

Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan
United Nations
New York

Re. Nordic views on the report of the High-level Panel and of the UN Millennium Project

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

We, the Nordic Ministers for Foreign Affairs and for Development Cooperation, are strong supporters of multilateral cooperation, and our countries have been firmly behind the United Nations since its establishment in 1945. With this letter, we wish to support your ambition to reform the UN in order to strengthen our collective capacity to counter the multifaceted security situation of today. We agree that the UN Summit this September will be an event of critical importance. It will provide us with a unique opportunity to take decisive steps towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, including the MDGs, and at the same time to ensure a safer and more secure world. It will represent an opportunity - which should not be missed - to modernize and adapt the United Nations to the challenges of the new century. Let us assure you that the Nordic countries will play an active and constructive role in supporting the necessary reform efforts aimed at strengthening the UN. Our goals are to further consensus and reach concrete results in cooperation with the UN system and all member states.

The Nordic countries have considered the reports from the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change as well as from the UN Millennium Project. Following your request for comments and views in preparing for your report to the 2005 Summit, we would like to highlight some of the issues and concerns which we would like to see addressed. Thus, we suggest that the following issues be given special attention in your upcoming report:

1) Use of force

We agree with the High-level Panel that the Security Council is fully empowered under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to address the full range of security threats with which States are concerned. On the right to self-defense, we support the recommendation that article 51 of the Charter should be neither rewritten nor reinterpreted.

2) Responsibility to protect

We fully align ourselves with the strong statement made in the HLP-report regarding the international responsibility to protect individuals in the event of genocide or other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Sovereign governments always have the primary responsibility to protect their own citizens, but when they are unable or unwilling to do so, the responsibility rests with the wider international community, in accordance with the Charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Security Council has the responsibility to act with authority, efficiency, and without hesitance in the event of genocide and other large-scale killings, ethnic cleansing or serious violations of international humanitarian law. We emphasize that the responsibility to protect must be coupled with a responsibility to prevent. We need to build greater consensus around the need for collective action and early diplomatic response, which can prevent the need for military intervention.

3) Terrorism

The fight against terrorism requires collective action. We welcome your decision to prepare a comprehensive anti-terrorism strategy for the United Nations and look forward to your

presentation in Madrid next month. The specific factors behind various terrorist groups and conditions promoting extreme ideologies and violent methods must be studied and addressed appropriately. The international community needs to join forces to combat terrorism in all its forms. We must find ways to take decisive action while upholding the respect for human rights and the rule of law. We are very pleased that the High-level Panel was able to reach consensus on elements of a definition of terrorism. We hope that the process might now lead to the completion and adoption of the comprehensive convention.

4) Weapons of mass destruction

Our overall assessment of the HLP-report's recommendations on disarmament and non-proliferation is positive. While supporting the report's recommendations related to disarmament and non-proliferation, we also wish to emphasize the crucial role of effective verification and compliance mechanisms, on disarmament commitments, and on the need for measures to avoid accidental nuclear war. We are pleased with the clear message in the HLP-report about the need to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We agree that new negotiations should be initiated under the BTWC to establish a verification protocol and a new bio-security protocol. The HLP-report notes the role of the Security Council resolution 1540. In our view there could be even more emphasis put on the potential of SCR 1540 for the further strengthening of the international non-proliferation efforts.

5) The Rule of Law

There is an emerging consensus among the international community that strengthening the rule of law lies squarely in the nexus between security and development. Not only does the rule of law work towards conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding; it is also an important prerequisite for creating conditions for sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Strengthening the rule of law is therefore another essential factor in efforts to achieve the MDGs.

The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons in many parts of the world is a major contributor to poverty. They fuel conflict, crime and terrorism, and present a major obstacle to sustainable human development. They are among the issues, which must continue to be addressed if we are to achieve the MDGs especially in Africa.

6) Security Council reform

The challenge for any reform of the Security Council is to increase both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of the Council and to enhance its capacity and willingness to act in the face of threats. We are in favour of a more fair representation of all continents on the Council. We support the principles for reform as suggested by the HLP, including that involvement in decision-making of those members that contribute most to the UN financially, militarily and diplomatically should be increased. We have some concerns that the new regional classification proposed by the Panel may run counter to these objectives and reduce small countries' participation in the Council's deliberations. We support the basic premises that Security Council reform should not include expansion of the veto, and that processes to improve transparency and accountability in the Security Council be integrated and formalized in the rules of procedure. Finally, we consider that a decision on Security Council reform should be made this year, and that the process should not be allowed to block reform progress in other important areas of UN-activities.

