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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
DEFENCE AND TRADE

**Reference: Australia's relations with the United Nations**

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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE**

**Tuesday, 2 July 2002**

**Members:** Senator Ferguson (*Chair*), Mr Brereton (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Bartlett, Bishop, Bolkus, Calvert, Cook, Eggleston, Evans, Harradine, Sandy Macdonald, O'Brien and Payne and Mr Baird, Mr Baldwin, Mr Beazley, Mr Bevis, Mr Edwards, Mr Laurie Ferguson, Mrs Gash, Mr Hawker, Mr Jull, Mr Lindsay, Dr Martin, Mrs Moylan, Mr Nairn, Mr Price, Mr Prosser, Mr Scott, Mr Snowdon, Mr Somlyay and Mr Cameron Thompson

**Senators and members in attendance:** Senators Ferguson and Harradine and Mr Edwards, Mr Laurie Ferguson, Mr Jull, Mr Price and Mr Scott

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

Review of Australia's relations with the United Nations

## WITNESSES

<b>ALLEN, Mr Phillippe Guy, Executive Officer, United Nations and Commonwealth Section, International Organisations Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CALDER, Ms Rosemary, First Assistant Secretary, Office of the Status of Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>DUNBAR, Group Captain Garry Edward, Director, United Nations, Peace Operations and Arms Control, Department of Defence .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>GLENN, Mr Richard Alexander, Acting Principal Legal Officer, Security Law and Justice Branch, Attorney-General's Department .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>HANNA, Wing Commander Christopher, Deputy Director, Operations Law, Department of Defence.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>HEYWARD, Mr Peter Maxwell, Assistant Secretary, Environment Branch, International Organisations and Legal Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>JENNINGS, Mr Mark Brandon, Senior Adviser, Office of International Law, Attorney-General's Department .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>KING, Ms Philippa Jane, Acting Director, United Nations and Commonwealth Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>LEON, Ms Renee, Assistant Secretary, Civil Justice Division, Attorney-General's Department .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>MANNING, Mr Greg, Principal Legal Officer, International Human Rights Section, Public International Law Branch, Office of International Law, Attorney-General's Department .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>MELLSOP, Ms Gillian Ruth, Acting Assistant Director General, Humanitarian, Multilateral and Community Branch, Australian Agency for International Development .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>MUIR, Mr Ross Stewart, Director, East Timor Section, Australian Agency for International Development.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>NAGY, Colonel William Stephen, Director of United Nations Engagement, Strategic Command, Department of Defence.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>QUINN, Ms Elizabeth Mary, Acting Senior Adviser, Specialist Policy Section, Office of the Status of Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ROWLING, Ms Myra Ann, First Assistant Secretary, Strategic and International Policy, Department of Defence.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SKILLEN, Mr Geoffrey James, Senior Legal Officer, International Crime Branch, Criminal Justice Division, Attorney-General's Department.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SMITH, Mr Roderick Richard, Assistant Secretary, International Organisations Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TAPP, Mr Charles William Nicolas, Deputy Director General, Papua New Guinea and Global Programs, Australian Agency for International Development.....</b>	<b>1</b>

**TRINDADE, Mr Dominic, Legal Adviser, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade ..... 1**

**VAN DER WAL, Mr Eric, Director, Human Rights and Indigenous Issues Section, Department  
of Foreign Affairs and Trade ..... 1**



**Committee met at 9.07 a.m.**

**ALLEN, Mr Phillippe Guy, Executive Officer, United Nations and Commonwealth Section, International Organisations Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

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**SKILLEN, Mr Geoffrey James, Senior Legal Officer, International Crime Branch, Criminal Justice Division, Attorney-General's Department**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. I would like to declare open today's hearing. It represents the first in what we expect will be a series of annual hearings reviewing Australia's relations with, and activities at, the United Nations. The hearings are intended to help broaden community understanding about the United Nations, subject Australia's activity at the United Nations to regular scrutiny and debate, and ensure that UN reform initiatives remain at the forefront of government attention.

This first hearing is an opportunity to seek an update on events since the committee's June 2001 report on Australia's role in the United Nations reform and also perhaps an indication of the government's likely response to recommendations that were made in that report. In our June 2001 report we concluded that, while the ideals of the United Nations are as important today as when they were first written, the organisation itself was in dire need of structural and financial reform. Moreover, we were alarmed at the extent of community misunderstanding about the purpose and the work of the United Nations. It remains our view that Australia, like all member countries, has a vital role to play in ensuring that the United Nations is able to deliver on its ideals.

The idea of annual public hearings reviewing Australia's relations with the UN was recommended in our report and the format that we are going to use today closely follows the format that is suggested in that report. We have seven 45-minute sessions, each focusing on a particular theme. At the beginning of each session I will invite our witnesses to commence proceedings by providing some brief opening remarks on the theme of the session. At the conclusion of those remarks members will have an opportunity to ask questions and to explore the issues in detail. We are planning to cover a lot of territory today, so I will be keeping a close eye on the clock and I will endeavour to keep us within our time frames.

At the conclusion of the hearings we will adjourn the review to allow members to review the evidence gathered today and any separate written submissions that we might receive. I expect that we will then prepare a brief report for the parliament on the nature of Australia's current engagement with the United Nations and on any issues requiring attention.

In commencing the hearing, I welcome representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Attorney-General's Department, AusAID, the Australian Defence Organisation and the Office of the Status of Women. The committee intends to conduct today's proceedings



in public, although should you wish at any stage to give evidence in private you may ask to do so and we will give consideration to your request.

Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should remind you that these hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and therefore warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. I now invite you to make some opening remarks on our first theme, an overview of current United Nations priorities.

### **Overview of current United Nations priorities**

**Mr Smith**—First let me say, on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, that we welcome this first annual hearing into Australia's relations with the United Nations. We see it as a very valuable opportunity to promote public debate on the United Nations and Australia's role in it and we are very pleased to be able to contribute to its deliberations. I should also note at the outset that we regret that we have not been able to finalise the government's response to the committee's report in time for this hearing. The response is in the final stages of the clearance process, and we hope it will be made available very shortly.

We thought it would be useful to start by highlighting for the committee some of the key developments that have taken place within the UN system over the past year, with a particular focus, obviously, on outcomes of importance to Australia. In doing so, we will also try to set out some of our current priorities, although of course—as the events of September 11 last year showed—priorities and focus can often shift with alarming speed and in ways that cannot be anticipated. For the UN, as for the international community as a whole, the terrorist attacks of September 11 last year were the defining event for the year and affected just about all aspects of its work and its activities.

The General Assembly's general debate—which, as you know, is the high-level segment attended by ministers that usually kicks off the session—was delayed by two months, and the assembly session as a whole was largely dominated by the international community's response to terrorism. The UN played a very important role in rallying international support behind the fight against terrorism. The Security Council gave the war on terror its strong endorsement and, though Security Council Resolution 1373, has put in place a strong and internationally enforceable regime of controls designed to starve terrorists of their financial, political and moral support and to deny them safe haven.

The September 11 attacks also highlighted the significance of the work done in the UN's Sixth Committee—the Legal Committee—on a Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism. As you may know, this has been an important issue for Australia for some time, and of course September 11 added to its urgency for all member states. Australia was asked by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to coordinate work on a comprehensive convention. This built on our earlier work on aspects of the convention, including key issues such as the definition of terrorist offences, in particular. This is obviously a very difficult and complex set of issues and, while we continue to be engaged, regrettably this work is now stalled. But again it underlines the important role the UN is certainly endeavouring to play in this area.

The Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee, which was established by resolution 1373 to monitor implementation of that resolution, is a significant new part of the UN's armoury for dealing with threats to international peace and security. The committee is undertaking a thorough review of each member state's implementation and is developing a mechanism to assist member states to meet their obligations under that resolution, all of which are important contributions to the war against terror. Australia is playing a particularly important role in this respect in assisting the countries of the Pacific to meet their obligations. Notwithstanding this focus on terrorism, a number of other priority Australian interests were also taken forward last year. Worthy of particular mention was the UN's presence in post-independence East Timor, which was an abiding interest of Australia in the United Nations and one of our major priorities over the last few years.

Let me mention two key outcomes: one was the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Support of East Timor—which goes by the acronym UNMISET—and, related to that, the second was ensuring that UNMISET would be able to operate on a sound financial basis. Australia has played a central role in negotiating both of these outcomes in the United Nations. Again, this reflects our continued strong interests in a stable and secure East Timor and our recognition of the important role the UN continues to play. The cooperation between Australia and the UN in improving security governance and the rebuilding of infrastructure has been critical to reconstruction efforts in East Timor—and, of course, we expect East Timor shortly to become the 190th UN member.

Turning now to the UN peacekeeping agenda, which is as full as ever, let me say that over the last 12 months—and our colleagues from Defence can elaborate on this—Australia has processed claims and remittances in excess of \$110 million for our participation in UN peacekeeping operations. We have contributed to the implementation of the Brahimi report and the subsequent review of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, including the ongoing debate on more rapid and cost-effective deployment of UN peace operations. The Secretary-General's updated report of December 2001 on the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Brahimi report gives further impetus to strengthening the UN's peacekeeping capacity. Australia continues to be an advocate for the interests of the Asia-Pacific region in the United Nations. I just mentioned the contribution we have made to shaping the UN's role in East Timor.

There are other regional issues on the UN agenda—for example, Burma and Cambodia—where Australia is an influential and constructive player. In New York our delegation works very closely with Pacific Islands countries. The UN election observer missions to Fiji and the Solomon Islands were an important complement to our own efforts to assist those countries.

We have encouraged the UN, through recent visits to Australia by senior UN representatives—notably the Director General of UNESCO, Mr Koichiro Matsuura, and the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Mr Kim Hak-Su—to give greater priority to development needs in the Asia-Pacific region where the UN has expertise to contribute. I should note in passing, while on the issue of high level UN visitors, that the President of the UN General Assembly, Dr Han Seung-Soo of the Republic of Korea, will visit Australia later this month.

The UN has played host in the last year to a number of significant conferences. In particular, I have in mind the World Conference against Racism, which was held in Durban in late August to

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early September last year; the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March of this year; the Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid in April of this year; and the Special Session on Children held in New York in May. These conferences were all preceded by intensive preparatory work, in some cases going back a number of years. Australia was an active participant in all of this work. Two more of these major conferences are still in the preparatory stages: the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will take place later this year in Johannesburg; and the World Summit on the Information Society, scheduled for Geneva in December of next year.

We would have to say that the success of these conferences has been mixed, but generally fairly limited. In fact, a generous assessment is that they only partially serve the purpose for which they were intended. The world racism conference, for example, was undermined by an unwieldy preparatory process that allowed unrelated political agendas to dominate the conference negotiation and outcomes. In contrast, the Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey was more focused. It agreed on a set of specific actions and avoided distractions from its core purpose. The World Summit on Sustainable Development regrettably appears at this stage to be heading more in the direction of Durban than of Monterrey, although we will do what we can to get it back on track. As a general observation, we would say that we are increasingly of the view that these ‘blockbuster’ conferences, as they are coming to be termed, are of limited value. The problem is that the broader their agendas, the more unfocused and divided they become. All of that serves to undermine the political authority of their outcomes.

This brings us, in a sense, to the issue of UN reform which, of course, is a major focus of the committee’s report. Here again, we can report only mixed results. We warmly welcomed the Secretary-General’s second term reform agenda. This is an initiative aimed at reviewing comprehensively the allocation of the UN’s resources against the priorities and goals agreed in the Millennium Summit Declaration. This initiative, from our point of view, holds some promise of further rationalisation of the UN and its activities. Again, I think it is fair to say that Australia can claim some credit for influencing the development of this process. The Secretary-General will present to the next General Assembly—UNGA 57, which, of course, begins in September—what is described as a comprehensive strategic report, which will bring together a number of other internal reviews. Australia has long been an advocate of a number of these reviews, in particular those relating to aspects of UN administration, conference servicing and public affairs.

In contrast to this, little progress can be reported on some institutional reform questions. Security Council reform and the interest that Australia has in the reform of the UN electoral group system are largely deadlocked. Some progress has been made toward streamlining the work of the General Assembly and this is very welcome, but I have to say that there is still a considerable way to go on this issue as well. On the UN budget, member states reached agreement in January this year on the 2002-03 biennium budget. The outcome was a slight departure from zero nominal growth, although the increase of around \$US80 million above zero nominal growth should be seen against currency and inflation costs of around \$US165 million that were absorbed in that final budget outcome. The final budget outcome, just to put the figure on the record, is \$US2.625 billion. As I said, that is \$80 million above zero nominal growth. Importantly, from our point of view, this outcome did include increased funding in three priority areas of interest to Australia—particularly, I mention peacekeeping, human rights and the safety and security of UN personnel.

Human rights, of course, remains one of Australia's main priorities in the UN. One very welcome and important outcome during the year was Australia's election to the Commission on Human Rights for a three-year term from 2003. This, as you know, was a key component of the government's initiative to reform the UN treaty committee system. Just on this particular initiative, sustained advocacy of the need for reform has seen real momentum develop behind the initiative, with many member states, the treaty committee members themselves and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights all now strongly supportive.

Australia hosted a second workshop in Geneva just last week—this built on the first workshop that was held 12 months earlier—which looked at streamlining reporting procedures and measures to avoid overlap and duplication. Perhaps the most encouraging thing to report on this initiative is that reform issues are now firmly on the agenda of the treaty bodies themselves.

I should touch briefly on our engagement with other UN offices and specialised agencies. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has a particularly important role to play in dealing with the difficult issue of refugees and illegal migration, with which many of us have been seized in recent times. We do not always agree with UNHCR, but we do work very closely with that organisation. We were very pleased with the support that we received from it and with its participation in the Regional and Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking of Persons and Related Transnational Crime that was co-chaired by Mr Downer in Bali in February this year.

UNHCR needs to be a part of the global response to the problem of illegal migration and people-smuggling, and we will continue to engage with it. We are particularly pleased that UNHCR is now starting to focus on the difficult problem of secondary movements, which, as you know, is a major part of contemporary illegal people movements and one, in particular, that we face in this part of the world. It is a problem that the international protection system, at present, is ill equipped to deal with. We have been advocating attention to this issue for some time, so UNHCR's focus on it is pleasing. I should also recognise the valuable role that UNHCR is playing in facilitating the return of displaced Afghans to Afghanistan.

Other specialised agencies have made progress in their own areas. I will not go into any detail on this. There is a separate agenda item on it, but I should say that our mission in Geneva, in particular, is actively engaged with them. A couple of examples are the work of the World Health Organisation on tobacco control and work in the International Telecommunications Union in the lead-up to the World Summit on the Information Society. The international environment agenda is another area where intensive multilateral activities are under way. Again, I will not go into any detail, but this is an area where Australia is an active and important player. I might leave my opening comments at that. I thank the committee for its patience. It has obviously been a necessary selective survey of recent developments but one which we hope is a useful basis for our deliberations.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. I think that we might even allow some questions to go into the next session, which is treaties, because you mentioned treaties, although I know that people from the Office of the Status of Women are due to be here at a quarter to 10. If questions range in those first two areas, I do not think that you would mind. You made a couple of statements on the value of conferences. I think the words you used were 'the blockbuster conferences have limited value'. Amongst our recommendations was the fact that there is very little understanding in the

Australian community of what the United Nations does or what it stands for. It would appear to be a general view that the United Nations does some things very well and some things not very well. For instance, it seems to do very well in health and education issues but in solving political conflicts where there is no political will there really is no solution.

But in talking about blockbuster conferences, you have had the General Assembly on children, which was a special General Assembly. I would suggest that perhaps members of the Australian public do not see any great particular value in a conference like that, although there may have been. You might be able to expand on that conference, because I am unaware of much of what happened there. I think the year before there was the special assembly on AIDS, yet only this morning I think I heard on the radio that, I think, currently four males aged under 24 contract HIV every minute in sub-Saharan Africa. So I am just wondering whether you could comment on the value of those special assemblies and whether anything came out of them that we should be highlighting.

**Mr Smith**—The comment that I made about their limited value is a general comment. It reflects our concern that, while often the intent and purpose of these conferences is laudable and certainly very worthwhile, they can often be derailed and the purpose of the conferences distracted by unrelated political agendas. We have certainly seen that in the case of the UN racism conference. We are seeing it, to an extent, in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Our concern is that, unless the member states of the United Nations—and, of course, these conferences are always a consequence of the collective political will and the decision making processes of the United Nations and its member states—are kept focused and there is a degree of discipline exercised in what is drawn into the ambit of the conferences, they lose focus and the outcomes tend to be devalued and undermined.

That is not to say that there are not some kernels of value in them. You asked in particular about the special session on children. As you know, that was a conference largely organised by UNICEF. Our colleagues from AusAID may wish to comment on this as well. The delegation was led by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and it was something that we did support and contribute to. The final document, which goes by the title of *A world fit for children*, focuses on four key priorities: promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV-AIDS. We generally were satisfied with the outcome of this conference. I do not have any particular expertise on it; as I said, AusAID may wish to comment further.

Just moving to the point that was raised about what recognition there is in the wider Australian community about the value of these conferences, it is incumbent, in a sense, on all of us to ensure that, where we see value in the outcomes of these conferences and where we think that wider community and public understanding of the outcomes is important in taking forward the agendas and programs of action and so on that emerge from the conferences, we do find better ways of ensuring that the public understand and are informed about them. We had some youth representatives as part of our delegation, and through their own networks they have an opportunity through school, through the education system, to promote those outcomes—I think this was something that the Department of Family and Community Services was assisting in.

**CHAIR**—Isn't it fair to say that, though, that in general, if you were to present those four statements that you have made to the Australian public, they would say, 'You wouldn't need a

conference to come up with those four subheadings.’ People in Australia generally believe all of those things. The one they probably would not consider very often is HIV-AIDS amongst children, because it is not as prevalent here as it is in other countries, but all of those other things really are taken for granted by Australian citizens as standards that we should honour.

**Mr Smith**—Certainly. I think you really need to look behind those and look at the issues that the conference agreed on in terms of the specific program of action. These conferences, I guess, have a number of purposes. One of them is consciousness raising, providing a mechanism that can promote the sort of standards and values that we in Australia might take for granted but which in many countries of the world are not recognised or are not accepted as standards that we should be aspiring to. So part of it is helping to promote those standards as standards that should be accepted globally. Part of it also is to look at ways in which the international community can cooperate, particularly in assisting developing countries to achieve those standards. In the case of the outcomes of the special session on children, there are a number of quite specific goals that have attached to them practical, cooperative activities with a view to helping developing countries to address some of those particular problems.

