

A more secure world:
Our shared responsibility

**Report of the High-level Panel on Threats,
Challenges and Change**



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Transmittal letter addressed to the Secretary-General from the Chair of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change

I have the privilege to transmit to you the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled “A more secure world: our shared responsibility.”

The report puts forward a new vision of collective security, one that addresses all of the major threats to international peace and security felt around the world. Our research and consultations revealed that ours is an age of unparalleled interconnection among threats to international peace and security, and mutual vulnerability between weak and strong. We found that the United Nations has been much more effective in addressing the major threats to peace and security than it is given credit for, but that nonetheless major changes are needed if the United Nations is to be effective, efficient and equitable in providing collective security for all in the twenty-first century.

Our mandate from you precluded any in-depth examination of individual conflicts and we have respected that guidance. But the members of the Panel believe it would be remiss of them if they failed to point out that no amount of systemic changes to the way the United Nations handles both old and new threats to peace and security will enable it to discharge effectively its role under the Charter if efforts are not redoubled to resolve a number of long-standing disputes which continue to fester and to feed the new threats we now face. Foremost among these are the issues of Palestine, Kashmir and the Korean Peninsula.

The members of the Panel may not be in full agreement with every specific point and detail of the report, but they all endorse the report and generally agree with its findings. I undertake to draw to your attention, however, that the members of the Panel disagree about the models put forth for Security Council expansion and the method for determining criteria for Security Council membership. Some members of the Panel believe strongly that only the model involving expansion of permanent membership, albeit without a veto, will equip the Security Council to deal with the new century's threats. Others believe equally strongly that the alternative model involving elected, long-term but non-permanent members is the better way to proceed. We all agree, however, that it would be a major error to allow the discussions needed to move towards a decision between the two options to divert attention from decisions on the many other necessary proposals for change, the validity and viability of which do not depend on Security Council enlargement.

Our report is addressed to you, but many of our recommendations will require commitment from and action by heads of Government. Only through their leadership can we realistically forge the new consensus required to meet the threats described in our report.

A more secure world: Our shared responsibility

Our deliberations drew on inputs from a wide range of sources, including Governments, academic experts and civil society organizations across the globe. None of our work would have been possible were it not for the extensive support we received. The following Governments made generous financial contributions to our work: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russian Federation, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey and United Kingdom. The following foundations and think tanks made financial or in-kind contributions to our work: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, New York University Center on International Cooperation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, Stanford University Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanley Foundation, United Nations Foundation and William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

I should like to conclude by thanking you most warmly on my own behalf and that of other members of the Panel for the honour of entrusting to us this important task. I also wish to register our gratitude to all those who have contributed over the past year to our process of reflection, and above all to our Research Director, Stephen Stedman, and the Secretary of the Panel, Loraine Rickard-Martin, and their staff, without whose hard work and intellectual contributions the present report would not have seen the light of day.



Anand Panyarachun

Chairman

High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change

3. Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, internal threats and the responsibility to protect

199. The Charter of the United Nations is not as clear as it could be when it comes to saving lives within countries in situations of mass atrocity. It “reaffirm(s) faith in fundamental human rights” but does not do much to protect them, and Article 2.7 prohibits intervention “in matters which are essentially within the jurisdiction of any State”. There has been, as a result, a long-standing argument in the international community between those who insist on a “right to intervene” in man-made catastrophes and those who argue that the Security Council, for all its powers under Chapter VII to “maintain or restore international security”, is prohibited from authorizing any coercive action against sovereign States for whatever happens within their borders.
- The principle of non-intervention in internal affairs cannot be used to protect genocidal acts or large-scale violations of international humanitarian law or large-scale ethnic cleansing*
200. Under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention), States have agreed that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and punish. Since then it has been understood that genocide anywhere is a threat to the security of all and should never be tolerated. The principle of non-intervention in internal affairs cannot be used to protect genocidal acts or other atrocities, such as large-scale violations of international humanitarian law or large-scale ethnic cleansing, which can properly be considered a threat to international security and as such provoke action by the Security Council.
201. The successive humanitarian disasters in Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Kosovo and now Darfur, Sudan, have concentrated attention not on the immunities of sovereign Governments but their responsibilities, both to their own people and to the wider international community. There is a growing recognition that the issue is not the “right to intervene” of any State, but the “responsibility to protect” of every State when it comes to people suffering from avoidable catastrophe - mass murder and rape, ethnic cleansing by forcible expulsion and terror, and deliberate starvation and exposure to disease. And there is a growing acceptance

that while sovereign Governments have the primary responsibility to protect their own citizens from such catastrophes, when they are unable or unwilling to do so that responsibility should be taken up by the wider international community - with it spanning a continuum involving prevention, response to violence, if necessary, and rebuilding shattered societies. The primary focus should be on assisting the cessation of violence through mediation and other tools and the protection of people through such measures as the dispatch of humanitarian, human rights and police missions. Force, if it needs to be used, should be deployed as a last resort.

202. The Security Council so far has been neither very consistent nor very effective in dealing with these cases, very often acting too late, too hesitantly or not at all. But step by step, the Council and the wider international community have come to accept that, under Chapter VII and in pursuit of the emerging norm of a collective international responsibility to protect, it can always authorize military action to redress catastrophic internal wrongs if it is prepared to declare that the situation is a "threat to international peace and security", not especially difficult when breaches of international law are involved.
203. **We endorse the emerging norm that there is a collective international responsibility to protect, exercisable by the Security Council authorizing military intervention as a last resort, in the event of genocide and other large-scale killing, ethnic cleansing or serious violations of international humanitarian law which sovereign Governments have proved powerless or unwilling to prevent.**