international commission should be established to analyze by region, by topic, and by time frame the possible and desirable range of activities that should be undertaken either by the United Nations or by regional, sub-regional, or other intergovernmental groupings of states, or by a combination.

THINKING BIG

Recommendation 6:

Towards a Third Generation World Body

The international community of states, in partnership with the private sector and civil society, should recognize the character of the deepening global emergency and convene a second UN Conference on International Organization. A major overhaul of the United Nations and its relations to its partners is required rather than continuing the unsatisfactory practice of more piecemeal UN reforms repeatedly but unsuccessfully tried over several decades.

2. Introduction: Strategic Repositioning, The Contemporary Context

Inis Claude distinguished between the role of the United Nations as an intergovernmental arena and its identity as an international secretariat.¹ The “first United Nations” comprises the world organization’s 192 member states, which collectively have decision-making power. The “second United Nations” forms a distinct arena consisting of career international civil servants and staff members with the Secretary-General at its head. These interdependent dimensions of the world body are complemented by a “third United Nations,” comprising influential NGOs, academics, experts, commissions and other individuals who interact with and have an impact on the first and second UN.²

The three United Nations are worth distinguishing, but this report focuses chiefly on the second UN and its Secretary-General. The ranks of international civil servants who compose the second UN serve member states. However, the secretariats and affiliated organizations also have independent capacities for action and are capable of asserting significant leadership and influence in the international arena more than is commonly recognized. The second UN offers considerable room for maneuver and independence, especially when it comes to research and advocacy. Secretariats frequently propose new ideas to address problems, deliberate with governments, push for change, and seek to implement agreed upon solutions.

In particular, the authors believe that the role and leadership of the UN Secretary-General is critical in the twenty-first century. He or she is expected to be an honest broker, a respected world leader who can propose new ideas and bold action for the rapidly changing international system and at the same time work—sometimes publicly, sometimes behind the scenes—towards finding solutions to unprecedented problems that humankind will face in the coming years and decades. UN member states are collectively in the driver’s seat and have responsibility for policy making and agreeing on actions. While all states are de jure equal, there is obviously a de facto disparity in power among them; and leadership is often lacking. A fact of life is that for 192 member states—or even for smaller bodies such as the Security Council or the Group of 8 or 20—it would be a revolution in world affairs to agree quickly on drastic policy measures and demonstrate leadership independent from national interests. Few national parliaments or publics would support such departures.

This context cries out for leadership by the Secretary-General. He or she should show that the first UN and the second UN, together with the private sector and civil society, can be partners and take dramatic actions necessary to deal with the global emergency described in this report.

UN Charter Article 99 already provides a mandate for the Secretary-General to act independently. All Secretaries-General have undertaken independent initiatives

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although they are almost always challenged by some member states, with even the least powerful often in a position to stymie initiatives. Some of the recommendations in this report would directly enhance the Secretary-General's leadership potential. Implementing the last recommendation in particular—to convene a Second World Conference of International Organization—would necessarily lead to formal changes in the mandates of the head of the world body as well as the heads of UN organizations.

With an eye toward bolstering the capacity of the second UN—especially critical because current events demand a robust response—this report outlines a series of recommendations. It draws on conversations among a group of diplomats, academics, scientists, and other experts convened in the first half of 2009, the flavor and content of which are outlined in Chapter 3 and Annexes 1–5. Chapter 4 offers the recommendations, which flow from the content of these conversations but are the exclusive responsibility of the authors.

Mounting challenges facing the world are characterized by the intensifying inter-connectedness of global and regional issues: political tensions; climate change; water shortages; financial, economic and food crises; ecosystem disruptions; increasing inequality and persistent poverty.

As the first decade of the twenty-first century comes to a close, mounting challenges facing the world are characterized by the intensifying interconnectedness of global and regional issues: political tensions; climate change; water shortages; financial, economic and food crises; ecosystem disruptions; increasing inequality and persistent poverty. The food riots around the world in early 2008 were manifestations of this trend that blurs the boundaries between political, climate, energy, agriculture, trade, technology, and other factors. Later, the financial and economic crisis demonstrated how quickly national calamities could spread and affect development strategies far beyond the financial and economic arena in one country, requiring coordinated international responses. In all of these crises, the disjuncture between their global nature and the national centers of decision-making was obvious.

The world's multilateral institutions, with the UN at the center, are ill-equipped, unable, or seemingly unwilling to take bold initiatives and catalyze quickly necessary and drastic action in the face of major global crises.

The UN's record in responding to these challenges has, to this point, been mixed. In reacting to the reality of this century and changing world politics, the Secretary-General has begun to play a role apart from his traditional good offices function in political crises by spending part of his time on environmental and socio-economic issues. Examples are the climate change negotiation process, in which he has already participated and is expected to take further actions, and the world food crisis, in response to which he has formed and chairs a UN task force to devise strategies and options. In the ongoing financial and economic crisis, however, the Secretary-General has not been prominent, nor have the managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the president of the World Bank, and other heads of international or regional organizations. The world's multilateral institutions, with the UN at the center, are ill-equipped, unable, or seemingly unwilling to take bold initiatives and catalyze quickly necessary and drastic action in the face of major global crises.

This report offers a different approach for positioning the United Nations to respond to and manage critical global issues amidst increasingly turbulent world politics. Accomplishing such an ambitious objective demands a forward-looking agenda anchored in achievable short-, medium-, and long-term goals. The strategy advanced here, therefore, outlines steps to meet the objective of positioning the

UN to more effectively manage critical issues amidst changing world politics in the short to medium term (that is, in the next two to three years) as well as in the longer term.

In order to act on the entire range of challenges confronting the world in the twenty-first century, the world organization must change. The UN strategy should be:

- **bold**, responding to threats with speed and the confidence accorded by its universal membership and legitimacy;
- **idea driven**, confronting challenges with imaginative proposals and fresh initiatives with transformative potential;
- **analytically robust**, drawing on the world body's comparative advantage in analysis to take deliberate, informed action and bolster the leadership role of the Secretary-General;
- **structurally integrated**, establishing a working division of labor between the world body, regional organizations, national and local actors for rapidly tackling issues in a way that coordinates their respective capabilities and expertise; and
- **reflective of reality**, pursuing objectives and reform that mirror the shifting terrain of world politics.

In order to act on the entire range of challenges confronting the world in the twenty-first century, the world organization must change. The UN strategy should be: bold, idea driven, analytically robust, structurally integrated, reflective of reality,

3. Looming Global Threats: The Seminar's Conversations

The Secretariat, with the Secretary-General at the center, does not have the luxury of passively permitting its member states to decide the fate of mankind on an *à la carte* basis according to their political preferences.

Notwithstanding the considerable uncertainty surrounding the future of international economic affairs, it is abundantly clear that current economic and financial arrangements are not sustainable, and the effects of the crisis will be long-standing.

Presently the world and the world organization confront a host of challenges the combined magnitude of which has not been witnessed since the end of World War II, which led to the founding of the United Nations. Not only do perennial problems persist—international peace and security, human rights and humanitarian action, and development—but they are compounded by a new set of peculiarly twenty-first century crises. The Secretariat, with the Secretary-General at the center, does not have the luxury of passively permitting its member states to decide the fate of mankind on an *à la carte* basis according to their political preferences. Instead, it should embrace its leadership potential—derived from the UN's universal legitimacy and membership—and confront head-on the new brand of threats and in particular their still poorly understood interconnections to international peace and security. To be sure, the mission is daunting. Based on the discussions during five sessions, which are described in more detail in Annexes 1–5, the world body will encounter the following five major problems, all of which were heatedly debated in one or more sessions.

The Economic Crisis and the Need for New Financial Architecture

The global financial system has verged on collapse during the past year. The conventional wisdom driving international economic decision making for the past two decades led to ever more complex financial instruments, uncontrolled risk-taking, and lack of regulation—characteristics that culminated in a major meltdown at the end of 2008. The crisis threatens developed and developing countries, be they well established and stable or in transition. Notwithstanding the considerable uncertainty surrounding the future of international economic affairs, it is abundantly clear that current economic and financial arrangements are not sustainable, and the effects of the crisis will be long-standing. Yet the seminar reached consensus that a business-as-usual mentality is present among many who believe that matters will return to normal in the future, a situation all the more alarming as unpredictable sociopolitical forces are unleashed for which the world is unprepared. To counter these trends, participants at the 23 February 2009 seminar advocated a number of steps that could be taken by the international community, which are described in Annex 1.

Shifting Geo-politics

The so-called unipolar moment that followed the end of the Cold War lasted for two decades but seems to have ended. China and India have been on the rise for some time as major economic and political powers. Russia's actions demonstrate the intent to reassert influence around the globe. The United States has set aside its multilateral leadership mantle since the attacks of 11 September, but the administration of Barack Obama has exhibited a more multilateral bent than its predecessor. Yet Washington's attempts to recapture primacy will face stiff challenge from the likes of Europe, Japan, and increasingly a handful of emerging

countries like the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) as well as South Africa, Indonesia, and Egypt. The Gulf countries have amassed large reserves, thanks to oil revenues, and, together with China and India, have been buying Western banks and other firms. Despite the rapidly changing contours of international relations, such trends are poorly reflected in the structures and functioning of the multilateral system. Many seminar participants expressed concern that the arrangements devised at the close of World War II have passed their use-by date. If this is the case, an enhanced, retooled institutional framework must be devised to better meet the needs of a world so fundamentally changed. Steps forward, as well as a number of related challenges, were outlined during the 4 March 2009 seminar and are described in Annex 2.

Despite the rapidly changing contours of international relations, such trends are poorly reflected in the structures and functioning of the multilateral system.

Interrelated Challenges of Climate Change, Food and Water Security, Energy, and Changing Financial and Economic Policies

UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown could not have been clearer in outlining the ramifications of failing to address the challenges associated with climate change when he stated early in 2009 at Davos that “the costs of unchecked climate change are far, far higher than the costs of combating it. If we do not reduce our emissions from their present path—by at least half, globally, by 2050, with a peak in 2020—we will bring upon ourselves a human and economic catastrophe that will make today’s crisis look small. And it will be the poorest and the most vulnerable who will suffer first and greatest.”³ Clearly, a broader reorientation of global production and consumption patterns and economic and agricultural activity, but also a drastic change from market fundamentalism to multi-nationalism, is needed to avoid irreversible damage to the environment and world population. Thus, the September 2009 high-level meeting in New York before the General Assembly and the negotiations at Copenhagen in December aim to achieve a global deal for the post-2012 period. But even if such a deal is reached, there is increasing scientific evidence that current emission targets under negotiation are insufficient. The 25 March 2009 session, described in fuller detail in Annex 3, outlined these alarming trends and steps to counter them. A Copenhagen “protocol” of some sort likely will be reached in December; but if it is weak, or based on outdated scientific evidence, 2009 will be remembered as the year the world suffered a collective failure.

