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STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS
June 27, 2017

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the United Nations and International Organizations.

Five months and two days ago I was sworn in as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

I came into this position at a time when many Americans felt a deep sense of betrayal at the UN, in the wake of passage of Resolution 2334.

At my confirmation hearing I made the following promise: “If I am privileged to be the U.S. ambassador, I will never sit passively while America’s interests – and America’s friends – are run down at the UN.”

Five months later, I can say that I haven’t been quiet on the issues important to the United States. And I can say this: I have kept my promise. Our friends and our rivals know that America has once again found its voice at the United Nations.

The international community is now very clear about what the U.S. is for and what the U.S. is against. It wasn’t long after my confirmation that my promise was put to the test. In early April, the Syrian regime dropped chemical weapons on Syrian children.

We forced the Security Council to hold an open, emergency session, which some member states didn’t want. We drew a red line: if the UN would not act collectively, the United States would act alone. And we did.

We’ve brought new accountability to the North Korean regime. When North Korea continued its illegal missile tests, we brought all the nations of the Security Council together – including China and Russia – to impose new sanctions.

Even as we focus on North Korea’s nuclear and missile threat, we also continue to highlight the barbaric human rights violations the regime is committing. Otto Warmbier’s death brought home to Americans the brutality that North Koreans have known for decades.

The same clear voice we’ve used to take on our adversaries, we’ve also used to support America’s values and America’s friends.

Thanks to U.S. leadership, human rights are at the forefront of the UN agenda. For the first time ever, during the U.S. Presidency of the Security Council, we convened a meeting dedicated solely to the protection of human rights and their relationship to conflict.

We made the case that human rights violations and conflict are directly connected.

History has played out that when governments don't respect the rights and voices of the people, conflict will soon follow.

We've also called out the UN Human Rights Council for legitimizing human rights violators at the expense of their victims. We've put forward reforms to make the Council what it was meant to be: a place of conscience for nations and justice for victims.

I traveled to Geneva earlier this month to make it clear to the Council that continued U.S. participation is contingent on adoption of these reforms.

On a related note, the U.S. mission now refuses to tolerate one of the UN's most disreputable and dangerous habits: obsessive bashing of Israel. We forced the withdrawal of a false and biased report. And we've steered the Security Council's monthly debate on the Middle East away from unfairly targeting Israel, and toward the true threats in the region such as Iran and Hamas.

In the areas in which the UN has real value, we've built on its good work.

Peacekeeping is one of the most important things the UN does. We are reviewing each of our peacekeeping missions with an eye toward ensuring they have clear and achievable mandates. We are also working to ensure that troops are ready, professional, and committed to the safety of civilians on the ground.

Troops in the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, have long faced charges of sexual abuse and other serious misconduct. We inserted clear instructions into the mission's most recent mandate to enforce performance standards for troops. There is no place in any UN peacekeeping mission for predatory and abusive troops.

Our peacekeeping reforms are aimed at producing more effective missions for vulnerable civilians and holding host governments accountable to their responsibility to protect their own citizens while also cutting down on waste and inefficiency.

We've adapted the mission in Haiti to changing conditions on the ground, and are on target to save at least \$150 million for the year. We will continue our reform efforts when we take up the peacekeeping mission renewal this month in Darfur, Sudan. Our efforts will hold the government accountable to improve humanitarian access.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to highlight our efforts to reassert U.S. leadership at the United Nations. It's hard to believe that it's been just five months since I moved my family to New York to begin this exciting and challenging new chapter. I look forward to more progress in the months ahead, and I welcome your questions.

Thank you.

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