

I – INTRODUCTION

This publication is the 26th annual Report to the Congress on Voting Practices at the United Nations. It is submitted in accordance 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.”

This report reviews voting practices in the UN Security Council and General Assembly (UNGA) in calendar year 2008 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 63rd General Assembly in the autumn of 2008 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 2008. It also lists and describes UNGA resolutions selected as important to U.S. interests, again with tables for regional and political groupings (Section IV). It then presents all data by country (Section V). Finally, an annex is included to present the voting patterns on General Assembly resolutions relating to Israel and 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. 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 243 meetings in 2008 and adopted 65 of 66 resolutions that were considered. The Security Council also issued 48 presidential statements, consensus documents issued by the Security Council President on behalf of the members.

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The single resolution that was not adopted was draft resolution S/2008/447 on Zimbabwe. China and Russia vetoed the resolution, and Libya, South Africa, and Vietnam voted against. Indonesia abstained on the vote in question. Indonesia also abstained on Resolution 1803 (Iran sanctions), and the United States abstained on Resolution 1828 (Sudan). The United States did not exercise its veto during the year.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly opened its 63rd session on September 16, 2008, and held 74 Plenary sessions before recessing on December 24, 2008. It adopted 266 resolutions. The subject matter of the resolutions covered the full range 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 primarily addressed arms control, the Middle East, and human rights.

Of the 266 resolutions adopted in Plenary, 192 (72 percent) were adopted by consensus, a slightly higher percentage than in 2007.

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 2008 was 25.6 percent, up significantly from 2007, when it was 18.3 percent, and reversing a downward trend of more than a decade.

The following table outlines thematic and overall voting coincidence with the United States in the General Assembly since 1998.

Year	Arms Control	Middle East	Human Rights	Overall Votes
2008	33.0%	11.6%	28.1%	25.6%
2007	10.3%	11.3%	31.9%	18.3%
2006	29.5%	10.7%	28.2%	23.6%
2005	31.7%	10.8%	35.8%	25.0%
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%

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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 is reached - 78.6 percent in 2008. (See Section III - General Assembly - Overall Votes for additional comparisons.)

The coincidence figure on votes considered important to U.S. interests was 27.6 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 had the highest level of voting coincidence with the United States in the General Assembly - 87.7 percent on votes only, 96.5 percent including consensus resolutions. In 2008, the top ten countries in order of voting coincidence were: Israel, Kiribati, Micronesia, Palau, Marshall Islands, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Nauru, and France.

All the tabulated regional and other country groupings registered an increase in overall voting coincidence in the General Assembly in 2008. (These tabulations can be found in Section III.) Voting trends among traditional voting allies such as the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), the European Union (EU), Eastern Europe (EE), and the Nordic countries are reflected in the following table.

Year	<u>General Assembly Voting Coincidence</u>			
	WEOG	EU	EE	Nordic
2008	46.4%	45.0%	39.4%	43.6%
2007	41.3%	40.0%	34.1%	38.2%
2006	44.9%	42.9%	37.9%	42.0%
2005	46.4%	45.2%	40.4%	44.7%
2004	45.9%	44.3%	38.0%	42.6%
2003	46.1%	45.5%	38.7%	44.4%

Higher overall coincidence rates were also recorded in 2008 for the African Group, the Asian Group, and the Latin American and Caribbean Group, as well as countries represented in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, and NATO.

Voting coincidence among regional and other country groupings on Important Votes (see Section IV) was generally lower in 2008.