

THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS: AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

The Evatt Memorial lecture, by Senator the Hon Gareth Evans QC, Minister for Foreign Affairs, United Nations Association of Australia Conference, National Press Club, Canberra, 1 September 1995

Evatt and Australia's vision for the United Nations

This Fiftieth Anniversary year of the founding of the United Nations is a time for us to remember, with a real degree of pride in our achievements, the part Australia played as a founder member in bringing the new organisation into being. We were actively involved with the UN from its very earliest days, in the negotiations of 1944 and 1945 which determined its structure and aims. And there was no Australian who played a more substantial or constructive role in those negotiations than the man after whom this lecture is named, the then Foreign Minister Dr Herbert Vere Evatt.

Dr Evatt's performance at San Francisco was the stuff of which legends are made - especially in his fights for the rights of the smaller powers against the greater in the roles of the General Assembly and the Security Council, and in his faith in the UN as an agent for social and economic reform and as a protector of human rights. He won by no means all his fights: in particular the full veto power of the five Permanent Members of the Security Council was retained against his strong opposition. But his principled stand earned him, and Australia, the widest respect at the 1945 San Francisco Charter Conference. The finest tribute of all was perhaps that paid in New York Times, which said of him that there were two kinds of power, that exercised through crude national muscle and coercive methods and that purveyed by the force of ideas, argument and intellectual effort - and that Herbert Vere Evatt epitomised the latter.

While Australia's primary goal for the United Nations in 1945 was the creation of a system in which disputes could be settled peacefully, in accordance with accepted international legal principles, Evatt argued with great effect that the political activity of the United Nations would not be enough by itself to prevent future conflicts, and that the more fundamental causes of the world's problems would have to be tackled if international peace and stability were to be guaranteed.

Evatt insisted that specific language on cooperation on economic and social issues be included in the Charter. It is largely due to his persistence that UN member states agreed to take "joint and separate action in cooperation with the [UN] organisation" for the achievement of, among other things, "higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development".

It is a cause for pride for all Australians, and a testimony of Dr Evatt's influence, that this undertaking which now forms Article 56, of the Charter, became known at San Francisco as "the Australian pledge". There is no doubt that the modern UN's massive involvement in economic, social and humanitarian issues can be traced back to the influence of Dr Evatt and his Australian colleagues of fifty years ago.

In addressing the 49th UN General Assembly last year, I set out the Australian Government's view of what we wanted from the UN in its next fifty years. At least so far as basic concepts and principles are concerned, in thinking about those future directions I don't think we need to look much further than where we started, with Dr Evatt's contribution. The challenge is essentially to reintegrate the functions of the United Nations in the way the founders intended: to avoid the Cold War compartmentalisation of peace and security issues, development issues, and human rights and justice issues in completely different conceptual and institutional boxes. Any viable modern concept of international peace, let alone peace within states, must recognise that "peace and security" and "development" are indissolubly bound up with each other: there can be no sustainable peace without development, and no development without peace. And human rights, in the fullest sense, not just economic and social rights but civil and political rights as well, have to come into the equation too: there is unlikely to be sustainable peace in any society if material needs are satisfied, but needs for dignity and liberty are not.

In this Fiftieth Anniversary year, the need has never been greater for the international community to devote all its intellectual resources and creativity to solve the problems facing the UN and to fitting it for the challenges of the next fifty years. I want today to talk about those problems - the key issues facing the UN in discharging its basic functions - and about possible approaches the international community might take.

The peace agenda

There is a central, unifying concept for international efforts to maintain peace and security, both in the UN and outside it, which I believe is best expressed in the term cooperative security. This embraces three separate, but all reasonably familiar, ideas - collective security, common security and comprehensive security - that have framed conceptual debate on this subject for some time. Cooperative security emphasises prevention and applies to the whole range of responses to security concerns, both before and after the threshold of armed conflict has been crossed: at one extreme this would involve long-term programs to tackle economic and social problems which are likely to generate future tensions, and at the other it would include the enforcement of peace by full-scale military means.

This is not the occasion to discuss in great detail the full spectrum of possible or desirable responses. I want instead to focus on just some matters which either are, or should be, getting particular attention at the present time, as we wrestle with the unhappy reality of a world which is not nearly as peaceful as we hoped it would be after the end of the Cold

War, and one in which nearly all the conflicts that are occurring are within states rather than between them, and fuelled not by traditional political or ideological rivalry so much as ethno-nationalism and religion.

