

## 2009 UN Wrap-Up - A Summary of 2009 at the United Nations

### Women and Girls

*“Thirty years ago today, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Obama Administration strongly supports this landmark treaty, and is committed to United States ratification.”* – The beginning of a statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), December 18, 2009.

CEDAW has been ratified by 186 countries. The United States *signed* it on July 17, 1980, meaning we agreed to go forward with the ratification process in the Senate, but we never *ratified* it. League members should look for this treaty to be brought before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and ultimately before the full Senate for ratification, given the commitment of the administration. It last came before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2002. It was passed by that Committee, but blocked from the floor of the full Senate.

The Security Council, which deals with issues of conflict, passed Security Council Resolutions 1882, 1888 and 1889 all establishing efforts to end violence against women and girls during conflict. Resolution 1888 was passed during the US Presidency of the Security Council in September and Secretary Clinton presided on the day that it was passed. To see her remarks go to: <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/2009/september/130054.htm>

Among other things, 1888 calls for the appointment of a Special Representative to lead, coordinate, and advocate efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence against women and children.

The Secretary-General also launched a Network of Men Leaders to inspire men and boys to speak out against violence to women and girls. To read more on the network see: <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/network.shtml>

### Climate Change

On 15 Oct 1992, the US *ratified* The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but we did not *ratify* the Optional Protocol to that treaty known as the Kyoto Protocol although we *signed* the protocol. In December, the LWV and many other organizations and countries looked forward to the Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen in the hopes that it would result in a new treaty, since so much more is known about the results of human action in creating climate change. The Conference consisted of meetings of the parties to UNFCCC and meetings of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

Note that among the more than 40,000 attendees (governments and NGOs) at the Copenhagen Conference, were 8 LWV official delegates. The outcome of the conference was disappointing because no treaty resulted. In the last days a negotiation among some of the world leaders, including President Obama, resulted in some forward progress, but without a treaty, the outcome is non-binding.

Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary said: *“Three key things that Copenhagen produced are: 1) It raised climate change to the highest level of government; 2) The Copenhagen Accord reflects a political consensus on the long-term, global response to climate change; 3) The negotiations brought an almost full set of decisions to implement rapid climate action near to completion.”*

He also noted that *“Close to 115 world leaders attended the...high-level segment from 16-18 December, marking one of the largest gatherings of world leaders outside of New York “* He also said that *“The key points of the accord include the objective to keep the maximum temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius; the commitment to list developed country emission reduction targets and mitigation action by developing countries for 2020; \$30 billion short-term funding for immediate action till 2012 and \$100 billion annually by 2020 in long-term financing, as well as mechanisms to support technology transfer and forestry. The challenge now is to turn what is agreed into something that is legally binding in Mexico one year from now.”*

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The UN magazine *The UN Chronicle* devoted most of its latest issue to Climate Change, see: <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/chronicle/lang/en/home/archive/Issues2009/pid/5067>

### **H1N1 Flu**

With the outbreak of the H1N1 flu, the World Health Organization (WHO) worked on pushing the development of an H1N1 vaccine as infection spread to countries around the world. The Secretary-General and the WHO Director-General negotiated for pharmaceutical companies to donate vaccines to 95 countries that were judged the most vulnerable.

### **Millennium Development Goals**

In the year 2000, the UN established the Millennium Development Goals including the plan to reduce the number of people living on less than \$1.00 a day by half by the year 2015. The Group of 20 (G-20) nations in a meeting in London in 2009 committed a \$1.1 trillion package towards that goal.

### **UN Personnel Ultimate Sacrifice**

Again in 2009, many UN personnel died in the service of the UN. More than two-thirds of the victims were employed by UN agencies to work in their own countries to contribute to humanitarian efforts. One of the most deadly incidents occurred when a UN guest house in Kabul was attacked by gunmen. They killed five staff members, including two security officers who fought a running battle with the shooters to allow many of their colleagues to escape. *“Once again, United Nations personnel had to pay with their lives for their effort to assist populations in distress”* said UN Staff Union President Stephen Kisambira.

### **UN Dues and Assessments**

*“We have also re-engaged the United Nations. We have paid our bills.”* President Obama said in his remarks at the opening of the 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. See: [www.un.org/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/US\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/US_en.pdf)

Speaking of peace keeping assessments UN Ambassador Susan E. Rice said *“As we call on others to help reform and strengthen the United Nations, the United States has to do its part as well, And we are. We’re paying our bills. We’ve worked with Congress to pay our dues in full and on time. And thanks to the strong support of Congress, we’ve been able to clear U.S. arrears.... We’ll meet our 2009 obligations on the peacekeeping budget in full.”* For the most recent information see; <http://www.unausa.org/Page.aspx?pid=1803>

### **Human Rights Council**

On May 12<sup>th</sup>, the United States was one of 18 countries elected to serve on the UN Human Rights Council, which the US had previously shunned. We will serve a three-year term on the 47-member Council, which replaced the Human Rights Commission in 2006.

### **Nuclear Weapons**

In September, the Security Council Resolution 1887 established a framework for reducing global nuclear dangers at an historic summit chaired by President Barack Obama, during the US Presidency of the Security Council. This Resolution included efforts to staunch the proliferation of nuclear weapons and ensure reductions in existing weapons stockpiles, as well as control of fissile material. For information on this see: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9746.doc.htm>

Space limitations greatly restrict the amount of information contained in this report which barely touches on all the achievements of the United Nations in 2009.