Can the United Nations Address the Interconnected Global Challenges of Today and Tomorrow?

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This essay attempts to review the capacity of the UN system, as configured at the secretariat level, to respond to today's interconnected global challenges and threats. The effectiveness of the system, of its mechanisms and operating procedures, is measured against core functions of the UN, namely early warning, policy planning, decision-making, coordination, implementation, and support provided to intergovernmental processes. Addressing climate change is taken as a case study.

The essay shows that there is only partial readiness and partial or no integration in the implementation of these core functions across departments and agencies in face of emerging, interconnected global challenges. In crisis situations the secretary-general has to make use of existing bodies through ad hoc combinations, which may produce suboptimal results. In this light, the essay briefly considers other possible institutional arrangements that could strengthen the effectiveness of the UN's response.

Introduction

The challenges facing the world in the twenty-first century are increasingly characterized by their global reach and their interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature. The food riots seen in several countries in early 2008 were an indication of the new trend of interconnectedness of political, climate, energy, agriculture, trade, technology, and other issues in the world of to-day.[2] Efforts to deal with such issues and related global crises in recent years have reaffirmed the value of multilateralism and coordinated national efforts, even if the modalities and institutional arrangements for such coordination are still unclear or being debated.

Sitting at the centre of the multilateral system, the United Nations and the numerous specialized agencies, funds, and programs revolving around it are expected to respond to these challenges and to help governments in addressing them. What is the role of "the UN system," what should it be, and is the system adequately equipped, able, and willing to carry it out? This question applies of course to the employees of the system, the international civil servants, including

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1. The views expressed here are those of the authors, in their personal capacity, and do not necessarily reflect the position of the United Nations or the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies

2. On interconnected global challenges and crises see for example: Weiss, Thomas G., Tapio Kanninen, and Michael K. Busch (2009), Sustainable Global Governance for the 21st Century, The United Nations confronts economic and environmental crises amidst changing geopolitics [Dialogue on Globalization—Occasional Paper No. 45], New York: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung with the Ralph Bunche Institute for international Studies.

most prominently the UN secretary-general and his agency counterparts. It also concerns the intergovernmental organs, such as the UN General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, and the corresponding bodies across the UN system.
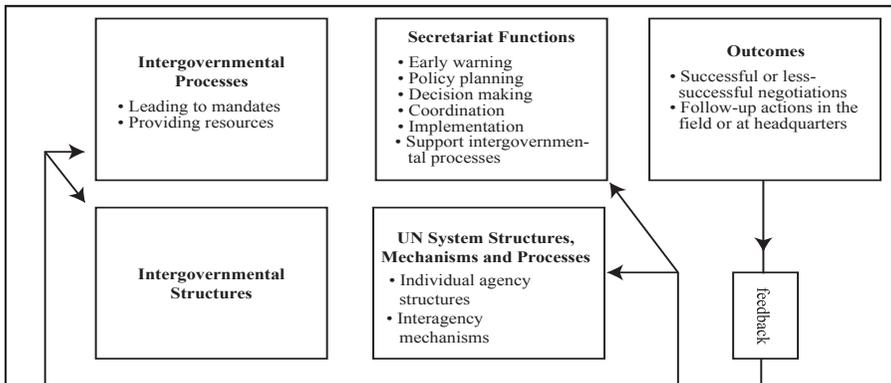
In reacting to the new realities of the twenty-first century, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has already assumed a new role, apart from the traditional good offices function in political negotiations, by increasingly focusing on environmental and socio-economic issues. A prominent example is the climate change negotiation process, in which he has already made and is expected to make further strategic interventions,[3] and the world food crisis, in response to which he has formed a high-level task force he is chairing to devise strategies and options.[4] This emerging new role in a more interconnected globe has not been fully recognized. It may well pan out that his/her contribution will be more needed in the foreseeable future in areas such as sustainable development, human security, and the management of interconnected global crises rather than in traditional peace and security negotiations. The implications of such a shift would be crucial for conceiving, developing, and providing the leadership and interventions needed to deal effectively with the world of the twenty-first century, as this study will demonstrate.

In this context, this essay attempts to review the capacity of the UN system to respond to current and, more importantly, to future interconnected global challenges and crises. Addressing climate change is taken as a case study. In terms of definitions, when reference is made to the UN system, it means the combination of the UN secretariat, headed by the secretary-general, and the secretariats of all specialized agencies, funds, and programs.

Overview of CORE Functions, Mechanisms, and Processes in the UN System

A Framework for Assessing the UN System's Response to Multifaceted and Interconnected Global Challenges

We focus in this study on the core secretariat functions—from early warning to support to intergovernmental processes—as presented in Graph 1 below. These functions and their connections to other elements included in the graph provide an overall assessment framework for the study.

Intergovernmental Processes
• Leading to mandates
• Providing resources

Secretariat Functions
• Early warning
• Policy planning
• Decision making
• Coordination
• Implementation
• Support intergovernmental processes

Outcomes
• Successful or less-successful negotiations
• Follow-up actions in the field or at headquarters

Intergovernmental Structures

UN System Structures, Mechanisms and Processes
• Individual agency structures
• Interagency mechanisms

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Graph 1: Un/Multilateral Decision-Making Framework

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3. For an overview of the role of the UN secretary-general on climate change, see http://www.un.org/climatechange (click on "Secretary-General" on the left), accessed on 24 July 2010. For a critical analysis, see the case study of this essay.

