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Session III: The UN in the Second Year of Ban Ki-Moon's Leadership

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Gillian Sorensen: We have an extraordinary opportunity here to hear an inside voice on the future strategic planning of the United Nations. Bob Orr has survived the leadership of two Secretaries-General; he served under Kofi Annan and now Ban Ki-Moon. He has such an impressive and diverse background. He has worked at Harvard, he's been head of the Washington office of the Council on Foreign Relations, he has worked for the National Security Council, and he's worked for USAID, and so on. The thorough bio is in your books, so I won't dwell on that, but I will just repeat his actual title, which is quite descriptive. He's Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Planning and Policy Coordination in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Bob, thank you for coming back, and the floor is yours.

Dr. Robert Orr: Thank you, it's great to be here. Someone said it's like Old Home Day, it is, it feels like it, with all the friendly faces around the table. And I really enjoyed the discussion last year, I thought it was a really strategic discussion. And since the word strategic is in my title, any group that I can have a strategic discussion with is a good group. So you can help me do my job; I love it; I need it.

What I thought I would do is maybe briefly lay out our strategic direction; what the Secretary-General's priorities are: what we have called his priorities for 2008 and beyond. Of course the "and beyond" part will evolve, but I think you can take it as a given that what I'll lay out here this morning is really what we are focused on this year. Not to say that other things aren't important and that we're not doing other things, but strategically, what are issues that have a moment right now, that we need to drive? The Secretary-General is focused on three sets of priorities this year, as we look to the future.

The first is creating a UN that can deliver results to those most in need. There are two parts to this that bear parsing. Delivering results: the UN has long been an exceptional platform for normative discussions; the UN has not always been an operational arm in all parts of our activity. We have become increasingly operational on areas that go well beyond peacekeeping and humanitarian affairs, areas we've been operational in for a long time, but now stretch into a whole range of our previously normative areas, including

human rights, including things like work on elections. There are whole ranges of areas where we are operational where we were not designed to be operational originally, so we are really focused on our systems; being able to deliver results in these areas.

And then the second part: “to those most in need.” Our prioritization will focus on those most in need. This has taken various forms. The Secretary-General has spoken about the need to address the “bottom billion” right now; it’s not necessarily the exact construct of the bottom billion that is in the exceptional book by that name, but it is the concept of really targeting those who have been left behind, whether by economic processes, by war, by famine, you name it. Really targeting what we as the UN can do for those most in need in all of our areas: peace and security, human rights, and development. Of course, we have a tailor-made opportunity on two of those three pillars this year, with this year being the halfway point of the Millennium Development Goals. The Secretary-General will convene, with the President of the General Assembly, a summit-level event following on a summit-level event last year on climate change, which really changed the terms of the debate on climate change. We hope to do the same thing with the Millennium Development Goals this fall, in September.

Also, this year is the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We have to move this from simply an anniversary, and a celebration of a declaration, into operational terms. We have been pushing very hard. The former Secretary-General backed a doubling of the resources of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, specifically to have operational capacity at the field level, at the country level. Traditionally, almost all of the UN’s capacity on human rights has been based in Geneva. We are now getting more people on the ground in more places, and we see the difference. From what has happened in Nepal, the fact that we’re actually on a constructive track in Nepal, difficult as it is, due largely to the presence of a large number of human rights monitors.

The incredible efforts of Kofi Annan as mediator in Kenya were supported by human rights monitors in the field that we got in in a timely enough manner that when the parties were looking at the invitation to facilitate a resolution to their conflict, all of a sudden they knew that they could be held accountable for what was going on on the ground, because we had people there watching and documenting. It’s not been talked about much publicly, but that played, according to the participants themselves, an important role that they knew people were looking over their shoulders and they could be held accountable. So getting more capacity onto the ground on human rights is something that is happening and that we would like to push even further this year, on this sixtieth anniversary year. So that’s the first group of areas. It’s not an exhaustive list, but it’s that we want to focus on delivering results to those most in need.

The second priority is to really codify, with the member states of the UN, an accountability compact. The Secretary-General, since he came in, has been driving very hard at making us more accountable; making sure that the Secretariat and the system, the executive arms of the UN, are fully accountable, internally as well as to the member states. This is trying to fundamentally reestablish a trusting relationship with our member

states, that had been battered in recent years by things like Oil-for-Food and the like. Now that we've come out of that, with a fairly strong reiteration that we've actually done quite well in fact, in most cases, but that the perception was much worse than the actual facts, that we need to address the perception by driving much harder in this area. We've done so many things on an accountability front that individually might not make headlines, but together, I think, mean that we can all feel confident that the UN is not only increasingly accountable, but more accountable than, if I dare say, most of our member states are.

