



U.S.- UN
PRIORITIES FOR 2017
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U.S. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UN

Since the UN's founding in 1945, the United States has been the organization's largest funder. As a permanent member of the Security Council and host of UN Headquarters, the U.S. holds a significant amount of clout at the UN, and its leadership in providing financial support to the organization is a reflection of that influential role. Continued U.S. funding is essential to a number of UN activities that promote core U.S. interests and values, from peacekeeping missions and global nonproliferation efforts, to the provision of humanitarian and development assistance to some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

Funding from member states for the UN and its affiliated programs and specialized agencies comes from two main sources: assessed and voluntary contributions.

- **Assessed contributions** are payments that all UN member states, including the U.S., are obligated to make by virtue of their membership in the organization. These assessments provide a reliable source of funding to core functions of the UN Secretariat via the UN regular and peacekeeping budgets. In addition, each of the UN's specialized agencies have their own assessed budgets that member states are obligated to help finance.
- **Voluntary contributions** are not obligatory, but instead left to the discretion of individual member states. These contributions are vital to the work of the UN's humanitarian and development agencies, including the UN Children's Fund, World Food Program, UN Development Program, and UN Refugee Agency.

ASSESSMENTS FOR THE REGULAR BUDGET AND UN SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

The UN Regular Budget finances the UN's core bodies and activities, including political missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Libya that are directly in our national interests and working to promote stability in key regions of the world. The current assessment structure for the Regular Budget sets maximum (22%) and minimum (.001%) rates for all UN member states, which are primarily determined by gross national income (GNI) and GNI per capita. Since the U.S. has some of the highest levels of both indicators, its rate is higher than those of other member states. Over time, the U.S. has negotiated several reductions in this rate, most notably an agreement in 2000 that capped contributions at 22 percent. If this ceiling did not exist, the U.S. would pay a significantly larger portion of the Regular Budget.

The U.S. contribution to the UN regular budget is appropriated under the State Department's "Contributions to International Organizations" (CIO) account. In addition to the Regular Budget, CIO covers U.S. dues payments to more than 40 other UN and non-UN international organizations, including NATO, the IAEA, and WHO.

ASSESSMENTS FOR THE UN PEACEKEEPING BUDGET

UN peacekeeping missions are funded through assessments on member states similar to those made for the Regular Budget, but with greater discounts for poorer nations. The resulting funding deficit is compensated for by the five permanent members (P5) of the UN Security Council—the U.S., UK, France, Russia, and China. Under this formula, the U.S. is assessed 28.46 percent of the total peacekeeping budget in 2017—a level the U.S. negotiated and voted for in the UN General Assembly in late 2015. For the past several years, however, the U.S. has only paid 27.14 percent of the cost of each mission, in line with the U.S. peacekeeping rate effective in 2012. If left unchanged by Congress, this situation could cause shortfalls in U.S. funding for UN peacekeeping. U.S. contributions to UN peacekeeping operations are appropriated under the State Department’s “Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities” (CIPA) account.

Since each of the P5 countries have veto power over Security Council decisions, no UN peacekeeping mission can be deployed, withdrawn, or expanded without U.S. support. While this unique responsibility for establishing and renewing UN peacekeeping operations means the U.S. pays a greater portion of the bill, the vast majority of personnel deployed on these missions come from less developed countries, such as Bangladesh, Jordan, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Nepal. Currently, a historic number of personnel—nearly 125,000 soldiers, police, and civilians—are serving on 16 UN peacekeeping missions around the world. The U.S., under both Republican and Democratic Presidents, has actively used its position on the Security Council to push for an increase in the deployment UN peacekeepers over the last two decades.

