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UN General Assembly Welcomes Annan's Call for Reform

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The U.N. General Assembly has given Secretary-General Kofi Annan a symbolic show of support in the face of calls by some U.S. lawmakers for his resignation. Mr. Annan received a rare standing ovation after addressing the 191-member body.

Diplomats stood and cheered for nearly a minute as the Secretary-General completed a speech urging support for the recommendations of a high-level panel on U.N. reform.

When the applause died down, General Assembly President Jean Ping told Mr. Annan to consider the outburst an expression of the trust member states have in him, both as a person and for his work as leader of the world body.

The secretary-general has been described as "tormented" since it was revealed that his son received payments from a Swiss company hired to monitor the scandal-ridden Iraq oil-for-food program.

The head of a U.S. Senate committee investigating the program and a few Republican members of the House of Representatives have publicly called for Mr. Annan to step down.

The secretary-general told reporters Tuesday, however, that he intends to carry on with his work. U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard noted that the resignation calls came from a small number of U.S. legislators, and that no U.N. member state, including the United States, had suggested that Mr. Annan step down.

"I don't want to prejudge how much support that might eventually get in the U.S. Congress," he said. "But we haven't heard from the administration in Washington that they want to ask the secretary-general to resign or they don't want to work closely on Iraq elections, transition in Afghanistan, the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, and other important issues we're working on together."

Secretary-General Annan, in his speech to the General Assembly, said the world body may need radical change if it is to meet future challenges.

He pledged to take the lead in promoting a new anti-terrorism strategy. And in a reference to the Security Council's failure to reach consensus on Iraq last year, he said it is time to, "get serious" in developing a comprehensive system of collective security.

"Either we turn our backs on the very notion of collective security, or we must work hard to make sure that collective security really means something - and that we are able, in a practical and decisive manner, to lay out a new agenda and act on it in the years to come," Mr. Annan said.

The General Assembly plans to debate the high-level panel's reform proposal over the coming months. Mr. Annan is to issue his own set of specific recommendations for change next March, which he hopes will lead to action at the annual assembly debate next September.

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U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is planning to carry on in his job, despite calls by some U.S. lawmakers and news organizations for his resignation. Several world leaders are rallying to the Secretary-General's defense, amid allegations of corruption in the Iraq oil-for-food program. A day after several Republican members of the U.S. Congress urged him to

step down, Secretary-General Annan told a group of reporters he plans to keep on working. "I have quite a lot of...

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A high-level U.N. panel has issued a sweeping series of recommendations on how to reform the world body to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The recommendations deal with subjects ranging from nuclear non-proliferation to expanding the Security Council. Secretary-General Kofi Annan named a panel of 16 eminent persons a year ago, following the deep split among Security Council members over whether to authorize military action against Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

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The United States' top U.N. diplomat says the Bush administration has confidence in Secretary-General Kofi Annan and intends to continue working with him. Ambassador John Danforth's comments came in response to calls from some conservative congressmen for the U.N. leader's resignation in the wake of the U.N. oil-for-food scandal. Many world leaders have come out in defense of Mr. Annan since the calls for his resignation, which some diplomats believe has more to...

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The Bush administration has expressed confidence in United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, despite calls for his resignation from several U.S. lawmakers over a scandal involving the U.N.-administered oil-for-food program for Iraq. The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John Danforth, said Thursday that President Bush has confidence in Mr. Annan, and dismissed speculation the administration was trying to push the Ghanaian diplomat out. Mr. Danforth also...