



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
of the United States of America
AND THE BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA)

Better World Campaign (BWC)

2008 Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

on US-UN Relations

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Response from Barack Obama

1. Supporting the United Nations and Multilateral Organizations

Working cooperatively with the international community and engaging in multilateral organizations can be an important and cost-effective means for furthering national security interests of the United States. The United Nations provides a forum for the U.S. to build support for global action on enduring foreign policy interests, such as international stability, prosperity, and the promotion of fundamental freedoms. Through burden sharing, the UN allows us to advance our goals without paying all the bills or taking all the risks. Unfortunately, the United States is falling far behind and is more than \$1 billion in debt to the United Nations, despite the fact that we are asking the UN to undertake a wide variety of new tasks and missions, including new and complex missions in places like Iraq, Lebanon, and Darfur.

As President, how would you work through the United Nations to advance U.S. national interests and security? Will you work to ensure that the United States honors its treaty commitments to the United Nations by paying our UN dues on time, in full and without conditions?

No country has a greater stake in a strong United Nations than the United States. The United States benefits from a global institution intended to advance the rule of law, the peaceful resolution of disputes, effective collective security, humanitarian relief, development, and respect for human rights. That is why it is particularly painful when the broken politics of the UN leave it short not only of its potential but also of the principles expressed in the UN Charter. All too often, UN member states use UN processes as means to avoid action rather than a means to solve problems. In recent years, for instance, UN member states have acted far too slowly and still not decisively to end the genocide in Darfur.

In this environment, achieving our goals requires us to have first-rate representatives with the political and diplomatic skills to forge broad coalitions. It means identifying common interests based on widely shared values. It means recognizing international law as an asset that serves great and small alike. We cannot renew America's global

leadership so long as our leaders act as though the United Nations is irrelevant or mainly counterproductive and view active diplomacy as a sign of weakness.

The United States must play a leading role at the United Nations, including by pushing to implement important reforms. Our ability to effectively lead in this body is substantially undermined when we do not fulfill our financial obligations at the UN. As President, I will insist that Congress provide funds to pay our dues on time, in full, and without improper conditions. We also need to acknowledge when reforms are enacted by the organization and use that progress to build bridges of cooperation with the UN and other nations.

2. Iraq

The situation in Iraq has repercussions that span the entire globe, and it is in the interest of the United States to engage the United Nations in stabilizing Iraq. The United Nations Security Council recently renewed and expanded the UN Mission in Iraq in three key ways: (1) promoting national reconciliation; (2) facilitating regional dialogue on issues such as border security, energy, and refugee matters; and (3) providing humanitarian assistance to and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced Iraqis. These efforts build on the United Nations' prior efforts to help with national elections; to help draft, approve and review the 2005 Constitution; and to coordinate and deliver reconstruction, development, and humanitarian assistance.

Do you think working through the UN on issues concerning Iraq is helpful to U.S. interests in the region? How would your Administration work with the United Nations to strengthen the international effort to stabilize Iraq?

The UN played a critical role in disarming Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction in the 1990s, and it can play an important role in helping stabilize the country now. America's most urgent task is to end a costly and disastrous war that Congress should never have permitted. I would responsibly end the war by beginning an immediate withdrawal of combat troops and completing that drawdown within 16 months. Drawing down our troop presence is the best way to finally apply real pressure on the Iraqi government and factions to make the political accommodations necessary to end the civil war.

The United Nations has an important role to play in bringing about a political solution in Iraq and in dissuading neighboring countries from intervening. The UN's technical expertise and global standing can be beneficial in this complex situation. I would ask the UN to convene a new constitutional convention that includes all segments of Iraq's population and that would not adjourn until Iraq's leaders reached a new accord on reconciliation. I would lead U.S. efforts to work with all of the nations of the region to achieve a new regional security compact and launch a major initiative to confront Iraq's humanitarian crisis.