I shouldn't say things like that, but I'm going to, because I feel that strongly about it. We are doing the right things, and we need to continue to do that, so if we can be purer than the driven snow, it will give us a bit of leverage to really push back when either the UN is attacked, or when we need our member states to kind of answer to their higher angels. The compact part of this is that accountability can't be just us; it can't be just the executive arms of the UN. It must be our member states as well. And they really don't like to hear this. In fact, when the Secretary-General started talking about an accountability compact that's us to you and you to us, the "us" here was not to the Secretariat, it was to the organization. That when you take decisions, you have to back them up, whether that's in the Security Council, when you take bold decisions to deploy a mission to Sudan, well then, you, the member states who voted for that, are going to have to come forward with the human, political, and financial resources to back it up.

But it's not just a Security Council issue. It's an organization-wide issue, that as member states pass mandates, they must hold themselves accountable to those mandates that they have passed. The ability of the organization to sustain grandstanding is quite minimal. All of us, member states and parts of the system alike, have to deliver on what we say we're going to do. So that accountability compact takes many forms, but I think that initially we've done most of the work on our side, and we are now calling on member states to really deliver with us on the parts that member states need to hold themselves accountable for.

As you can imagine, that's a difficult discussion sometimes. This is everything from, you pass a resolution on Sudan and then we can't get the helicopters that are essential for that mission to actually be able to deploy in a safe way, or to achieve the mandate. That's unacceptable. The Secretary-General's gone from country to country to country saying, "You've publicly supported this mission, now where are the helicopters?" We've gotten down to the level where we can tell you, we have lists of the helicopters everyone in the world has. And we can talk with every other state and every foreign minister and every defense minister about, what about the 30 you have over there? And they're usually horrified that we even know this. But this is what we talk about when it's accountability. It's not just passing a resolution, it's following through on it. And that's with troops, that's with political support, and financial support, as well as those critical assets.

The third area of priority for the Secretary-General is what we might call global public goods, or global goods. We've actually taken the "public" out of it, even though that is the initial genesis of the concept. These are those goods which are truly global in nature,

which everyone partakes of, those that require all 192 member states to deliver something. If I might just distinguish this here, an example would be something like climate change, where you need everybody at the table to get a solution, and it affects everybody, and nature of the problem is contagious; it crosses borders at will. These types of problems are different than the other problems we have, and the way that we have to solve them is different. It's not to say they're more important than other issues, but they are different, and some of them are tremendously important.

But it's the difference, I would say, between climate change and peacekeeping. Both are crucial missions of the UN. We have to do something on both of these. But for peacekeeping, you need a core group of countries with political power, the Security Council, let's use a shorthand, to decide something's worth doing. You need a core group of countries with human assets, troop contributors, and material contributions of the nature I just described, helicopters, to help solve a problem in one country, or in a region. That is something of global value, if we solve a war in a country, but it is not contagious across all parts of the globe. It is not of concern, quite frankly, to 192, so we mobilize parts of our system and parts of our member state core, to solve certain problems.

These global goods issues really cut across everyone, and therefore the availability, and the difficulty, of the numbers game, is offset in some ways by the fact that every country recognizes it has something at stake. What's in this basket? Climate change is maybe the classic global good issue, but global public health is increasingly so as well, the fact that it is now demonstrable that health issues are literally contagious across borders, but also having impacts that even ten years ago we neither saw nor understood. Now we both see and understand we need to mobilize around global health in a way that we have not in the past.

This is something that is unusual for the UN. I think the former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, did an incredible job of choosing one specific health issue, HIV/AIDS, and elevating it to a strategic level for all to engage. So we have a bit of a model here. But we are talking about HIV/AIDS and beyond. There are a number of global health challenges that need this same treatment, so the Secretary-General has been convening all the heads of the UN system on global health, but then the myriad actors that have grown outside the UN system on global health; the private monies, the foundations, the individuals, the corporations. We're going to have to mobilize all of those actors, and there has been kind of a universal call for increased coordination and integration of these various efforts, and many have turned to the Secretary-General, so we are focused on that as another global goods issue.

