

I – INTRODUCTION

This publication is the 22nd annual Report to the Congress on Voting Practices at the United Nations. It is submitted in compliance with Section 406 of Public Law 101-246. This law provides, in relevant part:

“The Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a full and complete annual report which assesses for the preceding calendar year, with respect to each foreign country member of the United Nations, the voting practices of the governments of such countries at the United Nations, and which evaluates General Assembly and Security Council actions and the responsiveness of those governments to United States policy on issues of special importance to the United States.”

The fiscal year 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 108-447) called for expanded treatment by the report of Middle East issues, requiring “a separate listing of all plenary votes cast by member countries of the United Nations in the General Assembly on resolutions specifically related to Israel that are opposed by the United States.” This information appears in a new Annex at the end of this report.

This report reviews voting practices in the UN Security Council and General Assembly (UNGA) in calendar year 2004 and presents data in a variety of formats. All Security Council resolutions for the entire year are described, and voting on them is tabulated (Section II). The report also statistically measures the overall voting of UN member states at the 59th General Assembly in fall 2004 in comparison with the U.S. voting record (Section III). In addition to an alphabetical listing of all countries, the report presents the voting record in a rank-ordered listing by voting coincidence percentage and geographic regions, by selected bloc groupings, and in a side-by-side comparison with the amount of U.S. aid given to each country in fiscal year 2004. It also lists and describes UNGA resolutions selected as important to U.S. interests, again with tables for regional and political groupings (Section IV). In Section V it presents all data by country. Finally, this year’s report includes an Annex on General Assembly resolutions on Israel opposed by the United States.

The Security Council and the General Assembly deal with a full spectrum of issues—including threats to peace and security, terrorism, disarmament, economic and social development, humanitarian relief, and human rights—that are considered critical to U.S. interests. A country’s behavior at the United Nations is always relevant to its bilateral relationship with the United States, a point the Secretary of State routinely makes in letters of instruction to new U.S. Ambassadors. Nevertheless, a country’s voting record in the United Nations is only one dimension of its relations with the United States. Bilateral economic, strategic, and political issues are at times more directly important to U.S. interests.

SECURITY COUNCIL

The Security Council held 216 meetings in 2004 and adopted 59 out of 62 resolutions that were considered. It also issued 48 presidential statements, consensus documents issued by the Council president on behalf of the members. Voting coincidence percentages for Security Council members were high, with most resolutions (93.2 percent) adopted unanimously.

Russia and the United States were the only permanent members of the Security Council to exercise their veto power. Russia vetoed a draft resolution on Cyprus that the United States and the United Kingdom had submitted, and the United States vetoed two draft resolutions on the Middle East. Germany, Romania, and the United Kingdom abstained on the two draft resolutions the United States vetoed. The United States abstained on one resolution on the Middle East which was adopted. Algeria, China, and Pakistan abstained on two U.S.-cosponsored resolutions on Sudan; Algeria, Brazil, China, Pakistan, Philippines, and Russia abstained on a U.S.-cosponsored resolution on the elections in Lebanon. See Section II for vote descriptions and tables of voting summaries.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly opened its 59th session on September 14, 2004, and held 76 Plenary sessions before recessing on December 23, 2004. It adopted 282 resolutions, more than in the past few years, but still below the 332 of 1990. The subject matter of the resolutions covered the full gamut of UN concerns: security, arms control, economic, social and humanitarian issues, human rights, budget and financial matters, and legal concerns. The resolutions that were the subject of recorded votes continued primarily to address arms control, the Middle East, and human rights.

Of the 282 resolutions adopted in Plenary, 213 (75.5 percent) were adopted by consensus. This figure and similar ones in recent years (78 percent in 2003, 82 percent in 2002 and 2001, 76 percent in 2000, 76.9 percent in 1999, 78 percent in 1998, 75.2 percent in 1997, 72.9 percent in 1996, 76.6 percent in 1995, and 77.4 percent in 1994) illustrate the high rate of consensus in the work of the General Assembly.

VOTING COINCIDENCE WITH THE UNITED STATES

On non-consensus issues, i.e., those on which a vote was taken, the average overall General Assembly voting coincidence of all UN members with the United States in 2004 was 23.3 percent, down from 31.2 percent in 2002, and reflecting the general downward trend since 1995, when voting coincidence reached 50.6 percent. This decline in voting coincidence with the United States on non-consensus issues in the years since 1995 reverses the steady and dramatic increase in the years immediately following the end of the Cold War. The 50.6 percent figure in 1995 was the first time the coincidence

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figure had exceeded 50 percent since 1978, while the 23.3 percent figure in 2004 is still considerably higher than the low point of 15.4 percent in 1988.