4. See http://www.un.org/issues/food/taskforce/ and http://www.un-foodsecurity.org

Of course, all of the above functions, processes, and structures are expected to be inter-linked, forming a continuum of planning and action rather than occupying completely sepa-rate boxes. In what follows, we first review the early-warning and policy-planning capacity of the UN system, then move to decision making, coordination, and implementation, as well as support given by the UN to intergovernmental processes. The same categories are used in the examination of our case study.

Early Warning and Policy Planning Capacity

Early Warning

Early-warning mechanisms regarding threats to public health,[5] tsunamis,[6] and other hu-manitarian contingencies, potentially also covering the threat of genocide,[7] have been de-veloped in the UN system over the years. Apparently though, no such mechanism exists for events and crises of a cross-sectoral nature. Various efforts have been made over the de-cades to create such an early-warning and comprehensive information system for the UN secretariat, from a political entry point, without success. The Office for Research and the Collection of Information (ORCI) was established in 1988 for political and global moni-toring functions but was merged into other offices in 1992. Similar efforts were tried more recently, for example, through the "Brahimi Report" and its proposed Executive Commit-tee on Peace and Security (ECPS) Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat (EISAS)[8] and in a smaller scale by the Policy Planning Unit of the Department of Political Affairs.[9] The deputy secretary-general for peace and security proposed by the high-level panel on threats, challenges, and change in its 2004 report would have been part of a coherent capac-ity for developing strategic options for early warning and analysis in the office of the UN secretary-general[10] but again the proposal was not implemented.

One promising new initiative is the Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS), recently renamed to "Global Pulse." It started as part of the UN system's response to the global financial and economic crisis and a related G-20 request, but expanded to cover monitoring and response to other systemic shocks as well. With an innovative approach, including the use of the latest ICT technologies and processing methods, it may form the basis for a standing, early-warning framework for the UN system on a multitude of humanitarian and sustainable development issues.[11]

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5. See World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for South-East Asia (2008): *Early Warning and Response to Outbreaks and Other Public Health Events: A Guide*, Available on line at http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Publication_CD-178.pdf, accessed on 24 July 2010.

6. See Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning on the web site of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), http://www.unisdr.org/ppew/tsunami/ppew-tsunami.htm, accessed on 24 July 2010

7. See mandate of the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide at http://www.un.org/preventgenocide/adviser/, accessed on 24 July 2010. A rather complete discussion on early warning on genocide can be found in Hamburg, David (2008): *Preventing Genocide, Practical Steps toward Early Detection and Effective Action*, Boulder, London: Paradigm Publishers.

8. See United Nations (21 August 2000): *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* [Brahimi Report], UN Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, also available online at: http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/, accessed on 24 July 2010.

9. See Kanninen, Tapio and Kumar, Chetan (2005): "The Evolution of the Doctrine and Practice of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention in the United Nations System," in Ramcharan, Bertrand G. (ed.): *Conflict Prevention in Practice; Essays in Honour of Jim Sutterlin*, Leiden/Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. See also Ramcharan, Bertrand G. (2008): *Preventive Diplomacy at the UN*, UN Intellectual History Project Series, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

10. *See A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*—Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, para. 98, in-cluded in United Nations (2 December 2004): *Note by the Secretary-General*, UN doc. A/59/565; also available online at http://www.un.org/secureworld/report.pdf, accessed on 24 July 2010.

11. See http://www.unglobalpulse.org/, accessed on 25 July 2010. For broader background see also UN system Joint Crisis Initiatives at http://www.unsceb.org/ceb/priorities/global-financial-crisis/initiatives/9, accessed on 25 July 2010.

Of course, to be effective, early warning needs to be connected to policy planning and decision-making processes and bodies, both at the level of the secretariat and that of member states/intergovernmental organs. While the secretary-general has the authority to "bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security" (Article 99 of the UN Charter), there is no corresponding mechanism and body to receive and act upon early warning on sustainable development issues, including economic, social, and environmental threats and challenges. That said, there are less direct and immediate ways of pointing at trends in the development area and advising for action, including numerous reports of the secretary-general to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly, as well as broader reports, like the annual report on the work of the organization.

Policy Planning[12]

A central role in policy planning at the UN proper is played by the Strategic Planning Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (SPU/EOSG), which falls under the assistant-secretary-general for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning. The SPU directly supports the UN secretary-general in his intellectual leadership role by identifying global issues meriting his attention and proposing options for action that would benefit from his advocacy and involvement. It is a rather small unit of half-a-dozen or so staff, enhanced depending on the issues focused on each time with additional personnel with varied backgrounds, from peace and security to environment and development to human rights. Such surge capacity, though reflecting the political realities, current priorities and resource requirements each time, depends on the generosity of donors, as it is sustained through voluntary contributions to issue-specific trust funds.

