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and Strategic Planning

New Leadership of the United Nations

Dawn Calabia:

Our next speaker is Assistant Secretary-General Robert Orr. Bob Orr is an old friend of the Women's Foreign Policy Group, having served as the Director of the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington. And we also knew him of course when he was in the United States Government as Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the UN and Director of the U.S.-UN office and then earlier when he was at the National Security Council Directive of Global and Multilateral Affairs. He is the senior -- he is sort of policy issues central for the new Secretary-General as he was Kofi Annan. Bob, we're delighted to have you with us.

Robert Orr:

Thank you very much. It's a real pleasure to be here. And I know you're seeing a real battery of speakers and issues this morning, so I will try to be brief, but I thought it might be helpful to try to give you an overview of the Secretary-General's priorities.

Coming to a position like the Secretary-General of the UN is truly, as he has said, at first jokingly and now I think he realizes it's fully true, it is truly the world's most impossible job.

You get all the problems laid on your doorstep and very few solutions. What that requires is a real process of triaging what the UN can do on major issues.

So the Secretary-General has many priorities, but I think if we look at just where he has spent his time in the early days of his tenure, you get a good sense of where he thinks he can make a difference. I would just start with the obvious, the top geopolitical crises, the big issues that move the global community on many levels.

One of the issues he has spent the most time on is Darfur. This is both because of the gravity of the challenge, but I think also the range of issues and direct challenges to the UN posed by Darfur. I know you heard some about that, but I think it's important to note that the Secretary-General sees this on all levels of human rights concerns, humanitarian, political, security. There is a thread of every single UN program that runs through Darfur, and I think recognizing that he's spent a lot of time on it.

A second geopolitical crisis area that he has spent a lot of time on is the greater Middle East. It is no surprise, this is an area that is extremely important and in which again the UN has a lot of equities but not always historically a large role. The UN role in the Middle East has in fact been quite limited at various points in its history.

So it is with I think careful consideration that he decided that he would enhance, to the extent of his ability, his role in the Quartet process for seeking a solution for Middle East peace. The Quartet has now met three times already since he began, which is a much accelerated pace of diplomacy on the Middle East peace.

He is now currently in Sharm al-Sheikh, just left last night, will be launching the Compact on Iraq to try to strengthen support both in the region and globally for a rebuilding and reconstruction of Iraq. This has been a long process of trying to build external support to help

internal processes in Iraq.

We all recognize the security challenges in Iraq today. That said, we have no option but to try to offer both what services we can as we have been on the political front, the elections, but also now very much the government has asked for and we, the UN co-chairs, with the Iraqi Government the Compact. That is being launched today in fact, and I think it's another area that you could expect to see the UN active on.

Also in the greater Middle East, he has spent a good bit of time on Lebanon. The question of peace and stability in Lebanon is a very real concern not only to people in the Middle East but around the world. Lebanon, which has such a proud history, is going through a particularly difficult time politically right now. And the UN force, UNIFIL II [United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon], the new peacekeeping force there, has been credited, I think rightfully, with reestablishing peace in the region after a very short but intense war last summer. And I think not only stabilizing the situation but actually improving it politically within Lebanon is crucial to any long-term solutions and it has impact on various other pieces.

So the greater Middle East and Darfur have been the areas of greatest concentration in geopolitical terms. He has spent time on Somalia, on Kosovo and other issues, but I think those are the ones that have grabbed most attention on that side.

He has also spent a good bit of time and energy on the perpetual quest to reform the UN, but he has chosen specific areas to try to push early on. First, recognizing the shift of the UN to the field, the fact that the UN is truly a field-based organization today. When we were set up we were a headquarters organization. The vast majority of our staff were based in New York or Geneva, in our headquarters stations. Now the vast majority of our staff are not. They're out in the field. This is a big shift. And it's very important that we adjust all of our structures

accordingly. We are in all the most difficult places in the world, supporting those staff in the field not just in security but in oversight, accountability, all kinds of personal and human resource related issues. It's a major challenge to run what has become a truly global operational organization as opposed to a headquarters-based organization.

The first area in which the Secretary-General sought to really examine and make some changes is in creating a new Department of Field Support, which would consolidate pieces of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, parts of the Department of Management and other little pieces throughout the system to try to consolidate in one place our arrangements for supporting not only peacekeepers in the field but also our political missions, our humanitarian mission. There are a whole range of services in the field that require special kinds of support, and we've done that out of many different places. We're going to try to consolidate that in one area, both realize some efficiencies in doing so, but also staff up in this area. Our headquarters backstopping capacity for field missions ratio is not acceptable, quite frankly. We need better backstopping of our operations in the field and this reform is intended to do that.

