

I – INTRODUCTION

This publication is the 23rd 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 2005 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 60th General Assembly in fall 2005 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 2005. 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 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 (Annex).

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 235 meetings in 2005 and adopted all 71 resolutions that were considered. Voting coincidence percentages for Security Council members were high, with most resolutions (95.8 percent) adopted unanimously. The Council also issued 67 presidential statements, consensus documents issued by the Council president on behalf of the members.

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No permanent member of the Security Council exercised its veto power in 2005. The United States, as well as Algeria, Brazil, and China, abstained on a resolution on Sudan and the International Criminal Court, which was adopted; there were no negative votes. Algeria, China, and Russia abstained on a U.S.-sponsored resolution on sanctions against Sudan which was adopted. (See Section II for vote descriptions and tables of voting summaries.)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly opened its 60th session on September 13, 2005, and held 69 Plenary sessions before recessing on December 23, 2005. It adopted 256 resolutions, more than in the past few years, but still below the record of 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 again primarily addressed arms control, the Middle East, and human rights.

Of the 256 resolutions adopted in Plenary, 183 (71 percent) were adopted by consensus. This figure and similar ones in earlier years (76 percent in 2004, 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. Combining the 183 consensus resolutions and the 62 of 66 decisions adopted by consensus, the percentage of resolutions and decisions adopted by consensus was 76 percent. (Decisions are less formal than resolutions and generally cover matters of lesser importance.)

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 2005 was 25 percent, up from 2004 (23.3 percent), but down significantly from 43.0 percent in 2000 and reflecting the general downward trend since 1995, when the 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 figure had exceeded 50 percent since 1978, while the 25 percent coincidence in 2005 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 also in the steady drop in coincidence on the votes on human rights. On human rights issues, the voting

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coincidence in 2005 was down from last year, although still above previous years. On arms control votes, the trend had been generally upward; although that trend began to reverse itself in 2001 and hit a low point in 2004, 2005 almost doubled in coincidence percentage from 2004. Since 1995, the trend on Middle East issues has been generally downward, except in 2001 and 2002, in which the consensus increased. Coincidence increased slightly in 2005.

Year	Arms Control	Middle East	Human Rights	Overall Votes
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%
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 is reached. This figure (77.6 percent in 2005), which more accurately reflects the work of the General Assembly, is below the 85–88 percent range recorded since the statistic was first included in this report in 1993. It was 81.3 percent in 2004, 80.7 percent in 2003, 83.0 percent in 2002, 85.0 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 (37.6 percent) is higher than the percentage registered on overall votes (25.0 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 (90.5 percent), Nauru (88.9 percent), and Palau (77.0 percent) were among the highest in voting coincidence with the United States. Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Albania, Australia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, France, and the United Kingdom were also among the top 10 countries, with Canada, Japan, and Latvia close behind.

Voting coincidence with the United States increased in 2005, stopping a decline in coincidence. Most members of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) continued to score higher than average

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coincidence levels with the United States; the average was 46.4 percent, up from 45.9 percent in 2004 and 46.1 percent in 2003, and down from 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 members of the European Union, with the voting coincidence for 2005 at 45.2 percent, up from 44.3 percent in 2004, but still 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 73.0 percent in 1997. Voting coincidence with members of the Eastern European Group was also up in 2005, at an average of 40.4 percent, up from 38.0 percent in 2004 and 38.7 percent in 2003, but still down from 43.7 percent in 2002, 48.8 percent in 2001, 58.0 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. In 2005 the NATO and Nordic countries also increased in voting coincidence with the United States, reversing the downward trend of previous years. The African and Asian groups, the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Latin American and Caribbean group all increased in voting coincidence with the United States in 2005.

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 UN General Assembly voted by consensus on two sweeping reform resolutions: the World Summit Outcome Document and the resolution establishing the Peacebuilding Commission. The World Summit Outcome resolution represented an important step in a long process of strengthening the United Nations and ensuring that it effectively addresses the threats and challenges of the 21st century. Member states, through the Outcome Document, agreed to denounce terrorism in all its forms, advance the cause of development, reform UN management, establish a Peacebuilding Commission, and create a Human Rights Council. The resolution establishing the Peacebuilding Commission was a successful part of U.S. efforts to make the United Nations more effective. This concurrent resolution was adopted in the Security Council as well, reflecting the leadership role of that body on peace and security issues.

The United States made some progress in increasing the number of “no” votes and abstentions on one-sided Middle East 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. The resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian Children, adopted in 2004, was withdrawn in 2005.

In the First Committee [Disarmament and International Security], the United States drafted a resolution that called on states to fully comply with their non-proliferation, arms limitation, and disarmament agreements while urging states to hold non-compliant members accountable. Most UN members voted yes on this resolution. However, the United States voted nearly alone in the First Committee and in the Plenary of the General Assembly against resolutions on elimination of nuclear weapons and the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

The United States achieved positive outcomes on some economic and development issues in the Second Committee. One such positive outcome was General Assembly adoption by consensus of a resolution dealing with corrupt practices. The resolution represented a step forward in focusing attention on the importance of combating corruption and the central role of the UN Convention against Corruption in this effort. Supporting the Millennium Development Goals, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution on global partnerships. The United States strongly supports efforts by the UN system to make greater use of partnerships, in particular public-private partnerships, in carrying out its activities. However, the United States voted in isolation in opposition to resolutions concerning international trade and development (Resolution 60/184) and unilateral economic measures (Resolution 60/185).

In the Third Committee [Human Rights], the United States was encouraged by the defeat of no-action motions on human rights resolutions on

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Belarus, Iran, and Turkmenistan. The Third Committee adopted resolutions on the human rights situation in Belarus, Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and, for the first time, North Korea. The no-action motion on the human rights situation in Sudan won by only five votes in Committee, as opposed to 17 votes the year before. Adoption by consensus of a resolution condemning religious intolerance was also a victory in that it condemned religious discrimination and included appropriate language on anti-Semitism. The United States also successfully headed off resolutions related to U.S. treatment of detainees at the Guantánamo Naval Station.

In the Fourth [Special Political and Decolonization] Committee, the number of countries voting with the United States in opposition to resolutions concerning Israel increased. Australia and Canada joined the United States in voting against a number of these resolutions.

The Fifth [Budget] Committee adopted a biennial budget for 2006–2007 which had a \$950 million cap. While the deadline for consideration of the UN budget was December 2005, the Secretariat’s recommendations on mandate review and the rules and regulations review would not be considered until March 2006, consistent with the Outcome Document. The budget cap that was adopted provides UN funding equal to one-quarter of the biennial budget, or only until approximately June 2006, giving UN members time to consider Secretariat reform recommendations, including mandate review, and to tie any reform measures to a revised budget before a decision is made to lift the cap. The United States supported this mechanism, which was adopted by consensus.

In the Sixth [Legal] Committee, the U.S. priority was adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. A consolidated text was presented to the Committee, but the Committee did not agree on a final draft. Instead, the Committee instructed the Ad Hoc Committee drafting the Convention to continue to meet on an expedited basis to finish its work. The General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution calling on states to ratify or accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). 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 Section III (General Assembly Overall Votes), Section IV (General Assembly

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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 183 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.