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Increasing Potential for Conflict over Resources

The world was treated to a preview in 2008 of what may lie ahead when food riots exploded in dozens of countries across the globe. Participants at the 22 April 2009 meeting discussed whether conditions for resource riots will likely recur in the future. Some felt that any optimism regarding a more peaceful future in this respect is belied by the fact that a likely rise in the price of oil, bio-fuel production, major drought forecasts, and declining purchasing power in the developing world all threaten the security of food and water resources throughout the world, developments that taken together paint a pessimistic portrait of a future of rising conflicts over dwindling access to the necessities of life. Others pointed out that while the threat of conflict over resources is looming, there are points of potential conversion. Water, specifically, has proven to be a source of cooperation as well as conflict.⁴ Either way, as conditions worsen, the world’s rich will not enjoy a

As conditions worsen, the world’s rich will not enjoy a buffer from the problems of the poor, as the two increasingly share a common fate.

buffer from the problems of the poor, as the two increasingly share a common fate, issues discussed more fully in Annex 4 together with the steps the UN could take to become a more critical actor for change.

The Energy Crisis and Reorganization of Socioeconomic Policies

Green technology currently enjoys the status of being a prominent and popular subject of study for the world's most talented young scientists. At the same time, however, the clock is ticking on fully implementing alternatives before non-renewable resources run dry.

The global oil supply has grown tighter, a situation thrown into sharp focus in 2008 when fuel prices spiked to unprecedented heights. While they subsequently subsided, production levels have not increased since 2005, at least in part the result of political calculations by oil-producing countries. But we have reached, or are rapidly approaching, the peak of world supply. With carbon-based energy sources being finite, scenarios imagining alternatives are politically charged by buzzwords such as “nuclear renaissance,” the “solar age,” or a “hydrogen economy.” The good news, delivered to the seminar convened on 6 May 2009, is that green technology currently enjoys the status of being a prominent and popular subject of study for the world's most talented young scientists. At the same time, however, the clock is ticking on fully implementing alternatives before non-renewable resources run dry, as discussed in Annex 5.

4. Steps Forward: Key Recommendations

In establishing an agenda, we originally asked presenters and participants to keep in mind a tripartite framework for organizing their recommendations:

- **actionable:** issues for which progress can be made relatively easily and for which no governmental decisions are required;
- **achievable:** issues that require strong diplomacy and bold action to achieve objectives but are politically and operationally within reach; and
- **untenable:** issues that should not be addressed because they are so divisive or impossible that action would be counterproductive.

While this formula worked well for an earlier effort by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Ralph Bunche Institute at the outset of the current Secretary-General's tenure,⁵ participants noted early on that it would not be feasible for categorizing recommendations about possible future actions by the UN to improve its overall approach to the management of critical global issues about ongoing economic, financial, and environmental crises amidst rapidly changing world politics. The borders between categories were amorphous and fluid, and rarely was there consensus about priorities or sequencing. Moreover, these topics are already large enough that the group decided not to discuss the relationships to international peace and security, human rights, and humanitarian affairs although linkages are clear.

As a result, we listened closely to our speakers and the rich exchanges that followed among participants and distilled and then elaborated what we judge to be the most necessary and doable recommendations in the next two to three years. Not all the recommendations received support from the entire roster of participants, but one or more undoubtedly would be acceptable to some or all.

But in light of the critical nature of the current state of the planet—a definite tone of urgency and crisis was the background music for all five of our sessions—we thought it better to proceed and boldly place them all in the report as our own. We also added one recommendation for the longer term about global governance and UN reform.

We benefited enormously from reactions and discussions with various members of our core group—in planning the sessions, during the five conversations, and then during a special sixth meeting at the end of the series to discuss a draft of the current report—but responsibility for the following recommendations is exclusively our own. Participants are identified at the end of the report because we are obliged to them for having stimulated what follows, but they have not signed off on individual items in this report. Discussions took place under Chatham House rules, but we attempt to provide a flavor of the passionate conversations that informed the recommendations.

4.1 Intellectual Leadership Can Make a Difference

Participants were of one mind that the United Nations could and should provide intellectual leadership about the fundamentally changed nature of crucial contemporary problems and their solutions, and seriously attempt to bridge the deepening gap between scientific knowledge and political decision-making. They also were of one view that not all member states would necessarily welcome ideas that did not coincide with conventional wisdom on the various issues under consideration.

Ideas and concepts are a main driving force in human progress and arguably one of the most important contributions of the United Nations over the last six and a half decades.

Ideas and concepts are a main driving force in human progress and arguably one of the most important contributions of the United Nations over the last six and a half decades, according to the independent United Nations Intellectual History Project.⁶ During the seminar series, participants indicated a number of possible ways that various UN secretariats could exploit their comparative advantage—namely, universality and legitimacy—in analysis and advocacy. For instance, the UN's economic and social organizations and research units could:

- identify and distinguish between the bad debt of the banking systems and sovereign governmental debt, and advocate strategies that could address the debt crisis internationally;
- project worldwide unemployment forecasts, and propose effective approaches for dealing with it and its social and economic impacts;
- address pressing issues of climate change, energy, and environmental degradation in the context of the financial crisis;
- analyze possibilities for international taxation, including a currency tax as well as options for a global currency fund as well as possible ways to assuage the visceral negative reactions from major powers;
- advocate that more restricted forums (e.g., the G-20 and G-8) should include issues not on their agenda and develop a new paradigm for development which takes into account interrelated issues of financial, environmental, trade, energy, and other international crises;
- identify those challenges best addressed at the regional level, and propose possibilities for effective coordination between the UN, regional bodies, and individual nation-states; and
- emphasize the increasing interconnectedness of today's economic, social, environmental and political problems and the urgency to act holistically on them.

Nothing short of a quantum shift in thinking will suffice to institute sustainable global governance for the twenty-first century and beyond.

However, nothing short of a quantum shift in thinking will suffice to institute sustainable global governance for the twenty-first century and beyond. The need for a dramatic change in strategic thinking echoed throughout the seminar series. The economic fundamentalism that has served as the ideological underpinning for the management of world affairs clearly has proven to be lacking, and the United Nations has the capacity to apply its multidisciplinary and multilateral research capacities to assess and plan more sustainable options for global governance. Intellectual leadership is desperately required to address the fundamentally changed nature of contemporary problems and fill the gaps between scientific knowledge and political decision-making.

Repeated discussion throughout the seminars noted that traditional economic thinking—which has been the basis for decision-making of governments, the IMF, and the World Bank, as well as more exclusive groups like the G-8 and the new G-20—is the dominant approach to economic and social management. This doctrine is sometimes called, correctly or incorrectly, the “Washington Consensus,” “market fundamentalism,” or the “economic philosophy of the rich.” It is not necessary to deny positive results over the decades in order to point out that recently this doctrine seems to have contributed to the ongoing financial and economic crises with substantial negative impact on the poor, both in developed and developing countries, causing inequality to grow across the planet.

Nowadays, the fate of the poor and the rich are linked. Another major theme of the seminar series was the fact that the self-interest of the rich has to take the well-being of the poor into account. Consequently, a deep change in economic thinking would justify efforts to formulate a new theoretical basis for global governance in the face of growing interdependence and a global emergency.

It was often mentioned that the UN’s multilateral and multidisciplinary thinking and research, at its best, is more balanced and comprehensive than that of the prevailing economic doctrine of market fundamentalism. Different views—ranging from more regulation to larger concessional flows, from a new international architecture to an enhanced role for the United Nations—should become more visible at the center of a new economic paradigm. From the start, it should take more adequately into account long-term environmental and social consequences of economic policies with legitimacy, universality, and equity as basic values. The United Nations should also play a critical role in formulating alternative paths for developing countries taking into account both lessons learned from previous economic policies and development efforts as well as the precarious environmental situation of the planet.

In many ways, all of our recommendations reflect the unfortunate gap between rapidly evolving scientific knowledge and the use of the latest research, analysis, and statistical data in political decision-making at the United Nations and elsewhere. A new scientific paradigm for global governance should change the way that research and analysis are used in decision-making, which is especially crucial for responding sooner rather than later to the worldwide environmental emergency already in its early stages.

A shift of this sort, however, will be ineffective if not complemented by an economic paradigm shift as well. The current crisis has demonstrated the inadequacy of the global economic architecture and highlighted the need for new approaches to ensuring the stability of developed and developing countries. Still, changing an economic paradigm usually takes a very long time. In the meantime, short-term steps—discussed in actionable recommendations below—could be taken to promote a new multilateral and multidisciplinary approach to global governance. The desperate need for a strategic reorientation underlies the recommendations for analysis and research that follow.

The United Nations should play a critical role in formulating alternative paths for developing countries taking into account both lessons learned from previous economic policies and development efforts as well as the precarious environmental situation of the planet.

The current crisis has demonstrated the inadequacy of the global economic architecture and highlighted the need for new approaches to ensuring the stability of developed and developing countries.

Recommendation 1:

Transforming Human Resources and Providing Finance for UN Research

The United Nations should drastically improve its capacities to manage critical global issues in a comprehensive and credible way and, in particular, to exploit its often neglected comparative advantages in information gathering, conceptual thinking, problem solving, and policy analysis. Making better use of its competitive edge in producing and nurturing world-class thinkers and practitioners on critical global issues requires not only dramatic changes in human resources policy but also more appropriate financing.

Because research and ideas matter, the world organization should enhance its ability to produce or nurture world-class public intellectuals, scholars, thinkers, planners, and practitioners who could win Nobel and other such prizes. UN officials are typically considered second-class citizens in comparison with the researchers, thinkers, and practitioners from the international financial institutions (IFIs). This notion partially reflects the resources devoted to research in these institutions as well as their respective cultures, media attention, dissemination outlets and the use of the research in decision making.

Some twenty-five organizations, diplomats or statesmen associated with the United Nations have also won a Nobel Peace Prize. No other organization comes even close to being such a center of excellence, a fact missed by many politicians, the media, and a global public looking for answers to global predicaments.

Reality is often different. Nine persons with substantial experience within the UN and its policy discussions have won the Nobel Prize in economic sciences—Jan Tinbergen, Wassily Leontief, Gunnar Myrdal, James Meade, W. Arthur Lewis, Theodore W. Schultz, Lawrence R. Klein, Richard Stone, and Amartya Sen—whereas only one from the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, has done so. But even he resigned from his post at the Bank in protest and is now deeply associated with the United Nations in New York. And this list is in addition to individual Nobel Peace Prize winners who worked for years as staff members of the United Nations: Ralph Bunche, Dag Hammarskjold, Kofi Annan, Mohammed ElBaradei, and Martti Ahtisaari. In total, some twenty-five organizations, diplomats or statesmen associated with the United Nations have also won a Nobel Peace Prize. No other organization comes even close to being such a center of excellence, a fact missed by many politicians, the media, and a global public looking for answers to global predicaments.

