

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I find it hard to believe that a year has already passed since I assumed leadership of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. Before another year rushes by, I wanted to take just a moment of your time to thank you for all the valuable insight, guidance, and feedback I have received over these months, and to offer you a quick update on some of the Bureau's most recent activities.

Dominating that category in recent weeks has of course been the continuing international response to the tragedy in Haiti. At the end of March, Secretary Clinton co-hosted an [International Donors' Conference](#) at UN Headquarters to focus attention on the resources needed for Haiti's long-term recovery and reconstruction. The conference, which featured the participation of Haitian President René Préval and the UN Secretary-General, resulted in an unprecedented outpouring of global support, to the tune of nearly \$10 billion in pledges.



Consulting with colleagues during the Haiti Donor's Conference

I was profoundly affected by the scene in New York, where representatives from the widest spectrum of nations stood shoulder to shoulder with the Haitian people. Maintaining that degree of support in the coming years will be crucial, as will ensuring that pledged support is applied in the most effective, coordinated, and transparent manner possible.

The IO Bureau will play an important and ongoing role in the U.S. response to the crisis in Haiti by working closely with the United Nations and other international organizations engaged there, and I would of course welcome your thoughts as that effort unfolds.

You are also well aware that the IO Bureau plays a leading role in U.S. participation on the UN Human Rights Council. We've been a member of the Council for less than a year, but have nonetheless worked with great energy to promote a vision of the Council as a more credible and effective force on behalf of human rights. In assuming a seat on the Council, we understood that political and institutional dynamics would pose considerable challenges to realizing that vision.

I am pleased to report, however, that the most recent session of the Council, which ended just a few weeks ago, resulted in significant, though incremental, accomplishments toward that objective. Of particular note in that regard was our effort to steer the Council toward a more productive approach in combating issues of racial and religious intolerance.

As you are already well-aware, there has been a deeply troubling effort at the UN in recent years in support of banning speech that might prove offensive to religious groups. While

we share concerns about racial and religious understanding, such an approach is unlikely to be effective and would impose unwarranted infringements on freedom of speech.

In an effort to begin redirecting this energy toward more constructive paths, the United States was vocal on this issue at the Council and in capitals around the world. The result of that effort was a significant shift of support away from the annual [resolution on defamation](#) – a trend we will strive to extend and strengthen in the coming months.



Media outreach at the Human Rights Council

This and other successes were the product of a concerted effort by the United States, an effort immeasurably strengthened by the arrival in Geneva of our Chief of Mission, [Ambassador Betty King](#), and U.S. Representative to the UN Human Rights Council, [Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe](#).

Finally, just a quick note on a recent event that I believe captures the true essence of the President’s “Era of Engagement.” A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to join the U.S. delegation to UN-Habitat’s 5th [World Urban Forum](#) (WUF). The U.S. and Brazil co-chaired the Forum, which focused on the urgent importance of addressing the impacts of rapid global urbanization.

By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will be living in cities, most of them in the developing world. This fact could have very real implications for U.S. national security, and certainly *will* have implications for the global economy and the wellbeing of hundreds of millions of people around the globe.

As the United States addresses the domestic phenomenon of growing urbanization -- with issues as varied as affordable housing, water and sanitation, and mass transportation -- we must concurrently seek means of addressing similar phenomena across the globe.

Once again, my sincerest appreciation to all for your interest in and commitment to multilateral engagement and foreign affairs. I look forward to sending you occasional updates in this format as a means of keeping you abreast of the Bureau’s activities. I would also encourage you to [register for](#) our IO Summaries, which capture major IO activities, UN actions of note, public statements, and more.

As always, I welcome your comments and feedback to the [IO Mailbox](#).

With Highest Regards

Esther Brimmer