On 24 October 1945, the Charter of the United Nations entered into force. The Organization is thus celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. The purpose of establishing the United Nations was, to quote the Charter, “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. The Charter lays down purposes and principles, which the members of the Organization pledge to respect.

It goes without saying that every organization needs reforming. In reality, the United Nations has been the subject of continuous reform ever since its establishment. The fact that the Organization was not able to function as intended during the Cold War is one important aspect to be borne in mind. The same goes for the period following the fall of the Berlin Wall. After the initial euphoria, the members of the Organization realized that there were a number of conflicts that had been kept under the carpet during the Cold War and the standoff between East and West. These issues now became a major challenge to the Organization.

But there were also moments when the members of the Organization were able to join hands and come to common understandings on how to act. One such instance was the Millennium Assembly in September 2000 (the Millennium Summit). On that occasion, the General Assembly of the United Nations was able to adopt a resolution, the Millennium Declaration, in which they agreed to a number of goals to be reached by a certain point in time – the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).\(^1\)

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\(^1\) A/RES/55/2. Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015: Halve extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; empower women and promote equality between men and women; reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds; reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters; reverse the spread of disease, especially HIV/AIDS and malaria; ensure environmental sustainability; create a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade and debt relief.
THE FORK IN THE ROAD

In 2003, however, not least because of the armed attack on Iraq, the United Nations came to a point where it was felt that a more fundamental assessment of the functioning of the Organization was necessary. In his statement before the General Assembly in September 2003, Secretary-General Kofi Annan made his famous reference to “a fork in the road”:

Excellencies, we have come to a fork in the road. This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded. At that time, a group of far-sighted leaders, led and inspired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, were determined to make the second half of the twentieth century different from the first half. They saw that the human race had only one world to live in, and that unless it managed its affairs prudently, all human beings may perish. So they drew up rules to govern international behaviour, and founded a network of institutions, with the United Nations at its centre, in which the peoples of the world could work together for the common good. Now we must decide whether it is possible to continue on the basis agreed then, or whether radical changes are needed.²

In November 2003, the Secretary-General appointed a High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Its main mandate was to make proposals to strengthen the UN collective security system.

On 1 December 2004, the panel presented its report – “A more secure world: our shared responsibility”.³ The report contained a number of proposals, both related to the MDGs and to the functioning of the Organization and its different organs. In particular, the panel presented two alternative solutions for enlargement of the Security Council.

On 21 March 2005, Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented his own proposal – “In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all” – drawing inspiration, inter alia, from the High-level Panel.⁴

³ UN doc. A/59/565.
⁴ UN doc. A/59/2005. “In preparing the present report, I have drawn on my eight years’ experience as Secretary-General, on my own conscience and convictions, and on my understanding of the Charter of the United Nations whose principles and purposes it is my duty to promote. I have also drawn inspiration from two wide-rang-