

Forum: General Assembly 5 - Administrative and Budgetary (GA5)

Issue: Effective Measures to ensure the transparency and accountability of the United Nations

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Introduction

When it comes down to the transparency and accountability in any organization, body or government, there is no doubt of its vital importance. Being anchors which support truth, objectivity, and key tenets in a healthy functioning organization, the principles of transparency and accountability are what credible and trustworthy institutions are built on. In that capacity, accountability goes past the minor obligation of the delivery of an assignment or administration. It implies answerability if an administration isn't conveyed in an opportune and effective way with the end goal that it becomes a burden, where it is the citizens right yet additionally their obligation to request it. Some nations such Botswana, Chile or South Korea demonstrate that there is a solid positive connection between transparent political and economic establishments and the maintenance of their development.

Moreover, as the United Nations is an intergovernmental association with a mission that aims to “maintain international peace and security, protect human rights, deliver humanitarian aid, promote sustainable development and uphold international law,” the notions and concepts of transparency and accountability are in the United Nations' best interests. Conducive to good governance and acting as an all inclusive method of reasoning for the arrangement of good record administration frameworks, documents, and financial regulatory and monitoring frameworks, the principles of transparency and accountability are metaphorical barriers against corruption, that which undermines all essential social values. Debilitating the control of law, and undermining trust in political establishments, corruption breeds toxic environments in which only the degenerate flourish. Along these lines, it upsets scientific research, diminishes the elements of professions and hinders the emergence of knowledge. In this regard, corruption is the major contributor to the creation and prolongation of human misery and the inhibition of development at all levels.

In light of this, associations with an absence of transparency and accountability are more susceptible to strife and social distress, where the persistence of corruption antagonistically impacts the provision of health and training alongside being a contributing variable to the diligence of destitution and

other imbalances. Given the scale and status of the United Nations as an intergovernmental organization, the loss of international confidence in the organisation only stands to reduce the efficacy of the solutions they seek to provide to the world. In the words of American founding father Patrick Henry, “the liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure, when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them.”

Definition of Key Terms

Transparency

The term transparency refers to the condition of being honest and clear with regards to intent. In the context of this research report, this refers to transparency in the United Nations.

Accountability

The term transparency refers to the condition of being held responsible for one’s actions. In the context of this research report, this refers to accountability in the United Nations.

Governance

The term governance refers to the act of governing over a nation, body or organization. In the context of this research report, this refers to governance of the United Nations.

Answerability

The term answerability refers to the consequence of one’s actions, being the responsibility that is justification of an individual or organization’s actions. In the context of this research report, this refers to answerability which manifests as a result of transparency and accountability in the United Nations.

Corruption

The term corruption refers to the unjust conduct of those in power, where something once civil and balanced has become fraudulent. In the context of this research report, this refers to the importance of transparency and accountability in preventing corruption.

Reform

The term reform refers to the process of making changes to something, most often used to refer to practices and institutions. In the context of this research report, this refers to the reform of the United Nations.

Background Information

Reform of the United Nations

Since the late 1990s, there have been numerous calls for the reform of the United Nations (UN). Notwithstanding, there is little lucidity or accord about what reform may mean practically speaking. Both the members who want the UN to assume a more prominent role in world affairs and those who want its role confined to humanitarian work are otherwise reduced to using the term "UN reform" to allude to their thoughts. The scope of sentiment stretches out from the individuals who wanted to dispose of the UN completely, to the individuals who want to make it into a world government. With reform endeavors existing since the inception of the UN, the principles of transparency and accountability have been jargon which have been closely associated with the notion of the reform of the United Nations.

Accountability Frameworks in the United Nations

In paragraph 4 of Resolution 64/259, the United Nations requested the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) to submit to it for its thought at the primary part of its sixty-seventh session, "a comparative analysis report on various accountability frameworks in the United Nations system." Thus, the JIU incorporated this subject in its Program of Work for 2011. Consequently, the assessor accused of this assignment takes note that "accountability is complex, multi-dimensional and expectations vary and change depending on the lens through which it is viewed." Despite that, given the extent of the United Nations, the overseer found seven United Nations associations that had a solitary formal accountability structure, (ILO, United Nations, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, WHO), three Secretariat substances pertaining to the ECE, and other United Nations system associations that have different key segments of accountability to fluctuating degrees, a few of them with solid inside control frameworks or parts set up.

The review found that generally associations had several of the parts that make up accountability inside an organisation. The assessor finds that enormous steps have been made over the most recent couple of years and encourages organizations that have taken a proactive demeanor towards accountability by creating systems and inward strategies. In spite of the fact that not all associations have a formal internal control system in place, the greater part of the associations have the fundamental components that make up interior controls. Although there have been advances in order to improve these structures, more work is still possible and expected in the spheres of risk assessment, data and correspondence, and particularly in the zone of internal and external correspondence.