In terms of the way we look at implementing those goals and programs of action domestically, there is a role for government and there is a role for the wider community. Clearly, the media, education organisations, NGOs and civil society more broadly all have a role to play both in promoting those particular outcomes and in facilitating community action to try and achieve those sorts of goals.

**CHAIR**—Mr Jennings, I apologise, I should have asked whether you want to make any additional general remarks from the department.

**Mr Jennings**—I have some brief comments just to pick up on what Mr Smith had to say. Let me start by saying that the Attorney-General’s Department welcomes this opportunity to appear before the committee to give evidence in its first annual hearing on Australia’s activities at the UN. The Attorney-General’s Department is involved in support of and in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on some of these issues. For example, in the terrorism area we have been working in relation to the various conventions and also on the legislation that was being considered by parliament. In the area of treaty body reform we worked very closely with Foreign Affairs on this issue—it is really a joint effort on the part of the two departments.

I might note that, since the committee’s report was published last year, Australia has hosted the first two of three workshops to be held as part of the government’s high-level diplomatic initiative. The first workshop was held in Geneva in June last year. That focused on practical ways of improving the reporting process under human rights treaties. There was significant common ground between states on this issue. The second workshop, as I think Mr Smith mentioned, was held in Geneva last week. Under the theme, ‘Towards best practice’, the second workshop built on the momentum of the first workshop through discussions on streamlining the reporting process, ensuring that reform efforts include the individual communication processes—which is a separate issue there in addition to the reporting under the human rights treaties—and a range of other matters.

These workshops have certainly stimulated the momentum for reform, both within states and within the treaty bodies themselves. Certainly, we were heartened to hear at the second work-

shop of positive steps being taken by treaty bodies to improve their processes. The workshop process is proceeding apace and the third one will be held next year. At your next annual day we can give a further report on that. But they are well attended, as I understand, so it is moving along quite well. I will have a number of brief comments to make in relation to the points arising under your second session, so I will come back to those. I do not want to delay the movement forward in relation to the overview.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—Mr Smith, I think in your presentation you said that, on the issue of the war against terror, the UN conventions in this area are stalled. Can you elaborate more on that, and why and where it is stalled?

**Mr Trindade**—One of the key areas where conventions or discussions on terrorism are stalled is not so much in relation to the suite of conventions already in existence but in relation to the broader themes that are involved in some of the conventions—particularly on definitions of terrorism, which take into account a lot of political issues. That is the main issue upon which discussion in the United Nations on a definitional level has been stalled for some time. I do not know if my colleagues from Attorney-General's would have any other issues that they would add to that, but that is the big issue—what constitutes terrorism, and what are the political issues that then become involved in judgments as to what sorts of organisations are terrorist organisations and what sorts of organisations are legitimate self-defence or self-determination exercises; for example, people resisting dictatorships or non-elected tyrannical leaderships? Those are the issues.

**Mr Jennings**—I have nothing to add to those particular comments but, as the committee may be aware, there has been a range of these conventions adopted over a number of decades which have built upon the hijacking conventions and a range of other conventions that have dealt with the actions that might be taken by terrorists. But the issues that are arising in coming to the comprehensive convention and grappling with some of these very difficult political issues in the UN forum have, I think, been well outlined by Dominic.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—When will those conventions be activated for further discussion and development? When you say they have stalled, does that mean they are going to be sitting in limbo for months or years?

**Mr Trindade**—The comprehensive conventions?

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—Yes.

**Mr Trindade**—I think that what we have seen, as my colleague from Attorney-General's has indicated, is that people tend to be working on the specific issues and specific action that you might take—for example, trying to get at the financing of terrorism—and focusing the activities on the practical side rather than on the bigger picture. That is certainly the approach that the Australian government has taken, in that we recognise that there may be value in a broader overarching or comprehensive convention. But if it is going to get caught up in an exercise where individual states will be taking their own bilateral concerns with their neighbours or their own particular domestic issues into that forum then that is not going to be particularly productive. We would rather work with specific issues, whether they might be the financing of terrorism, terrorist bombings, hijacking or some of the other conventions that have been worked on.

**Mr JULL**—With the General Assembly session just a couple of months away, to be held early in September, do you expect that the whole focus on that General Assembly debate this year will once again be on terrorism? What other issues are starting to emerge that may be of interest to us?

**Mr Smith**—It is often difficult to predict, of course, but certainly terrorism and international community responses to terrorism will be a major issue. We think that is inevitable. We are not sure what other issues will be around. It is interesting how these things work. What we have seen in the past is that the opening statement given by the Secretary-General at the start of the session can be very influential in directing the debate and creating and identifying a set of themes, if you like, that the general debate and the session coalesce around. We are not sure yet what the Secretary-General might say in his opening statement. Clearly there are some regional issues around that will be on people's minds. Issues of perennial concern about the UN's role in prevention may be around, given the nature of some of those regional conflicts. Certainly, I think terrorism will continue to be an overriding theme.

**Mr JULL**—Can I just go back to blockbuster conferences. You said that they go off the track because there is a certain sense of a lack of discipline. Who should provide that discipline? Why are they really stuffed up? Who does it?

**Mr Smith**—That is a very good question. In a sense, we all contribute to that because, as I said before, ultimately these are the product of the collective decisions of the member states. We would like to see the United Nations organisation, and particularly the Secretary-General, take a stronger hand in guiding them. There is a very important role for the bureaus of those individual conferences in containing the pressures to expand agendas, which is often the way that they do get derailed and their core purpose becomes unfocused.

It is difficult, though, because what inevitably happens is that individual countries or groups of countries want their own particular issues or their own particular political agendas to become part of the work of that conference. They see in them opportunities to promote their particular perspectives on issues. To give one powerful example, we saw Middle Eastern political issues play very unhelpfully into the racism conference in a way that we think caused the international community as a whole to lose an opportunity to make a very practical and constructive contribution to international cooperation on eliminating and eradicating racism.

Australia took a very constructive and pragmatic approach to that conference. We saw it as an opportunity to promote particular Australian values from which we thought the rest of the world could learn. I am referring in particular to notions of multiculturalism, tolerance, cultural diversity and so on, which are all fundamental aspects of the Australian community and Australian society which underpin the tolerance that we have here and which provide us with a very powerful set of tools to deal with questions of racial discrimination. We thought that our experience could be very valuable to the international community, and that is the approach we took. We thought, at the same time, we could learn from others' experiences.

Unfortunately, what happened in the conference was that some particular political agendas—Middle East was one, particular interpretations of colonial history and so on was another; of course, they are very difficult, sensitive and contentious political issues—became the focus of the negotiations, and that detracted from what we thought was a much more positive, forward-



looking view of how the international community can cooperate to eliminate racial discrimination. I offer that as just one example of how these things can get derailed. How do we deal with it? I think discipline on the part of all member states and a much clearer definition of the objectives and the purposes of conferences in, for example, the General Assembly resolutions or resolutions of other functional bodies of the UN which kick off those conferences will be very important. Fundamentally, ultimately, it comes down to discipline on the parts of all the member states of the UN and the regional groups.

**Mr JULL**—Finally, a broad, sweeping statement: it is generally acknowledged that Australia punches well above its weight in the United Nations. Can you name another country that proportionately makes a greater contribution to the UN than we do?

**Mr Smith**—That is a very difficult question. I would hesitate to compare Australia to any other country in terms of the way that it operates in the United Nations. Certainly, Australia is recognised as a country that has considerable influence—sometimes, some argue, disproportionate influence. That is obviously a good thing, and it is something we work to maintain. We do have important interests in the United Nations and in an effectively functioning United Nations. There are clearly other countries that have comparable influence.

Often, rather than seeing ourselves as being in competition with those countries, we see their role and their influence as opportunities for us to cooperate in achieving our collective goals and interests, and we do that often in a very creative way. We often talk about developing coalitions of interests or functional affinities. Where we can identify we have a common interest, we work with those countries who have similar common interests to achieve an end, because it is an influence multiplier. It is a way that we can leverage our influence for greater influence in the UN. We would rather see it in terms not so much of competition as of what opportunities that will open for us to extend our influence.

**Mr JULL**—But, for those who argue that our involvement is a waste of time and money, the reality is that it would be a much poorer place if we were not in there punching with the best.

**Mr Smith**—That is certainly our assessment, yes.

**CHAIR**—In financial terms, it would be fair to say that countries like Japan and some of the Scandinavian countries—if you want to use the term ‘punching above their weight’—make commitments to a greater degree than Australia does over and above the commitments that they are required to make, wouldn’t it?

**Mr Smith**—In some cases, yes. Japan is a major financial contributor. Some of the European countries are also large financial contributors, and there are two elements to that. One is the assessed contribution—

**CHAIR**—Yes, I meant outside of that.

**Mr Smith**—On top of that, there are voluntary contributions that countries choose to make. They are generally not to the UN organisation as a whole but to specific agencies—specialised agencies in particular, many of which rely on voluntary contributions for the bulk of their funding. In a number of cases, some of the European countries make larger contributions than

Australia does. I am not sure that Japan is a major contributor on the voluntary side; certainly it is the second largest contributor on the assessed side.

**CHAIR**—The assessments are based on share of the world's economy, and I always understood that Japan paid, percentage wise, more than its share of the world's economy, but I might be wrong.

**Mr Smith**—I can tell you exactly what percentage Japan pays. The formula for determining the scale of assessments is rather complicated. It is not just the share of global GDP, for example; it has all sorts of adjustment factors. We can provide the committee with that, but I would not like to try and recite it off the top of my head.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Could you tell me what initiatives the UN has taken over the past 12 months to curtail the activities of people smugglers and what initiatives it might take in the next 12 months to curtail the initiatives of people smugglers?

**Mr Smith**—It is worth making a distinction here between the United Nations and the United Nations member states. The United Nations itself—with the possible exception of UNHCR, and I might come back to that in a minute—generally will not take initiatives independent of the member states. Australia, of course, has been very active in trying to focus international attention and to garner, if you like, international support for greater cooperation against people-smuggling. We have been doing that in a number of areas. We have certainly been doing it in the case of the Bali regional conference—

**Mr EDWARDS**—I am aware of what Australia is doing but I am not aware of what the United Nations is doing.

**Mr Smith**—Again, a lot of what we are doing is being done through the United Nations. Let me come back to UNHCR, for example. I mentioned in my opening remarks that UNHCR is now starting to look at the question of secondary movements. 'Secondary movements' refers to groups of people who have had protection from persecution in a country and choose then to move from that country of first asylum—that country where they have had protection—to an alternative destination.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Often using people smugglers.

**Mr Smith**—Often using people smugglers; that is exactly right. As I said, for some time we have been advocating greater international attention, particularly by UNHCR, to this aspect of illegal people movements. We are heartened that UNHCR is now starting to turn its mind to this. Some work is under way, in Geneva particularly but also in this region—again, driven very largely by Australia in cooperation with other participants in the Bali conference—to address that issue.

We worked at the last session of the Vienna crime commission—which is the part of the United Nations which deals with transnational organised crime and is, for example, the area of the UN where the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its related protocols were negotiated—to give more of a focus to the issue of people-smuggling. I have to say that we were not quite as successful in that endeavour as we had hoped. It is an issue which

is difficult and sensitive, and often when trying to get a foundation of understanding of the importance of cooperation on these issues it takes time to sensitise countries to it and to focus on ways in which the international community can contribute in a practical way. So we are continuing to push.

At the New York end of the UN, Australia has convened an informal group of like minded countries with an interest in addressing the issue of people-smuggling. We are looking at how we can take that forward in the next session of the General Assembly. Much of this, again, is consciousness raising. These things do take time. It is very important that countries like Australia are prepared to lead on it, and that is what we are doing.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Would you expect that this issue might be on the agenda of the next General Assembly?

**Mr Smith**—It is an issue that we want the General Assembly to take up. Whether or not it is formally on the agenda is, in a sense, a separate question. The agenda is something that rolls over year by year as a result of previous decisions. But we will certainly be looking for opportunities under related agenda items and debates in the UN to give substantial airplay to the problem of people-smuggling—recognising, of course, that it is an issue not just for Australia but for the international community as a whole.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Given that it is an issue for the international community as a whole, I am a bit surprised that there are not stronger initiatives being pushed by Australia and other nations which have a direct interest in this issue.

**Mr Smith**—There are, in fact, quite a number of very substantial initiatives. We are doing this at a couple of levels. Firstly, we are doing it through the UN system. I mentioned, in particular, our advocacy and our cooperation with UNHCR. UNHCR is, of course, the principal UN agency. It is the agency with principal competence for the refugee issue and, while it is broader than just refugees per se—in the strict definition of the term ‘refugees’—UNHCR is the relevant agency. It is a principal player in this, and we are putting a lot of energy into promoting that work in UNHCR. As I said earlier, we are also working at the regional level. As you know, regional cooperation is critically important to addressing the problem of people-smuggling. The Bali conference, about which I am sure all members and senators are very familiar, was, in a sense, a watershed in getting regional countries to focus on that issue, and that remains a very important plank in our overall approach to the issue.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I want to now turn to another issue. You mentioned Burma. What is the influence of Aung San Suu Kyi with the military regime, and what weight does Australia put on her ability to achieve change in Burma?

**Mr Smith**—I would be very hesitant to comment on that. I do not have responsibility for Burma.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I would not have raised it; it is just that you mentioned it in your opening address.

**Mr Smith**—I mentioned it because it is obviously an issue that is on the United Nations agenda. As you know, the secretary-general has a Special Envoy for Burma. There is other activity going on, including on the human rights side, in which we are engaged. I would not like to try and address that comment, because it really relates to the internal political developments in Burma, and I have neither responsibility nor expertise on that issue.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Is there anyone else who could comment, Chair?

**CHAIR**—We have probably got people here today who are concentrating on the UN's role and the foreign affairs department, rather than individual countries. There would be no reason why they could not take it back and get an answer for you, but I do not think that we have those people here today.

**Mr Trindade**—We could perhaps get someone from our South and South-East Asia division, which is responsible for that geographic area, either to provide a written answer on notice or to perhaps come back in the afternoon session.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I just would have assumed that there had been some contact between the UN and Aung San Suu Kyi since her release.

**Mr Trindade**—I am not aware of—

**Mr EDWARDS**—But I am happy to let that go.

**Mr Smith**—I am confident that I can say yes to your question. I think that the UN special envoy, Mr Razali, would have had contact with Aung San Suu Kyi. I do not know the outcome of those discussions, of course.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I think we are dealing at the present moment with the 9.00 till 9.45 section.

**CHAIR**—Yes. We are just about to move into treaties, but if you want to stray a bit we do not mind.

**Senator HARRADINE**—No, not at all. I want to get back to what is possibly the priority. It is a fact, isn't it, that the UN was founded with its principal objective and *raison d'être* being the establishment of world peace and, to the extent that they have failed in that, then they have failed? That is the priority, isn't it?

**Mr Smith**—Certainly the bedrock objective of the United Nations in the charter is to contribute to peace and security; that is correct. There is no question that the UN's success in that has been mixed. Clearly, there have been some successes, but there have been some abject failures as well. I come back to a distinction I made earlier between the United Nations as an international organisation and the United Nations as an organisation of member states. Often its capacity to contribute, particularly on issues of peace and security, is constrained by the ability of its member states to agree on particular approaches to problems and to security issues.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Nevertheless, that should be the priority of the United Nations.

**Mr Smith**—It remains one of the fundamental priorities. Contributing to economic and social development is another priority. Contributing to the advancement of human rights is also a priority. The UN charter contains a number of key objectives and activities. As I said, the bedrock objective is contributing to international peace and security.

**Senator HARRADINE**—How many of these blockbuster conferences—including the Bali one recently—have there been in the last 10 years, and what has the cost been to the United Nations and to us in Australia? Somebody was talking about punching above our weight. I thought we allowed Liechtenstein to speak on our behalf at the Bali conference. Is that so?

**Mr Smith**—No. I will just clarify that. The Bali conference was not a UN conference. Let me ask first whether you are referring to the Bali people-smuggling conference or the Bali preparatory meeting for the WSSD? You may be referring to the latter, I suspect.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I am referring to the latter, yes.

**Mr Smith**—That was a preparatory meeting. It was part of the World Summit for Sustainable Development process. We will have to take your initial question on notice. We may be able to provide you with the answer during the course of the day; we will check that—certainly the number of conferences that have been held in the last 10 years. We will have to provide you later with the information on the total cost of those conferences.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I do not know whether you have got an estimated cost to other member states. We are talking about the overall picture.

**Mr Smith**—The conferences are funded through the UN regular budget in most cases, so the contribution that individual member states make would be the same as their normal assessed contribution. In some cases they may have paid additional voluntary contributions. In Australia's case, for example—

**Senator HARRADINE**—No, I am talking about for themselves.

**Mr Smith**—The cost of their own participation?

**Senator HARRADINE**—Yes, the cost of their own participation—factoring that amount in.

**Mr Smith**—We would not be able to provide you with that information.

**Mr Trindade**—Certainly the hosts of those conferences would make major contributions over and above any other participants. The logistical exercises in hosting those major blockbuster conferences are enormous. With the number of delegates attending, it is comparable to running something like the Commonwealth Games or the Olympic Games. It would be very hard to quantify that for the host countries.

**Mr Heyward**—It would also be hard to quantify the costs involved in preparation and participation. I am speaking from a qualitative rather than a quantitative point of view. Let us take the example of the World Conference against Racism, which Mr Smith was talking about earlier. In my time at our mission in Geneva it consumed an enormous amount of effort in preparation, in attending meetings at an official level and in attending informal meetings and bilateral discussions. That would be difficult to quantify.

The resources that the blockbuster conferences consume for the return that they give at the end would be an element in our assessment as to their effectiveness, as would the diversion of resources from other UN activities—the day-to-day things that the UN does quite well, including program management, implementation of conventions and so on. If the blockbuster conferences do not deliver a positive and new outcome or if they do not add value, then they have wasted resources in the process of their preparation and operation, and that is one of the areas where the blockbuster conferences do not do well.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I am just trying to see the effectiveness of the conferences. For example, I think you are talking about humanitarian aid and the like, but that has gone backwards in the last 10 years. With all the work that the UN has put into it, it has gone backwards. Is it not also a fact that one of the reasons is the high overheads of the UN?