My strongest conviction is that if we are to meet these challenges we are simply going to have to devote more resources to preventive strategies than to reactive strategies. In a world where commitment and resources are always likely to fall short of aspirations - and in which there are always going to be formidable conceptual and practical difficulties facing attempts to intervene in essentially internal conflicts - it just makes more sense to concentrate on prevention than on after-the-event peace restoration. That is true both for intra- and for interstate conflicts: violent conflicts are always far more difficult and costly to resolve than non-violent disputes, and failed states are extremely difficult to put back together again.

Peace building is the most important preventive strategy because it confronts the fundamental underlying causes of disputes and conflicts - to ensure that they don't occur in the first place, or if they do arise, they won't recur. At the international level, peace building centres on building or strengthening international structures or regimes aimed at minimising threats to security, building confidence and trust and operating as forums for dialogue and cooperation. Examples of what I mean here are multilateral arms control and disarmament regimes; treaties governing issues like the Law of the Sea; dispute resolution forums like the International Court of Justice; and multilateral security dialogue and cooperation forums like the ASEAN Regional Forum in the Asia Pacific.

Peace building within states, by contrast, seeks to encourage equitable economic development in order to enhance human rights broadly defined, and to facilitate good governance. These goals are important in their own right, but they also contribute directly to national and international security. Economic development, human rights, good governance and peace are inextricably connected and mutually reinforcing. Policies which enhance economic development and distributive justice, encourage the rule of law, protect fundamental human rights and foster the growth of democratic institutions are also security policies and should be recognised as such.

Preventive strategies must also address actual disputes which may deteriorate into armed conflict if they are not resolved. Hence, peace building must be accompanied by strategies of peace maintenance, the major strand of which is *preventive diplomacy*. This is often thought of in terms of resolving or containing disputes between states. But it applies equally to many situations of internal ethno-nationalist and religious dispute: the Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has already shown, both through its own direct missions, and through the role of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, how this might work in countries such as Albania, Estonia, Latvia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary and Slovakia. Creative political solutions, involving power sharing strategies and the like, can be found for many problems involving disaffected national minorities.

Like peace building, preventive diplomacy tends to be a low profile activity, lacking the obvious media impact of blue helmet peace keeping. It succeeds when things do not happen. Therein lies the political problem with prevention: if it works nobody notices, and it is an iron law of government, national or international, that everyone likes to be seen to be doing something. The notion that something might be inherently worth doing, or worth doing as an insurance premium to avoid a larger payout later, tends to be foreign to the political psyche. We are just going to have to put more effort into getting more people to see the point of that splendid observation attributed to Jean-Marie Lehn, who won the Nobel prize for Chemistry in 1987: "Only those who can see the invisible can do the impossible".

Preventive diplomacy is most successful when it is applied early, well before armed conflict is likely, but it has unfortunately been the case too often in the UN system, that preventive diplomacy efforts have been attempted too late, when escalation is so advanced that a slide into hostilities is almost inevitable. Despite the importance and cost-effectiveness of preventive diplomacy, the UN devotes relatively few resources to it. There are presently only some forty UN officials assigned to tasks immediately relevant to preventive diplomacy, compared with nearly 65,000 UN peace keepers in place at the moment and approximately 30 million armed service personnel world-wide. Some reforms to UN practice have been implemented but far more needs to be done if the UN is to play its rightful role as the pre-eminent cooperative security institution in the post-Cold War era.

The UN must upgrade its capacity to the point where it can offer an effective dispute resolution service to its members, providing low-profile, skilled, third party assistance through good offices, mediation and the like. In my book *Cooperating for Peace*, I proposed that regionally focused UN preventive diplomacy units should be established. Staffed by senior professionals expert in dispute resolution, closely familiar with the areas and issues on which they work, and with the experience and stature to be able to negotiate at the highest levels, preventive diplomacy units could operate not only at UN headquarters, but also in the field, in regional centres. Because preventive diplomacy is so cost-effective, a large increase in the UN's capability could be achieved at minimal cost. The creation of, say, six regional preventive diplomacy centres, of the kind I have described, with a total staff of one hundred and the necessary support funding, would cost little more than US\$20 million a year. By comparison, the UN's peace keeping budget for 1994 was US\$3.5 billion, with the cost of its operation in Mozambique alone being over US\$1 million each day. And the cost of preventive diplomacy fades into almost complete insignificance as compared with that of waging all-out war: the cost to the UN Coalition of waging the Gulf War has been estimated at US\$70 billion!