FISCAL YEAR 2017 AND 2018 FUNDING LEVELS

For the better part of a decade, the U.S. has largely honored its financial obligations to the UN. This is critical, given the growing role the UN is being asked to take on a variety of global challenges, particularly in terms of peacekeeping. Provided below is a table summarizing recent and requested future funding levels for peacekeeping operations and the CIO account - **which are largely flat-lined from last year’s President’s request.**

Account	FY’15 Actual	FY’16 Omnibus/ FY’17 Continuing Resolution	FY’17 President’s Budget	FY’17 House SFOPS	FY’17 Senate SFOPS	BWC FY’18 Recommendation
CIPA	\$2.118 billion	\$2.460 billion	\$2.394 billion	\$1.949* billion	\$2.369 billion	\$2.398 billion
CIO	\$1.496 billion	\$1.446 billion	\$1.387 billion	\$1.346 billion	\$1.375 billion	\$1.387 billion
PKO	\$473.691 million	\$600.63 million	\$475.391 million	\$631.523 million	\$388.441 million	\$475.391 million

*The FY’17 House bill includes funding for U.S. assessments for the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) under the PKO account, which funds a number of regionally focused peacekeeping and security initiatives. UNSOS provides logistical support and equipment to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which while not technically a UN peacekeeping mission, does operate under a Security Council mandate. The Administration’s request and the Senate bill include funding for UNSOS under the CIPA account.

UN STRENGTHENING & REFORM

In order to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to ensure member state resources are used most effectively, the United Nations continues to update its operations and management practices. Changes have taken place in nearly every area of UN operations, from the management of peacekeeping missions, to tougher ethics rules, to streamlined budget processes, to delivery of humanitarian aid on the ground. However, reform takes concerted engagement by all member states, and positive U.S. leadership will be essential to continuing the reform agenda. Provided below is a selection of completed and ongoing UN reform efforts.

PRACTICING BUDGETARY RESTRAINT

In December 2015, the General Assembly approved the UN Regular Budget—which covers the organization’s core activities and expenses, including political missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya—for the 2016-2017 biennium. Overall, the budget for that two-year period came in at \$5.4 billion, roughly 2 percent less than the 2014-2015 regular budget approved by the Assembly in December 2013, and around \$400 million less than the final appropriation of \$5.8 billion for those years.

Among other provisions, the 2016-2017 budget eliminated 150 redundant staff posts and achieved a 5 percent reduction in expenses on supplies, travel, furniture, and other equipment. The General Assembly also reassessed the UN’s staff compensation package for the first time in 26 years, approving a unified base/floor salary scale structure to replace the current separate scales for staff with and without dependents.



COMBATING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

In recent years, the UN has been buffeted by a number of high-profile allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) committed by UN peacekeepers, most notably in the Central African Republic. In response, the UN is working to implement a number of measures and changes in policy to help combat these appalling crimes. These include, among other efforts:

- **Expanding** UN vetting mechanisms currently in place for civilian personnel to cover all troops and police serving on UN peacekeeping missions;
- **Requiring** UN investigative entities to conclude their own investigations into SEA cases within a six-month timeframe, which will be shortened to three months “where circumstances suggest the need for greater urgency”;
- **Developing** an e-Learning program mandatory for all UN field personnel to allow for the flexible delivery of SEA-related pre-deployment training in multiple languages;
- **Establishing** complaint reception mechanisms within local communities to provide victims with safe and confidential means to report SEA violations by UN personnel;
- **Repatriating** entire military or police units to their home countries when there is evidence of widespread or systematic violations by members of these units;
- **Suspending** reimbursement payments to troop-contributing and police-contributing countries in connection with individuals suspected of committing SEA;
- **Creating** a trust fund to support the provision of critical services—including psychological assistance, medical care, access to legal help, and assistance in settling paternity claims—to victims of SEA.

In addition, the UN committed to “naming and shaming” individual member states by publishing country-specific data on the number of credible allegations of SEA against uniformed peacekeeping personnel. In early March 2016, the Secretary-General fulfilled this pledge, publishing a report identifying the nationalities of personnel accused of SEA in 2015 and providing details on the status of investigations against them by their home governments. Later on in March, the UN Security Council weighed in on the issue, adopting its first-ever resolution aimed specifically at addressing SEA in peacekeeping. The resolution—which was drafted by the U.S.—endorsed key parts of the Secretary-General’s reform agenda, including his decision to repatriate entire peacekeeping units that engage in widespread or systemic SEA. The resolution went further on this point however, also calling on the UN to replace entire peacekeeping contingents from countries that fail to properly investigate SEA allegations, hold perpetrators accountable, or keep the UN informed about the progress of investigations or actions taken against their personnel. The resolution also requests that the UN assess whether a member state has taken appropriate steps to investigate and punish cases of SEA when determining that country’s participation in other current or future missions.



