



**Women's Foreign Policy Group
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Session I: The Three Priority Areas for the Secretary-General

Eva Busza

Principal Officer, Strategic Planning Unit, Executive Office of the Secretary-General

Maxine Isaacs: We're thrilled that you could join us. This is our fourth annual Women's Foreign Policy Group UN conference. Today will be a series of briefings on world crises and the UN, from Sudan to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Afghanistan. We have a wonderful turnout today, with representatives from UN missions, consulates, the UN family, think tanks, NGOs, foundations, corporations, and the media. I would like to take one moment to introduce our President, Patricia Ellis, and the Women's Foreign Policy Group Board Members who are present: Donna Constantinople, Mary Catherine Toker, and Gillian Sorensen, who will be presiding for us today. It's my pleasure to introduce Gillian. She's, as I mentioned, a Women's Foreign Policy Group Board Member, and a former UN Assistant Secretary-General for External Relations, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General for Public Policy, and the New York City Commissioner for the United Nations. Gillian now serves as a Senior Advisor to the UN Foundation and is a national advocate and speaker on the UN and the US-UN relationship. Gillian, thank you so much for doing this, and please take the podium.

Gillian Sorensen: Good morning everyone, and welcome to the United Nations. As Maxine said, I'm a longtime United Nations professional, former UN official, and I'm very happy to have you here. This building has always felt like my second home, and we're delighted that the Women's Foreign Policy Group comes back each year. I do want to salute and thank Maxine Isaacs and Pat Ellis for their leadership and their vision and their dedication to the goals of the Women's Foreign Policy Group.

You may have noticed that we are not in Conference Room 5, we're seated in the General Assembly. We got bumped because there were about 17 other meetings going on, but I would consider this an upgrade. This historic room, of course, is the setting for the gatherings of the General Assembly in the fall. This podium is where the Presidents and Prime Ministers speak. The Secretaries and support staff would be behind him there. But when you see the leaders of the world speaking in the UN, it is almost always at this setting. If you look behind you, you'll see the paintings. This room dates back to 1950 when the building was constructed, and you may have noticed as you came in that there is construction underway. It is the beginning of the renovation of the UN building after

more than 60 years, something that is necessary at this stage, and sometime in the middle of summer, nearly 6,000 people are going to be moved out of the Secretariat and over to a temporary space on Madison Avenue and 46th Street while the building is renewed for, we hope, the next 60 years.

I need to tell you that our first speaker, Bob Orr, was called into an urgent meeting with the Secretary General, and so we have the pleasure of his deputy, who is the Principal Officer, his number two person, who will speak to us and share her thoughts about the priorities of the United Nations. Her name is Eva Busza, the Principal Officer in the Strategic Planning Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. She previously was the Team Leader for Asia and the Pacific, and Policy Advisor and Strategic Planner in the UN Development Programme. She has degrees from Stanford and the University of British Columbia, and has been a professor. We welcome you and thank you very much for stepping in on short notice for Bob Orr, and we look forward to your words.

Eva Busza: Good morning. It's a pleasure to be asked to step in. This is an organization that I have a great deal of respect for, and I would like to try to talk to you about the three priority areas that the Secretary-General has identified for his tenure period. We may have some time for a question-and-answer or joint discussion.

When the Secretary-General came into office, he identified three baskets of priorities. The first was delivering results for people most in need, the second was addressing a new generation of global challenges through securing what he identified as 'global goods,' and the third was creating a stronger UN through full accountability. In his discussion of what he understood for delivering concrete results for people most in need, under this agenda item, he emphasized the importance of trying to work with countries, member states, to address the Millennium Development Goals. Now in 2009, this has become an even more pressing concern. A couple of weeks ago at Princeton, the Secretary-General said that 2009 is a make-or-break year for the world and its peoples.

Just to give you some numbers, in part due to the economic crisis, what we are seeing is that the number of hungry people is rising to nearly one billion. Our estimates are saying that the ranks of the unemployed are to grow by up to 50-80 million this year, and women are likely to feel much of the brunt of this. By the end of 2009, the African economy stands to lose twice as much in percentage terms as Asia's economies lost during the region's crisis a decade ago. Last year's food crisis suggests to us that if the economic crisis continues taking the path that it is on, we are likely to see increased social unrest. If you look at 2007 and 2008, there were a total of 61 food protests; 23 of them were violent.

