

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairwoman Lee and Ranking Member Rogers:

We write to express our strong support for meeting our nation's financial commitments to the UN in the FY'22 State/Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. Your Subcommittee has long recognized the importance of U.S. investments in multilateral diplomacy to advance our national interests in a cost-effective manner, and we firmly believe that these efforts are deserving of your continued bipartisan support.

The UN has long been as a force-multiplier for the U.S., helping to protect our interests and spread our values in ways that we would be hard-pressed to do acting alone. Take UN peacekeeping operations, for example, which have long played a role in shortening the duration of conflicts, stabilizing fragile states, ensuring peaceful transitions of power, and reducing civilian deaths and sexual and gender-based violence. Prior GAO reports have also found them to be far cheaper to U.S. taxpayers than deploying our own forces. Just as importantly, the missions include soldiers and police from more than 120 countries, meaning the U.S. does not need to put significant numbers of its own boots on the ground to support them.

Beyond peacekeeping, a range of other aspects of the UN's work also help advance U.S. interests and values:

- UN humanitarian agencies provide food, shelter, medical assistance, clean water, and other essential services to tens of millions of people affected by conflicts or natural disasters every year, often in areas where the U.S. itself has limited reach. This includes Yemen, where years of war have left nearly 80% of the population dependent on aid from the international community in order to survive.
- The World Health Organization (WHO), a UN specialized agency, is coordinating the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic, developing guidance and distributing

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testing materials and PPE to countries with weak health systems to help contain the virus. Through its COVAX facility, the WHO is also working with partners to ensure equitable global distribution of vaccines, with a goal of providing two billion doses and critical supplies like syringes to low and middle-income countries by the end of 2021. Besides the health and humanitarian reasons, research demonstrated that the “U.S. would be likely to gain more than any other country” via equitable distribution through multilateral partners.

All UN member states are required to contribute to the UN’s peacekeeping and regular budgets at specified levels agreed to by consensus every three years in the UN General Assembly. Our assessment rates (27.89% for peacekeeping and 22% for the regular budget) reflect both our nation’s large share of the global economy and immense decision-making power as a permanent member of the Security Council. Unfortunately, since FY’17, we have failed to live up to our end of the bargain, accruing more than \$1.1 billion in peacekeeping arrears due to enforcement of an arbitrary 25% cap on our contributions. We have also accrued nearly \$90 million in regular budget arrears due to the previous Administration’s practice of withholding assessed contributions to UN human rights organs.

These funding decisions are problematic for a host of reasons. In terms of peacekeeping, U.S. arrears have prevented the UN from fully reimbursing major troop and equipment-contributing countries like Bangladesh, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Senegal. This creates unnecessary financial burdens for lower and middle-income countries who provide the bulk of the UN’s peacekeeping forces and potentially threatens their future willingness and capacity to continue to make such contributions. Our arrears also provide an easy talking point to strategic competitors like China, which has significantly increased its own financial and personnel contributions to peacekeeping over the last decade. Chinese diplomats in New York have used our growing debt to both portray us as an unreliable partner and as a convenient pretext to call for the elimination of posts in peacekeeping missions focused on human rights monitoring, civilian protection, and combating gender-based violence.

Continuing to lose influence at the UN by failing to meet our financial obligations is not in our nation’s long-term strategic interests, undermines U.S. values and, ultimately, our credibility as champions of multilateralism. Therefore, we request your support for \$2.7 billion for the Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities account in FY’22. This amount includes funding necessary to pay our peacekeeping dues at the full assessed rate, as well as funds necessary to pay our arrears. As part of this request, we ask that you include bill language lifting the cap on U.S. contributions to UN peacekeeping, similar to what has been done in the past under both Republican and Democratic leadership. We also ask that you support the Peacekeeping Operations account—which includes funding for UN activities in Somalia—at \$548 million.

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With regards to other parts of the UN budget, we recommend \$1.595 billion for the Contributions to International Organizations account, including \$90 million to pay back our human rights-related regular budget arrears. In addition, we ask that you provide needed funding for UN relief activities in Yemen, Syria, Venezuela, and other humanitarian emergencies, including \$646.5 million for the International Organizations and Programs (IO&P) account. Finally, we hope that you will include language requiring the State Department to pay our UN assessments earlier in the calendar year. The practice of waiting until the end of the fiscal year to pay our regular budget dues—something that no other permanent member of the Security Council does on an annual basis—has led to repeated liquidity crises at the UN, negatively impacting the organization's ability to deliver critical programs and services.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that these vital activities are fully funded. Thank you for your leadership and consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,



GREGORY W. MEEKS
Chair
House Foreign Affairs Committee



DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress

/s/ Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
/s/ Colin Z. Allred
/s/ Jake Auchincloss
/s/ Karen Bass
/s/ Ami Bera, M.D.
/s/ Donald S. Beyer Jr.
/s/ Salud Carbajal
/s/ Joaquin Castro
/s/ Rep. Judy Chu
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/s/ Jim Costa
/s/ Joe Courtney

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/s/ Jackie Speier

/s/ Thomas R. Suozzi
/s/ Dina Titus
/s/ Frederica S. Wilson

/s/ John Yarmuth
/s/ Mike Levin
/s/ Stacey E. Plaskett