



Chairwoman Barbara Lee
Subcommittee on Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Hearing: Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request for the United Nations (UN)
June 8, 2022

As Prepared

Good morning, and welcome to today's hearing with United States Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield to discuss the Administration's fiscal year 2023 request supporting the United States' diplomatic engagement at the UN, its specialized agencies and programs, and UN peacekeeping activities.

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, on behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank you for joining us today and for bringing your many decades of experience in development and diplomacy to such a critically important post at such a critical time.

The United Nations is an invaluable and irreplaceable platform for fostering diplomacy and international peace. I've been privileged to serve as the U.S. Congressional Representative to the UN General Assembly on four different occasions, so I've seen first-hand the importance of the issues debated in New York and how much is at stake without UN engagement.

After an historic global pandemic that has devastated health systems, crippled economies, reignited racial and ethnic divisions – and tragically claimed the lives of over 15 million people – the role and mission of the United Nations are as essential now as they were when the UN was first created in the aftermath of World War II.

That is why I am very pleased to see that the Administration's FY23 request fully funds or provides necessary increases in the UN-related accounts, including our assessed and voluntary contributions to UN organizations and UN peacekeeping missions.

The request includes funds to begin paying down our unpaid debts for peacekeeping that have accumulated over the last five years and have now reached over a billion dollars – a staggering amount. This Subcommittee has long recognized the vital role UN peacekeepers play in conflict zones and the benefits we gain from burden-sharing with other countries through UN peacekeeping missions. We simply cannot continue to tout these multilateral partnerships while, at the same time, maintain arbitrary caps on our contributions and rack up millions of dollars in arrears, leaving other countries to foot the bill. Not paying our dues weakens our ability to lead on a host of international issues and cedes ground to our strategic competitors.



Speaking of ceding ground, I am deeply concerned that we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 now that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused tremendous backsliding. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, I am eager to hear about your conversations with UN partners on how we get the SDGs back on track and how the FY23 resources will help.

I also hope you will update our Subcommittee on the UN's response efforts to the devastating invasion of Ukraine as well as the UN's ongoing global response to COVID-19 – especially in terms of vaccine distribution, rebuilding health systems, and addressing the second-order impacts, including rising rates of gender-based violence, illiteracy, malnutrition, and job loss, all of which have disproportionately affected women around the world.

Secretary Blinken said during his first major speech as Secretary of State, that: “We’re always better off at the table, not outside the room.” I could not agree more, which is why I fully supported the Administration rejoining the Paris Agreement, the World Health Organization, and the UN Human Rights Council. As Chairwoman, I also fully support the United States playing a leadership role through our contributions to organizations like UNRWA and UNFPA, both of which were needlessly cut off during the previous Administration in order to score domestic political points at the expense of millions of people who depend on these institutions.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have consistently advocated for the strongest possible partnership between the United States and the United Nations. I encourage my colleagues to think carefully about calls for America to unilaterally cede the field at these international bodies to governments who work against our values. We may not always agree with other nations on every issue, but we must always have a venue where we can hear from other countries and be heard ourselves. America is not always a perfect or consistent voice for human rights, but we can and have been vocal and persuasive. We need to keep making the case for human rights and human dignity.

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, thank you for your leadership, your devotion to diplomacy, and for your testimony today.