A second area is in the area of system-wide coherence in terms of reforming and recognizing that we are now a field-based organization. Of course the former Secretary-General launched a process whereby he put together a very distinguished panel on system-wide coherence. They produced a very serious report. The new Secretary-General has evaluated that and found it to be a very solid report. He recommended to the Assembly to take it up and gave a strong push towards recommendations, one of which I'm sure is not a surprise to many of you, the whole question of gender architecture in the UN. We have had various pieces of the organization dealing with gender for many years. This is an old story.

The panel looked at this and among other recommendations thought that pulling together

three distinct pieces of the UN's gender architecture would be important and that upgrading that function by designating an Under Secretary-General to then lead a consolidated gender architecture in the UN system. This is a proposal that's in the Assembly now, that will be debated. There have been strong voices raised in support for this, some questions raised. I think this is a process that will play out in the weeks and months ahead, a very important one. And I think for a group like yours, not only covering the wide range of UN issues, but in particular the gender dimension here at the UN, I think supporting us in this process would be extremely helpful.

A second area on the reform side that the Secretary-General has really privileged is the question of enhancing accountability. We have to earn the trust of people around the globe. For whatever reasons there is a natural cynicism in some parts of the globe about the UN, not least in my home country, the United States, and many of yours. And I do hope that we can overcome that cynicism with proof that we're delivering the goods for the people of the world, and in the case that I mentioned, the people of the United States. But we also need to be really at the top of our game in terms of accountability, that we can really account for everything. We have to hold ourselves to highest standard. And in this regard, the Secretary-General has taken some new initiatives to do management compacts with all of his senior managers, sit down one-on-one with all of his senior managers, agree to what they're going to accomplish in the year ahead, really put benchmarks to it. This is a level of accountability at the top that I think should have a very healthy effect on overall management accountability. We've always held all of our staff members accountable. We need to hold that all the way up through the senior most ranks and on a very dynamic, active basis.

A last area that I would mention on the reform side is kind of transforming our human

resource base. The UN attracts really some of the best people in the world, but it is a difficult, difficult system to navigate. If any of you have ever applied to the UN for a job, you know that. It is painful in fact, and I think that we recognize that on the inside. There should be very serious competition for every job in the UN because there should be a qualified pool of people from around the world. We need to create a human resource system that can actually tap that potential, retain that potential, and then be able to train and move that potential around the system to be able to keep everyone fresh.

One of the things that -- a new team with a new set of eyes came in and looked at the averages of how long people have been in their jobs. It's far too long, in some cases multiple decades in the exact same job. And that, even if you are the best person in the world at that job and you know it extremely well, three decades in the same job you probably are not as fresh and approaching it in the same vibrant way that you might want to see. So the Secretary-General has made some proposals on ways to enhance mobility in the system and this is something that will take a lot of work because it affects our staff. It affects the way that member states see their role in governing the organization. So I think on the human resources side we not only have to attract the best, we have to keep the best and then keep them fresh, so a whole set of activities in that area.

Two more things I would mention in terms of top priorities. One of the UN's biggest jobs is to deliver hope to those most in need. It sounds a little bit corny to say, but it is really the essence of what we do in many parts of the world. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) do represent, in a very concrete way, hope for some of those who need it. We are at the halfway point of the MDGs. I think the official halfway point is this summer. This is a time to reflect on where we are and where we need to be on the Millennium Development Goals.

There is some good news. We have statistics that will be coming out, a new set of statistics in June, but even a preliminary analysis of those statistics indicates we have made real progress on certain MDGs and in certain parts of the world.

What we need is to do a hard, kind of steely-eyed analysis of where we're not making progress and why and remobilize the international community around those areas that really need the most attention. And I think that's what we'll be doing after the statistical analysis is complete -- and then really able to sort through what we think is behind those statistics, to be able to really drive a new push. And the Secretary-General has announced that he will chair a very a top-level working group of various international organizations and governments to try to address specifically where we know we will be falling short, and that is achieving the MDGs in Africa.

One last area, you've probably seen it in the paper. The Secretary-General has not been shy about indicating his commitment on climate change. We are at a global inflection point on climate change. Climate change is a scientific fact. It's something that is really proven beyond a shadow of a doubt by the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change]. That is sinking into global publics around the world. There is a real push from below right now to address climate change. This is different than when negotiators sat down to negotiate Kyoto years ago. The push from below was much more scattered, in certain pockets and certain places, certain expert groups. Now with the global community united behind the science and a push from below, we have a whole new political environment on this, but that does not translate itself easily or automatically into a new global agreement for how to govern the question of climate change.

