

## **Preventive Action and Aid**

- 6.1 This chapter looks at the role and effectiveness of the UN in fulfilling its purpose to prevent war and preserve peace and security from the perspective of preventive action and aid. Identifying and providing assistance in resolving the underlying causes of the conflict is the most significant action the international community can take towards the preservation of peace in the longer term. Without this commitment, peace operations become nothing more than an expensive folly.

### **The Causes of Conflict**

- 6.2 One of the most important factors leading towards a breakdown of peace and security is a lack of economic development. The acceleration of the globalisation of the world's economies in the 1990s highlighted this relationship. Thus, individuals and groups without adequate access to the necessities of life may be desperate enough to resort to violence to secure those necessities. A decline in the level of Official Development Assistance has necessitated a greater role for UN agencies and NGOs in providing both emergency relief and long term development assistance.
- 6.3 Other than more immediate political or religious causes, there is a strong correlation between injustice and violence. This is particularly so when basic human rights are not respected by governments. Chapter 7 will examine the need for governments to protect the human rights of all those within its territory, in order to prevent human rights abuses from leading to wider problems of retribution and open conflict.
- 6.4 Diminishing natural resources in some places, low prices for commodity-exporting nations and the burden of debt in the world's least-developed countries have led to difficulties in obtaining even the most basic necessities for life. Other structural reasons behind problems of poverty

and environmental issues include the forced collectivisation of land, questions of land distribution, ownership, land management, sustainable practices, drought, the impact of eviction, the impact of structural adjustment programs on the poor, and other factors such as consumerism, militarism and the distribution of wealth. Similarly, while major natural disasters are not always preventable, but they can be caused or exacerbated by human activity. These environmental factors need to be considered in any adequate assessment of security. Ms Janet Hunt of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) described the myriad of causes behind conflict:

The underlying causes of conflict and instability are usually very complex. They often include economic and social inequality and low human development, particularly in situations where there are different identity groups, whether they be religious, ethnic, or any other form of identification. They arise where there are weak institutions and, at times, corruption. They arise where human rights violations are persistent, and they arise often where there are environmental and land issues at the heart of the conflict.<sup>1</sup>

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## **Recommendation 7**

**The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop a whole of Government strategy addressing the role of preventive action within Australia's foreign policy, including:**

- **Aid and development;**
- **Human rights initiatives;**
- **Strategic and defence partnerships;**
- **Preventive diplomacy; and**
- **Preventive deployment.**

## **Preventive Action**

6.5 Large scale UN peace operations are very costly exercises in a financial sense, and have the potential to be costly in terms of lives lost as well. Although such interventions may be necessary from time to time, it is far preferable for disputes to be resolved before they become crises.

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1 ACFOA. Transcript, 14 August 2000, p. 387.

Traditionally, preventive diplomacy has involved the United Nations or a state making an offer of its 'good offices' to the parties to a dispute, in order to help reach a resolution, ideally before the dispute grows into armed conflict. However, this approach lends itself towards crisis diplomacy – action is only taken when a dispute has arisen or is likely to arise.

6.6 The role for the UN in preventing crises which may threaten international peace and security is envisaged in Chapter VI of the Charter, which provides mechanisms for the UN to investigate and discuss any dispute and to make recommendations for its resolution. Failing this, the Security Council may intervene and make recommendations in order to resolve the dispute.<sup>2</sup> While much emphasis is placed on the high politics of the UN – on diplomacy, peace operations and international law, there is less recognition of the UN's role in advancing peace and stability through other means. Article 55 of the Charter also describes the UN's role in promoting:

- higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development;
- solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems; and
- universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

6.7 The concept of preventive diplomacy received a fillip when, in 1992, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined preventive diplomacy in a wider way. For him, preventive diplomacy was '... action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur'.<sup>3</sup> This extended the definition to include disarmament, the use of confidence building measures, fact finding missions and ultimately of preventive deployment as well.

6.8 Today, the current Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, defines preventive diplomacy in an even wider manner:

Preventive diplomacy is particularly favoured by Member States as a means of preventing human suffering and as an alternative to costly politico-military operations to resolve conflicts after they have broken out. Although diplomacy is a well-tried means of preventing conflict, the United Nations experience in recent years

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2 Charter of the United Nations, Articles 33-38.

3 Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. *An Agenda for Peace*. 1995. United Nations, New York, p. 45.

has shown that there are several other forms of action that can have a useful preventive effect: preventive deployment; preventive disarmament; preventive humanitarian action; and preventive peace-building, which can involve, with the consent of the Government or Governments concerned, a wide range of actions in the fields of good governance, human rights and economic and social development. For this reason, the Secretary-General has decided to rename the activity called "preventive diplomacy" as "preventive action".

6.9 Taken in a very different sense, preventive diplomacy can be seen as more than the UN or national governments offering their good offices to prevent disputes from spiralling out of control into conflict. The committee agrees with this broader definition of preventive diplomacy and would argue that any concept of preventive diplomacy should include an understanding of the causes of conflict and an effort to address them well before hostilities break out.