Peacekeeping

A job held by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, peacekeeping has been characterized as "a unique and dynamic instrument developed by the organization as a way to help countries torn by conflict to create the conditions for lasting peace." The UN as of now deploys more than 100,000 peacekeepers from 123 nations to 16 peace tasks all over the world. These missions are an imperative element in the UN's obligation toward global peace and security. However, poor execution and outright misconduct by a few peacekeepers in the field, matched with deficient organizational accountability measures, undermines the credibility of the UN and the peacekeeping being undertaken. Ranging from sexual abuse and murder to extortion and theft, several crimes have been committed by United Nations peacekeepers. As setting up execution principles is fundamental, an essential assignment would pertain to ensuring that peacekeepers are truly assisting in the implementation of tasks for which they were deployed for. This includes holding poor performers accountable, and although the United Nations has a determined approach of "zero resistance" of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by its workforce, the UN approaches to accountability stay substantially underdeveloped.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support (DFS) presented an archive of 52 indicators for assessing the accomplishment of the protection of civilians (POC) commands. In this sense, identification is also a central part of transparency in United Nations peacekeeping, without which an incredible obstruction is posed with respect to enhancing transparency and accountability of peacekeeper offence. As it is already difficult to reach an agreement revolving around what exactly peacekeepers should do and the kind of punishments they should receive, said vagueness only increases the probability of diverging opinions on fitting means of punishment.

Revitalizing the United Nations Assembly

On November 3, 2015, at a debate on revitalizing the United Nations Assembly, the President of the 70th session of the General Assembly, Mogen Lykketoft said that "to advance the values, principles and purposes of the United Nations, the General Assembly's role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency must be continuously reviewed and enhanced." Despite that, several states expressed their concerns and complaints, mentioning that what the UN Assembly needs is "greater transparency and accountability." As a response, the President was brought to state that the matter of transparency is vital and concerns every President of the General Assembly on forth. Given the corruption case regarding the previous President of the General Assembly John William Ashe, in which he was accused of engaging in a corruption scheme, the UN has reiterated the importance of improving the functioning of the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The United States of America

The USA is one of the P5 nations; it funds approximately 22% of the budget of the United Nations; the UN headquarters are located in New York. For better or for worse, it is abundantly clear that the USA have the most influence on the UN as a whole and how it is run. Therefore it is obvious that the United States would use their hegemonic influence over the United Nations to ensure that it is held accountable, that its inner going-ons are transparent, and that it can be relied upon by those in need. Indeed, the USA has already taken steps towards ensuring the transparency and accountability of the UN, through the “United Nations Transparency and Accountability Initiative”, which was created in 2007 in response to humanitarian abuses.

Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations

The Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations, commonly abbreviated as the JIU, was created experimentally on 4 November 1966 under General Assembly resolution 2150 (XXI), and was formally established 22 December 1976 under General Assembly resolution 31/192. The JIU is the only independent and external body that oversees the UN’s activities, and has full investigative authority. It is composed of 11 appointed inspectors, from 11 different nationalities, appointed for terms of 5 years, with a maximum of two terms. While the primary goals of the JIU revolve around ensuring efficiency of utilising resources, they also ensure that there is no abuse of finances for selfish and corrupt causes. The JIU thus play a huge role in ensuring that the United Nations remain fiscally accountable and transparent.

Department of Peacekeeping Operations

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, often abbreviate as DPKO, is the UN organ that acts as the link between the Security Council and the Peacekeeping Forces utilised by the UN. Specifically, they provide “political and executive direction to UN Peacekeeping operations around the world and maintains contact with the Security Council, troop and financial contributors, and parties to the conflict in the implementation of Security Council mandates.” As such, they play an important role in ensuring the effectiveness of the UN Peacekeepers, and can have a large influence on the behaviour of Peacekeepers, which is often a major component of the criticisms of the UN.

United Nations Dispute Tribunal

The United Nations Dispute Tribunal, often abbreviated as the UNDT, was established and became operational on 1 July 2009. Its primary function is to serve as a court system to hear and decide all cases filed by or on behalf of staff members, current or former, that regard appealing administrative actions and/or decisions that are alleged to be in violation of any or all agreement, specifically their terms of employment. This body therefore ensures transparency and accountability of the UN with regards to how it treats their employees. For example, James Wasserton, who was removed from his job for reporting a possible bribery scheme involving senior officials, filed a complaint with the UNDT, who ruled on his behalf and ordered the UN to pay him a \$65,000 for wrongful termination.