So in the context of these economic challenges, the pursuit of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and ensuring that we maintain and stay on track for 2015 becomes even more important. In the context of the Millennium Development Goals, the Secretary-General has particularly emphasized the importance of ensuring that food production and agriculture production is given necessary investment. He's particularly focusing on maternal and infant health; those are areas where he feels a great deal of

progress can be made quickly. He's also focusing very much on Africa, and ensuring that particularly sub-Saharan Africa, which is one of the regions most lagging across all the Millennium Development Goals, is able to move towards achieving those targets.

Also, in delivering to those most in need, the Secretary-General has places on his agenda for peace-building and peacekeeping. One of the things that's been happening over the past couple of years is that the UN has been working very hard to bolster its capacities for conflict prevention and for peace-building. As we all know, prevention is much more efficient and a better option than having to send in peacekeepers. So we've seen a new unit and we've seen significant attention being brought into constructing and building the capacities for peace-building and conflict prevention within the organization.

If we look at peacekeeping, one of the issues that the Secretary-General has been facing is that the need has expanded astronomically over the past decade. Just in terms of numbers, [...] if you look a decade ago, the UN fielded less than 20,000 civilian, military, and police personnel. Today, the number exceeds 110,000; it's a huge increase. And the difficulty is that much of the missions have gotten much more complex, and it requires a whole new set of skills. So the Secretary-General is working very hard with the peacekeeping forces and with member states to really try to look at these needs and try to address these needs and ensure that what we have in terms of capacities measures up to what the mandates and needs of the organization are.

Finally, in terms of delivering to those most in need, there's been a strong emphasis on ensuring that there's effectiveness, predictability, and accountability of humanitarian relief mechanisms, both addressing needs in disaster and in conflict, and there's been significant work in terms of trying to bolster our disaster risk reduction mechanisms, and working with member states to strengthen those.

In the second basket, trying to address the global challenges that we face today by providing global goods, what is characteristic of this set of needs is that these global challenges – it's not that they haven't existed before, but it's that the depth and scope of what is needed has really changed dramatically. What do I mean by global goods? They are global challenges. These are the challenges that affect everyone, everywhere, that require solutions that are not restricted to a particular member state. They cross borders; they're contagious. So it requires a whole new type of approach to trying to deal with these challenges.

I thought I would focus on a couple of them for you. Today, one of the reasons why the original speaker is not here is because he's with the Secretary-General discussing swine flu, and what the appropriate responses should be. Global health is one of the global challenges that the Secretary-General identified when he came to office. In that discussion and in his priorities, what he has been trying to do is work to mobilize global health systems, to strengthen global health systems, and get cooperation in order to address precisely this type of challenge that we are seeing today.

Another dimension of this has been working – particularly at the rural level in developing countries – to strengthen access to health care for rural populations. As I mentioned before, in his emphasis on maternal health in the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals], this also reverberates in his global health agenda, really focusing on maternal health and what needs to be done. So these are all elements of what he has been focusing on, and trying to bring together different stakeholders across the member states, across business, across NGOs, to come together and come up with a common strategy that would address this huge challenge of securing global health.

The second agenda item that falls under this category is of course climate change. Right now the real push is to seal the deal in Copenhagen. The emphasis is to try to help countries come up with mitigation and adaptation strategies to deal with climate change, to come up with some agreements on emissions, and to try to move forward this agenda by December. Again, a huge challenge, one that requires cooperation across the broad spectrum of member states.

The third global challenge that he's identified is counter-terrorism. This has been a very interesting area to watch develop. In 2006, member states came together in the General Assembly, and 192 member states agreed to a single counter-terrorism strategy. Now that may not seem so unique to you, but getting consensus across the globe for something as sensitive as this is truly remarkable. What's unique about the strategy as well is that it addresses in a sense, four baskets of concerns. The first is that it says in order to address counter-terrorism, you have to look at the conditions conducive, you have to develop programming to address the conditions conducive. In other words, the degree to which poverty, conflict, etc. exacerbate the conditions that may then lead to terrorism. It also points to the need for capacity-building, making sure that member states have the capacity to deal with counter-terrorism measures. And a very important dimension of this strategy is to ensure protection of human rights, throughout the strategy. The principle is, only through the respect of human rights can you have effective counter-terrorism strategies.

This strategy, as I said, was adopted in 2006. Last year, it was once again reconfirmed. Perhaps one of the most interesting initiatives recently that comes out of this strategy was the Secretary-General held a symposium in support of victims of terrorism. He brought together, this was in September of last year, victims from around the world to tell their stories and to give a human face to terrorism. This was perhaps one of the most touching and important activities that we've seen recently in these chambers.