Major UN departments and offices have their own specialized units, some of which are larger in size than SPU. For instance, there is the policy planning unit in the policy and mediation division of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA); the peacekeeping best practices section in the policy, evaluation and training division, as well as the military planning service of the Office of Military Affairs in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); and the Policy Planning and Analysis Section of the Policy Development and Studies Branch in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Often, policy-planning functions are also carried out by the immediate offices of the heads of departments, exclusively or in cooperation with relevant dedicated units. This is for example the case in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), where a strategic planning unit has been recently created in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, in addition to research and planning branches in the various parts of the department, such as the policy analysis and development branch of the financing for development office, policy analysis and network branch in the division for sustainable development, and the development strategy and policy analysis unit in the development policy and analysis division. OCHA also has a strategic planning unit in the office of the under-secretary-general of the department.

The broader UN system seems to follow a similar pattern. For example, at the UN Development Program (UNDP), policy planning and analysis are performed by units in the Bureau

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12. Names and functions of policy units in the UN secretariat keep changing. We have used here the names found in the spring 2010 UN Telephone Directory.

for Development Policy, the Office for Development Studies, and the Office for Planning and Budgeting, as well as in the Office of the Administrator and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

Some of these entities undertake studies, evaluations, analyses, and other special tasks beyond traditional policy planning. In the past, the SPU/EOSG has brought selected planning units of the UN system together for brainstorming and seminars, although not in a very systematic and regular fashion. In Geneva, planning units of the UN system have also had joint meetings, while the rector of UNU and the director general of the UN office at Geneva used to hold annual meetings with major UN research and planning entities.

The UN planning system is partly intergovernmentally driven, in response to mandates and requests issued by member states, more often than not for studies and reports. Agency and departmental heads, however, can and do define more broadly the tasks assigned to their respective planning units. Broader perspectives do come in, through contacts with outside think tanks and academics, who are invited to brown bag discussions, seminars, and other activities by UN system entities, including those organized by the secretary-general's Strategic Planning Unit and the UN University's New York Office. Special reports and high-level panels often initiated by the secretary-general and including senior world leaders and experts, are also used to deal with major global issues. For example, the high-level panel on threats; challenges and change, established by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2003; and the high-level panel on global sustainability, established by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2010.[13] Occasionally, intergovernmental requests also force thinking on the interconnectedness of global challenges, as in the case of the secretary-general's report on the possible security implications of climate change, which was coordinated by DESA and brought together several UN entities for its preparation.[14]

Assessing the Adequacy of UN Early Warning and Policy Planning for the Future

For long-term thinking, original research, or bringing scholarly views into serious consideration, the UN often relies on outside consultants and think tanks such as the International Peace Institute (formerly International Peace Academy)[15] or the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum[16] in the political area, with the special case of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in the area of climate change (see below). This is less clear when it comes to interconnected global threats and challenges; partly, at least, because there are no think tanks that systematically cover this area. The Club of Rome, which is revitalizing itself,[17] and the World Economic Forum at Davos[18] seem to be among the few such think tanks that consider seriously interconnected threats ranging from the environment to development to peace and security in some aspect or another in their work.

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13. See http://www.un.org/secureworld/report.pdf, accessed on 24 July 2010, and http://www.un.org/en/gsp, accessed on 4 November 2010 respectively.

14. See United Nations (11 September 2009): *Climate Change and Its Possible Security Implications – Report of the Secretary-General*, UN doc. A/64/350.

15. See www.ipinstitute.org

16. See www.cppf.ssrc.org

17. See for instance its new program at http://www.clubofrome.org/eng/new_path/, accessed on 24 July 2010.

18. See for instance its global risk report at http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/globalrisk/Reports/index.htm, accessed on 24 July 2010.

As said before, early warning has not been a regular and systematic activity of the UN system except in some specialized agencies and other isolated cases, an issue we return to in our concluding section. Concerning policy planning, despite the establishment of numerous relevant units of various sizes and capabilities, there is evidently not a system or even a well-coordinated network of policy planning units in the UN system working toward common goals. Contacts with think tanks, academic institutions, and other civil society representatives performing relevant functions are of an ad hoc nature. Some efforts have been made, particularly by the secretary-general's SPU, to give overall guidance and direction to UN planning procedures and their content. SPU as currently configured, however, gets overwhelmed by many routine activities and is short on staff and other resources. Thus, it is often unable to do policy planning work with the consistence and effectiveness that many outsiders might consider necessary, taking into account its crucial importance. Regarding the broader UN system, HLCP of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) plays a policy-planning role on a larger time frame in those areas identified as being of system-wide concern.

Could the policy planning support directly available to the secretary-general be strengthened? We believe that would be very sensitive, both institutionally and politically. Such a move could be easily seen to be undertaken at the expense or exclusion of other important resources available in the rest of the UN system and could thus trigger institutional rivalries and suspicions. Also, member states might feel the secretary-general is overstepping his mandate, especially if he attempted to establish a robust early warning system, as happened with the Brahimi Report and the aborted EISAS, as mentioned before. In our conclusions, we briefly explore other alternatives for strengthening the early-warning and policy-planning capacity of the UN.