3. Counterterrorism

International terrorism is a shared global challenge that can be confronted most effectively through coordinated and collective international action. In September 2006, all

United Nations member states agreed for the first time to a common Global Counterterrorism Strategy that denounces all forms of terrorism and includes a detailed plan of action with practical steps for fighting terrorism at the national, regional and international levels. The UN and its member governments must now find a way to successfully implement this new comprehensive strategy.

Do you support collective action through the United Nations on counterterrorism efforts? Do you have other ideas for how the U.S. can better protect itself from future attacks by working with others on international strategies for preventing and mitigating terrorist activity?

We must use all the tools available to advance our counterterrorism priorities. That means using our military capability when necessary, building new institutions - like a new Shared Security Partnership Program - to strengthen partner countries' law enforcement and intelligence capabilities to fight extremists, and investing development assistance in education and economic initiatives to fight the extremists' agenda of hate with our own message of hope.

It also means working with the United Nations to isolate extremists and strengthen international efforts to crack down on terrorist financing. Here is an example of the unique benefits of a global institution. UN resolutions have helped build a broader consensus of opposition to international terrorism and, specifically, provided the international framework for other specialized institutions to attack terrorism financing.

Security Council sanctions have successfully pushed governments that sponsored terrorist attacks on civilians, such as Libya, to renounce such activities.

4. Climate Change

Anthropogenic climate change is the most far-reaching environmental challenge facing the international community, requiring diplomatic, economic, scientific and technological cooperation. The United Nations can provide the most effective platform for much of this cooperation. Under the framework of the United Nations, the international community is beginning the process of drafting a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, which expires in 2012. The goal of these negotiations will be the establishment of a comprehensive international agreement for preventing catastrophic climate change.

Do you support development of a post-2012 framework for addressing climate change under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change? What steps will you take to help foster international cooperation to combat climate change?

I strongly support the development of a post-2012 global framework for addressing climate change, and will reverse the Bush administration's intransigent rejection of binding emissions targets - a rejection that almost derailed the first round of negotiations last December in Bali under the framework convention. I have pledged to create a cap on carbon emissions in the United States designed to reduce our emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by the year 2050. I will also press other key countries to implement commensurate measures to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

I have called for the creation of a new Global Energy Forum of the world's largest greenhouse gas emitters. We cannot ignore the developing countries that are being worst affected by climate change and force them to tackle adaptation on their own. To that end, I will call on the Global Energy Forum to launch the Global Energy and Environment (GEE) Initiative to bring developing countries into the global effort to develop alternative sources of energy and prepare for the ravages of a changing climate. GEE will help build the capacity of the developing world to participate profitably in the global carbon market, promote the transfer of viable and affordable technologies, and ensure that a substantial portion of increased research and development funds is allocated to technology adaptation appropriate to the poorest countries.

I will incorporate climate change and energy development goals into all tools of U.S. economic engagement, including assistance programs, trade agreements, and debt relief initiatives and help developing countries prepare for climate change by spurring the development of an open-source, real time mapping system to forecast the impacts of climate change country-by country. An Obama administration will also create an

Emerging Market Energy Fund, using USG funding to leverage the investment and venture capital needed to expand the developing world's renewable energy portfolio.

5. United Nations Reform

There is broad agreement in the international community that UN strengthening and renewal would be beneficial. The proposals for UN reform revolve around the organization's three major structures: the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat. The United States has promoted numerous reforms of the General Assembly and Secretariat, but has been less eager to engage on Security Council reform. Many other nations put a priority on Security Council reform, given that the permanent membership of the Security Council has remained unchanged since the United Nations was created at the end of World War II. Some argue that this situation has damaged the legitimacy of Council decisions and impeded further progress on UN reform.

Do you support Security Council reform? What would you do to take account of the influence and contributions of regional powers, i.e. India, Brazil, Japan and South Africa, among others, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations and its Security Council?

