Saner Elements of the World, Unite

A clarion call for action — for a reformed and strengthened United Nations

Saner elements of the world, unite — before our fragile civilization is destroyed by the extremists of both sides.

How can one explain the madness spreading across this beautiful earth of ours?

- When some followers of a faith whose very name means "peace and submission" (Islam) are driven to indiscriminate killings and suicide bombings. Whatever the provocations, surely the gentle Prophet of Islam would never have approved of such a course.
- When the most powerful nation and sole superpower on earth, the USA, allows its leaders to act as "judge, jury and executioner" all rolled into one. Surely the founding fathers of the USA would not have approved of such a course.
- When the United Nations — an international agency created for the second time in the 20th century — is crippled and neutered by the veto rights of the victors of World War II, and even after 50 years we are still only talking of reform without getting much done.
- When the saner elements of the world can only assemble periodically and protest weakly to show their disappointment and anger, but are unable to mobilize and stop, or even slow down, the extremists on both sides.
- When human rights are constantly being curtailed in the name of fighting "terrorism" in the world's most powerful democracy. What was once a torch-bearer of freedom is in danger of sliding back into the old imperialist mold through the doctrine of "pre-emption" and the New World Order.

- When walls, borders, prejudices and armaments proliferate, when might is declared right, and the focus shifts to regime change as and when it suits the high and mighty.

Then something has clearly gone seriously wrong with our world order — and it calls for urgent, resolute action by those affected: you and me. Unless we, the people of the world, take matters into our own hands and drive the saner elements to press the world's leadership to change course or step aside, our occasional protests will be of no avail, and may come too late.

What needs to be done

Let all who share these ideas join hands and raise their voices together, building into such a rising crescendo that it can no longer be ignored and drowns out the madness of the neoconservatives and the fanatics of this world. Let a tidal wave of world opinion brush aside the extremists, and let sanity once again rule the world.

> *Even if we cannot yet abolish war, power no longer resides in the "barrel of the gun" — it is steadily shifting to the citizens of the world, through "clicks on the internet".*

The best instrument for this purpose, despite its inadequacies, is still a rejuvenated, reformed, refocused and strengthened United Nations. Much work has been done by the forums set up by successive Secretaries-General; there is the Millennium 2000 effort with its targeted programme, and many bureaucratic reforms have already been enacted.

Yet the basic problem remains untackled. By its very nature the UN — especially at policy level, in the General Assembly and the Security Council — is dominated by representatives of nation states. There is no real voice for the common citizens of the world, and no one has the sole and primary responsibility to study the present and future challenges facing mankind.

The world is fast becoming a global commons. Accelerating technology has outpaced the growth of our social and moral institutions, and may

even have undermined them. The systems of the 19th and 20th centuries, centred on nationalism, are outdated and can no longer serve mankind. Agencies such as the UN were created to overcome these limits; they have served a useful purpose, but they need drastic redirection and reform to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We must demand that the following happen now — and make our voices heard and count.

Action plan

A committee to be established by the UN Secretary-General, mandated to produce a reform package within three months — building on the work of the many committees before it — covering:

- Review the size and workings of the Security Council, and abolish or dilute its veto powers.
- Make the UN more of a people's organization, rather than a representation of nations, by strengthening the role of civil society.
- Find and develop independent sources of income to lessen the UN's dependence on contributions from nations. In the transition, if member nations are unwilling to help, let the resources be generated by the civil sector, NGOs and motivated private enterprises and foundations.
- Give the UN suo motu powers — the authority to take up any issue of vital concern to the world, whether or not the parties concerned want it.
- Give the UN a judicial rather than merely a recommendatory role — moving towards world government with the ability to implement decisions.
- Move quickly towards a world parliament elected by adult franchise, on the pattern of the European Parliament.

A Council of Sages

Pending a world parliament, the Secretary-General should move to establish a "Council of Sages": people with a demonstrated record of

service to the common interests of mankind. Members would be chosen through a transparent process, perhaps on the pattern of the Nobel prizes, and could be endorsed — if not elected — by the world's citizens via the internet.

The kind of person who could serve is exemplified by Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, the Aga Khan, Prince Hassan of Jordan, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dominique de Villepin, Arundhati Roy, George Soros, Gro Harlem Brundtland and Fernando Henrique Cardoso — drawn from different parts of the world, but willing, able and committed to put the common interests of the world and its citizens ahead of allegiance to their own nations, states or groupings.

Such a council would give the Secretary-General — acting as managing director of the board — the collective insight and clout to resist pressure to turn the UN into a debating society where national and regional interests reign supreme. Unless its attention shifts to international and common citizens' issues, the UN will not fulfil the tasks its founders set in its Charter, nor help save the world from the follies of the neoconservatives and the fanatics.

In brief

- Mobilize the citizens of the world as a counterforce to the pressures exerted by the neoconservatives at one end and the fanatics at the other.
- Strengthen and reform the UN so it can act autonomously and effectively in the true interests of the world's citizens — not be dominated, as today, by the powerful veto-wielding states.
- Sign this call to convey your support for its contents and objectives.
- Help circulate the Clarion Call worldwide, in different languages.
- Pledge your time and finances to further the cause.
- Urge the UN Secretary-General to form a committee to finalize UN reform on a time-bound plan.
- Urge the Secretary-General to establish, transparently, a Council of Sages with the confidence of the world's citizens — in preparation

for a truly representative world parliament.