Regional organisations, too, have a special role in preventive diplomacy. Being close to the conflicts, with obvious interests in their resolution, they are often (although not always) better placed to act than the UN. The role of the OSCE High Commissioner on

National Minorities, which I have mentioned, is one example, and the ASEAN Regional Forum is another. Regional mechanisms for conflict prevention have begun to emerge in Africa and the Middle East. For example, the Association of Southern African States (ASAS) has recently been formed as a part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with a strong conflict prevention objective. And as part of the Middle East Peace Process, a Regional Security Centre in Jordan and two related centres in Qatar and Tunis have been proposed to be established through the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) working group.

While prevention is always better than cure, there must still be some credible international capacity to deal collectively, and if necessary forcefully, with deadly conflicts - and humanitarian crises - that cannot be prevented or resolved by other means. Political constraints on the Security Council's ability to take such action have lessened significantly with the end of the Cold War. But the experience of more frequent and more ambitious UN peace operations has exposed important constraints on the effectiveness of military responses under the UN flag.

There are limitations flowing from the nature of the Security Council mandates for many operations. The last few years have given us all too many examples of politically-influenced mandates - driven above all by the need to be seen to be doing something - which have not been achievable in the field or which have lacked the clarity about goals and time frames which commanders could reasonably expect. We have seen missions undertaken without provision for the necessary resources, and the UN assuming a role in complex situations without sufficient thought given to how Blue Helmeted forces should interact with other international actors, whether these be regional organisations, non-governmental aid bodies or major UN organs or agencies such as the UNHCR. We have seen the problems caused when peace keeping operations, premised on the consent of the parties to the UN's presence and inherently peaceful in character, are mixed with peace enforcement missions, which presume resistance by one or more of the parties and are mandated to apply whatever force is needed to meet the operation's objectives.

The situation in the former Yugoslavia, which has already generated more than 70 Security Council resolutions, is a rich source of illustrations of what not to do - in particular the unwisdom of mounting a peace keeping operation when there is manifestly not a peace to keep, and then seeking to supplement that with a peace enforcement operation in which those on the ground are left without the resource capability to enforce anything.

The last few years have tested the limits of how far the UN's secretariat resources can stretch, and of how much Member States are willing to contribute, in troops and finance, for peace keeping operations. Even with generous arrangements for seconding military staff into UN headquarters - the Australian Defence Force, for example, has seven staff seconded into the Department of Peace Keeping - there are serious limits to the capacity of the UN Secretariat to act as a strategic headquarters handling, as is now the case,

seventeen operations around the world. For the moment, at least, there seems to be a ceiling of around 70-80,000 troops which Member States are prepared collectively to make available to the Secretary-General at any one time, and there is often a considerable lag before these forces can be deployed to the field. Purely financial constraints are making themselves felt, too. The budget for peace operations has risen ten-fold in three years, but we are now seeing that the largest contributor has decided unilaterally to cut its share of that budget, and many developing countries fear that the expansion in payments for such operations will be at the expense of funding for their priority concern of economic and social development.

One of the most evident weaknesses of UN peace operations, whether they be peace keeping or related operations under Chapter VI or peace enforcement operations under Chapter VII, has been the inability to deploy forces quickly when a crisis is emerging. The Security Council approved the immediate deployment of UNTAC in Cambodia in February 1992, but it was not actually deployed until September of that year. Similarly, it took ten long months before the Security Council's decision to enlarge UNPROFOR to protect "safe-havens" in Bosnia was actually put into effect. There has been a flurry of recent proposals and studies to consider how the UN could do better to deploy forces to crises more rapidly, ranging from Dutch Foreign Minister Mierlo's idea of a "UN fire brigade" - a variation on a theme long advanced by Sir Brian Urquhart - to suggestions for enhanced stand-by arrangements put forward by the Secretary-General and the Danish Government.

I have to confess that my own views have moved backward and forward on this issue - I have no choice but to confess, since my inconsistent statements are all on the public record! - but after devoting many hours of discussion to the subject around Europe and in New York and Washington in recent months, and reinforced by the outcome of a major Canadian study currently nearing completion, I now firmly believe that our priority efforts should be devoted to building the UN's headquarters capacity - to enable it to better conceptualise operations, construct their mandates, plan and organise them, and rapidly set them in train. If there can be a really major enhancement of the UN's strategic and operational planning capability, in a way that generates a confidence in that capability now largely lacking, then Member States are likely to be much more willing to earmark and deliver military units for rapid reaction purposes. The idea of a standing volunteer UN force is one that should continue to be quietly explored, but it is not an idea whose time has yet come.

