Opening statement by UN Chief of Staff Mark Malloch-Brown
at a press conference on the Oil-for-Food programme (8 August 2005)

• Secretary-General Kofi Annan has received the third interim report from the Chairman of the
  Independent Inquiry Committee (IIC) looking into allegations concerning the Oil-for-Food
  Programme.

• "The Secretary-General this morning received the Third Interim Report from the Independent
  Inquiry Committee into the United Nations Oil for Food Programme from Chairman Paul Volcker
  and his two fellow IIC members Richard Goldstone and Mark Pieth. He is deeply concerned by
  the conclusions it reaches about Benon Sevan, the former Executive Director of the United
  Nations Office of the Iraq Programme and Alexander Yakovlev, a former United Nations
  procurement officer.

• The IIC has recommended that the Secretary-General accede to any properly supported
  request from an appropriate law enforcement authority for a waiver of immunity from criminal
  prosecution for both Mr. Sevan and Mr Yakovlev. The Secretary-General, as he has made clear
  many times, will do so.

• With specific regard to Mr. Sevan, the United Nations is already cooperating with inquiries from
  the Manhattan District Attorney and is in the process of replying to a request for cooperation
  from the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. With regard to Mr. Yakovlev, the
  UN’s Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) last month contacted the U.S. Attorney for
  the Southern District of New York to alert them that internal, ongoing investigations of
  Mr. Yakovlev had turned up prima facie evidence of criminal wrong doing and has shared that
  evidence with the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

• With respect to broader UN procurement practices, following a series of reforms put in place
  since the late 1990s, the United Nations recently commissioned an independent review of
  procurement practices from the U.S. National Institute of Governmental Purchasing. That
  review, which was completed last month, strongly supported the thrust of the reforms and made
  a number of additional technical recommendations. As part of its investigation of Mr. Yakovlev,
  OIOS will separately make recommendations for further reforms, particularly regarding
  strengthened supervision and controls over individual procurement officers. The Secretary-
  General intends to act expeditiously to implement those recommendations.

• The Secretary-General also notes the IIC’s commitment to publish its comprehensive report in
  early September including recommendations for action. That report will include an overall
  assessment of the Oil-for-Food programme and specific conclusions about the role of Security
  Council, the UN Secretariat and the Secretary-General and UN agencies. He very much looks
  forward to that report, not least in the strong expectation that it will clear up any remaining
  questions concerning his own conduct.

• Let me just add one late breaking note. We have in the last hour been contacted by the U.S.
  attorney for the Southern District of New York and been requested to waive Mr. Yakovlev
  immunity. The Secretary-General has done that within the last few minutes, we believe
  Mr. Yakovlev is already in custody."}