Structures and Processes for Decision Making, Coordination, and Implementation
Over the decades, a rather elaborate system has developed for decision making and coordination within the UN secretariat and the broader UN system. The UN secretary-general, in the case of the secretariat, and the heads of agencies, funds, and programs, retain the final word on substantive and managerial decisions in their respective organizations. However, a number of collective bodies prepare the options and influence those decisions or decide directly on issues for which authority has been delegated to them. In the UN secretariat the main such bodies are the following:

> *Policy Committee*: Chaired by the secretary-general with key senior officials attending, usually meeting every week. It plays the role of a "cabinet" that assists and advises the secretary-general on reaching decisions on key policy issues.
> *Management Committee*: Chaired by the deputy secretary-general and deals with administrative and management issues of the organization.
> *Senior Management Group*: Chaired by the secretary-general, the group consists of the heads of all departments and offices, funds, and programs—but not specialized agencies, as the latter do not fall under the administrative authority of the secretary-general. It is a forum for the exchange of information rather than a decision-making body.
> *Executive Committees*: Chaired by senior officials in the political (Executive Committee on Peace and Security—ECPS), humanitarian (Executive Committee on Humani-

tarian Affairs—ECHA), and economic and social (Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs—ECESA) areas.

At the UN system level, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and WTO, the main coordinating body is the *UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination* (CEB). Established in response to ECOSOC resolution 13 (III) of 21 September 1946, and initially known as the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the CEB is chaired by the UN secretary-general with all agency heads participating.[19] It meets twice a year, with its decisions prepared by three main subsidiary bodies: *High-level Committee on Programs* (HLCP), *High-Level Committee on Management* (HLCM), and *UN Development Group* (UNDG).

There are several other mechanisms for decision making, implementation, and coordination within the UN secretariat and the broader UN system on specific issues. They include the so-called "framework team" for conflict prevention initiation, implementation and coordination, with a rotating chairmanship and a secretariat housed in UNDP, and a food security task force established in response to the 2008 food crisis, chaired by the secretary-general. Country-level coordination is undertaken by UN resident coordinators, who convene UN system representatives in the context of UN Country Teams and interact with national authorities trough programmatic frameworks, such as the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

These regular and ad hoc bodies and mechanisms dealing with decision making and coordination seem to be working reasonably well in normal times sharing information, strategies, and resources, thus limiting duplication and providing some degree of rationality for the inner-workings of the world body. The products of early-warning and policy-planning processes, whatever they may be, are channeled to these bodies and inform their decisions, through departmental and agency head interventions but also by the fact the secretariats of these bodies, as a rule, reside in the corresponding policy-planning units. At the same time, when it comes to actual implementation of decisions made, there are many unresolved issues due to lack of core resources and interagency competition for voluntary funds, apparently tolerated if not encouraged by donor governments. We will return to this issue briefly in the concluding section of the essay.

Support for Intergovernmental Processes

A function of overall UN system coordination rests, according to the UN Charter, with the ECOSOC, through agreements with which specialized agencies are connected to the UN proper to create the UN system.[20] The UN secretariat, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), and the secretariats of agencies, funds, and programs interact with the fifty-four-member council, through reports and briefings and give support for its deliberations in various ways. There is also close interaction with the UN General Assembly, with the president of which the UN secretary-general has as a rule a close relationship, as do their respective offices. Intergovernmental assemblies, convention, treaty, and other bodies are also serviced by respective secretariats of dedicated or shared UN system entities.

19. For background information on the CEB, see http://www.unsceb.org/ceb/brochure/overview/, accessed on 25 July 2010.

20. According to Article 63.2 of the UN Charter, ECOSOC "may coordinate the activities of the specialized agencies through consultation with and recommendations to such agencies and recommendations to the General Assembly and Members of the United Nations." This rather vague formulation of the charter might be one reason that intergovernmental coordination has been a difficult task from the beginning and may explain (a) periodic efforts to strengthen coordination, such as initiatives for system-wide coherence, international environmental governance, and mandate review, and (b) reliance on independent high-level UN reform panels and working groups every three to six years.

Support by the UN system secretariats to intergovernmental processes ranges from the provision of conference services (e.g., meeting organization, translation/interpretation) to substantive advice, conduct of studies, and submission of reports around which member states debates revolve. In particular, the role of the UN secretary-general and other UN system executive heads and/or their senior advisors can be catalytic in advancing a delicate process or breaking a stalemate through good offices.

While the provision of logistical and technical support has been in existence since the founding of the UN and the responsible organizational entities have gained a lot of experience in that respect, it is often difficult to assess the quality of substantive support provided to member states. Such support, in terms of early warning, options for decision making, agreement brokering, etc., depends on availability and quality of resources in each case and a willingness of governments in charge of each intergovernmental negotiation to use the services and advice provided by the secretariat, important issues to which we return in our case study.[21] Moreover, government representation in intergovernmental bodies and UN system agencies is not uniform or consistent, in view of different ministries taking the lead in different fora, such as Foreign Ministries in the case of UNHQ, Finance Ministries for the Bretton Woods institutions, Health Ministries for WHO, Environment Ministries for UNEP, Meteorological Services for WMO, etc.; which point to broader governance issues. This side of broader policy coherence in international institutions deserves more attention in future research.

