

Voting Practices in the United Nations 2016



**Report to Congress
Submitted Pursuant to
Public Laws 101-246
and 108-447**

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I — INTRODUCTION

The Report to the Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations was first published in 1984, for the year 1983. It is submitted in accordance with Section 406 of Public Law 101-246. This law provides, in part:

“[T]he Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a full and complete annual report which assesses for the preceding calendar year, with respect to each foreign country member of the United Nations, the voting practices of the governments of such countries at the United Nations, and which evaluates General Assembly and Security Council actions and the responsiveness of those governments to United States policy on issues of special importance to the United States.”

This report reviews voting practices in the UN Security Council and the 70th General Assembly (UNGA) in calendar year 2015, and presents data in a variety of formats. All Security Council resolutions for the calendar year are described, and voting on them is tabulated (Section II). The report also statistically measures the overall voting of UN member states at the 70th General Assembly in the fall of 2015 in comparison with the U.S. voting record (Section III). It also lists and describes UNGA votes and consensus resolutions selected as particularly important to U.S. interests (Section IV), and lists these important votes again with tables for regional and political groupings (Section V). It then presents the voting patterns on General Assembly resolutions relating to Israel and opposed by the United States (Section VI).

The Security Council and the General Assembly deal with a full spectrum of issues — including threats to peace and security, disarmament, economic and social development, humanitarian assistance, and human rights — that are considered critical to U.S. interests. A country’s behavior at the United Nations is always relevant to its bilateral relationship. Nevertheless, a country’s voting record in the United Nations is only one dimension of its relations with the United States. Bilateral economic, strategic, and political issues are at times more directly important to U.S. interests. U.S. embassies use the pertinent information in this report when engaging their host countries.

FORMAT AND METHODOLOGY

The format and presentation of this report are consistent with provisions of Public Law 101-246 as amended by Public Law 108-447, and the methodology employed is the same as that used since the report’s inception.

The tables in this report provide a measurement of the voting coincidence of UN member countries with the United States. However, readers are cautioned to be careful in interpreting voting coincidence percentages. In Section III (General Assembly Overall Votes) and Section IV (General Assembly Important Votes and Consensus Actions), the percentages in the column of the tables titled “votes only,” are calculated using only votes on which both the United States and the other country in question voted Yes or No; not included are those instances when either country abstained or was absent. Abstentions and absences are often difficult to interpret, but they make a mathematical difference, sometimes significant, in the percentage results. The inclusion of the number of abstentions and absences in the tables of this report enables the reader to consider them in calculating voting coincidence percentages.

The percentages in the column of the table titled “including consensus” offer another perspective on General Assembly activity. Most UNGA resolutions are approved by consensus and indicate agreement with U.S. positions, so adding these to the vote totals more accurately reflects the extent of cooperation and agreement with the United States in the General Assembly.

Since states are not all equally active at the United Nations, the report credits to each country a portion of the 162 consensus resolutions based on its participation in the 112 recorded Plenary votes. Each country’s participation rate was calculated by dividing the number of Yes/No/Abstain votes it cast in the Plenary (i.e., the number of times it was not absent) by the total number of Plenary votes. However, this calculation assumes, for want of an attendance record, that all countries were present or absent for consensus resolutions in the same ratio as for recorded votes.

Questions about this report may be directed to the Bureau of International Organization Affairs in the Department of State.