

Statement of Brian H. Hook
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State
for International Organization Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Thank you Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. I am grateful to President Bush for nominating me to this position, Secretary Rice for her support, and I thank Chairman Nelson and Senator Vitter for convening this hearing during a very busy time.

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the good work of my predecessor in advancing U.S. interests before the United Nations, its affiliated bodies, and other international organizations to which the U.S. is a party. U.S. leadership in multilateral organizations has never been more important. Many of the challenges we face today are international in scope and require action on a multilateral level. These challenges include international terrorism, nuclear proliferation, the protection of human rights, promotion of democracy and good governance, poverty eradication, disease prevention and treatment, and food security. Working constructively within the United Nations, through the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and the many UN agencies, we are better able to address constructively many of these challenges. Of course, any such success requires not only the shared commitment of our international partners, but also rigorous oversight of the agencies in question to ensure effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable outcomes.

If confirmed, I will apply what I learned while serving at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations for two years. During that time, I was the Ambassador's lead negotiator on Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on Iran, Sudan, Al Qaeda, and the Taliban. I also helped to negotiate the resolution authorizing deployment of the UN/AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur.

I believe it is necessary to further strengthen U.S. leadership in the United Nations and to facilitate the necessary reforms to the organization.

Of course we face many challenges throughout the world, but we should also recognize progress in a number of key areas, including:

- In March we adopted Security Council Resolution 1803, which imposed legally binding Chapter VII sanctions on Iran for its failure to comply with its prior UN Security Council obligations. This is the third time that the Council acted to impose Chapter VII sanctions on Iran since the IAEA reported Iran's noncompliance to the Council in February 2006, and Secretary Rice has expressed her commitment to a fourth resolution should Iran continue to act in defiance of Council's directives.
- Last fall the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the elimination of rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict situations, as well as a resolution on women, peace, and security during our Council Presidency in June. Both these resolutions call attention to states that condone the use of rape by their own forces or surrogate militias as a weapon of war.
- The last General Assembly also adopted U.S. co-sponsored resolutions condemning the human rights records of Iran, Belarus, the DPRK, and Burma, communicating to these regimes and to their victims that the international community will not countenance such blatant disregard for the fundamental rights and freedoms of their people.
- The World Food Program delivered 3.3 million metric tons of food aid to more than 86.1 million people in 80 countries last year. The United States provided approximately \$1 billion, or roughly 40% of the resources needed to accomplish this. The World Food Program continues to reach those in need quickly and effectively, despite physical and political obstacles. A recent example of this was its response to Cyclone Nargis in Burma.
- UN peacekeeping operations continue to successfully facilitate the difficult transitions to stability and democratic governance underway in Haiti, Liberia, the Congo, and Timor-Leste.

While we can point to such notable achievements, we must be frank in acknowledging failures and the continuing challenges the UN faces.

Russia's recent military actions in Georgia and recognition of the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states are inconsistent with previous Security Council resolutions reaffirming Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are closely engaged with our colleagues to promote a constructive role for the Council in addressing this crisis, but that will ultimately depend on Russia's willingness to play a constructive role in any Council decisions.

At times, the UN has neglected to act with the moral clarity that defined its establishment. The UN Human Rights Council, for example, was established in 2006 as a replacement for the discredited former Commission on Human Rights. The Council was intended to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Unfortunately, it has consistently failed to address grave and ongoing human rights violations in countries such as Zimbabwe and Iran, and has protected notorious human rights abusers from scrutiny. In its first year the Council eliminated the special rapporteurs on the situations of human rights in Cuba and Belarus. Furthermore, it has taken only weak and ineffective action on Sudan, while a political agenda has led to the passage of 20 unbalanced resolutions and other actions against a single country – Israel. Regrettably, in its first two years the Human Rights Council has proved to be even worse than its predecessor, and we are now focused on ways to correct the Council's deficiencies, including its membership structure, when its mandate and functions are renewed by the UNGA no later than 2011.