6.10 Many submissions to this inquiry stated that greater efforts should be taken towards preventing disputes from growing into conflicts. The National Party of Queensland suggested that:

What is required is the identification, recognition and acceptance of the possible causes for internal conflict within each and every nation and the maintenance of a watching brief or overview on the development/resolution of these causes. An approach along those lines and the intervention of the UN before open conflict occurs may preclude the need for UN military/peacekeeping action at a later stage. Pre-conflict involvement may secure and strengthen sovereignty rather risk violating it further on.<sup>4</sup>

6.11 The Medical Association for the Prevention of War (Australia) makes a distinction between structural prevention and operational prevention measures:

Possibilities for preventing violence are placed in two broad categories: 'structural prevention' – disarmament, sustainable development and respect for international humanitarian law; and 'operational prevention' – which includes early warning systems, military intervention, sanctions, inducements to negotiate, and peacekeeping.<sup>5</sup>

6.12 World Vision Australia argued that, today, in its peacekeeping role, the international community has a responsibility to ensure the continuation of

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4 National Party of Queensland. Submission No. 106, p. 1203

5 Medical Association for the Prevention of War (Australia). Submission No. 90, pp. 927-8.

peace and security over the longer term, not just to resolve an immediate problem:

If the international community (including Australia) intervenes coercively for humanitarian purposes, this assumes some responsibility to help ensure long-term peace and security in the region. Peacekeeping operations now have the additional obligation of assisting the development of practices of good governance and of ensuring that reconstruction and development assistance address socio-economic equality and the protection of human rights. While there is debate surrounding the effectiveness of democratic reform to establish peace and security, it remains the best option for ensuring equality and protection of minority rights.<sup>6</sup>

- 6.13 In its submission to the inquiry, World Vision Australia provided a hypothetical comparison of the costs of intervention with the costs of non-intervention in a series of post-Cold War crises. Table 6.1 suggests that the costs of possible preventive action were far outweighed by the actual costs of the conflicts which occurred. Similarly, in two cases where preventive action was taken, the small cost of intervention represented a better alternative than a possible intermediate or large-scale conflict. Given the hypothetical nature of these figures, the committee considered the comparisons made here speculative.

## The Role of Aid as a Preventive Measure

- 6.14 During our inquiry, many submissions suggested that Australia should accept greater responsibility for peace and security in the region by providing a greater amount of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Mr John O'Neill submitted that:

One of the best ways in which Australia can further the aims of peace in the world particularly in our region is by means of development assistance to poor countries. As countries develop economically and socially they are less likely to resort to war and violence. Australia should over time be moving closer to the UN target ratio of 0.7% of GDP to fund Official Development Assistance.<sup>7</sup>

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6 World Vision Australia. Submission No. 99, p. 1013.

7 O'Neill, John. Submission No. 36, p. 228.

**Table 6.1 Summary of the Effectiveness of Conflict Prevention Efforts: Total Costs of Intervention (in \$US billion)**

<b>Case</b>	<b>Cost of conflict to outside powers</b>	<b>Cost of conflict prevention</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Bosnia</b>			
Actual conflict	53.7		
Possible intervention		33.3	20.4
<b>Rwanda</b>			
Actual conflict	4.5		
Possible intervention		1.3	3.2
<b>Somalia</b>			
Actual conflict	7.3		
Possible intervention		1.5	5.8
<b>Haiti</b>			
Actual conflict	5.0		
Possible intervention		2.3	2.7
<b>Gulf War*</b>			
Actual conflict	114.0		
Possible intervention: small		10.0	104.0
Possible intervention: intermediate		30.0	84.0
<b>Cambodia**</b>			
Actual conflict	12.0		
Possible intervention		1.7	10.3
<b>El Salvador**</b>			
Actual conflict	2.4		
Possible intervention		0.1	2.3
<b>Macedonia</b>			
Actual intervention		0.3	
Possible conflict: intermediate	15.0		14.7
Possible conflict: large	143.9		143.6
<b>Slovakia</b>			
Actual intervention		0.9	
Possible conflict: intervention	1.3		0.4
Possible conflict: large	15.0		14.1

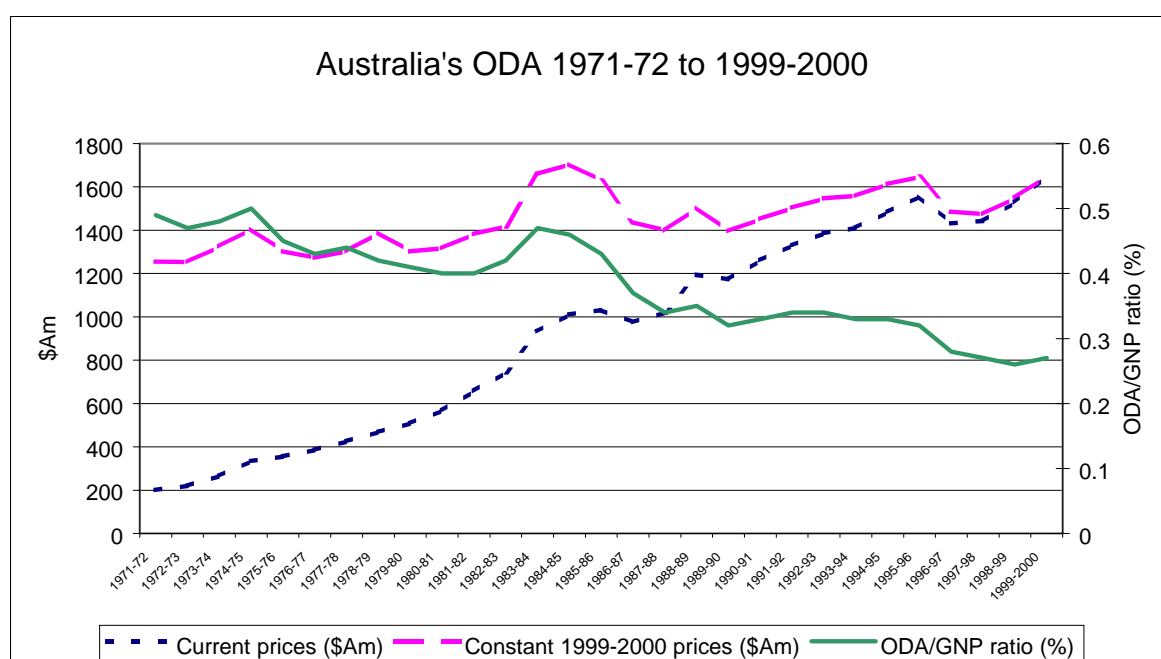
\* Costs to western powers only      \*\* Costs incurred since the end of the Cold War