The following table illustrates the gradual decrease in overall voting coincidence with the United States since the post-Cold War high of 50.6 percent in 1995. This decrease is reflected in the steady drop in coincidence on human rights votes. On human rights issues, the 2004 voting coincidence percentage was up from the previous three years. On arms control votes, the trend has been generally upward; however, that trend began to reverse itself in 2001 and continued in 2003 and 2004. Since 1995, the trend on Middle East issues has been generally downward, except in 2001 and 2002, years in which the coincidence increased. Coincidence dropped significantly in 2004.

Year	Arms Control	Middle East	Human Rights	Overall Votes
2004	17.9%	9.8%	44.9%	23.3%
2003	30.7%	16.5%	34.3%	25.5%
2002	41.9%	32.4%	23.7%	31.2%
2001	50.4%	29.0%	33.9%	31.7%
2000	66.1%	11.9%	55.7%	43.0%
1999	57.9%	22.7%	52.5%	41.8%
1998	64.0%	22.5%	62.8%	44.2%
1997	65.8%	26.2%	61.9%	46.7%
1996	62.3%	28.3%	68.3%	49.4%
1995	60.9%	35.2%	81.0%	50.6%

When consensus resolutions are factored in as votes identical to those of the United States, a much higher measure of agreement with U.S. positions can be seen. This figure (81.2 percent), which more accurately reflects the work of the General Assembly, is slightly below the 85–88 percent range recorded since the statistic was first included in this report in 1993. It was 80.7 percent in 2003, 83 percent in 2002, 85 percent in 2001, 87.6 percent in 2000, 86.4 percent in 1999, 88.3 percent in 1998, 87.3 percent in 1997, 87.3 percent also in 1996, 88.2 percent in 1995, 88.8 percent in 1994, and 88.3 percent in 1993. (See Section III—General Assembly—Overall Votes for additional comparisons.)

The coincidence figure on votes considered important to U.S. interests (35 percent) is significantly higher than the percentage registered on overall votes (23.3 percent). (See Section IV—Important Votes, for a side-by-side comparison of important and overall votes for each UN member.)

As in past years, Israel (93.2 percent), Palau (98.5 percent), and Micronesia (78 percent) were among the highest in voting coincidence with the United States. Marshall Islands, Australia, the United Kingdom, France,

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Albania, Canada, and Spain were also among the top 10 countries, with Latvia, Monaco, and Iceland close behind.

In general, however, 2004 saw declining voting coincidences with the United States, even among friends and allies. Most members of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) continued to score higher than average coincidence levels with the United States; the average was 45.9 percent, which is down from 46.1 percent in 2003, 49.9 percent in 2002, 54.4 percent in 2001, 61.5 percent in 2000, 67.1 percent in 1999, 65.2 percent in 1998, and 70.9 percent in 1997. There has been a growing divergence between the United States and the European Union, which at 44.3 percent is down from 45.5 percent in 2003, 49.5 percent in 2002, 53.5 percent in 2001, 62.5 percent in 2000, 68.5 percent in 1999, 66.7 percent in 1998, and 73 percent in 1997. The Eastern European Group was also down in 2004, at an average of 38 percent, which is down from 38.7 percent in 2003, 43.7 percent in 2002, 48.8 percent in 2001, 58 percent in 2000, 61.7 percent in 1999 and 1998, and 68.6 percent in 1997 and 1996. After the latter group's meteoric rise in coincidence with the United States immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, it largely matched the coincidence level of the Western European countries before its decline in the past six years. The NATO and Nordic countries also decreased in voting coincidence with the United States, continuing to reverse the upward trend of the late 1990s. The African and Asian groups, the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Latin American and Caribbean group all declined in voting coincidence with the United States.

The following five bar graphs depict voting trends since the end of the Cold War. Voting coincidence with the United States, in terms of both overall and important votes, is broken down by year for issues, geographic groups, and political groups.

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REALIZATION OF U.S. PRIORITIES

The United States set forth five major objectives for the 59th General Assembly: (1) advancing economic freedom as a route to freedom and prosperity, especially in developing countries; (2) ending child sex tourism; (3) promoting democracy and increasing cooperation among democratic countries in the United Nations; (4) banning human cloning through an international convention against human cloning; and (5) bringing balance to Middle East resolutions to support the Roadmap to Middle East Peace.

The United States made modest gains in each of these five areas during the session. The United States succeeded in adding important references to free market policies to resolutions on development, and in adding language addressing sex tourism to a resolution on the trafficking of women and girls. Cooperation among members of the UN democracy caucus continued to gain momentum, with passage of a resolution encouraging the work of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations in promoting and consolidating democracy. With regard to cloning, although a U.S.-cosponsored resolution calling for the negotiation of a convention to ban all forms of human cloning was not adopted, the General Assembly did adopt a proposal to form a working group to draft a Declaration urging all member states to prohibit any attempts to create human life through the process of cloning. Finally, the United States made progress in increasing the number of “no” votes and abstentions on one-sided Middle East resolutions, although it did not succeed in reducing the number of such resolutions. The United States believes that General Assembly resolutions dealing with the Middle East should be consistent with the principles of the performance-based Roadmap and the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991.

