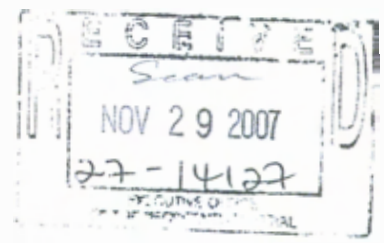


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Note to the Secretary-General

Please find attached for your information copy of an article appeared on the "La Commission en direct" (an internal magazine of the European Commission) about my recent visit to the European Commission.

Thank you.


Alicia Bárcena
29 November 2007

CdC		SG	
For SG's approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
For SG's attention	<input type="checkbox"/>	Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
For SG's information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>1/52</i>	Seen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>1/52</i>
For SG's signature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Signed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date	<i>30-11-2007</i>	Date	
Comment (if applicable):			

Cc: The Deputy Secretary-General
Mr. Nambiar
Mr. Akasaka
Mr. Kim

SG OFFICE
#755 30 Nov

A multi-lateral organisation established in the aftermath of World War Two by Member States determined to prevent future conflicts. After almost 5 decades of existence, the organisation faced the need to adapt to a changing world and more demanding political and public expectations. Headline-grabbing events, including allegations of corruption, have dramatically accelerated the pace of reform in recent years. Sound familiar?

The Commission and the United Nations have been engaged in a process of radical and fundamental reform. Their management and administrative structures are being overhauled at the same time as the nature of the organisations' missions is being re-examined by their Member States.

The secretariats of both organisations face similar challenges: multilateral bodies, trying to satisfy stakeholders and Member States who have sometimes wildly varying notions of what they expect the organisation to do; recruiting and managing diverse and multi-national staff (55,000 in the UN secretariat and agencies compared to the Commission's 33,000); and planning, controlling, implementing and auditing programmes and policies in a structure with complex governance systems.

With so much in common, the UN and the Commission have been working together to share experiences and information on administrative best practices since 2006. Most recently Alicia Bárcena, the UN's Under-Secretary General for Management, visited the Commission to share with its management ideas and views concerning good governance and to make plans for the second joint UN-Commission seminar which will take place in March 2008. She spoke to *CenD* about the UN's own reform and what it can learn from its European counterpart.

Although UN reform had been on the agenda for over a decade, Mrs Bárcena stressed that the Oil for Food scandal in 2003-4 had been a big turning point for the organisation. *"We had to become much more accountable, more transparent and more careful to communicate with people what we are about"*

In response to a request of world leaders at the 2005 UN World Summit, a number of landmark reports were delivered. The first, "Investing in the UN: For a Stronger Organisation Worldwide" came in March 2006 and proposed a bold vision for UN Secretariat management reform for the next three to five years. Later that year, came three more reports on governance and oversight, the Internal Justice System and System Wide Coherence contained far-reaching recommendations on key management processes and structures.

Before taking on her current role, Mrs Barcena was Chef de Cabinet to former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, under whose mandate the Reform was sketched out. She described the current Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon as being a "champion of change" and equally committed to changing the culture of the UN.

So what did the Commission and the UN have in common? Mrs Bárcena said that both organisations needed to better learn how to communicate with the "normal public" what they were about, and to convince them of their "value added" contribution to areas such as global climate stability and democracy. In addition, the Commission and the UN had both needed to increase their accountability internally and with their major contributors. *"Here we have much to learn from the Commission. You have your Audit Review Committee and the UN itself is creating an independent audit advisory committee which will help us become more accountable to the Member States"* she said.

As in the Commission, HR policy and staff relations were also part of the UN's Reform Process. *"We spend money on attracting, identifying, training, retaining and then moving around the best people, talents and young people that come into the system.... We went to make our recruitment more transparent and merit-based and of course work on our gender balance and geographical representation"* The UN's Secretariat is currently 65%/35% male to female. As for the Commission's own reforms in this field, she was *"very impressed"* and felt that there had been a major change which the UN *"had much to learn from"*.

However in a post-crisis Reform, Mrs Bárcena underlined that management and the administration needed to remain at the service of policy and rather than add unnecessary burdens. *"Sometimes substantive areas believe that administration is too heavy, creates too many rules and opposition and is about saying 'no', so our challenge is to demonstrate that administration can be transparent and efficient"*.

Like the Commission, the UN is major purchaser of goods and services from the private sector, spending around \$ 2 billion in public procurement. OLAF, and the Commission specialists in anti-corruption and anti fraud have been cooperating with the UN, as those in internal control, risk assessment and oversight. Again, Mrs Barcena emphasised that the administration should not over-react to a crisis situation by creating climate in which people were afraid of making decisions or taking risks.

"Public servants of multilateral institutions like ours are honest by definition. If we wanted to make money, there is a big private sector out there. .. We have objectives that are beyond materialistic. Vice-President Kallas and I believe in the integrity of international civil servants. We have to put in place systems that make everybody feel comfortable".

Claire Hewitt

To watch the full interview with Mrs Bárcena visit
http://www.cc.cec/dgintranet/admin/policy/un/admin_un.htm