

**Testimony of U.S. Permanent Representative-designate  
Samantha Power  
Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, and distinguished Members of the Committee.

It is a great honor to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Representing the United States of America would be the privilege of a lifetime. I am grateful to the President for placing his trust in me.

I would like to thank my friends and my remarkable family who are here with me today – my parents, who brought me here from Ireland, Vera Delaney and Edmund Bourke; my husband Cass Sunstein; and our children, four-year-old Declan, and one-year-old Rían, who may prove less interested in this hearing than others here today.

I would also like to thank Senator Chambliss and Senator Isakson for their generous introductions. Growing up as an Irish immigrant in Atlanta, Georgia, I cannot say that the United Nations was a popular topic with my classmates at Lakeside High School. But it was in Georgia, while working at a local television station, that I witnessed footage of the horrible massacres in Tiananmen Square and resolved that I would do what I could the rest of my life to stand up for American values and to stand up for freedom. My Georgia friends supported me every step of the way, and I am now very proud to count these two great public servants among them.

When I first came to this country, I viewed the United Nations as a place where people assembled to resolve their differences and prevent hunger and disease. It was the stage on which iconic Americans like Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Jeane Kirkpatrick stood up for what was right.

Unfortunately, when I travelled to the Balkans in 1993, I saw a different side to the UN. The UN Security Council had sent peacekeepers to Bosnia to protect civilians. But in the town of Srebrenica, those Bosnians who sought the protection of the blue helmets were handed over to those who wished them harm. More than 8,000 Muslim men and boys were executed in cold blood, as the peacekeepers stood idly by.

A decade later, I travelled across the Chadian border into Darfur to document the genocide being carried out by the Sudanese government. After discovering a mass grave and many charred villages, I brought out some of the burnt remnants of those villages, which were exhibited at the U.S. Holocaust Museum. It was UN humanitarian workers who steered me to living witnesses, so eager were they to expose the regime-sponsored horror. I should note that, as the crisis in Darfur once again intensifies, UN peacekeepers on Saturday suffered a horrific ambush that killed seven soldiers and wounded seventeen others – a reminder of the risks that UN personnel face every day.

Elsewhere, today, we see physicians from the World Health Organization working with governments and local volunteers to provide polio vaccinations in Nigeria and Pakistan – determined to heal even as terrorists wage a campaign of assassinations against them. Just last Friday, the UN provided a platform for Malala Yousafzai – the brave young Pakistani girl who was shot in the head last year by Taliban gunmen on her way home from school – to inspire millions to stand up for girls’ education.

Yet within this organization built in the wake of the Holocaust – built in part in order to apply the lessons of the Holocaust – we also see unacceptable bias and attacks against the State of Israel. We see the absurdity of Iran chairing the UN Conference on Disarmament, despite the fact that its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons is a grave threat to international peace and security. We see the failure of the UN Security Council to respond to the slaughter in Syria – a disgrace that history will judge harshly.

The UN is multi-faceted, and its record mixed. But sixty-eight years after the United Nations was founded in San Francisco, one fact is as true today as it was then: an effective UN depends on effective American leadership. The war in Bosnia didn’t end because the UN was shamed by the massacres in Srebrenica. It ended because President Clinton, backed by a bipartisan coalition in Congress, decided that American values and interests were imperiled and acted to end the war. It is now possible to imagine an AIDS-free generation in Africa not merely because of the essential work of UNAIDS, but because President George W. Bush decided to provide life-saving drugs on a massive scale.

I believe that America cannot – indeed, I know that America should not – police every crisis or shelter every refugee. While our goodwill knows no bounds, our resources are finite, strained by pressing needs at home. And we are not the world’s policeman. We must make choices based on the best interests of the American people. And other countries must share the costs and burdens of fighting injustice and preventing conflict.

That is where the UN can be very important. There are challenges that cross borders that the United States alone cannot meet -- terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and pandemics. There are cases – as with sanctions against Iran and North Korea – where U.S. efforts pack a far greater punch when we are joined by others. There are occasions – as in Mali today – when the UN has to step up to prevent state failure, which abets terrorism and regional instability.

An effective UN is thus critical to a range of U.S. interests, and strong American leadership at the UN is indispensable to advancing those interests. Under the leadership of President Obama, the UN supported action to save countless lives in Libya; assisted a peaceful referendum giving birth to an independent South Sudan; and established a new agency dedicated to the empowerment of women worldwide.

