

**Statement of Assistant Secretary-Designate Esther Brimmer
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
March 24, 2009**

Thank you Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. I thank the President for his confidence in naming me to this position, Secretary Clinton for her support, and Ambassador Rice for her encouragement and wise counsel.

It is with abiding humility and a deep commitment to serve my country that I contemplate this challenging assignment. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing U.S. interests before the United Nations and other international institutions in a manner that will help restore the position of the United States in world affairs and address the transnational challenges the President has made clear are among the highest priorities for his administration.

Throughout my career I have focused on international security issues in multilateral settings. Twice before I have served in the State Department. Each time my portfolio has included the United Nations. Over the years I have worked on or written about political and security issues in organizations -- such as the United Nations, the European Union and NATO -- that bring together many countries. Increasingly, understanding the relationship among security organizations is important to advancing foreign policy.

I am deeply committed to public service and public policy. I have served in government and studied policy while in the think tank community. I have worked on the Hill, albeit in the "other place," and appreciate that American foreign policy benefits from a positive relationship between the executive and legislative branches.

I am a proud Washingtonian who grew up surrounded by people dedicated to public service, starting with my father. Madam Chairwoman, my family is here today. I would like to introduce them to the Committee. I am joined by my parents, Doris and Andrew Brimmer, my husband Steven Beller and our son Nathaniel Brimmer-Beller.

I am a proud American who, if confirmed, would strive to advance America's interests based on our values. I believe that the United States still has a unique role to play in international affairs, building on the fundamental values that we share across party lines. Americans believe that you should study hard, work hard and that each of us has an obligation to make the world around us a better place. That "world" may be as small as a home town or as large as a hemisphere, but what we do matters. I was a child in the Civil Rights era. Can we make a difference? Yes we can. I have seen my parents and my grandparents in their own ways break down barriers to help America reach its potential. My parents heard Martin Luther King give the "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963; four decades later my son -- now studying American History in 6th grade -- heard Barack Obama take the oath of office as our 44th President. In each generation we find our best way to contribute.

I would like to advance the President's vision of the United States in the world. I believe that our country can advance its interests by working with others. I became interested in the United Nations in 8th grade when I served as a page carrying messages in plenary sessions of a Model United Nations. Years later I led Pomona College's delegation to the Model United Nations of the Far West. During my junior year in college, I participated in Pomona's highly competitive program to study international organizations in Geneva. I even wrote a paper on the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO. Having earned a pilot's license when I was 20, I was curious about international cooperation in this area. I still

am. I would like to combine my optimism about America and commitment to public service to advance U.S. interests in international organizations.

President Obama has enunciated a new vision of U.S. leadership in international affairs, to "strengthen our common security by investing in our common humanity." Revitalizing multilateral cooperation will play an important part in that effort. The President has reaffirmed America's commitment to the United Nations as an indispensable, if imperfect, institution for advancing our security and well-being.

This represents a return to the role we played after the Second World War, when the United States took the lead in establishing and developing a wide range of international institutions. This greatly enhanced our influence, while also serving to enhance collective security and stability. Even if viewed from a unilateral perspective, it was clear American interests required a positive, multilateralist foreign policy. A recommitment to this approach and a sense of urgency is desperately needed. We face new and fast-moving challenges on a daunting array of issues that no one state can address effectively alone.

When thinking about the UN, our focus is often on intractable, politically-charged issues debated at the Security Council or General Assembly. But the UN system is comprised of many agencies and organizations quietly trying to get the job done in difficult circumstances. Indeed, in some parts of the globe the UN is the only institution able to make a difference in performing vital, life-saving services. If confirmed, I would focus my efforts on shaping U.S. engagement in the UN system to serve our national interests of strengthening peace, security and the well-being of humanity, while also strengthening the UN as an institution.

Besides its ten internal offices in Washington, the IO Bureau supports the U.S. Mission to the UN in New York and six overseas missions. All told, this comprises 617 hardworking people with a major impact on multilateral programs.

During Fiscal Year 2009, IO-managed accounts comprised \$1.5 billion in assessed contributions to mostly UN-system organizations, nearly \$300 million in voluntary contributions to a host of international organizations and initiatives, and we anticipate \$2.3 billion in assessed peacekeeping costs.

Multilateral diplomacy is of course not the only tool available to us. I appreciate the need to dovetail these efforts with the bilateral work of our Embassies, with our public diplomacy, with the often hazardous operations of the U.S. military and other government agencies, and with regional and non-governmental organizations. Nor does being an effective part of the UN mean surrendering our sovereignty in any way.

Secretary Clinton and others have summed up this multifaceted approach with the term "smart power" -- using the full range of tools at our disposal to advance American interests and promote a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic world. This places diplomacy on the leading edge of international relations.

We will join the United Nations in addressing climate change, stabilizing weak and failing states, delivering humanitarian assistance, preventing and resolving conflict, improving health and education, and on a host of other issues. In achieving these goals, we must convince others they have a stake in the efficient operation of the institutions. That comes only by including them as full partners. For example, the UN plays a crucial role in reducing poverty and advancing human well-being. The United States will join the UN in helping countries reach their Millennium Development Goals, including efforts to reduce the proportion of hunger and extreme poverty by half by 2015.