Source World Vision Australia. Submission No. 99, v. 5, p. 1038

6.15 These calls for the greater provision of ODA were further echoed by both the United Nations Association of Australia<sup>8</sup> and the United Nations

Youth Association.<sup>9</sup> ACFOA in particular described the need for assistance in the context of declining rates of ODA provided by the developed world:

ACFOA member agencies are alarmed at the continuing decline of official (government funded) ODA in general and Australia ODA in particular. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD/DAC) 1999 Development Cooperation Report stated that poor countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America missed out on an estimated US\$88.7 billion in aid flows due to massive cuts in ODA budgets since the early nineties. The shortfall occurred from 1992 to 1998, and was part of a cumulative drop in OECD countries' aid effort compared to what would have flowed to developing countries had average levels of aid of the previous 20 years been maintained.<sup>10</sup>



**6.16 The Synod of Victoria of the Uniting Church of Australia describes how poverty alleviation through foreign aid and the protection of human rights help to promote structural prevention:**

Foreign aid directed to poverty alleviation and to ensuring that all people enjoy their basic human rights, as guaranteed in UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights

<sup>9</sup> UNYA. Submission No. 47, p. 329.

<sup>10</sup> ACFOA. Submission No. 101, p. 1101.

instruments, is certainly a significant step towards ensuring that peace-keeping operations will not be needed in the future.

Poverty and violation of basic human rights, including economic and social rights, play a significant role in generating both civil and international wars.<sup>11</sup>

- 6.17 The Australian agency for international development AusAID, provides development assistance in the sectors of health, gender and development, education, rural development, governance, infrastructure and the environment. These programs are funded through NGOs or multilateral development agencies, including the UN, and operate mostly in Australia's immediate region. In the financial year 2000-01, Australia's development assistance program, administered by AusAID provided A\$1.6 billion to assist other nations. However, this amount represents a mere 0.25 per cent of Australia's Gross National Product (GNP).
- 6.18 The aid volume target recommended by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a ratio of 0.7 per cent of GNP to be spent on ODA. As a member of the DAC, Australia's aid performance is subjected to review by this group. The latest report on Australia's aid performance commented that:
- There exists in Australia the requisite level of political and popular support to enable it to fulfil its strategic role. However, expressed as a share of its expanding gross national product (GNP), Australia's official development assistance (ODA) has fallen to its lowest level ever. Based on the ambitions Australia rightly sets for its aid programme, Australia should increase its ODA and move closer towards the 0.7% ODA/GNP target set in its present aid policy statement.<sup>12</sup>
- 6.19 In several reports over the last 15 years, this committee has examined the issue of the level of Australia's spending on ODA relative to its GNP and these reports suggested at least two options for increasing the amount the Australian Government spends on ODA. In our report on the Simons Committee Report, we recommended that the Government develop an alternative target for ODA levels, and create a timetable for meeting that target. The Government's response to this committee's report rejected that recommendation, instead retaining its commitment to a 0.7 per cent target. The Joint Committee's report on World Debt recommended that the

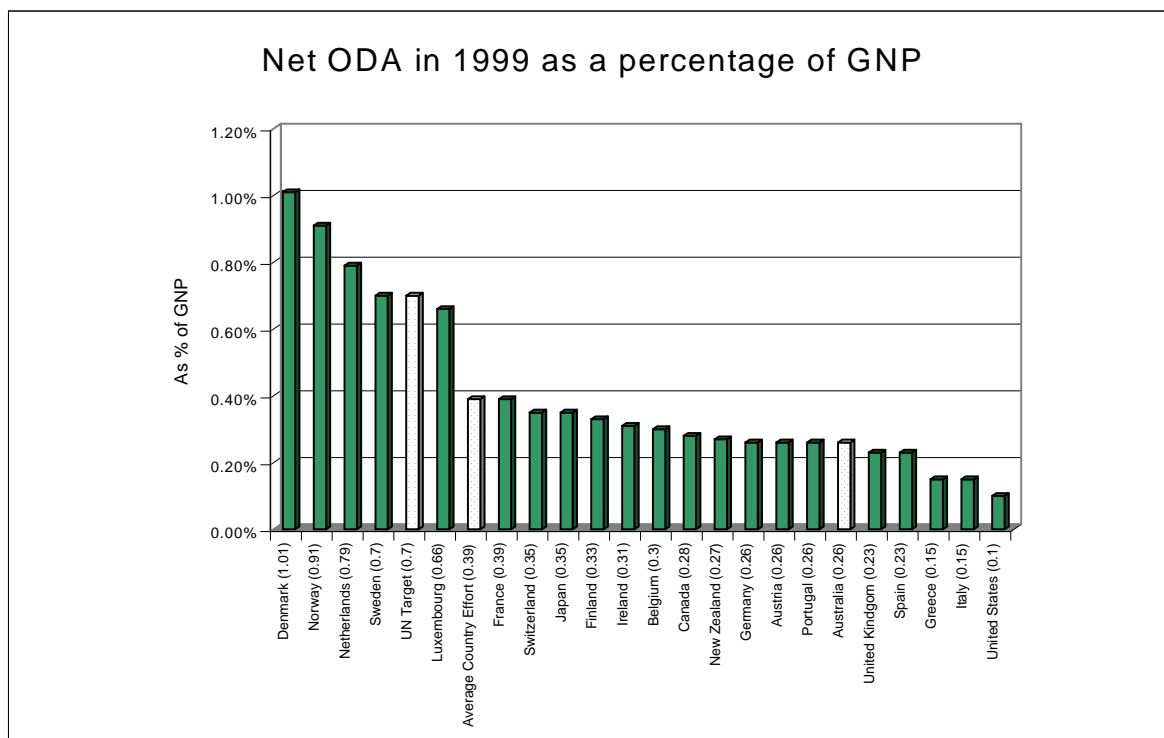
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11 United Church of Australia, Synod of Victoria. Submission No. 91, p. 950.

