

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON

October 12, 2011

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Chairman:

I am writing to express my deep concern over H.R. 2829, the United Nations Transparency, Accountability, and Reform Act of 2011. This bill mandates actions that would severely limit the United States' participation in the United Nations, damaging long-standing treaty commitments under the United Nations Charter and gravely harming U.S. national interests, those of our allies, and the security of Americans at home and abroad.

If implemented, the bill's requirement to withhold 50 percent of U.S. assessed contributions to the United Nations absent a shift to voluntary-only funding would undercut international collaboration in advancing core U.S. national security interests such as staunching nuclear proliferation, combating terrorism, fully implementing sanctions on countries such as Iran and North Korea, preventing conflict around the globe, supporting elections in countries just undergoing transition to democracy, fighting pandemic disease, providing life-saving humanitarian relief to countries such as Haiti, and supporting peaceful transitions in places such as the new nation of South Sudan. Through international cooperation, the United States reaps real security benefits that make Americans safer and more secure.

At a time when we all are expected to do more with less, this bill would gravely diminish our ability to burden share with other nations, defray costs, and enhance the impact of our own limited resources. We cannot depend on United Nations missions such as UNAMI in Iraq and UNAMA in Afghanistan to help American troops return home safely and successfully, while taking actions that will decimate the budgets that underpin these important missions. In the end, engagement through the United Nations comes at a fraction of the cost of acting alone.

This bill also represents a dangerous retreat from the longstanding, bipartisan focus of the United States on constructive engagement within the United Nations to

galvanize collective action to tackle urgent security problems. If we act to diminish our global stature, the United States would surrender a key platform from which to shape international priorities, such as obtaining tough sanctions on Iran. The restrictions regarding U.S. contributions to the International Atomic Energy Agency, for example, are counterproductive to our non-proliferation efforts and cooperation to secure nuclear material worldwide, and would undercut our successes in isolating countries such as Iran. This bill could also have the effect of restricting funding to UNICEF, the World Food Program, and the World Health Organization.

The United States strongly supports serious, sustained reform of the United Nations to make it more lean, nimble, and cost-effective. Through our leadership, across Administrations, the United States has brought greater transparency, accountability, and efficiency to the United Nations. This reform must continue. We will also sustain our vigorous and principled push for fair treatment of Israel, which is still all too often unfairly singled out across the UN system. Withholding U.S. contributions and shifting to voluntary funding erode the concrete dividends of our leadership and undermine ongoing reform efforts at the United Nations.


As challenges to U.S. national security interests become more global in nature, we must use all the tools at our disposal to advance U.S. values and national security interests. The United Nations, for all its imperfections, is indispensable to advancing these goals. This bill would effectively cede American leadership, creating a void for our adversaries to fill.

The Department of Justice advises that the legislation also raises constitutional concerns and the Department will submit its concerns separately in the future.

For the reasons outlined above, the State Department opposes this bill. Should it be presented to the President, I will recommend that he veto it.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the presentation of this letter from the standpoint of the Administration's legislative program.

Sincerely yours,


Hillary Rodham Clinton