7) General Assembly reform

The General Assembly is the world's main global forum for policy debate. To ensure its legitimacy and relevance, the Assembly's efficiency and effectiveness must continuously be reviewed by the member states. Repetitive resolutions, and resolutions that bring no added value should be removed from the Assembly's agenda. Instead, current issues of importance should be discussed, leading to operational decisions.

8) ECOSOC reform

ECOSOC needs to be more relevant. It could become an arena for monitoring progress in the achievement of the MDGs. Its role in operational coordination and in promoting dialogue and partnerships could be strengthened, and its agenda and work program rationalized. We also believe that its mandate includes the development aspects of security and thus, linkages should be established to the Peacebuilding Commission.

9) Peacebuilding Commission

We need to strengthen the UN's capacity to build lasting peace in war-torn societies, and we therefore support the proposal to establish a Peacebuilding Commission. Supporting states in fragile post-conflict situations is a decisive factor in preventing the resurgence of conflict and in paving the way for sustainable development. Clearly, there is a UN-system gap between peace-building activities and long-term development activities. A post-conflict transition phase needs to be carefully planned and coordinated between UN peace-keeping, humanitarian and UN development entities. Therefore, the mandate, function, organization and composition of the Peacebuilding Commission need to be defined with care. The membership needs to reflect the involved actors, i.a. troop contributors, major donors, the Bretton Woods Institutions, and the affected country. A corresponding strengthening of the Secretariat needs to take place.

Sufficient financing for peacebuilding activities needs to be ensured. We support increased use of assessed contributions for the civilian components of a peacebuilding mission, the disarmament and demobilization, as well as for early activities in the areas of rehabilitation and reintegration.

10) Human rights

The linkages between human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security have become increasingly clear and widely accepted. We support the idea of further mainstreaming human rights into the work of the Security Council, including the more active and frequent involvement of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Security Council deliberations. Nevertheless, concrete efforts at mainstreaming human rights throughout the UN system are often challenged. To support the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner, all parts of the United Nations system should be mandated to concretely implement relevant human rights related decisions.

There is a clear contradiction between a regular budget allocation of 2 percent for the OHCHR and the obligation under the UN Charter to make the promotion and protection of human rights one of the principal objectives of the Organization. Therefore, we would be encouraged if the Summit could result in a commitment to raise the level to 5 percent of the regular budget within a given deadline.

We also agree that there is a clear need for reform of the UN human rights bodies, and welcome the fact that the Panel made concrete proposals to this effect. Universalising the membership of the CHR or establishing a new human rights body, could well improve the credibility and legitimacy of UN's human rights work, and we welcome a through discussion on

these proposals. The High-level Panel suggestion to upgrade the Commission on Human Rights to a Human Rights Council should be discussed in the longer term.

11) MDG-based national poverty reduction strategies

We support the three main recommendations in the Millennium Project Report to concentrate the increased efforts to meet the MDGs within the framework of MDG-based poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs). We would, however, like to stress that MDG-based PRSPs must not create new planning exercises. Rather, existing PRSP processes should be adjusted to incorporate the MDGs. National authorities need to “own” the development process, and PRSPs must be created and implemented through broad-based national participatory processes. In some countries, this may require a somewhat longer timeframe than the end of 2006 as suggested in the report.

12) Mobilizing necessary resources, including increased ODA

We agree with the basic premise in the Millennium Project Report that further joint efforts to meet the MDGs must be based on the Monterrey consensus, and that simultaneous efforts in all relevant fields are required. Financial resources must be mobilized through a variety of means: domestic resource mobilization in developing countries will be key, and mobilization of private resources should be encouraged. Furthermore, we believe that a stronger emphasis on good governance, anti-corruption, and proactive furthering of education, human rights and democratization processes as important elements of an environment conducive to development.

We consider that a timely finalization of the Doha trade round would contribute significantly to increasing the resources available in developing countries to combat poverty. We particularly welcome the Millennium Project report’s emphasis on complementarity between improving market access and addressing supply side constraints, and we look forward to a more detailed discussion on the recommendations. We believe the integration of trade in national poverty reduction and development strategies requires attention in this discussion.

Nevertheless, the MDGs will not be met in the poorest countries – particularly in Africa – in the absence of increased ODA. The best option for securing more aid would be for donors to move towards the UN objective of 0.7 percent of GNI. It should be noted in this connection that the ODA target as agreed also includes a sub-target for a minimum ODA proportion for the Least Developed countries. We underline that funding by donors should be predictable, timely, adequate and long-term. Also, proposals for effective, timely and well-functioning innovative sources of international resources would be welcome as important supplements to regular sources of development finance.

