

Prologue

This report is submitted pursuant to the “United Nations Participation Act of 1945” (Public Law 79-264). Section 4 of this law provides in part that:

“The President shall from time to time as occasion may require, but not less than once each year, make reports to the Congress of the activities of the United Nations and of the participation of the United States therein.”

In July 2003 the President delegated to the Secretary of State the authority to transmit this report to Congress.

The United States Participation in the United Nations report is a survey of the activities of the U.S. Government in the United Nations and its agencies, as well as the activities of the United Nations and those agencies themselves. More specifically this report seeks to assess UN achievements during 2008, the effectiveness of U.S. participation in the United Nations, and whether U.S. goals were advanced or thwarted.

The United States is committed to the founding ideals of the United Nations. The United States believes that the United Nations should be a place where diverse countries and cultures of the world work together for freedom, democracy, peace, human rights, and prosperity for all people. In 2008 the United Nations continued to face many challenges in living up to those founding principles.

This report treats thematically UN activities that most significantly affected U.S. interests. It is divided into six parts:

Part 1, Political and Security Affairs, focuses on activities undertaken by the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. Under the UN Charter the primary responsibility for this task lies in the Security Council, which is empowered to take various actions to maintain international peace and security, such as adopting resolutions authorizing peacekeeping and special political missions or employing coercive measures, including sanctions. The activities of the UN General Assembly and other UN bodies are also described. This chapter also covers security-related thematic issues, including disarmament and international terrorism.

In the Middle East the United States actively pursued the vision of a two-state solution of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. The United States continued to work in partnership with the other members of the Quartet (the United Nations, European Union, and Russia) to achieve progress on the Quartet’s Performance-Based Roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (“Roadmap”).

In July the United States opposed a Libyan draft Security Council resolution on the situation in the Middle East that did not mention ongoing terrorist rocket attacks against Israel from Gaza nor explicitly acknowledge the Roadmap’s obligation for a permanent end to attacks targeting civilians, nor for regional states to cut off support to groups and engaging in and/or supporting violence and terror. As a result of our opposition, the Security Council did not take up the resolution. In September the Security Council held a ministerial meeting on the situation in the Middle East in which Secretary of

State Condoleezza Rice underscored the importance of the work of the Quartet and noted that there was now a viable peace process with Israelis and Palestinians negotiating. In December the Security Council adopted Resolution 1850 – its first resolution on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in five years – sponsored jointly by the United States and Russia. The resolution endorsed the principles established at the Annapolis Conference (November 2007) and recognized the progress achieved. It also called on the parties to fulfill their obligations under the Performance-Based Roadmap, noted the importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, and encouraged the work of the Quartet.

Turning to Iran, throughout 2008 its Government continued to augment its uranium enrichment program, to construct the Arak heavy water research reactor, and to operate the heavy water production plant (also at Arak) in clear violation of Iran's UN Security Council obligation to suspend those activities.

In March the Security Council adopted Resolution 1803, imposing additional, legally binding sanctions on Iran under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Resolution 1803 broadened the scope of the proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities and nuclear weapons delivery systems-related embargo by establishing a travel ban on persons designated in an annex to the resolution and on any additional individuals designated by the Security Council or the Sanctions Committee, and by expanding the lists of individuals and entities subject to the asset freeze and of persons subject to the travel notification requirement. The resolution called for vigilance against publicly provided financial support for trade with Iran, and (as appropriate) for inspection of cargoes to and from Iran of aircraft and vessels, at member states' airports and seaports, owned or operated by specified Iranian entities provided there were reasonable grounds to suspect the transport of prohibited goods. The resolution also requested an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report on Iranian compliance with pertinent resolutions and clearly stated Security Council intent to consider further measures if the IAEA reported Iranian failure to comply.

In September the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1835, wherein it reaffirmed its commitment to an early negotiated solution through a dual-track approach to the Iranian nuclear issue and welcomed continuing efforts in that regard. The Security Council also called for full Iranian compliance without delay with its obligations under pertinent resolutions and to meet IAEA requirements.

The situation in Somalia remained highly unstable in 2008. The Security Council increased its involvement by adopting 10 resolutions (all unanimous), two Presidential Statements, and two press statements. The Security Council welcomed the August "Djibouti Agreement," a peace and reconciliation accord. Further, the October "Cessation of Hostilities Agreement," coupled with the pact to form a unity government in Djibouti, created a political process to establish a broad-based parliament and unity government and to improve the security situation. However, extremist groups

opposed to the political process continued a dire security situation and continued to threaten humanitarian aid deliveries to more than three million people. Piracy off Somalia's coast also significantly hindered delivery of humanitarian aid.

Through its resolutions the Security Council extended the mandates of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somalia Sanctions Committee's Monitoring Group, expanding the latter's mandate. (The United States continued to provide equipment, logistical support, airlift, and communications equipment bilaterally.) In June Security Council Resolution 1816 authorized states (in cooperation with the Transitional Federal Government) to use "all necessary means" as appropriate to combat piracy in international waters off the coast and within Somalia's territorial waters.

In October the Security Council adopted Resolution 1838 (co-sponsored by the United States), which called upon member states operating naval vessels and military aircraft in the area to "take part actively in the fight against piracy," and to do so on the high seas and in the airspace off the coast of Somalia.

In November Resolution 1844 expanded the Somalia sanctions regime from a comprehensive arms embargo to include targeted measures, authorizing a worldwide asset freeze and travel ban on individuals and entities threatening the peace process, obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid, or violating the arms embargo.

In December a ministerial meeting of the Security Council (attended by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice) adopted Resolution 1851, allowing states and regional organizations combating piracy off the coast of Somalia (with proper notification) to take all necessary measures "appropriate in Somalia" to combat piracy. This resolution allowed certain states to enter Somali territory and air space to suppress acts of piracy.

