

I – INTRODUCTION

This publication is the 24th annual Report to the Congress on Voting Practices at the United Nations. It is submitted in accordance with Section 406 of Public Law 101-246. This law provides, in relevant part:

“The 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 General Assembly (UNGA) in calendar year 2006 and presents data in a variety of formats. All Security Council resolutions for the entire 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 61st General Assembly in fall 2006 in comparison with the U.S. voting record (Section III). In addition to an alphabetical listing of all countries, the report presents the voting record in a rank-ordered listing by voting coincidence percentage and geographic regions, by selected bloc groupings, and in a side-by-side comparison with the amount of U.S. aid given to each country in fiscal year 2006. It also lists and describes UNGA resolutions selected as important to U.S. interests, again with tables for regional and political groupings (Section IV). It presents all data by country (Section V). Finally, an annex is included to present the voting patterns on General Assembly resolutions relating to Israel and opposed by the United States (Annex).

The Security Council and the General Assembly deal with a full spectrum of issues—including threats to peace and security, terrorism, disarmament, economic and social development, humanitarian relief, 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 with the United States, a point the Secretary of State routinely makes in letters of instruction to new U.S. Ambassadors. 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.

SECURITY COUNCIL

The Security Council held 273 meetings in 2006 and adopted 87 of 89 resolutions that were considered. Voting coincidence percentages for Security Council members were high, with most resolutions (95.4 percent) adopted unanimously. The Council also issued 59 presidential statements,

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consensus documents issued by the Council President on behalf of the members.

The United States was the only permanent member of the Security Council to exercise its veto power in 2006, vetoing two Middle East draft resolutions. Denmark, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom abstained on each of these drafts. Peru abstained on one, and Japan abstained on the other. China, Russia, and Qatar abstained on two U.S.-sponsored resolutions concerning Sudan. China and Russia also abstained on a U.S.-sponsored resolution concerning Lebanon and Syria. See Section II for vote descriptions and tables of voting summaries.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly opened its 61st session on September 12, 2006, and held 84 Plenary sessions before recessing on December 22, 2006. It adopted 258 resolutions, more than in the past few years, but still below the record of 332 of 1990. The subject matter of the resolutions covered the full gamut of UN concerns: security; arms control; economic, social, and humanitarian issues; human rights; budget and financial matters; and legal concerns. The resolutions that were the subject of recorded votes again primarily addressed arms control, the Middle East, and human rights.

Of the 258 resolutions adopted in Plenary, 174 (67 percent) were adopted by consensus, continuing a decrease in recent years (71 percent in 2005, 76 percent in 2004, 78 percent in 2003, and 82 percent in 2002 and 2001). Combining the 174 of 258 resolutions adopted by consensus and the 65 of 66 decisions adopted by consensus, the overall percentage of resolutions and decisions adopted by consensus was 74 percent. (Decisions are less formal than resolutions and generally cover matters of lesser importance, including procedural issues.)

VOTING COINCIDENCE WITH THE UNITED STATES

On non-consensus issues, i.e., those on which a vote was taken, the average overall General Assembly voting coincidence of all UN members with the United States in 2006 was 23.6 percent, down from 2005, when it was 25 percent, and significantly lower than the 43.0 percent in 2000 and reflecting the general downward trend since 1995, when the voting coincidence reached a peak of 50.6 percent. This decline in voting coincidence with the United States on non-consensus issues in the years since 1995 reverses the steady and dramatic increase in the years immediately following the end of the Cold War. The 50.6 percent figure in 1995 was the first time the coincidence figure had exceeded 50 percent since 1978, while the 23.6 percent coincidence in 2006 is still higher than the low point of 15.4 percent in 1988.