If I am confirmed by the Senate, I will remain clear-eyed about the UN’s flaws as well as its promise, and I will fight fiercely every day for what is in the best interests of the United

States and the American people. The list of our challenges in New York is of course long, but let me highlight three key priorities.

First, **the UN must be fair.** The UN cannot focus disproportionate attention on a few, while giving a pass to others flouting their international obligations. There cannot be one standard for one country and another standard for all others. The United States has no greater friend in the world than the State of Israel. Israel is a country with whom we share security interests and, even more fundamentally, with whom we share core values – the values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. America has a special relationship with Israel. And yet the General Assembly and Human Rights Council continue to pass one-sided resolutions condemning Israel above all others. Israel – not Iran, not Sudan, not North Korea – is the one country with a fixed place on the Human Rights Council’s agenda. Israel’s legitimacy should be beyond dispute, and its security must be beyond doubt. Just as I have done the last four years as President Obama’s UN adviser at the White House, I will stand up for Israel and work tirelessly to defend it.

Second, **the UN must become more efficient and effective.** In these difficult budget times, when the American people are facing tough cuts and scrutinizing every expense, the UN must do the same. This means eliminating waste and improving accounting and internal management. This means strengthening whistleblower protections and ending any tolerance for corruption. It means getting other countries to pay their fair share. And it means closing down those missions and programs that no longer make sense. As both the UN’s principal founding member and its largest contributor, the United States has the right and the duty to insist on reform. I will aggressively pursue this cause.

Third, **the UN must stand up for human rights and human dignity, which are American and universal values.** The UN Charter calls for all countries “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person.” But fewer than half of the countries in the world are fully free. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights is universally hailed and yet only selectively heeded.

Taking up the cause of freedom is not just the right thing to do, nor is it simply the American thing to do; it is the smart thing to do. Countries that abuse their own people are unstable. Countries that violate the rights of women and girls will never approach their full potential. Countries that allow people to be trafficked provide safe haven to dangerous transnational criminal organizations. Countries that do not protect religious freedom create cleavages and extremism that cross borders and destabilize whole regions. Countries that fail to invest in the health and education of their citizens undermine our shared efforts to promote opportunity. Countries that are corrupt trample upon the dignity of their people, while scaring away investment. If I am given the honor of sitting behind the sign that says “United States,” I will do what America does best: stand up against repressive regimes, fight corruption, and promote human rights and human dignity. I will also do everything in my power to get others to do the same.

This means pushing for democratic elections, but also pushing for the freedoms necessary for democracy to work – freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly,

freedom of religion, independence of the judiciary, and civilian control over the military. It means contesting the crackdown on civil society being carried out in countries like Cuba, Iran, Russia, and Venezuela. It means calling on the countries of the world to unite against human trafficking and against grotesque atrocities of the kind being carried out by the Assad regime. It means ensuring that in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, peacekeepers sent into harm's way have the resources and the will to protect civilians. It means bolstering UN mediation so that conflicts can be defused before they become costly, protracted wars. It means strengthening non-UN forums like the Community of Democracies and President Obama's flagship governance initiative, the Open Government Partnership. It means redoubling our efforts to end extreme poverty. And it means uniting peoples who long to live free of fear in the cause of fighting terrorism and terror of all kinds.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, and other distinguished Members of the Committee, let me stress before closing that this Administration will most effectively confront our current challenges if we benefit from the counsel and collaboration of this essential Committee, and if we can earn the bipartisan support of both houses of Congress. I would like to echo the words of the late Ambassador, my friend Richard Holbrooke, who told this Committee that "Congress should be in on the take-offs, not just the landings." So I appear before you not just to seek your support, but to ask to join you in a conversation about how to strengthen what is right and fix what is wrong at the UN. If I am confirmed, I will continue this dialogue directly and personally. If the prospect of visiting the UN does not immediately entice you, my son Declan has resolved to become a tour guide like no other.

In closing, please know that, if I am given the privilege of sitting behind America's placard, you will be able to count on me. I will tirelessly promote and defend U.S. interests. I will be a blunt, outspoken champion of American values and of human rights. I will be a straight-shooter, always accessible to you and forthright in my dialogue with you and the American people. And above all, I will serve as a proud American, amazed that yet again this country has provided an immigrant with such opportunity – here, the ultimate privilege of representing the United States and fighting for American values at the United Nations.

Thank you. I look forward to answering your questions.