ENSURING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The last several years have witnessed the adoption and implementation of some important reforms and advancements in UN peacekeeping operations. For example, the UN has implemented the Global Field Support Strategy (GFSS), a five-year project (2010-2015) aimed at improving the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and speed of administrative and logistics support to UN field missions. As a result of the UN's implementation of GFSS, the cost per peacekeeper declined by 18 percent between 2008 and 2015. Moreover the number of support and security staff serving on UN peacekeeping missions declined by 3,000 over the same period, despite the fact that the number of uniformed personnel in the field has actually increased.

STRENGTHENING TRANSPARENCY

In the spirit of transparency, the UN now makes all internal audit reports issued by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) publicly available online. This development followed similar decisions by UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA. The U.S. Mission to the UN has called this commitment to transparency “a turning point in how the UN does business.”

THE UN AND ISRAEL: A CASE FOR CONTINUED U.S. ENGAGEMENT

Since the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 181 in November 1947, which recommended the partition of Mandatory Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, the UN has played an important role in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through its participation in the Middle East Quartet—which also includes the U.S., EU, and Russia—the UN has worked with a variety of international partners and successive U.S. Administrations to support mediation efforts with the goal of reaching a sustainable and just two-state solution.

While the U.S., UN, and wider international community have an important role to play, it is also clear that true peace will only result from negotiation and agreement between the two parties. The UN Secretariat acknowledges this reality, and has repeatedly called on both Israel and the Palestinians “to do their part to create the necessary conditions to launch direct negotiations.”

In late December 2016, the UN Security Council voted by a margin of 14-0, with the U.S. abstaining, in favor of a resolution condemning Israeli settlements. In the wake of this decision, some in Congress have called for withholding U.S. funding for the UN or even withdrawing from the organization completely. Such proposals are counterproductive and inimical to U.S. interests.

The UN and its family of agencies, funds, and programs carries out a wide range of activities that advance core American values and national security, foreign policy, and humanitarian objectives. Defunding or withdrawing from the UN would seriously undermine or cripple these activities, including the UN’s peacekeeping and political missions, humanitarian assistance, and sanctions monitoring for rogue states and terrorists (all outlined in more detail earlier in this briefing book).

In addition to undermining UN activities and programs that serve vital U.S. interests, giving up our seat at the table at the UN would also compromise our ability to defend Israel there. While some criticize the UN as demonstrating a reflexive anti-Israel bias, and there are serious and legitimate questions surrounding the disproportionate focus of some UN bodies on Israel, the fact remains that Israel is a member of the organization and works assiduously to raise its profile in various UN organs, forums, and activities. Indeed, Israel has announced its intention to seek a rotating seat on the UN Security Council in 2019, an effort that is unlikely to succeed without robust diplomatic support from the U.S. in New York.



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Over the years, strong and constructive U.S. engagement and participation has been absolutely critical to normalizing Israel's status at the UN and fighting back against institutionalized biased treatment. Nowhere are the benefits of the U.S. maintaining its seat at the table more evident than the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The Council—a 47-member intergovernmental body mandated to protect and promote universal human rights—was created by the UN General Assembly in 2006 to replace a previous UN human rights body which had been criticized as ineffective, politicized, and biased against Israel. During its first several years, the U.S. refused to run for a seat on the Council, fearing it would be no better than its predecessor. This absence played a key role in allowing Agenda Item 7, which placed “the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories” on its permanent agenda – to be adopted. In addition, during the period (2006-2009) when the U.S. refused to participate in or engage with the UNHRC, the Council held six special sessions on and devoted more than half of all country-specific resolutions to Israel.

That record of biased treatment began to change in 2009, when the U.S. reversed course and successfully ran for the first of two consecutive three-year terms of membership on the UNHRC. While the permanent agenda item remains in place, there have been noteworthy improvements in other areas. For example, since 2009, the Council has only held one special session on Israel, a marked difference from the three-year period prior to U.S. membership. In addition, the proportion of country-specific resolutions focused on Israel has declined significantly. At the same time, the Council has broadened its repertoire, adopting strong resolutions and establishing independent investigatory mechanisms to scrutinize human rights abuses in Iran, Syria, North Korea, Belarus, and Eritrea, among other countries. The UNHRC is, now more than ever, working to address a much broader set of human rights challenges; this is a direct result of the U.S.'s decision to serve as a member of the Council.