In order to have ideas and the people who produce them taken more seriously within the context of the forward planning to the UN,⁷ a number of priority steps should be taken to improve the world organization's research, analytical, and policy work that would permit the Secretary-General and the system as a whole to play more important roles in world political, economic, social, and environmental decision making. To this effect, the world organization should revamp its human resource policies and do the following:

- use borrowing and other staff exchanges from universities and think tanks for original and synthetic research;
- create space within the UN system for truly independent research and analysis;
- increase interaction and exchange programs between the analytical staff of the Bretton Woods institutions and the UN economic and social departments and offices;

- ensure more effective outreach and media promotion activities so that the economic and social research produced by the UN is held in greater esteem and has more impact on the decisions of economic and finance ministers around the world; and
- transform recruitment, appointment, promotion, and organization of responsibilities as an integral part of a new human resources strategy to exert intellectual leadership.

To be sure, the UN's specialized agencies and related organizations have played a prominent role in advancing new ideas and forward-looking approaches to tackling global challenges. One need look no further than the UN Development Programme's annual *Human Development Report* to understand the potential of agency-based intellectual output. Under the leadership of Mahbub ul Haq, the UNDP began to issue these annual reports in 1990 that document the progress of human-based development across the globe, thereby upending conventional approaches which exclusively stressed GDP per capita. While the data and methods of the *Human Development Report* are certainly open to criticism and refinement, the UNDP has succeeded in generating and disseminating powerful, original ideas that have changed the way governments formulate development policies, carry them out, and measure results.

Despite this rich tradition of contributions from various UN agencies and organizations, the full potential of the system's capacity for research and analysis has scarcely been tapped. Cross-agency collaboration is too rare; research staff in different parts of the world organization seldom venture beyond the walls of their departmental silos. Regular, mandatory gatherings for sharing research and ideas would reduce this institutional parochialism by bringing together representatives from across the UN system. An inter-agency research council—comprising lead analysts from each agency and meeting twice a year, and discussed more in depth in recommendation #4—would greatly expand opportunities for information-sharing and collaboration, and reduce the chances of redundancy and the pursuit of different projects at cross-purposes.

The UN should seek as many alliances as possible with centers of expertise and excellence—in academia, think tanks, government policy units, and corporate research centers. The UN is a prominent location for dialogue and for knitting countries together, and so it should also be a place to network outstanding thinking. The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change was backed by a research secretariat, a model for independent staff loosely affiliated with the UN that should become a permanent feature of the organization but with frequent and regular turnover in personnel. Kofi Annan also started a more systematic dialogue with UN research organizations, outside scholars, and think tanks; and Ban Ki-moon has continued to reach out to them. The results of this networking should be shared to stimulate both research and its application in decision-making.

Human resources policy should also do more to foster an atmosphere that encourages creative thinking, penetrating analysis, and policy-focused research of a high intellectual and critical caliber. Improving the quality of staff members is essential, which will depend on improvements and better professional procedures in recruitment, appointment, promotion, and organization of responsibilities. Some progress

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has been made, such as the establishment of a system of national competitive examinations for entry-level recruitment as well as internship and junior professional officer programs.⁸ But there could also be a continual infusion of young or senior scholars for fixed periods to the United Nations. This could be brought about through lending personnel or other exchange procedures from the universities and think tanks around the world, and not just those from the West. This would benefit not only the UN while these visitors were in residence but also the future research agendas of the scholars thereafter.

Calling into question conventional or politically correct wisdom requires longer-term funding that should be taken into account by donors in the next UN reform and before.

In addition to changing human resources policies, it is also essential for donors to provide more financing with longer duration and more flexibility if research and ideas are to matter. To state the totally obvious: whenever the world body pursues a bold and forward-looking agenda, it is unable to please all 192 member states all of the time. Calling into question conventional or politically correct wisdom requires longer-term funding that should be taken into account by donors in the next UN reform and before. The terms on which such financing is provided are of crucial importance, not only to ensure availability but sustained multi-year commitments without strings. The encouragement of free thinking and exploration of ideas and approaches are vital but not cheap. It is thus a prerequisite that donors ensure adequate funding for research and analysis, with no strings attached, ideally through assessed contributions but more likely through voluntary funding.

Without such availability, messages typically are watered down to satisfy the lowest common intergovernmental denominator. However, the example of the *Human Development Report* provides optimism in that the process since 1990 suggests that independent teams can be liberated from the need to check analyses before publication with boards or donors. Given the UN's current culture, this may well require what participants described as "safety zones" within the system's organizations—where serious and independent analysis can take place not only away from daily tasks but also without fearing the loss of income or publication because one or more governments are irked. The tolerance for controversy should be far higher; academic freedom should not be an alien concept for researchers within a twenty-first century UN Secretariat.

An important institutional challenge is rethinking and improving professional relations between the United Nations and IFIs in order to encourage a better exchange of ideas and experiences and a less skewed allocation of international resources toward the latter.

With better personnel and financing, the UN's intellectual agenda would still need to be designed for impact. Basic research is best done in universities, but many elements of applied research can and should be undertaken within the United Nations. An important institutional challenge is rethinking and improving professional relations between the United Nations and IFIs in order to encourage a better exchange of ideas and experiences and a less skewed allocation of international resources toward the latter.

Production of new ideas is one task, but the distribution and dissemination of key UN reports to academics, policy analysts, and the media are also crucial. Outreach, including translation and subsidies for high-visibility reports, has at times been very impressive. Still, too many quality analyses languish on book shelves or in filing cabinets. Discussion should not only be in intergovernmental settings at headquarters but also in capitals with governments, and among such diverse constituencies as NGOs, business, the media, and civil society. This too has financial implications—if UN ideas are worthwhile, they should be widely circulated and discussed in all working languages.

Recommendation 2:

Policy Leadership by the Secretary-General during Crises

For the ongoing global economic and financial crisis as well as for other potential major emergencies, the Secretary-General should appoint a world-class thinker on economic and financial issues as part of his inner circle. He should also have the capacity to recruit a similar adviser on short notice for other emergencies (such as a nuclear disaster or new pandemic) that require immediate global responses.

Notwithstanding the possible pitfalls of an overcrowded 38th floor—the Office of the Secretary-General (OSG) in UN parlance—having expert advisers at the ready would bolster the UN head’s capacity for robust leadership in times of crisis. Far from being a humble servant who does only what he or she is told, the Secretary-General possesses significant power to offer direction in matters of policy and emergency response. Kofi Annan demonstrated this when he challenged member states to reconcile the “two concepts of sovereignty” and then drew upon the entrepreneurial power of his office to promote the adoption of the responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit.⁹ Although the traditional role of the Secretary-General is in political negotiations and good offices, he or she need not be confined to traditional peace and security concerns but should instead expand the purview of his or her office to issues of finance and economics, energy and the environment.

Under-Secretaries-General are on hand to advise the Secretary-General. But these officials are political appointments and normally are not intellectual authorities with publication records and reputations in their areas of responsibility. During a major crisis that requires quick action, using them as a sole source of advice can detract from ongoing work and exacerbate internal rivalries, and deploying them does not enhance the credibility of the Secretary-General.

To his credit, Ban Ki-moon has sought to expand traditional practices by making one of his priorities successful climate change negotiations. To this effect he has created a special support team in his office with experienced staff. Both Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon have also relied on visible US political scientists as Assistant Secretaries-General in the OSG to give advice on various new initiatives and specialized concerns (such as terrorism, relations with the private sector, UN reforms, and overall strategic planning and coordination). This successful practice is fine as an example but is inadequate for pooling advice needed in today’s complicated world. Another relevant initiative that might serve as a model for a transformed 38th floor is the Millennium Project, a specialized team headed by Jeffrey Sachs.¹⁰ The series of reports issued in its name in the lead-up to the 2005 World Summit led to widespread discussion, if not results.

Some participants noted that the current Secretary-General has been largely absent amidst the ongoing financial and economic meltdown, an impression reinforced by the almost total lack of media attention irrespective of whether or not he had been active behind the scenes. The General Assembly President assumed a prominent role by creating a Commission of Experts in October 2008 on reforming the international economic and financial system and convening the UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development in New York on 24-26 June 2009. But illustrating the formidable challenges to

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becoming credible actors in world's economic and financial matters that are faced by the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, the gathering did not attract more than a handful of leaders and virtually no media attention.

The Secretary-General's moral authority affords an ideal platform—often called the “bully pulpit”—to highlight the plight of poor and rich countries, as well as to point to the obvious need for more international collaboration, and the dangers of basing solutions on the market fundamentalism of previous decades. Even the few participants who argued that he had made an effort to issue public statements were unable to claim that this work was visible in the media. An active and constructive presence in addressing the interrelated problems of any international crisis affecting humankind is vital due to Secretary-General's unique stature and recognized legitimacy; and it would improve the UN's public image as well. The UN can ill afford any absence by the Secretary-General and his or her visibility in any major future crises.

Being an active world leader in major financial and economic crises is an unusual requirement placed on the shoulders of any Secretary-General. As an experienced diplomat and foreign policy practitioner, Ban Ki-moon's experience is in high politics. Currently he is without an experienced senior adviser in his own office for advice on the crisis. The Under-Secretaries-General on economic and related matters are not appropriate sources for continuous advice; they do not ordinarily have the appropriate expertise and background in managing research, and moreover they have their own departments or organizations to administer. The adviser therefore should have world-class credibility in financial matters and would preferably be a full-time staff member in the Secretary-General's inner circle, ready for day-to-day consultations along the lines of Lawrence Summers in US President Barack Obama's White House.

The times require that the Secretary-General respond to any global crisis. The welfare of the planet may hang in the balance.

The times require that the Secretary-General respond to any global crisis. The welfare of the planet may hang in the balance. The OSG's analytical capacity should also be markedly improved to manage the interconnected global emergencies facing the planet as elaborated in the recommendation that follows.

Recommendation 3:

Establishing Independent Analytical Capacity

The United Nations should have available an independent institution capable of pulling together and synthesizing the host of relevant research and analysis being produced by universities and think-tanks on global issues and of undertaking its own focused research on complicated risk scenarios of the future.

Improving the capacity of the Secretary-General and the UN system for high-quality research, scenario-building, analysis, and ability to draw lessons from past successes and mistakes was a repeated theme. There are basically two options: develop this capacity either inside or completely outside the world organization. The latter was the clear preference of a large number of participants who argued that due to previous unsuccessful experiences with attempting to pull together an in-house capacity, creating an external capacity might be more fruitful.

The first effort to create such a unit inside the UN was likely Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's decision to establish the Office for Research and the Collection of Information (ORCI) in 1988. ORCI reported directly to the Secretary-General, and senior UN officials with inside experience were appointed to head it. Monitoring global trends was also included in the mandate of the office although efforts mainly revolved more around speech-writing than research. But Boutros Boutros-Ghali abolished the office in 1992. In the mid-1990s, Kofi Annan created the Strategic Planning Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and other similar units were also established elsewhere in the system. Planning units do not, however, conduct research but are tasked largely with tackling practical policy and management issues, and like their predecessors drafting reports and speeches.