It is not just the Security Council that needs reform among the UN's policy bodies, but its inadequacies may garner the most attention. The Security Council's structure and composition are not reflective of 21st Century realities. European nations' representation requires some modernizing reform as the European Union forges a common foreign policy, while Japan and India, two large and very important countries in Asia, feel underrepresented. Africa, Latin America and the Middle East should also gain adequate representation in any reform process. It is understandable that such countries and regions strongly favor Security Council reform. As President, I will carefully consider proposals to update the composition, structure and rules of procedure of the Security Council that will enable it to function effectively while preserving the US veto. I would not favor proposals that increase the number of members to unworkable levels or that enable more countries to block critical UNSC action.

6. Peacekeeping

UN peacekeeping is perhaps the world's best example of the value of international cooperation - demonstrating the wisdom of burden sharing so that no nation has to pay all the bills or take all the risks associated with international peace and security. Over the last several years, the UN Security Council has authorized an increasing number of new and expanded peacekeeping missions in places such as Darfur, Lebanon, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Once the recently-authorized hybrid UN-AU mission to Darfur is fully deployed, there will be more than 130,000 personnel serving in 18 UN-led peace operations. Because of the size and complexity of the hybrid mission to Darfur and combined with the existing mission in Southern Sudan, peacekeeping operations in Sudan will constitute half of the UN's total peacekeeping budget.

Do you support the efforts of UN peacekeeping operations as a 'force multiplier' that can complement U.S. efforts to prevent and/or contain conflict? Would you support paying our full assessments for peacekeeping operations on time and in full? Would you support permanent repeal of a 25%, congressionally-imposed cap on peacekeeping assessments given that the U.S. executive branch has negotiated and agreed to pay a 26% rate?

Today, the UN has more peacekeepers than ever (over 100,000) deployed in 18 missions around the world. Only a small handful are Americans. Peacekeeping is not the solution in every crisis, but if used wisely and deployed carefully, UN peacekeepers can help prevent and end conflict while enhancing international peace and security.

UN blue helmets play a crucial role in many parts of the world by advancing the cause of peace. Since September 11th 2001, more than 700 men and women have lost their lives serving on UN peace operations to protect fragile post-conflict transitions in the Great Lakes region of Africa, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Haiti, Sudan and elsewhere. We should not forget that one of the first terrorist attacks in Iraq targeted the UN compound in August of 2003 and resulted in the murder of twenty-two people, including UN Envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello.

I would never send our own troops on dangerous missions without the resources they need, and we cannot continue to send UN peacekeepers on dangerous missions while denying or delaying the resources those missions require. The President and Congress need to support the UN's peace operations with the resources they deserve and abide by the commitments we have made. The Bush administration's record on pursuing the payment of dues is uneven, which has depleted the UN's capabilities and sent a signal that this administration does not respect its purpose or its promise.

7. Crimes Against Humanity

The International Criminal Court is the world's only permanent international court with jurisdiction to try individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity, and serious war crimes when national courts are unwilling or unable to act. More than 100 countries have joined the Court, which only has jurisdiction over crimes committed on the territory or by a citizen of a country that has joined the Court or granted it special consent, or that have been referred to it by the UN Security Council.

Should the United States support and join the International Criminal Court for the prosecution of crimes against humanity, particularly in its investigation of ongoing cases in Darfur, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and the Central African Republic?

Now that it is operational, we are learning more and more about how the ICC functions. The Court has pursued charges only in cases of the most serious and systemic crimes and it is in America's interests that these most heinous of criminals, like the perpetrators of the genocide in Darfur, are held accountable. These actions are a credit to the cause of justice and deserve full American support and cooperation. Yet the Court is still young, many questions remain unanswered about the ultimate scope of its activities, and it is premature to commit the U.S. to any course of action at this time. However, we should be exploring ways to cooperate with the Court in its investigative work on the African crisis situations in which it is now involved.