The following table illustrates the gradual decrease in overall voting coincidence with the United States since the post-Cold War high of 50.6 percent in 1995. This decrease is reflected also in the steady drop in

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coincidence on the votes on human rights, which was down from 2005. On arms control votes, the trend had been generally upward; although that trend began to reverse itself in 2001 and hit a low point in 2004, 2006 was significantly higher than the coincidence percentage from 2004. Since 1995, the trend on Middle East issues has been generally downward, except in 2001 and 2002, in which the consensus increased. In 2006, coincidence decreased slightly from 2005, although the coincidence was still higher than in 2004.

Year	Arms Control	Middle East	Human Rights	Overall Votes
2006	29.5%	10.7%	28.2%	23.6%
2005	31.7%	10.8%	35.8%	25.0%
2004	17.9%	9.8%	44.9%	23.3%
2003	30.7%	16.5%	34.3%	25.5%
2002	41.9%	32.4%	23.7%	31.2%
2001	50.4%	29.0%	33.9%	31.7%
2000	66.1%	11.9%	55.7%	43.0%
1999	57.9%	22.7%	52.5%	41.8%
1998	64.0%	22.5%	62.8%	44.2%
1997	65.8%	26.2%	61.9%	46.7%
1996	62.3%	28.3%	68.3%	49.4%
1995	60.9%	35.2%	81.0%	50.6%

When consensus resolutions are factored in as votes identical to those of the United States, a much higher measure of agreement with U.S. positions is reached. This figure (75.5 percent in 2006), which more accurately reflects the work of the General Assembly, is below the 85–88 percent range recorded since the statistic was first included in this report in 1993. It was 77.6 percent in 2005, 81.3 percent in 2004, 80.7 percent in 2003, 83.0 percent in 2002, and 85.0 percent in 2001. (See Section III—General Assembly—Overall Votes for additional comparisons.)

The coincidence figure on votes considered important to U.S. interests (27.2 percent) is higher than the percentage registered on overall votes (23.6 percent). (See Section IV—Important Votes, for a side-by-side comparison of important and overall votes for each UN member.)

As in past years, Israel (84.2 percent), Marshall Islands (81.8 percent), and Palau (78.4 percent) had the highest levels of voting coincidence with the United States. Kiribati, Micronesia, Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and Latvia were also among the top 10 countries, with Monaco, Albania, and Hungary close behind.

In general, 2006 saw declining voting coincidences with the United States, even among friends and allies. Most members of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) continued to score higher than average

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coincidence levels with the United States; the average was 44.9 percent, down from 46.4 percent in 2005, 45.9 percent in 2004, 46.1 percent in 2003, 49.9 percent in 2002, and 54.4 percent in 2001. There has been a growing divergence between the United States and the members of the European Union (EU), with the voting coincidence for 2006 at 42.9 percent, down from 45.2 percent in 2005, 44.3 percent in 2004, 45.5 percent in 2003, 49.5 percent in 2002, and 53.5 percent in 2001. Voting coincidence with members of the Eastern European (EE) Group was also down in 2006, at an average of 37.9 percent, compared to an average of 40.4 percent in 2005, 38.0 percent in 2004, 38.7 percent in 2003, 43.7 percent in 2002, and 48.8 percent in 2001. After the latter group's meteoric rise in coincidence with the United States immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, it largely matched the coincidence level of the Western European countries before its decline in the past six years.

In 2006, the NATO and Nordic countries also decreased in voting coincidence. The African group was the only group that increased its voting coincidence with the United States (but from a low base level of 13.5 percent in 2005 to 13.9 percent in 2006). The Asian group, the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) group all decreased in voting coincidence with the United States in 2006.

The following five bar graphs depict voting trends since the end of the Cold War. Voting coincidence with the United States, in terms of both overall and important votes, is broken down by year for issues, geographic groups, and political groups.

