

Embattled Kofi Annan proposes UN reforms

By Ron Walters
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In the throws of a United Nations scandal in the management of Iraq's oil-for food program, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has fended off cries among conservatives in the United States to oust him by unveiling a series of the boldest proposals ever to reform that body.

Of course, United States' pressure on Annan mounted when the scandal surfaced, largely because he was lukewarm to Bush's invasion of Iraq and head of a body that opposed a policy of preemptive military action. In any case, Annan acted, even if, in some respects, his report is a warmed-over version of other UN reports, with an emphasis on poverty reduction, labeled the principle of "Freedom from Want." And in response to the U.S. establishment of a Millennium Challenge

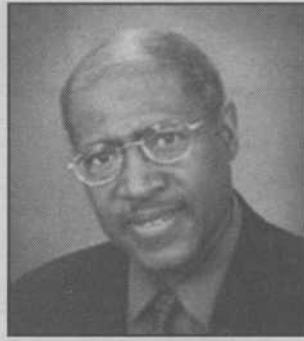
Account to spur poverty reduction, the report believes that dramatic breakthroughs in poverty reduction can take place by 2015 through adequate global partnerships. We

have also heard that before, as well as the emphasis on fighting environmental degradation, enhancing health by fighting HIV/AIDS, and etc.

The report seems to contain a direct response to the Bush doctrine in the section on "Freedom from Fear," which puts preventing "catastrophic terrorism" at the front of UN priorities. Other priorities have to do with preventing the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological agents of warfare.

But it is in the new proposal for a "peace-building commission" where the proposals recognize that little of this will occur without the absence of major conflict. People fight most of all because they are hungry or have few options, and someone steps forward, gives them money to feed their hunger, opening option to, maybe, even prospering because of their role.

The above concerns are supplemented by



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a section that deals with "freedom to live in dignity" that focuses on enhancing the rule of law, human rights and democracy. This is meant to strengthen civil society and, thus, sharpens a concern with the role of government. The theory here is that strong government flows from the people who will keep government accountable.

We know from what happens in this country, however — where Black people especially could use a lot more "dignity" — that there have been few times when people have had the expertise or the backbone to hold government accountable. Why? Because if citizens don't know what is going on and don't follow public policy, they don't have a chance to keep politicians accountable.

Proof of this is that even the great U. S. ends up with an entire war being fought for the most corrupt ends: for controlling oil and making money (they just discovered the goal of expanding democracy this year); where a contracting cesspool has been created with Halliburton, the vice president's firm in the leadership; and with key politicians, like Tom Delay, a Republican member of the House of Representatives from Texas, bilking Indian tribes, corporations and whoever he can for millions, probably illegally.

The pressure on weak states to end corrup-

tion in exchange for qualifying for funds to end poverty is laughable; poor states seldom have the expertise or institutional strength to do so. So aid donors create a revolving door and a rat-maze that keeps many of the poorest countries from receiving the aid they deserve.

One example of this is that out of the 16 states that have been approved for the Millennium Challenge Account, only seven are from Africa — and that group includes Senegal and Ghana, two of the strongest states on the continent.

Moreover, the point of the UN Report was to respond to charges that the institution itself needed reform. To put even more pressure on the UN, George Bush appointed the most anti-UN diplomat ever, John Bolton, to be the new U. S. Ambassador to that body. Bolton once said that the U. S. should be the only member of the Security Council.

It is doubtful, then, that he would approve Kofi Annan's proposals to expand the current number from 15 to 24, or to agree that African states who are clamoring for four seats should even have one. Kofi Annan should get the credit that he deserves for stepping forward so boldly to reform the UN — a complex, 191 member body that is vital to world peace and security — and to strengthen poverty reduction. But with this crowd in the White House, I doubt it.

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NAACP

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in April for final approval. After they are approved and receive a branch identification number and charter, they can start functioning as a chapter.

The organization hopes to bring some of the NAACP's national initiatives to young people on campus and in the community. "Our goals are on par with the local and national branches. The Youth and College division oversees our college chapter. They have a strategic plan that includes credit and financial literacy on college campuses. Students apply for credit cards, and their credit can sometimes fall by the wayside. We need to make them more aware of that. We want to make them aware of [health] education information, AIDS and STDs understanding, as well as other topics applicable to college chapters," said Wilson.

When asked why students should be interested in joining the organization, Wilson

stated, "I think the reason anyone should be interested in joining the NAACP is that this is an organization that supports the rights of all people of color. The NAACP is unique because our goal is to make students more proactive in the community, as well as on the campus." Wilson added, "President (Dean) Ishman has wanted the young people to get involved with the NAACP and have a working relationship with the local branch."

Most of the fees needed to start the chapter were provided by Tony Gladney, Vice President of External Diversity for Caesars Entertainment. "He is the person that really made this possible, he gave us the money to pay for the twenty memberships needed to get this started," Wilson indicated.

Although there are currently over twenty paid members, Wilson mentioned that fewer than a dozen active members attend meetings and respond to organization

e-mails. "Now is the time where we are going to need commitment from people to attend our meetings and support the growth of the organization," said Wilson.

According to Ms. Laini Coffee Regional Director of Youth and College Chapters, the creation of a chapter was attempted at UNLV over two and a half years ago, but the process was never completed.

"I already have them asking young people in and around UNLV about what issues and concerns they have so they can hit the ground running, knowing what issues need to be addressed in their community. They need to know about meetings and events going on in and around Las Vegas that they can participate in. They need to know what funding they are going to have. This is the first time a college chapter has been [this] proactive..." explained Coffee, "I think they are going to take Las Vegas by storm."

Clingman

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hell-bent on maintaining economic and political control of all the resources in this country. We had better start making some rules of our own. For example, we had better start telling these folks "if we don't get ours you don't get yours."

We had better get serious about who we give our money to and what we get in return. We had better start realizing that it's not just about "jobs" for "those poor unfortunate Blacks;" it's about control of the development of projects that bring the jobs, and it's about business ownership and education of our youth in that regard.

When we finally understand that their ice is not colder, their water is not wetter and

their sugar is not sweeter; when we finally realize that Black folks are capable of doing the things necessary for our economic survival in this country — and then step up and do it, or take it, if that be the case — we will win. Until then, our politicians will always sell us out for colder ice, and the (B)lack gatekeepers will always block the entrance to economic prosperity for the Black masses. Cooperative economics is the answer. Want to know more on how it's done? Take a look at Koreatown in Annandale, Va. They buy and sell their own ice.

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