

Annan calls for bold changes to United Nations

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged world leaders Monday to implement the boldest changes to the United Nations in its 60-year history by expanding the size of the Security Council, tackling conflicts and terrorism, and strengthening protections for human rights.

In a speech to the 191-member U.N. General Assembly, Annan called for adopting his entire reform package at a summit of world leaders in September, and he warned countries against treating the list of proposals "as an a la carte menu, and select only those that you especially fancy."

But getting leaders to agree on the package will not be easy because many countries have opposing views on issues ranging from reform of the powerful Security Council to creation of a new Human Rights Council to increasing development assistance to poor countries.

The timing of Annan's appeal also raised some questions, coming just before former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker releases the results of an investigation into the activities of Annan and his son, Kojo, in the scandal-ridden U.N. oil-for-food program in Iraq. Kojo Annan worked in Africa for a company that had an oil-for-food contract.

Asked at a news conference how he believed the United States would respond to the report, Annan said he hoped all would find its suggestions in their interests.

"I think there are many things in the report that should please many states including the United States," he said. "You have to understand that we have 191 member states and I was dealing with the problems of all regions."

The oil-for-food scandal is one of several that have dogged the world body this year. The sex abuse by peace-keeping troops in Congo and the resignation of the U.N. refugee chief amid sexual harassment charges have also tainted the U.N. image.

Mark Malloch Brown, the secretary-general's chief of staff, dismissed media comments that Annan's report was "a panicked response" to the U.N.'s problems.

Annan is proposing the most extensive overhaul of the world body since its founding in 1945. His reforms call for a realignment of the United Nations to give addi-

tional weight to key development, security and human rights issues. It also sets out plans to make the world body more efficient, open, and accountable — including strengthening the independence and authority of the U.N.'s internal watchdog.

Volcker's report is expected by the end of March, but Annan believes he will be cleared and has invited world leaders to a summit in September to consider the reforms.

"These are reforms that are within reach — reforms that are actionable if we can garner the necessary political will," Annan said in the report, which called 2005 "a historic opportunity" to create a better life for millions of people. He urged the leaders to "act boldly" and adopt "the most far-reaching reforms in the history of the United Nations," which was founded in 1945.

But getting all 191 U.N. member states to agree on the package will be a challenge.

"It's a very well-prepared gamble," Malloch Brown said, urging world leaders to focus on the positive and adopt the package by consensus in September.

"For us, the key point is that the deal holds together," he said. "This is a package. Don't go for a la carte shopping on it."

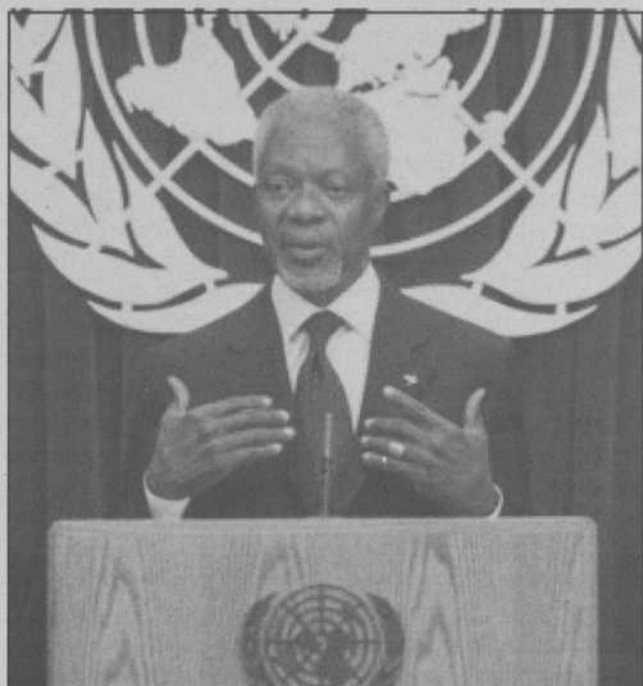
Annan said he had "constructive" discussions with U.S. leaders but suggested it also should compromise.

"I think the argument that comes through the report is very clear — that we live in an interconnected world, in a world where we face many challenges and many threats, threats that no one country, however powerful, can face alone."

One of the major proposals in the package calls for a new Human Rights Council as a major U.N. organ — possibly on a par with the Security Council — to replace the Geneva-based Commission on Human Rights. That panel has long faced criticism for allowing the worst-offending countries to use their membership to protect one another from condemnation.

"The creation of the council would accord human rights a more authoritative position," and put it on the same level as security and development, Annan said.

Annan also called for an expansion of the U.N. Security Council to reflect the glo-



U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan speaks during a news conference at headquarters on Monday. Annan unveiled his new report and list of reforms: "In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All."

bal realities today, but he left the details to the General Assembly. He urged its members to decide on a plan before the September summit, preferably by consensus, but if that's impossible by a vote.

Annan backed two options proposed in December by a high-level panel. One would add six new permanent members and the other would create a new tier of eight semi-permanent members: two each from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. He left open the possibility of other ideas.

Likely candidates for the council's permanent members include Japan, Germany, Brazil, India and Nigeria or South Africa.

A poll released Monday by the British Broadcasting Corp.'s World Service found a majority of people in 22 countries support expanding the Security Council to include new permanent members. In Russia, however, only 44 percent of respondents backed the idea of expansion, the poll said.

The reform report said the Security Council already has the authority under the U.N. Charter to use military force, even preventively, but it should adopt a resolution specifying the criteria for decisions on whether to use force. The criteria should include the seriousness of the threat, whether nonmilitary action could stop it, and whether there is a reasonable chance that military action would succeed.

In cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, Annan urged all states to accept that there is a "responsibility to

protect" those being killed, which requires collective action.

Currently, the report noted, half the countries emerging from violent conflict revert to conflict within five years. To prevent the return to war, Annan called for the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission,

as well as a Democracy Fund to provide money and technical expertise to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy.

For years, a comprehensive convention against terrorism has been held up over a definition of the term. Some countries argue that one nation's terrorists are another's freedom fighters. Annan said the debate must end and all countries must accept that resisting occupation "cannot include the right to deliberately kill or maim civilians."

He called for adoption of a convention by September 2006 with the definition of terrorism in the high-level panel's report. It said terrorism includes any act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act."

The secretary-general also urged all rich countries to establish a timetable to reach the goal set 35 years ago of earmarking 0.7 percent of

gross national product for development assistance no later than 2015, starting with a significant increase no later than 2006. The United States has one of the lowest levels — about 0.15 percent.


In the BBC poll, Germany and Japan were the most popular choices for new member countries, with 56 percent of all respondents supporting the inclusion of Germany and 54 percent in favor of including Japan.

The poll, conducted for the BBC by international polling firm GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, surveyed 23,518 people in 23 countries — Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States.

GlobeScan conducted the poll between Nov. 15, 2004, and Jan. 5. The margin of error per country ranged from 2.5 percentage points to 4 percentage points.


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