The development agenda

A major debate is currently taking place about the UN's role in economic and social development. A key question is what can be done to improve the multilateral system's ability to plan and implement development programs in a more coordinated and coherent manner, including by finding ways to allow the Bretton Woods institutions and UN bodies to work in closer harmony. From the point of view of aid recipients, it is equally important

to have a greater guarantee of continuing commitment by donor countries to aid and technology transfers to the developing world, a concern made more acute as they observe declining real levels of assistance.

Under the terms of the UN Charter, the Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC, was to share with the General Assembly responsibility for the UN's promotion of international economic and social cooperation. One of ECOSOC's powers was to coordinate the activities of the UN specialised agencies and, as more attention has been paid to the lack of coherence and co-ordination between the efforts of different parts of the UN developmental system, there has been increasing interest in reviving ECOSOC's intended role. Some progress has already been made, including limiting or eliminating duplication of debate and consideration of issues which have been considered fully in the Council's subsidiary bodies, as well as encouraging a greater focus on agreed, system-wide approaches to problems. We hope these changes will be the beginning of more far-reaching progress. The test for a reformed ECOSOC will be its influence on the overall effectiveness of multilateral development programs and donor willingness to support them, and the extent to which it is able to engage the international financial institutions and the major agencies and UN funds and programs in a collaborative relationship.

There are some more far-reaching proposals around for structural change in the economic and social areas. The Carlsson-Ramphal Commission on Global Governance argues for the establishment of an "Economic Security Council", alongside the Security Council and constructed on a similarly selective basis, while the recently released Yale/Ford Foundation Study co-chaired by Moeen Qureshi and Richard Von Weizsacker goes so far as to urge the creation of separate "Economic" and "Social" Councils to, again, sit alongside the Security Council. I frankly think that the energy that has gone into developing these proposals has been misapplied: there is a negligible chance of the developing countries abandoning the existing inclusive character of ECOSOC; the emergence of a new body (and especially two new ones) in this area would, if anything, make more rather than less difficult the task of coordinating, prioritising and reintegrating the UN's functions; and - more positively - there is a reasonable chance of the present reform effort being made within ECOSOC bearing significant fruit.

There is certainly no lack of issues for the agenda of a revitalised and better managed ECOSOC: the alleviation of extreme poverty, stabilisation of population growth, the situation of women and children, and the economic problems of Africa just for a start. Its recent leading role in establishing a Joint and Co-sponsored Program on HIV/AIDS - UNAIDS - which draws together representatives of six co-ordinating agencies and the Member States has been a notable achievement. And last year's Global Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, this year's Summit of Social Development in Copenhagen and - hopefully - this week's Women's Conference in Beijing - have also been important milestones that will shape the UN's future and put more substance into the Charter goals of "social progress and development".

The concept of sustainable development is most important in this regard. Competition over scarce resources is a potential source of instability and conflict in many regions - even between affluent countries, as we observed between Canada and Spain over fisheries earlier this year. Such threats demonstrate how important it is, in security terms, for the UN to strengthen its ability to deal with developmental issues. There is already increasing acceptance of the UN as the forum for negotiating arrangements for rational and cooperative management of scarce resources. The Law of the Sea Convention, which has provided in effect a common language for interaction between states on matters affecting two-thirds of the world's surface, is one example; the recently successfully-concluded negotiation of a Convention on Straddling Fish Stocks is another.

The human rights agenda

Since 1945, the international community has created an impressive-looking array of human rights machinery, including those treaty-based bodies pursuant to the provisions of the six major UN human rights instruments. Two Australians, Professor Philip Alston and Justice Elizabeth Evatt, serve with distinction on two of these bodies, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Human Rights Committee. But in practice this machinery has been something of a cul-de-sac - cut off from the main stream of UN activity, largely neglected by Member States, severely underfunded, understaffed, lacking coordination and simply not able to meet the steadily increasing demands placed upon it. A great deal of effort is going to have to go into refining these arrangements.

