

Ready for the Challenge



Jan Eliasson, Sweden's Ambassador to the US since 2000, will become the next president of the United Nations General Assembly for its 60th session beginning in September 2005. Eliasson served as Sweden's ambassador to the UN from 1988-1992 and was appointed the first Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs of the UN in 1992. He speaks about his new job, UN reform, and his hopes for the future.

The IAEA Bulletin talks to Jan Eliasson

Q. You take over as head of the UN General Assembly this year. What will your role be for this year?

I will chair the 191 member states of the United Nations General Assembly. We are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the United Nations during a crucial time of its history. By the way, former Secretary-General of the UN and a fellow Swede, Dag Hammarskjöld, would have been 100 years old this year.

Realities on the ground like the nightmares in Cambodia, Rwanda and Srebrenica demand quicker and more effective action from the UN. Some question the legitimacy and accountability of the UN. In response to such concerns, we need to mobilize to reform the UN. On the table we have a high-level panel report on reforming the UN and reform proposals from the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly. There are now a great number of proposals providing different ideas on how to reform the UN. We ought not least to discuss the basic issue of how to combine the demands of security with the demands of development and respect for human rights.

The UN Summit in September is expected to bring together a record number of Heads of State and Government and will deal not only with reform but to what degree the rich countries of the world are fulfilling the Millennium Declaration and Goals in terms of dealing with the challenges of development.

Talk at the Summit

World Leaders Gather to Tackle Global Challenges

In September 2005, the United Nations is holding a high level plenary meeting — also referred to as a summit — to tackle the challenges of development, security and human rights and to overhaul the United Nations. Kofi Annan's report, *In Larger Freedom*, lays the groundwork for the decisions at the summit of world leaders. The report promotes realignment of the world body to give additional weight to key development, security and human rights issues, while setting out plans to make the UN more efficient, open and accountable. Its recommendations are drawn in part from the conclusions of the two UN-commissioned panels on collective security and on the anti-poverty Millennium Development Goals as well as promises made in the Millennium Declaration of 2000. Key proposals include:

Development

- Developing countries to implement national action plans to meet the Millennium Development Goals, supported by increased development assistance by developed countries, including meeting their commitment to meet the 0.7 % target of gross national income by 2015 or sooner;
- Mitigating the impact of climate change by mobilizing science and technology and committing to a more inclusive international framework for stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions following the expiration of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012;

Security

- Agreement on a comprehensive convention against terrorism based on a clear and agreed definition, as part of a broader strategy to prevent catastrophic terrorism;

- States to complete, sign and implement a fissile material cut-off treaty to reduce the risks of proliferation of nuclear materials;

- Creation of a UN Peace-building Commission to help win the peace in post-conflict countries;

Human Rights

- Replacement of the Commission on Human Rights with a smaller, more-empowered standing UN Human Rights Council;

- All States to embrace the “responsibility to protect” as a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity;

- Establishment of a Democracy Fund to provide funding and technical assistance to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy;

UN Renewal

- Expansion of the UN Security Council to make it more broadly representative of the international community as a whole and the geopolitical realities of today;

- Streamlining of the Secretariat to be more flexible, transparent and accountable in serving the priorities of Member States and the interests of the world's peoples.

To access the full report go to www.un.org/largerfreedom

It is a huge agenda and I would hope that the Member States are ready for reform and vitalization of multilateral cooperation.

Q. What results can be expected from the summit?

I hope we will make progress both in the areas of development, security and human rights. We will of course not be able to solve all issues at this meeting. Some matters will undoubtedly be referred to the General Assembly for further consideration and for implementation.

2005 is a year of reform for the United Nations and a year in which the commitments of the rich countries regarding development in the world should be given concrete form. This entails both a promise and a problem. The promise is that we will help the UN and multilateralism move forward. The problem is that the world situation is fairly bleak and that the UN is experiencing setbacks and problems. So the task I face as President of the General Assembly is challenging and, in many respects, very difficult.

Q. What about the UN and United States? You've spent considerable time in Washington as Ambassador. How do you see UN and US relations evolving?

It is very important for the UN to be in a dialogue with the United States. Recent events in the world show the need of working together, not only between the US and Europe, but also globally. Global problems require global solutions.

The United Nations is the organization that was created for this purpose and it is my absolute conviction that the UN can come out stronger after the reform process. I know of the criticism of the UN in the United States on Capitol Hill. It is important to have an open dialogue between Congress and the UN.

