

**Statement of Ambassador Michael Waltz
Representative of the United States to the United Nations
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Reforming the UN: Assessing U.S. Efforts and Priorities**

Initial Testimony Remarks

April 15, 2026

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

Your oversight helps us make our case in New York. When I push the UN and its Secretariat to use American dollars more efficiently, I tell them: don't just listen to me—the United States Senate and its constituents are watching very closely.

Last year, the American people returned President Trump to the White House with a clear mandate: Put America first in our foreign policy. With that mandate came a critical look at the United Nations.

When the UN was created after World War II, Americans argued fiercely about whether we should join, including before this very Committee. Even then, they knew we'd be the main funder and insisted on a basic test: the UN has to work for Americans.

To meet that objective, we are pressing UN Secretary-General Guterres and leadership across the UN system to streamline bureaucracy, eliminate duplication, and bring more accountability to a more-focused, more-effective United Nations.

Eighty years since that founding, it has grown into a sprawling bureaucracy reaching beyond its core mandate. Wars rage on, trade abuse flourishes, dictators sit on human rights bodies, and redundant agencies maul industry. We are left with a UN that promotes distracting and wasteful narratives that fall outside core mandates, including the 2030 Agenda, harmful climate and gender ideologies, and discriminatory DEI programs and policies.

So, I get it when Americans wonder if it's worth it—like I did when I first arrived in New York. President Trump wondered the same thing when he said early last year that the UN has tremendous potential, and it just wasn't doing its job.

Getting the UN to do the job it was created to do is what we have been focused on over the past year. Under President Trump's leadership, we are getting the UN back to basics: ending conflicts, keeping the peace, and delivering lifesaving assistance.

Let me walk you through what we have done so far, and tell you about our goals for the future.

First, Gaza. When this Administration came in, the war was raging, hostages—including Americans—were still in tunnels, and there was no credible plan to end the conflict.

President Trump crafted the 20-point Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict—like only he could. Our job was to take it to the Security Council, get it endorsed, and enforce it.

In November, under American leadership, the Council resoundingly endorsed that framework, welcomed the Board of Peace, and established the basis for an International Stabilization Force, a Palestinian governing body, and a World Bank-managed reconstruction fund financed largely by regional partners.

We've taken the same approach in Haiti and Sudan. American soldiers and taxpayer dollars shouldn't solve these conflicts, but with President Trump's leadership, we can build unexpected coalitions at the UN, share the burden, and keep the peace.

In Haiti's case, we convinced several reluctant Security Council members to stand up a Gang Suppression Force so international partners—not U.S. troops—can restore order. In Sudan, we fought for humanitarian corridors, sanctions on RSF commanders, and real pressure on the bad actors driving the war—over blank checks.

In Western Sahara, we insisted that the renewal of the peacekeeping force be tied to an actual political process using the Moroccan autonomy plan as the basis for talks. Ongoing U.S.- and UN-led discussions aim to resolve a fifty-year frozen conflict.

Last month, with our Gulf allies, we condemned Iranian aggression alongside a record-setting 136 cosponsors.

President Trump has been clear: the UN needs to be focused on peace and security. U.S. leadership- from Gaza to Haiti, Sudan to Western Sahara- can help the UN deliver on its core responsibilities.

And thanks to the President's vision, we have made real reform possible.

I've been saying this since my confirmation hearing: the UN needs to do *less*, and do it *better*.

We need to reduce the overall size and reach of the UN budget and ensure every hard-earned U.S. taxpayer dollar is spent responsibly. The UN's 2026 regular budget was projected at about \$3.45 billion; we pay roughly a fifth. In December, we cut the regular budget by about 15 percent—\$570 million. We also eliminated nearly 3,000 headquarters-based positions and reduced our own dues by about \$126 million. These outcomes are unprecedented in the UN's history.

Staff costs—pensions, salaries, and benefits—are about 70 percent of the regular budget. UN staff, on average, make about 17 percent more than most U.S. federal workers. Their 16 percent employer pension contributions- unheard of, even in the private sector- have amassed over 105 billion pension dollars under management. We are driving those costs down, cutting wasteful travel and conference spending, and promoting cost-cutting innovations.

Peacekeeping missions should solve problems, not exist indefinitely. We are also downsizing or closing missions that have outlived their purpose. No more missions sitting for 30, 40, 50 years with no end in sight.

We supported a drawdown of UNIFIL in Lebanon, closed UNAMI in Iraq and the Hudaydah mission in Yemen, and streamlined operations in Colombia and Haiti—shrinking the budget by about \$200 million and greatly reducing the number of boots on the ground.

We are shuttering “park-and-pay” peacekeeping. If you want to be reimbursed for peacekeeping equipment, you’ve got to use it for peacekeeping. Common sense.

We are initiating long-overdue reforms to push the UN to improve mission strategic planning and peacekeeper accountability.

We have also made significant progress in pushing the UN-led humanitarian system to greater efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. We have fundamentally shifted the way in which we provide humanitarian assistance to save lives while driving system reform.

In December 2025, we signed a historic memorandum of understanding with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), codifying reforms that will make UN humanitarian assistance hyper-prioritized, time-bound, and more efficient. We pledged \$2 billion to OCHA country-based pooled funds. We have fulfilled that pledge, helping the UN respond to humanitarian needs quickly and efficiently.

We’ll also work with the private sector in our push for trade over aid. The UN Office for Outer Space Affairs is already working with U.S. space companies. The World Food Program is delivering through American logistics leaders. And the Food and Agriculture Organization is partnering with Global Dairy Platform, Google, Mars, and Pew.

We will also support and engage key specialized agencies like the International Telecommunication Union and the International Civil Aviation Organization—bodies whose rules and standards directly affect Americans, their jobs, and their security.

But we will also block ideological forays—like we did last October when we stopped the International Maritime Organization’s blanket carbon tax on global shipping that would have raised costs for everyday Americans.

Previous Administrations lost sight, focusing on incremental changes to the rules while trusting the institution to follow them. We’re changing that – changing the way we look at our role as stewards of American taxpayer contributions. We are chopping down barriers to private investment, strengthening the rule of law, cutting dueling mandates, trading best practices from American industry, moving from global welfare dependency to jobs, and creating opportunities for Americans at home and around the world.

When I first arrived in New York, I heard every day from my staff just how much leverage we Americans had at the UN. I’ll be honest with you. I didn’t believe it.

But I quickly saw that the UN had forgotten what American leadership looked like. And we’ve brought it back.

As I said earlier, President Trump thinks the UN has tremendous potential, and it’s our job to help it reach that potential. His charge still sits with me now. As he said at the Board of Peace’s very first meeting: “Someday, I won’t be here, [but] the United Nations will.”

Under President Trump, we are working for the American people—reminding the UN what it has promised, what it is capable of, and what it does best: peace, security, and lifesaving assistance.

Thank you.