Outside the Secretariat proper, but supposedly with close links, was the 1965 establishment of the UN Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR). The origins of the idea to create a RAND-type think tank for the Secretary-General originated within the US State Department.¹¹ The purpose was to create a world-class research organization in New York to assist the Secretary-General. Selecting the head was politicized by the General Assembly and consequently UNITAR never attained the status planned nor received acknowledgement among the academic world. It has recently concentrated on training activities although the "R" remains in its acronym.

In addition, governments created the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo in 1969, which now has some sixteen research institutions around the world.¹² A few have contributed to research that is cited by academics worldwide—the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) comes immediately to mind—and a handful of commissioned edited volumes or authored ones by staff have also been widely reviewed. However, part of UNU's problem is—besides dependency on government funding from a small number of countries and the bureaucratic procedures constraining all UN organizations—the distance between its research institutions and the Secretary-General's office. That said, the UNU Office in New York has sought to disseminate core publications.

Improving the UN Secretariat's research and planning capacity has also occasionally been proposed by high-level bodies or member states themselves but without notable success. For instance, the so-called Brahimi Panel proposed in 2000 that information and news gathering and political analysis and strategic planning should be consolidated to one entity, the Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat for the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (EISAS).¹³ Similarly, General Assembly resolution 57/26 of November 2002 urged "the strengthening of cooperative mechanism for information-sharing, planning and the development of preventive measures... [and] the development of a comprehensive plan for a revived early warning and prevention system for the United Nations."

The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change went further in its 2004 report, but again nothing happened. It noted that prevention requires early warning and analysis that is based on objective and integrated research. Although the UN has some early warning and analysis capacity scattered among different

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organizations and departments the panel recognized that the Secretary-General has not been able to establish a properly-resourced unit able to integrate inputs from these offices for early-warning reports and strategic options for purposes of decision-making. The panel then recommended that the best option for creating a coherent capacity for developing strategic options is to strengthen the OSG through the creation of the Deputy-Secretary-General for Peace and Security.¹⁴

The Secretary-General as well as other senior officials in the UN system need an objective research and an analytical entity able to quickly mobilize the best scientific and analytical advice on global problems and their interconnections.

The Secretary-General—in order to be responsive under Charter Article 99—as well as other senior officials in the UN system need an objective research and an analytical entity able to quickly mobilize the best scientific and analytical advice on global problems and their interconnections. This body’s research agenda would adhere closely to the evolving needs of the Secretary-General, but it should conduct its investigations and analyses from a distance. Among the requisite functions would be to:

- give confidential advice to the UN Secretary-General on a regular basis and undertake research or organize discreet brainstorming sessions upon his or her request;
- prepare scenarios of interconnected world trends and how the Secretary-General should be prepared to show leadership in various situations of sudden challenge. As a recent model of this practice in one UN agency, global modeling groups prepared alternative scenarios on selected world trends for UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which published them in its fourth *Global Environment Outlook* in 2007¹⁵; and
- prepare public reports, with the help of outside research communities worldwide, on global trends, threats, and solutions.

Participants benefitted from a presentation about the operation of a similar capacity within the US government. The National Intelligence Council (NIC) and its long-range, strategic research staff confidentially advise the US president and other high-level governmental officials on sensitive national security matters. But they also produce public assessment reports, which are supposed to provoke wide debates, change the framework and parameters of current policies, and influence the perception of US policy priorities. A recent and visible publication was *Global Trends 2025*,¹⁶ whose findings generated wide discussion not only in the United States but also worldwide.

NIC staff members are not political appointments but experts, substantially increasing the credibility of their research and findings. Most participants in the seminar series thought that any new independent capacity for research and analysis to benefit the Secretary-General should follow similar appointment practices in order to avoid the politicization of findings.

Establishing such a capacity inside the UN system would not be desirable. Funding from the General Assembly—with its inevitable demands for oversight and politicized appointments—would compromise independence and quality. For an entity outside the UN, the funding should probably come from a number of governments, foundations, the private sector, and individuals but, importantly, without strings attached. Some examples of similar arrangements that have worked well in the past—although more restricted in scope—are described below.

The International Peace Institute (IPI) exists independently from the UN system but has attained semi-UN status with close cooperative arrangements with the Secretary-General and UN departments in the areas of international peace and security. Its location is across First Avenue from the UN, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is honorary chair of the board. Established in 1970, the board and international advisory council each consists of respected individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds. Seventy percent of its funding comes from governments, 20 percent from foundations, and the rest from corporations and individuals.¹⁷ One of the chief pillars supporting IPI's work is its convening role, organizing a series of gatherings each year to promote strategic responses and policy proposals for issues related to peace and security. These meetings bring together preeminent scholars, policy advisors, and members of the private sector and civil society.

The Security Council Report (SCR) is a relatively new but authoritative, not-for-profit research organization, which is tasked with filling the void of high-quality, publically available information on Security Council activity. Such a “watch dog” provides another relevant model. SCR too receives a mix of funding from member states and private foundations, and its timely and objective analysis is read by UN officials and relied upon by governments, especially those of smaller states.¹⁸

Another example outside the UN system is the New York-based Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). It convenes meetings and undertakes studies exclusively at the request of the United Nations. Its Advisory Board consists of UN staff and academics; and its funding comes from governments, foundations, and other institutions.¹⁹

In the area of groundbreaking cooperation between the private sector, academic institutions, NGOs, and governments, the World Economic Summit has instituted a global risks network and publishes various annual and other publications.²⁰ But it does not cooperate explicitly with the United Nations despite the fact that the Secretary-General often attends the yearly summits.

These examples are listed to indicate not only that independent convening and research efforts are feasible, but they also highlight that no independent research and analytical institution currently is available to understand and deal with the totality of interconnected world problems and to work closely with the Secretary-General and other UN entities. And yet the global interrelatedness of political, economic, social, environmental, and other trends—and the dangers their synergistic impacts create as discussed in the seminar series—is key to the world organization's work.

If the independent capacity for research and analysis is instituted outside the UN system, it should work in close cooperation with the Office of the Secretary-General and also serve other world leaders and organizations such as G-8, G-20, the Non-Aligned Movement, Group of 77, regional organizations, the World Economic Summit, and the World Social Summit. Time will tell how ambitious the exercise could be. The initial step would be a feasibility study discussing, among other things, various ways to make the entity acceptable and fundable and proposing whether or not it should be one organization or a network of organizations with a secretariat and with special links to the Secretary-General.

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4.2 Structural Integration Can Make a Difference

Participants pointed to the clear need to take full advantage of capacities dispersed within the UN system as well as to think more concretely about relations with other intergovernmental bodies. Getting more from existing resources inside the system, and establishing work programs based on comparative advantages between universal and regional organizations are therefore essential.

Recommendation 4:

Making Better Use of the UN System’s Policy Planning and Research Capacities

The Secretary-General and the UN system as a whole should build on the potential of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to respond quickly with new policies in future global crises.

The interconnected nature of today’s global challenges examined in the seminar series often led, not surprisingly, to suggestions for coordinated responses by a more coherent UN system. Many also pointed to numerous solid policy, research and analytical capacities across the system that remain too frequently in institutional silos rather than more widely available.

The Chief Executives Board for Coordination was identified as a potential mechanism for bringing about better coherence, unity of purpose, and concerted action by the specialized agencies and other bodies that comprise the UN system.

The Chief Executives Board for Coordination was identified by some participants as a potential mechanism for bringing about better coherence, unity of purpose, and concerted action by the specialized agencies and other bodies that comprise the UN system. Under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General but with the presence of the heads of the Bretton Woods institutions and other agency heads, the CEB has an unrealized potential for global policy leadership during crises.

Eyes glaze over at the thought of UN “coordination,” but the topic was inevitable at the seminars as it is elsewhere. Discussion throughout the sessions highlighted the following problems—as well as opportunities—regarding the management of global emergencies in the present system:

- The actual heads of agencies that comprise the CEB meet under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General once every six months. The main inter-agency committees that report to the CEB also meet a few times a year, although working groups or special task forces under them may meet more often. The CEB mechanism has been planned around the need for UN system-wide information exchange and knowledge sharing, harmonization of long-term policies and practices, and personal familiarization of staff around the system. But certainly it is not a response mechanism for rapidly evolving global crises. A recent review²¹ of the CEB finds that it gives prominence to the identification of emerging issues of system-wide concern, yet there have been no plans for major adjustments in existing mechanisms and procedures to implement conclusions.
- Key policy and operational issues are not necessarily brought before or discussed in a decision-making sense in the CEB. An example was the formulation of the policy and operational decisions during the 2008-2009 economic and financial crisis. The CEB discussed it in broad terms, and press statements were issued; but key concerns were not brought to the CEB in advance for input and coordination by the IMF or the World Bank. Clearly the CEB is not perceived to have

a credible crisis-management capacity. Yet the repercussions of decisions taken by both have a major impact on the work of the entire UN system. The possible leverage from a coherent system-wide response and leadership was absent during the crisis.

- The Secretary-General's leadership is hardly a foregone conclusion on many issues because many heads of even UN bodies are not appointed by him and have their own governing bodies and constituencies.

The CEB has an unrealized potential to respond to major and linked global crises by bringing the weight of the entire UN system to bear on problems. It could prompt data collection and early warning; develop quick and well-thought-through responses; and implement decisions consistently and efficiently. To operationalize this potential, the Secretary-General could have two cabinets during a crisis: one with his or her Under-Secretaries-General and another with UN agency heads. But at the moment, the CEB's structures and practices are too heavy and slow for this kind of crisis management, and the Secretary-General does not seem inclined to use the machinery to that effect.

The shortcomings of the current arrangement might be remedied in part through a structural renovation that would assign responsibility for the CEB to the Deputy Secretary-General. The January 1998 General Assembly resolution 52/12B sought explicitly to ensure systemic coherence. The CEB could help meet this objective and its mandate to "support the Secretary-General in elevating the profile and leadership of the United Nations in the economic and social spheres, including further efforts to strengthen the United Nations as a leading centre for development policy and development assistance."

An overhaul of this sort would benefit significantly from the creation of an inter-agency research council comprising members from the various research departments throughout the UN system. Regularly convened gatherings would provide opportunities for departmental researchers to share information, coordinate agendas where appropriate, identify areas of overlap, and enhance the standing of the CEB. Particularly important to this endeavor would be participation by such groups as the United Nations University and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) whose comparative advantage should be producing independent, multidisciplinary research and disseminating critical analysis for policy consideration. Kofi Annan started a tradition, together with UN Office in Geneva and UNU, to have regular meetings of planning and research units of the UN system. An interagency research council could build upon these efforts and similar initiatives taken by Ban Ki-moon.

Although the CEB system is at present inadequate for complex crisis management, some participants argued that it usually works well in planning and implementing long-range changes in the UN system when there is enough time to make detailed preparations and conduct elaborate inter-agency consultations. Participants welcomed the increasing emphasis on delivery at the regional and country levels, notably through UN country teams. Steps towards harmonization of business practices of the various UN entities involved was expected to make practical cooperation and delivery on the ground less complex in terms of budgeting, funding disbursement and human resources management, among other areas.

