Reform Starts with

Cutting the Cash Flow

by Phyllis Schlafly January 8, 1997

You can bet that the Clinton Administration will use the substitution of another African, Kofi Annan, for Boutros Boutros-Ghali as UN Secretary General as an excuse to try to bamboozle Congress to pony up a extra billion dollars in handouts to the United Nations. Congress should assert its appropriations authority and say no.

The notion that we "owe" the UN $1.2 billion (some say $1.7 billion) in back assessments is ridiculous. For years, we've been paying 25 percent of the budget while being treated like a Third World nonentity.

Sob stories about the UN's "financial crisis" deserve a belly laugh. The UN's cash shortage is caused by its corrupt and extravagant spending, not by a backsliding or penurious United States.

The general annual UN budget has expanded from $20 million and 1,500 employees in 1945, to $10 billion and 50,000 employees today. Of this, U.S. taxpayers are contributing an estimated $4 billion a year.

Although we have the power of the Security Council veto, for the most part the United States has played the role of just one vote among 185 in the General Assembly. The other countries even ganged up and voted the U.S. off of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions which makes up the UN budgets.

The United States is assessed 25 percent of the UN's general budget, double that of any other nation. Japan is assessed 12.45 percent, the United Kingdom 8.93 percent, and more than 90 countries only 0.01 percent each.

When he was Secretary General, Boutros-Ghali endorsed the notion that the UN should impose global taxes in order to relieve the UN of any accountability for contributions from its member nations. The first thing Madeleine Albright should do is demand that UN Secretary General Annan repudiate that impudent suggestion.

In addition, the UN "peacekeeping" budget has expanded from $700 million in 1990 to $3.5 billion today. The UN assesses the United States 31.7 percent of the "peacekeeping" budget (U.S. law now limits us to 25 percent), compared with 8.5 percent for Russia, 6.3 percent for the United Kingdom, and 7.6 percent for France, all of whom have more direct interest in the various UN expeditions than we have.

The Clinton Administration, having succeeded in dumping Boutros-Ghali, will now claim that we should pay our "peacekeeping arrears" so that we can demand fiscal reform. That puts the cart before the horse; if we fork over the cash first, we'll never get reform.

The United States is the only country that really wants UN reform. Most of the others are not spending their own money, they are spending ours, and their overpaid UN representatives feel threatened by American ideas of fiscal integrity.

The arrogant UN bureaucrats didn't even pay lip service to reform until Rep. Joe Scarborough (R-FL) introduced his bill called the United Nations Withdrawal Act. It would require the United States to withdraw from the UN by the year 2000, while retaining membership in a few independent agencies.

In 1984, Congress passed the Kassebaum-Solomon amendment to try to force the UN to impose fiscal discipline on itself. The effort failed.

The Omnibus Appropriations bill passed by the 104th Congress included a provision that withholds payments of so-called U.S. arrears unless the UN meets two of three specific reforms:

the UN budget must be less than the $2.6 billion 1996-97 budget,

the UN Secretariat staff must be reduced by 10 percent, and

the UN must make net budget cuts of $100 million.

That's a wee small step in the right direction, but it's not enough. The UN must cut its colossal bureaucracy, which is now spread around 70 agencies doing mostly useless paper-pushing.

For starters, Congress should reduce our contribution to 20 percent of the UN budget, and we should withhold all payments until the staff is reduced by at least 10 percent. That's the only language the UN understands.

Even more important is dealing with UN mischief. Congress should expose the fakery of UN participation in "peacekeeping" expeditions to places where there is no peace to keep.

Under Boutros-Ghali, UN "peacekeepers" were sent to intervene in civil wars and to carry out a nebulous new activity called nation-building. Of course, such projects are expensive and always involve more missions, more time, more risk, and more troops than anticipated.

But the worst part is that they involve U.S. troops and U.S. risk

In faraway places where we have no national security interest. Congress should make it clear that U.S. armed services are not UN policemen or a UN foreign legion, and will be sent only on missions required by the U.S. national interest and voted by Congress.

Congress should reassert its constitutional authority over the U.S. armed services, making it clear that we will not engage in any UN military action disguised as "peacekeeping," that U.S. troops will never serve in UN uniform, or under UN command or UN rules of engagement, and that no U.S. ground troops will be committed for any UN enterprise.