



# Press Release

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**EXPERT PANEL ON UNITED NATIONS INTERNAL JUSTICE SUBMITS REPORT TO SECRETARY-GENERAL,  
SAYS FUNDAMENTAL OVERHAUL ESSENTIAL FOR MANAGEMENT REFORM SUCCESS**

The independent panel of experts appointed by the Secretary-General at the request of the General Assembly to review and redesign the United Nations internal justice system has completed its work and submitted its findings and recommendations to Secretary-General Kofi Annan on 20 July, for transmission to the General Assembly.

The Redesign Panel has concluded that the United Nations does not have an efficient, effective, independent and well-resourced internal justice system at the present time. The Panel believes that a fundamental overhaul of the internal justice system of the Organization is essential for the success of management reform in the Organization. It found overwhelming support for this approach in its interviews and consultations.

By its resolution 59/283, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to form a panel of external, independent experts to review and redesign the United Nations administration of justice system. The General Assembly established wide-ranging terms of reference for the Panel, emphasizing the need for an independent, transparent, effective, efficient and fair internal system of justice. In January 2006, the Secretary-General announced that he had established the Redesign Panel on the United Nations Administration of Justice System (Press Release [SG/A/971](#)) consisting of five independent experts: Mary Gaudron (Australia); Louise Otis (Canada); Ahmed El-Kosheri (Egypt); Diego Garcia-Sayan (Peru); and Kingsley Moghalu (Nigeria). Sinha Basnayake (Sri Lanka) was the Executive Secretary.

The Assembly, in resolution 59/283, requested the Secretary-General to transmit the Redesign Panel's report "as a matter of priority", along with his comments on the report's recommendations, and estimate of time and resources needed for their implementation, for consideration by the Assembly in the first part of the resumed sixty-first session.

The Redesign Panel consulted widely with stakeholders in the internal justice system, including senior managers and individual staff of the Organization, and staff unions. It also briefed Member States -- representatives of the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, and the European Union, United States, Canada, Australia and Japan in the Fifth Committee -- on the status of its work. As part of its staff and management consultations, the Panel travelled to Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Santiago, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda at Arusha and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. The Panel also consulted, by videoconference, with staff at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at The Hague and the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

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The Panel has, among others, recommended major changes in five important aspects of the internal justice system: the informal system of justice (the Ombudsman, mediation, Panel on Discrimination and Other Grievances); the formal system (Joint Appeals Board/Joint Disciplinary Committee and the United Nations Administrative Tribunal); the legal representation of staff and the Secretary-General; the multiplicity of recourse mechanisms; and the decentralization of the internal justice system.

The Redesign Panel recommends the strengthening of the informal justice system through a strong mediation mechanism as part of the Office of the Ombudsman, the abolition of the Joint Appeals Board/Joint Disciplinary Committee and its replacement with a professionalized judicial body of first instance with authority to issue binding decisions, with the United Nations Administrative Tribunal as an appellate tribunal, and the establishment of a standing, professionalized office of counsel to provide legal advice and representation for staff members.

It also recommends the abolition of a number of recourse mechanisms and streamlining their functions within the jurisdiction of the judicial body of first instance, and the decentralization of justice through the establishment of regional branches of the first-instance judicial body and the office of counsel, in order to ensure effective access to justice by staff members of the Organization in peacekeeping missions and offices away from Headquarters. The proposed new judicial system will have to be enacted by a statute adopted by the General Assembly.

The Panel has, thus, essentially recommended a fundamentally "redesigned" system of internal justice in the United Nations that is independent, effective, efficient and professional, one that complies with basic human rights standards, to which staff members are entitled, and ensures accountability of managers and staff.

The new system, if adequately resourced, will offer redress to staff grievances and deal with staff or managerial misconduct far more quickly and effectively than the system currently in place. It will, thus, be significantly more cost-effective than the present system, which is costly, in terms of time, staff dissatisfaction and the reputation of the Organization.

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