

Preface

From 1966 to 2003, a period of thirty-eight years, I worked at the United Nations in two places: the fifth committee and the advisory committee. I was assigned to other areas but these were peripheral and temporary, like my brief participation in the work of the committee for programme and coordination, CPC, the governing council of the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, and the de-colonisation committee - otherwise known as the committee of twenty-four.

The period of thirty-eight years was unique for me. I was the youngest to chair the fifth and advisory committees; I was the first person from the developing countries to chair the advisory committee; and by 2003 I had the longest uninterrupted tenure in both the fifth and the advisory committees. This long period was unique for me in other ways. The subjects I dealt with, such as budgets and expenditure control, examining audit and planning reports for the United Nations, were often shunned by many of my generation. In the early years of my career if one wanted to make headway in a developing country like Tanzania, one concentrated on national political issues. At the international level the favourite subjects were decolonisation, imperialism, and the freedom struggle. These were expanded in the late seventies and eighties to include economic development and financing international cooperation.

This lackadaisical attitude dogged me to the end of my career at the United Nations. I was neither a political operator nor did I relish self-promotion press interviews nationally or internationally. To address this weakness of mine I intend to provide in this memoir information about the subjects I was involved in, subjects to which top representatives from many developing countries still give scant attention. History is replete with blunders of those who refuse to learn from history. There are many events referred to in my memoir that may be worthy of the attention of future generations who may be interested in the nature of representation and governance of certain international institutions such as the advisory committee.

The present memoir deals with my role as chair of the advisory committee on administrative and budgetary questions, the ACABQ. The memoir is not about the technical history and the many accomplishments of the committee; it is about me on the advisory committee and my struggle to hold together a committee that began to decline due to attitudinal changes of new members. It also sheds light on how the life of international bodies like the advisory committee is affected by the quality of individuals selected to serve on them, and how individual, rather than national or committee interests, often play critical roles in the performance and ultimate future of these bodies. If the United Nations still exists the way I knew it, and my telling of these experiences leads to changes in the way committees like the advisory committee are composed and governed, then I would consider to have achieved something I was not able to accomplish while still employed with the United Nations.

The texture of my memoir is at times very personal and reflects the environment in which I operated. I believe a personal memoir should reflect the writer's experience, otherwise



everything becomes remote and lifeless. Although I have read harsher comments about the United Nations it's not likely that everyone will like everything I have written. While at the UN, I had a penchant for taking notes, and in this publication I have used materials from notes I've gathered over the years. I will provide information known to me at the time I left the United Nations in 2003, which has been updated as I have considered appropriate and relevant.

The United Nations is one of the finest international institutions ever conjured up by the human mind to save humanity from self-immolation. It has many faults, but it is worth defending by all of us. Again, my writing is not about the lofty objectives enshrined in the United Nations Charter: peace, development, national and international human rights, international justice, law, and saving humanity from the scourge of war. These fields are better left to those who have been directly involved. But mine is a story just as human as any situation involving people from all over the world is bound to be. Any criticism I have espoused is not primarily about the United Nations as an institution; it is mainly about government and secretariat representatives, it is about individuals, it is about you and me and the way we treat this worthy institution.

United Nations situations described in this memoir may be different by the time the memoir is published, but that does not alter the facts as I experienced them. Since I have relied entirely on information in my notes, supplemented by other sources, all mistakes or omissions are mine. As to omission, I always note one thing: call on three delegates in a room to explain a simple occurrence they witnessed and you are likely to have three different versions of what happened. The United Nations as of the time of the completion of this preface has 192 member states;



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if I get three delegations out of 192 member states agreeing with much of what is in my memoir, I shall consider that a great achievement.

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Arusha, Tanzania

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