The UN will not be a strong organization without the support of the United States. I hope Americans realize that a strong UN is in the best interests of the United States. We need to focus on the constructive pursuits of the UN. Afghanistan could serve as an example. After the atrocious terrorist events of 9/11 there was worldwide solidarity with

the United States. There was speedy action against the Taliban regime and against terrorism by the UN Security Council. Afghanistan is a contrast to what happened in Iraq.

But recently, the UN played an important role in the elections in Iraq. I am convinced that the UN could also play a role in the reconstruction of Iraq. With a different focus of the debate we could change attitudes on the UN.

Q. What do you hope the Summit will achieve in terms of global security and specifically security issues in the nuclear arena?

From events around the world, we are all keenly aware of the need to stay vigilant and sustain the momentum to keep strengthening security and the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The UN Secretary-General — as well as the high-level panel of experts he commissioned to examine global security — has recommended a course of action, and they have rightly commended the IAEA and the key roles it plays for nuclear safety, security, and peaceful development. The Summit must accelerate the push for achieving higher levels of global security — in all of its dimensions.

Q. As President, how can you act to change the UN?

It will primarily be a matter of acting as a catalyst for the will to implement reform within the UN. It is not I personally who will play the most important role. It is what we together can achieve in order to translate declarations into action. At the same time, I can avail myself of the experience that Sweden has in the field of reform. Ingvar Carlsson, our former Prime Minister, headed a commission on UN reform in the early 90s and published the report *The Global Neighbourhood*. It is an important document and there is every reason to study it more closely while we go through the reform process in the UN.

Jan Eliasson succeeds Jean Ping of Gabon as UN General Assembly President. Sweden and Gabon co-chair the UN High-Level Meeting on 14-16 September, 2005.

NPT Breakdown

Views on the 2005 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

States reviewing the world's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) were unable to reach substantive agreement at their conference in May 2005. The NPT is a landmark international treaty which was extended indefinitely in 1995 and has a near universal membership of States. Its objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei: "It is with regret that I note the inability of the States Party to the NPT, at their Review Conference in New York, to agree on how to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty. The lack of substantive agreement is particularly disheartening, given the urgent challenges we face, and the opportunity afforded by this Review Conference. Despite the outcome of the Conference, these challenges are still here and must be addressed. We still need to universalize IAEA authority under the additional protocol; tighten control over, and dissemination of, proliferation sensitive aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle (while ensuring assurances of supply); enhance mechanisms for dealing with non-compliance; and accelerate progress towards nuclear disarmament.

If there is a positive note to be taken from the conference, it is that the challenges we face have been clearly identified. I would urge all States to pursue in earnest solutions to reforming our faltering global security system — of which the non-proliferation regime is an essential part. The United Nations summit in September is a timely opportunity to launch this urgently needed reform."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan: "For 35 years, the NPT has been a cornerstone of our global security... Let me be clear: Failure of a review conference to come to any

agreement will not break the NPT-based regime. The vast majority of countries that are parties to the treaty recognize its enduring benefits. But there are cracks in each of the treaty's pillars — non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear technology — and each of these cracks requires urgent repair.

To revitalize the NPT, action will be required on many fronts. To strengthen verification and increase confidence in the regime, leaders must agree to make the International Atomic Energy Agency's additional protocol the new standard for verifying compliance with nonproliferation commitments. Leaders must find ways to reconcile the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy with the imperative of non-proliferation. The regime will not be sustainable if scores more countries develop the most sensitive phases of the fuel cycle, and are equipped with the technology to produce nuclear weapons on short notice. A first step would be to create incentives for countries to voluntarily forgo the development of fuel-cycle facilities. I commend the nuclear agency and its Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei, for working to advance consensus on this vital question, and I urge leaders to join him in that mission.

This September, more than 170 Heads of State and government will convene in New York to adopt a wide-ranging agenda to advance development, security and human rights for all countries and all peoples... Bold commitments would breathe new life into all forums dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation. They would reduce all the risks we face of nuclear accidents, of trafficking, of terrorist use and of use by countries themselves. It is an ambitious agenda, and probably daunting to some. But the consequences of failure are far more daunting. Solutions are within are reach; we must grasp them."

For more information, visit:
www.un.org/events/npt2005