The United States has more troops deployed overseas than any other nation and those forces are bearing a disproportionate share of the burden in the protecting Americans and preserving international security. Maximum protection for our servicemen and women should come with that increased exposure, but we also need to ensure that U.S. law properly holds all U.S. personnel to the highest standards of compliance with international humanitarian law and the law of war. Therefore, I will consult thoroughly with our military commanders and legal advisors and also examine the track record of the Court before reaching a decision on whether to ask the Senate's consent to making the U.S. a State Party to the ICC.

8. Poverty

One third of the world's population - more than 2 billion people - live in abject poverty. Hunger, disease, and illiteracy present both moral and security issues. The scale and scope of global poverty demands broad international cooperation. At the urging of the UN and the international donor community, world leaders agreed in 2000 to a specific, prioritized development agenda for international focus and commitment. The Millennium Development Goals (or MDGs) include eight concrete objectives for achievement by 2015: cutting extreme poverty in half; achieving universal primary education; empowering women; reducing child and maternal mortality; reversing the spread of AIDS and other deadly diseases; protecting the environment; and cooperating internationally on these aims. The MDGs have been endorsed by Presidents Clinton and George Bush.

Do you support the MDGs, the United Nations' agreed international framework for alleviating global poverty? As President, what specific steps would you take to achieve these goals?

I fully support the Millennium Development Goals. In the 21st century, progress must not just mean freedom - it must mean freedom from fear and freedom from want. The lesson of my own experience - as an American boy living in Indonesia, as a community organizer in neighborhoods left behind by global change, and as a state senator and United States senator - is that change must come from the bottom up. In 2000, the Member states of the United Nations unanimously agreed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These eight goals offer a people-centered vision of development, including a commitment to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015. As President, I will make the MDGs America's goals.

We need new approaches around the world to help people to help themselves. In order to meet the Millennium Development Goals, I will double U.S. spending on foreign aid from \$25 billion to \$50 billion a year by 2012. I will target this new spending towards strategic goals, including helping the world's weakest states to build healthy and educated communities, reduce poverty, develop markets, and generate wealth. I will also help weak states fight terrorism, halt the spread of deadly weapons, and build the health care infrastructure needed to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS as well as detect and contain outbreaks of avian influenza. With this increase in our foreign assistance, the U.S. will be better positioned to seek greater contributions from other nations in pursuit of the MDGs.

9. Human Rights Council

Many sections of the United Nations' work to promote human rights worldwide - from UN electoral assistance offices to the new Democracy Fund. The Human Rights Council is a key part of this system and was created in March 2006 to replace the Human Rights Commission. To date, the Council has been criticized for focusing too much on problems with Israel and for a general unwillingness to address other regions' human rights problems. Western democratic countries constitute a minority block on the Council and less developed democracies have been reluctant to condemn serious abuses in their respective regions. In May 2007, UN Member States elected several new members to the Human Rights Council, but for the second year in a row the United States chose not to run for a seat. The United States' absence from the new Council leaves a void in which no one is protecting our interests or the reputation of our friends and allies inside the Human Rights Council.

Would you work toward having a U.S. representative on the United Nations Human Rights Council in order to influence its actions? How would your Administration ensure that American values are represented and U.S. foreign policy interests are served by the work of the Human Rights Council?

The new Human Rights Council has passed 8 resolutions condemning Israel, a democracy with higher standards of human rights than its accusers, yet only with difficulty adopted resolutions pressing Sudan and Myanmar. The Council has dropped investigations into Belarus and Cuba for political reasons, and its method of reporting on human rights allows the Council's members to shield themselves from scrutiny.

With new leadership in Washington committed to human rights standards in deed as well as in word, the United States will again have the moral authority to lead the world on human rights issues. The United States should seek to reform the UN Human Rights Council and help set it right. If the Council is to be made effective and credible, governments must make it such. We need our voice to be heard loud and clear to shine a light on the world's most repressive regimes, end the unfair obsession with Israel, and improve human rights policies around the globe.

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