The United States sought to engage the Security Council about Zimbabwe throughout 2008. The United States lobbied for the Security Council to hold two informal consultations on Zimbabwe (which took place on April 29 and June 12). The second consultation, which occurred after an incident in which American diplomats and local U.S. Embassy staff in Harare were threatened at gunpoint and detained for several hours, resulted in a press statement which expressed concern over the incident.

The United States used the Security Council presidency during June to focus attention on Zimbabwe. That month Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice co-chaired a roundtable meeting of Security Council and other UN members, and the Security Council held its first formal meeting on Zimbabwe and issued a Presidential Statement which made clear that violence against and restrictions on the political opposition made a free and fair presidential run-off election impossible. The Security Council also committed to continue monitoring Zimbabwe closely and requested the Secretary-General to report on efforts to resolve the crisis. Also, after repeated urging by the United States and other Security Council delegations, Secretary-General Ban sent a special

envoy to Zimbabwe to engage with the Government and the opposition in support of regional mediation efforts and to report on the situation.

In July the United States sought a strong Security Council resolution on Zimbabwe to reinforce regional efforts to end the crisis, to allow for economic recovery, and to provide international support to ensure that the Zimbabwean people's will was respected. The draft resolution would have imposed a comprehensive arms embargo, and subjected to a worldwide travel ban and asset freeze those involved in acts of politically motivated violence or supporting subversion of democratic processes or institutions. Fourteen individuals, including President Robert Mugabe, were designated in the draft resolution's annex.

The resolution failed. Russia and China vetoed the draft; Vietnam, Libya, and South Africa voted no; Indonesia abstained. Nevertheless, the United States pledged to continue to urge all Security Council members to monitor Zimbabwe closely; to urge the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative to support the political negotiating process; and to report on the political, humanitarian, human rights, and security situations. Secretary-General Ban called on the Mugabe regime to lift restrictions on humanitarian activities, and the United States urged UN agencies to do their utmost to continue humanitarian assistance.

Part 2, Economic and Social Affairs, assesses the work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and various subsidiary bodies and commissions on issues that involve economic development, the status of women, humanitarian aid, and crime prevention and control.

Concerning disaster and humanitarian relief activities, about 200 million people were directly affected in 2008 by earthquakes, floods, storms, landslides, and other destructive events. At least 236,000 people lost their lives and total damages exceeded \$180 billion. The United States continued to provide substantial support to UN humanitarian operations in response to these disasters, as well as to ongoing relief efforts in crisis areas -- including the West Bank, Gaza strip, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Somalia, and Chad.

Much U.S. assistance went through agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). In fiscal year 2008 the United States contributed approximately \$1.8 billion to WFP for food commodities and humanitarian air operations, and more than \$129 million to UNICEF programs with an emphasis on immunization, girls' education, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, and emergency relief. The United States is the world's largest food aid donor overall, providing half of all food aid internationally and 40 percent of total resources contributed to the WFP. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees leads and coordinates international efforts to protect and provide durable solutions for the world's refugees. It also plays a key role in providing for refugees' basic needs, such as food, shelter, health care, and education. In

2008 the overall population of persons of concern to UNHCR increased from 31.7 million to 34.4 million. In fiscal year 2008 the United States contributed over \$507 million to UNHCR to help refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless people, and others of concern. U.S. funding also supported UNHCR's continuing reform process aimed at improving its capacity to address new and ongoing crises. Over \$234 million of the total U.S. contribution went toward the annual budget. The United States additionally contributed more than \$251 million for supplementary budgets both for refugees and IDPs.

Though resettlement traditionally is a solution for a small percentage of all refugees, the United States admitted 60,192 refugees for resettlement -- out of a total of 88,000 -- in fiscal year 2008, most referred through UNHCR. The United States admits more refugees than the other 25 resettlement countries combined.

Part 3, *Specialized Agencies*, describes the activities of a host of agencies, from the Food and Agriculture Organization to the World Health Organization, and assesses how they served U.S. interests.

Part 4, *Legal Developments*, highlights the work of the judicial bodies, such as the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the International Court of Justice.

Part 5, *Reform of the UN System*, describes progress on reform of the United Nations and of the main UN bodies.

Part 6, *Administration and Budget*, provides an overview of the current UN financial situation and resource management issues. During 2008 the UN General Assembly increased the 2008-2009 biennium budget by more than 16 percent, from \$4.17 billion to \$4.86 billion. This increase was primarily due to the approval of several "add-ons" that were proposed but not acted on when the initial budget was approved in December 2007. The "add-ons" included reform initiatives and restructuring proposals, plus increased funding for special political missions.

Member nations' total UN arrears increased from \$3.31 billion to \$3.49 billion by the end of 2008, \$182 million more than at the end of 2007. The increase primarily reflected amounts owed for UN peacekeeping operations, which accounted for \$2.9 billion -- about 83 percent -- of the total owed at the end of 2008.

Of the total arrears, the U.S. shortfall was \$1.377 billion: 39.5 percent. Most of the U.S. debt, \$860 million, related to UN peacekeeping operations. With respect to the UN regular budget, the United States had paid \$316.5 million of its annual assessment of \$452.6 million by the end of 2008. The total U.S. payment for all UN assessments in 2008 was \$1.974 billion. Most of that -- about \$1.446 billion -- related to peacekeeping assessments.

Finally, the report's appendices include President Bush's 2008 speech to the UN General Assembly and information about the principal organs of the United Nations and their membership.

Questions about this report may be directed to the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, U.S. Department of State.