In the First Committee [Disarmament and International Security], the United States joined consensus on a resolution that followed up on last year’s U.S.-introduced resolution to initiate a process to modernize the Committee. While not the U.S. version, this resolution preserved key U.S. recommendations. The United States joined consensus on a resolution on bilateral strategic nuclear arms reductions. However, the United States voted nearly alone in the First Committee and in the Plenary of the General Assembly on resolutions on elimination of nuclear weapons and the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

The United States achieved several positive outcomes on economic and development issues in the Second Committee. These included a follow-up resolution on Financing for Development and changes to a resolution on economic integration which ultimately included U.S.-supported references to good governance, rule of law, and free market policies. The General Assembly for the first time graduated two countries, the Maldives and Cape Verde, from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, and adopted a resolution providing further momentum for other countries’ graduation.

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On human rights issues, the United States was disappointed to see a phenomenon seen in the UN Commission on Human Rights take hold in the Third Committee—the growing support for no-action motions which prevented consideration of resolutions on country human rights situations. Majorities in the Third Committee voted for no-action motions to avoid dealing with resolutions on Belarus (a U.S. resolution), Sudan, and Zimbabwe. The United States was encouraged, however, by the steps taken by the UN democracy caucus, including its support for a Romanian-sponsored resolution to encourage the work of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations in promoting and consolidating democracy. The resolution passed with no votes opposed. Passage of a resolution condemning religious intolerance with no votes against it was also a victory. The United States welcomed the passage of resolutions condemning the human rights situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Myanmar (by consensus), and Turkmenistan. Finally, the United States succeeded in adding references addressing sex tourism and sexual exploitation to a resolution on trafficking of women and girls.

In the Fifth [Budget] Committee, the United States pressed for several measures to strengthen the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and achieved passage of a resolution providing for member state access to any OIOS report upon request. The Fifth Committee also adopted a revised biennial budget for 2004–2005 which provided funds for greatly enhanced worldwide security for UN personnel, including a new Department of Safety and Security, which the United States strongly supported. The United States also joined consensus on the proposed outline of a biennial budget for 2006–2007.

Two legal issues of great importance to the United States continued to receive attention in the Sixth Committee. The United States cosponsored a Costa Rican resolution calling for the negotiation of a convention to ban all forms of human cloning. This resolution was not adopted; the Committee instead adopted a proposal to form a working group to draft a Declaration urging all member states to prohibit any attempts to create human life through the process of cloning. The General Assembly adopted a resolution calling upon states to ratify or accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The United States has long-standing concerns about the ICC, and disassociated from consensus on this resolution.

FORMAT AND METHODOLOGY

The format and presentation of this report are consistent with provisions of Public Law 101-246 as amended by Public Law 108-447, and the methodology employed is the same as that used since the report's inception.

The tables in this report provide a measurement of the voting coincidence of UN member countries with the United States. However, readers are cautioned about interpreting voting coincidence percentages. In

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Section III (General Assembly Overall Votes), Section IV (General Assembly Important Votes and Consensus Actions), and the Annex, the percentages in the last column of the tables, under “votes only,” are calculated using only votes on which both the United States and the other country in question voted Yes or No; not included are those instances when either state abstained or was absent. Abstentions and absences are often difficult to interpret, but they make a mathematical difference, sometimes significant, in the percentage results. The inclusion of the number of abstentions and absences in the tables of this report enables the reader to consider them in calculating voting coincidence percentages.

The percentages in the second to the last column of the tables, under “including consensus,” offer another perspective on General Assembly activity. These figures, by presenting the percentage of voting coincidence with the United States after including consensus resolutions as additional identical votes, more accurately reflect the extent of cooperation and agreement in the General Assembly. Since not all states are equally active at the United Nations, the report credits to each country a portion of the 213 consensus resolutions based on its participation in the 89 recorded Plenary votes, plus one in the Third Committee. Each country’s participation rate was calculated by dividing the number of Yes/No/Abstain votes it cast in the Plenary and on the one counted vote in the Third Committee (i.e., the number of times it was not absent) by the total number of Plenary votes (plus the one vote in the Third Committee). However, this calculation assumes, for want of an attendance record, that all countries were present or absent for consensus resolutions in the same ratio as for recorded votes.

Moreover, the content of resolutions should be considered in interpreting the figures in either of the aforementioned columns. There may be overwhelming agreement with the U.S. position on a matter of less importance to the United States and less support for a resolution it considers more important. These differences are difficult to quantify and to present in two coincidence figures.

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