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Participants also noted that the coordination of secretariats across the UN system could not replace the need for coherence in the decisions made, mandates issued, and resources provided by the various intergovernmental organs of the system. Member states are not monolithic, and so their positions often are internally inconsistent as well as across the system's various forums. Such issues as climate change, therefore, are difficult to address meaningfully in all aspects—from environmental, agricultural, and health-related dimensions, to developmental, financial, humanitarian elements. The CEB and secretariats of the UN system should more assertively bring such inconsistencies publicly to the attention of member states.

Recommendation 5:

A Better Division of Labor among Multilateral Organizations

An independent international commission should be established to analyze by region, by topic, and by time frame the possible and desirable range of activities that should be undertaken either by the United Nations or by regional, sub-regional, or other intergovernmental groupings of states, or by a combination.

In addition to improving analytical capacities and improving collaboration *inside* the UN system, participants in the seminar series often broached the essential principle of a better division of intergovernmental labor *outside* the UN system. As is customary, the mention of “subsidiarity” within the context of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter was on the table, but this concept is as easy to support as it is tough to implement. As in other gatherings, participants were not able to go far beyond the agreement that it was urgent to establish a working division of labor between the world organization and regional bodies for attacking issues most suitable to their capabilities and expertise. In light of the variable capacities of particular institutions—past and current if not necessarily future—it is essential to move beyond facile generalizations to specifics.

While it is clear that solutions for many problems require world-wide cooperation, aspects of that cooperation may best be accomplished at lesser levels.

While it is clear that solutions for many of the problems discussed at the seminar require worldwide cooperation (e.g., halting climate change or pandemics), aspects of that cooperation (e.g., information gathering and monitoring) may best be accomplished at lesser levels. Furthermore, some problems may best be addressed below the UN's universal level (e.g., insecurity resulting from food shortages, mass migrations prompted by environmental degradation).²² Moreover, institutional and financial capacities of regional or functional bodies vary enormously, making cooperation not only complicated but also having quite different feasibilities for different problems and time horizons.

An essential part of the puzzle would be to evaluate recent experiences between the UN and regional and other intergovernmental organizations. For instance, Boutros Boutros-Ghali—who had written his doctoral dissertation on regional organizations—started a new practice in 1994 of conducting regular high-level meetings with heads of regional and other international organizations. Kofi Annan continued and considerably deepened this tradition,²³ but Ban Ki-moon has not yet organized his first summit. Various models of cooperation have been tried during the past fifteen years but with mixed results.

One important tool in moving beyond conventional thinking about issues and institutions has been using independent commissions of experts, who are less subject to the usual and predictable constraints of intergovernmental diplomacy. In addition to NGOs, they represent some of the loudest and most challenging voices in the Third UN. This type of expertise—combining knowledge with political punch and access to decision makers—has been influential in formulating and nourishing ideas. Commissioners speak in their individual capacities and can move beyond what passes for received wisdom in governments and secretariats. Visible individuals, who made careers as senior governmental or intergovernmental or nongovernmental officials are subsequently—as independent and usually prominent elders—sometimes willing to voice criticisms at higher decibel levels and make more controversial but still perceptive recommendations than when they occupied official positions.

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The reports are normally presented to the Secretary-General, who can point to their multinational composition and multi-perspective consensus and thus use the findings and recommendations more easily than ideas emanating from inside the Secretariat. Research teams for these commissions and panels are often led by academics and usually located “outside” the Secretariat and often temporarily in their employment. The researchers play an important role not only by supporting the commissioners’ deliberations with necessary documentation, but also by providing an entry point for ideas that eventually get carried forward by the commissioners and the published panel reports.

Since the so-called Pearson Commission, headed by former Canadian Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson, issued its 1969 report, *Partners in Development*,²⁴ numerous other such groups have been convened including most recently, as part of the lead-up to the UN’s 60th anniversary, the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and, as an element of the follow-up to the September 2005 World Summit, the High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian aid, and the environment. In between were a host of others, including commissions on development issues chaired by former German Chancellor Willy Brandt (1980 and 1983); on common security by former Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme (1982); on the environment and development by serving Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1987); on humanitarian problems by Iranian and Jordanian princes, Sadruddin Aga Khan and Hassan bin Talal (1988); on South-South cooperation by serving Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere (1990); on global governance by former Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and the Commonwealth Secretary-General Shridath Ramphal (1995); on humanitarian intervention and state sovereignty by former Australian Minister of External Affairs Gareth Evans and former Algerian Ambassador to the UN Mohamed Sahnoun (2001); on human security by Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen (2003); and on civil society by former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (2004). There were also commissions recalled more by their sponsors’ names rather than those of their chairs—for example, the first report to the Club of Rome (1972) and the report of the Carnegie Commission on preventing deadly conflict (1997).

Among the many commissions,²⁵ a short list of the most influential ones in the main working areas of the United Nations would include the World Commission

The establishment of what could be called the “International Commission on the Division of Labor between the UN and Other Multilateral Organizations” would be an opportunity to catalyze debate about the preferred shape of an alternative multilateral division of labor.

on Environment and Development and the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty.²⁶ Both led to conceptual advances that subsequently changed not only the language of statecraft but also found their way into national and international decisions as well as into the policies and programs of governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations.

The establishment of what could be called the “International Commission on the Division of Labor between the UN and Other Multilateral Organizations” would be an opportunity to catalyze debate about the preferred shape of an alternative multilateral division of labor. The purview of the commission would include not just regional organizations but also agencies, clubs, forums such as the World Economic Forum, and sub-regional bodies for tasks to be tackled over the next five to twenty-five years. The legitimacy and even the relevance of the G-8, and now increasingly the G-20+, as a financial manager of the world’s economic and financial crisis and global governance generally, was an oft-repeated concern during discussions. At its thirty-fifth meeting in Italy in July 2009, the members of the restricted club found themselves joined by representatives of some forty countries representing about 90 percent of the world economy along with representatives of several international organizations. When Chinese President Hu Jintao left to deal with the upheaval in Xinxiang, a side-bar on the summit in the *New York Times* did the confusing math, “G-8 + 5 +1 +5 -1.”²⁷

This equation underlines that the need for such a commission is increasingly obvious. In addition to the ad hoc sub-contracting by the Security Council to various regional groups for international peace and security, the need for a better division of labor is equally strong for economic and environmental affairs. Unlike the work of many commissions that were formed to examine issues for which there were few ready consumers, the proposed International Commission on the Division of Labor between the UN and Other Multilateral Organizations would take on issues for which there is a clear demand. The immediate impact is thus likely to resemble the more successful past commissions on sustainable development and the responsibility to protect.

The proposed international commission thus would be demand-driven and well suited to offer nuts-and-bolts assessments that specifically delineate a division of labor between the UN, regional organizations, and other appropriate agencies and forums. A commission of the sort recommended here would identify which regional organizations are best suited to tackle which problems and under which conditions as well as when it is most appropriate to make use of the universal United Nations. The result would be a blueprint for action of the UN and others.

4.3 Thinking Big

This final recommendation grows from the discussions at the seminar series, but it goes further by building logically upon the clear disconnect between the nature of the current challenges (that is, unparalleled and urgent) that virtually all participants espoused versus the modest and mundane (that is, “realistic”) solutions that seemed plausible to many of them individually or as a group. But the tone and passion of the conversations in the seminars about contemporary related crises leads us to put forward an idea that has been on the fringes of NGO activities for years and should move closer to the mainstream in UN policy-making circles.

Recommendation 6:

Towards a Third Generation World Body

The international community of states, in partnership with the private sector and civil society, should recognize the character of the deepening global emergency and convene a second UN Conference on International Organization. A major overhaul of the United Nations and its relations to its partners is required rather than continuing the unsatisfactory practice of more piecemeal UN reforms repeatedly but unsuccessfully tried over several decades.

As existential threats to the survival of the planet continue building, it has become clear that periodically repeated managerial and policy tinkering by successive Secretaries-General and the General Assembly are inadequate to respond to the interlinked challenges of today and tomorrow. The discussion of “UN reform” in this seminar and others often reminded us of Albert Einstein’s widely reported quip that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again with the expectation of a different result. Consequently, world leaders and members of the United Nations should give more serious consideration to convening a contemporary version of the Conference on International Organization that assembled in April 1945 in San Francisco. The challenges of the twenty-first century require thinking big; moving to a third generation of international organizations is as desperately needed as it is hard to imagine.²⁸

The legal justification is found in UN Charter Article 109 providing for a review conference, as well as numerous General Assembly resolutions asking the review to take place under “auspicious international conditions” and “at an appropriate time.”²⁹ Charter Article 109 foresaw a constitutional review of the world organization no later than 1955, but a two-thirds quorum in the General Assembly has never been assembled to convene such a gathering. There were those who hoped that ten years would suffice to demonstrate that the UN was not up to the challenges facing the international system. So it may seem hazardous now to assert that we have reached a point that states will understand the need to return to the drawing boards. But if not now, when? Only following a global ecological, health, nuclear or financial catastrophe? Or worse still, a combination of these or other major disasters, comparable to the disruption of World War II?

Virtually all the speakers in the seminar series called attention to the planet’s precarious state on the issues that they were discussing, a sentiment shared by many if not by the majority of participants. A “global emergency” seems to be the most accurate way to describe the current and certainly the future condition of what could be considered a “failing planet” or what one participant provocatively called our “Third World planet.”

One former UN official recalled discussions when Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali took office after the Cold War and compared the period to those following the Napoleonic Wars, World War I, and World War II. A conference of world leaders was convened for every previous such historic moment in order to design institutions for a changed world order. The result was an unprecedented Heads of State and Government Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, which set the stage for the Secretary-General’s bold, at least for

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the world organization, formulations in June of *An Agenda for Peace*.³⁰ But few of the proposals were implemented; a “business as usual” mentality took hold quickly after initial enthusiasm.

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But business is no longer usual. Several speakers and participants highlighted the interconnected nature of various crises as well as their mutually reinforcing character that appears to be intensifying their global impact in unprecedented ways. The contemporary period appears qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from other watershed moments in previous centuries. Participants referred to the Club of Rome’s *Limits to Growth* projections of 1972.³¹ After being dismissed at the time of its publication as overblown, their projections currently seem broadly accurate in describing the negative and compound effects of population and industrial growth, resource depletion, pollution, and environmental degradation. A 2008 study published by the national science agency of Australia found the basic scenario of the 1972 projections quite close to today’s situation.³² The fundamental message of *Limits to Growth* was that humankind would enter a period of drastic global disruptions between 2010 and 2030 with catastrophic effects if governmental policies did not change. The three authors—Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, and Jorgen Randers—published *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update*³³ in 2004 confirming that the basic thrust of their projections was still valid. Their book, however, received nothing like the media coverage as the original volume; in fact, it paled in comparison with that of Bjorn Lomborg’s *The Skeptical Environmentalist* three years earlier.³⁴

The Charter’s Preamble starts with the following declaration of purpose: “We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which in our lifetime has twice brought untold sorrow to mankind...have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these ends.” A solid case could be made that two recent events—11 September 2001 and the economic and financial crisis of 2008—have also caused untold sorrow and suffering, particularly for the world’s poor. Consequent deaths through hunger, disease, and violent conflict may in fact approach the horrors of two world wars, which gave rise to the United Nations. Even still, had the 2001 and 2008 events not taken place, higher economic growth rates would have meant a much higher pace of global warming. Either way, the fact remains: our planet is in crisis.