Developing nations need effective health care, not only to protect their citizens, but also to sustain economic gains. Diseases know no borders, and global health represent a security issue for the United States. Thanks to the efforts of the World

Health Organization and UNICEF, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the eradication of smallpox next year.

The food security crisis that struck last year threatened an estimated 86 million people in 80 countries. The World Food Program responded by expanding its program of work to \$10.9 billion, an increase of 87%. The United States has provided over 40 percent WFP's resources. Addressing the January 26 World Food Program's Summit in Madrid, Secretary Clinton recommitted the United States to continue this support.

For six decades, the Security Council has provided a framework for cooperative international efforts to sustain or restore international peace and security. As authorized in the Council's resolutions, some 112,000 UN peacekeepers, police personnel and civilian support staff from 119 countries -- more than ever before -- are now deployed in 16 peacekeeping missions around the world as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Last year, the Council had to grapple with a problem out of the history books — piracy. Centuries ago countries realized that international cooperation was needed to deal with threats to international navigation, upon which a nascent global system of commerce depended. Today, when the problem of piracy reemerged, countries turned to the Security Council to provide the framework for an effective naval, legal and commercial response. This exemplifies how the Security Council can be a forum for confronting the challenges of the 21st century. If confirmed, one of the most challenging aspects of my work will be to find a way forward on Security Council reform that enhances its credibility and enables it to carry out its mandate.

One of the greatest potential threats to international security is Iran's push to develop nuclear weapons. As Secretary Clinton stated, we will "do all that we can to deter and to prevent Iran from obtaining [these] weapons." The International

Atomic Energy Agency has provided the technical expertise that informed the Council's action in sanctioning Iran. Compliance with the Council's resolutions is the sole path Iran can take toward restoring international confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.

Multilateral engagement is also central to achieving core human rights objectives. Unfortunately, the Human Rights Council has been a major disappointment, diverted from its mission by states with some of the worst human rights records. Under the Obama Administration, the United States has resumed its observer status, reflecting a fervent commitment to defend the rights of the individual, the rule of law and the principles of the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Rice have stated the Administration's strong commitment to women's rights, and Ambassador Rice was actively involved in the U.S. delegation to this year's meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Racism remains a serious human rights concern as well. However, the Durban process was diverted by a vocal group of delegations and NGOs into a platform for prejudice and intolerance towards one country, the state of Israel, and a vehicle to promote restrictions on freedom of speech in the guise of protecting against alleged defamation of religions. The Administration made a good faith effort to engage, but in this case came to the conclusion that it could not participate in negotiations on the document originally presented.

Having noted these challenges and the UN's potential to addressing them, one must acknowledge our expectations have often not been met. At times, mismanagement and corruption have tainted the UN's work. The Secretariat must continue to improve accountability, transparency, internal oversight and program effectiveness.

The United States must fulfill its financial obligations while insisting on UN accountability. Failure to pay all of our dues has reduced our influence, diluting

efforts to promote reform. President Obama has stated that we should pay down arrears. This can have a major impact on international peace and security.

Despite its limitations, most Americans continue to support the UN, sharing the view of a majority worldwide that it can be our best hope for the resolution of globally challenging issues. Opinion surveys conducted in scores of countries have consistently shown a strong public commitment to the UN. Yet these surveys also show that many people realize the UN has often failed to meet its potential.

Why this continued commitment to an institution with so many flaws? I believe it speaks to a sense of ownership in the United Nations that people around the world share. Challenged by economic, cultural or political disenfranchisement, feeling disconnected from traditional societies, people turn to the UN if not for immediate solutions, at least for the consolation of having an address where solutions ultimately may reside. By enhancing our connection to the UN, we connect with people around the globe who hope for better lives for themselves and their children.

Even if we are regularly outvoted, our principled positions in the UN are reported to -- and resonate among -- communities under stress worldwide. We sometimes forget how important this was throughout the Cold War -- the world's leading democracy speaking honestly and openly in the world's leading international institution, refusing to be silenced on the need for universal human rights, justice and economic opportunity for all, and an end to violence and repression.

With the determination to exercise "smart power" at the UN and other international organizations, we can build communities of interest once again, bringing openness and transparency to international affairs. No other country is more capable of exercising leadership in this way. Both President Obama and Secretary-General Ban saw it as a high priority to meet early on in the President's new administration to consult on the wide range of challenges they face. The President noted the UN

can be "an extraordinarily constructive partner in bringing about peace and security in the world." I was heartened as well by the Secretary-General's unconditional statement of his commitment to work with us.

In conclusion, I look forward with enthusiasm to the prospect of advancing along all of these avenues. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to this effort, not only to address the immediate crises that will inevitably arise in the coming weeks and months, but also to lay the groundwork for sustained U.S. leadership in multilateral engagement as we move forward into the 21st century. Thank you.