

August 2, 2005

Statement by Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, Deputy U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on United Nations Reform, August 2, 2005

Mr. President:

The United States appreciates this opportunity to present its views on the progress of the preparations for the High Level Event scheduled for September 14-16 of this year. In particular, we welcome the opportunity to comment on the status of the draft outcome document that you and your dedicated staff have drafted in consultation with member states and with the facilitators.

As we have said, the United States is committed to a package of sweeping reforms that will change the face of the United Nations -- reforms that include new human rights and peacebuilding machinery, a Peacebuilding Commission that can make the UN more effective in helping countries emerging from conflict, and improved UN management practices that bring a level of transparency and accountability that has previously been lacking. We seek a strong declaration on terrorism that will contribute to the timely adoption of a comprehensive convention, and a development agenda that makes the UN an instrument to help countries make and implement the right choices about how to govern themselves and use aid effectively. These are issues of paramount importance to the current Administration, the U.S. Congress, and the American people.

We are at a critical juncture in the reform debate. While we have worked extensively with you Mr. President, your facilitators, and your staff, we do not believe that the outcome document as currently drafted adequately addresses these priorities. At the outset, we note, as we have in many meetings over the past weeks, that the document is too long and not worded in a manner that heads of state normally agree to or endorse. The development section is over 15 pages long. It does not adequately reflect the necessary partnership between the developing world, which must put into place the institutions that allow it to use aid effectively, and the developed world, which must work the developing world to arrive at new and creative measures-based upon democracy and free markets- that will ensure the best use of development assistance.

We find similar fault with the section on security- it focuses far too much on disarmament rather than nonproliferation; it is also too long. Even the management reform section of the document, which contains many ideas welcomed by the U.S., is not well organized.

The U.S. believes that in order to have a successful event in September, and in order to say that there are good prospects for reform of the UN, the following elements are necessary:

(1) A smaller, more effective Human Rights Council, elected by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly with due consideration of any potential Council member's commitment to human rights. The legitimacy of such a council depends upon more credible membership than exists with the current Commission on Human Rights. There should be clear, objective criteria for membership. For example, countries under UN sanctions should not be considered for membership. A peer review mechanism must include elected members within a year of election and must focus on the most acute cases of human rights abuse. We need a mandate, which serves to improve the freedom and human dignity of people on the ground. The Council should have a manageable membership of not more than 30 countries. The Council should be action-oriented, focused on helping countries meet existing international standards and on improving human rights conditions on the ground, especially in situations of serious or persistent human rights abuses. Along with increased regular budget funding for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which will allow for practical action to assist nations to improve human rights, these steps will restore credibility to the UN's human rights machinery and bring the UN closer to its Charter responsibilities.

(2) We need a Peacebuilding Commission that incorporates strong Security Council oversight.

(3) We welcome the management reforms listed in the document, although, as I said, we believe that section could be written with more clarity and direction. We also need a clearer policy on waiver of immunity, and establishment of an Oversight Advisory Committee with a clearer mandate, not least to recommend proper budget levels for Office of the Inspector for Oversight Services, which should remain independent of the bodies it audits. And it is especially important to follow through on the Secretary General's own call that old mandates be regularly reviewed before extension -- with an eye to ending some and funding more important things; if regular review is good enough for peacekeeping missions, it is good enough for all UN mandates.

(4) We call for major rewriting and drastic shortening of the section on Development. It presents a vision of development inconsistent with the blueprint of Monterrey and events subsequent to that landmark conference. As the largest contributor to international development in the world, the US has a responsibility to ensure that the text fully reflects the Monterrey Consensus.

(5) We call for conclusion of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. This would be a significant achievement in the UN's global effort to counter terrorism.

(6) The nonproliferation and disarmament section falls well short of what the US can accept. It does not address the seriousness of the WMD threats facing the international community. Much of the text really goes beyond the mission of the High Level Event. Serious substantive differences remain, in particular on the specific steps identified for action. Among our specific concerns repeatedly raised through this process, we have made it crystal clear that the US will not support language on CTBT entry into force. We believe that the document should limit itself to brief, focused language reflecting the

reality that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the possibility that terrorists may acquire such weapons, remains the gravest threat to international peace and security, and that all member states must enhance their efforts to address this threat.

(7) There are numerous other issues that need serious work, including on the definition of terrorism, language about the International Criminal Court, sanctions, and other provisions that would endorse statements and principles that we, and others, have long resisted in other fora. If there is to be an outcome document, it must be transformed to have the substance and tone of an instrument appropriate for adoption at the level of heads of state and government.

Finally, we call for the G-4, AU, and Uniting for Consensus groups to defer the tabling of Security Council expansion resolutions, to stop pushing for votes, and to focus first on more urgently needed reforms.

The Security Council debate has indeed siphoned extensive resources and attention away from more critical UN reforms.

Mr. President:

We again thank you for your efforts and leadership and for the efforts of your staff. It is now up to us, the member states. Our own lines of communication are open. We want to work with other countries and organizations to ensure that this document reflects real commitment to UN reform. We hope all of you will join us in a true effort to transform this institution into a dynamic, successful, and valuable vehicle of international diplomacy and goodwill.

Thank you.