UN reforms often take place like clock-work, every five to ten years, more often than not propelled by the start of a newly-elected Secretary-General’s tenure—this was the case, for instance, in 1992, 1997, and 2002, though not in 2007. They have not, however, typically produced much change, and certainly not adequate structural measures required to address the interconnected global problems foreseen and discussed in this seminar series.³⁵ Some reforms have languished for decades such as Security Council reform, which started in earnest for the second time in 1994 (four additional non-permanent members were added in 1965) with no outcome in sight. Financial crises of the UN are also a periodic phenomenon, and General Assembly working groups and committees have tried to find a longer-lasting solution without success.

At the same time, a clear disconnect exists between the world body and the international financial institutions underpinning the global economic order. The Washington Consensus usually refers to economic policies advocated in general by “official” Washington—mainly the IMF, the World Bank and the US Treasury.³⁶ Many argue that there is in fact little consensus and certainly as much confusion as accord. Moreover, some fundamental issues like the unbalanced influence and power relationship among the IFIs, ECOSOC, and the General Assembly—or more broadly between the Washington-based financial institutions and the UN proper—had not been discussed in any institutionalized format until the General Assembly president established a Commission of Experts, chaired by Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, on the reforms of the international monetary and financial systems in October 2008.³⁷ The distance and division between the analyses in Washington and New York and the respective decision-making between the IFIs and the UN were one of the main themes running throughout our sessions as well.

Among the calls to solve the financial crisis of the UN once and for all through a “grand bargain” was the 2004 report from the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.³⁸ But efforts to link trade, aid, finance, and the environment with international peace and security (more specifically new permanent and non-permanent members to the Security Council) have failed, most recently in the September 2005 World Summit.³⁹ The perceived stakes have not been high enough.

Our proposal, using Charter Article 109 to convene a world conference on international organization, goes further than any grand bargaining so far proposed or attempted. Its implementation is not without risks. Stephen Schlesinger eloquently relates how difficult the 1945 negotiations were and how close they came to breaking down.⁴⁰ Even the ratification process for Charter amendments is difficult enough that only three have taken place in six-and-a-half decades. But tinkering with the system once again may satisfy no one and could leave the United Nations largely irrelevant or unable to respond effectively to looming major global crises. Treading water is not a solution if the tide is taking the UN out to sea.

A major problem of the United Nations are its slow and tentative responses to early warning and new scientific research findings which are changing very rapidly in an interconnected world.⁴¹ UN-sponsored governmental negotiations and the gathering of evidence of accelerating climate change by the scientific community often resemble “two different boats passing each other by,” according to one presenter. But the UN and scientific communities must be close to being on the same page; wise intergovernmental action in a global emergency should be based on science, and not on the politics of what is deemed desirable.

Many participants viewed the UN’s Nobel-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as a possible model for a better scientific basis for the work of the world organization. But that too is not without problems, as assessments of the IPCC—official baselines for negotiations—are three to four years old. Negotiations are, therefore, based on outdated scientific information as new data is constantly being generated. But an even deeper difficulty is that often even solid

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But tinkering with the system once again may satisfy no one and could leave the United Nations largely irrelevant or unable to respond effectively to looming major global crises. Treading water is not a solution if the tide is taking the UN out to sea.

Unfortunately major governments and international organizations tend to wait until major disruptions are already evident and only then scramble together an ad hoc response as they did in the financial crisis of 2008–2009.

Ideas that seem outlandish yesterday often become part of tomorrow's mainstream.

scientific evidence of a likely catastrophe is not enough to move politicians. However, when governments see existential threats as a result of drastic threats—9/11 and the 2008 economic and financial crisis come to mind—no cost seems too high and the usually elusive political will not only present but mobilized quickly.

It was thought by many participants that the Secretary-General in particular should wake up the world's citizenry to the upcoming major dangers of the future for which mankind is not yet prepared. U Thant sounded such an alarm forty years ago, a call featured prominently in the introduction to *Limits to Growth*.⁴² Unfortunately, however, major governments and international organizations tend to wait until major disruptions are already evident and only then scramble together an *ad hoc* response as they did in the financial crisis of 2008–2009. The disappointing results of the summits and in June 2009 of the UN Conference of the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development are only the latest illustrations.

Ideas that seem outlandish yesterday often become part of tomorrow's mainstream. Based on the content and tenor of discussions during this seminar series, the agenda for a review conference could include:

- Establishing a new and more powerful, ministerial-level, economic and social council, entirely distinct from ECOSOC, with an enhanced relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions and political status and operational power like the Security Council's. Such an upgrading could diminish the wish of more countries to join the Security Council as permanent members, as joining the new council could be as, or perhaps even more, important.⁴³ The transformation of the feeble Human Rights Council into an effective third and powerful council should also be on the agenda.
- Reviewing the principal organs—including the functioning and structure of the Security Council, the purpose of the Trusteeship Council, and the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.
- Finding solutions for alternative funding for the United Nations in the face of the increasing volume of voluntary, pick-and-choose contributions.
- Reviewing the coordination mechanisms, including substantial consolidation, between the UN and its organs, agencies, funds, and programs as well as the between the UN and regional and other intergovernmental organizations and groupings—such as the G-8 and G-20—as well as academia, think tanks, and civil society.
- Changing the appointment processes and the mandates for the UN Secretary-General, deputy, and heads of other UN organizations and specialized agencies.
- Improving mechanisms that bring objective, scientific knowledge to guide the work of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions.

Annex 1:

Summary of

“The Global Financial System after Meltdown—Roles for the United Nations in a New Financial Architecture?”

February 23, 2009

Presenters:

James K. Galbraith

Professor of Economics, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas

José Antonio Ocampo

Director, Programme in Economic and Political Development,
Columbia University, Former UN Under-Secretary-General

Setting the Stage

With the world economy teetering on the brink of collapse at the start of 2009 and waiting for an absolutely necessary reform of the global financial system, neither the United Nations nor the Bretton Woods institutions were initially prominent. As they are currently organized, neither is equipped, able, or willing to take initiatives and catalyze necessary and sometimes even drastic action. This session explored possible roles for the United Nations in a reconfigured international economic architecture. A host of proposals surfaced during the discussion, and a number of key themes emerged.

Breaking the Mold of Pre-crisis Thinking

Perhaps the most significant roadblock to progress in dealing with the current economic and financial crisis continues to be the belief—on the part of economists, think tanks, and governments—that things will soon return to normal. A fundamental task, one the UN system could usefully undertake, is that of breaking the mold of pre-crisis thinking. Up to now, policymakers have fallen into the trap of using the crisis to advance formulas for recovery that may have been useful in the past, but which are no longer relevant or helpful. At the same time, the severity of the crisis, which is not fully recognized, will force the world to ultimately rethink the international financial and economic structure. The UN and its associated agencies could use their universal legitimacy to sound a wake-up call to the world, that we are experiencing a severe crisis of extended duration, and promote the notion that “business-as-usual” band-aids will no longer suffice.

Pressing the Advantage

The UN should draw on its comparative advantages in universal membership and legitimacy to take a more active role in reacting to economic crises. The world body’s unique representative character as center of the multilateral universe is its strongest asset. Yet recent years have witnessed powerful states turn to alternative, exclusive bodies like the Group of 8 and the newer Group of 20 to coordinate economic decision making. Such a development is an inappropriate response to the challenges at hand. All countries will have to have a say in the world’s management of the crisis.

Filling Gaps

One way to promote confidence in the world body as a robust source for the coordination of economic decision making is for the UN to fill gaps left by groups and regional organizations. While these organizations tend to tackle macroeconomic policy and monetary issues, there are numerous areas that are weakly represented or entirely absent from their agendas. At the same time, they are often the issues that could push the frontiers of debate in coming years. The UN's comparative advantage in membership and legitimacy could be meaningfully employed to discuss issues such as an international debt resolution mechanism and international taxation that are not be debated in any other forum.

Asserting Leadership

If the United Nations is to position itself to manage critical issues related to the ongoing financial and economic crisis, the Secretary-General should lead the charge. Until recently, however, some participants thought that he has been largely absent, and his public presence is still unremarkable. The Secretary-General possesses tremendous potential to take an active role as a representative of both poor *and* rich nations, improve the world body's public image as a constructive force in addressing the crisis, and raise issues and foster negotiations on critical topics in need of redress.

Tightening Family Bonds

In order to press its comparative advantages, the UN will also have to draw on the vast resources of the entire galaxy of its agencies and affiliated institutions. The Bretton Woods institutional family is particularly important in this regard, but the relationship between the United Nations and the Washington-based financial institutions needs to be further developed. Reform of this relationship should therefore be a matter of priority. Of special import is the need for revitalizing the IMF and reorienting its international mandate. Methods for dramatically increasing the IMF's Special Drawing Rights and expanding its capacity as a development bank should be explicit. The IMF could be made more robust if it begins acting as a forum for the creation of a network of regional monetary reserve funds, similar to the way in which the European Central Bank serves Europe. A network of this nature would help fortify the larger international financial structure. The UN's Chief Executives Board is best positioned to serve as the primary mechanism of centralized coordination.

Sharpening the UN's Edge in Economic Analysis

Perhaps the lynchpin that could facilitate the achievement of these objectives lies in further strengthening the UN's ability to undertake first-class research, collect information, give advice, and coordinate action in addressing issues produced by the financial and economic crisis. Contrary to the claims of many, the UN holds a distinct comparative advantage in economic analysis and data collection. The organization could mobilize for the purpose of proposing solutions swiftly, and strategizing their implementation across variously organized economic arrangements.

A New Economic and Social Council?

The issue of greatest disagreement was whether the UN should create strong social and economic council entirely separate and distinct from ECOSOC. The world desperately needs an authoritative forum for effective economic and financial coordination, and a new council could fill that void. Such a council would convene often at the ministerial level and would include IMF and World Bank participation. The spats over even the location of the discussion convened by the President of the General Assembly on the world's financial architecture reflected the need for such a mechanism. A priority agenda for this council would be outlining an accountability mechanism for all international financial transactions, which would be designed to ensure coherence and coordination between the different forums and organizations. An international system with strong regional institutions is a robust one and the new council should have adequate links to or representation from the regions. While the body might have the virtue of greater representation, decisions may prove difficult amongst a large group. Any new council stands a chance of falling victim to lobbying which would undermine its very purpose. Clearly, designing a new council would be time consuming and fraught.