There are real costs to be allocated, real benefits to be gained, but that whole process of a

new negotiation to set up a new climate change regime, certainly before the expiration of Kyoto in 2012, is essential. So the Secretary-General has been spending a lot of time consulting a lot of leaders about ways to move this forward, and I think you can watch this. We will be spending a lot more time on climate change as well.

So a quick review of the priority areas that we've been working on. Clearly we've worked on a lot of other things, but really that, if I could just in a nutshell say where the Secretary-General has spent his time and energy, that probably gives you a good sense.

Thank you. (Applause.)

Patricia Ellis:

Yes, thank you so much for coming. I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about the announcement of the envoys on climate change, and what their mandate will be?

Mr. Orr:

I'll try to make my answer as succinct as your question, but that was a beautifully succinct question. The mandate for the envoys is to assist the Secretary-General in these political consultations with leaders around the world for both substantively what they think can and needs to be done. Secondly on process, how did we structure a process such that all the global views can be channeled into a single process, and also quite frankly to make sure that we're matching up this groundswell with the political leadership.

If there's one thing that I think a lot of environmental ministers have themselves noted it is that they are not the ones that really govern the process. This is not just an environmental issue. It's an economic issue. It's an allocation of costs issue. It's a political issue. And

recognizing that, you have to engage Heads of State. And so the Environmental Ministers themselves have come to us and said, elevate, go above our heads, please, which is not a normal reaction for many ministers, to say go over my head, but that's what we found. So the envoys will be consulting in the coming weeks and months. A wide range of Heads of State, the Secretary-General is already talking with a number of Heads of State. Once we kind of get those views back, the Secretary-General will come forward with some ideas about how we might move the process forward. So that's their initial stage of their mandate.

Question:

Good morning. I'd like to ask you about Security Council reform, because you didn't touch on it in your presentation. Thank you.

Mr. Orr:

I didn't mention it, you're right. The fact is that this is an ongoing debate in the membership. The Secretary-General at this point has not played a role in this. It's something squarely in the membership's hands.

The President of the General Assembly recently appointed five facilitators to look at different pieces of the Security Council reform issue, and those five came back with a report on each of their areas. And then she produced a consolidated report out of that. It is not yet clear where member states want to go with that report. I would say that the same old divisions are there in the membership that we've seen before. Those in favor of expansion in a permanent category, those in favor of expansion but not in a permanent category, working methods, a lot of the same issues on the table.

What is new, and I think very interesting and potentially something that would give some hope to see some movement on this, a number of delegations have talked about the need for compromise. Compromise was not a word we heard much about in the last round of this debate. It was who has the votes. And when it turned out that neither side really had the votes - or I say neither side, there weren't just two sides; no side had the votes. There were multiple sides. The discussion sort of froze for a while. But now I think as people are looking at the issues, interestingly some of the key delegations are saying, well, let's look at something that will garner enough support from the broad membership.

So we'll see. Stay tuned. I think we'll see what the President does to move forward the debate on her report, but I would expect that the member states will have a debate on this in the coming months. I can't predict an outcome yet, but I think the talk of compromise is healthy and to be encouraged.

Donna Constantinople:

You mentioned the Millennium Development Goals and that you wanted to do a hard analysis of what's not working and why. Can you expand on that?

Mr. Orr:

MDGs, where are we falling short and where are succeeding? Well, all the preliminary analysis is not yet done. I think some early trends do suggest themselves. In many, many countries we've made real progress on child mortality, and so there's one of the MDGs that we can look at interventions that have been designed based on MDG programs and see a real result.

Unfortunately we have not seen the same impact on mothers out there. So here's one

where normally you would expect children's health and mother's health to travel together. As in a lot of experience in interventions on maternal and child health, that even the term, “maternal and child health,” is often packaged together because they move together. But we've seen in a number of countries we've made progress in one and not in the other, not in all countries. So we need to look and see what's behind that, how have we made progress on one, how have we not made progress on the other. That's just one example of two specific areas. I think the broad trend lines that we've seen in previous annual reports, I think we will see them here confirmed again.

Our biggest area though not unique area of concern is Africa. There have been countries in Africa that have made real progress, so we need to look at who has made real progress and why and how and then see if we can extrapolate from that to broader lessons for the continent and how we can mobilize international support and how Africans themselves can mobilize themselves and try to capture some of those lessons learned in Africa in new approaches.