The political environment for change is strengthening, particularly following the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993. That meeting affirmed the validity of the basic concepts of the universality of human rights, and the legitimate interest of the international community in violations of human rights wherever they occur. But a major task ahead of the international community is to end the disparity between the proclaimed priorities of the United Nations and its actual allocation of resources for the protection of human rights. What is needed is not so much the further proliferation of treaty bodies, thematic and country rapporteurs, experts and working groups, but giving those that now exist the capacity to do their jobs really effectively.

There are three specific new directions I would particularly like to see the UN take. First, the World Conference on Women must set out the parameters for the UN's role in promoting gender equality. And it is reasonable to expect the UN not only to advocate but also to embody equal status for women, including in high-level positions in all its decision-making bodies. Secondly, the UN must give due attention to the needs and aspirations of the indigenous community by adopting a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to develop more substantial programs to assist the exercise of those rights. And thirdly, in the area of economic, social and cultural rights more generally, a concerted effort is required to ensure that full recognition and emphasis is given to these rights at a national, regional and international level.

We must understand in this context the significance attached by developing states to the right to development and alleviation of poverty. Without the developed world recognising these aspirations as "rights" properly so-called - and many governments remain extremely reluctant to do so - the international community risks increased division between governments of the North and South: certainly it makes it very much harder to argue respect for political and civil rights.

It is worth emphasising the point again about the *interconnectedness* of the different UN agendas I have been discussing. Human rights observance has its own profound significance for peace and security. The most basic of rights - the right to life - is directly dependent on the maintenance of peace. Security in the post-Cold War era has as much to do with human security - the protection of individuals - as it has to do with state security and the defence of national borders. Recent experience underlines the lesson that a state whose government systematically disregards human rights, ignores the rule of law and fails to strive for equitable development and distributive justice, is a state showing clear signs of heading towards breakdown and civil strife.

The UN's human rights monitoring mechanisms and its Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, should be integral part of its capacity to provide early warning of such situations. The advisory services and technical assistance programs of the Centre for Human Rights - which include activities to develop the rule of law, an independent judiciary and a human rights culture emphasising tolerance and non-discrimination - are effective strategies for minimising the risk of breakdown and violence. Also important are measures to develop independent, national human rights machinery - like the Indonesian Human Rights Commission which is increasingly confounding the sceptics by the work it is doing in investigating and drawing attention to actual or alleged human rights abuses, as for example at present in Irian Jaya. These programs must be strengthened and supported in a practical way to ensure the development of domestic infrastructure which supports human rights and national human rights machinery. Our funding of Brian Burdekin's appointment for two years as a Special Adviser to the High Commissioner for Human Rights with a particular brief to work on national institutions is an indication of how seriously we take this aspect of the human rights agenda.

National authorities are, of course, not always willing or able to deal effectively with gross violations of human rights, such as genocide. It is not acceptable that the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing and related crimes should go unpunished. The recent establishment by the Security Council of ad hoc war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda is a welcome demonstration that the international community will pursue such serious crimes. In this context, the Australian Government also strongly supports the establishment of a permanent international criminal court to deal with gross violations of international criminal law, wherever they occur.

A better organised UN

If the UN is to be able to grapple effectively with the demands being made on it, and be seen as a relevant, responsive and equitable organisation, it will need to look to changes in its own structure and methods.

First and foremost is the structure of the **Security Council**. The future success of the whole UN system depends in significant part on the success of current attempts at regenerating the Council by making its structure more representative of 1990s - not 1940s - realities. The Council will continue to be the UN body with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, with all the power and responsibility this entails. To be effective, it must maintain broad international support for its decisions.

But the composition of the Security Council no longer represents the international community. Economic power, in particular, has spread to new parts of the globe, just as the realities of political power have changed dramatically over the last half century. The principle of limited expansion of the Security Council - from its present fifteen to twenty, or a maximum of twenty five - is now generally accepted, but the questions of "who and how many" remain the subject of intensive negotiation. Australia believes there should be new permanent members, including Japan and Germany (who together now pay 23 per cent of the UN budget), but also from the major developing countries. To guarantee the Council's effectiveness and legitimacy there must be adequate representation from all regions - including the Asia Pacific - to ensure adequate airing of regional perspectives on international issues. And a more widely representative Security Council would help break down perceptions that the UN is a world body dominated by First World Powers.

