

REFORMING THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE: A NOBLE PROJECT, NOW ACCOMPLISHED

Matthew Parish



The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), one of the most admired organs of the United Nations system, has always benefitted from the finest standards of leadership. Some of the most impressive, least partial persons, invariably uninfected by improper government connections, always occupy the distinguished role of Executive Secretary. That is surely why the office-holders invariably limit their terms to untypically short periods, avoiding the moral hazards of some UN office-holders who hold terms such as two or even three years that by any international standards are far too long.

The goals of the Economic Commission are set out in manifold fundamental statutory and constitutional documents of the United Nations and other associated and independent bodies thereof. Those documents guarantee in the most principled way the impartiality and propriety of the Commission and of all its staff, including its Executive Secretary, his Deputy and the various departments and branches that are associated with its implacable structure.



The very highest standards of management are meticulously applied in every instance, its employees being finely motivated and its prestigious S-building offices on the third floor of the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva being adorned with sophisticated magazines, reading materials and institutional documentation revealing the Commission's overriding imperative for effective and impartial execution of its functions.

Moreover the management of the Commission has always been the subject of a realistic and appropriate change between persons from different parts of the Commission's member states and respective political alliances. Never once has there been more than one Executive Secretary from the same country: a principle of geographical rotation that we must all applaud as an essential arm of effective operational policy in the United Nations. Nor has there ever been seen a creep in that undesirable direction, found in some UN agencies, towards appointing proxy nationals. Such an approach is wholly incompatible with the solemn obligation existing upon all UN officials, up to and including the Secretary General, to act neutrally and without regard for the national interests of the office-holder of countries associated with them.



The daily operations of UNECE reflect this admirable principle of integrity, which must be meticulously enforced by its Executive Secretary without regard for narrow national interests of small countries that might think they have a legitimately disproportionate influence over so important an institution. I have personal knowledge and confidence that the daily operations of the Executive Secretary and her fine team are invariably free of political or other inappropriate forms of influence, and all occupants of the post have the most admirable backgrounds, including forensic security; combatting corruption in domestic civil service recruitment; highlighting elected politicians' expenses irregularities; foundation management; incorruptible oversight of state finances; foreign relations in times of strain; and generic pharmaceuticals.

Such universally impressive people, particularly those who have connections





with admirable post-conflict peace building, should be lauded. Many critics of the United Nations system are known to include within the few exceptions to their cynicism the meticulous operations of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Staffed by persons with such intimate connections with the best Eastern European universities, the organisation is blessed to accumulate such consistent consecutive talent. We can only hope that this extraordinarily fortunate pattern persists indefinitely. I am quite confident that it will. These are the days in which the world citizenry insists that an institution such as UNECE operates within its full and most expansive mandate, serving as a conciliator and promoting peace and harmony. Where those behind UNECE uphold those values with indefatigable

rigour, I applaud them. This is my vision for the United Nations. I warmly welcome UNECE's new Executive Secretary, who I very much anticipate will hold every bit as long and distinguished, nay devoted, a tenure as all of her much-admired predecessors.

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Matthew Parish is a former UN Balkan peacekeeper and one of the foremost supporters of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in Geneva. He is an advocate for UN reform, and is proud to offer his services to those who share his ideals. www.matthewparish.com