**Mr Smith**—If you do not mind, I might leave our colleagues from AusAID to address the question of the impact of humanitarian aid. On the question of the UN overheads, I am not sure where the figures come out, but our general assessment is that overall administrative and management efficiency of the UN has increased quite substantially in recent years. The Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, announced a very comprehensive process of reform in 1997. That is obviously ongoing and it has resulted in very considerable cuts in overall staffing numbers and administrative efficiencies that have led to quite substantial reductions in those sorts of overhead costs that you refer to.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I will follow that matter up.

**Mr PRICE**—Mr Smith, I understand that in your opening remarks you indicated that the response to the committee's report is due shortly. Is that correct?

**Mr Smith**—It is in the final stages of the clearance process, so we hope for it to be available soon.

**Mr PRICE**—Given that the parliament seeks to have a three-month response to parliamentary reports, why does it take the department more than 12 months for a response?

**CHAIR**—In fairness, it is not the department that takes 12 months. I think it has been with the minister for some time, hasn't it?

**Mr PRICE**—Has it?

**Mr Smith**—The minister has it now, but he has not had it for long. I will try to provide some context. As I said, we regret that we have not been able to get it to the committee earlier. We did have a response close to finalisation in about October last year, when, of course, the federal

election intervened. We then made some fairly substantial revisions to the response at the beginning of this year.

**Mr PRICE**—Were you anticipating a Labor victory then?

**Mr Smith**—This was to take account of the developments that took place in the UN General Assembly—particularly on the question of UN reform and the UN budget—and those clearance processes have continued.

**Mr PRICE**—You say you do not always agree with the UNHCR. Has this been historical or is it recent? Is there a lengthy history of Australia disagreeing with UNHCR? This is not entrapment. Clearly there is a disagreement about detention centres and what have you, but I was not aware of any other areas of disagreement with UNHCR.

**Mr Smith**—From time to time governments disagree with pronouncements and statements made by various UN organisations. There have been a number of occasions in recent times where we have disagreed, particularly with statements that have been made by senior representatives of UNHCR, because they have offered a particular view of—

**Mr PRICE**—But there is no history of another area of disagreement with UNHCR, is there, other than this one that has been festering until the present day?

**Mr Smith**—As I said, there have probably been times when we have not agreed or we would have liked to have seen UNHCR take a different approach to particular issues. For example, I mentioned the issue of secondary movements. We have been arguing for some time now that this is an aspect of the whole question of illegal people movement that needed to be given greater attention. Frankly, it has been frustrating that the UNHCR has been as slow as it has to respond to that and to recognise the importance of addressing that issue in attempting to deal with weaknesses in the international protection system, but that is now starting to happen and that is very encouraging.

**Mr PRICE**—The department is responsible for a number of publications which promote the activities of the department or AusAID or whatever. What is that budget? Is there anything that specifically publicises the United Nations activity that the department—or departments—is involved in? Or, regarding its separate treaties, does the department publish anything on, for example, the convention on human rights?

**Mr Smith**—There are a number of ways in which we engage in public diplomacy. Written reports are one and the department's annual report is obviously important. The department has a very comprehensive Internet site, which has a great deal of information including on the UN. We produce publications periodically on particular issues. For example, in the lead-up to the Durban World Conference against Racism we produced with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs a booklet on Australia's experience with cultural diversity, drawing attention to a particular aspect of Australia that we thought contributed usefully to public understanding. We produce a detailed manual on human rights, which plays a useful role both domestically and internationally in promoting understanding of human rights, the role of the United Nations human rights commission and the various human rights treaties.

**Mr PRICE**—Sorry, what do you mean by ‘manual’? Who is the manual intended for?

**Mr Smith**—It is called a manual. It is used very largely as a training tool for Australian representatives overseas but it is also used by NGOs and community groups, and I think I may be used in some schools. It is also looked at by a number of other governments.

**Mr PRICE**—Okay, I am embarrassed—would it be possible to get a copy of it? Can the members get access to it?

**Mr Smith**—Certainly.

**CHAIR**—We are going over the edges of this theme and getting into the next session. It does not really matter—

**Mr PRICE**—Can I just ask one last question—you could probably take it on notice for me. What, in the last financial year, was the world global budget on humanitarian aid, on agricultural subsidies and on defence expenditure?

**CHAIR**—I think you would probably want to take that on notice.

**Mr Smith**—Our AusAID colleagues may be able to answer the aid question but we would have to take the other ones on notice.

**Mr PRICE**—I would be grateful if you would.

**CHAIR**—Senator Harradine wants to follow up on a question he asked before.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Yes, the question regarding the essential objective of the United Nations. There have been some infamous failures in the last few years, haven’t there? Do you make your own assessments of those?

**Mr PRICE**—I thought you said, ‘Do you make your own failures?’—sorry.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Surely, we have got to be open about this. I will give you some examples: going back to Somalia in 1993, the mistiming of interventions and the culpable delays that allowed the genocide in Rwanda—to some extent, that was the fault of the UN not intervening in time; and the withdrawal of UN protectors as the Bosnian Serb forces moved to massacre Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995. I have got a number of other examples as well. Shouldn’t they be out in the open? It is often talked about but shouldn’t there be some internal rigorous analysis of what went wrong, so that they do not repeat the failures? For example, Kofi Annan himself was told, well before the Rwandan massacres, that there was a real problem there.

**Mr Smith**—That is a very important question. The whole question of how we learn from experience, and particularly learn from the failures of the United Nations, is something that we have argued for very strongly in the United Nations. We have been advocates for a long time of more resources for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which are now being provided



for what is called the Lessons Learned Unit. As you know, the UN itself has done very detailed analyses of the failures—you mentioned three in particular: Somalia, Rwanda and Srebrenica—which have been comprehensive, warts-and-all analyses. I am not sure that I can directly answer your question about whether or not Australia has independently done its own analyses of these. We have certainly looked very closely at the outcomes of the UN analyses. It may be that the Department of Defence has looked closely at Somalia in particular, as we had troops involved in that peacekeeping operation. We were not so directly involved in either Rwanda or Srebrenica, so we would not have seen ourselves as having quite the same sort of role in those review processes, but we do look very closely at those experiences and we look very closely at the outcomes of the UN's reviews.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Is it policy that you would support peacemaking as well as peacekeeping forces?

**Mr Smith**—In circumstances where we judge that to be appropriate, yes.

**CHAIR**—I remind the committee that the genesis of this whole inquiry was the fact that the United Nations only ever seemed to be able to get in after the tragedies occurred rather than preventing them. That was one of the issues which we found most difficult to comment on, because of the sovereignty of the member states, and peacemaking was one of the issues that was raised at that time. I think we should move on to the next session, which deals with treaties. Mr Trindade, did you want to say something?

### **Status of Australia's treaty obligations**

**Mr Trindade**—I appreciate that we are probably a bit behind time so, rather than having a long opening statement, I will just note that, as we have already heard this morning, the main focus in the UN for Australia in the last year has certainly been terrorism. Progress has been made towards the Australian ratification of and accession to some of the anti-terrorism conventions in the United Nations, which I have asked colleagues in the Attorney-General's Department to report on a bit further. Another development, which is very timely to note this morning, is that Australia overnight has deposited its instrument of ratification for the statute of the International Criminal Court. As a result of that instrument of ratification, which incorporated a declaration, Australia overnight has become the 75th party to the court in New York. I note that, in the context of the preceding discussion about what steps could be taken to try to prevent some of the sorts of atrocities that have occurred, it has certainly been a guiding principle in the commitment to an International Criminal Court that to create an international criminal jurisdiction of this kind would be a deterrent for some of the persons who have engaged in the sorts of conduct that we have seen in Rwanda and other places, and to get rid of the perceived impunity that some of these people have had has been a key factor in the establishment of that court.

There have been other issues in the treaty agenda, including, as discussed, the treaty body reform workshop that Australia has pursued, most recently in Geneva. Our colleagues from the Office of the Status of Women would be happy to talk further about other treaty issues, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Our colleagues from the Attorney-General's Department will also be able to give you an update on the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime.

**Mr Jennings**—I will ask Mr Skillen to comment briefly on the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime. It may be of interest. As Mr Trindade indicated, we can update you on the situation with the terrorist bombings convention and the financing convention, which were elements of the legislative package that has been addressed in the parliament. JSCOT has recently considered the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and in its report No. 46 recommended that binding treaty action be taken in relation to the convention, and the formal processes will move on from that. The Convention for the Suppression of Financing of Terrorism and its national interest analysis were tabled in parliament on 18 June this year and will now move through with the JSCOT process. That is where both of those are at.

Perhaps I will make one other comment, as Mr Skillen will address the transnational organised crime. I note that there were two protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in May 2000. We have responsibility for addressing one of those protocols dealing with the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The department is currently taking the necessary steps before government addresses the issue of ratification and so on. If the committee is interested, perhaps Ms Leon can provide some further information on that. That is just to let you know where another one of these matters is at. I will now pass along to Mr Skillen on transnational organised crime.

**Mr Skillen**—Mr Edwards earlier asked what initiatives the United Nations had taken within the last 12 months in the area of combating people-smuggling. I think the United Nations would regard its major contemporary initiative in this area to be the adoption of its Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, which Mr Smith referred to in his remarks. That convention has three protocols dealing with specific types of transnational organised crime, one being people-smuggling. The convention and the people-smuggling protocol were adopted and opened for signature in December 2000. They have so far been signed by somewhat in excess of 100 states, and the people-smuggling protocol has been ratified by approximately 12 states so far. Australia has signed the convention. One other development since this committee last sat on this subject is that Australia signed the people-smuggling protocol in December 2001. The government is now engaged in the process of consultation with interested parties at the Commonwealth level and, where appropriate, the state and territory level designed to come to a decision as to whether or not we will move towards ratification of that instrument. Of course, if that decision is taken, the next step would be the preparation of a national interest analysis with a view to that instrument being put to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

**CHAIR**—Ms Leon, do you have anything you wish to add?

**Ms Leon**—No.

**CHAIR**—Can I just raise one issue. Almost a couple of years ago the announcement by the foreign minister and the Attorney-General in relation to our attitude towards reform of the treaty bodies system caused quite some consternation and comment. I remember it well, because it was the night before I left to go to the UN. Our committee, for instance, received widespread views, such as those from those ex-commissioner Sidoti, saying that the actions appeared to align Australia with hardline states with appalling human rights records back to views which were completely opposite.

An issue that was taken up was reporting, and reporting to the committees. I noticed in the table that we had that in CERD, for instance, there were 431 overdue reports in 2001 and in CEDAW I think there were 249—there were a whole number of overdue reports. Yet Dr Pace, who gave us a lengthy submission, said that if they were all to report it would be a logjam and that if you gave 2½ minutes to each country—which is ridiculous—then you could not do it. Where are we at in relation to reforming the treaty body system so that there is effective and efficient reporting and proper consideration is given to those reports, and how do we overcome this backlog which seems to exist?

**Mr Heyward**—I will be answering in relation to my previous job, which was in Geneva. As Mr Smith said, the latest workshop that we ran on this issue showed that the reform process is maturing, for want of a better word. When we first launched this initiative, as you noted there was a degree of consternation amongst many of the human rights lobbyists in Australia and in other places. I think what has happened over the previous year is that, on reflection, most who have an interest in the effective operation of the treaty bodies have recognised that reform is necessary and that some of the things that we were saying are clearly matters that need attention.

As to where we are at: there is no doubt that there is still some way to go. The treaty bodies in a sense are masters of their own destiny. They are created by convention and determine their own rules of procedure. In doing so they have to be responsive to the parties to those various conventions, and that is the angle we are taking on it. But the decision making in effect rests with the committees themselves as to how they change the rules of procedure and how they change the way in which the reporting obligations are to be met. That is to a certain extent a slow process: these bodies only meet several times a year and they have quite a big agenda in dealing with the reports that are before them at that time. Plus, those committees which deal with complaints have that on their agenda as well.

The positive sign is that all of them now have, as an explicit part of the agenda for their meetings, the question of their methods of work. Most of them now have met with state parties as part of their regular work, to discuss how better to run things and meet their obligations, and how states can better present their progress toward meeting their obligations. This year, also, for the first time there is a meeting amongst committees to discuss how best to deal with reporting and their views on reports. Cumulatively, I think things are going better, but in terms of progress there is still quite some way to go for the system to operate effectively.

**CHAIR**—When you say it is maturing, I hope it is maturing like cheese and not like a good wine—it could be a very lengthy process. A question to follow on is: how much support does Australia have for its attitude towards reforms, and do the reforms cover issues such as the method of inquiry as well as the method of reporting? Criticisms that Australia might have had include the fact that some of the treaty bodies have come with a political agenda rather than an open mind. I am only voicing criticisms that were voiced to us.

**Mr Heyward**—In terms of the level of support, I think that this latest workshop has shown that the majority of states now agree with the general thrust of the initiative that we have taken. Not only are the states on board; the committees themselves in general are also on board. But the initiative, as you note, covered a whole range of issues of effective operation.

The question of there being political agendas—whether implied, explicit or underlying—is one that we would see being dealt with not as itself but by improving methods of work so that these things would not be so easy to pursue or would not arise. I think that one way in which we are dealing with that is by having more transparency in operation. For instance, there was concern that, in some cases, non-government organisations had provided information to committees which they would then operate on without disclosing to the country concerned the source, the content or the means by which that information was verified or not verified. The fact that that has been raised and is now being dealt with in a systematic way will make it much harder, I guess, for that sort of political agenda to be pursued.

The other way of dealing with that, of course, is through the process of the election of members of the committees. Any state party may nominate people to be elected to the committees and all state parties have the right to participate in those elections. Australia and other states are probably looking a little more carefully at some of the candidates over time, because terms last four years. So it is a lengthy process to change members if there are some about whom states may have concerns.

**CHAIR**—The lobbying process in New York is also difficult to change.

**Mr Smith**—I would just add one point to Mr Heyward's comments. On the question of streamlining the reporting procedures, I would like to note that one practical way that we are taking this particular interest forward is by funding a detailed study, which is being done by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It will look at identifying best practice, if you like, for streamlining the reporting process. We hope that might provide the basis for some practical improvements to that.

**CHAIR**—My final question is probably one for Ms Calder. Amongst those 250-odd overdue reports to CEDAW, of course, is Australia's report. Would you like to comment on the current situation—what the status is and whether it is a deliberate decision?

**Ms Calder**—Preparations for the fourth and fifth combined report to CEDAW began in 1999. The report was due for tabling in 2000. The development of the report was arrested during the government's inquiry into the treaty reform process. It was recommenced in late 2001 after the election. We are now at the point where the penultimate draft is with states and territories for final clearance. It will go from there to the interdepartmental committee that is overseeing its development, and then to the minister assisting. We hope to table it in October this year.

**CHAIR**—When was it due?

**Ms Calder**—I think it was due in August 2000.

**Senator HARRADINE**—On CEDAW, would you not think that one of the reasons for that extraordinary number of states that have not reported is that the type of questioning of states by CEDAW could lead to a lack of confidence of the state parties in CEDAW? I refer, for example, to the questioning of Belarus by the committee, which you have heard about. It says:

The Committee is concerned by the continuing prevalence of sex-role stereotypes, as also exemplified by the reintroduction of such symbols as a Mothers' Day and a Mothers' Award, which it—

that is, CEDAW—

sees as encouraging women's traditional roles. It is also concerned whether the introduction of human rights and gender education aimed at countering such stereotyping is being effectively implemented.

Even in the United Kingdom the committee notes with concern that the Abortion Act 1967 does not extend to Northern Ireland where, with limited exception, abortion continues to be illegal.

**CHAIR**—Senator Harradine, are you asking a question?

**Senator HARRADINE**—Yes. If CEDAW is going to ask those sorts of questions, isn't it possible that they lack integrity?

**Ms Calder**—I cannot comment on that. I can only say that in the last several months we have had discussions in a broader context with other states which are reporting to CEDAW and presenting this year. I have observed a high level of commitment to the reporting process by other states.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Have any undertakings been given, or structural procedures developed, to ensure that that sort of questioning is not included? In relation to Croatia, CEDAW stated:

Croatia: the Committee is particularly concerned about the consistent emphasis placed on women's roles as mothers and caregivers in Croatian legislation pertaining to a variety of areas. While legislative provisions protecting maternity are important, the Committee is concerned that prioritizing that aspect of women's lives reinforces traditional and stereotypical role expectations, which tend to limit women's full participation in society.

**CHAIR**—Senator Harradine, you are reading a statement. Is there a question involved?

**Senator HARRADINE**—I am dealing with CEDAW.

**CHAIR**—I do understand that, but it was not in the form of a question. We are here for questioning. We have discussed these issues at length when we were writing our report. I think it is fair to ask questions of the witness.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Will you give us some examples of what CEDAW has done in the last couple of months? Do you have any examples of that?

**Ms Calder**—Senator, I do not. I will have to take that on notice.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Wouldn't that be something that you are monitoring?

**Ms Calder**—I came prepared to answer questions about the preparation of our report, so unfortunately I did not seek briefing on other issues.

**Senator HARRADINE**—But we are dealing with the whole issue of CEDAW.

**Mr Trindade**—In the context of Australia's treaty obligations, so that is the basis on which we have prepared for today's hearing.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Isn't it a matter of interest in developing Australia's attitude as to whether or not this type of questioning has continued?

**Ms Calder**—In preparing our report we take into account this type of inquiry of CEDAW. I apologise that I did not come prepared to inform you on what CEDAW has sought in the last few months. I came prepared to advise you on our process of development and the tabling of the report.

**Senator HARRADINE**—But we are talking about whether the government ratifies the optional protocol to CEDAW, are we not? Would that be relevant?

**Ms Calder**—I am referring to the preparation of our fourth and fifth reports to CEDAW.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I am sorry. Obviously I have asked the wrong question to the wrong person. Mr Smith, does the government take into account the type of questioning of the member states by CEDAW when considering whether or not to ratify the optional protocol?

**Mr Smith**—I think the government's position on the optional protocol to CEDAW is well known, and that is that, while the government continues to have concerns about the operation of the UN treaty committee system, it would not be appropriate to sign the optional protocol. As a more general observation, in the process of preparing our reports to the various treaty committees we look at how Australia is complying with the different elements of the conventions in question. We will also look at questions the committee has asked of Australia in terms of its compliance with elements of the convention in its previous hearings.

