**The United Nations’ Patently Ridiculous Report on American Poverty**

By: Nikki Haley

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Last month, the United Nations released a report about poverty in America. A single researcher spent two weeks in our country, visiting four states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C. His report was harshly critical, condemning America for “punish[ing] those who are not in employment,” among other farcical notions.

Everyone knows there is poverty in America. Thousands of public officials at the federal, state, and local levels of government attempt to address poverty, as they should. Thousands more nonprofit, charitable, and religious organizations honorably dedicate themselves to fighting poverty in our country.

As governor of South Carolina, I saw firsthand the struggles of poor communities that often lack the economic and educational opportunities enjoyed elsewhere in America. And we did something about it. During my administration, we brought record-breaking numbers of new jobs to South Carolina, spanning each one of our state’s 46 counties; moved thousands of citizens from welfare to work; and made unprecedented investments into the education of students in economically challenged parts of our state. The fight against poverty is a complicated, multi-dimensional battle, but it is one that has the attention of Americans at all levels.

It certainly has the attention of the Trump administration. Its economic policies have helped bring unemployment down to the lowest level in decades. Its tax-reform law included a landmark measure to direct billions in new capital into distressed communities in every state.

But as the United States ambassador to the United Nations, my job is to help protect American interests and tax dollars at the U.N. It is patently ridiculous for the U.N. to spend its scarce resources — more of which come from the United States than from any other country — studying poverty in the wealthiest country in the world, a country where the vast majority is not in poverty, and where public and private-sector social safety nets are firmly in place to help those who are.

Instead, the U.N. might have studied poverty in the Congo, where 60 percent of the entire population lacks the basics of food and electricity. Or Burundi, where the typical annual income is $280. Or Venezuela, where narco-state dictators have driven a once prosperous country into the ground with an inflation rate over 25,000 percent, and where diseases that were once thought eliminated are now reappearing.

When there are many dozens of countries where poverty consumes most of the population, and where corrupt governments deliberately make the problem much worse, why would the U.N. study poverty in America? The answer is politics.

Take a closer look at what the U.N. report says we should do about poverty. It reads like a socialist political manifesto of higher taxes, government-run health care, and “decriminaliz[ing] being poor” (never mind that nowhere in America is it a crime to be poor).

The report also distorts and misrepresents the facts about poverty in America in ways that a biased political opponent might. For example, it states that 18.5 million Americans live in “extreme poverty” and 5.3 million live in “Third World conditions of absolute poverty.” In fact, these numbers fail to incorporate the vast majority of welfare assistance provided to low-income households, such as food stamps, Medicaid, and refundable tax credits. The report also exaggerates poverty by excluding pension and Social Security assets from its calculations. The truth is that America’s median household income has hit record highs. Wages have risen faster under President Trump for low- and middle- income earners than for high earners. And for the first time on record America now has more job openings than unemployed workers.

Unsurprisingly, Senator Bernie Sanders has strongly embraced this U.N. report. Senator Sanders criticized my comment that the report was “patently ridiculous.” But when the U.N. takes sides in an American political debate and shifts resources from truly needy countries to prosperous ones, I fully stand by my characterization. All the more so when it’s largely American tax dollars that are paying for it.

In the past year and a half, the United States has cut almost $800 million from the U.N. budget by eliminating wasteful and duplicative spending. This is important because while America is just one of 193 countries at the U.N., we pay about one-quarter of the entire U.N. budget. When the U.N. wastes American tax dollars, like it did on this unnecessary, politically biased, and factually wrong report, we’re going to call it out for the foolishness that it is.