Another global goods issue that may not usually find its way into a discussion alongside climate change and global public health is terrorism, or counter-terrorism, to be specific. The nature of global terrorism today has meant that those who thought they were immune from the effects of terrorism have been disabused of that notion. And I think it's one reason that the General Assembly passed a rather impressive global counter-terrorism strategy in September 2006. The recognition that this was not someone else's problem. Everyone is affected by the terrorism problem, to differing degrees, but everyone is

affected. One of the revelations that I think has sunk into many is that even if a problem starts locally, it has become regional in many cases, and in some cases become global, very quickly.

And then there are things like the use of the internet, not just for propaganda purposes but for actually financing, training, executing terrorist operations. You cannot address terrorism unless you have a global approach to this, because imagine how sensitive issues of governance of the internet have been, even before you get to terrorism. Now layer terrorism onto that. How do we get a solution that recognizes the importance of something like the internet for free speech, and at the same time addresses real problems of its abuse? So it's a global good issue to try to fight terrorism, and we have a very good strategy that was passed by the GA that will be reviewed. It's two-year review is in September.

Just a quick side note: one of the issues that we are going to focus on as part of that strategy, that's in the strategy that we've been developing, is a serious approach to the victims of terrorism. Working with victims is extraordinarily sensitive. Governments are very bad at this. All governments, I might say, are quite bad at this. It's because when you have victims, you can quickly be blamed for failing to protect those victims. And so structurally, there is a governments vs. victims dynamic, all over the world. If you are going to address terrorism, it has to have a human face.

And victims can't be shunted aside and stuck in the corner and said, oh, that's a shame, and give them a little payoff to be quiet over there. That's not the way to deal with it. We have to engage victims. We have to put them on a platform; let them talk about what this meant for them and their families. And then start, I said start, a truly constructive dialogue between victims and governments about then how to address the problems. We are going to do something a bit daring, if I might say, this fall, and have a major engagement between victims from around the world with member states of the UN. We've been preparing this very systematically to make sure that this does not go awry. It still could, because it is so sensitive, but we think that if we are to really make progress on building a truly global coalition against terrorism, we need to take some chances, and this is one that we think is worth taking.

A last global goods issue that I've put on the table is non-proliferation and disarmament. Unlike the three I've mentioned – which are “new issue” – this is an old issue. When the UN was created, neither climate change nor terrorism nor global public health were really part of our mandate, that's not what we were created to do, but these problems keep washing up on our doorstep because a universal approach is needed to these global goods issues. So these three are the “new” ones that have ended up on the UN docket. Non-proliferation and disarmament started with the UN's creation, and yet we have really stalled in recent years, and we need to reinvigorate that agenda.

One area in particular that is a now part of the agenda is the threat on the biological side. The fact that we have had and are experiencing a revolution in the life sciences right now creates huge opportunities on the global public health side, and huge vulnerabilities on

the misuse of these technologies. And we don't have a regime for either one. We have no real regime for global public health, and we have no real regime for containing the dangers of the misuse of the new sciences; biotechnology and the like. So one of the areas within this non-proliferation and disarmament area in which we want to focus is on this revolution in the life sciences: how to tap into its potential and spread the benefits of biotechnology and the revolution in the life sciences and how to start to create a system to mitigate the dangers that those same technologies can sometimes pose.

So this three part agenda, really three baskets of priorities: global goods, this accountability compact, and delivering results for those most in need, is really where we're headed. It's obviously quite ambitious in that it's a lot of different things, but there is a real coherence to it, that if you make progress on the accountability side, you'll have increased capacity to deliver results to those most in need. If you make progress on some of these global goods issues, it automatically has positive side effects for the accountability issues, and for the delivering results. So we see linkages between these three baskets, and we're trying to exploit those linkages.

It's an aggressive agenda, I would say, a bold agenda, but it's rather exciting, I might say. The opportunity of a new Secretary-General to define and re-define the agenda has been taken up on a number of issues – climate change, for example – and I think increasingly on MDGs. So we feel like there is some momentum on some of these. We can name lots of problems, and each one of these I just gave you, there are plenty of hurdles to be jumped, but we are moving. And I'd like to leave the rest of the time for the discussion.

Questions and Answers

Ms. Sorensen: Thank you, Bob. There is a clear challenge, and an ambitious agenda, as you say. I know there are lots of questions so let us begin.

Question: To the organizers, I hope you will invite Bob for a third year in a row! It is so nice to hear Bob's strategic thinking. It is very nice that you spoke about the bottom billion from Oxford [*The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* by Paul Collier] and you talked about public goods, which is Jeffery Sachs and his *Common Wealth* [*Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet*], his new book, and it's wonderful that you spoke about it. And you spoke about accountability compact, of public goods – excellent. How do we get the bureaucracy out of the United Nations from which I fled for an NGO. It stands as a big block. And how can United Nations engage the grassroots organizations, the non-governmentals, and to truly make it a movement for international and sustainable development? That's my question.