12 Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. 'Development Co-operation Review of Australia Summary and Conclusions'. [www.oecd.org/dac/htm/australia99.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/htm/australia99.htm) visited 23 May 2001.



Government make good on this continuing commitment by increasing substantially the amount of ODA spent as a proportion of GNP.



6.20 Five countries in the Pacific – Kirribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu are assessed by the United Nations as being among the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Two further countries in Australia's wider region, Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic are also categorised as LDCs. There are therefore significant yet basic needs within Australia's region which are yet to be met by either sovereign governments or contributions of development assistance. The committee believes that prudently directed, additional aid in Australia's region will help to boost regional security.

6.21 This point was reinforced by Mr Charles Tapp of AusAID:

There is scope for the aid program to bolster efforts to prevent conflict and to reinforce peace efforts in the aftermath of conflict and prevent, critically, a recurrence of violence through support, for example, for grassroots initiatives aimed at strengthening community linkages, such as we are looking to do in the Solomon Islands today.<sup>13</sup>

6.22 While the Government's expenditure of the considerable sum of A\$1.6 billion on development assistance is commendable, the committee believes

13 AusAID. Transcript, 14 August 2000, p. 373.

that the Australian Government should make a commitment to work towards the 0.7 per cent ratio recommended by the UN.

- 6.23 The criticisms within submissions to our inquiry, the comments of the DAC, the high level of support within the Australian community for funding ODA and the obvious need for additional funding for development assistance in Australia's region all provide additional impetus for the Australian Government to reconsider its position on this issue. Of all the tools available for preventive action, the granting of ODA is the least likely to be of concern to the recipient and is a necessary precondition for peace and stability. This is not to say that ODA alone will prevent conflict, but properly used, it should be viewed as an important tool for fostering peace and security.

### **Recommendation 8**

**The committee recommends that the Australian Government:**

- **set a target ratio for ODA/GNP of not less than 0.35 per cent;**
- **develop a plan for the implementation of this ratio by the financial year 2003-2004.**

### **Multilateral and Bilateral aid**

- 6.24 Australian development assistance is provided in two forms – either as a grant to a developing country, or as a grant to a multilateral agency. Increasingly, Australian aid is being directed towards bilateral aid.
- 6.25 Additionally, aid to multilateral agencies is being granted on a more and more conditional basis, with the Australian Government choosing to fund specific projects of individual agencies. This allows Australia more discretion over funding, but reduces the agency's ability to determine priorities themselves.
- 6.26 In its submission to the inquiry, the AEC noted that '... member states frequently find the receipt of multilaterally coordinated aid more politically acceptable than aid provided on a bilateral basis'.<sup>14</sup>
- 6.27 There are many issues that a single state cannot resolve alone. Although it is inevitable that unanimity of purpose will not always be possible, preventive action is best dealt with by the international community acting in concert. Indeed, some issues can only be dealt with through international cooperation - this is especially so of many environmental

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14 AEC. Submission No. 79, p. 687.

problems. In this regard, the UN is the most positive and plausible institution available for addressing issues of peace and stability. Not only does the UN have almost universal membership of sovereign states, it is an institution which has shown a capacity to evolve, albeit very slowly. In particular, the UN has expanded the way in which it deals with the causes of conflict.

## Specialised Agencies

- 6.28 Because the causes of conflict are numerous and complex, it is important to use preventive action in a holistic way. Steps to promote peace and stability in one area can be quickly undone by neglect of other areas. This need has been recognised by the UN itself, through the creation of several bodies to promote the cooperation of UN agencies.
- 6.29 The individual agencies within the United Nations system which provide humanitarian and development assistance often have a degree of independence from the UN itself. Combining their disparate activities to meet common goals requires dedicated coordination of effort. This combination of specialised agencies and separate programs and funds, along with leading NGOs form the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC). Created in 1991, the IASC allows these specialist groups to come together and better coordinate their resources to deal with complex humanitarian emergencies. The success of a peace operation depends on how well these agencies and organisations cooperate during the planning and execution of peace operations.
- 6.30 In addition to the standing members discussed in greater detail below, the IASC's invited members includes:
- the International Committee of the Red Cross;
  - the International Council of Voluntary Agencies;
  - the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies;
  - InterAction – the American Council for Voluntary International Action;
  - the International Organisation for Migration;
  - the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response;
  - the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons
  - the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; and
  - the World Bank.

## Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

6.31 Within the United Nations system, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) exists to better coordinate the efforts of the UN's various humanitarian agencies and with NGOs, and to prevent duplication of effort to meet common goals. OCHA's predecessor, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was created in 1992 to strengthen and make more effective the collective efforts of the United Nations system and the international community in providing humanitarian assistance. OCHA took over the responsibilities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in 1998.

6.32 The submission of ACFOA describes the role that OCHA plays in relation to other humanitarian agencies within the UN:

Four United Nations bodies – the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Program (WFP) – have primary roles in the delivery of relief assistance. Coordination in the field during individual emergencies is the role of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The Office works to secure agreement among agencies of the United Nations system on the division of responsibilities such as the establishment of coordination mechanisms, the mounting of needs assessment missions, the preparation of consolidated appeals and resource mobilisation.<sup>15</sup>

6.33 Mr Charles Tapp of AusAID agreed that OCHA serves a very useful purpose, but also warned that expectations of OCHA might not always meet with OCHA's capacity to deliver them:

There is always a danger in the case of OCHA, for example, that it can become a victim of its own success. OCHA superseded the previous DHA—Department of Humanitarian Affairs—and we have seen a very significant improvement in the whole coordination on the humanitarian emergency side. But for OCHA to be able to continue to build on some of those successes, and lessons learned on the things which have not gone so well, obviously it needs to be able to be given the resources and, perhaps, more of a mandate to be able to operate. A lot is being asked of OCHA at the moment that it may not, perhaps, have the resources to be able to deliver.<sup>16</sup>

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15 ACFOA. Submission No. 101, p. 1111.

16 AusAID. Transcript, 14 August 2000, p. 383.

## United Nations Children's Fund

- 6.34 The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)<sup>17</sup> has the substantial responsibility of ensuring the rights of the world's children are protected and in assisting children's development by meeting their basic needs. The rights of children are described within *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* of 1989, an international agreement with almost universal adherence throughout the world.
- 6.35 Some of the practical efforts of UNICEF during peace operations were described to the committee by Ms Alanna Sherry:
- In our submission we talk about various examples of corridors of peace, days of tranquillity, bubbles of peace—there are different names for the same phenomenon—that have been negotiated in the middle of a bloody conflict.<sup>18</sup>
- 6.36 The committee met with representatives of UNICEF in New York. They described the work of the agency in detail. They have made significant advances in child health in the last 10 years.
- 6.37 Immunisation had been a particular focus of its work; it was seeking to eradicate polio. Mortality rates for children have fallen in most areas of the world, but Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Eastern Europe represent problem areas still. Where there had been conflict and access was difficult, in places like the Congo, Sudan and Afghanistan, UNICEF used the good offices of the Secretary-General to negotiate a ceasefire to enable immunisation to continue. In 18 countries there has been a synchronised immunisation day. The budget required between now and 2002 to complete the program is US\$1 billion. Half of that had been raised already. Rotary had promised an additional US\$250 million. There remained a US\$300 to US\$400 million gap.
- 6.38 One of the biggest problems facing UNICEF was the spread of HIV/Aids. The committee was told that the problem was particularly acute in India, Burma and Cambodia. In Sub-Saharan Africa, HIV aids was a dampener on all programs for children. It neutralised all other efforts. Life expectancy was going down as a result, the education system was shattered – there were more teachers dying than could be trained. Child orphans have become a particular concern. There were estimated to be 13 million in Sub-Saharan Africa. Families have broken down and grandparents can be looking after 2 dozen children. Parenting skills have been lost and this in turn would create problems for the next generation.

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17 Originally, the acronym stood for the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

18 UNICEF. Transcript, 5 July 2000, p. 164.

- 6.39 UNICEF was originally set up for emergencies. This was still a major aspect of its work. It had storage in Copenhagen of emergency packages on health, food, shelter and education (school in a box). Education assists in the normalisation of the situation for children. At the onset of an emergency, the office in Copenhagen worked 24 hours a day on distribution.
- 6.40 UNICEF also worked on the demobilisation of child soldiers especially in the Sudan.
- 6.41 Australia was a strong partner for UNICEF, making an important contribution in the Asia Pacific:
- an immunisation program in Cambodia;
  - assistance with the crisis in Indonesia – in the Maluku, East Timor, West Timor, Irian Jaya;
  - programs for the eradication of on landmines in Laos; and
  - programs on HIV/aids in Thailand.<sup>19</sup>
- 6.42 It was the view of both the AusAID representative and UNICEF that HIV/Aids was emerging as a key development problem.

### **United Nations Development Programme**

- 6.43 The UNDP's mission is to assist countries in achieving sustainable development in sectors such as poverty eradication, employment creation, the empowerment of women and the protection and regeneration of the environment. By working with national governments and NGOs, the UNDP's programs provide assistance for managing disasters, creating strategies to assist the poor and to promote democratic governance.
- 6.44 The committee was informed by the AusAID liaison officer to the Australian Mission to the United Nations, Ms Jacqui de Lacy that UNDP reform has been significant: the organisation is now decentralised, staff reductions have occurred and results based budgeting has been introduced.
- 6.45 Mr Bruce Jenks, a director within the UNDP expanded on these comments, noting that for more than ten years, the UNDP was a classic entitlement organisation – money was set and spending allocated. Its focus during this time was unclear. This began to change at the beginning of the 1990s. The UNDP is no longer simply an organisation for the transfer of resources from developed countries to developing ones.

- 6.46 However, the challenges for continuing reform within the UNDP remain. It needs to specify its goals and build a consensus around its key objectives. Consistent with Australia's results-based budgeting reforms, the UNDP can only measure its achievements after its objectives have been defined. Assessment of its success is a matter of public accountability.

