

**Testimony of Ambassador Susan E. Rice,  
U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations,  
House Subcommittee on Appropriations for State, Foreign Operations, and Related  
Programs  
March 20, 2012**

Chairwoman Granger, Representative Lowey, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am deeply grateful for your leadership and continued support for our efforts at the United Nations, especially in this time of fiscal constraint.

On behalf of the Administration, I am pleased to reiterate the request for funds for fiscal year 2013 for three key accounts: \$1.57 billion for Contributions to International Organizations (CIO); \$2.1 billion for Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA); and \$327.3 million for International Organizations and Programs (IO&P). This request includes funding to meet our obligations to international organizations of which the United States is a member as well as our voluntary contributions to various United Nations programs.

Reflecting the fiscal environment, this year's budget requests for voluntary contributions to major UN agencies largely remain constant and, in most cases have decreased, compared to last year's request. On the whole, our FY13 request for the IO&P account reflects a 6% decrease from FY12 levels.

Let me start by underscoring the importance of the United Nations to advancing U.S. interests and upholding the universal values we hold dear.

The world is shrinking. Problems in remote parts of the globe can and do threaten our security interests abroad and ultimately affect us here at home. Nuclear proliferation, terrorism, drug trafficking, refugee flows, gross human rights abuses, manmade and natural disasters, infectious disease, extreme poverty and suffering, environmental degradation - problems that no one nation, no matter how powerful, can address alone. And especially in tough economic times, these are not burdens that the United States should have to bear on our own.

As both Democratic and Republican leaders have long attested, a strong and effective UN is one of the best tools we have to tackle many of the world's problems. The UN plays an indispensable role in building international coalitions and promoting global burden sharing to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. The UN is not the sum of our strategy, but an essential piece of it.

As President Obama has said, "That's how the international community should work -- more nations; the United States right there at the center of it, but not alone -- everybody stepping up, bearing their responsibilities, carrying the costs of upholding peace and security. That's what it means to be United Nations." And as former President Reagan proclaimed, "We are determined that the United Nations shall succeed and serve the cause of peace for humankind."

Now, the UN is far from perfect, but when it stumbles, it's often because its members stumble – because big powers block critical actions in the Security Council or spoilers grandstand in the General Assembly. As one of my predecessors, Richard Holbrooke, was fond of saying, “Blaming the UN when things go wrong is like blaming Madison Square Garden when the Knicks play badly.”

In response to the ongoing horrors in Syria, the United States and our partners have engaged in intensive diplomacy at the United Nations to put the world on record in support of an immediate halt to the violence; a negotiated, peaceful solution; and a responsible democratic transition. While Russia and China twice vetoed Security Council action, the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council have repeatedly condemned the carnage the Asad regime is inflicting on its own people and endorsed the Arab League's proposal for a transition. The Human Rights Council has mandated a Commission of Inquiry that has thoroughly investigated and documented the human rights abuses of the Asad regime. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and senior UN officials have vigorously condemned abuses by the Syrian regime and called for an end to the violence. The United Nations and the Arab League have jointly appointed former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as their Special Envoy for Syria. The UN has coordinated the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance to afflicted Syrian communities and has provided support to thousands of Syrian refugees and vulnerable populations inside Syria tormented by the regime's systematic abuses, though the need remains great.

The regime continues to renege on its commitment to implement the League of Arab States' action plan agreed to in November. It has spurned efforts by its Arab neighbors to mediate a peaceful political solution. It continues to wage a brutal campaign against innocent civilians and there are credible allegations that the regime has committed crimes against humanity.

The United States fully supports the Syrian people's demands for a unified Syria with a democratic, representative, and inclusive government that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and we fully support the Arab League's unprecedented initiatives to end this crisis peacefully. In order to provide lifesaving assistance to Syrian civilians in need, we have announced a \$12 million initial contribution to scale up humanitarian efforts. To deepen the Asad regime's isolation, we have imposed sanctions and worked with others to do so as well, such as placing travel bans on senior members of the regime, freezing their assets, boycotting Syrian oil, and considering closing embassies and consulates. And we have encouraged a democratic transition by supporting opposition groups and individuals inside and outside Syria to come together around a common vision for the country's future where the rights of every citizen are respected and protected.