Case Study: The UN System and Climate Change

In order to evaluate whether the mechanisms and processes in the UN system are adequate for the handling of today's multifaceted, interdisciplinary, and interconnected global challenges, we have selected one of these challenges as a case study. Climate change touches upon a very broad range of global issues and sectors of activity, from environmental degradation and sustainable development to global trade, industry and energy, and peace and security. The intergovernmental system has been dealing with this challenge for a while and there are several mandates in that respect, but the search for a more comprehensive approach is still ongoing with the intense participation of countries and multilateral institutions.[22] Here we attempt to extract some key points in terms of the UN system's performance of the core functions mentioned in our analytical framework in section 2.

Early-Warning and Policy-Planning Capacity

Early Warning

Climate change has been on the UN agenda since at least 1992, the year of the earth summit in Rio de Janeiro. That is when the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was signed. The convention entered into force in 1994, and there have been annual meetings of its conference of the parties since. Scientific advice to the parties to the convention is provided

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21. John S. Odell deplores that international relations research has largely neglected a promising tradition of negotiation analysis, see Odell, John S. (2009): "Breaking Deadlocks in International Institutional Negotiations, The WTO, Seattle, and Doha," *International Studies Quarterly* 53: 273–99.

22. A concise summary of earlier negotiations can be found in Chapter 9 entitled: "Environmental Sustainability: From Environment and Development to Preserving the Planet," in Jolly, Richard, Emmerij, Louis, and Weiss, Thomas G. (2009): *UN Ideas that Changed the World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

by, among others, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), established by the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) already in 1988 and bringing together top scientists from all over the world, as well as government representatives. It was the panel's fourth assessment report in 2007 and its authoritative pronouncement on the anthropogenic causes of climate change that added new urgency to tackling climate change and its increasingly apparent negative impacts. Thus, in terms of early warning the UN system has had a pivotal role, especially through IPCC.

Policy Planning

Was the system's follow-up in terms of planning of policy options equally efficient and pivotal? Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon very early in his tenure identified climate change as a major priority both for the UN organization and the UN system. Both the secretary-general's policy committee and the high-level committee on programs of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) were asked to deal with the issue and come up with key messages and activities in preparation of the scretary-general's high-level event on climate change (New York, 24 September 2007) and the thirteenth conference of the parties to UNFCCC ("COP 13"—held in Bali, Indonesia, December 2007). The high-level event elevated climate change to the highest political level, with some eighty heads of state or government attending the event. COP 13, with the secretary-general's intervention, resulted in the Bali Action Plan that was supposed to culminate, through a series of negotiations, in a major agreement at COP 15 in Copenhagen two years later.

During this period, the UN and UN system policy planning bodies produced, among other things, the CEB climate change action framework, with five focus and four crosscutting areas and several action-oriented initiatives under them, as well as convening agencies taking the lead in each case.[23] Parallel activities of the UN system included the publication of major reports on the impact of climate change, including UNDP's Human Development Report 2007/2008 *"Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World*,"[24] UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4 issued in 2007),[25] DESA's "World Economic and Social Survey 2009: Promoting Development, Saving the Planet,"[26] the World Bank's "World Development Report 2010: Development and Climate Change,"[27] and UNEP/ILO/International Organization of Employers/International Trade Union Confederation's "Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World."[28]

Assessing the Adequacy of UN Early Warning and Policy Planning Regarding Climate Change

As recognized by the Nobel Peace Prize, in IPCC the UN system has a body that undertakes ground-breaking work in the area of climate modeling, synthesis, and dissemination of peer-

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23. See United Nations (November 2008): *Acting on Climate Change: The UN System Delivering as One*, New York: United Nations, also available online under Publications at http://www.un.org/climatechange, accessed on 24 July 2010.

24. See http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008/, accessed on 24 July 2010.

25. See http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/, accessed on 24 July 2010.

26. See http://www.un.org/esa/policy/wess/past-issues.htm, accessed on 24 July 2010.

27. See http://www.worldbank.org/wdr, accessed on 24 July 2010.

28. See http://www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/Publications/Newreleases/lang--en/docName--WCMS_098503/index.htm, accessed on 24 July 2010.

reviewed research findings. The embedded interaction of scholars and government representatives is something other UN processes could learn lessons from. In terms of policy planning, a number of existing units were involved in producing important climate-change related policy papers and reports before the 2009 Copenhagen summit, often in close collaboration with academia and think tanks.

Structures and Processes for Decision Making, Coordination, and Implementation

As a result of early decisions within the UN system, a two-track approach was adopted. On one hand and at the highest political level, the secretary-general intensified his interventions—through high-level meetings, calls to world leaders, and public statements and speeches—in order to generate political momentum for a major global deal at COP 15. He was assisted in this by a number of special envoys he appointed, a small Climate Change Team (CCT) of key agency heads that would advise him, and a dedicated Climate Change Support Team (CCST) falling substantively under the SPU/EOSG in his own office that would support him on a daily basis.

On the other hand, the UN system was focused on "delivering as one" on the ground, in implementation of already existing mandates issued by UNFCCC and other intergovernmental bodies and in preparation for mandates that would emanate from the expected COP 15 agreement. CEB's HLCP and its working group on climate change took on the task to prepare the framework for that and advise the CEB accordingly, which resulted in a CEB decision in April 2008 that established the CEB Climate Change Action Framework mentioned above. The understanding was the system's work would gradually shift from overall program work to coordination of country-level implementation through the UNDG. To that end, UNDG worked on a comprehensive guidance note on climate change for UN Country Teams, along the lines of related notes regarding disaster risk management and environmental sustainability issued earlier.