A hard look also needs to be taken at the **UN Secretariat**, with a view to creating a more modern and efficient structure and administrative system. This should include a basic change to the senior decision-making structure of UN Headquarters in New York to ensure that the Secretary-General has an effective chain of command to exercise authority over the whole range of major UN operations, not just in the peace and security area. I have been arguing in this context for the creation of a new working collegiate executive of four Deputy-Secretary-Generals to work with the Secretary General - responsible respectively for Economic and Social Affairs, Peace and Security Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs and Administration and Management. This kind of restructuring is needed to consolidate and coordinate the more than forty separate Departments, agencies, instrumentalities and commissions that currently report directly to the Secretary-General: flat management structures may be fashionable, but I don't think any MBA graduate could bring himself or herself to recommend the UN's existing one!.

There is no use talking about reintegrating the UN, or reshaping its responsibilities, if the resources are not available to meet Member States' demands. It is the responsibility of Member States to rectify the current financial problems, and the perennial cash crisis faced in UN headquarters because of overdue payments. One solution is obvious enough, even if apparently unattainable in practice - all Member States should meet their

obligations to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

If the UN does develop in the directions I have indicated, it may well need a bigger revenue base. The time has come to look at more innovative approaches to raising funds. One possibility I have raised, in the UN General Assembly and elsewhere, is to consider more seriously than hitherto the application of levies on certain kinds of international transactions such as air travel - or foreign exchange movements - which can only take place when a minimum degree of international peace and stability is maintained, to which in turn the UN makes a major contribution. I have no illusions about the political difficulties of implementing these kinds of strategies - not least those generated by those many Member States who are not especially uncomfortable about having a UN struggling to pay its way. But if we want to take the UN seriously, as we must, we have to take its resource problems much more seriously than the international community has so far.

Realism and Optimism

Can the UN ever meet the hopes and aspirations of those of us who want to see it meeting successfully its basic Charter objectives? With 185 Member States, and a tradition of relying largely on consensus decision-making, the UN is sometimes said to be beyond reform. But the UN is not static, and significant changes have been agreed and introduced, both by this Secretary-General and by the collective decision of Member States. And the pace of change is no longer glacial; in fact, some of the significant improvements and innovations of the last few years, such as the establishment of the High Commissioner for Human Rights following the Vienna Conference and planned redundancy packages designed to weed out non-performing staff in the UN Secretariat, as well as some under serious consideration, such as the International Criminal Court, would have seemed impossible less than a decade ago.

I am, however, realistic enough to accept that many of the UN's problems cannot be solved in the short-term. Confidence in the UN tends to wax and wane, and we are at present in a period of relative pessimism - a downturn in confidence following its initial revival in the immediate Post Cold War period. It is not easy to generate enthusiasm for discussion of reform proposals in capitals at a time when, their expectations deflated, many have swung back to excessively negative or dismissive views of what the UN is or could have become.

There are other reasons to doubt whether much significant progress towards a more effective UN can be achieved in this anniversary year. Although rhetorical recognition of the need for reform has become routine, many governments are largely content with the status quo unless and until they see their specific interests threatened. Attacks on the UN's credibility, the waning support of the United States Congress, the Washington Administration's uncertainty about its leadership role in the UN, are all obstacles to creating the will for reform amongst the majority of governments.

That may seem rather gloomy, but it is really only intended to inject some realism into talk about converting the UN into a more effective agent for achieving the main purposes of the Charter. But making possible more effective multilateral action through a reformed and revitalised UN is such an important task that we cannot let the difficulty of achieving everything prevent us from trying to do anything.

And there have been some hopeful developments over the last few months or so. The drafting committee chaired by Australia's Ambassador Richard Butler in New York has agreed on a single negotiating text for the 50th Anniversary Declaration for adoption by the Head of Government Summit in New York in October, which is succinct and points to most of the general areas for reform I have stressed. Furthermore, there is now serious discussion amongst delegations about creating a group to work on synthesising different reform results and developing agreement on broad directions for the UN. We have ourselves begun to discuss the elements for such a forward-looking agenda with others, with the aim of having this endorsed at the 50th session of the General Assembly.

Even if the gains we make in 1995 are unspectacular, we must stick with our broader vision of what the UN should become. As Dr Evatt showed at San Francisco, energy and persistence are formidable qualities when accompanied by a clear sense of where one wants to go. The task at hand is to get some consensus on the UN's agenda, and particularly on what is to be done to make the UN more effective; to get task-priorities broadly identified and agreed; and to begin some of the basic internal structural reform. That might not add up to the revolution that some of us might have hoped for with the UN's 50th Anniversary. But it would make 1995 a very significant year indeed for the United Nations, and give us grounds for very real optimism about the longer term future.