**Senator HARRADINE**—And not of other countries?

**Mr Smith**—The questions would not be addressed to Australia; they would be addressed to other countries in relation to those countries' compliance.

**Senator HARRADINE**—What about in relation to Mother's Day? Isn't that something that the government would think was rather ludicrous for a committee to ask?

**Mr Smith**—I am not familiar with that particular instance. Again, not making a comment in relation to CEDAW or the specific case you mentioned but in terms of our broader approach, the thing that guides us is compliance with the conventions. If we judge that an approach or a line of questioning by a committee is not relevant to the terms of the convention or to Australian compliance then we would say so.

**CHAIR**—I might just intervene here. One of our recommendations—and I think it has been a recommendation in the past—is that the government ought to recommence the process of referring Australia's periodic reports to the UN treaty body committees to this committee for inquiry and report. If I remember rightly, I think it was a process that was used in the early nineties, which has since stopped. Do you know whether recommencement of that process has been given any consideration?

**Mr Smith**—I do not want to comment too specifically on that because it is obviously an issue that is being addressed in the government's response and, until that is finalised, I do not want to

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pre-empt that. But I can say, by way of clarification, that the advice I have is that our past practice did not involve referring all of our reports to the committee. There was one that I think was examined by the committee in 1991 but that was not a report pursuant to a convention; it was a report by the department on the government's international efforts to protect and promote human rights.

**CHAIR**—At the time of the hearings I thought we understood that it had been a process that was discontinued.

**Mr Smith**—That is not my understanding.

**CHAIR**—You are saying that you think there is only the one instance.

**Mr JULL**—Overnight we became the 75th group to sign up to the ICC. Where do we go from here? When will the process of everybody joining be finalised? Perhaps you could give us some indication of what then happens. For example, what is on the agenda first up? Are there any specific aspects of it that Australia wants to make a particular contribution to, or are there issues that Australia might believe should be raised?

**Mr Trindade**—The final preparatory conference for the International Criminal Court will take place in New York shortly—I think it is starting today. Australia will participate in that final preparatory meeting as a state party, having ratified and that ratification having been accepted. Among the priorities that that preparatory meeting will look at will be some of the basic infrastructure for the court when it comes into being. That will include issues in which we have played a very constructive role in the past. As members and senators would be aware, Australia has chaired the Like-Minded Group, which has had a key role in shaping the jurisdiction of the court. We will continue to play that role in this preparatory meeting.

The issues include the budget for the court, which will be shaped and formulated at this meeting. As to some of the other remaining issues, most of the bigger or more difficult ones have already been resolved and now it is a case of actually getting the court up and running. The other things that we will now be able to participate fully in include the election of judges and prosecutors to the court. This is very important, given Australia's interest in ensuring that we are a participant and that, as a fully sovereign state participating in the court, our interests are represented. Perhaps I could ask my colleagues from Attorney-General's whether they have other points they would like to add to that.

**Mr Jennings**—I would just indicate very briefly in a bit more detail the process that has been ongoing. The Rome conference adopted the Rome statute in 1998. As part of the final resolutions of that conference, a preparatory commission was established—that is a term of art in UN parlance—which indicated that it is charged with the task of laying the further technical groundwork for the court to come into existence. That has been meeting over these last couple of years in New York. It has been dealing with a whole range of documents that are required, not the least of which is the rules of procedure and evidence, which is a technical underpinning to the statute and is a very important document in its own right. Australia played a very significant role in the drafting and preparation of those instruments.

There has been a range of agreements which will have to be considered—headquarters agreements with the Netherlands, a relationship agreement with the UN and the budget, which Mr Trindade commented on. All of those have been resolved and finalised for the purpose of taking them forward to the first Assembly of States Parties, which will meet in September. The Assembly of States Parties is charged with adopting those particular documents that have come forward from the preparatory commission. So this has been a very long process over a number of years—through the preparatory negotiations, the Rome conference, the preparatory commission—and all of this has now come to fruition with the entry into force of the statute. Of course, we then have the first Assembly of States Parties. That is the institutional structure, but a lot of important work has been done by the preparatory commission and it has addressed quite important issues. That will be taken forward to the Assembly of States Parties.

**Mr JULL**—I have an indelicate question regarding the appointment of judges and prosecutors: are we going to be in there?

**Mr Trindade**—That would be a matter of election among the state parties.

**Mr JULL**—Are we going to nominate, though?

**Mr Trindade**—I am not aware of any proposal at this stage.

**Mr Jennings**—I think our answer would be that that is a matter for the government.

**CHAIR**—I think you are probably right.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—Following on from that question from Mr Jull, how long would it be before the court could be operating? Is there a time frame, an agenda? Is it something that will happen through the passage of time and negotiation, or is there a target date?

**Mr Trindade**—My understanding is that from the first conference of state parties onwards the court would be a concrete reality. The issue of its activities or its actions would depend on people bringing a complaint to the court.

**Mr Jennings**—The court is in effect as of 1 July. That is when the statute entered into force. That is the legal starting point. But, obviously, as members of the committee would know, you are required to elect the judges and the prosecutor and so on, and the first assembly of states parties, as we understand it, will be working out the ground rules for that and moving forward to a second assembly for the purpose of electing judges and the prosecutor. Detailed requirements are set out in the statute itself as to the qualifications of judges, the prosecutor and so on. We have the statute there; now we have to put flesh on the bones in terms of the judges, the prosecutor and the staff and so on so it actually gets up and running. If I could refer back, for example, to the international tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, they started their lives through Security Council resolutions but then there was a process of putting the staff into place and appointing the judges so that they could get up to speed and start conducting their investigations. As with any major institution, you start with the piece of paper and then you put the human heart into it.



**Mr Skillen**—One thing that can be said is that the court's temporal jurisdiction commenced as of 1 July, meaning that any crimes within the court's jurisdiction committed after 1 July fall within its jurisdiction and can be tried once the court is an operational reality.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—So there is jurisdiction from 1 July.

**CHAIR**—There is no retrospectivity at all.

**Mr Jennings**—No.

**Mr EDWARDS**—You mentioned earlier that 100 countries had signed the treaty against transnational crime and 12 countries had ratified it. Can you let us know which countries have signed and which have ratified?

**Mr Skillen**—I would have to take that on notice but I can certainly provide that to the committee.

**CHAIR**—I asked a question earlier about referring periodic reports to us for inquiry and report before they were presented. Is it possible for this committee to be advised as soon as Australian reports have been approved and made public and for a copy to be sent to our committee for their consideration anyway—they may choose to look into it themselves, even it is after the event, particularly in the case of CEDAW—and all the other committees as well? Is that possible?

**Mr Smith**—We can certainly—

**CHAIR**—Thank you. After our break we had probably better move on to UN peacekeeping operations, but I am sure that if any questions arise regarding the other matters somebody will attempt to answer them.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.53 a.m. to 11.03 a.m.**

### **Involvement in United Nations peacekeeping operations**

**CHAIR**—I welcome representatives from the Department of Defence. I remind you that today's proceedings are being conducted in public, but if at any stage you want to give any evidence in private you may ask to do so and we would consider that. I do not think we are touching on any areas that are going to be so sensitive that you may want to go into a private meeting, but that is available to you if you wish. I invite you to give us an opening statement on your involvement in UN peacekeeping operations, and then we will move on to questions.

**Ms Rowling**—We are very pleased to have the opportunity to speak with the committee today on Australia's activities with the UN. We welcome the opportunity to update you on developments since Defence last appeared, in March last year, and I will touch on a number of those now. As has been noted to the committee on previous occasions, the ADF is structured towards providing a force capable of defending Australia and its interests. We believe that this approach has produced professional, disciplined forces capable of responding appropriately to the wide range of complex situations generated by peace operations. Our commitment to peace operations is consistent with the fifth strategic objective of the 2000 Defence white paper: to contribute to international efforts to uphold global security. Australia contributes to UN mandated and multilateral operations to ensure the long-term defence of Australia, through peace operations that complement our global and regional strategic interests, and to reinforce bilateral relationships.

Participation in peace operations provides the ADF with training and development opportunities. Australian involvement in peace operations also allows the ADF to augment its military competence in a multinational environment. ADF personnel deployed on peace operations have developed a reputation for professionalism, reliability and resourcefulness. As a result of this, the ADF receives many requests for assistance in peace operations. The current ADF operational tempo is about 1,350 personnel deployed on UN mandated or UN supported operations around the world. In addition, there are some 780 personnel involved in Operation Slipper, our contribution to the international coalition against terrorism. There are also approximately 1,300 personnel involved in border protection, known in Defence as Operation Relex. Australia's most significant commitment in terms of personnel is the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor, UNMISET, with approximately 1,250 ADF personnel deployed with the force.

The ADF is involved in a number of UN mandated operations outside of our immediate region. These include: Operation Paladin, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation, UNTSO, in the Middle East, where we have 13 ADF members; and Op Pomelo, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, UNMEE, where we have two ADF members. While not United Nations mandated operations, the ADF is also involved in three international operations occurring in association with UN peacekeeping missions: Op Osier, the stabilisation Kosovo force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Croatia, and we have eight defence members there; Operation Husky, the British led International Military Advisory Training Team, IMATT, in Sierra Leone, and we have two members there; and Operation Mazurka, the Multinational Force and Observers, MFO, in the Sinai, and we have 25 ADF people there. This,

like IMATT, is not a UN mission but, rather, a multinational mission which includes 11 different national contingents.

The major change since March last year is the reduction of 130 ADF personnel formerly deployed in East Timor. We have also withdrawn from the demining operation in Mozambique. This operation had met the United Nations objectives of establishing a civilian demining framework for the country. The program was transferred to a Mozambique non-government organisation.

Within our immediate region, Australia continues to provide strong support and a visible, positive presence on the ground to assist progress in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. In Bougainville, Australia leads the peace monitoring group, the PMG, and continues to contribute the majority of personnel—some 40 people—to enable the international peace monitors to fulfil their role on Bougainville. The most significant challenge confronting the Solomon Islands is law and order, and not ethnic conflict, which resulted in the Townsville Peace Agreement. Defence had three civilian monitors in the international peace monitoring team and four ADF members providing additional support. Most of the personnel withdrew at the end of March, with the security officer withdrawing on 25 June. Royal Australian Navy support, which consisted of an RAN vessel embarked off the shores of Honiara, ceased in October 2001, following our commitment to Operation Slipper.

We have noted to the committee previously that the ADF is involved in a range of peace building initiatives that strengthen cooperation in the region. The ADF conducts regular military exercises with a range of countries within the region. Our exercises with regional countries serve to increase interoperability and therefore contribute to our capacity to cooperate with them on peace operations. These include Exercise Pirap Jabiru, which is conducted with Thailand on a biennial basis and has a specific focus on peace operations. The Department of Defence coordinates an annual international peace operations seminar, which focuses on UN issues and attracts strong regional representation. Australia recently coordinated a South West Pacific seminar on regional peace operation issues, which was announced at the Pacific Island Forum. It was an extremely popular initiative and it was requested that we conduct another one in the next year, and we are looking positively at doing that.

Regarding the Brahimi report, as you are aware, the Secretary-General of the United Nations convened a high-level panel in early 2000 to make specific recommendations for addressing deficiencies in UN-led peace operations. Many of the 57 recommendations of the report of the panel on UN peace operations are being implemented by the United Nations. The secretary-general's update report of December 2001 on the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Brahimi report acknowledges that member states have shown a sustained commitment to strengthening and developing the instruments of peacekeeping.

The changes in the United Nations structure, systems and procedures, together with the provision of additional resources, are proof that member states are determined to invest in the future and the long-term success of peacekeeping. In April this year, the United Nations General Assembly committee supported the recommendations of the Brahimi report in reinforcing the United Nations logistics base in Brindisi, Italy. The report proposed that one complex peacekeeping mission start-up kit be established and stored at Brindisi at a cost of \$US146

million. The initial stocks are expected to arrive in Brindisi late this year, with an additional 47 personnel to follow.

Defence was involved in extensive internal and interdepartmental consultation in considering our response to the Brahimi report. The core issue for Defence has been the focus on more rapid reaction. The report defined 'rapid reaction' as 30 days for deployment from the date of the Security Council resolution for traditional peace operations, and 90 days for more complex peace operations. Defence has consented to aim for these time lines in terms of regional peace operation deployments. We have also enhanced our information flow with the UN through giving greater detail and more frequent updates—that is, every quarter—of information under the UN stand-by arrangement system. We also agreed to investigate the possibility of quickly deployed military planners—that is, seven to 14 days—to assist with mission start-up.

To contribute to and promote ongoing peace operations reform, the Department of Defence is sponsoring the next 'Challenges to peace operations into the 21st century' seminar. The Challenges project is a series of international seminars that provide an independent contribution to the continuing debate on peace operations, reflecting different national and international perceptions and complementing the analyses and recommendations contained in the Brahimi report. The Challenges seminar is an initiative of the Swedish National Defence College. The college has formed partnerships with the US, Canada, Japan, India, Argentina, Jordan, South Africa, Russia and now Australia. In November this year we will support the 10th seminar in this international series. The seminars are termed '1½-track dialogues' with service personnel and government officials participating in their personal capacities.

Australia is also working with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations to achieve reforms. Our approach to DPKO is to have highly competent and credible staff within the DPKO, capable of influencing peace operations reforms. Additionally, our involvement in DPKO enhances our understanding of UN thinking and enables us to better gauge how countries are aligning on a host of issues. This improves our early warning on developing issues and our ability to achieve timely leverage and shape outcomes. A member of the ADF, Major General Tim Ford, is currently serving as the military adviser to the secretary-general. It is worth noting that he is the first non-NATO military adviser. We have also nominated an ADF officer for the upcoming deputy military adviser appointment to DPKO and we have one officer currently on the staff. We have recently submitted three nominees for a number of advertised positions in the office. That concludes my opening statement.

**CHAIR**—Do any other officers wish to make any statement before we proceed to questions?

**Group Capt. Dunbar**—No.

**CHAIR**—Can I just raise a couple of issues with you. The Brahimi report has been considered over the past couple of years, and I think it was considered in a very good light by most member states of the UN. Have the majority of the report's recommendations been committed to by the UN? There were two things in the Brahimi report which we highlighted in our own report. One was that Brahimi suggested that failures of UN peace operations in the past were due to the operations being carried out in inappropriate circumstances. He was referring to situations where there was no victory for one side or there had not been political agreements; in other words, there were not the right conditions for a peacekeeping force to succeed. The other

was that traditional peacekeeping, which treated the symptoms rather than the sources of the conflict, had no built-in exit strategy. I think he was referring then to places such as Cyprus, where we have had people for an enormous number of years now.

They are two of the issues that came out of Brahimi. But in our own discussions with Tim Ford in New York, one of the things that he raised with us was the fact that there were only 32 officers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to administer some 38,000 troops throughout various operations throughout the world. By any reasonable comparison with Australian or any other military planning staffs the number was clearly insufficient. What impact has that had on peacekeeping operations? Perhaps you would also like to comment on what Brahimi said about exit strategies and inappropriate circumstances.

**Ms Rowling**—I will start and then perhaps hand over to Group Captain Garry Dunbar. With regard to the implementation of the Brahimi report, it is an ongoing exercise with the UN. As I said in my statement, there have been a number of examinations of the recommendations and reports on the progress made to date. I think the last one was in December last year. Our staff in our UN mission are plugged into those reports and the ongoing implementation of those recommendations. That enables us to feed in views and to assist where appropriate. On the 32 officers, certainly that has been a concern, which was particularly highlighted by the Brahimi report. The number of officers in the DPKO has been increased, and there is consideration being given to increasing it yet again. That is part of our nomination of more officers to be part of the DPKO.

**CHAIR**—Tim Ford's appointment must nearly be up.

**Ms Rowling**—It is indeed. That is why we have nominated for the deputy military adviser position, because it would be good to have an Australian officer in one of those key positions, participating and contributing. We have also put forward three names for other jobs in the DPKO. We have one officer there already.

**Group Capt. Dunbar**—Following on from that, trying to get the management of peacekeeping operations correctly done—as you quite rightly point out—has been one of the issues that Brahimi referred to. Increasing the size of the DPKO staff has given the management within the DPKO additional resources to do that particular activity. But, irrespective of the size that the DPKO staff could get to, there needs to be a recognition—and there is a growing recognition of this now—that there is a responsibility within the peacekeeping force deployed on a mission to do in-depth planning and management of the peace operation as it goes forward. Getting the responsibility correctly shared between the strategic level of the DPKO and the operational level of the mission itself is another area that they have been trying to work more solidly on to ensure that the operational responsibilities of missions are correctly dealt with by the mission and not passed to the DPKO to be some sort of top cover for that.

The issue of exit strategies is an area of major discussion within the UN at the moment. We have moved from what are generally called generation 1 peace operations—those of the fifties, where agreement was there between two sides and the peacekeepers were there simply to be unarmed observers of a peace which had been assented to by all parties—through to generation 2, which are more complex peace operations, where not all parties have signed, and we are seeing the application of chapter 7 type operations. But in both of those cases it is dealing with a

crisis that already exists, and it does not necessarily do anything more than to stabilise the situation. If there is going to be ongoing peace, a methodology needs to be put in place that brings together all of the United Nations agencies and a broader range of non-government and semi-government organisations in the humanitarian fields to support the development of a better set of circumstances so that those conflicts will not arise in the future.

**CHAIR**—Do we have an exit strategy for East Timor?

**Group Capt. Dunbar**—We do. We have spoken with East Timor about a set of milestones associated with a regularisation of the border and a resolution of the refugee situation. With those requirements met, the need for an external security agency there would no longer exist.

**Mr PRICE**—Did we have an exit strategy or a time line when we deployed? You say we have one now. Did you have one when we first deployed?

**CHAIR**—It was not a regular peacekeeping thing to start with. INTERFET was different from the normal peacekeeping arrangement, wasn't it?

**Group Capt. Dunbar**—I must beg the committee's indulgence on this aspect. I was not in my current position at that time, so I cannot really speak for the thinking which went on some two years ago.

