

## **United States Participation in the United Nations in 2011**

This executive summary for the report on United States Participation in the United Nations 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.”*

This summary describes the activities of the U.S. government in the United Nations and its agencies during 2011. It seeks briefly to assess UN achievements, the effectiveness of U.S. participation in the United Nations, and whether U.S. goals were advanced.

This summary and the report itself, for 2011 and previous years, are available online at <http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/index.htm>.

Last year the United States continued to demonstrate invigorated leadership at the United Nations and in a host of international organizations in support of U.S. national interests. That leadership was apparent in numerous multilateral venues, many of which are discussed in this report and/or in the complementary information mentioned above.

Notable examples include UN Security Council (UNSC) attention to Libya, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) highlighting Iran’s failure to adhere to its international obligations related to nuclear enrichment activities. The United States also continued to engage robustly and successfully at the UN Human Rights Council, where forceful and principled U.S. positions targeted urgent global challenges, including the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria, violence against women, and the Council’s history of disproportionate focus on Israel.

Another important element of U.S. leadership at the United Nations is the continuing effort to foster a more effective, efficient, transparent, and credible UN system. During 2011, this effort featured supporting actions to streamline services, eliminate duplicative functions, and improve performance of UN peacekeeping operations.

Initiatives to advance U.S. interests in the UN system are summarized as follows:

- Political and Security Affairs;
- Economic and Social Affairs;
- Specialized Agencies;
- Legal Developments; and
- Budget and Administration.

## **Political and Security Affairs**

The United States engages actively on political and security issues throughout the UN system, often most visibly through U.S. leadership on the Security Council. But U.S. actions and initiatives in the UN General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and in specialized agencies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, and other international organizations also advance important U.S. policies.

With U.S. leadership, the UNSC engaged robustly in efforts to resolve conflicts and to give direction to UN peacekeeping missions, with significant attention focused on Africa and the Middle East. The United States successfully promoted the creation of a peacekeeping mission to assist with security and governance in the new nation of South Sudan, as well as a new mission to assist with security and confidence-building along the volatile Sudan/South Sudan border and in the disputed region of Abyei.

The United States was also the driving force behind UNSC action to respond decisively to the grave threat to international peace and security posed by the Libyan government's violent repression of its own people. Six UNSC resolutions responded to tumultuous events there, creating a sanctions committee to oversee an arms embargo plus a travel ban and asset freeze on key figures and entities. When violence against civilians continued, the Security Council authorized all necessary measures to protect civilians, created a no-fly zone, banned flights, strengthened the asset freeze, and established a Panel of Experts to assist the Committee in monitoring sanctions implementation. After the regime fell, the Security Council responded quickly, establishing the UN Support Mission in Libya to aid the country's transformation from dictatorship to nascent democracy.

With resolute support from the United States, the IAEA continued its focus on Iran's failure to live up to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That focus resulted in noncompliance reports in March, June, September, and November, the latter document providing a comprehensive public assessment

of the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program. The Security Council also adopted a seventh resolution on Iran, extending the mandate of the expert panel assisting the sanctions committee. The panel submitted a report in November that found Iran to be continuing with nuclear activities that relevant UNSC resolutions obliged Iran to suspend. The United States also strongly supported General Assembly Resolution 66/12, condemning Iran's terrorist plot to assassinate Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States.

In 2011 the United States also continued to emphasize improving the lives of women and employing the UN system in that pursuit wherever possible. Secretary Hillary Clinton and other world leaders participated in a groundbreaking event on women's political participation during the General Assembly's high-level segment in September, where she vigorously endorsed an expanded role for women in the political sphere. Moreover, no fewer than six General Assembly resolutions in 2011 addressing important issues affecting women passed by consensus.

Concerning Israel and its neighbors, the United States consistently employed Security Council sessions to call for the international community to support Middle East peace efforts. After working assiduously to block a one-sided draft Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlement activity, the United States vetoed it, as it would have worsened the impasse between the parties. In other UN venues the United States firmly opposed anti-Israel resolutions in all forms, as well as imprudent and premature Palestinian efforts seek member state status in UN organizations. Across the UN system, the United States took every opportunity to speak and vote against resolutions that unfairly singled out Israel for criticism.

Determined U.S. diplomacy also blocked a Palestinian bid at the Security Council for UN membership, and reinforced to all parties the importance of resuming direct negotiations and refraining from unilateral acts. The General Conference of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) voted to admit the Palestine as a member state, despite unambiguous and vigorous U.S. opposition. As a result of this action, and in compliance with U.S. legislation, the United States suspended all assessed and voluntary contributions to UNESCO.

Following the outbreak of violence in Syria, the United States led a broad coalition in various UN bodies to highlight and condemn the Assad regime's violence against its own people. In New York, the UNSC adopted a Presidential Statement expressing concern over Syria's deteriorating situation, and the General Assembly

adopted a resolution criticizing Syria's human rights situation. In Geneva, the HRC held three extraordinary special sessions on Syria.

## **Economic and Social Affairs**

In 2011, the United States continued to its robust and sustained engagement at the Human Rights Council to promote and defend universal human rights. Among the key accomplishments during this period was the Council's unprecedented suspension of a UN member state (Libya).

The United States also played a leading role in the Council's other critical country-specific and thematic issues. For example, the United States was among the primary forces behind three special Council sessions on Syria noted above, resulting in a special investigation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the subsequent establishment of an Council commission of inquiry, and the creation of a special rapporteur on Syria to focus international condemnation of the Assad regime's continued gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The General Assembly's first-ever resolution on human rights in Syria, condemning the Assad regime's violence and violations against its own people, followed. The United States also led the effort to create a special rapporteur on human rights in Iran. U.S. engagement also advanced other priorities, including the first-ever resolution on the human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender persons and ending the decade-long run of the resolution on "Defamation of Religions," which called for limitations on free speech.

U.S. membership in and funding of key UN humanitarian agencies once again was essential to the lives and well being of millions of people. The World Food Program gave food assistance to approximately 90 million people in 70 countries, and received about \$3.4 billion from governments in 2011. As the largest donor, the United States provided about \$1.43 billion in FY 2011. The United States was also the largest bilateral donor to both the Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (\$250 million), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (\$700 million), enabling that organization to

assist more than 34 million refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and other populations of concern.

### **Specialized Agencies**

The United States continued its broad and active engagement with the full range of UN specialized and technical agencies. These organizations seldom receive media attention, but perform vitally important work for the international system in line with U.S. national interests. Those interests include global health, maritime commerce and safety, postal cooperation, electronic communications, intellectual property, and civil aviation.

### **Legal Developments**

U.S. support remained especially important in fulfilling the missions of the international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, the Cambodia Khmer Rouge tribunal, the special tribunal for Lebanon, and the special court for Sierra Leone.

### **Budget and Administration**

The United States and its international partners achieved the first real cut in the UN budget since the 1990s, and just the second in 50 years: The initially adopted 2012-2013 biennial budget of \$5.152 billion reflected a decrease of 4.9 percent from the final 2010-2011 budget. The United States also led efforts to introduce the concept of administrative pay and hiring freezes, advance transparency efforts, and strengthen oversight and accountability capabilities.

U.S. payments in calendar year 2011 totaled \$2.64 billion for all UN assessments. Approximately \$2.04 billion – about 77 percent – related to peacekeeping assessments. The United States paid \$501.6 million to the UN regular budget, as well as contributing funding for the Capital Master Plan and UN legal tribunals.