### United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

- 6.47 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) main purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. The UNHCR's mandate is described in the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, although in practical terms, the UNHCR provides assistance to refugee populations and assists in resettlement or repatriation of refugees where possible.
- 6.48 The committee received several submissions and took evidence on the role and reform of the UNHCR, and the Australian Government's relationship with that organisation. Ms Jenny Bedlington of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs described how the Australian Government's relationship with the UNHCR operates on two levels, formal and informal:

The formal relationship with UNHCR is by virtue of the fact that we are one of the signatory states to the Refugees Convention and Protocol and also by the fact that we are a member of UNHCR's executive committee. We can participate actively in that forum, providing direction and guidance to the high commissioner in the exercise of his mandate. That is the formal relationship. Informally, we have ongoing contact with the regional representative, who is based here in Canberra. The relationship is primarily one of consultation and an advisory function from them. They have been, over many years, quite closely involved in talking about policy changes, how we do our asylum determination, matters of refugee law, and so on. It is a close consultative relationship and works very well at that informal level.<sup>20</sup>

- 6.49 The Australian Government had remained engaged in the process of reform of the UNHCR for some time. Ms Bedlington suggested that:

For a long time we have pushed UNHCR for better accountability frameworks, better priority setting, better evaluation activity, more open and transparent reports on how they use the very considerable funds that they get from donors, particularly in terms

of what they achieve for all this money. The sort of thing that in the Australian government context we are very used to about reporting in concrete terms on outputs and outcomes is not part of the UNHCR evaluation framework.<sup>21</sup>

- 6.50 A major reform considered by the UNHCR has been to widen the definition of a refugee to include internally displaced people, rather than just those refugees who cross international borders. ACFOA's submission discusses the context to the reform of the definition of a refugee in the following way:

The UNHCR, the agency charged with the task of supervising international conventions providing for the protection of refugees, has in practice responded to changing circumstances and extended assistance and protection to persons who do not fit the strict criteria set out in the Refugee Convention. While this has attracted criticism of UNHCR from some quarters, it is a welcome example of the ability of United Nations agencies to respond to changing needs. ACFOA and its member agencies consider that United Nations Member States should support the UNHCR in its efforts to forge a mandate which is in keeping with current realities and provides full legal and practical protection to internally displaced persons as well as refugees.<sup>22</sup>

- 6.51 These comments supporting the widening of refugees to include internally displaced people were also supported by Ms Jennifer Poole of World Vision Australia.<sup>23</sup>

- 6.52 Unfortunately, the resources available to the UNHCR are insufficient to meet even its existing commitments to refugees, let alone those who would be included by extending the definition of a refugee to include internally displaced people. Funding for the UNHCR is inconstant, meaning that the organisation was not able to deal with refugee crises in a consistent way from year to year. As an autonomous program, the UNHCR does not receive funding from the UN's regular budget, rather it relies on voluntary contributions from member states. The Acting Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Andrew Metcalfe described the UNHCR's problems with funding:

In part UNHCR's difficulties can be attributed to funding shortfalls. For example, the annual budget for the year 2000 was set at \$933.6 million but was revised downwards to \$824.3 million, resulting in a reduction in programs globally. Australia is

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21 DIMA. Transcript, 21 March 2001, p. 472.

22 ACFOA. Submission No. 101, p. 1113.

23 World Vision Australia. Transcript, 6 July 2000, p. 234.



UNHCR's twelfth largest donor and I am pleased to advise that Australia was the earliest donor to UNHCR's 2001 programs with a core contribution of \$14.3 million, an increase of \$400,000 over the year 2000 contribution.<sup>24</sup>

- 6.53 These comments were supported by Ms Bedlington, who noted that pledges made to the UNHCR were not always forthcoming:

One of the major problems that UNHCR has faced has been the difference between the amount that states have pledged to contribute and the amount that they finally do contribute and, also, importantly, the timing of that contribution. The UNHCR cash flow at various times has really been outrageous.<sup>25</sup>

- 6.54 Regardless of definition, refugees, asylum seekers or internally displaced people will continue to be a feature of the international environment, and will continue to seek alternative conditions to avoid persecution. However, the committee believes it is inconsistent to argue for greater efforts by the UNHCR while at the same time acknowledging the paucity of resources available to that organisation. World Food Programme

- 6.55 The objective of the World Food Programme (WFP) is to eradicate hunger and poverty throughout the world. The WFP provides emergency food aid, but also uses food to promote development. The WFP's Food-for-Life program provides emergency food aid during humanitarian disasters. Its Food-for-Growth program targets specific groups of people when food is most necessary for their development, such as for children, pregnant women or the elderly. Food-for-Work programs help communities in developing countries to improve or rebuild infrastructure or towards environment rehabilitation and protection.

### World Health Organisation

- 6.56 The World Health Organisation's (WHO) mission is to promote the highest possible level of health in all peoples. Health is defined by the WHO as state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not only the absence of disease. As the peak international body, the WHO undertakes a large range of tasks towards this end. Perhaps most importantly, the WHO proposes international agreements on health, and also sets standards for foods, biological and pharmaceutical substances.
- 6.57 Ms Melissa Hilless of the Department of Health and Aged Care described the efforts of the Australian Government to reform the WHO:

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24 DIMA. Transcript, 21 March 2001, p. 458.