**Mr PRICE**—Could you tell the committee, or take it on notice, when the exit strategy was developed?

**Group Capt. Dunbar**—We can do that.

**CHAIR**—You raised the issue of East Timor—

**Mr PRICE**—No, you raised East Timor.

**CHAIR**—In fact INTERFET was a peacemaking operation not a peacekeeping operation, wasn't it? We are talking about an exit strategy for peacekeepers rather than peacemakers. That is what I was looking at, anyway.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I think the point that is raised is a reasonable one. You would assume that at some stage an exit strategy was devised. It would be interesting to see when that did occur.

**Group Capt. Dunbar**—My judgment would be that, at the time, there was a set of circumstances on the ground in East Timor that we wanted to stabilise. The exit strategy would not necessarily have needed to be worked out in detail at that stage. The expectation would be that we would not be there forever and that, having stabilised the situation, a regularisation of relationships between an independent East Timor and its neighbours would be achieved. How quickly that was going to be achieved—

**Mr PRICE**—Group Captain, I beg to disagree with you. There was a clear policy, in a number of operations, about a time line in terms of commitment of troops and an exit strategy. That

was not followed in Bougainville and it has not been followed in East Timor. I welcome the fact that there is an exit strategy, but I am still curious to know at what time that was developed.

**CHAIR**—Mr Price, you asked whether we had an exit strategy when we went into East Timor. I would have thought that, when we went in as INTERFET, we may not have had an exit strategy, but by the time INTERFET became UNTAET we should have had an exit strategy, because that is when the United Nations peacekeeping operations really started.

**Ms Rowling**—We will get more detail on this, because neither of us was there at the time. As you say, INTERFET went in and it then handed over to UNTAET, so there was a defined time line there for the life of INTERFET. The life of UNTAET went up to the independence of East Timor, which was 20 May. UNTAET took the operation up to the date of independence for East Timor and now we have UNMISSET, which has milestones—

**CHAIR**—What is UNMISSET?

**Ms Rowling**—It is the UN Mission of Support in East Timor. It started on the day of East Timor's emergence as a nation. With that mission, we do have milestones that we are aiming to achieve, as Group Captain Dunbar said, and general time lines—a time of two years from the date of independence has been anticipated. That is being looked at in terms of the achievement of these milestones as well.

**Mr PRICE**—Has that been enunciated by the government or is it internal to the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade? What is the status of that?

**Ms Rowling**—It is a UN process.

**Mr PRICE**—But we are talking about our commitment of troops. You are saying that we are aligned to the latest UN operation and we do not have any separate consideration of that.

**Ms Rowling**—We are part of a UN force, part of a UN mission. Our mission in the United Nations is working closely with the UN as it develops the strategy for draw-down and departure.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—Can you tell me whether there is any consideration given to participation in the International Security Assistance Force in and around Kabul?

**Ms Rowling**—The government was approached early in the time of the ISAF, when it was first set up and was under British leadership. The government did respond but, in the event, its offer was not needed. The decision was made that the offer—of two companies, I think—was not needed. There has been a more recent approach about the provision of financial assistance. That is currently being considered by the government.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—So you are saying that the offer was made but it was not taken up?

**Ms Rowling**—They had enough infantry companies, so they did not take up our offer. Then we had this second approach, for financial assistance.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—What is the likely future role of peacekeeping in Afghanistan?

**Ms Rowling**—The ISAF mandate has been extended from June to December. At the end of that time, consideration will be given to what the future might be. There has been talk by the head of the transitional authority, Karzai—and also, I think, by Secretary-General Kofi Annan—that there may be a need to extend beyond that time and there may be a need to extend the mandate. At the moment it is focused on security operations—keeping peace and order around Kabul. There has been talk of the need to do it further afield than Kabul.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—So at this stage it is until the end of the year. That is the plan but it could be, in this period of time, extended beyond Kabul?

**Ms Rowling**—I am not sure about that. I do not think so, because its mandate has been set until the end of the year and it is focused on maintaining order around Kabul. I think that will be the focus until the end of the year. But if the mandate were to be extended that would obviously be an issue that would be considered, in view of a couple of people raising the issue.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—In terms of our commitment, it is, at this stage, still until the end of the year?

**Ms Rowling**—We are not involved in the ISAF.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—In Afghanistan, though?

**Ms Rowling**—Our involvement is in the coalition operations against terrorism.

**CHAIR**—So we are not involved in peacekeeping; we are involved in peacemaking.

**Ms Rowling**—That is right.

**Mr PRICE**—We have made the conscious decision that we will not be involved beyond December. Is that correct?

**Ms Rowling**—No, we are not involved at all in the ISAF. The ISAF was set up for a period from January to June, under British leadership, with a number of contributing nations. We were approached and we did offer two infantry companies at the time but they were not needed. So we were not involved in that first six-month period of ISAF. ISAF has now been extended for another six months, to December, under Turkish leadership. We were approached to provide some financial contributions to the running of ISAF for those six months, and the government is considering that.

**Mr EDWARDS**—You are aware of the committee's last report in which table 11.2 on page 216 sets out the various operations that we support. I would like to request an update of that with the extension of the actual cost budget estimates. It is a very good, one-glance sort of ready reckoner.

**Ms Rowling**—We would be happy to provide that.



**Mr EDWARDS**—In relation to East Timor, I assume that one of the triggers will be the Timorisation of the responsibilities there. I understand that they are training to try to build up to a strength of two battalions of East Timorese people and it will ultimately be their responsibility to pick up the border tasks that are currently being carried out by United Nations forces. Could you just tell us where we are with those two battalions? Are they building as anticipated? Are they regularly attending parades and are they gradually starting to accept those responsibilities?

**Ms Rowling**—Certainly. Our contribution in East Timor is in two parts, as you are probably aware. The first is part of the UN mission, UNMISET, where we have our 1,250 troops. The other contribution that we make is through our involvement in a Defence Cooperation Program with the government of East Timor to help them develop their East Timorese Defence Force. I believe we will have spent about \$9 million in the last financial year on that task and we have budgeted for something like \$4 million or \$5 million for the next financial year to assist East Timor to develop its defence force.

There were some 600 initial recruits into the East Timorese Defence Force and they were put through basic training at Metanaro, which is the training facility that we were involved in helping East Timor develop. A lot of that \$9 million was spent on building that training facility which has now been handed over to the East Timorese. We have people there helping with this basic training, as do a number of other countries—New Zealand and Portugal, for example. Those troops have finished their initial basic training and they have moved from Metanaro out to Los Palos where further training is being undertaken, so we now have some people out there assisting with ongoing training. Another recruitment round was run and there are 200-odd recruits now at Metanaro undertaking their basic training. We will continue this program.

We also have a training course to be undertaken in Darwin for some of their junior officers. It will be run in Bahasa by the Army and will go for about 10 weeks. In another initiative we undertook earlier this year, two East Timorese cadet officers came down to do a short period of training at Duntroon. We are looking to continue that flow through Duntroon. We expect, as with other countries in the region, that this defence cooperation activity will be ongoing into the future. In terms of capability, as you would imagine it will take some time to establish the East Timorese Defence Force. With regard to the border, my understanding is that border security will be the responsibility of the police and not the military. The military's focus will be on external security. So any developments on the border will really be a question for civilian and policing activity as well.

**Mr EDWARDS**—The figures which you have given me show that we have 600 recruits entering into the next phase and 200 recruits being brought in. Are we on track to put together those two battalions in the time frame that was originally envisaged?

**Ms Rowling**—I believe we are. I have certainly heard nothing to the contrary. I understand that it will be a continuing recruiting and training round until the required numbers are available and trained up.

**Mr EDWARDS**—That will be one of the triggers that we would be looking to for our exit strategy?

**Ms Rowling**—I do not believe it is a UN milestone. There would certainly be concern as to whether, with the withdrawal of UNMISET, there would be capable policing, capable judiciary and capable military in place. From the point of view of Australia's bilateral relationship, we are working hard to ensure that that is so with the East Timorese Defence Force.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Given that most of the activity around the border is probably of a criminal nature, I guess it is appropriate for the police to accept the responsibility there. Are they matching up to expectations? Within a reasonable period of time, will they be able to accept that responsibility?

**Ms Rowling**—I am afraid I cannot comment on the police. Our focus is on the defence force, so I am not aware of developments within the East Timorese police force.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I gather that the capacity of the East Timorese to protect and secure the border would be part of the exit strategy?

**Ms Rowling**—I do not know, but I can check on that. I can take that on notice and get back to you.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I would be most appreciative if you could do that. My other questions relate to the withdrawal of the mine clearing team from Mozambique. Were they redeployed—did they go into Cambodia—or were they simply brought back to Australia?

**Ms Rowling**—There were only two people, and I believe they were brought back to Australia.

**Col. Nagy**—That operational commitment was concluded on 31 March this year and those personnel were returned to Australia. There has been no offsetting engagement or deployment to some other regional theatre to compensate at this point.

**Mr PRICE**—I get a bit confused about what numbers we are talking about in relation to the white paper commitment. It talks about a brigade and also a battalion group being able to be separately deployed and sustained. What numbers are we talking about in a brigade and a battalion group?

**Col. Nagy**—Could I attempt to respond to that? Unfortunately the question is very general, and it is difficult to be specific.

**Mr PRICE**—It is straight out of the white paper.

**Col. Nagy**—As you would probably be aware, a task force is, as the name implies, a force that is particularly configured for a specific task. I would have to say that I am not aware that there is a specific figure that is set. Again, the nature of the operation that is being contemplated—the mission, the end state and a range of factors—would dictate the actual configuration and composition. Each of the task forces that we currently have within the Army is quite different. They are configured to reflect the specialisations that are maintained within those formations. I am not sure that I can be more specific than that. Perhaps we can take a more specific question on notice.

**Mr PRICE**—That would be good. I do not think there is any demurrer, disagreement or dissent about that being what our defence forces should be able to do. Unless you can get a handle on what numbers you are talking about, there is a real question as to whether it is in fact capable of being delivered; that is really the basis of my question. In respect of the deployment to the Solomon Islands, are you able to say what approaches were made to the Australian government? Is there a public record of the approaches to the Australian government for assistance in the Solomons prior to any deployment?

**Ms Rowling**—Yes, there was quite a process of discussion, facilitation and negotiation. There was the meeting in Townsville that led to the Townsville peace agreement. That then led to the creation of the international peace monitoring team, to which Australia contributed, to go into the Solomon Islands to help monitor the implementation of the peace agreements that were agreed in Townsville.

**Mr PRICE**—There was no request for an Australian battalion to be deployed to the Solomons?

**Ms Rowling**—Not that I am aware of, no.

**Mr PRICE**—Is there any way we can check whether there was a request from the Prime Minister of the Solomons for an Australian battalion?

**Ms Rowling**—We will get back to you on that.

**Mr PRICE**—To give some credit to the committee, a ministerial statement was made, and an exit strategy was announced, following a report on Bougainville. Where are we in terms of a timetable for exiting from Bougainville?

**Ms Rowling**—The government is currently considering that issue. As you know, very good progress has been made on the Bougainville issue with the passing of the autonomy legislation by the PNG government. That means that autonomy for Bougainville will start to be implemented once the weapons disposal program has progressed. We are currently working on both stage 1 and stage 2 of the weapons disposal program, which is the gathering together of the weapons and then the containerisation of the weapons. After stage 2 has been completed—that is, the containerisation—there will then be a 4½-month period when a decision will be made about what happens to those containerised weapons. After that the autonomy legislation will start to come into effect, and the process will then begin for elections for provincial government et cetera.

**Mr PRICE**—Do those milestones that you have outlined have a date line alongside them? If so, what are they?

**Ms Rowling**—For the stage 2 declaration that containerisation has occurred and been completed, that is up to the UN. The UN will make a declaration when they believe that sufficient weapons have been containerised. That will trigger the 4½-month period for the decision to be made on those weapons and then for the autonomy legislation to come into effect.

**Mr PRICE**—You have thrown me with the UN. Did you say, ‘the UN’?

**Ms Rowling**—Yes, there is a UN official there, Mr Paul Sinclair, who is in charge of the Bougainville mission. It will be his task to declare when he believes sufficient containerisation of those weapons has occurred.

**Mr PRICE**—Your minister has said Australia is supporting President Bush's pre-emptive strike options—I am not sure of the correct terminology—in terms of the war on terrorism. Is any work currently being undertaken in the department about a future commitment of Australian troops as a result of that announcement by your minister?

**Ms Rowling**—I think that is an issue that I would leave to the minister to address.

**Mr PRICE**—Call the minister, please, Chair!

**CHAIR**—I know where he is, but I do not think he wants to come here!

**Mr PRICE**—You would leave that to the minister—okay. As an overwhelming general rule, the committee is always very supportive and admiring of the peacekeeping efforts of the ADF. How would you describe our efforts in the Solomons? Do you see that as one of the successes? You could say that Bougainville has been very difficult but, whilst initially slow, progress is now gathering a degree of momentum, and you have indicated that you can see an end in sight there. How would you describe our involvement in the Solomon Islands?

**Ms Rowling**—What we set out to achieve with that international peace monitoring team has been achieved. That is why the team was withdrawn on 25 June. That team's role was to help the Solomon Islands and to monitor progress towards the cessation of ethnic conflict, and that has ceased. There is good progress on that, which is why the IPMT was withdrawn. The issue now in the Solomon Islands is law and order, and the Solomon Islanders themselves need to address that issue. A peace monitoring committee has taken over from the IPMT, and that will be an issue for both that committee and the Solomon Islands government. Australia is taking a whole of government approach to helping the Solomon Islands with that law and order issue. We are involved with the police, AusAID and Foreign Affairs in working through the issues of how we can assist the Solomon Islands in developing their capability to maintain law and order.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—Going back to my original question about the war against terror in Afghanistan and the peacekeeping operation, is there any dialogue between the two forces? You are fighting a war in Afghanistan and you also have a peacekeeping operation there in Kabul. Is there any dialogue between the two?

**Ms Rowling**—There undoubtedly is a lot of dialogue between the two organisations. I do not know if any of my colleagues can add to that.

**Col. Nagy**—No. The response would have to be very general. I am not aware of the specific arrangements that exist on the ground but typically, given the previous presence of the multinational force and then a separate UN-led peacekeeping operation, strictly from a military perspective there would have to be a high level of cooperation between the two forces to avoid the sort of clashes and obvious incidents that may occur in such circumstances given that they have separate reporting chains and separate command structures. I am not sure that that satisfies your question.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—I am wondering where we have had this sort of situation before, where in one country you have two mandates that are quite different—peacekeeping and fighting a war.

**Col. Nagy**—I can only agree with you that this is a particularly challenging environment. Again, I am not in a position to be specific about the nature of those arrangements and the issues that have occurred other than what has been reported in the media. We can certainly try to get further information if you wish to pursue that.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—I would be interested to see how close the dialogue is, because they are two almost conflicting objectives. The objective is to bring peace in the war against terror, but we do not know when that is going to end.

**CHAIR**—You are no doubt aware that the United States has vetoed the continuing operations in Bosnia. Do you think that that veto is a serious threat to United Nations peacekeeping operations, or is it perhaps more a political response to the establishment of the ICC?

**Wing Cmdr Hanna**—The matter is still playing out in the United Nations. The US and the Security Council have a three-day extension until midnight on Wednesday to hammer out some kind of agreement. Naturally the matter is of some concern, but they are still trying to work out how they are going to proceed on that particular matter.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Wouldn't it go beyond just Bosnia? Wouldn't it have ramifications?

**CHAIR**—That is the only one that they have actually stipulated on the veto. That is why I wondered whether it is going to affect other operations. It is obviously a response to the formation of the ICC, 1 July being the critical date when they say that they are concerned about any acts that might involve their own military or their own defence forces. I do not know whether it is a serious response or a political response. I guess we will have to wait and see.

**Wing Cmdr Hanna**—I think that is correct. Each time matters come before the Security Council, there are five countries with a veto, so that is a matter that will be ongoing and watched.

**CHAIR**—Do you want to comment, Mr Smith, or do you want to leave it there?

**Mr Smith**—I do not think that there is any question that it is a serious issue. The United States exercised its veto on the extension of the mission—at least, a longer term extension—so I think that is a demonstration of the seriousness with which it considers the issue. From Australia's point of view, we want the United States and the other members of the Security Council to resolve the issue in a way that enables the United States to continue to participate actively in, and indeed support politically, the UN peacekeeping operations.

### **Involvement in United Nations programs, funds and specialised agencies**

**CHAIR**—We will move on to the next theme which is the involvement in UN programs, funds and specialised agencies. Mr Tapp, perhaps you could make an opening statement and we can then ask some questions.

**Mr Tapp**—We understand that the purpose of today's hearing is to provide the opportunity for an update on developments since the committee's inquiry report was published. Perhaps we might make a few comments in that vein and then, of course, we would be very glad to answer any questions. Touching briefly first on the aid budget—the most recent budget—it is a good outcome from the aid perspective, with an increase of almost \$90 million, or three per cent in real terms, over the 2001-02 budget figure. The ratio of Australia's development assistance to GNI remains at 0.25 per cent.

Over the last year, the UN has organised a number of major conferences that have achieved some positive results for the international community. The aid program has played a key strategic role in supporting and building on some of these outcomes. Of particular importance to Australia in terms of the aid program were the UNGA Special Session on HIV-AIDS, the UNGA Special Session on Children and the Financing for Development conference in Monterrey. A key outcome from Monterrey was the recognition by the international community that development assistance is only one component of the resources available for development. Other essential elements include mobilising domestic resources, trade liberalisation, foreign direct investment and good governance. This is a very significant development in the whole international debate around aid, and I would underline the importance of the recognition at Monterrey of the mobilisation of domestic resources. This was an important step forward. The next major conference of some significant interest to Australia in terms of the aid program is the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Rio Plus 10, at which we are reviewing the Agenda 21 agreement on environment and development.

Touching briefly on aid budget outcomes for United Nations agencies, it is important to highlight that in addition to receiving core funding, most of the UN agencies that the aid program is supporting have significant access to non-core support. In a number of cases, this funding is significantly higher. For example, in the case of UNDP, the core contribution generally represents only about one-third of total Australian aid non-core funding. On core allocations, in the recent budget there were funding increases for the IAEA, UNRWA, UNICEF and reductions for UNHCR, UNDP, WFP and UNEP.

**CHAIR**—Did you say reductions for UNDP?

**Mr Tapp**—Yes, a reduction of core contributions to UNDP.

**CHAIR**—What has it been reduced to? Do you know offhand how much it has been reduced by?

**Mr Tapp**—It was reduced by \$500,000, though, maybe in a minute I can outline to you the increases in non-core funding to UNDP and the work that we have been engaged in with UNDP with a particular focus on our region. Would you like me to come back to that later?

