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NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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U.N. 50TH ANNIVERSARY

DOLE: U.N. RECORD MIXED, NEEDS FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

Today is the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter. Amid high hopes at the end of the Second World War in Europe, the United Nations Charter was signed in San Francisco. Fifty years later, the record of the United Nations is mixed, and the expectations of its founders have not been met.

The United Nations has had some important accomplishments -- on international air travel, eradicating smallpox and sharing information about global concerns ranging from weather to health. But the United Nations at 50 is an organization at a crossroads -- if the United Nations is to survive another fifty years, there must be fundamental change. If the United Nations is to be more than a debating society with 185 members, there must be fundamental change. And if the United Nations is ever to fulfill the hopes of its founders, there must be fundamental change.

Much was written this last weekend about the past and future of the United Nations. In my view, the best single piece was by my colleague from Kansas Senator Nancy Kassebaum and Congressman Lee Hamilton of Indiana, one a Democrat and one a Republican. On each of the key issues facing the United Nations, they made important points.

Peacekeeping - Not "Peace Enforcing"

On peacekeeping, they conclude the U.N. has overreached. Much criticism of the United Nations in the last five years has centered on the failures of U.N. peacekeeping. The tragic record of Somalia and Bosnia make one fact very clear -- the United Nations is not capable of mounting serious military operations. Nor should it be. Monitoring an agreement between two or more parties is one thing the U.N. can do. Imposing an agreement is something it cannot. The U.N. should be limited to peacekeeping, not peace enforcing.

Senator Kassebaum and Congressman Hamilton also suggested the United Nations focus on key agencies and functions -- such as the International Atomic Energy Agency -- and quit wasting time and money on the dozens of agencies which no longer serve a useful purpose -- if they ever did. In my view the U.S. should push to abolish wasteful organizations -- and withdraw if we are unsuccessful. Example of unnecessary or duplicative bureaucracies include the International Labor Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and many more.

The Kassebaum-Hamilton article suggests an end to United Nations hosted conferences which cost millions and accomplish very little.

Finally, and most importantly, Senator Kassebaum and Congressman Hamilton focus on the importance of accountability at the U.N. Last year, Congress tried to move the United Nations toward an Inspector General. Progress has not been sufficient. An individual was appointed, but with limited powers, and under the authority of the U.N. Secretary General. I expect Congress to revisit the issue this year. Much more needs to be done: promotions based on merit, real investigations of U.N. waste, shutting down bloated bureaucracies. Reforming the U.N. is a tall order -- but the alternative is to give up on an organization that could still live up to some of its founders' ideals.

The Importance of American Leadership

The United Nations can be an important tool to advance American interests -- as long as America leads the way. The answer to the problems of the United Nations is not getting the U.S. out of the U.N., it is getting common sense into the U.N.

There are two very different U.S. approaches toward the United Nations -- one pursued by the Bush administration and one pursued
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by the Clinton administration. In 1990-1991, the U.N. gave valuable support for American and allied efforts to liberate Kuwait. But two years later in Somalia, the United Nations changed the mission and began a vendetta against one Somali faction. Many brave Americans died in the ensuing disaster. Nation building was complete failure, and the U.N. finally left Somalia little better than when the humanitarian mission began.

The lesson is clear -- if the United States is not in the drivers seat at the U.N., the U.N. will take us for a ride. If the U.N. is to realize its potential -- and if American support for the U.N. is to continue -- real reforms must begin now. No more window dressing, but real reform to build a foundation for future U.S. support for the U.N. I expect the Congress will continue to lead the way to reform as it has before. And I expect to work with Senator Kassebaum, Congressman Hamilton and other interested colleagues in this fiftieth anniversary year.

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* Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 4:20 pm.