U.S. engagement has helped bolster Israel's position at the UN in other ways as well. In late 2013, the Western European and Others Group in Geneva, one of several regional groupings of countries, invited Israel to become a member. This was a positive development in Israel's overall treatment at the UN, providing Israel with greater opportunities for engagement with the Human Rights Council. In February 2014, Israel participated for the first time in the JUSCANZ caucus at the General Assembly's Third Committee, another core regional coordinating group for human rights and social policy at the UN. According to a State Department press release on the issue: “Israel is now able to fully participate in the main regional and core coordinating groups in New York and Geneva where much of the behind-the-scenes work at the UN gets done.” This also meant it could seek membership in key UN bodies, including enabling its current campaign for a seat on the Security Council.

IN AN OP-ED PUBLISHED AT THE TIME, THE NEW YORK BOARD OF RABBIS CONCLUDED THAT,

“Without continued U.S. engagement — and fiscal responsibility to the organization — we would not have the required leverage to bolster Israel's position or to help defend it against bias from UN member states”.

This importance of continued U.S. participation was also recently emphasized by the American Jewish Committee in a March 10, 2017 letter to Congress. In it, they stated, “While the impulse to retaliate against ‘the United Nations’ for obsessive condemnation of Israel is understandable, it is short-sighted since Member States – and not the UN per se – are responsible. Moreover, a “slash and burn” approach, as critically characterized by Ambassador Nikki Haley, would lead to significant negative consequences for the U.S. and Israel. Should the U.S. cede its leadership at the UN, other States will rush to fill the vacuum, to the detriment of international peace and security. Moreover, should the U.S. retreat at the UN General Assembly or UN Human Rights Council, other Member States will only increase their campaign to use these bodies as vehicles for attacking Israel. States including China, Cuba, and Venezuela would be handed an opportunity to shape the human rights agenda in ways that would distort it completely, destroying international commitments to universality, equality, and freedom that the U.S. has invested so much energy in securing in the decades since World War II.

Furthermore, AJC argued that, “Despite its flaws, the UN serves several essential purposes. It promotes a rules-based international order that relies upon collective action to maintain international peace and security, reaffirms the universality of human rights, and seeks to impartially monitor States’ compliance with these international norms. It serves as a forum for identifying and promoting diplomatic resolutions to international disputes and crises. It provides essential humanitarian and development assistance, including support for refugees fleeing persecution. It also carries out peacekeeping operations that offset the financial and human burdens associated with policing conflict areas and promoting global stability.”

UNRWA

Besides the Human Rights Council and the UN system more generally, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has also been a target of intense Israel-related criticism over the years. This criticism is misplaced, however, as UNRWA’s work directly advances key American and Israeli interests.

Federal law conditions U.S. contributions to UNRWA on the agency taking “all possible measures” to ensure that no U.S. funding goes to assist any refugee involved in terrorism. UNRWA has agreed to conform to these requirements, and two separate investigations by the U.S. Government Accountability Office in recent years have failed to find UNRWA in violation of these conditions.

Aiding Palestinian refugees in this area of the world continues to be an important priority for both the U.S. and Israel. If UNRWA were unable to provide aid due to lack of support, extremist groups like Hamas would likely fill the vacuum in Gaza. In the West Bank, meanwhile, Israel itself could be responsible for providing many of these services in UNRWA’s absence.

UNRWA PROVIDES A NUMBER OF CRITICAL HUMANITARIAN SERVICES TO PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN THE WEST BANK, GAZA, JORDAN, LEBANON, AND SYRIA.

For example, UNRWA operates one of the region's largest school systems, with primary and junior secondary schools free to refugee children. UNRWA schools achieved gender parity in the 1960s, and have maintained this record ever since. Overall, more than 50 percent of the agency's budget is applied towards education, reaching nearly 500,000 Palestinian children with a curriculum centered on tolerance, gender equality, human rights, and non-violence. In addition to education, UNRWA provides comprehensive health services (including primary health care, maternal care, child health, disease prevention and control, and dental care), camp infrastructure maintenance, microfinance, and emergency support in case of armed conflict. Currently, UNRWA is responding to the needs of Palestinians in Syria, more than 50 percent of whom have been displaced by the civil war there.

