

The U.S. Department of State's International Information Programs issued the following issue focus report of foreign media reaction:

KEY FINDINGS

- * Papers opine that Annan's proposed reform puts the UN "on the right track."
- * Skeptics see Annan's proposal as "no more than a signal."
- * Without American participation, the UN is likely to be a "toothless tiger."
- * The UN must choose: "reform or death."

MAJOR THEMES

Reform plan 'deserves every support'- Supporters of UN reform saw Annan's proposal as "a step in the right direction" and an "attempt by Mr. Annan to reassert his leadership and to restore confidence in the UN"; the UAE's expatriate-oriented Gulf Today declared that "Annan's call for bold changes in the world body deserves a positive response from all its members," and a Czech writer claimed that "Annan's proposed reform of the UN amounts to its resuscitation." Like-minded outlets applauded the "human rights" element of the proposal, and agreed that the UNSC is "a top item" in need of reform. Some Euro papers warned that "the road for approval...will be an uphill battle," as Annan has many "enemies in the U.S. Congress."

'Reforming the UN is a hopeless cause'- A number of commentators were critical of UN reform and unimpressed by Annan's proposals. These outlets claimed that the UN reaction to recent atrocities in Darfur did "not cast a favorable light" on the body. The conservative Australian decided to "take the whole issue of UN reform with a grain of salt" because of the failure of "previous reforms." Canada's conservative National Post scoffed, "since 1948, the UN has sent nine peacekeeping missions...to the Middle East. What have they achieved in bringing stability and freedom to the region?" Liberal Euro papers argued that for reforms to succeed, "wealthy countries will have to increase their foreign aid contributions."

UN reform 'depends solely on Washington's position'- Worldwide outlets agreed that Annan needs "U.S. backing to proceed with UN reform," and that his proposals reflect a "desire to win back the Bush administration's interest." Euro dailies agreed that America has "shown little inclination to allow anyone to dilute its influence," and that "without the resolute cooperation of the Americans, there will be no reform." Japan's liberal Mainichi hoped for a U.S. "return to the global body," while a Russian writer warned that for negotiations to work, Bush must "turn a blind eye to the...corruption inside the UN."

If reforms fail, the 'UN will end in the dustbin of history'- Global papers agreed that the UN is "in crisis" and "needs a general overhaul." They generally warned that the UN is "facing its biggest credibility crisis" and that the U.S. will be "among the many losers" if reforms fail. Germany's right-of-center Schw?bische Zeitung opined that if the UN ultimately failed, America could no longer "exert its influence" on the world body; another editorial pointed out, "Europeans often

forget...that Washington is also interested in effective UN reform." An Austrian author believed that the U.S. "silence" in wake of the proposal may be "an indication that American interests were preserved."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Media Reaction reporting conveys the spectrum of foreign press sentiment. Posts select commentary to provide a representative picture of local editorial opinion. Some commentary is taken directly from the Internet. This report summarizes and interprets foreign editorial opinion and does not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Government. This analysis was based on 50 reports from 18 countries over March 21-24, 2005. Editorial excerpts are listed by the most recent date.