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Could you repeat which organisations received a reduction in core funding?

**Mr Tapp**—It was UNHCR, UNDP, WFP, the United Nations Environment Program, and also maintenance, in nominal terms, for other UN agencies handled by the aid program. We continue to work with others to support and encourage reforms to improve the performance of the United Nations development system. This has included active engagement in executive board meetings and increased bilateral and regional engagement with a number of significant agencies. A key priority for the financial year that has just commenced is the development of strategic partnerships with a number of key UN agencies which have a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. These partnerships aim to improve the multilateral agencies' engagement and effectiveness within our region. In this context, I should also mention our current review of the international health program under the aid program, which is exploring how the international health program can more effectively complement bilateral and regional activities to achieve better health outcomes within our region. For those purposes, you are looking at a particular focus, for example, on the World Health Organisation.

The government recognises the importance of preventative action in preserving peace and security and supports the need for a whole of government approach. We are working very closely with our colleagues in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Defence and the AFP to develop a multitiered conflict and poverty prevention approach. Recently, the Minister for Foreign Affairs launched a new policy for the Australian aid program on peace, conflict and development cooperation. He launched this new policy at the Aid Advisory Council meeting held in Sydney on 12 June of this year. This is an important policy development for the aid program and a series of operational changes will underpin the policy, including stronger working relationships with key United Nations organisations. That is a very brief sketch of some of the issues that may be of interest to the committee from the perspective of the aid program and we would be happy to respond to questions.

**CHAIR**—I would like to move back to the issue of core budget funding and any additional special purpose funding that might be given. I notice that you said UNDP is down by \$500,000. I think you said that the World Food Program was the other one where there had been a reduction. In relation to those two programs, can you tell us whether or not there has been a reduction in the overall allocation of funds for both of those areas, or have they just reduced the core funding?

**Mr Tapp**—No, it has just been a reduction that we have had in terms of the core funding. In the financial year just ended, the core funding to UNDP was \$7 million and non-core funding was \$14½ million. In the financial year just started, the core contribution to UNDP will be \$6½ million, but it is unclear what the final outcome at the year end will be—obviously, it is still early days. But, again, by far the bulk of the funding to UNDP will be coming from non-core funding. For example, we are working very closely with UNDP at the moment in the development of funding for their role in the Solomon Islands with regard to a very important program that they have developed with our support. The program is looking at the reintegration of special police constables back into their local communities—these are former militants. This is an example of a very important activity which can ideally be implemented by the UN—as opposed to being implemented by Australia from a bilateral perspective—but where we are able to supply the support to the UN to enable them to implement it.

We have had a number of discussions recently with the UNDP in relation to the enhancement of their role and activities within the Asia-Pacific region. I have had discussions with the deputy

administrator and there have been discussions with the administrator and with their regional representative in Suva, who was recently here in Canberra, in terms of looking at the way in which the UNDP is going to be able to play a role that is more supportive to Australia's interests within the region. So the reduction in core funding does not indicate a reduction in engagement with UNDP. Indeed, as I have outlined, we have probably had more engagement with UNDP but very much with the focus on our region.

In terms of the core contribution for the World Food Program, the numbers tend to fluctuate from year to year. This is a function of a number of different factors. Some of this is in relation to food purchases. We provide funding to the World Food Program through two principle channels. One is through a core contribution for development food aid—that is, food which will be used for development purposes by the World Food Program. The other is through contributions that we may be making for emergency operations. We have seen an increase in the provision of food to the emergency operations and a reduction to the development program. In those terms that is seen within the budget figures as representing a reduction in core contributions to WFP but, in fact, our overall contributions to WFP have remained fairly consistent within the boundaries of price and exchange rate fluctuations.

When dealing with food purchases one has to recognise that we are bound by the Food Aid Convention, where Australia has a commitment to provide 250,000 metric tonnes of wheat equivalent per year. The amount of Australian dollars that is required to purchase that will vary as a function of exchange rates, because all of the main food commodities' global prices are based on US dollars. It would also vary depending on world market prices. The world market price for wheat has increased by five per cent in the last two weeks, to give one example. It varies also by function of where we are actually channelling some of the food: putting food into Afghanistan is a great deal more expensive than putting food into Indonesia, for example.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—I heard what you said. You have given the example of food price changes. I thought that originally you mentioned five UN organisations. The chair asked you about two of them—am I right in believing there have been reductions in more than two?

**Mr Tapp**—UNHCR was another one.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—We speak about 'engagement'—engagement might not mean money; it might mean that we are talking to them more often or are involved in a few more projects and so on. I note that ACFOA has been critical of the overall money to the UN. What is the actual bottom line with regard to their criticisms—and those of a few writers? Engagement can mean many things.

**Mr Tapp**—Looking at the overall core funding to UN agencies, the 2001-02 outcome was just under \$80 million to all of the UN agencies; in the previous year it had been \$78 million; in the year before it had been \$75 million. In terms of the overall contributions to the UN agencies, again it is quite interesting to look at some of the trends. For example, in the financial year just ended non-core contributions to UNHCR were significant. I do not have the exact number in front of me, but certainly in addition to the \$14.3 million core contribution we were making very significant non-core contributions to the UNHCR.



Overall funding to UNHCR has been increasing in recent years as a function of the non-core contributions. In the current budget, while the core contribution to UNHCR has reduced, from \$14.3 million to \$7.3 million, we have established an international refugee fund which is available for UNHCR and other international agencies. The total amount in this fund is \$15 million in this financial year's budget. These funds are available for UNHCR and others to apply for funding. At the moment, at this early stage in the financial year, it would be impossible for me to be able to indicate what the likely funding levels for UNHCR would be this year. It is very clear to point out that the government has very explicitly stated that the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons is of sufficient importance and gravity to warrant the establishment of this special fund.

**CHAIR**—On the issue of core funding, particularly in relation to UNDP, I am sure that Mark Malloch-Brown would argue that by lowering the core funding you are actually lowering the flexibility of the UNDP to make its own decisions and set its own priorities—whereas non-core funding is really only granted at the whim of a government after a program has been set up, and then the countries involved decide, 'Maybe we will support it and maybe we won't'. He was arguing a couple of years ago for an increase in core funding so that the UNDP could then set some priorities of its own. Can you see that if we continue to reduce our core funding—which I think four or five years ago was something like \$12 or \$13 million, if I remember rightly—it is going to reduce the ability of those organisations to set their own agendas and set their priorities? We might not like their priorities—perhaps that is why we are doing it.

**Mr Tapp**—Certainly we need to look at this one extremely carefully. Taking, for example, the direction of overall core funding of UNDP, we have certainly been asking questions of UNDP as to whether they have been providing adequate attention to our region. We have raised some very significant concerns with UNDP in terms of their overall performance within our region. To illustrate the point—and I am talking off the top of my head and I may not be exactly correct on the figures, but they are close—35 per cent of the population of concern to UNHCR, as identified by UNHCR, essentially refugees and internally displaced people, is to be found within the Asia-Pacific region. Sixteen per cent of UNHCR funding goes to the Asia-Pacific region. This poses certain questions in terms of whether some of these agencies are, through their core contributions, providing an adequate focus on the region and certainly on Australia's interest within the region. That has been very much one of the driving issues behind the focus on non-core funding, because that enables us to ensure that our interests and the region's interests are being adequately met. Therefore, one could argue from the one hand that, if one reduces the core contributions, that may reduce the flexibility of some of the UN agencies to set their priorities; however, from Australia's national interest perspective, there is a real question mark as to whether those priorities are actually ones meeting our regional interests. UNHCR has responded to us in relation to the reduction in core funding to say that we are merely doing what many other donors have been doing in recent years and they were not surprised by our decision.

**CHAIR**—I do not have a problem with it. I think we ought to make public the reasons why we are cutting down on core donations rather than just see it as a line on the budget as a cut or a reduction.

**Mr Tapp**—I was answering these questions as well, as you are aware, Mr Chairman, during the recent estimates process.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—In that region, would Iran not fit into that, for instance?

**Mr Tapp**—Sorry?

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—I am interested in the region you described as taking 35 per cent or 16 per cent—Iran, Pakistan, India?

**Mr Tapp**—That would include the Afghan refugees.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—Including those in Iran?

**Mr Tapp**—I am not sure if that includes Iran or not or whether it actually moves from Pakistan to further out east. I can check on that if you wish; I can take that on notice.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—Just on that point, let us say, for the sake of argument, that we accept this line of argument. Where would Australia see the alternative funding going? Do you know? Is there any view as to which region? Is too much going to the former Yugoslavia?

**Mr Tapp**—There is a great deal which could be going into eastern Europe. Eastern Europe currently represents 19 per cent, I think, of UNHCR's total budget, Africa represents 36 per cent of UNHCR's total budget, and that is certainly not representative of the locations of the populations of concern.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—Furthermore, does the fund that you spoke of have specifications?

**Mr Tapp**—We are working out the final parameters around that, but this fund is for programs which would be responding to the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons within the Asia-Pacific region. One of the points that we have underlined quite strongly is that now, globally, there are more internally displaced persons than there are refugees. For example, we have also highlighted the fact that currently there are well over one million internally displaced persons in Indonesia alone. Our concern is that these populations of concern are not receiving adequate attention.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I would like to ask questions about the UNHCR in relation to scams and the involvement of some—obviously a tiny minority—UNHCR workers in sex scandals in certain refugee camps. Have you noted any inquiries into these reports? What action has been taken?

**Mr Tapp**—We are aware that allegations have been made against two agencies which have received support under the UNICEF Child Protection Program in Sierra Leone. You are asking the question in terms of UNHCR?

**Senator HARRADINE**—UN agencies generally.

**Mr Tapp**—If I could talk briefly—

**Senator HARRADINE**—First of all, regarding the UNHCR, wasn't there an inquiry by the so-called watchdog, the UN Office for Internal Oversight Services, into corruption scandals involving staff at the UNHCR?

**Mr Tapp**—The UN Office for Internal Oversight Services will be releasing its report to UNHCR. The point is that the issue pertains to other agencies working under subcontracts under the broader UNHCR program in Sierra Leone and, specifically, two agencies which had received support under the UNICEF Child Protection Program. We understand that the Office for Internal Oversight Services report will be presented to the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly and possibly the Third Committee as well later this year. We are not aware of the contents of this report, but we would draw attention to the fact that, in the interim, UNICEF has taken measures to clarify its codes of conduct and staff monitoring procedures for their implementing partners. They have also helped to establish specific mechanisms for the prevention of abuse in camps through improved monitoring and reporting.

UNHCR has also developed a code of conduct for all of its staff. We understand it is reviewing its own monitoring activities, reinforcing staff training and improving the gender distribution of its staff within the west Africa region. We, obviously, require our implementing partners to exercise the highest standards of professional and personal behaviour in any programs funded from the aid program. In response to your question, until the reports are finalised, we are not in a position to provide any greater detail beyond saying that there are procedures in train specifically from UNICEF, since their specific partners were the ones which were under investigation. But also from UNHCR, there are some procedures in place to try to improve some of their practices.

**Senator HARRADINE**—One of the best ways, I assume, of dealing with this matter, is to make sure that the perpetrators are caught and dealt with. What has been the actual result, in those terms, of these reports?

**Mr Tapp**—I do not have the answer to that question at hand. I would very happily take that on notice and we would get back to you.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I understand that the most recent report related how about 70 workers from more than 40 non-government organisations in UN agencies were suspected of sexually abusing teenage children in the region. I am talking about the Guinea-Liberia-Sierra Leone region. Was that the report that you were talking about?

**Mr Tapp**—Yes.

**Senator HARRADINE**—That was the one done by UNHCR and, I think, Oxfam, wasn't it?

**Mr Tapp**—The study was commissioned by UNHCR and Save the Children. It is based upon that report that the UN office of internal oversight has been conducting its inquiry.

**Senator HARRADINE**—The one that I was talking about was the one in Kenya.

**Mr Tapp**—I am sorry; I have been responding to the west African inquiry. I do not know whether my colleagues from DFAT have some information on the Kenyan inquiry.

**Mr Smith**—I think that it is, in fact, the same report. One of the allegations was made against UNHCR staff based in the UNHCR office in Nairobi, and that is picked up in that OIOS inquiry that Mr Tapp referred to.

**Senator HARRADINE**—The reports have not come out, as yet, have they? One should have. The Kenya one was commenced about two years ago.

**Mr Tapp**—I do not have the exact date at hand.

**Mr Smith**—We can check that and get back to you.

**Senator HARRADINE**—In regard to the detention centres in Australia or elsewhere, what monitoring procedures are adopted by UNHCR, for example, to determine whether or not sexual abuse occurs there?

**Mr Tapp**—Responsibility for all matters relating to the role of UNHCR in detention centres and the offshore processing facilities rests with the immigration portfolio. The aid program has no responsibility for that.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Who pays?

**Mr Tapp**—In terms of the role of UNHCR at the offshore processing facilities on both Manus Island and Nauru, all of the payments to UNHCR are made from the immigration portfolio. They do not come from the aid portfolio. They would be questions you would have to direct to DIMIA.

**Senator HARRADINE**—This is part of our relationship with the United Nations, however. I acknowledge what you are saying. In regard to the UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, what is the position on monitoring? What monitoring by Australia of the operations of the UNFPA has taken place?

**Mr Tapp**—The work and engagement that we have with the UNFPA is similar to that which we have with some of the other UN agencies, in that we would be involved with the UNFPA at the executive board level. Obviously, given our relationship with the UNFPA, we also seek to ensure that the UNFPA, along with other international family planning agencies receiving Australian funding, satisfies the government's policy, which is articulated in *Guiding principles for Australian assistance for population activities* and also in the population checklist. There may be other ongoing engagement with the UNFPA on specific activities that we may be involved in as needed. As you are well aware, Senator, many times we have been engaged in discussing with the UNFPA, for example, some of their activities in China, often in response to some of the questions that you have put to us at various times.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I again raise that question about the PRC's coercive population control program which involves forced abortions, forced sterilisations, economic 'disincentives'—if I put it mildly—and the like. The UNFPA is heavily involved in China.

**Mr Tapp**—The UNFPA has significant activity in China, yes.

**Senator HARRADINE**—But the Chinese program is a coercive program, is it not?

**Mr Tapp**—As we have discussed before on previous occasions, our support for family planning activities under the aid program is based on the principle of voluntarism that was agreed at ICPD in 1994 and reaffirmed in ICPD Plus Five in 1999. We do recognise that social taxes and other things can in particular circumstances be regarded as coercive. But we are prepared to support multilateral activities in such a coercive context in the interests of trying to achieve change. If on balance we judge that the family planning programs supported have themselves no aspect of coercion—as is the case with the UNFPA program in China—and it is still possible to work to achieve change over the longer term, then we will remain engaged. The UNFPA project in China is a case in point.

**Senator HARRADINE**—There has been no change in the PRC policy, has there?

**Mr Tapp**—The UNFPA has succeeded in terms of seeing that those counties that are engaged are more voluntarist than before the project commenced and than other counties within the country. The independent international review team on the UNFPA China country program last year concluded that the UNFPA program in China is a positive force in moving China away from coercive family planning activities.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I am aware of that so-called inquiry. I am asking for the details. Give us the details on what has been put in place by the PRC in respect of those counties where UNFPA is present. You seem to be indicating to the committee that there is a different modus operandi on the part of the PRC in those provinces where the UNFPA is working as compared with the other provinces. Would you please provide the committee with the particular laws.

**Mr Tapp**—I would be glad to do so. I will take the detail of that on notice, if I may. I would also highlight the point that we have quite a large number of questions that you put on notice at the recent estimates hearings that we are also providing answers on, including a number which relate to this particular program.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Are there any published laws outlawing coercive tactics in family planning in any part of the PRC?

**Mr Tapp**—I will take that one on notice. We will add that to the replies that we give to you.

**Senator HARRADINE**—When you are dealing with the question of the laws, would you outline what is described as ‘civilised’ or ‘legal’ in those particular laws?

**Mr Tapp**—I do not understand what you are asking.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I am thinking of Falun Gong, for example. I would imagine that the adherents of Falun Gong who were tortured would not see that as being civilised.

**CHAIR**—Are you asking them to give you an opinion, Senator Harradine? We are going into a lot of detail in what is a general questioning on Australia’s aid programs and our involvement in UN programs. I thought it would have been more general and not quite as specialised as what we are going to.

**Senator HARRADINE**—I hear this all the time, but at some stage we have to get to the point where the women of the PRC are not forced to undergo abortions because they have not done their duty, according to the PRC—that is, limited their family.

**CHAIR**—I understand that, Senator Harradine, but I am not sure that this inquiry—where we have stipulated three-quarters of an hour for each session, because we have got a whole range of issues relating to our report that we want to cover—is where you should be asking for some very detailed and specific information.

**Senator HARRADINE**—How much money is provided to the UNFPA by the Australian government?

**Mr Tapp**—Under the 2002 allocation, the UNFPA receives \$2,230,000, which is obviously a small contribution by UNFPA standards—that is going into the core contribution. I should add that we provide no direct contribution to the UNFPA program in China.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Is that an increase or a decrease?

**Mr Tapp**—That is an increase on the 2001 allocation by \$30,000.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—I have two points on the same issue. Firstly, could you give us an appraisal of UNFPA operations in a number of other countries in the region, their success rates and how they are managing population control et cetera?

**Mr Tapp**—I will happily come back to you on that one, Senator.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—Secondly—and I cannot say I read this as the bible, word for word—once again referring to ACFOA, you made the comment that this is all the responsibility of the immigration department et cetera, and I saw some headline criticism from ACFOA in regard to the aid budget that included aspects of the refugee care by Australia in the overall aid budget. Are there any figures that are included in reaching this 0.25 per cent of GDP that would come into that kind of framework?

**Mr Tapp**—Under the total funding which is considered to be official development assistance there is an element which includes that payments may be made by other government departments which are ODA eligible as determined by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD in Paris. There are a large number of other departments both at a federal and a state level that are making such contributions. I do not have the details with me at the moment, but we have undertaken to provide through the Senate estimates process some details on those figures, so I would imagine those would be available quite shortly.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—Thank you.

**Senator HARRADINE**—In your opening statement, Mr Tapp, you mentioned health outcomes and more money—or was it more cooperation—with WHO in health measures.

