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Statement to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and

Governmental Affairs

Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal

Workforce, and the District of Columbia,

August 1, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the Department of State's efforts to recruit U.S. citizens for positions at United Nations (UN) organizations. We place high priority on increasing the number of Americans at all levels in international organizations. Americans bring to the work environment well-honed skills, high levels of education, and relevant experience in their fields of expertise. They are also accustomed to working in a culture where ethics, efficiency and effectiveness are prized and accountability is expected. A strong American presence in international organizations is in our nation's best interests because it translates into influence and a greater likelihood of achieving our policy goals.

Our highest priority is placing American citizens in policy and senior-level positions in the UN system. We have worked closely with new UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and his staff to identify the most talented Americans and place them in positions of responsibility. We were particularly pleased that the Secretary General selected Ambassador Lynn Pascoe to serve as Under Secretary General for Political Affairs and Josette Sheeran to be the new Executive Director of the World Food Program. The appointments of Nancy Graham as Director of Air Navigation for the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Craig Johnstone as Deputy UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were other achievements.

We have also provided assistance to Americans who have been successful in obtaining entry and mid-level positions. For example, a Foreign Service Officer recently obtained an Administrative Officer position in the UN Office at Geneva, and an American was selected as an Examinations Officer in the UN Secretariat.

We are seeking to increase the overall number of Americans in international organizations. As of the end of 2005, there were roughly 2,200 Americans serving in professional positions in the UN system, representing 8.2 percent of the professional work force. This is down from 2000 when Americans held 8.8% of the professional positions. But these numbers don't tell the whole story. We are targeting particular jobs and particular agencies and programs where the presence of American citizens can make especially important contributions. For example, there has been a major interagency effort to increase the number of Americans at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and we've had some success.

However, increasing the number of Americans, regardless of grade level, is not an easy task. Many challenges are not primarily within the control of the United States—including restrictions on the number of positions open to external candidates, stiff competition from nationals of other countries, many of whom are multilingual, and limited job opportunities for spouses—a problem for many American families that are used to two incomes and spouses who want to work.

To achieve our goal of increasing American representation in the UN system, we are working in different ways. First, we have increased the resources devoted to this effort. In 2002, there were only two positions assigned to this area, while now we have six positions, four of which are fully dedicated. One position concentrates solely on identifying and placing Americans in senior and policy level jobs. Also, in recent years, we have provided higher levels of funding for travel, displays, and materials related to outreach events.

Second, the Department has increased and broadened its outreach efforts. We have reached a much wider source of potential candidates because OPM's USAJobs website has a link to our employment-in-international organizations website, as do other organizations. We have continued to compile an International Vacancy Announcement list, with a dissemination list that keeps growing. We have regularly sent officers from Washington to meet with international organization officials to press for an increase in hiring Americans at all levels, to supplement the message being sent routinely by our ambassadors. We have participated in more career fairs than in the past, and are now trying to better target our audiences. Also, we have been broadening our outreach geographically by participating

in outreach events outside the Washington area (such as in Arizona, California, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, and Texas). To help ensure that Americans are hired at the entry level at the UN, for the last several years the Department has funded the costs for holding the UN's National Competitive Recruitment Exam in locations other than New York (i.e., in California and Illinois). We also recognize the value of Junior Professional Officers (JPOs), and the Department has continued its funding for these positions. For example, there were 15 JPOs funded in 2006, which was increased to 17 in 2007.

I should note that Secretary Rice, her senior staff, and others throughout the Government have worked actively to place Americans in positions in the UN. American citizen employment is a U.S. Government priority.

Third, we have been seeking better coordination and collaboration within the U.S. Government. We created an interagency task force as a forum for identifying issues, seeking out best practices, and disseminating information. We have met individually with U.S. Government agencies to examine American employment issues in international organizations. In

addition, in 2006, Secretary Rice sent a letter to heads of U.S. Government agencies urging them to assist and encourage details and transfers of their employees to international organizations.

We acknowledge that more can be done to place American citizens in UN jobs and we welcome GAO's report, issued in September 2006, on additional efforts needed to increase U.S. employees at UN agencies. We agree with each of the report's recommendations and are in the process of implementing them. For example, we updated all informational documents on our international organization employment website in 2007; we began researching internet-based options for compiling a roster of potential candidates; and we initiated a study to identify the fields of expertise most often advertised by international organizations in order to better target our recruitment efforts.

The Department of State is committed to placing more U.S. citizens in international organizations at all levels. We are continuing our efforts to place more Americans in important posts and will continue to engage senior officials, our missions, U.S. government agencies, and international organizations themselves toward this end. We will persist in seeking to

implement better, more cost effective and efficient mechanisms to recruit and place Americans in the UN system.

Thank you for your kind attention, and I now invite your questions.