13) Aid effectiveness

Efforts to increase volumes of aid must move in tandem with efforts to increase aid effectiveness. The changes in aid modalities, increased emphasis on ownership, alignment and harmonization and need for greater policy coherence agreed on within the framework of OECD/DAC at the High-Level forum on Harmonization in Rome in 2003, to be followed by operational and specific mutual commitments by donors and partner countries in Paris in early March, will greatly improve the effectiveness of aid. They need to be fully implemented by 2008. Furthermore, coherence in the application of development related policies is of critical importance. All governments should ensure greater national policy coherence in order to contribute to global sustainable development.

14) Reform of the UN development system

Changes are also required to ensure the continued relevance of the UN in development activities. The UN needs to join forces in broader undertakings, harmonized with other donors and aligned with national programs. The paper on “The United Nations Development System - Issues for Strengthening and Change”, which was presented to you last June by a group of like-minded donors contains ideas and concrete proposals which could usefully be pursued in the preparations for the Summit. In particular, there is a need to establish a more predictable funding system through alternative means of funding such as negotiated contributions. We should strive for binding multi-year pledges. We also need to set a firm time limit for achieving full implementation of UN Country Team reform.

15) Quick-wins

The Millennium Project Report prominently calls for increased efforts to finance and implement a number of “Quick Win” opportunities. While some of the “quick win”-proposals could be implemented immediately, we believe that care should be taken not to promote this approach too vigorously. There are no shortcuts to meeting the MDGs. They require long-term, systemic and predictable efforts. The importance of national ownership for these measures must best stressed.

16) Fast-track countries

We welcome the increasing number of countries that are improving governance and work with dedication to create the necessary enabling environment to meet the MDGs. These countries deserve our support and positive feedback. Identifying a number of MDG “fast track” countries is an interesting option, although it should be pursued with care. We stress that rapid scale-up of ODA will have to be carried out under the leadership of national governments.

For a variety of reasons, other developing countries may not qualify as “fast track”. Many of them will still need the support and attention of the international community and UN. This is particularly true for countries affected by or emerging from armed conflicts.

17) Sexual and reproductive health and rights

We support the strong focus in the Millennium Project Report on the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights in meeting the MDGs. The ICPD Program of Action is key to poverty reduction. Sexual and reproductive health is directly linked to MDG 4, 5 and 6, and the MDGs cannot be attained without progress in achieving the ICPD goal of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all in 2015. For this reason, we support the proposal in the report of the Task Force on Child Health and Maternal Health to establish a specific target and accompanying indicators under MDG 5 on universal access to sexual and reproductive health services by 2015 through a strengthened primary health care system. With regard to MDG 6 it should be emphasized that sexual and reproductive health and rights are essential components of HIV/AIDS prevention.

18) Cross-cutting issues - gender mainstreaming, environment and sustainable development.

Some key crosscutting issues need to be clearly spelled out both as essential ends in themselves and as fundamental premises for meeting the MDGs and strengthening our collective security. One of these is gender equality. The equal rights of women and girls compared to men and boys must be ensured, as must their equal access to economic and political opportunities, right to control assets, freedom from violence and implementation of efforts to meet the MDGs.

With regard to environment, this cannot only be seen as linked to MDG 7. Rather, it needs to be brought out clearly that environmental sustainability is just as important as economic and social sustainability in any effort to achieve the MDGs. The Millennium Project Report states that most developing countries are not on track to achieve environmental sustainability and that environmental policy is often neglected. The Johannesburg summit made important decisions and formulated targets and objectives, which could be of use in reversing this negative trend and thus avoiding a serious setback for achieving the MDGs.

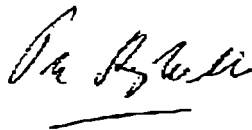
Employment and decent work as part of the social dimension of globalization should also be considered among the development goals.

Finally, development is based on human rights. The rights-based approach means that the notion of empowerment, the ability to participate and the right to voice dissent are crucial to reaching the development goals. This understanding must also underpin the approach we take in reinforcing our efforts to meet the MDGs.

Mr. Secretary-General, as evidenced by our positions set out in the above, we support the comprehensive concept of collective security outlined in the report from the High-level Panel: the threats and challenges of today's world require a collective response. We subscribe to the call in the High-level Panel Report and the Millennium Project Report for a new consensus on collective security and the shared responsibilities of all member states. Our commitment to an equitable and sustainable development rests on our solidarity with the poor, and on our common obligation to contribute to a better future. The UN has to be effective, swift, and unbiased in its efforts to meet the threats and challenges facing us all.

Please be ensured that we stand firmly behind your reform efforts.

Per Stig Møller
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Denmark



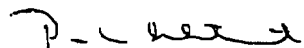
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