Finally, in terms of his focus on global goods, he's put front and center the non-proliferation agenda. Again, this is something that is very much in the news today, as we're seeing some progress in US-Russian relations on disarmament and non-proliferation. And again, last year, the Secretary-General came out with a five point agenda on how to move on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, and he has been urging all parties to fulfill their obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. He's called on member states of the Security Council to initiate discussion on a number of issues, including on assurances to non-nuclear weapons states that they will

not be the subject of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. He's calling on member states to eliminate other weapons of mass destruction, and impose limits on conventional arms and adopt new weapons bans. I think you'll be seeing more on this agenda as we move into the end of this year and early next year.

The final item that the Secretary-General has been emphasizing as his priority is that – while it's been identified that the UN has to deliver to those most in need and we have to address these global challenges – but we as an organization can't do it unless we are strong and accountable. So he has been instituting a number of internal reforms to improve the effectiveness of the organization. Ultimately, it's to ensure that senior managers are accountable and responsible to staff, that staff are more responsible to senior managers, that the organization is more responsible and accountable and transparent to our member states, but that also member states have a responsibility to us. This has been sort of the message that he has been giving. In order for us to move forward and address these very complex challenges, we as an organization will have to move forward and become more effective and accountable to the public.

And I think I'll stop there.

Question: You talk about human rights and how we're all going to work together. What are you doing about China and their lack of human rights?

Eva Busza: I think one of the steps that the Secretary-General has been trying to very much focus on is to make sure that the human rights mechanisms that we have in the UN are strengthened. We've seen some reforms there, and we are really pushing member states to come up to the plate and start addressing the needs, and having a system that is considered to have the legitimacy and to move forward on the human rights agenda. That pertains to all member states who have signed onto conventions and rules and who are participating in the various mechanisms that we have.

Question: I'm very interested, since you work in the strategic planning arm of this big global organization, how do you go about setting priorities? I have watched our new President of the United States deal with a slate of issues that one could only imagine you'd see seven or eight two-term presidents dealing with, and with the speed and the seriousness and the steepness, how does the UN go about prioritizing to make sure you're meeting your mandate, meeting your mission?

Eva Busza: That's an excellent question. It's interesting because our office actually does a lot of the forward planning, and in a sense I'd say we're a policy incubator. This is probably not going to be a satisfactory answer, but what we really try to do is to think about our organization and what are our strengths and weaknesses. When we're talking about the global health agenda, for example, there are some things that the UN is well-equipped to do, and particularly the Secretary-General.

The strength of the role of the Secretary-General is that he has a convening power; he can bring stakeholders from all communities and create an environment where people can

dialogue, and that's a huge strength. He also has in a sense the bully pulpit of being the Secretary-General and being able to say what is right. That is a strength that the Secretary-General has, and when we look at issues – for example, global health – is there anyone else that has the ability to bring these stakeholders together? No. Does any other organization have that legitimacy? No. So this is clear-cut; this is the kind of issue where we can actually make a difference. So we have to look at what the different parts of the organization have strengths in. What can we deliver on? There's no point in us getting engaged in a particular part of an agenda when we're just not the best people in town to be doing it. So when we look at this broad range of challenges, of issues, the requests that come to us from member states, that's really the first criteria: can we make a difference?

The second is, because we represent the global community, we have to engage on issues that have a broad spectrum of support; that there's broad call for. It's not enough for one member state, for example, to be trying to push for something. It has to be something that's really going to make a difference to a lot of our constituency. So I think those are really the two criteria that filter into how we decide what we should prioritize. Obviously resources come into play then, but in terms of strategic planning, we try to start from the principal thing of what are we best able to make an impact on, and then we hope that we can then raise enough resources to actually move forward and achieve what needs to be achieved.

Question: I just wanted to ask whether there is a – you mentioned the meeting that Bob Orr is in with the Ban Ki-moon about the current flu. Is there a crisis plan in place in the UN for this kind of a global outbreak? I wondered if you might comment on the article I saw this morning on the plane coming up about the lack of funding for organizations like the WHO and other needed groups that play a role during a time like this.

Question: In the prior administration, Kofi Annan was able to make the business case for the multinational corporations to have an agenda of corporate social responsibility. Under that administration, they established a framework for operations and for contributions of the multinational corporations. I would like to ask if you could give us just the highlights of the continuation plan for their involvement in this administration.