In Syria, as elsewhere, the United States has led efforts to promote principled action at the UN through persistent diplomacy with our traditional allies, regional partners, and emerging powers. Indeed, this has been the hallmark of the Obama Administration's engagement at the UN. We work hard to build and sustain the coalitions required to advance our interests and values. And we fulfill our obligations, so that our hand is that much stronger when we demand that others do the same. Our investments at the United Nations have advanced U.S. interests and made the American people more safe and secure.

In Libya, the United States and its allies acted through the United Nations to prevent Qadafhi from massacring his own people. And now the UN is remaining engaged over the long term, helping the people of Libya make the difficult transition to democracy after a brutal dictatorship.

To curtail illicit nuclear weapons programs, the United States led the Security Council in imposing the toughest sanctions ever on Iran and North Korea. As a result, a large number of countries have also imposed additional bilateral sanctions on Iran, and the regime is more isolated than ever before with its leaders facing crippling sanctions. As the President has repeatedly made clear, we will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and as long as Iran fails to meet its international obligations, the pressure will build.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the United Nations is providing vital assistance to their political transitions, and to their social and economic development – supporting the process of bringing our service members home responsibly.

After decades of brutal war, the United Nations played a critical role in supporting the creation of the newly independent South Sudan. There are significant challenges ahead in Darfur, Abyei, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, so the United States will continue our efforts to support Sudan and South Sudan living side by side in peace.

In Cote d'Ivoire, the UN stood firm in stopping a strongman from stealing an election and ensured that the democratically elected President took office, preventing a return to civil war.

In Haiti, the United Nations has been essential in helping the country recover and rebuild from the devastating earthquake two years ago – a tragedy that claimed thousands of lives, including one hundred and two UN personnel. The United States worked closely with the UN to help the Government of Haiti ensure security and deliver humanitarian relief. Tens of thousands of U.S. forces were able to withdraw from Haiti within a few months as the UN peacekeeping presence was quickly reconstituted.

During last year's General Assembly, we secured, by the largest margins ever, condemnations of Iran and North Korea – and for the first time ever, Syria – for their mass violations of human rights. In the Human Rights Council, the United States worked to achieve ground-breaking resolutions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, discrimination against women, religious tolerance, and investigations into human rights abuses in Syria, Sudan, North Korea, Libya, and Iran.

We have led the fight for women's rights, forging a broad coalition to establish UN Women, a streamlined entity that replaced multiple UN offices, and that now works to empower women worldwide. We also support the vital work of a Special Representative to tackle the issue of sexual violence in conflict.

We've spearheaded important progress throughout the UN system to advance the universal rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, including landmark victories in the General Assembly and Human Rights Council, and our advocacy on behalf of LGBT non-governmental organizations.

These are just a few examples of how United States leadership at the United Nations is yielding tangible dividends for the American people.

But despite important progress, much remains to be done. UN reform is not a luxury. It is a necessity. That is why we are relentlessly championing greater budget discipline and comprehensive administrative and management reforms that will make the UN more efficient and cost-effective.

In December, we led a successful effort to cut by five percent the size of the UN's regular budget, the first reduction in 14 years and only the second in the past 50 years.

In addition, by responsibly shutting down peacekeeping missions and showing discipline in establishing new missions, we have contained the growth in recent years of the UN peacekeeping budget, which increased from \$2.6 billion to \$7.8 billion from 2000 to 2009. The Obama Administration has succeeded in holding peacekeeping budget levels effectively constant for the past three years.

We have also promoted a paperless UN, resulting in a 65% reduction of pages printed in New York over the past two years, saving on an annual basis a pile of paper nearly 50 times the height of the UN building.