**Mr Tapp**—We have been working quite closely with WHO under the international health program. Core contributions to WHO come from the Department of Health and Ageing. We provide specific funding under the international health program for various international health activities, a large part of which is to the World Health Organisation. We have been working with WHO—in particular, their Western Pacific Regional Office—in terms of looking at some of their activities within our region.

One of the things that I might touch on there has been some of the work that we have been doing with them in support of the important issues of non-communicable diseases within our region. Indeed, there has been some quite interesting research by the Menzies Research Institute in Tasmania, the School of Medicine in Fiji and the World Health Organisation, essentially trying to get a sense of putting in place some systems for monitoring the incidence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, which in the Pacific is such a huge problem. In the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office we have been finding a very interested and engaged partner in looking at some of these issues. In my introductory statement, I was highlighting that based on some of the initial work we have done with them we wish to take that further and have quite a clear review of how that has been going and build on some of the successes that we have had.

**CHAIR**—I think the time has come for a break. Thanks very much for appearing before us today and providing us with that information.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.35 p.m. to 1.47 p.m.**

**Australia's permanent missions to the United Nations****Structural and financial reform in the United Nations****Costs and benefits of Australia's participation in the United Nations**

**CHAIR**—There may be some overlap between these topics, and I am quite happy for people to overlap if they want to. Are there any opening statements, firstly, about the permanent missions?

**Mr Smith**—We are really in the committee's hands; I am not sure how you want to proceed with the discussion. What I can do, if it is helpful, is to try and sketch, for the benefit of the committee, some of the major priorities that our three UN missions have on their agendas at the moment. Turning first to the mission in New York, clearly an important priority is continuing work with the United Nations on the fight against terrorism. I mentioned the importance of that in my opening remarks. The mission continues to work very closely with the CTC—the Counter-Terrorism Committee—in monitoring developments in the implementation of council resolution 1373, and also engaging in Sixth Committee discussions on terrorism. It continues to work very closely with the UN on the issue of East Timor, ensuring that Australian interests in the operation of the UN's mission there are protected, and generally continuing to engage the UN to ensure that it provides the support that we think it needs to provide in East Timor's early post-independence days.

We continue to work very closely on managing Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations, contributing to efforts to strengthen the UN's capacity on peacekeeping including, importantly, through the ongoing process of implementation of the Brahimi report. The post is very actively engaged in the process of UN reform, particularly in encouraging the secretary-general and the secretariat to develop a very robust second-term reform agenda. Again, we see this as a very important opportunity for the UN to identify further efficiencies, savings and rationalisation of its activities. Allied with that is the work that we continue to do through the UN's Fifth Committee on budget and resources in managing these ongoing pressures for budget growth.

I mention again in my opening statement the importance of our engagement on Asia-Pacific regional issues. We are working to ensure that the UN is giving the right attention to those issues in the case of some country-specific situations—we discussed Burma and Cambodia this morning, and issues in the Pacific: Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. On the disarmament and security side of things, the mission obviously participates very actively in the work of the UN's First Committee on arms control and disarmament issues. One interesting aspect of this work is the advice that the mission gives to Australian companies in the implementation of the oil for food program. As you know, the Australian Wheat Board has major export interests in Iraq and that operates under the framework of the oil for food program. The sort of advice that the mission provides is very important for Australian companies in managing those export interests. We talked a little earlier about our efforts to promote greater international cooperation on people-smuggling and illegal people-moving into the United



Nations. Again, that is an ongoing issue for us and we will continue to work to create opportunities to take that cooperation forward.

That broadly covers the main areas of activity of the UN mission in New York. There is a lot of ongoing work; for example, in promoting Australian candidacies. I mentioned earlier our election to the Commission on Human Rights. Obviously there are opportunities to promote Australian candidacies and, indeed, promote qualified Australian individuals into positions in the United Nations. We work very actively to support those opportunities. These examples are by no means complete but they give a sense of the work of the missions.

I turn now to our mission in Geneva. Firstly, migration and refugee issues will remain a very high priority. As we discussed earlier, we work very closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in developing responses to this ongoing problem, particularly in relation to people-smuggling and the problem of secondary movements. We also work closely with the United Nations, particularly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UNHCR, on various mechanisms that have been engaged in examining Australian programs and activities, including in relation to immigration detention. I refer specifically to two recent visits: one by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and one by the special envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, both of whom visited during May and June.

There is a very large program of activities on indigenous issues at the Geneva end. This program crosses over and is picked up at times in New York as well. There are a couple of UN forums, one of which is called the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. There is a process of negotiation and a group working on a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. All of these are dealing with issues of great interest to Australia and we engage very actively in those processes, principally through our Geneva office. We have already discussed at some length the efforts that we are making to reform the UN human rights treaty bodies, and that remains a major priority for our mission in Geneva. The Geneva office is also principally responsible for managing our relations with a number of UN specialised agencies, in particular, the World Health Organisation, the International Labour Organisation and the International Telecommunication Union. I mentioned earlier the role that the Geneva office is playing in preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society.

Our office in Geneva also maintains very close contact with Geneva based humanitarian agencies—in particular, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross. I do not know if you would call it a humanitarian agency but it is an important agency, and that is the International Organisation for Migration, which again is a key partner in our efforts to address the problem of people-smuggling and illegal migration. One very important priority for our mission in Geneva next year will be the Commission on Human Rights, when we take up our membership of that commission from January. The commission sits in regular session generally for about six or eight weeks during March and April. That will be a very important process and we will be using our membership of the commission to advance a number of our human rights objectives, including that relating to reform of the human rights treaty bodies. Again, it is an incomplete survey, but I think it will give you a sense of what the Geneva office is doing.

I now turn briefly to our mission to the UN in Vienna. The bulk of the Vienna mission's work is in fact focused on the disarmament and arms control agenda. There is a very wide range of issues, including our relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency, managing the Program of International Nuclear Safeguards, the implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the monitoring mechanisms that are associated with that treaty, and managing our involvement in a number of weapons of mass destruction export control regimes—in particular, the Nuclear Supplies Group, the Zangger Committee and the Wassenaar arrangement, dealing with conventional dual use items.

On the UN side, again in Vienna, there are a few areas that I will mention: firstly, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs; and, secondly, the Palermo Convention on Transnational Organised Crime. Again, that has been the subject of some discussion this morning. In the Vienna based Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, we have been quite actively involved in negotiations on a comprehensive convention on corruption. That is also the commission in which we have been trying to engage other members to advance international cooperation on people-smuggling.

**CHAIR**—Does Vienna run under the oversight of Geneva or is it a completely separate entity?

**Mr Smith**—It is a separate mission.

**CHAIR**—How many people are employed in each of the three missions? There are about 19 or 20 in New York, aren't there?

**Mr Smith**—In New York there are nine officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, two from the Department of Defence and one from AusAID—these are Australia based officers. There is a small complement of locally engaged staff. Most of the administration for the mission is in fact done, as you know, out of the consulate-general, which is in a sense their joint mission. On the UN side, there are nine DFAT officers, two Defence officers and one AusAID officer. In Vienna there are—

**Mr EDWARDS**—Which one were you talking about just then?

**Mr Smith**—That was New York. In Vienna there are eight officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, three from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and one from the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. In Geneva there are 3.4 A-based officers—that is Canberra based—and 2.6 on the disarmament side. Let me try and put that in English. As you know, we have two missions sitting side by side in Geneva: one dealing with UN issues and one dealing with disarmament issues. There are six officers for both missions, one of whom splits his or her time between the two missions—hence, the 0.4 and the 0.6. In addition, there is one officer from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and one officer from AusAID. Until April this year there was an officer from the Department of Health and Ageing but that position has since been abolished.

**CHAIR**—Why does it cost \$9.5 million in Geneva and \$5.5 million in New York to run the missions?

**Mr Smith**—That is probably accounted for by the fact that, for Geneva, the figures probably include the Geneva WTO mission as well as the UN disarmament mission.

**CHAIR**—Mr Jull says it is also because of the cost of a cup of coffee in Geneva!

**Mr Smith**—It may well be a factor, yes.

**Mr EDWARDS**—In relation to that, table 11.2 on page 216 of the committee's last report clearly sets out the areas of involvement with our peacekeeping forces. I wonder whether we could have a similar table which sets out exactly the same thing in relation to the various missions that we have involved.

**Mr JULL**—Have you any idea of the actual costs for this financial year?

**Mr Smith**—Of our missions?

**Mr JULL**—Yes.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Can you provide that for us?

**Mr Smith**—I can provide you with the details that I have here.

**Mr EDWARDS**—You can take it on notice. I refer you to that table on page 216. Could we have something similar in relation to those missions?

**Mr Smith**—Yes, we can certainly do that.

**CHAIR**—What about Mr Jull's question about this year's costs—do you have that information on hand?

**Mr Smith**—Yes, I have. The Geneva UN had total costs of \$1.5 million, and New York had total costs of \$1.04 million. I can give you the exact figures if you like. The figure I have for Vienna is \$4.7 million. That includes \$1.46 million for property and \$0.24 million for capital costs, but I am not sure what they are for. I may need to get some advice on that and provide some explanatory notes to the committee.

**CHAIR**—I do not think your figures could be right for New York and Geneva. They were \$9.5 million and \$5.5 million in 1998-99, I think. Didn't you just say \$1.5 million or \$1.4 million?

**Mr Smith**—They appear to be salary costs.

**CHAIR**—Why don't you take that on notice and give us a detailed breakdown—I think that would be better.

**Mr Smith**—We could certainly do that.

**CHAIR**—Is there any way at all that the government assesses or measures the effectiveness of each of our missions? Is there a criterion that it uses?

**Mr Smith**—The department as a whole has quite a rigorous process for evaluating the performance of its missions and its posts. It is a process that we are undergoing at the moment—it is done at the end of each financial year, with a mid-term review around February. It is done by the departmental senior executive on the basis of a detailed analysis of post performance against specific objectives that are set for it in consultation with the senior executive at the beginning of each of those appraisal periods.

**Mr JULL**—That is for every mission in the UN, isn't it, whether it be Copenhagen or Karachi?

**Mr Smith**—That is right.

**CHAIR**—But there is nothing specific to assess the effectiveness of a body like the United Nations as compared with a mission to Canada, the UK or somewhere else?

**Mr Smith**—For the purpose of these evaluations, the multilateral missions are treated in the same way as our other missions are treated. Of course, the way that their objectives and activities are defined is a little different because of the multilateral nature of those activities, but the internal evaluation process that the department goes through is essentially the same for bilateral and multilateral posts.

**Mr Trindade**—Our mission in Vienna is also a bilateral post with Austria. It covers the bilateral relationship with Austria as well.

**CHAIR**—We might move on. If you have a statement on structural and financial reform we might tie it in later on. Is there anything else you would like to say about structural and financial reform?

**Mr Smith**—Can I go back and say—just for completeness—that a number of our other posts have multilateral responsibilities, and I will identify what they are. Our mission in Paris is accredited to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO. We have a delegation that is essentially part of our regular Paris bilateral mission but is accredited to UNESCO. Similarly, in Rome, part of the mission has accreditation to the Food and Agriculture Organisation. Our mission in Bangkok has accreditation to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; our mission in Nairobi has accreditation to UNEP—the UN environment program. Our mission in The Hague has responsibilities for the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and, as of now, the International Criminal Court. Lastly, our mission in London has responsibility for the International Maritime Organisation.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Further to the question I asked previously, if we can get that information sent out as per that other table it will give us a ready reckoner that we can use as a basis for continuing oversight and it will inform us as to exactly what is happening.

**CHAIR**—As we said at the start, an issue that was identified in our report was the total lack of understanding on the part of the Australian community of what the United Nations actually consists of and how it operates. There is plenty of misinformation around but very little factual information, and all of these things can only help if we can get them out into the public.

**Mr JULL**—Have we done anything to spread the joy of the United Nations, or are we waiting for your response to our report ahead of that?

**Mr Smith**—Spreading the joy of the United Nations?

**Mr JULL**—One of the things we recommended was that there should be some promotion of the United Nations within the community. Has much been done?

**CHAIR**—That is one of our recommendations that have not been responded to.

**Mr Smith**—I can speak to that issue if you like. I thought we were going to come to that issue later in the discussion, but I can certainly speak to it now. Essentially, I do not think we would say that we have a single program for promoting understanding of the United Nations. As is the case with many of the department's public diplomacy activities, they take many forms. I will give some examples to give the committee a sense of what I mean. I mentioned earlier that the department produces a number of publications which explain to the public what the department as a whole does. Part of that covers some of our multilateral activities. The department's annual report is obviously a principal vehicle for explaining what we do in our multilateral work. The department's web site, as I mentioned earlier, has a great deal of information on it. It has some very important information tours including some that are geared, for example, for use by students and to keep the general public informed. There is quite a lot of information on that web site on the UN, and UN-related activities in particular.

Our mission in New York also has a quite detailed web site which includes all the major statements that have been made by the delegation and visiting ministers, and it provides some additional background material. Again, part of it is geared towards helping students and other interested members of the community understand what we are doing. We produce a number of specific publications. I instanced earlier a booklet that we produced as a contribution to the world conference against racism. Other agencies, similarly, produce detailed publications. AusAID, in its annual report and in some other publications, provides quite a lot of detailed information about our engagement with and contributions to various specialised agencies. Statements and speeches are an important way of promoting understanding of the government's activities. Certainly Mr Downer on numerous occasions speaks to Australia's multilateral interests. Similarly, our heads of mission and our ambassadors—particularly at our Geneva and UN New York missions—make statements which, again, are made available to the public. From time to time, op-ed pieces are written and published, again to provide the government's views on developments in the multilateral system.

There are a number of ways in which we engage quite directly in dialogue with members of the community, the public as a whole—NGOs, for example—on our activities. The department holds biannual consultations on human rights with NGOs. The last one of those took place in March, from recollection. We are planning another round of those consultations in, probably, August. They run for about a day. Mr Downer usually attends when his parliamentary

commitments allow. It is a very good opportunity to have quite an interactive debate with NGOs and members of the wider community on international human rights developments and the government's activities on human rights. Similarly, the government has set up the National Consultative Committee on Peace and Disarmament, which provides input and, in turn, a mechanism for disseminating information on the government's activities on disarmament.

We engage very closely with NGOs in our specific preparations for a number of major conferences. For example, last year I was very closely involved in preparations for the world racism conference. We had a number of consultative sessions with NGOs. There was an NGO working group with which we, through the interdepartmental process, worked very closely so that community views were being fed directly into the government's preparatory processes for its involvement in that conference. Of course, as you know, NGOs and various other representatives of the wider community, including parliamentarians, participate in Australian delegations. The racism conference was one. We, of course, have parliamentary delegates to each General Assembly session, and there are numerous other examples.

**CHAIR**—'Very high-quality delegates,' Mr Jull was saying.

**Mr Smith**—Always. We take advantage of opportunities provided by UN representatives who visit Australia to promote community understanding of the United Nations. I can mention a couple of recent visits. Mr Kim Hak-Su, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, was in Australia recently and spoke to the Australian Institute of International Affairs. Mr Koichiro Matura, the Director-General of UNESCO, was again here just a couple of months ago and spoke to the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, which has very wide community participation. I think I mentioned earlier that Dr Han Seung-Soo, the President of the General Assembly, will be visiting at the end of this month. His current schedule has him speaking at the National Press Club. All of these are very valuable opportunities to complement the government's own public diplomacy activities.

**Mr JULL**—How are we going with the junior organisations, like the UN Youth Association?

**Mr Smith**—The UN Youth Association is very active. For the last three years it has had a youth representative on our delegation to the General Assembly. The government will again be supporting a youth rep to participate in this forthcoming General Assembly, including providing financial support. I know that that was one of the recommendations of the committee.

**Mr JULL**—Pretty impressive people, from what I have seen of them.

**Mr Smith**—Yes.

**Mr Trindade**—It might also be worth referring also to the reference of UN related treaty activity to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties and the public consultation processes that are gone through by the work of that committee, which obviously complements the public diplomacy and public activities of the department and the government as a whole in having a broader community and parliamentary participation in discussing the benefits of particular treaty action that is coming up in the UN context. I think that many of the joint standing committee's hearings this year have been on a number of UN related treaty actions that have been referred to that committee.

**CHAIR**—One of the problems is that hearings, either of our committee or of the Joint Committee on Treaties, tend to highlight that a lot of people have no idea about the United Nations. While you talk about all these various groups that are going to be addressed or visited or that someone is going to have discussions with, they disappear without trace in the media or anywhere else. I remember that in my younger days at school a United Nations day was held every year. That has just dropped off the radar screen. Within schools there is no such thing, as far as I know, as United Nations day. We used to have an empire day too; I think that has probably fallen off the screen!

The public education of schoolchildren is where it starts. While we might have a group in UNYA, it often is a small band of people associated with tertiary institutions and late secondary schools. If you take it in the context of all the young people at school, it really is a small group of people who have become very enthusiastic—I must say that—but they are a mere drop in the ocean compared with the number of people who do not get regular information or education. Maybe we should be pressing for a United Nations day at schools so that, just for one day of the year, people can focus on the work of the United Nations. When we talk about the community not being aware, it is because there is no mechanism for everybody to gain some understanding of what the United Nations stands for and what it tries to do, and what it is successful at and what it is unsuccessful at. We ought to get at least some more information out to the general public.

**Mr Smith**—I agree with you. It is always the case that we can do more. There are a number of ways of getting information out, and it is not solely the responsibility of government to do that. This is something that the secretary-general is very conscious of, and he has been very active in trying to promote in a very practical way better community understanding. The UN office in Sydney has, as one of its principal functions and activities, the promotion of the United Nations and the goals and aims of the United Nations. I know that it works closely with a number of schools and school authorities in promoting understanding of the United Nations amongst that particular part of the community.

One of the things that Kofi Annan has done that we are very strongly supportive of, through an initiative called the Global Compact, is promote greater business and private sector engagement in the United Nations. Clearly, business groups can be a fundamental and very important stakeholder in the work the United Nations is doing—in an indirect but very important way—and we see business as potentially a very important ally in promoting wider community understanding of the work of the United Nations.

**CHAIR**—In developing countries there is not necessarily the need to educate, because they see the United Nations in action all the time but, in more affluent Western countries, the United Nations is something that they do not see. They find that their country is contributing to it in a financial way or in manpower, but there is no need for the United Nations to be seen actually working in Australia, except on committees which usually come in for their share of criticisms.

