

THE UNITED NATIONS AND AMERICAN MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY: PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES FOR A BETTER WORLD

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U.S. actions in the United Nations are based on three principles, according to Kim Holmes, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. He says America seeks: to have the organization live up to “the vision of its founders;” to have an effective, results-oriented multilateralism — not “empty declarations;” and to ensure the “good stewardship of U.N. resources.”

Nations the world over live in an age of unprecedented promise made possible by political liberty and free markets, technology and trade, and peaceful relations among the great powers. Our time is also one of extraordinary problems and escalating dangers, both natural and man-made. Pandemics such as HIV/AIDS visit misery and death on untold millions, endangering whole societies. Too many of our fellow human beings live under dictatorial and corrupt regimes that deny them the most basic of rights and the possibility of a better future.

Finally, in the greatest threat of our time, terrorists and tyrants, who fear freedom’s advance, seek to destroy the open societies that foster it. They have murdered the innocent in appalling numbers in every corner of the world. They seek to get chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons to destroy lives wholesale, and all else that men and women of goodwill around the world cherish.

This administration’s overarching aims are to meet the major foreign policy challenges of our time while helping greater numbers of people to realize freedom and democracy’s gifts. We see multilateral diplomacy as essential to this effort. Whether it is in the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, or one of the many other international organizations in which

the United States participates, our diplomats energetically work with other nations to find solutions to the problems of our era. As President Bush has declared: “This is America’s agenda in the world — from the defeat of terror, to the alleviation of disease and hunger, to the spread of human liberty. We welcome, and we need, the help, advice, and wisdom of friends and allies.”

Effective multilateralism, the Bush Administration believes, should always have a clear, worthy, and attainable purpose. Multilateralism should seek more than laudable goals; it should seek practical actions with achievable outcomes to address the significant problems of the day. Consensus is desirable and potentially useful. But achieving it should not come at the expense of results, which ordinary people around the world need if they are to get the peace and security, health and economic opportunity, liberty and dignity they need.

Not every member of every international organization will agree on every issue every time. We think, however, that U.N. members owe an obligation to each other to make a good-faith effort to reach an agreement consistent with higher principle and interest. The United States has done this on numerous issues, going to great lengths, for example, in the U.N. Security Council to achieve consensus around controversial questions.

In the last year, despite vigorous American efforts, the Security Council could not always bridge its differences on the necessity of using force to bring Iraq into compliance with its solemn duties. But before the recent war and afterward, the United States did succeed in working with other Security Council members to secure approval, where possible, of important resolutions.

The first, Resolution 1441 (November 8, 2002), demanded that Iraq end its material breach of its international obligations or face serious consequences. The second, Resolution 1483 (May 22, 2003), coming after Iraq's liberation, lifted the decade-old U.N. sanctions on the country; recognized Coalition authority there until a representative, internationally recognized government would be established; and affirmed the U.N.'s vital role in cooperating with the Coalition to help the Iraqi people build a better future.

The United States works for effective Security Council action when feasible. It also invests huge financial resources in a host of U.N. agencies to help nations everywhere in myriad ways — from feeding their hungry, to creating a natural disaster early warning system that will save lives, or even to helping keep the international postal system, which every nation depends on in our interconnected world, functioning smoothly.

PRINCIPLES

The United Nations and many of its specialized agencies have their success stories. They also have their failures. The United States seeks more U.N. successes and fewer failures. Three principles guide America's engagement with the United Nations and, more broadly, multilateralism:

Principle No. 1: We want the United Nations to live up to the vision of its founders, which calls upon all member states to contribute to international peace and security while giving their citizens freedom, health, and economic opportunity. Americans, desirous that the United Nations system succeed, want their leaders to ensure that it adheres to

that vision, whether the specific objective is getting Iraq to comply with its Security Council obligations, promoting peace and democracy in East Timor, or helping stop a global illness like SARS.

The Bush administration's policy during the most recent session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights reflected this results-oriented approach. When we declared our opposition to Libya — one of the world's worst human rights violators — as Commission chair, we stood up for the U.N.'s founding principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When we now work to reform this troubled body, our goals are to help it live up to its potential and become a support for those millions of men, women, and children around the globe denied their inalienable political and civil rights. A Commission on Human Rights, true to its values, will find new reservoirs of goodwill among Americans and other people throughout the world.

Principle No. 2: We seek multilateralism that is effective. Multilateral diplomacy should produce more than empty declarations; it should tangibly advance peace, freedom, sustainable development, health, and humanitarian assistance to the benefit of ordinary people on every continent. When U.N. organizations perform well, the United States will be enthusiastic. If they fall short, the United States is obligated to say so, as it believes other nations should. Likewise, while the United States will act in its self-defense whenever necessary, it will not hesitate to work with the Security Council when collective action is possible and justified to thwart violence and promote freedom.