To better tackle waste, fraud, and abuse, we have worked to reduce vacancies in the UN inspector-general's office by nearly half so it can be a strong, independent, and effective watchdog.

Over the past decade, the United States has championed increased transparency throughout the UN system. And last year, we secured a commitment from the heads of all NY-based UN funds and programs to disclose publicly online all internal audit reports, starting this year.

We led efforts in the General Assembly to adopt wide-ranging peacekeeping reforms –including a new global field support strategy - which have already saved an initial \$62 million to date and will dramatically improve the performance of 15 peace operations worldwide employing approximately 120,000 military, police, and civilian peacekeepers.

Our UN reform agenda is based on four key pillars:

First, economy: a leaner UN that does more with less. We are working hard to shrink the bureaucracy, bring some private-sector sensibility to the UN, and upgrade the UN's information technology.

Second, accountability: a cleaner UN with robust oversight mechanisms, ethics enforcement, whistleblower protection, and greater transparency.

Third, integrity: a more credible UN that lives up to its founding principles and values, and does not tolerate individuals or states that bring dishonor to the institution.

Fourth, excellence: an insistence on delivering real results and upholding the highest standards, including a merit-based human resource system that rewards performance, the capacity to respond in real time to unfolding crises, integration of disparate UN programs, and a culture of evaluation for effectiveness.

We have a good partner in Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been a leader on these issues, and look forward to working with him and his team in the coming months and years.

There are many challenges ahead – upcoming negotiations on member state assessment rates, divisive politics within the General Assembly, an entrenched bureaucracy that resists change – but with patience and determined engagement, we will continue to succeed.

This brings me to another important priority: ensuring that Israel’s legitimacy is beyond dispute and its security is never in doubt.

Every day, we stand with Israel and oppose hostile efforts to challenge Israel’s legitimacy and security at the UN. We remain vigilant on the Palestinians’ unilateral bid for UN membership. The United States will not hesitate to use its veto when necessary. However, due to our efforts, the Palestinians saw clearly that they had not mustered enough votes to gain the UN Security Council’s support and thus to provoke a U.S. veto. There is no shortcut to statehood. Tough issues can only be solved through direct negotiations between the parties. We have been consistent and clear on this.

When a Security Council resolution on settlements that would have undermined the cause of peace was put to a vote, we vetoed it. Likewise, when the deeply flawed Goldstone Report was released, we insisted on Israel’s right to defend itself and maintained that Israel’s democratic institutions could credibly investigate any possible abuses. We refused to attend meetings in 2009 and 2011 concerning the 2001 Durban Conference, which unfairly singled out Israel. And we always fight against anti-Israel resolutions in the General Assembly, Human Rights Council, UNESCO, and other UN bodies.

We are also fighting for the full and equal participation of Israel throughout the UN system. We championed Israel’s successful bid for the UNDP Executive Board last year and when they took their seat last month, it was hailed by the Israeli Deputy Ambassador as “a milestone in Israel’s integration to the global agenda of the UN.” We have succeeded in winning Israel’s inclusion in key negotiation groups in New York and in Geneva, and are pushing for Israel’s participation where it remains excluded. At the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the disproportionate and biased focus on Israel undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the Council, and we consistently oppose the permanent agenda item devoted to Israel. As President Obama has said, “It should be clear to all that efforts to chip away at Israel’s legitimacy will continue to be met by the unshakeable opposition of the United States.”

Madam Chairwoman, members of the Committee, allow me to draw your attention to one specific matter of great importance – longstanding legislative restrictions on paying our assessed contributions to UN specialized agencies that admit Palestine as a member state. Our participation in these organizations serves a wide range of important American interests, such as

promoting human rights, democracy, nonproliferation, global health, international telecommunications, intellectual property rights, and free markets. Withholding U.S. funding only harms U.S. interests.

The World Health Organization assists countries in addressing critical health problems and helps protect Americans from infectious diseases, such as the H1N1 and avian influenza. WHO programs have led to the eradication of smallpox, which saves America millions by eliminating the need for vaccinations, and are working towards the eradication of polio, neonatal tetanus, leprosy, and other preventable illnesses.