**Mr JULL**—When I was there in 1995, they were talking about commercial sponsorships at the UN. That did not seem to get anywhere.

**Mr Smith**—This issue has been the subject of some debate, particularly in relation to some of the specialised agencies. I know that the World Health Organisation and the Food and

Agriculture Organisation have been looking at—I hesitate to describe it as sponsorship, because that implies some sort of vested interest on the part of the sponsoring company—getting some sort of private sector contributions to the UN. A number of large US philanthropic foundations are important contributors. The Gates Foundation and the Turner Foundation, amongst others, make a very valuable contribution to the work of the United Nations.

The problem, of course, with private sector contributions—I am not talking about philanthropic contributions but other private sector contributions—is that there is always a risk of at least the perception of conflict of interest. As a government, we would want to be very certain that the activities and the programs of an international organisation were not being distorted by such a conflict of interest.

**CHAIR**—But there are certain areas of the activities of the United Nations where it is pretty easy to establish that there is not a conflict of interest—for example, eradicating polio with the Turner Foundation and the Gates Foundation. There are some areas where philanthropic organisations can actually make an enormous contribution and take some of the pressure off the other funding. It is just a matter of having it directed in the right direction.

**Mr Smith**—Absolutely. Where we can be confident there is no conflict of interest, we are very keen to encourage exploration of those sorts of alternative sources of financing for the UN.

**Senator HARRADINE**—In considering this issue of informing the public, surely this would not be just so that the public will feel good about it—you know, ‘Anything that is humanitarian must be good’? The statement has been made:

... that the coordination of UN work had produced non-development in Africa!

That is not my statement. That is the statement of the UN report on the panel discussion on coordination of UN works in Africa. If there is information, there should be a completeness of that information. Otherwise, ultimately you are not going to achieve the international development goals that are set. All I am asking is whether or not the department would include the ups and downs.

**Mr Smith**—Very much so. I think it is very important that people have access to full information about the operations of the United Nations, both its successes and its failures.

**Mr Trindade**—Certainly, in the treaty body reform processes, we have been looking at improving the quality of reporting, which means accurate assessments and more balanced assessments, not just one-sided statements. That is part of the process that the government has been pursuing.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON**—Does the department do qualitative research on attitudes of the electorate in areas of departmental activity? More particularly, if any kind of polling is undertaken, I would be interested to know whether you are aware of the perception of the UN and Australia’s role there.

**Mr Smith**—I do not think we have done any such polling on attitudes to the United Nations, no. We get, essentially, an anecdotal sense of what the community thinks and we respond to



that. We get a lot of correspondence from the public and that gives us a sense of what is on the minds of the public. It is often driven by media reporting which is not always as well informed as it might be, of course.

**CHAIR**—We will now move on to structural and financial reform. Mr Smith, do you want to make any comments about that before we move to questions?

**Mr Smith**—I made a number of comments in my opening remarks about where things have got to on that. Unless there are other areas you want to explore, we are happy just to take questions.

**Mr JULL**—Just allied to what we were talking about on—for want of a better word—the sponsorship, the support, a committee was established which was supposed to be looking at new sources of funding. Do we have any role in that, and is that committee still going?

**Mr Smith**—Could we take that on notice and get back to you?

**Mr JULL**—Of course.

**Mr Smith**—I am not sure where that has got to.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—I am interested in the composition of, and the work that is going on, in regard to the structure of the Security Council. Where is that at? I know that we are opposed to the current structure and, of course, the power of veto of those that have been there since the Second World War is seen as almost a shameful position from Australia's point of view.

**Mr Smith**—The process of discussion on reform of the Security Council I think can best be characterised as stalled. A working group looking at the question of reform has been in existence for eight or, possibly, nine years. It made some progress in its early days but, fundamentally, it has come to a deadlock on a couple of the crunch questions about reform. There are two elements to the debate. One is reform of the council's working methods and on that there has been some considerable progress. Australia has been very actively supporting that and we are quite encouraged by the improvements we have seen in the operation of the council, and I can talk about that in a little more detail if the committee is interested. The other more difficult area is the question of the expansion of the Security Council, both in its permanent members and its non-permanent members, and the associated question of the veto.

On those issues, there is probably a very widespread view that it is time for the Security Council to be expanded but there is no agreement on the model for the expansion. The five permanent members are probably fairly comfortable with the way things are now. A lot of countries, including Australia, believe that the Security Council does need to be expanded and that it does not now properly reflect the much wider membership of the United Nations and the way that the geopolitical demographics, if you like, of the UN membership have changed since the council was last expanded which was in 1965. Again, it is one thing to get agreement that there is a need for expansion; getting agreement on the mechanisms for expansion is quite another and that is where the issue has stalled.

On the question of the veto, as you know Australia has been an opponent of the veto. That is a position we took into the San Francisco conference in 1945 and it is one that we still hold, although we have a very practical view on that issue and that is that the permanent five members by virtue of the veto can prevent that veto being taken away from them. We do not think that will happen; it is certainly not foreseeable in the near future. The pragmatic approach that we are taking is to encourage much more constrained use of the veto.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—Would it be fair to say that, since it has stalled, we should be pushing more to get an expansion rather than looking at the issue of the power of veto? Would we not get a more representative Security Council geographically in the world, if we could get it expanded? Would that be a greater priority or focus for the government?

**Mr Smith**—It is in a sense, but at the same time it is difficult to deal with because if you start looking at options for expanding the permanent membership of the council, you will automatically have to address the question of whether or not those new permanent members get a veto. As I said, it is difficult to separate the two issues.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—If it has stalled, what is going to reactivate it? Are there discussions going on and they just cannot break the deadlock? In other words, is there work going on now on the expansion and veto issue?

**Mr Smith**—There is work going on in the sense that the working group I referred to earlier continues to meet but I have to say that very little progress is being made by that group. What can be done to energise it? That is something that a number of member states that have an interest in reform are looking at. It is not an easy question to answer. Ultimately, it comes down to political will. The reality is that there is insufficient political will on the part of enough major players in the UN for that process to seriously move ahead.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—So is it the power of the five that is the block in it all or are other states also reluctant to try and get a resolution? In other words, where does the real opposition come from?

**Mr Smith**—It is in part the permanent five. As I said, I think they are fairly comfortable with the status quo. The pressure for reform and the pressure for expansion over the last eight or nine years—certainly the impetus that gave rise to the establishment of this working group seven, eight or nine years ago—came from a number of countries that aspired to permanent membership, particularly Japan, Germany and some of the major players in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. They would constitute the five countries that we would envisage assuming new permanent seats on the Security Council in time. But, in a sense, that impetus has dissipated. It has dissipated for a number of reasons and it is difficult to identify whether there is any one issue that has caused the reform process to stall.

One of the interesting dimensions to all of this is how the process of the European Union, the development of its common foreign and security policy and the question of EU enlargement have played into this Security Council reform debate. It is not a direct influence but it is part of some of these wider issues. Germany has been an aspirant to a permanent seat for some years, as I said, but its position has shifted a little. It is quite interesting—it is now talking about holding a permanent seat on the Security Council on behalf of the European Union. So that has

changed the dynamics that have given impetus to the reform debate. Japan remains an aspirant to permanent membership of the Security Council and Australia supports that. Australia believes that Japan, as the second largest contributor financially and a very major contributor more broadly to the work of the United Nations, merits a permanent seat on the Security Council, but it is realistic in recognising that the political will is not yet there for reform to move ahead.

**CHAIR**—Isn't it true though that, while there might be some agreement that the blocs ought to be South America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific and Africa, in fact there is a lot of disagreement within those regions as to who the representative should be? They have talked about revolving permanent memberships, which defeats the purpose anyway. Really, it is not only a lack of will from the permanent five, there is actually a lack of a single voice from within those regions as well, isn't it?

**Mr Smith**—That is very much the case, yes.

**CHAIR**—Can I ask about the voting blocs? I think that is one area where there ought to be some agreement on where some changes can be made. I think that the way the voting blocs operate is little understood by many people. We had evidence which talked about America being beaten by the Sudan for a seat on one of the committees, when in fact it was never up against the Sudan—it was in a different voting bloc. Are we making any advances on changing the voting bloc patterns so that Australia is in a much more acceptable voting bloc for our region and, maybe, lessening the influence of some of the others?

**Mr Smith**—We are making progress but I have to say that it is incremental at best. This is an issue, as you know, that we have been engaged in for quite a number of years—it is what we describe as electoral group reconfiguration. It is rather like Security Council reform—while a fair number of countries recognise that the existing arrangements are outdated, do not reflect current geopolitical realities and need to be changed, the real problem arises when you try and get agreement on an alternative model. What we are doing in our advocacy of this reform exercise is really trying to build a stronger momentum for reform by expanding the number of countries that recognise that the issue is sufficiently serious and sufficiently important to warrant real attention being given to just what those alternatives are going to be. By its nature, that is a gradual incremental process.

**CHAIR**—But I presume that when Australia became a member of the Western European and Other group there were not many members of the United Nations in this area. We now have Pacific islands, representing probably another 15 or 16 members. In some of the other blocs, it would appear that there has been an enormous increase in membership, which makes for quite a disparity in the opportunities that are given to people within a bloc. The G77 is now about 120 or 130—not that they are a voting bloc, but as a grouping. So surely the powers that be can see that just the natural growth of the United Nations has meant that there are many disparities now in the size of voting blocs and in who has the opportunity to be represented.

**Mr Smith**—That is very much the case. When the electoral groups were set up in the mid-1960s, partly as a way of determining representation on the Security Council, there were around 100 members of the United Nations. There are now of course 189, soon to be 191.

**CHAIR**—Who else besides East Timor?

**Mr Smith**—Switzerland.

**CHAIR**—Of course.

**Mr Smith**—As you said yourself, Mr Chairman, the membership of most of the regional groups has expanded greatly. The African group now has well over 50 members. The Asian group has even more than that. The Western European and Other group has some additional members. The Eastern European group has quite a number of additional members following the break-up of the Soviet Union. That is true, I think, of all of the regional groups. There is great disparity in the numbers in each of the groups and in the opportunities that the members of those groups have to be represented on various UN bodies, including the Security Council but also others such as the economic and social commission. Again, the problem is not that member states do not recognise that the arrangements that were put in place in 1965 no longer mirror today's world; the problem is that there are not enough countries yet who feel that the current system is working less well than an alternative system might, and part of that is because there really is no clear alternative at this stage.

**Senator HARRADINE**—What makes a like-minded group like-minded?

**Mr Smith**—Like-minded groups operate on a lot of different levels and on different issues in the United Nations. We are members of what we very loosely call like-minded groups on specific issues. They are coalitions of interests that we develop to advance our negotiating interests on particular issues. They are distinct from the electoral groups, which have a quite specific function in, if you like, providing the electoral college for those regions in determining their representatives for particular UN bodies—so it is very much an electoral process rather than a process for advancing substantive interests.

**Mr Trindade**—In the context of the International Criminal Court, it was a group of countries which were committed to working towards bringing on the statute of the court. It was from the early development of the court—that is where we were like-minded.

**Senator HARRADINE**—Yes, but presumably you are like-minded on some issues and not like-minded on other issues. In that situation, you are not then called the like-minded group, are you?

**Mr Heyward**—No.

**Mr Smith**—That is correct.

**CHAIR**—You can have a different group of people for different issues, can't you?

**Mr Trindade**—Yes, and you can have a like-minded group within a context where you are like-minded on some issues but not on every issue.

**Senator HARRADINE**—So you can have three or four like-minded groups?

**Mr Smith**—We are members of a very great number of what you can loosely call like-minded groups in the United Nations, both in New York and in Geneva, and even like-minded groups that do not reside in a particular capital but come together opportunistically to advance the common interest that its membership has in particular negotiations.

**Mr Trindade**—In other contexts we also have similar groupings. In the WTO they have these functional groupings to get together on specific issues. Whether you are talking about the Cairns Group or about ‘friends of the new round’, there are different appellations that you might use to describe these. I think Rod has described them previously as ‘functional affinity groups’.

**Mr Heyward**—Can I just make a quick point too. In relation to electoral groupings, what Rod has been describing are the broad groups which operate in New York and generally in Geneva, but in some of the other bodies—for instance, the World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation—there are different electoral groupings as well. In some of those, Australia in fact belongs to an Asia-Pacific group. So there are some precedents for the change. The other point I would make, which is something to watch for the future, is that as the European Union expansion progresses you are going to find states which are ostensibly part of the Eastern European group of countries bound to a common foreign policy with states which are in the Western European and Other group. That may be a prime motivator for change which does not exist at present. That is yet to be seen, I guess.

**Mr BRUCE SCOTT**—That is an interesting observation.

**CHAIR**—Australia’s financial contribution to the core budget of the UN has gone up from 1.45 per cent to 1.63 per cent. Is that likely to increase again this year or is it set for a three-year period? I cannot remember whether it is an annual review or whether it is set for a period.

**Mr Smith**—The agreement that was negotiated just over a year ago, with a revised scale of assessment to accommodate the US demand to bring its ceiling contribution down, is a scale that moves over the next three years. We will this year pay 1.64 per cent. That comes down a little for next year, the 2003 calendar year, to 1.627 per cent.

**CHAIR**—The changing value in the US dollar could mean that our contribution might actually be less than it was.

**Mr Smith**—That will depend, of course, on the exchange rates at the time it is assessed, and that will be at the end of this year.

**CHAIR**—So an increase from 1.63 per cent to 1.64 per cent over last year would actually mean that it will be a decrease in what it costs us because of the dollar having appreciated about 10 per cent?

**Mr Smith**—It could well be, yes.

**Mr EDWARDS**—The funding arrangements do appear to be very complicated, as you indicated earlier.

**CHAIR**—They are.

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**Mr EDWARDS**—I wonder whether it would be possible to get a list of what the member countries should pay and what they owe. I understand that would need to be split up into two areas: one, the general division and, two, peacekeeping commitments. I ask this question—and there might be an easy way to provide it—because I want to see how the other countries are meeting their financial responsibilities and how Australia compares with other countries in terms of its assessment. Would you be able to provide that information in a reasonably straightforward form?

**Mr Smith**—We can certainly do that.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Do you see what I am trying to get at?

**Mr Smith**—Yes, I do. I can give you a list now of the 15 or 16 major contributors.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I would be interested in all of the member nations.

**CHAIR**—Even those on the minimum?

**Mr EDWARDS**—Yes.

**Mr Smith**—Yes, we can certainly provide that.

**CHAIR**—We have actually had those figures.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Have we?

**CHAIR**—Yes, I think we had them for our inquiry, but in our report we only included the top 10 or 15 or those that were above a certain percentage. But I am sure that list was available and if you could find it and make it available for the committee—

**Mr Smith**—Yes, we can certainly provide that.

**CHAIR**—It was a comprehensive list that we had.

**Mr JULL**—But Australia still pays in full, on time?

**Mr Smith**—We do.

**CHAIR**—Have we received our dues for our peacekeeping operations yet? I do not mean paying our dues; I mean receiving our dues, the payment from the UN.

**Mr Smith**—Have we received the payments that were owed?

**CHAIR**—Because there was a fair timelag.

**Mr Smith**—As you know, a lot of it depended on payment of US arrears that had been redirected. Now, of course, most of that has happened. Whether or not we have been reimbursed

all of our troop contributor costs, I am not sure—that is a matter for Defence. But we can check that and get back to you.

**CHAIR**—Yes, could you check that? I would be very interested to know. I know that a lot of the smaller countries of the world are very keen on being part of peacekeeping forces because they actually make a lot of money out of it if they get paid. In our case, it would be a matter of being reimbursed for some of the costs that we actually outlaid rather than all of them.

**Mr Smith**—We can provide that information.

**CHAIR**—We will move on to the final segment. We have covered some of these issues already, but do you have anything you want say by way of a statement on this last section?

**Mr Smith**—I had understood the committee's interest in this really to be about how we promote public understanding of our activities. I think that was what I tried to do earlier in answer to one of the committee's questions.

**CHAIR**—That is true. I guess that the only thing that needs reiterating, of course—and I need to be clear on this—is what initiatives are undertaken by the UN as opposed to the Australian government in educating Australians. Does the UN have an education process that it uses throughout the world on its roles and what it undertakes in various countries? Does it run an education program?

**Mr Smith**—It has a very active and comprehensive public information program. I think it is probably quite specifically targeted to either particular regions of the world or to particular activities—for example, when the UN hosts a major conference it will conduct public information activities in association with that conference. I mentioned earlier that, as one of its principal activities, the UN office in Sydney does engage in public information activities. We would be very happy to get the committee some more information on that, although the secretariat may also wish to get in touch directly with the UN's representative in Sydney to get some more information.

The Department of Public Information in New York is one of the largest departments. It has a very substantial budget. Frankly, we think it has a budget that is not justified, at least by the effectiveness of its public information activities. That is one of the reviews that is being undertaken in the context of this strategic review that the Secretary-General is engaging in as part of his second term reform agenda. Having said that, public information is obviously very important. We encourage the UN to engage in that in a very focused and targeted way. The head of the Department of Public Information is a very able Indian national by the name of Shashi Tharoor. It is our hope that he will visit Australia, probably at the very beginning of next year. I think that is going to be a useful opportunity for us to build some public information activities around.

**CHAIR**—Who conducts the reviews? Are they done by external independent bodies or are they done from within the United Nations?

**Mr Smith**—It is a combination of the two. There certainly has been some external auditing and external management review of DPI. They also conduct their own internal reviews.

**CHAIR**—History would suggest that external reviews possibly have more far-reaching effects than internal reviews.

**Mr Smith**—I agree and that is the approach that we have encouraged.

**CHAIR**—On behalf of the committee, I thank you for spending the day with us. This is the first process we have undertaken. There will always be new members on this committee. Mr Edwards has asked for some information which would be new to him as well as to others. It is important, as part of the education process, that we educate new members of parliament on some of the things that have taken place in the past. While some of us here might think it is old hat, it is always new to new members. Thank you very much for the information you have given us and we look forward to the responses in a few areas that will help us complete this. We will prepare a report on today's meeting and it will be available to you. Thank you for your attendance.

**Mr Smith**—Can I just say in conclusion that the department is very pleased to have had this opportunity to contribute to the committee's work.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Edwards**):

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 2.51 p.m.**