We are also disappointed that the UN plans to hold a second World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Geneva in April 2009. The U.S. withdrew from the first anti-racism conference in Durban, South Africa, in 2001 due to the pervasive anti-Semitism that characterized the conference itself, as well as the inclusion of anti-Israeli language in the Draft Declaration and the Program of Action. We have no confidence that the second conference will avoid the anti-Semitic undertones that plagued the conference in Durban. Accordingly, and in compliance with section 695 of the 2008 Foreign Operations Act, we will withhold from our regular UN budget assessment an amount equivalent to the U.S. share of funding for the Human Rights Council and the Durban review conference.

The work of the UN has also been hampered in some cases by systemic weaknesses in the organization. Many UN programs are outdated, irrelevant, or ineffective. As we have pressed the UN for greater oversight, accountability, and transparency, serious problems have come to light that need greater attention by UN management, including cases of sexual misconduct by UN peacekeepers and management failures in the United Nations Development Program.

Such failures underscore the need for continued efforts to reform the UN to ensure the organization is prepared to confront directly and effectively the great problems of our time. There is widespread recognition that the UN is not living up to its full potential.

If confirmed, my central focus will be to advance reform and facilitate substantive progress in the following areas:

Management and Administration

We will continue to work for a United Nations that meets the highest standards of integrity. The United States has launched the UN Transparency and Accountability Initiative (UNTAI) to encourage action to improve oversight, transparency, and accountability at the UN specialized agencies, funds, and programs. We will continue to reinforce this initiative. Within the UN Secretariat, we are working to strengthen the independence of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and will continue to demand responsible and effective stewardship of limited UN resources.

Human Rights

Due to the regrettable record of the UN Human Rights Council and in light of the United States' longstanding commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, the United States has decided that it can no longer participate as an active observer in the Council. We will further intensify our efforts in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, which has jurisdiction over human rights and related issues, and will continue to pursue constructive interaction with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the UN Special Rapporteurs on country-specific and thematic human rights questions.

Peacekeeping

We will work to achieve full troop deployment of the joint United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and continue to call on all UN member states to provide full support for the peacekeepers. Simultaneously, we will support the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) peacekeeping operation in its efforts to facilitate the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between North and South Sudan, as a means to promote long-term reconciliation and an end to Sudan's suffering. We will continue to rally international diplomatic support for UN operations that are rebuilding peace and stability in transitioning countries such as Liberia, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Non-Proliferation

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains the preeminent threat to U.S. national security. We will work within the UN Security Council, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and other international organizations to strengthen the barriers against access to WMD, associated technology, and their means of delivery.

Democracy Fund

We believe the UN should take a more active role in promoting democracy around the world through such mechanisms as the UN Democracy Fund. The Fund is the UN's only entity devoted solely to democracy promotion primarily by supporting civil society. While other UN organizations such as UNDP typically regard host governments as their primary development partners, the Democracy Fund supports civil society directly – making it possible for the UN to fund democracy promotion regardless of whether it is a priority for the host government. In only two years of programming, the Fund has already made important contributions in countries around the world, particularly for those most in need. We anticipate that the Fund will take action on its second round of grants during the month of September. This will include funding for projects in China, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela, among others.

Development

We will work with the UN to help developing countries eradicate poverty and hunger. This goal, along with the other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), can only be achieved and sustained through a strategy of economic growth. The United States is proud to be the world's largest contributor of development assistance, but our focus and that of the UN must be more on the quality and effectiveness of our efforts than on the quantity of our contributions. Development requires national responsibility, good governance, openness to trade and investment, and a free and robust private sector.

Terrorism

The UN provides a unique venue for member states to take collective action against terrorism, particularly those that may be reluctant to cooperate openly with the United States bilaterally. We will work with our allies to ensure that UN Counterterrorism bodies and programs are streamlined and that they engage with each other and with other international bodies to ensure maximum efficiency and systemic coherence. We will also continue to work toward ensuring that the Global Counterterrorism Strategy and Plan of Action, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2006 to enhance national, regional, and international efforts to counter terrorism, is implemented effectively.

Mr. Chairman, it is a great honor to be here today, and I hope that I have the privilege of working with you and your colleagues in the future. I would be happy to respond to the Committee's questions.