Annex 2:

Summary of

“Shifting Geopolitics of Power in the World”

March 4, 2009

Presenters:

Mathew Burrows

Principal Author of the US National Intelligence Council’s Global Trends 2025

Alvaro de Soto

Senior Fellow, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies,
Former UN Under-Secretary-General

Setting the Stage

Major changes have recently taken place in the relative power and influence of key players in the international community of states. But to what extent are these trends reflected in the structures and the functioning of the multilateral system? How long can arrangements devised at the end of World War II, as prominently reflected in the Security Council, continue to enjoy legitimacy in their present form? Can a better institutional framework be found that will better meet the needs of a world so fundamentally changed? Taking stock of current world politics and interrogating related issues, a number of geopolitical trends were identified during the discussion, and ideas for ways in which the United Nations might successfully reposition itself to meet political reality were also advanced.

Waning American Power

As more countries continue to grow, the foundational pillars currently supporting the system—largely reflecting American power—will become increasingly anachronistic. US military power will remain preponderant but of limited use in securing American interests; the dollar will likely not continue to serve as the exclusive reserve currency. Matters will be further complicated as traditional European partners of the United States become more domestically focused in order to meet the challenges of supporting their aging populations and integrating larger flows of immigrants.

The Rise of Schizophrenic States

Meanwhile, as the unprecedented balance of power shifts from West to East continues, rising powers will take on a dual identity. As they become increasingly rich, economic growth—combined with a boom in population growth—will place pressure on increasingly scarce resources and force them to focus on domestic issues. Emerging powers will take their seats at the international high-table of politics but may not be able to shoulder the attendant burdens that accompany economic privilege. This phenomenon could produce instability in rising powers, as well as the international system more broadly.

Funhouse Mirror Multilateralism

Compounding matters further, current trends in world politics are often distorted in international multilateral institutions. It is increasingly clear that the major challenges facing the world are interconnected, but the UN is more disjointed and institutionally segmented than ever. There exists no better example of the distorted reflection of international power embodied by the United Nations than the Security Council's Permanent Five. While the power dynamics of international politics are changing, the Council so far has not.

Reforming the World Order

If the United Nations is to represent more than the sum of its parts internationally, decisive action should be taken to improve the system's response to simultaneous, multiple crises. Often major disasters result in drastic institutional change. Is it time to call for a conference of states as was the case after major wars in Europe? The world is also in need of a new or revived ideology for international cooperation with multilateralism as a key value. Yet, despite almost universal acknowledgment that the multilateral universe, with the Security Council at its center, demands reform, efforts to effect change fail miserably time and again. Indeed, charting the web of state antagonisms that frustrate attempts at reform has become a parlor game of sorts among diplomats. Would an expanded Security Council reflect a more orderly world, or would decision making there simply become all the more unwieldy?

Independent UN Secretary-General and Collegial Secretariat

Procedures for choosing Secretaries-General could use an overhaul. The Secretary-General is the symbolic leader of the world. Yet the selection process guarantees dependence on powerful state interests. Nothing short of the UN system's health is at stake on this count, as the role of the Secretary-General as an honest broker of world politics is under threat. In addition, the world body needs to foster a healthier institutional culture. Greater collegiality and willingness to cooperate would greatly enhance the integration of action across agencies, something which is largely absent from today's arrangement.

Independent UN Capacity for Analysis

The UN has a mixed record in drawing lessons from mistakes made and best practices. Establishing an independent research and analysis unit on interconnected issues within the UN is in order. An independent body might issue regular reports, advise the Secretary-General and his staff, frame public debates and increase political pressure on domestic decision-makers to counter narrow national interests. An independent unit might also serve to bring together the various segments of the United Nations and mobilize them more effectively in common purpose. Knowledge is power: world-class analytical help close to the Secretary-General might increase his or her leadership and credibility to tackle the most difficult, interlinked global issues of the future. At the same time, recent history suggests that any intelligence is highly susceptible to manipulation and faulty interpretation. What would prevent the Secretary-General's independent analysis unit from falling into similar traps? Should this unit be inside or outside the UN? While difficult questions, some thought that the staff could and should be recruited without political interference.

Regional Responsibilities and a Broader International Architecture

Regional organizations complement the United Nations. Since the end of the Cold War, the world organization has increasingly relied on regional groups that may be better positioned to address certain challenges. However, there are issues and problems that cannot be addressed at the regional level. And some issues are not dealt with equally effectively by all regional organizations. The effectiveness of regional groups depends almost entirely on the shape of regional architecture, as well as sensitivity to what issues are best suited to regional remediation. One size does not fit all. We also require a division of labor between UN organs and organizations, clubs of states, regional bodies, and a recharged relationship between the Bretton Woods institutions and ECOSOC. Whether the former should be brought back under the shelter of the latter's umbrella of influence should be considered in any new architecture of global governance.

Annex 3:

Summary of

“Inter-related Challenges of Climate Change, Food and Water Security, Energy, and Changing Financial and Economic Policies”

March 25, 2009

Presenters:

Adnan Amin

Director, UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB),

Former UNEP Director

Jim Harkness

President, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

Setting the Stage

To avoid “runaway” climate change which puts humankind on the verge of an irreversible destabilization of global ecosystems, a broader reorientation of production and consumption patterns and of economic activity as a whole around the globe is needed. This, however, cannot come about solely through negotiations among environment ministers. Bold decisions and swift actions encompassing environmental, economic, financial, food, and energy policies are necessary. The December 2009 climate change negotiations under the UNFCCC could yield a global deal for the post-2012 period. Even if such a deal is reached in a timely manner, there is increasing scientific evidence from the IPCC and other bodies that current emission targets under negotiation are insufficient. Are countries therefore advised to adapt to the effects of climate change already now, and if so, how? Conversely, what could and should be done outside the negotiations towards the 2009 Copenhagen meeting to change emission patterns? Would it be feasible, at what cost, to create new comprehensive policies within the next few years? How will such strategies be affected by the global economic downturn? The links were obvious between the issues of climate change, food and water security, energy, and changing economic policies. Operating from this consensus, the seminar discussed the role of the UN before, during, and after the Copenhagen gathering.

Disappointing Reactions to Climate Change

While the December 2007 conference in Bali made some progress by articulating a “roadmap” to Copenhagen, it was unfortunately riddled with fundamental problems. Scientific evidence is changing by the day and very little has been achieved in implementing the Kyoto Protocol. One of the major issues continuing to plague efforts to combat climate change is a failure of conception. The problem is popularly cast as a local one, but there are many interrelated political and economic dimensions as well. There is also a strong conviction that equity has to be better taken into account. By drawing on its comparative advantage in legitimacy, comprehensive analysis and data collection, the UN Secretary-General and the UN system should examine these interrelated challenges closely, and articulate policy frameworks acceptable to all in advance of and during the Copenhagen conference. The arrival of the Barack Obama administration offered hope for productive discussions in preparations for Copenhagen.

Crisis in Agriculture

Current industrial-type agriculture, based on high-yield production focusing on maximizing output, is unsustainable in the long run as it ignores issues such as water shortages, overuse of pesticides, genetic engineering, monoculture, and the destruction of rural societies. Focus has so far centered on narrow thinking in the global economy and getting rid of sources of “friction” such as regulation and sovereign oversight of resources. But as challenges and solutions are interrelated the multifunctional nature of the international food and agricultural infrastructure gives us the opportunity to tackle numerous problems simultaneously.

Reassert Multilateral Primacy

The role of states and multilateral institutions should be increasing, not retreating. In order to correct this trend, the United Nations should be promoting itself as *the* forum for multilateral negotiations and state decision making on the issues of the environment, food security and clean water. The Secretary-General has made climate change a matter of priority in his public appearances, but environmental threats have not yet become central to agencies within the UN system. Indeed, outside organizations currently compete and try to outperform the world body on climate change issues. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) should be the prime movers behind designing and financing adaptation programs and do more research on critical issues.

Economic Market Fundamentalism Still in Charge

There is an ideological crisis in multilateral dealings with interrelated issues of climate, food, water, energy, and economy. Up until recently, states were seen to be barriers to progress but at the deeper level, the market fundamentalism that drove that thinking itself has proved wrong and unsustainable. But all fundamentalisms die hard. Climate change is still seen as a market externality by many in the West. The Club of Rome’s 1972 report *Limits to Growth* should be revisited as its line of thinking is very different from standard economics. Its systems analysis focus is a productive corrective to the reductive, narrowly-focused analysis that is still driving economic problem-solving.

Copenhagen’s Critical Issues

Copenhagen’s most formidable challenges consist of developing a common vision for long-term action. State leaders must develop a universal architecture to guide future decision making in answer to the current crop of problems, as well as related ones which will surely develop in the future. The Adaptation Fund, which was created to help finance and support developing countries meet their obligations within the Kyoto Protocol framework, is grossly under-funded. Progress by developing countries necessitates greater resources. Many experts now suggest that the world has roughly a decade in which to act radically on the environment. Yet ten years seems like too little time to properly institutionalize, for instance, a meaningful cap-and-trade framework.

Looking Ahead to Copenhagen

If agreement is to be reached, the United States must assert leadership *and* accept compromise. A deal will be reached at Copenhagen, no matter how poorly patched together. But if a weak agreement is finalized, it will represent a singular, collective failure of multilateral negotiations, to the peril of all.

Continuing Challenges

One of the outstanding problems in need of redress concerns funding. In the corridors of the United Nations, there is increasing awareness that environmental problems—related to interlinked issues of climate, food, water, energy and finance—are quickly mounting. While the need for coordinated action is great, ECOSOC is weak and ineffective. Does the CEB have potential? When the UN does succeed in coordinating an issue, funding remains in short supply. Donors should realize that they cannot continue making demands on a system in which they refuse to invest, nor engage in funding certain projects but not others. Lack of financing, and issue-area cherry picking undermine the UN's organization coherence, and contribute to its fragmentation and demise.

Annex 4:

Summary of

“Food and Water Security and Increasing Potential for Conflicts over Resources”

April 22, 2009

Presenter:

Michael Klare

Five College Professor of Peace and World Security Studies, and
Director of the Five College Program in Peace and World Security Studies

Adil Najam

Frederick S. Pardee Professor of Global Public Policy, Director of the
Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future, Boston University

Setting the Stage

With the decline of oil and food prices, addressing patterns of global food production seems to have lost some of its urgency for the industrialized world. Nevertheless, the largest part of the world population will continue to see its access to food and water heavily and negatively influenced by changes in climate, human food consumption, and agricultural production. Even more, scarcity of water and food may directly lead to increasing potential for conflicts, and threats to domestic populations and international order. A major roadblock for addressing these concerns is the misconception of leaders and populations about the connections between food and water security and potential conflict. Strategies that the United Nations could employ to reorient the way it conceives these issues emerged during the discussion.