25 DIMA. Transcript, 21 March 2001, p. 418.

Our initiatives were aimed broadly at reforming WHO into a more effective, transparent and responsible organisation. It was generally agreed among member states that WHO did not possess a clear mandate or direction and had a multiplicity of ill-defined priorities. It was also felt to be overly centralised at headquarters and at regional levels and overly bureaucratic. In addition, the financial management was not satisfactory. Corruption was a major concern, particularly in relation to staff appointments with the general belief that high quality staff were not being recruited.<sup>26</sup>

- 6.58 The new Director-General of the WHO, Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland has played a leading role in the reform and modernisation of the organisation:

In 1998 Dr Brundtland was elected on a reform agenda as Director-General of WHO. Central to her election platform was her commitment to re-establish WHO's leading role in international health and to place on the global development agenda the links between poverty and health. Within six months, Dr Brundtland had restructured WHO to enable it to better focus on its core business. Fifty-three programs had been reduced to 35 and grouped into nine clusters, each with a clear mission statement.<sup>27</sup>

- 6.59 In terms of budgetary reform, Ms Hilless described the introduction of results-based budgeting within the WHO, a measure Australia has supported and promoted:

... in the past, WHO budget reporting had focused exclusively on expenditure of funds—how much had been spent, without reference to results or any outcomes achieved. In 1999 member states passed a resolution setting out their expectations for improved accountability. It was agreed that future budgets should include information on administrative costs by program cluster, they should define targets and results in measurable terms, they should identify sources of expected extra budgetary funds and the impact if those targets were not realised. It was agreed that the budget would be presented in a format that included expenditure across the organisation and at the regional level.<sup>28</sup>

## **The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

- 6.60 As with all agencies of the United Nations the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is short of funds to do the work asked of it by the member states. In 1999 the total resources available to the fund were
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26 DHAC. Transcript, 21 March 2001, p. 473.

27 DHAC. Transcript, 21 March 2001, p. 474.

28 DHAC. Transcript, 21 March 2001, p. 474.

\$US254.1million, of which \$US245 million came from Government contributions. Its total operating costs in that year were \$US281 million. The organisation has a shortfall of \$US27 million per annum. UNFPA is supported by voluntary contributions from member states; it is not funded from the core budget of the UN. Japan (\$US48.3 million) and the Netherlands (\$US42.8million) are the top governmental donors.<sup>29</sup> Australia provides \$2.1 million per annum and \$100,000 for specific projects.<sup>30</sup> Foundation funding provides an additional source of income. It is considered more acceptable than other private funding as there is always some concern about possible conflict of interest where there is a reliance on private funding. Considerable funding for UNFPA therefore comes from foundations such as Hewlett, Packard, Wallace Global Trust and Summit, the Canadian Health Association, and the Gates Foundation.

- 6.61 UNFPA is working with other agencies as part of the reform process. It now operates on results based budgeting. However, the Deputy Executive Director, Ms Kerstin Trone, told the committee members during the visit to New York, that the organisation would benefit from four year budgeting to allow for planning.
- 6.62 The Fund describes its work as a commitment to providing universal reproductive health care. In discussions with the committee, the Executive Director outlined a number of activities of the Fund. UNFPA, she said, supports research on population and is involved in advocacy. The execution of projects, with the exception of procurement, is handled by governments, by UN organisations such as UNICEF and the World Health Organisation and by NGOs. However UNFPA is involved in the field in program formulation, in the management of the implementation and monitoring of programs. UNFPA is responsible for preventing overlap and maximising the use of resources. Of UNFPAs 1000 personnel, 75 per cent are in the field. Approximately 50 per cent of staff are women and they are at all levels of the organisation.
- 6.63 The major program focus of the organisation is:
- Reproductive health which includes family planning, maternal health care ie anti natal care, post partum care and assisted deliveries;
  - STD prevention, including HIV/AIDS;
  - Advocacy for such things as legislation on the age of marriage, punishment for violence against women;

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29 On a per capita basis the Netherlands is the highest donor country by far.

30 In 1999, this made Australia the 12 highest donor.

- Population and development strategies, consisting of data collection (census and surveys), and analysis and policy development.
- 6.64 In response to a specific question from a member of the committee, the senior representatives of the UNFPA stressed with committee members during briefings that abortion was not a family planning method of the UNFPA. There were programs to prevent abortions and health care programs for the care of women suffering from unsafe abortions. In particular, in China, UNFPA had programs in 32 counties. In these programs there were no targets and no quotas. These were programs in reproductive health in which the emphasis was on care and freedom of choice. The UNFPA was seeking to move the government of China away from its traditional methods.
- 6.65 In recent years, some issues have been given added importance. These included:
- Emergencies and humanitarian assistance;
  - Refugees;
  - HIV aids – 71 per cent of the numbers suffering with HIV/AIDS world wide are in Sub-Saharan Africa and UNFPA believed that there was a need to expand activities into preventive action; and
  - Violence against women - the committee was told that one in three women was subject to violence, often sexual and from someone she knew. UNFPA supported specific projects on laws, especially the enforcement of rape laws, and health support to assist women in these circumstances.
- 6.66 UNFPA also monitors the statistics on world population. The committee was told that, over the last 40 years (1960-1999), there was a 100 per cent increase in world population, from 3 billion to 6 billion. However, the growth rate declined from 2.1 in 1965 to 1.3 today, even though the overall numbers of people in the world remained high. South Asia and Africa have continuing high fertility. In sub-Saharan Africa the decline is from 8 to 5.5. The continuing high birth rates in these areas was related to the lack of status and education among women and poor health services. Population is being added to the world total at about 77 million per year so that at the present rate the world total will increase by at least three billion over the next 50 years. Today half of the world's population is under 25 years of age. Ninety-five per cent of the global growth of population takes place in developing countries.<sup>31</sup>

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31 Information supplied by UNFPA, New York.