Under the overall authority of the secretary-general, coordination of these inside tracks continued throughout 2008 and 2009. The first inside track culminated in a Summit on Climate Change hosted by the secretary-general in New York on 22 September 2009, with some one hundred heads of state or government in attendance. This followed on the steps of the secretary-general's 2007 High-level Event, which had preceded the establishment of his Climate Change Support Team (CCST). While the high-level event had been a first attempt to engage heads of state or government in the response to climate change, the summit aimed at involving them in the specifics of the negotiation process and of the key issues that needed to be decided upon. The first track also prepared the secretary-general's participation in COP 15 in Copenhagen, the last day of which, 18 December 2009, was also at summit level, with some 120 heads of state or government attending. Along the second inside track, the CEB, through HLCP and its Working Group on Climate Change, assisted by the CEB secretariat, presented in Copenhagen a package of system-wide initiatives in areas such as capacity building and training, knowledge sharing on adaptation, reduction of emissions from deforestation, and forest degradation (REDD), greening the economy, and tools for integrating climate change in the work of UN country teams.[29]

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29. See http://www.unsceb.org/ceb/priorities/climate-change/cop15, accessed 24 July 2010.

In conclusion, under the leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a very elaborate and extensive effort was made to use existing structures and processes to implement current mandates in a coordinated fashion and prepare for new mandates that were expected to result from the UNFCCC process. While new mandates did not emerge from Copenhagen, they could still materialize as a larger deal or elements thereof in Cancún, Mexico (COP 16) and thereafter. The extent to which the expressed unity of purpose of the UN system will remain in place and will translate into collective action on the ground remains to be seen in practice. Competition among agencies for scarce resources, different intergovernmental bodies and decision-making processes, and institutional and personal ambitions might still unravel this effort.

Support for Intergovernmental Processes

The main global forum for negotiations on climate change remains the UNFCCC. Its executive secretary and secretariat provide logistical and substantive support to the negotiators at the annual Conferences of the Parties and in-between negotiating sessions. Following the IPCC's Fourth Assessment report in 2007 and the upcoming expiration of the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention end of 2012, efforts were intensified for global and comprehensive agreement or package of agreements that would govern global action in the post-2012 period. The Bali Action Plan adopted by the UNFCCC parties in December 2007 (COP 13) set out a two-year road map that was supposed to culminate in a major deal in December 2009 in Copenhagen.
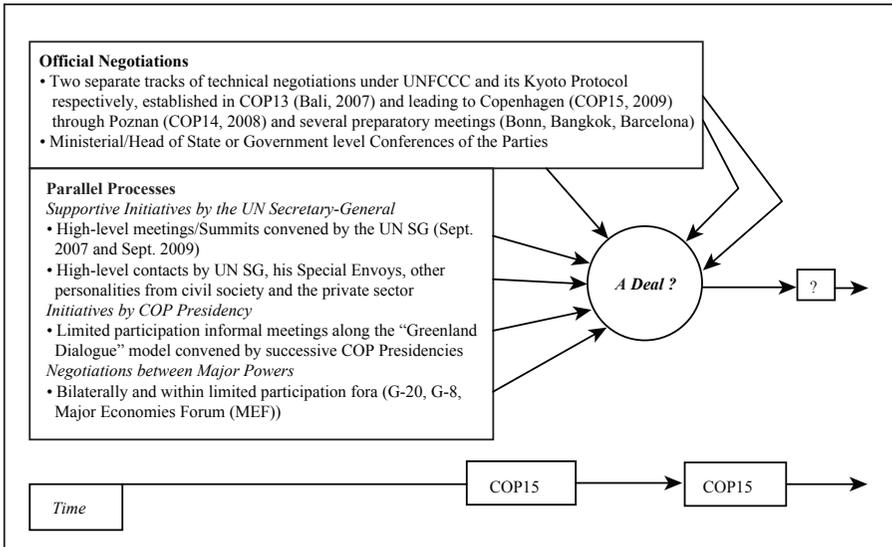
Negotiations continued on two tracks, one on Long-term Cooperative Action under the UNFCCC *per se* and the other under the Kyoto Protocol. This separation was, at least partly, necessary because of the fact the U.S. is not party to the Kyoto Protocol, and thus is unable to participate in negotiations on this track. On the other hand, high-level attention was brought and political momentum was generated by the Secretary-General's High-level Event in 2007 and Summit in 2009, as well as other high-level contacts and activities Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon undertook in cooperation with the COP Presidencies of Indonesia (COP 13), Poland (COP 14), and Denmark (COP 15) respectively and through his special envoys.[30] The negotiation process was a very complicated one. There were technical negotiations along the two post-Bali UNFCCC tracks, as well as various other high-level processes and limited participation fora. A graphical presentation of this negotiating universe is attempted below. The arrows indicate how all tried to shape a final deal directly but did not systematically interact or feed into each other through the official UNFCCC process.

