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Perhaps with a currency, this would change the perception...and shift the power.

Rudd lectures United Nations on its failings

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Byline: Brad Norington

Kevin Rudd has lectured the UN about its risk of descending into irrelevance and becoming a "hollow shell".

Australia's new Foreign Minister yesterday urged member nations to stop bypassing the UN's operations so it could be a legitimate force in world governance.

"The international community can no longer tolerate the actions of a few dissenting states to roadblock the common resolve of the many," Mr Rudd said.

After attending a week of UN meetings in New York, the former prime minister was giving his main address to the body's general assembly in his new role representing Australia.

Mr Rudd singled out three examples of UN failings to demonstrate how he believed the current system was not meeting expectations: development, climate change and disarmament.

He said that Millennium Development Goals set by the UN a decade ago, which include halving poverty by 2015, were falling far short of agreed targets.

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The UN had also not made progress on climate change at the Copenhagen summit last December to reflect the global challenge faced by carbon emissions, he said.

And the UN's nuclear disarmament conference had been in a "state of inertia" for 12 years.

This was despite recent proposals for urgent work on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

"If we have a conference on disarmament, it should do disarmament -- not pretend," Mr Rudd said.

"If we say we have a convention on climate change, it must do the job to tackle climate change.

"Similarly, development. Otherwise the UN's credibility in the eyes of the world, and our own citizens, will eventually collapse."

The warning from Mr Rudd, at the conclusion of his first UN sessions as Foreign Minister, reflects widespread criticism of the organisation's legitimacy.

The US under the Bush administration turned its back on the UN, although President Barack Obama has pledged to work through its institutions in future.

A range of countries, including Israel and Iran, have not observed UN resolutions. Permanent UN security council members have used their veto powers to block measures or forced a watering down of sanctions.

"If we fail to make the UN work, to make its institutions relevant to the great challenges we all now face, the uncomfortable fact is that the UN will become a hollow shell," Mr Rudd said.

He said he was not calling for another grand plan for UN reform, and accepted the UN had most of the essential structures in place.

