

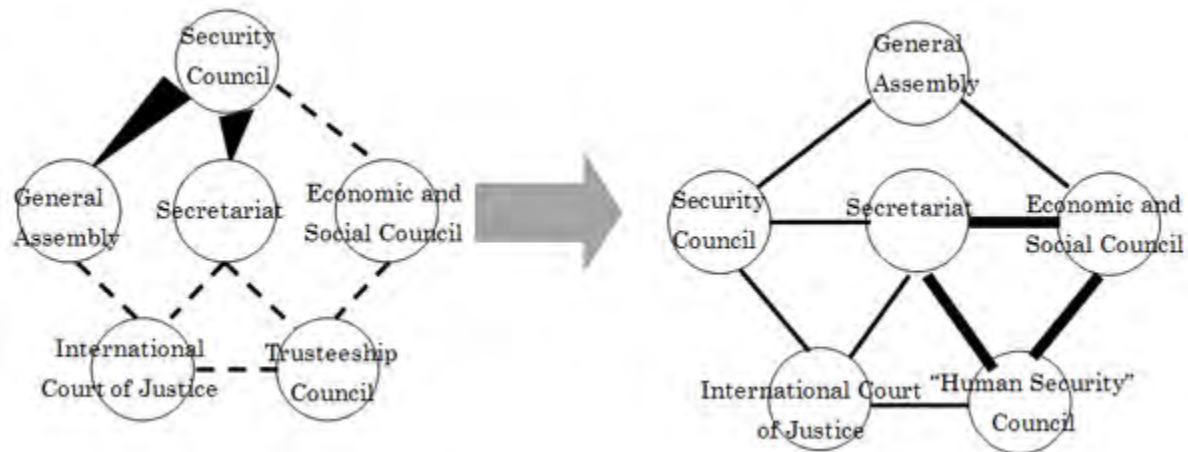
Proposal for an Interreligious Council Presented In Tokyo

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Tokyo, Japan - UPF-Japan held a "Consultation on Interreligious Council" in Tokyo on March 31, convening scores of experts on the UN, including several former directors and officers of UN agencies, former Japanese Ambassadors, and graduate students of international studies. This is the second consultation following the first organized on March 2-3.

Dr. Tsutomu Mizota, former director of UNICEF and UNIC Offices in Japan, presented his idea on establishing an interreligious council within the UN, and the participants exchanged their views on the proposal.

The main point of the proposal is to reform the Trusteeship Council, which has already finished its main role as one of the chief organs of the UN, and replace it with a Human Security Council (HSC). Then, by bringing together NGO-related operations, the Human Security Council will deal with intellectual issues, religious and spiritual issues, and issues concerning human dignity.



Amb. Nagao Hyodo, former Japanese Ambassador to Poland and Belgium, introduced his experience of submitting the proposed Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities to the UN General Assembly in 1998. And he said, "the direction of this declaration is the same as the direction of today's proposal. Although the declaration was not adopted, I hope its ideal would be realized in some form."

Amb. Kunio Muraoka, former Ambassador to Pakistan and Venezuela, commented that the United Nations would never take actions which might involve amendment of the Charter and that creating another UN would seem to be much easier than amending the Charter.

At the end, Mr. Masayoshi Kajikuri, Vice President of the Association of Ambassadors for Peace, suggested to enhance these consultations by forming a think tank for researching and influencing UN reform issues.

The summary of Dr. Mizota's proposal is as below:

Purpose

The proposal will prepare a feasible plan for and promote implementation of the establishment of an interreligious council. The process itself has the potential to enhance Japan's role and the function of UN organizations.

Outline

The establishment of a bicameral council or "second UN" is considered to be too early due to its large scale. Therefore, a temporary outline of the proposal will be as follows.

The fundamental reasons for the difficulty to establish an interreligious council are that (1) the unit of the existing UN is its member states, and (2) religion and culture were not treated as bodies of an administration board because they were considered as matters of individual freedom or regional characteristics.

In this proposal, "religion" is positioned as "the greatest fruit of culture created by human beings." Therefore,

A) We will hold an interfaith forum within or separately from the existing UN ECOSOC mandates. We seek to head for the future based on past accomplishments.

B) Since the Trusteeship Council of the existing UN organization has already finished its role, we will propose replacing it with a Human Security Council. Reorganization should be based on the idea of scraping-and-building.

C) All NGO-related operations shared and divided among existing various specialized agencies of the UN could be brought together under a Human Security Council.

D) Interfaith dialogue or an interfaith forum would be an important pillar within (C). By doing so, we seek to remove the fundamental reasons for the difficulties mentioned above. Metaphorically speaking, it is more effective to prevent sickness rather than to treat it.

E) In order to accomplish (D), the secretariat of the Human Security Council could be located in Geneva, complementing existing NGO coordination.

F) Among the UN special agencies affiliated in ECOSOC, the specialized agencies that are funded by voluntary contributions (World Food Programme, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, UN Environment Programme, etc.) would be placed under the Human Security Council. The Human Security Council would be temporarily managed by UNESCO (since it is in charge of education, science, culture, and communication). This would be an alternative to establishing a separate organization from the start.

G) The UN organizational reform would proceed according to the figure shown below: from left (existing form) to right.

Means of implementation

In order to implement the above-mentioned proposal as well as to address specific issues that the UN would initially present, we must

- cooperate with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and politicians in Japan, and
- internationally, cooperate with the UN headquarters in New York

The supposed manner of operation would be somewhere between the existing Security Council and ECOSOC. The greatest issues would be

- how the board would be constituted,
- how members would be elected, and
- how their term of office would be defined.

Whether the board should consist of individuals representing their religions/NGOs, or of organizations/groups itself will become a point of dispute. Furthermore, should the term of office be based on short-term rotation system in order to make it equal and fair for the board members?

Four points to consider

- Make the most of the present Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon's term of office.
- Move in step with the Security Council's present organizational reform.
- Aim for a certain level of implementation by January 2013.
- Hold a task force meeting every one to two months and devote it to training and development of human resources so trainees can also work as officials of international organizations (data gathering and utilization of expert resources). Some budget would need to be planned and applied for this purpose.