The result was a comprehensive, broadly acceptable, and legally binding deal remained elusive in Copenhagen in December 2009. The "Copenhagen Accord" put together by a group of world leaders in the final evening was only "take[n] note" of by the COP, and it was unclear whether it would lead to a legally binding agreement at COP 16 in Mexico (November–December 2010)[31] or later. The extent to which the UN secretary-general, the UNFCCC secretariat, and the broader UN system could have helped steer the process toward a more suc-

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30. The secretary-general in 2007 appointed three Special Envoys on Climate Change, namely Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway, Mr. Ricardo Lagos Escobar of Chile and Mr. Han Seung-soo of Korea. Following Mr. Han's departure, because of his appointment as prime minister of the Republic of Korea in 2008, the secretary-general appointed two additional Special Envoys on Climate Change, Mr. Festus Mogae of Botswana and Mr. Srgjan Kerim of FYROM.

31. This paper was submitted for publication before COP 16.

cessful outcome can be debated. They did try to make the best of an awkward situation, not the least by pushing for delivery on the fast-track and the long-term finances promised in the Copenhagen Accord, including through the establishment of an Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing mandated by the secretary-general to come up with options on the latter.[32] What is clear, though, is the high stakes, number of parties involved (notably major global players including the U.S., China, the EU, India, Brazil, South Africa, and others; along with the G-77; the most vulnerable countries like small island developing states, least developed countries and the countries of Africa; as well as overall-paradigm-challenging players like the ALBA countries), and public interest were clearly unparalleled, thus making comparisons of the climate change talks to other sensitive negotiations difficult or even impossible.[33]

Official Negotiations
• Two separate tracks of technical negotiations under UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol respectively, established in COP13 (Bali, 2007) and leading to Copenhagen (COP15, 2009) through Poznan (COP14, 2008) and several preparatory meetings (Bonn, Bangkok, Barcelona)
• Ministerial/Head of State or Government level Conferences of the Parties

Parallel Processes
Supportive Initiatives by the UN Secretary-General
• High-level meetings/Summits convened by the UN SG (Sept. 2007 and Sept. 2009)
• High-level contacts by UN SG, his Special Envoys, other personalities from civil society and the private sector
Initiatives by COP Presidency
• Limited participation informal meetings along the "Greenland Dialogue" model convened by successive COP Presidencies
Negotiations between Major Powers
• Bilaterally and within limited participation fora (G-20, G-8, Major Economies Forum (MEF))

A Deal ?   ?

COP15   COP15

Time

Graph 2: Intergovernmental Processes toward a Climate Change Deal

The UN secretary-general, through his efforts and initiatives, could be seen as instrumental in elevating climate change to a global priority deserving the direct attention of heads of state and government. He continued to keep world leaders engaged through public events, public awareness campaigns (e.g., "Seal the Deal!"), and quiet diplomacy, and he worked very closely with successive UNFCCC COP presidencies. All this preparatory work did indeed lead to a high level of public interest and high-level participation in Copenhagen. However, the way the Copenhagen Conference unfolded, did not lead to a major consensus agreement, despite all the preparatory work. What the UN secretary-general is concretely credited with in Copenhagen is his efforts to bring everybody together and at least reach consensus on the COP taking note of the Copenhagen Accord after hours of overnight negotiations. The secretary-general had also played a catalytic role in Bali, at COP 13, where his urgent return to the conference and his intervention helped persuade the U.S. to withdraw their objec-

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32. See http://www.un.org/climatechange/agf, accessed on 25 July 2010.

33. See Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce (November 2009): "Recipe for Failure," *Foreign Policy*, 77 and Carin, Barry and Mehlenbacher, Aland (2010): "Constituting Global Leadership: Which Countries Need to Be Around the Summit Table for Climate Change and Energy Security," *Global Governance* 16(1): 21–37.

tions to the adoption of the Bali Action Plan. We do note a serious effort was made by the UN secretary-general to go beyond the service mandate of the secretariat of UNFCCC and assist the intergovernmental process in reaching a deal. This support for the negotiations was at least as extensive as the authors of this essay have personally witnessed as participants in other sensitive intergovernmental negotiations, in particular in the Security Council reform negotiations in 1994–2000, in solving the UN financial crisis in late 1980s, and in the negotiations leading to the 2005 World Summit.[34] Whether something more could have been done by the secretary-general, the UNFCCC secretariat, and/or other bodies to guarantee better results in Copenhagen is an important research question for the future.

Conclusions

Present Response Capacity of the UN to Address Interrelated Global Crises

Our study has indicated that, despite some threat-specific systems developed by UN agencies and departments, no early-warning mechanism concerning interrelated global challenges exists at a comprehensive level, with information gathering, scenario building, and modeling, within the UN system. "Global Pulse" may fill part of the gap, but it remains to be seen whether that will happen in a timely and comprehensive way, both in terms of coverage of geographic areas and of interrelated functions and issues. This is a key concern regarding the work of the UN system that should be acted upon decisively, as the importance of understanding and anticipating complex emergencies as well as the impact of interconnected global crises is expected to grow markedly in the coming years and decades.

Second, concerning policy planning, decision making, implementation, and coordination vis-à-vis global emergencies, new interagency mechanisms and support structures have been established through the initiative of the secretary-general, for example, in the case of the 2008 food crisis, but not as forcefully or obviously with regard to the financial and economic crisis of the same year. The lack of pre-established structures or protocols bodes badly for the next major global crisis, in whatever areas that may manifest. With existing structures busy implementing their mandates, and no surge capacity or resources, it will be difficult to respond in a timely and effective fashion.