Question: You mentioned a number of priorities which obviously are all global issues: health, climate, terrorism; you didn't mention the financial crisis but I'm sure it's very much on your mind as well, and now of course the swine flu. So there is even more of a need and a call for a global instrument and for finding solutions which involve everyone. I think it has been proven that no country can really do it by itself, no matter how powerful it is. You also mentioned your priorities, and I imagine that once you have identified them you would have to also discuss them with the membership, and therefore, my question to you is, with a new [US] administration starting, is there any indication that you have felt since you are in office dealing with policy, about some changes or some signs that a multilateral organization is really welcome? Because no matter what you are going to do and what you are going to decide, as you know very well, at the end we will have to do it all together with 192 member states, so I would be curious to know if you have any indication of a new kind of philosophy or approach on the United Nations

and if it will become again that kind of multilateral instrument that we need to address global issues. Thank you.

Eva Busza: To the issue of the crisis and is there a plan in place, yes there is. During the avian influenza, that really jarred the planning within the UN system, so all of that is in place. Even as we are hearing the Director-General of WHO discuss what levels, how we should consider the current crisis, all of that is following procedures and processes that have been developed.

In terms of finances and the need to support different organizations like WHO – also, part of it is the health ministries of different member states – one of the big concerns that has occurred, but we don't really have that much data yet on it, is because of the economic crisis, there were some initial signals that some of the ministries of health were going to see their budgets cut. We don't have the data on that yet, but this has been one of the concerns of member states that has been discussed. When you're dealing with such a large issue, resources are always going to be a problem, and it's always an issue about prioritizing where those resources go. So in terms of do these organizations always need more resources? Yes. Will they be adequate to deal with the current crisis? I don't think we're in a position to say that yet. The good news is that because of the previous crises, they are much better equipped now to deal with what we are facing. So that would be how I would respond to that question.

On the issue of corporate social responsibility, one of the things that the Secretary-General has been very effective at doing is working with the business community. Part of it grows out of the Global Compact, which is the initiative that you spoke about that began under Kofi Annan, to bring the business community into the problem-solving for some of these global challenges. If you go back to the Davos discussions this year, there was the announcement of Global Compact II, which is very much the agenda moving forward on social corporate responsibility.

What I can tell you from the interactions that I've had on this agenda is that, for example, we have got the corporate world very engaged on the climate change agenda. That is a concrete area. Malaria, health issues are another area. There's been a little work moving towards some of the food crisis issues as well, but that's still in its infancy. If you want more details, the Davos website and the discussions of Global Compact II would provide you with a little bit more detail. There's also been a lot of work on water in that context.

On multilateralism and the new Administration that we are seeing in this country, this is, I think, a very promising time, and it's a confluence of several things. I think one of the issues is that we had a period, the past decade, when there was sort of a conviction that unilateralism was more effective. What we saw is that the magnitude and complexity of the problems that we are facing as a global community cannot be dealt with by single approaches; it requires multilateralism. I think that that lesson has been learned not only by the current Administration, but also we're seeing it reverberate across the member states. We see it because we're in constant demand, and the demands are increasing, on what we're being asked to assist with. When the Secretary-General was at Princeton two

weeks ago, he talked about the new multilateralism and very much saying that we are going to have to continue to strengthen and work together on our international instruments, across a whole range of issues. Our sense is that there receptivity and support for that, so that's good news.

Question: You spoke about state responsibility towards the UN. Could you please elaborate on that?

Eva Busza: As an organization that reflects the interests and agendas of our member states, it's absolutely essential that we get clear signals from our member states. That's one issue of responsibility. The second is: if we are asked to do something, we have to have the resources to do that. That's another responsibility. Third, if we are to reform, we need assistance; we need the best and the brightest to be helping us, and doing it in a way our member states want. So those are three very important elements of member states' responsibility for the organization to be effective in representing what it is that they want.

Question: This is a logical follow-on to the previous question, but all of the priorities that you outlined do require enhanced resources, and what kind of planning are you doing to clear up arrears of various countries, and to increase the contributions of member states for the various things you've outlined?

Eva Busza: The best that we can do is, internally we can make sure that what we deliver is efficiently and effectively done. That's what we can do. We can encourage member states, we can be accurate in our pricing of things, and then it's up to member states to decide if this is in fact the priority.

Question: This is a follow-up to the Global Compact question earlier. In March, the SG named a South Korean businessman who was earlier convicted of fraud, and I was wondering if you could explain that decision, why a man who was convicted of fraud in 2003 would be put on the board of a compact that supposedly protects and promotes corporate social responsibility.

Eva Busza: I don't know that particular incident, but we can talk off-line and I can try and get some information for you. I'm afraid I don't know the person in question or the issues around that case.

Gillian Sorensen: Thank you so much. Very interesting series of priorities for the Secretary-General.