Rising Levels of Conflict

Although the World Bank argues that the price of food will continue to drop, conditions that produced 2008 food riots are likely to recur. Rapidly declining yields from existing oil fields will reduce supply in the near future forcing prices to rise. The current economic crisis has led oil companies to withdraw from planned investments in new energy projects. World demand is peaking in particular in emerging economies and a transition to bio fuels will eat away available land for farming. Finally, global warming and recurrence of severe drought in parts of the world will force decline in the production of wheat and cereals.

Third World Planet

A “country report” on planet earth makes clear that the globe is a deprived third world country when taken as a whole: poor, extremely divided, environmentally degraded, insecure, and poorly governed. Poor people pay more money in real terms than the rich for commodities and other necessities for survival, in their time and health, and are disproportionately affected by the effects of resource conflicts. But increasingly the rich cannot insulate themselves from the problems of the poor as meaningful solutions have become interconnected.

Thinking Big

A silver lining may be found in the gathering clouds if the United Nations is able to move beyond traditional responses to emerging threats and state discomfort with vigorous action. The sheer complexity and seriousness of the current menu of challenges may have convinced key actors that the time has arrived to go beyond conventional wisdom and leave their comfort zones. The United Nations could lead the charge if it redefines the terms of international debate, and emerges as an informed, legitimate and entrepreneurial force on these issues. For instance, climate change has been largely cast as an energy issue but should be also refined as a water issue; and food security, cast as a market issue, in turn should be recast as a governance issue.

Redefining the Terms of the Debate

Current discussions about international security operate on outdated notions. Security is still too often discussed in terms of state security, with the threat of interstate conflict looming in the background. And yet, this intellectual framework papers over the essential question of insecurity. The United Nations, and particularly the Secretary-General, could play an important role in recasting the idea of security in ways most appropriate to the multiple and interconnected threats that we will likely face as rising energy costs, adverse climate change effects and economic crisis deepen.

Perception of Existential Threats

When societies are faced with what are perceived as life-threatening catastrophes—such as terrorism after 11 September—their governments act quickly to protect their populations with little consideration as to the costs. Climate change is clearly not yet perceived as an existential threat by populations and their governments in the industrialized Global North or in the Global South. The UN could usefully engage in ideational entrepreneurship on the issue, recasting climate change and its attendant challenges as direct threats to international security. Al Gore successfully brought the problem of global warming to a wide audience. Since then, climate change has seemingly been supplanted in the popular imagination by other crises and issues. Given its relative advantages as a universally representative international body, the UN could effectively take action, and construct ideas and concepts of international security taking into account the legitimate interests of vulnerable populations.

Institutionalizing Independent Analysis

In order to exercise authority in the construction of updated notions of international security, it will have to draw on reserves of expert analyses. Among the possibilities for institutionalizing research and analysis within the UN, an independent analysis unit could serve as a useful counterweight to the often short-sighted work of the IMF and World Bank stressing the interconnected nature of today's problems. In addition, it would invest the Secretary-General with a greater degree of legitimacy as an informed advocate on these critically complex security threats.

Annex 5:

Summary of

“The Energy Crisis and Reorganization of Economic and Social Policies”

May 6, 2009

Presenters:

Ian Dunlop

Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, and the Energy Institute (UK), Former Royal Dutch Shell manager

Christopher Flavin

President, Worldwatch Institute

Setting the Stage

If the energy demands of the expanding middle class of China, India, and other emerging markets continue to grow as expected, the nonrenewable energy supplies of the globe will be insufficient to meet the demands within a relatively short period of time. The slowdown in the world economy has delayed this prospect, but the requirement to reorient global energy politics is looming. How will the world and its major and minor powers adjust? How will this adjustment process affect the environmental, economic and social conditions and policies in the regions? The problems of peak oil supplies and harnessing the potential of renewable energy resources as well as productive roles for the United Nations emerged as key issues as the world draws closer to Copenhagen in December 2009.

World Hit by Many Crises

The energy crisis and reorganization of economic and social policies are likely among the most important issues that humanity will confront with over the coming decades. “Crisis” seems to be the flavor of the month in recent international affairs: first, the climate crisis, then the oil crisis, and finally the financial crisis. But what singles out the current moment seems to be a convergence of these various challenges, an unprecedented phenomenon. Scenarios proposed by the Club of Rome forty years ago are coming to pass. The world is reaching its limits with conventional notions of growth no longer sustainable.

Another Looming Oil Crisis

The fact that we have reached the point of peak oil is increasingly recognized by scientists and the oil industry. Production levels have not increased since 2005, and oil supplies will probably drop off markedly by 2030. Plans for alternative energy are urgent as a switch will take at least a decade to implement. A switch to coal would be environmentally devastating in spite of industry advertising to the contrary. All of this demonstrates the interconnectedness of global challenges and the inadvisability of keeping them in silos. A quantum shift in thinking is needed.

Renewable Energy Offers Hope

The world could change to more energy efficient systems and also rely more on renewable energy. Such a shift will reduce costs and increase efficiency by at least two thirds through such services as solar and wind. These resources are provided in abundance on the planet and technology is very rapidly progressing. Oil

has in fact been a “resource curse” to many countries and international stability in general. Renewable resources are more widely distributed and developing countries tend to be better positioned for a world dependent on renewable energy than the highly industrial countries of the North.

Getting Out the “Global Emergency” Message

In order to meaningfully combat the widening menu of challenges facing the world, political leaders should recognize that these problems obviously are bigger than any single state and its capabilities. Productive conversations moving forward will take place only if states understand that they will have to abdicate certain dimensions of their sovereignty for the common good and their own. The UN could play a critical role in this regard by initiating an honest discussion among states and their own outlining the sheer size of the problem currently confronting us, as well as by emphasizing the message of emergency to the world’s actors. Ban Ki-moon has begun to do so, but the effort should be markedly enhanced.

Advancing New Ideas

As countries begin to work together on issues of energy and the environment, a framework outlining effective steps is necessary. Developing countries, for example, need to be convinced that the development path ahead cannot be the same as that taken by developed countries. At the same time, they will need assistance in formulating alternative roads to economic development and security. The UN could play a critical role in this regard as well as in responsibly managing technology transfers allowing developing countries to leapfrog ahead.

Managing Technology Transfers

The UN is well-positioned to help responsibly manage the transfer of new technologies to developing countries. Efforts are already underway in partnership with the recently formed International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and they should continue to support the body’s activities. The new agency will help substantially in developing new technologies, disseminating them widely, coordinating assistance to developing nations, and outlining best practices as countries transition to renewable energy sources.

Developing a “Marshall Plan” for the Environment

The world has reached a moment that will ultimately usher in transformative change and is faced with the opportunity—but only an opportunity if quickly acted upon—to harness its resources for the purpose of initiating and controlling the changes that are soon to come. A “Marshall Plan,” if properly decentralized, designed to tackle the interconnected problems of climate change and energy could spark the sort of domestic projects—such as new transportation networks and building designs—needed to meet the challenges of climate change. Any such plan would need a component agreement at the international level to make sure that domestic changes occur quickly and evenly among all states.

Developing a “Copenhagen Protocol”

An international agreement could indeed emerge at December’s Copenhagen gathering. A “Copenhagen Protocol” designed to structure genuine change in the face of world crisis, should contain such essential features as carbon emissions limits, built-in national policy commitments, significant financial assistance for technological development, and language that can be usefully mobilized to build social sentiment for change.

Annex 6: List of Participants

The following persons attended one or more sessions. Current affiliations are given for identification purposes only.

Adnan Amin (presenter, session 3), *UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination*

Sami Areikat, *UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs*

Adiyatwidi Adiwoso Asmady, *Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the UN*

Oktay Ay, *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*

Mathew Burrows (presenter, session 2), *US National Intelligence Council*

Michael K. Busch (rapporteur), *Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies*

Eva Busza, *UN Executive Office of the Secretary-General*

Anne Carlsen, *UN Development Programme*

Christopher Coleman, *UN Department of Political Affairs, Policy Planning and Mediation Support Unit*

Francisco del Campo, *Permanent Mission of Chile to the UN*

Amitabh Desai, *The William J. Clinton Foundation*

Alvaro de Soto (presenter, session 2), *Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies*

Omar Dia, *UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*

Ian Dunlop (presenter, session 5), *Australian Coalition for Peak Oil*

Mohamed Edrees, *Permanent Mission of Egypt to the UN*

Christopher Flavin (presenter, session 5), *Worldwatch Institute*

James K. Galbraith (presenter, session 1), *University of Texas*

Eduardo Gálvez, *Permanent Mission of Chile to the UN*

Harris Gleckman, *Benchmark Environmental Consulting*

Kartika Handaruningrum, *Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the UN*

Jim Harkness (presenter, session 3), *Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy*

Eric Heeze, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*

Warren Hoge, *International Peace Institute*

Martin Hoppe, *Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN*

Benito Jimenez, *Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN*

Tapio Kanninen (moderator), *Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies*

Olav Kjørven, *UN Development Programme, Bureau for Development Policy*

Michael Klare (presenter, session 4), *Hampshire College*

Li Kok, *Permanent Mission of Singapore to the UN*

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Roy Lee, *Columbia University*

Volker Lehmann, *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*

Yuyin Liu, *Permanent Mission of China to the UN*

Diego Malpede, *Office of the President of the General Assembly*

Modest Mero, *Permanent Mission of Tanzania to the UN*

Adil Najam (presenter, session 4), *Boston University*
Marty Natalegawa, *Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the UN*
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Rachid Ouali, *Office of the President of the General Assembly*
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Marina Ploutakhina, *Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team*
Werner Puschra, (moderator), *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*
Insa Reimers, *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*
Zazie Schafer, *Executive Office of the Secretary-General*
Pedro Serrano, *European Union Council Secretariat's Liaison Office to the UN*
Anwar Shaikh, *New School University*
Sofia Soromenho-Ramos, *International Monetary Fund*
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James Sutterlin, *Yale University*
Jorge Tagle, *Permanent Mission of Chile to the UN*
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Thomas G. Weiss (moderator), *Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies*
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Peng Wu, *Permanent Mission of China to the UN*
Ye-Min Wu, *Permanent Mission of Singapore to the UN*
Suhayfa Zia, *Permanent Mission of South Africa to the UN*

Notes

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Tapio Kanninen is Senior Research Fellow at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies. A long-time UN staff member, he was Chief of Policy Planning Unit in the Department of Political Affairs (1998–2005) and Head of the Secretariat of Kofi Annan's five summits with regional organizations. He has worked on several UN reforms: as secretary and research focal point of the high-level drafting group of Boutros-Boutros Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace* and convener of the interdepartmental task force to implement its recommendations; secretary of General Assembly Working Groups on *An Agenda for Peace* (1992–1994); of Strengthening of the UN System (1995); and of Security Council reform (1994–1999). His Ph.D. dissertation, an insider's view of Pérez de Cuéllar's efforts at comprehensive UN reform, was published as *Leadership and Reform* (1995). He has also worked on conflict prevention, democracy, rule of law, recruitment planning, and environmental statistics at the UN and in Finland's Statistical Agency and Academy of Science.

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