Principle No. 3: We seek good stewardship of U.N. resources. An effective United Nations must spend its resources wisely. The intended beneficiaries of its programs must, indeed, benefit. The United States will work with other member states to ensure that the management and finances of U.N. entities and programs are sound. We will continue to promote reforms that make the U.N. more capable and efficient.

PRIORITIES

These three principles of U.S. engagement, in turn, give rise to five American priorities:

Priority No. 1: Preserving Peace and Protecting the Innocent Threatened by War and Tyranny.

These are key challenges that United Nations members must meet if the organization is to be successful. Terrorists, proliferators, and aggressive dictators like Saddam Hussein — who had attacked several neighboring states — endanger international safety. In the coming year, the United States will, therefore, strive to:

- **Strengthen** the Security Council's effectiveness in dealing with threats to international peace and security, especially the danger of terrorists or outlaw regimes acquiring weapons of mass destruction.
- **Build** greater capacities among U.N. members to defeat terrorism.
- **Ensure** equitable burden sharing and more effective peacekeeping that stops bloodshed and humanitarian disasters, particularly in Africa where the United Nations is already deeply involved.
- **Advance** an Arab-Israeli peace settlement that achieves President Bush's vision of an end to terrorism, and a democratic Palestine and Israel living in a peaceful Middle East. We will continue working with the U.N. through the Quartet to realize these goals, which also require full inclusion and fair treatment of Israel in all U.N. forums that it does not currently enjoy, but deserves.

Priority No. 2: Putting Multilateralism at the Service of Democracy, Freedom, and Good Governance. These objectives should drive nearly every U.N. activity. At the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, we brought to international attention the reality that governments that deny their citizens freedom and that rule them without respect for their

fundamental needs often keep their populations in poverty. Such governments often become the leading sources of international violence. Nations, however, that democratize and institutionalize the rule of law at home create the conditions necessary for economic development. These nations also become the foundation stones for a peaceful international order.

The United States, therefore, has made a priority of ensuring that all parts of the U.N. system recognize that promoting freedom, the rule of law and good governance is integral to their missions. The United States will, likewise, remain vigorous in its support of U.N. efforts to help budding democracies hold elections, train judges, promote the rule of law, and diminish corruption.

Priority No. 3: Helping Nations and Individuals in Desperate Need. The United States has frequently praised U.N. provision of humanitarian relief to people in severe distress. We continue to be a leader in supporting U.N. programs that reduce poverty and famine, assist refugees, and fight HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. We plan on remaining the largest donor to the World Food Program, having contributed, in 2002 alone, \$929 million. We hope that other nations will continue to join us in generously funding such critical U.N. endeavors.

Priority No. 4: Advancing Results-Oriented Economic Development. At the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, the United States helped create an international consensus on the factors that foster economic growth in developing nations. Sustainable development comes from working with market forces rather than against them, and giving people economic freedom and the rule of law. Years of experience have shown that foreign financial assistance can help promote growth if, and only if, governments of developing nations make the necessary reforms at home first.

The United States is now working with other U.N. members to ensure that agencies such as the U.N.

Development Program and the U.N. Environment Program integrate the Monterrey principles into everything they do. We are also trying to raise international awareness of the positive role that biotechnology can play in promoting economic development and food security in the world's poorest regions.

Priority No. 5: Urging U.N. Reform and Budget Discipline. Focusing on core missions, living up to original purposes, and wisely using member contributions will not only improve U.N. institutions, but also increase their credibility and support in the United States and elsewhere. The United States will team up with other members to help the U.N. reform poorly performing agencies, and terminate ineffective and antiquated programs. We will, moreover, strive to ensure that only countries that uphold the United Nations' founding ideals get leadership positions.

CONCLUSION

Multilateralism in the service of freedom, sustainable development, healthy populations, and a secure peace: That is President George W. Bush's objective. That is the goal that Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and American diplomats pursue daily with other nations in a host of venues. Regardless of our objective — whether it is expanding liberty, encouraging economic growth, combating deadly diseases, or achieving peace — we must recognize that realizing any one will often depend on the others' success. Each aspiration, simultaneously advanced, will reinforce the other, creating a virtuous cycle. If the United States and other nations pursue this agenda of constructive multilateralism together, we can improve the lives of ordinary men, women, and children around the world. President Bush and Secretary Powell are confident that, with good will and effort, we can succeed. ●