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REALIZATION OF U.S. PRIORITIES

The United States achieved several objectives during the 61st session of the General Assembly, but was concerned that the General Assembly failed to take significant action on U.S. priorities for UN reform. The United States believes that a more ethical, effective, transparent, and accountable United Nations will be better equipped to promote peace and security, economic development, and human rights and democracy by maximizing the best use of resources provided by member states, and hopes that the General Assembly will act in its next session on additional measures to improve ethics and oversight, bring about Secretariat reform, and implement program mandate review.

The General Assembly adopted a number of annual resolutions which the United States has consistently opposed. These included several resolutions on the Middle East. Three of those are described in the Important Vote section, and the remainder, including those adopted during two Emergency Special Sessions regarding Israeli actions in the Occupied Territories, are summarized in the Annex to this report. The United States believes that resolutions dealing with the Middle East should be consistent with the principles of the performance-based Road Map based on a vision of democratic Israeli and Palestinian states living in peace, and should not perpetuate institutional bias against Israel.

The Plenary of the General Assembly adopted a resolution approving the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Having contributed significantly to its constructive elements in negotiations, the United States joined consensus on this resolution, although it does not intend to become a signatory to the Convention. The Plenary also acted on the Security Council's recommendation to appoint Ban Ki-moon as next Secretary-General, approving the recommendation by acclamation. Ban Ki-moon began his five-year term on January 1, replacing Kofi Annan.

The General Assembly's First Committee approved resolutions on a range of disarmament and nonproliferation issues. The United States voted against several of these resolutions, such as those on an arms trade treaty and on trade in small arms, which are described in the Important Vote section.

The United States achieved positive outcomes on some economic and development issues in the Second Committee, such as the adoption by consensus of a resolution on corruption. This resolution represented a step forward in focusing attention on the importance of combating corruption and on the central role of the UN Convention against Corruption in this effort.

In the Third Committee, the United States was pleased by the defeat of no-action motions on human rights resolutions on Belarus, Burma, and Iran, so that the Third Committee was able to adopt resolutions on the human rights situations in Belarus, Burma, Iran, and North Korea. A no-action motion on a resolution on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan won by only five votes

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in Committee. Successes in the Third Committee were especially encouraging because of the new Human Rights Council's singular focus on Israel and its failure to take action on pressing human rights situations, with the exception of a modest resolution adopted during a Special Session on Darfur.

The Fifth [Budget] Committee adopted a resolution on the scale of assessments for member state contributions to the UN regular budget for the years 2007—2009. The United States achieved its principal objective of maintaining a ceiling establishing its 22 percent assessment rate. The General Assembly also adopted revisions to the 2006—2007 biennial budget reflecting a significant increase, largely related to the funding of special political missions strongly supported by the United States.

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 about interpreting voting coincidence percentages. In Section III (General Assembly Overall Votes), Section IV (General Assembly Important Votes and Consensus Actions), and the Annex, the percentages in the last column of the tables, under "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 state 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 second to the last column of the tables, under "including consensus," offer another perspective on General Assembly activity. These figures, by presenting the percentage of voting coincidence with the United States after including consensus resolutions as additional identical votes, more accurately reflect the extent of cooperation and agreement in the General Assembly. Since not all states are equally active at the United Nations, the report credits to each country a portion of the 174 consensus resolutions based on its participation in the 105 recorded Plenary votes, plus one in the Third Committee and one each from the Emergency Special Sessions. Each country's participation rate was calculated by dividing the number of Yes/No/Abstain votes it cast in the Plenary and on the one counted vote in the Third Committee and votes in the Emergency Special Sessions (i.e., the number of times it was not absent) by the total number of Plenary votes (plus the votes in the Third Committee and the Emergency Special Sessions). However, this calculation assumes, for want of an

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attendance record, that all countries were present or absent for consensus resolutions in the same ratio as for recorded votes.

Moreover, the content of resolutions should be considered in interpreting the figures in either of the aforementioned columns. There may be overwhelming agreement with the U.S. position on a matter of less importance to the United States and less support for a resolution it considers more important. These differences are difficult to quantify and to present in two coincidence figures.

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