

## Join Bipartisan Letter to State Dept. Opposing Waiver to Restore Funding to UNESCO

**From: The Committee on Foreign Affairs**

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in signing the bipartisan letter below to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on UNESCO. This letter expresses our opposition to the State Department's stated intent to "seek legislation that would provide authority to waive restrictions on paying the U.S. assessed contribution to UNESCO." It also emphasizes that the U.S. should not resume funding for UNESCO absent a decision by that agency to reverse its admission of "Palestine."

To sign on to this letter or obtain more information, please contact Alan Goldsmith with the Foreign Affairs Committee's Majority Staff at X55021 or [Alan.Goldsmith@mail.house.gov](mailto:Alan.Goldsmith@mail.house.gov), or Siamak Kordestani with Congressman Sherman's office at X55911 or [Siamak.Kordestani@mail.house.gov](mailto:Siamak.Kordestani@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Chairman  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Nonproliferation, and Trade

BRAD SHERMAN  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Terrorism,

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

We write to express our respectful but unequivocal opposition to the State Department's intention, as expressed in the *Executive Budget Summary for Function 150 and Other International Programs for Fiscal Year 2013*, to "seek legislation that would provide authority to waive restrictions on paying the U.S. assessed contributions to UNESCO." The U.S. should not resume funding for UNESCO absent a decision by the agency to reverse its admission of "Palestine." Therefore, we believe that the United States must not weaken current law to resume funding to UNESCO.

As you know, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 (Public Law 103-236) provides that:

"The United States shall not make any voluntary or assessed contribution—(1) to any affiliated organization of the United Nations which grants full membership as a state to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood, or (2) to the United Nations, if the United Nations grants full membership as a state in the United Nations to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood, during any period in which such membership is effective."

Further, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-246) provides that "No funds authorized to be appropriated by this Act or any other Act shall be available for the United Nations or any specialized agency thereof which accords the Palestine Liberation Organization the same standing as member states."

These laws were adopted by Congress with bipartisan support and reaffirmed the State Department's position, as articulated by Secretary of State James A. Baker in 1989, "that the United States [should] make no further contributions, voluntary or assessed, to any international organization which makes any change in the P.L.O.'s present status as an observer organization." This U.S. position and the ensuring U.S. laws were vital in successfully derailing attempts by Yasser Arafat's PLO to seek de facto recognition of a Palestinian state from the UN via the granting of membership to "Palestine" in UN agencies, including UNESCO. (It is important to note that the PLO controls the "Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine" to the UN, and so the admission of "Palestine" as a member of any UN body constitutes, in effect, the admission of the PLO.)

At present, the PLO is once again pursuing recognition of a Palestinian state by the UN outside of direct negotiations with Israel. This dangerous unilateral scheme would only undermine opportunities for peace and security between Israel and the Palestinians, and UN support for this scheme would only undermine the credibility of that institution.

Unfortunately, instead of rejecting this dangerous scheme, UNESCO's General Conference chose to support it, voting on October 31, 2011 to admit "Palestine" as a member of UNESCO. We appreciate your efforts to prevent this unfortunate decision by UNESCO. We note in that context that you strongly urged UNESCO's General Conference to "think again before proceeding with that vote" and emphasized the "strong legislative prohibition that prevents the United States from funding organizations that jump the gun" on recognizing states. Further, immediately after that vote, the Administration rightly proceeded to enforce the aforementioned U.S. laws and cease U.S. contributions to UNESCO.

We regret the fact that UNESCO's General Conference chose to act irresponsibly and admit the PLO as a member. However, it was that action by UNESCO, and not longstanding U.S. law, which warrants blame for the U.S. funding cut-off. A UN body that acts so irresponsibly—a UN body that admits states that do not exist—renders itself unworthy of U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Therefore, the only way to resume U.S. contributions to UNESCO is not through changing longstanding U.S. law, but through UNESCO reversing its decision to admit "Palestine." We would encourage UNESCO to take that step and we encourage you to call on UNESCO to do so. Weakening U.S. law, on the other hand, would undermine our interests and our ally Israel by providing a green light for other UN bodies to admit "Palestine" as a member.

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Chairman  
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