Third, related to intergovernmental processes, the case study indicated that, with political will, the UN secretary-general can, on occasion, establish new "organizational frameworks" and mobilize the UN system surprisingly quickly and effectively to give significant support to intergovernmental processes. Similarly, we could safely assume in case of urgent multifaceted global crisis, his/her role would be instrumental both in initiating intergovernmental action, providing support to it, as well as responding independently to the extent possible. Questions remain, though, regarding the timeliness and quality of the response of the intergovernmental machinery, bound as it is by its own cumbersome processes, lack of pre-established procedures, and actual expertise. This would be the focus of a different study.

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34. The early council reform negotiation process is described in Kourula, Erkki, and Kanninen, Tapio (1995): "Reforming the Security Council; The International Negotiation Process Within the Context of Calls to Amend the UN Charter to the New Realities of the Post-Cold War Era," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 8(5). Perez de Cuellar's role in the intergovernmental process that addressed the UN financial crisis in late 1980s' is discussed in detail in Kanninen, Tapio (1995): *Leadership and Reform: The Secretary-General and the UN Financial Crisis of the Late 1980s.* The Hague: Kluwer Law International, chapters 3 and 4.

Preparing for the Future

While the UN has made an effort to help address global challenges, the tools used have been developed before the recent understanding of the interdisciplinary and interconnected nature of today's and tomorrow's challenges. One cannot deny the wealth of bodies and expertise in the UN system, when aligned toward a common goal, seem to produce results, which go beyond "business as usual" when various entities attempt to deal with the challenges in an isolated way. Emphasizing partnerships under the broad guidance and convening authority of the secretary-general, his immediate office, and the CEB mechanisms seems to neutralize potential grievances about independence and predominance among agencies, funds, and programs, at least to an extent that allows workable synergies.

The relative success in organizing the UN system to deliver a coordinated response to the climate change challenge in the lead-up to the Copenhagen conference does not negate the difficulties inherent in regular coordination across agencies and departments that have different mandates, governing bodies, and work cultures. Turf-orientation is still strong, particularly among those agencies that have a lot of money and political clout to carry activities on their own. Coordination may often consist primarily in information sharing and networking without lasting change in the cultures, programs, and actions of participating entities. Still, even such limited involvement across the system helps the participants see and understand the perspectives of other agencies and gradually include the approaches and expertise of others in their own planning activities.

Concerning possible future crises, the study shows there is only partial readiness and partial or no integration in the implementation of core functions across departments and agencies in face of emerging, interconnected global challenges. The secretary-general's office, the political sector as well as the economic, social, and environmental sectors, still seem to lack working procedures in place in case a multidisciplinary global crisis suddenly occurs. When such an unexpected crisis hits the world, the secretary-general has to respond by making use of existing bodies through ad hoc arrangements. This might or might not be sufficient, depending on the urgency and severity of the crisis.

An alternative approach to the present one would entail a more centralized approach, e.g., a body specifically created in the center of the UN system to detect and respond to interdisciplinary and interconnected crises. This might allow for an earlier identification of threats/challenges, more integrated policy planning, and more authoritative coordination, as well as tailor-made links to member states and other stakeholders, including civil society, academia, and the private sector. At the same time, such a new body might have too vague terms of reference, add to the complexity of existing arrangements, and complicate sensitive balances by competing for its central role with other bodies from around the system, which could feel or even end up being marginalized in practice. The politicization of the selection of staff, as often happens in new UN bodies of strategic and topical importance, could also affect the quality of its work.

A third possibility could be complementary to either of the above and would involve the establishment of a focused analytical and research capacity for independent, long-range thinking and planning outside the UN system but in close proximity and cooperation with the UN secretary-general and his/her Strategic Planning Unit, as elaborated in a recent study.[35]

35. This approach is described in detail in Weiss et al., *Sustainable Global Governance for the 21st Century*, *op.cit.*: 20–23. See http://www. fes-globalization.org/new_york/ny_assets/OCC45GlobalGovernance.pdf, accessed 8 February 2010.

In all three approaches—using the present structures and processes of the UN system, creating a new centralized body, or establishing an independent analytical entity outside the UN but with close links to it—one should not underestimate the UN secretary-general's leadership potential and vision both in terms of identifying a challenge, mobilizing the whole UN system, and initiating and facilitating intergovernmental processes for a coherent and effective response. Our study demonstrated some of that potential and assets the secretary-general has at his/her disposal in this regard. He can indeed change the prevailing "business as usual" mentality, in particular in the areas that lack great power agreement and build up necessary consensus both from the bottom up and at the highest political level.

Overall, the UN system, member states, and the world as a whole would stand to gain from a more systematic, less ad hoc approach to identifying and responding to the multifaceted and interconnected global challenges of today and tomorrow. Existing or new functions, structures, and processes within the UN system, and the broader multilateral machinery could well be realigned according to a new approach or a conceptual framework in order to address the challenges more effectively than is presently the case. This essay attempted to provide some elements, including conceptual tools, research findings, and alternative structural solutions toward that end.