What I think the last word MDGs I would say is we have seen real progress based on real new commitments. Maybe one of the most exciting pieces of the MDG puzzle, a set of goals, a broad set of goals is something that many questioned early on, can you do development by just setting goals. We've now seen an answer. It is a mobilizational tool. It has worked, but now we need to break it down into its pieces, how has it worked, why has it worked and then see if we can apply that to the places where it's not.

Ms. Constantinople:

Could I just sneak one other quick thing, could you profile the new Secretary-General for us. What is the leadership style like? What is it like working for him and how do you sense

that any of these --

Ms. Calabria:

I think Bob likes his job.

Ms. Constantinople:

Yes, well, I hear that, but I mainly want to know, what's the scoop?

Mr. Orr:

What's the scoop? I'm not going to try to make news here, but I can answer honestly, which is a good thing. I think one thing, for those of you who know Kofi Annan and his many strengths, one person mentioned to me early on, walked out of a meeting and said, "he's an Asian Kofi Annan." It was an interesting insight.

I think the new Secretary-General like the former Secretary-General is a very good listener. He listens to a lot of people. He listens very well. He extracts important information from what is said to him. And I think in a Secretary-General a good listener is a tremendously important quality. He is also a truly engaged and interested person. He is very hungry for information. He likes to know what's going on throughout the system on a wide range of issues. This is not a disinterested leader in any way, shape or form. He's looking for ways to improve the system. He's looking for ways to make a difference around the world. And I think that is striking almost to anyone who meets with him.

At the same time, he is the first to acknowledge that he is from Asia and brings an Asian leadership style. I think he's been a bit surprised that some people that aren't really familiar with

Asia found it a little different. And I think this is kind of an interesting challenge for the organization. When our leadership changes every five or ten years, the world has to adjust in some ways as does the Secretary-General. It's a mutual adjustment process because he is the Secretary-General, not just an Asian anymore.

But I think he really does bring a real desire for consensus and harmony in decision making. I don't want to speak in clichés here, but he does use the word harmony a lot, and it's not an accident. And the UN interestingly is very well adapted to it, it's a consensus culture here. At the same time, he's made difficult decisions already. When there's not a harmonious way out of something, he will make decisions. So I think there are some very early indications of what kind of a leader he will be. He joked that people -- during the campaign said, "I'm not charismatic," and I will tell you he certainly has a charisma. No one should try to make him into any previous Secretary-General. He will be his own man and have his own style of charisma.

Question:

Thank you, Dr. Orr, for a very encouraging presentation. I feel much more relieved now that you're in the position. Strategically, have you considered establishing a coordination, collaboration consul to try to work from within the UN, not only the government members but also with some of the MNCs [Multinational Corporations] - large corporations, multinationals, some of which, as you know, are even bigger than governments who are members of the UN?

And two, for the eradication of poverty, and of course, at this point, even though as we know there are many, many resources such as global initiatives or even the American Idols, who in one night they can get \$67 million, \$76 million. So we also trying to strategically use these

resources to help to make United Nations more relevant?

Question:

Ambassador Holmes suggested that there was a new shift toward -- a policy toward protecting citizens, global citizens. And I wonder if there's some sort of discrepancy perhaps in one of the reforms that you're talking about or one of the strategic policies that you're talking about, delivering hope to global citizens when perhaps all that these citizens really need is physical protection, and if you can't provide that, can deliver hope to these people?

Mr. Orr:

In terms of coordination in the UN system, in particular with respect to multinational companies, or I'd say, broadly the private sector, we have multiple coordination bodies that engage the private sector, but clearly the initiative that began under Kofi Annan and is thriving today is the Global Compact. What really began as a corporate social responsibility initiative has grown into, I think, a network of good corporate citizens around the world that are not only being good corporate citizens, working through the Compact, but actually want to leverage some of their resources, their skills, to help the UN and its causes, including poverty alleviation.

So I think we have kind of a potential next generation of the Global Compact, tremendous membership if you just look at the kinds of companies that have been joining and what they're doing, real potential to not only see that corporate social responsibility base from where it began but also how to leverage those other assets that the companies have. And I think that will be one of our challenges under this Secretary-General, how to do that.

I think the broader notion of strategic partnerships -- I see Gillian Sorensen in the room,

who was worked on these issues for quite some time and really built a lot of our strategic partnerships outside the building. This is a growth industry, and it will be, I think, for the foreseeable future for the UN. It's interesting how much demand there is to partner with the UN today, not just companies but NGOs and other international organizations. The desire to partner with the UN today is stronger than I've ever seen it, and that presents some challenges for us.