Dr. Orr: An easy one! Now I know why you fled to the NGO side because clearly speaking your mind is important to you, and to us.

Question: And let me speak my mind for one last thing: how can America get its leadership role back?

Dr. Orr: We'll solve the bureaucracy at the UN, and then we'll solve the U.S.-UN relationship. (*Laughter*). On the bureaucracy question, I'm very glad you asked this. The level of change that we're talking about with this kind of agenda that I've laid out is quite tremendous and it is both exciting for our staff and scary for our staff and we recognize that. Speaking honestly, when the Secretary-General came in as an outsider – if you think about it, the UN hasn't had an outsider as Secretary-General for quite some time – and he came in with a lot of views that he had heard about the inside of the UN. He had been here a year in the GA and had seen some of it. But I must say that there is a process of engagement between a fresh look from the outside and from the inside, where things really do look different. And I think there has been a mutual cultural shock between the Secretary-General and the staff of the UN. I think that the level of change he wants and the speed of change he wants, and the level and speed of change that some of the staff want is quite different. But that said, if there is one thing about the Secretary-General that has sunk into everyone, even those who don't like too much change too fast, is his sincerity. No one doubts his motives here. And I think he has earned the trust of a broader cross section of staff over recent months, which is very important to making these kinds of changes.

But this brings me back to our accountability compact. I think now the staff are starting to move in the right direction and willing to make changes and willing to be more accountable and willing to do more and spend more time. But we now need member states to support us in this. We can't make the kind of change we need and the reform we need if member states pass all these wonderful resolutions and don't back them up with resources. And I mean all kinds of resources and we are stuck there.

Right now a lot of very good reforms are still sitting on the desks in the Fifth Committee, in the General Assembly and the only thing I can say here is we will continue to push this agenda. The Secretary-General was affectionately called in recent days by someone at the Chief Executive Board in Switzerland that just met said, "If there is one thing that you've proven, it's that you are wonderfully stubborn." And I think "wonderfully stubborn" is not a bad trait in this regard. When he digs in on an issue he sticks with it. So expect him to be wonderfully stubborn on this. I think he will.

I would like to say just one word on the U.S.-UN relationship. This is a constant area of concern. Throughout the organization everyone keeps one eye on what the U.S. is doing and how it's relating to the UN. Let's just say that we've come a long way baby. In the last couple of years, the U.S.-UN relationship has been solidifying on many, many fronts. That doesn't mean we don't have problems with the U.S., we do. But we do with a lot of our major stakeholders.

The area that I would say is in most jeopardy right now is on funding. The U.S. has become very constructive on the whole range of policy issues and the vast majority of the membership would recognize that the U.S. is really playing ball with the rest of the membership. What we haven't seen though is a budgetary follow-through on that. Right now we're looking at a \$600 million shortfall in U.S. payments this year. We've never

seen anything like that if the President's budget is not amended with large amounts of extra money. So that is quite significant. Even if we're "doing well" between the U.S. and the UN, if money upends us, all that goodwill in the world will upend over night. So in all of your conversations, if you can engage with all of your interlocutors – in particular in Washington – to just let them know that, while there is a very constructive U.S.-UN agenda right now, it will all evaporate overnight if we have a financial crisis. And we will have a financial crisis by the end of this year if that shortfall is not remedied.

Question: I'm Tamara Boorstein, with Ogilvy Public Relations. My question is about the World Health Organization. In some ways the World Health Organization is interacting quite well with the new foundations, like the World Lung Foundation, Bloomberg, and other health organizations. But then there's the big behemoth: the Gates Foundation and, for many of you this is from the *Economist* article, and so, how are they engaging groups and other organizations?

Dr. Orr: Great question. It is Gates and others. Gates may be the behemoth but there are new private monies available to global health that dwarf, and I mean dwarf, the public monies available for public health. And that's a totally new equation. So it's not just a question of just accommodating them, it's actually creating common cause, which is what we need.