The International Atomic Energy Agency protects Americans from the dangers of nuclear proliferation through its essential verification work ensuring that peaceful nuclear programs are not being diverted for weapons purposes. IAEA inspectors have been instrumental in blowing the whistle on illicit activities by Iran and North Korea.

The World Intellectual Property Organization supports American economic growth through the protection of patents and copyrights, and provides a forum for American businesses to raise complaints about the infringement of intellectual property. Last year, American companies, such as Apple, Costco, and Facebook, brought cases before WIPO.

Current U.S. law runs counter to U.S. national security interests by enabling the Palestinians to determine whether the U.S. can continue to fund and lead effectively in key UN specialized agencies that help protect Americans. Cutting off funding for agencies such as WHO, IAEA, and WIPO would deal a blow to our efforts on global health, nuclear nonproliferation, and the protection of the interests of American businesses.

In the case of UNESCO, due to irresponsible Palestinian actions, we have withheld our funding for valuable work that supports key U.S. interests. UNESCO's contributions include promoting freedom of the press and freedom of expression, providing literacy training and supporting tsunami warning systems. The United States has been a leading supporter and financial contributor to UNESCO's valuable Holocaust education program, second only to Israel. We have also supported UNESCO's efforts to empower women and girls through education. As former First Lady and UNESCO honorary Ambassador to the UN literacy decade Laura Bush has argued, "achieving the goal of global literacy requires global participation. It requires continued global leadership at every level – from international organizations like UNESCO to political leadership in each nation."

We believe our membership and participation in UNESCO is valuable and worth supporting. Therefore, the Administration's budget request includes funding for the U.S. contribution to UNESCO and a statement of intent to work together with Congress to find a solution that would give the Administration the authority to waive restrictions on paying our financial contributions when doing so is clearly in our national interest.

I also remain concerned about pending legislation that would shift contributions to the UN from assessed to voluntary funding. Treating our commitments and treaty obligations to the UN as an a la carte menu invites others to do the same and, simply put, would leave us paying more of the

bill. Similarly, we oppose legislation that would link efforts to reform the UN to withholding dues. Historically, such approaches have backfired by allowing opponents of reform to weaken our ability to prevail in negotiations.

I also respectfully request the Committee provide the authority proposed to pay our assessed peacekeeping dues at the current rate of 27.14 percent.

As we learned in the 1980's and 1990's, when the United States is unable to pay our bills, we undermine our leadership at the UN, especially on UN reform. In 2009, the Obama Administration worked with Congress to pay off millions in arrears that accumulated between 2005 and 2008. Being up to date with our commitments has helped us deliver some of the most significant accomplishments on UN reform for American taxpayers in more than a decade. The failure to pay our assessments undermines our credibility and our influence. We alienate our closest allies and partners when we don't follow through on the policies we together advocate in the Security Council, on priorities such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Libya, Haiti, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Neglecting our commitments leaves us in a position of weakness, not strength, when it comes to championing reforms and achieving the concrete results that make America safer and stronger. Paying our assessments has been the consistent policy of both Republican and Democratic Administrations. Of course, paying our bills in full and on time does not mean giving the UN a free pass. On the contrary, it allows us to pursue reform even more aggressively and successfully.

I will conclude by saying the United States is at the forefront ensuring that the UN lives up to its founding principles, safeguards international security, and delivers assistance to those who need it most. We greatly appreciate the Committee's longstanding efforts to help meet our commitments throughout the UN system, especially at a time of fiscal belt-tightening. The active and full support of this Committee has been and remains essential to our efforts.

It is an honor to represent the United States at the United Nations. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with wonderful colleagues at the U.S. Mission, the UN, the broader diplomatic community, and the Members of this Congress who share a deep commitment to protecting the innocent, pursuing peace, and defending universal human rights.

I welcome your questions.