- 6.67 By contrast, in western countries, there were problems of the aging of the population; however, those countries that had invested in health and education, in whatever sector, were in the best position to deal with the impact of these demographic changes.<sup>32</sup>

### United Nations' Environment Program

- 6.68 The United Nations' Environment Program's (UNEP) mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. The UNEP is not an agency either within the IASC nor OCHA. It is included here because of the growing awareness that sustainable development is a necessary condition for peace and stability.

- 6.69 The functions of the UNEP include the administration of international environmental agreements, such as the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the negotiation of new agreements. Mr Howard Bamsey of Environment Australia described Australia's participation in the UN's environment programs:

The UN has been at the core of international efforts to coordinate and build capacity to achieve ecologically sustainable development over the last 30 years. Australia's relationship with the UN, including with the specialised agencies in those efforts, has really been guided over that whole period by two main factors: the first is the recognition—the acknowledgment—in Australia that there are many global environment problems, ones which do not respect national borders, and that we had a role in the international community in helping to solve those; the second is the pursuit of our national interests in the environmental field, of course, and also more broadly in foreign policy, trade and security interests.<sup>33</sup>

- 6.70 Environment Australia's submission to the inquiry notes the relationship between environmentally sustainable development and peace and security:

One major concern that needs to be addressed in terms of the environmental agenda of the UN is the potential in the future for tension or conflict to arise between states due to the competition for scarce environmental resources. This is an issue that has not yet

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32 Notes from the visit to New York, October 2000.

33 Environment Australia. Transcript, 21 March 2001, p. 433.

been fully considered by global policy makers. In the long-term, areas which are currently less developed can be expected to see an intensification of development efforts and resource use. In many cases, this will involve the use of resources occurring across national borders, leading to circumstances of potential conflict.<sup>34</sup>

- 6.71 The committee agrees that greater attention needs to be paid to the possible effects of environmental degradation and resource use, not only between states, but within them as well.

### The Kyoto Protocol

- 6.72 There is a significant scientific consensus which suggests that global warming is a result of human activity, and that such warming may have an adverse affect on the well-being of populations around the world. The Australian Government's own peak scientific organisation, CSIRO concludes that 'greenhouse gases continue to increase in concentration' and that 'most of the increase can be attributed to human activity'. Furthermore, there is limited capacity for the earth's biosphere to absorb this increase.
- 6.73 While there may be no 'definitive answer' to show that human activity causes global warming, there is a strong body of opinion that a correlation does exist.<sup>35</sup>
- 6.74 Developing countries are not covered by the Protocol in the same way as more developed countries are. The reason for this is because of the extreme imbalance in the per-capita production of carbon dioxide. The greater per capita emissions and the greater wealth of developed countries place a responsibility on countries like Australia to show leadership in the lessening of greenhouse gases.
- 6.75 At the Kyoto Conference in 1998, Australia negotiated a net increase of 8 per cent in the production of carbon dioxide between 1990 and 2008. It is unlikely that Australia would achieve a better outcome than this in any future agreement, should the Kyoto Protocol not proceed.
- 6.76 Opinion was divided in the committee as to whether it was in Australia's national interest to ratify the Kyoto Protocol at this stage. Members believed that it was in Australia's national interest to reduce greenhouse gases and to encourage others to do so. However, some members were concerned that unless all states ratified the convention, there was a danger that pollution would simply be transferred from developed to

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34 Environment Australia. Submission No. 94, p. 976.

35 CSIRO submission to the inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties on the Kyoto Protocol.

underdeveloped countries by the transfer of industry from developed countries to the non ratifying states.

- 6.77 Other members believed that, apart from the potential risks posed to Australia's own security by environmental threat through droughts, floods and damage to coastal systems, the implications for Australia's immediate neighbours are far more grim. Countries such as Kiribati and Tonga, are threatened by severe storms or ultimately the loss of their entire land mass to the sea. And therefore the ratification of the Protocol should encourage the development and production of new power-generating technologies and the development of plantations to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Australia would benefit from both these developments.

### Multilateral Assessment Framework

- 6.78 In the interests of promoting greater efficiency in the UN's agencies and ensuring accountability for Australian taxpayers, the Australian Government uses a 'multilateral assessment framework' to gauge the performance of multilateral institutions it funds. Mr Peter Callan described the framework's use to the committee:

The multilateral assessment framework was introduced in 1998 in response to the government's decision that support for multilateral agencies would be more strategic and based on better informed assessments of their performance. It consists of two instruments. One is an annual assessment, using a questionnaire which we apply to all of the multilateral agencies to which we contribute, and the other is occasional in-depth reviews of agencies when we identify that we want to get a much better understanding of the way they operate and the way they perform.<sup>36</sup>

- 6.79 The committee recognises the greater efficiency in UN Specialised Agencies, Programmes and Funds, particularly through results based budgeting, that was evident in information presented to the committee during the inquiry. The committee recognises that the process of reform is incomplete and it will be interested to follow its implementation during coming years and urges the Australian Government to continue monitoring, in the interests of the Australian taxpayer, the effectiveness of the agencies in fulfilling their mandates. However, the committee wants to record its affirmation of the importance of the work that all these agencies undertake. Where possible the Australian Government should

continue to provide the highest possible level of participation with them in the interests of continuing peace and security.