

U.N. General Assembly agrees on watered-down document for world leaders to approve
By NICK WADHAMS, Associated Press Writer
September 14, 2005

With world leaders already descending on New York for the three-day summit, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a watered-down document on poverty, human rights and U.N. reform for world leaders to approve.

The compromise 35-page document is supposed to launch a major reform of the United Nations itself and galvanize efforts to ease global poverty. But to reach a consensus, most of the text's details were gutted in favor of abstract language.

"Responsibility to protect" was whittled down to nations' obligations to protect their own citizens, though there is a reference to nations being prepared to take collective action "should peaceful means be inadequate."

Annan called the failure to mention nonproliferation the biggest letdown. The United States had vehemently objected to focusing on disarmament by major powers rather than on the spread of nuclear weapons among rogue states and terrorists, leading to deadlock.

The diplomats' inability to agree to a stronger document disappointed non-governmental organizations. They faulted Cuba, Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Syria, the United States and Venezuela as the nations that created the biggest obstacles.

"There is very little to celebrate in the latest UN Summit outcome document," Nicola Reindorp, head of Oxfam's New York office, said in a statement. "We wanted a bold agenda to tackle poverty but instead we have a brochure showcasing past commitments."