The Secretary-General last October convened a meeting of all the behemoths, outside and inside. We had all the major UN health-related entities. So that's not just Margaret Chan and the WHO, it was UNAIDS, UNICEF, GAVI, the Global Fund – you know, all the UN-related core. But then it was Gates and Rockefeller, and going down the list, all the major foundations. We are going to have a second meeting. At that first meeting we kind of scoped out the problems and what came out of the meeting was a very strong sense that we have to work together. The private actors can't do this alone. They are shooting off in different directions and if they are not willing to be coordinated and be part of a system, their money will be wasted in many ways. And likewise, the UN system has to accommodate these new actors into their own thinking. We don't have all the money anymore. We don't even have all the normative power that we once had. But the good news is that coming out of the October meeting, the representatives on both sides of the equation: the UN system heads and the heads of the major private entities came out saying, "We want to work together".

And next week we will be in Atlanta. President Carter will be hosting a meeting of the same group: all the UN heads and then all the key outside entities, focusing on driving the agenda on three specific areas: global health systems – it's a broad issue of health systems but we've been focused on the human resources question, we're not going to look at the financing systems. The second area we're going to focus on is women's health. This is an area of great concern right now and of great opportunity. The MDG that is most lagging of all the MDGs is maternal health. How can this be? This is something that relates so directly to all of the MDGs and yet, while we've made huge progress on targeted interventions on child mortality, we have not made anywhere near that level of progress on maternal health, when everyone thought, going into the MDGs, these two

would move together. You get maternal health and child mortality solved together. But they've moved in divergent paths. So how do we bring those two back into convergence along the path of very positive developments. The third area is on neglected tropical diseases. Depending on how you count, there are some say 7, some say 13, and some say maybe 17 or more tropical diseases that we know exactly what the problems are, we know exactly what drugs are needed to solve them, and yet we have never mobilized to solve them. President Carter has of course been quite dogged on the Guinea worm problem in West Africa and is on the verge of actually eradicating it. And the implications for productivity, health, economic, and political outcomes across the board are immense. But there are these other tropical diseases as well that have been neglected as we focused all the resources on HIV/AIDS and other things that do deserve the resources. But now to get a concerted effort to address these could have huge implications for parts of the world that are suffering from one or more of these tropical diseases.

So these are just three areas that the group agreed in October we want to focus on and develop an approach to these three areas. We'll talk about these next week in Atlanta and hopefully we'll be saying a bit more about that.

The Secretary-General has invited the Elders Group to join this meeting. So we will have *inaudible*, Mary Robinson, Jimmy Carter. Desmond Tutu is not able to come. We will have three of the elders with us to try to focus global political leaders on health problems as political issues, not just as health or technical issues.

Question: Louis Kantrow, International Chamber of Commerce. I want to join my colleagues in thanking you for such a clear articulation of the strategic direction. In describing the platform, global goods, you mentioned that these are different problems with different solutions and that these are cross-border problems and that we need to have creative solutions to them. What I'm wondering is, we are able to observe a growing willingness on the part of the UN to bring in multi-stakeholders to the discussion. Is there now, from your perspective, a growing interest in also including these private-sector groups in terms of the decision-making process and how you evolve your solutions?

Dr. Orr: Louise, it's funny, just as you were saying the word "multi-stakeholder" I had just written it because my answer is embedded in your question. What sets these global goods issues apart is really that the solution has to be multi-stakeholder. It's not just that we need all 192 governments working together, it's that we need the private sector, we need civil society, and we need organized civil society on these. You will not solve global health, public health challenges, climate change, counter-terrorism, or non-proliferation through exclusively governmental means. And that's a hard message to give to our member states but that is what we're giving because this is what the nature of the problem is. So you member states need to organize in a way that opens the doors for these multi-stakeholder discussions.

On climate change, we've made a huge amount of progress and we are trying to learn some of those lessons and apply them in these other areas to determine a multi-

stakeholder process that can move change at the pace required and not scare the living daylights out of our board of directors, our member states. So that's the process we're engaged in right now on all of these fronts. As I mentioned, on biotechnology, we will be building a multi-stakeholder platform where governments can engage with scientists, with commercial interests, with civil society, with ethicist, to bring this discussion full circle to everybody.

But I think the multi-stakeholder model is still a term of art. We need to develop the art now. "Multi-stakeholder" has meant many things to many people but in this basket of goods, that's where we have to go and have to develop our thinking and our acting on that much further.

Ms. Sorensen: Bob our clock is out.

Dr. Orr: I took too long on the answers! (*Laughter*).

Ms. Sorensen: They were very excellent and very thought-provoking answers. Thank you very much for being here.

Dr. Orr: Well I saw that Jane just walked in so now you can get to the main course, I was the appetizer. (*Laughter*).