

# The End Justifies the Means

## A Letter from the President, United Nations Staff Union

Dear Colleagues,

The Secretary-General has over the past few weeks called for emphasis on results rather than on process. In his speech at a retreat with his senior managers in Turin (31 August-2 September), the Secretary-General said, "Too often, we seem to place more importance in process.... Let our UN put results before process." In his address to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly on 25 September 2007, the Secretary General reiterated that "transforming the way the UN does business—shifting our focus to emphasize results rather than bureaucratic process—will take patience, perseverance and courage."

The Secretary-General's remarks are troubling, especially in the context of an already result-oriented system with degraded processes. It is particularly disturbing that the Secretary-General of the United Nations should be advocating for such policies that run counter to not only societal norms but also the wisdom of conventions at the United Nations. The "sexual abuse or procurement scandals", which he identifies as defining the Organization's lowest points, are tips of an iceberg that point to faulty processes which must be redesigned, not circumvented.

The essence of ethical behaviour is undermined by the Secretary-General's remarks even as we seek to achieve the organizational objectives. This is illustrated by the recent refusal of the Administrator of UNDP to abide by the Ethics Office's determination that a staff member was a whistleblower. The Secretary-General's failure to insist that his appointee, the Administrator of UNDP, submit to the jurisdiction of the Ethics Office is instructive and appears to be driven

by a mindset that contemns ethical behaviour to subserve the pursuit of results at any cost.

The Secretary-General's remarks do not comport with the Staff Union's quest for effective participation in the development of policies and processes that affect staff and impact on their productivity. The current staff selection and placement system, launched in 2002, epitomizes the faulty processes whose "results" continue to impact negatively on staff morale amidst a dysfunctional justice system.

The reform initiatives to which the Secretary-General has indicated he is committed have as much to do with changing processes—not de-emphasizing them—as with delivery. More than ever before, the United Nations will require ethical programme managers, project managers and process managers who are well trained in managing people and the Organization; not merely managing results.

Results must be a product of a wide spectrum of legal, moral and ethical processes. The Secretary-General's remarks to his senior managers, some of whom already preside over dysfunctional processes, may serve to affirm their mindset that anything goes as long as they obtain the desired results. The United Nations Organizational Integrity Survey of 2004 found that changing the tone at the top and improving staff accountability would improve staff perceptions of Organizational integrity. A tone at the top that emphasizes results will change those perceptions into reality.



Stephen Kisambira  
President, United Nations Staff Union

§§§