We are a small organization. It's great to have partnerships, but you have to structure them in a way that they can be managed, and so I think the partnering is a crucial element of future UN success, but we need to be able to structure it in such a way that we can manage that. We have an incipient partnerships office that originally was created with the gift of Ted Turner's billion dollars. That partnership office in the UN has expanded now to include other types of activities, and I think will probably continue to grow. But we will continue to partner in various ways, and I think not just with the private sector but civil society at large as well as one other area that is a growth industry also, legislatures.

With democratization in various parts of the world there are legislatures that want to engage the UN. And as you could imagine, it can get pretty messy if you have many parliamentarians from every country around the world that want to come meet with the Secretary-General every day. But IPU [Inter-Parliamentary Union] is one organization that deals with legislatures, but we also have to deal with them directly, and I think that's another area for partnerships.

On the question of kind of physical vulnerability versus what I call to kind of give it hope. If you're in a position of physical vulnerability, to give hope means, first and foremost to provide that physical security. I don't think there's a tension there. If you want to be very old school about it, it's Maslow's hierarchy of needs. If your physical needs aren't taken care of the

rest of it doesn't matter to you.

But if we can do that and provide security, and we are providing security in many, many places, though not perfectly. I think that no one would claim that we are providing perfect security in Sudan, and that's what our policy about trying to get a more robust force in and a more active political negotiation that would be able to provide that security to the people of Darfur and beyond the borders of Sudan.

I would just say a word about the relationship between the security element and the MDGs. People often talk about these as if they're two separate things. There's peacekeeping over in this box and there's MDGs over in that box. I think one of the things you find where there has been successful peacekeeping and a peace established, surprise, surprise, progress on MDGs accelerates. So there is a link between what we do, our security side of the house and our development side of the house.

You have to look at a slightly longer time frame than most people are looking at. This isn't a progress over a year or two. But if you look at some of our peacekeeping success stories in previous years, where are you seeing the most explosive improvements on MDGs? Oh, Mozambique- that was a very successful UN peacekeeping mission. Looking at El Salvador today, Guatemala today, you know, go back to some of yesteryear's peacekeeping successes and you'll see some of today's development successes. There's not an automatic finish there, but I think historically there has been a strong trend in that direction.

Question:

Could you briefly address climate change and the role of the private sector?

Mr. Orr:

When I talk about a groundswell, this isn't just publics walking off the street. I mean a groundswell from all parts of society. Business is one of the drivers on the climate change debate right now, and in not an exclusively constructive way, but there are large segments of business that are engaging in a very constructive way. And that is, businesses want clear rules of the game. They need to understand what the rules are going to be. And for target markets in particular, if energy industries around the world don't know what the future target market is going to look like, they have uncertainty, and uncertainty hurts profit, and profit is something that most corporations are interested in.

So I think that we have an interest in working with business to make sure that their voice is heard. They have an interest in working with us, and we will be engaging with business, and I think bringing some of the business voices into the UN during the debates on climate change, because that is a dialogue that has happened at the national level in many countries though not in all, but does need to happen at the international level.

I expect that when we engage over climate change it won't just be governments. It will also be civil society. It will be global business and local business. We found business in various parts of the world very ready to engage in this discussion.

Patricia Ellis:

President's prerogative, just a quick question. Do you have a perspective on this and -- not to put you on the spot, but we do have a new Secretary-General and we now have a new U.S. Ambassador. I'm wondering if you could characterize the state of U.S.-UN relations and the impact it's having on the leadership for each side.

Dr. Orr:

I would say today we have a very, very good relationship with the U.S. That has not always been the case, as you know. I think there have been some rough patches, but I think there are multiple things driving what I would consider a very good relationship today, first and foremost, reality on the ground. There is a demand for the UN in some of the toughest places and the U.S. recognizes that and wants the UN to help. The U.S. has been instrumental on a number of Security Council resolutions asking us to do more in all parts of the world.

This is something that shows the U.S. valuing the UN in a very real way that may not have been as much the case in recent years. So I'd say reality on the ground is to say a lot of good will in the U.S. Government and in the Secretariat to work together. We're working together in a very collaborative way on a range of issues including the issue of climate change, which is one of the toughest for the U.S. where the U.S. is maybe most separated from the global public opinion.

And the Secretary-General raised this with President Bush in his very first meeting and there was a very good exchange on it. And he will be continuing to dialogue with the U.S. even on the tough issues like climate change, but I would say on reform, on peacekeeping, humanitarian, very solid collaboration across the board.

Ms. Calabria:

Well, thank you very much.

(Applause.)