United Nations Development Programme

The United Nations Development Programme, often abbreviated as UNDP, is the Global Development Network of the United Nations. They advocate for change and connect countries to important and valuable resources, including knowledge, experience and resources to help them in building a better life. However, in the context of this issue, what should be noted is that they are one of the most transparent development organisations in the world according to the Aid Transparency Index. By looking at how the UNDP runs, functions, and assists, and then applying those principles and methodologies to how the UN itself runs, we can help ensure that the UN remain as transparent and accountable as an organisation of its nature needs to be.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
24 October 1945	U.N. is officially created
22 December 1976	Resolution 31/192 of the General Assembly is passed, establishing the Joint Inspection Unit, the UN's only external, independent oversight body.
1995	The Oil for Food programme is put in place in Iraq, which was plagued by accusations of corruption.
1996	UN study <i>The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children</i> is published, in which it is documented that "In 6 out of 12 country studies on sexual exploitation of children in situations of armed conflict prepared for the present report, the arrival of peacekeeping troops has been associated with a rapid rise in child prostitution."
2007	USUN launches the United Nations Transparency and Accountability Initiative in response to systemic humanitarian abuses.
1 July 2009	UNDT is established, which seeks to "hears and decides cases filed by or on behalf of current and former staff members appealing administrative decisions

alleged to be in non-compliance with their terms of appointment or contract of employment”

Relevant Treaties

- Statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, 22 December 1976 (A/RES/31/192)
- United Nations Convention on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration, 10 December 2014 (A/69/496)
- Enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector, 15 August 2013 A/68/326)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

In the light of the systemic abuse regarding humanitarian and development that occurred in early 2007, the USUN established the initiative “United Nations Transparency and Accountability Initiative” where fellow member states can overlook and oversee the terms of accountability and transparency within the UN over 8 areas in order to ensure that these terms are met and the rights of the system are not violated. The eight areas are as follows: availability of internal audits, public access to internal documents, “Whistleblower” policies, disclosure of financial policies, ethics office, oversight on internal bodies, adoption of the IPSAS in the terms of accounting standards, and transparency with the economic costs of voluntary activities. This solution is aimed to improve organisational performance and maintaining any previous and current issues regarding transparency and accountability within the UN.

The report “Enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector” (document [A/68/326](#)) reflects on progress made by the United Nations on the aspects of accountability and transparency. Although this report has outlined the issue as well as the progress towards the issue, it does not express the enforcement of accountability and transparency within UN. Despite the fact that it poses as a viable solution, its reliability and effectiveness towards the issue itself stands to be questioned as no substantial progress or initiative is made towards the issue itself.

Ideally the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has increased the transparency and accountability of its own programme and that of the United Nations. Where it has established an online portal (Open.undp.org) that allows public access to various UNDP files and documents in the efforts on increasing transparency and accountability within the UN and the UNDP. They have been a member of the International Aid Transparency Initiative since 2008. The issues that arise alongside this point is that

online portal are risks to cyber attacks. In this age of modern technology, the issues of cyber attacks happen very easily and essentially to the point of being undetected and hence, pose a large threat to the reliability and validity of the information released in the terms of accountability and transparency.

Possible Solutions

The means of increasing accountability and transparency within the UN is subjective to many risks and hence, it is required that every solution made holds these risks in mind. For example, if an online method of sharing information regarding UN activities is made accessible to the member states, while this would ideally increase the transparency within the UN, it would also be susceptible to cyberattacks, and hence the measures of security need to be fully sufficient.

Perhaps holding meetings with member states where the forms of accountability can be addressed such that the information and allegations made are clear and concise. This can include private corporations, and both local and international organisations that were subject to the same allegation. This will increase the accountability within the UN as it brings together all nations and organisations where questions can be answered and allegations made can be clarified. This would also increase cooperation and coordination between the UN, member states, and other NGOs.

Another way is to further enforce and support the USUN initiative “United Nations Transparency and Accountability initiative”. This can be enforced by the UN under the UNDP as well as representatives from member states that can ensure that this enforcement and implementation of the initiative is appropriate and correct in manner. In this manner, coordination and organisational performance can be increased to a substantial standard. The eight target areas, which are availability of internal audits, public access to internal documents, “Whistleblower” policies, disclosure of financial policies, ethics office, oversight on internal bodies, adoption of the IPSAS in the terms of accounting standards and transparency with the economic costs of voluntary activities, can be refocused. This can be overlooked by representatives of member states in coordination with the Secretary General such that the terms of accountability and transparency is upheld to highest standard in an appropriate and correct method. A small body of member states and UN official can form together as the party incharge that this is carried out.

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