

February 09, 2011

Friends and Colleagues:

First, my sincerest thanks for the feedback and comments on these occasional newsletters. I welcome and value your thoughts on the Administration's multilateral priorities, and as our engagement with international organizations continues to grow and deepen, that feedback becomes increasingly useful.

Last week I was pleased and honored to visit the [Brookings Institution](#), where I had the opportunity to provide an update on that engagement and preview key themes and actions for 2011. I was additionally honored to be joined by U.S. Ambassador to Brazil Thomas Shannon, as well as Dr. Bruce Jones and Ted Piccone from Brookings.

Framing my [remarks](#) to the audience at Brookings was the President's vision of engagement with the UN as the core of our efforts to build a global architecture to address the challenges of the 21st century. That vision propels the Department's energized interaction across the full spectrum of UN and other international organizations – interaction aligned to U.S. foreign policy priorities and designed to advance U.S. national security.

As I also noted in my remarks, in spite of the clear and concrete benefits the United States accrues from active multilateral engagement, we once again are hearing criticisms from a bygone era. These critics suggest that the United States is somehow better served by ignoring our successes at the UN, as well as changes to the global landscape, that together demonstrate the importance of multilateral action. We in the Administration nonetheless remain committed to taking full advantage of our successes, in times that make effective multilateral engagement more important than ever. Our successes are real. We see it as we work to protect human rights in places like Iran. We see it as we work to ensure the elections in Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan are free and fair. We see it as we work to halt nuclear proliferation in Iran, North Korea and Syria.



In the Security Council, Ambassador Rice and her team in New York, in conjunction with our colleagues at the Department, negotiated the toughest and most comprehensive sanctions ever faced by the Iranian government. By engaging multilaterally within the UN and with its members, we crafted a tough set of sanctions that all states must implement – even those Security Council members that voted against them. Such universality is needed for sanctions to be effective, and the UN Security Council uniquely offers that capability. Global respect for universal values is an enduring American interest, and one we have long championed at the United Nations.

Another important setting for our efforts is the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We've become the most active delegation on the Council. I was proud to be the first American official to address the Human Rights Council as a member, and in the subsequent months we've seen significant progress

toward our overarching goal of a more active and credible Human Rights Council. That progress includes a new Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association, country-specific resolutions on the human rights situations in Guinea and Kyrgyzstan, and a special session on the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire.

The more I look at the HRC's record – its resolutions, actions, and outcomes – the more I am convinced that U.S. membership on the Council marked a watershed moment. And even critics who disagreed with this Administration's decision to join are admitting that U.S. membership has had a positive impact. We will still need to work hard to improve the Council. The ongoing 2011 HRC review is an important opportunity to move the Council closer to its envisioned role in defending universal human rights, preventing conflict and addressing human rights situations as they arise.

Of course much work remains to be done. The United Nations can and must be made more effective, more efficient, more transparent, and more responsive. The United States will not shy away from making tough demands of the UN. However, while we seek improvements in the UN system, we nonetheless take note of tangible results. Our continued commitment to and investment in multilateral engagement should be propelled by those results. Ultimately, having the U.S. voice present at the multilateral table means more than just filling a seat. It means fulfilling our role as a global leader; and it means exercising smart power in support of our nation's key interests.

As always, I welcome your [comments and feedback](#).

Best wishes,

Esther Brimmer