

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

August 22, 1980

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Tsongas

THRU: Chris Chamberlin

FROM: Peter Galbraith

SUBJ: The 35th United Nations General Assembly

This memorandum is intended to provide a brief overview of the upcoming United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Session and the Senators' role in it. The State Department will hold briefings for all ten delegates on September 9 and 10, and will provide more additional briefing material.

Schedule

The UNGA will open September 16 and run for approximately 12 weeks. Meeting concurrently with the Plenary Sessions of the UNGA are the seven standing committees (see below). After brief organizational session(s) September 16 and perhaps September 17, the UNGA Plenary will devote approximately three weeks to general debate. This is the time when heads of government and foreign ministers make formal presentations and conduct summits of various types. The balance of the UNGA is devoted to consideration of the substantive agenda. On important issues, governments often send high level delegations to represent their positions.

The United States Delegation

The U.S. delegation to the 35th UNGA will consist of 5 representatives and 5 alternate representatives. The representatives will be delegation chairman and U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Donald McHenry, Deputy Ambassador William vanden Heuvel, the two Senators and Hannah Atkins, a public member. The alternative representatives are Ambassadors Joan Spero, Richard Petree and Carl McCall, and two public members, Nathan Landow and Barbara Newson. The entire delegation, including the Senators, must be confirmed by the Senate.

The Senators' Role

Unlike Congressional participants in most other international conferences, (who generally attend as "observers" or "advisors") the Congressional representatives to the UNGA are full fledged

Members of the U.S. delegation. The delegates represent the United States in plenary sessions of the UNGA and, in addition, each delegate is assigned to cover one of the standing committees of the UNGA. Delegates' duties include casting the U.S. vote in UNGA or Committee, delivering speeches in support of the U.S. position, and sometimes negotiating with other delegations in behalf of the United States. The UNGA delegates, including the Senators, are in theory bound by Administration instructions. As a practical matter, however, a Senator who disagrees with the instructions may refuse to give the statement (or cast the vote) or negotiate for a position more to his liking. On one noteworthy occasion, Senator Symington ignored his instructions and proceeded to deliver his own speech.

The Agenda

The UNGA already has a 120 item agenda and the number of items is expected to grow before the session opens September 16. The most salient issues are likely to be:

1) **Mideast: Jerusalem, the occupied territories, Zionism, and the question of a Palestinian state** are certain to be the dominant issues of this UNGA. Having succeeded in isolating Israel in the U.N., the anti-Israel forces now seem poised to push for concrete action against Israel. Since sanctions are certain to be vetoed by the U.S. in the Security Council, the action may take the form of a move to expel or suspend Israel in the UNGA. Such a move, and the probably U.S. retaliation, could profoundly affect the future of the U.N. as well as the Middle East Peace Process.

2) **Cambodian credentials:** The question of who represents Cambodia -- Pol Pot, Heng Samrin, or no one -- is likely to be the only controversial issue to be considered by the Plenary in the first three weeks of the session.

3) **Other Cambodian issues:** The UNGA will again vote on an ASEAN resolution calling for withdrawal of all foreign forces from Cambodia. The status of the UNICEF/ICRC relief effort will also be considered.

4) **The Security Council seat:** Last Fall Cuba and Colombia battled for over 70 ballots (2/3 majority required) for the Latin American seat on the Security Council. Mexico was the compromise candidate last year, but Cuba is trying again. Costa Rica will challenge Cuba and this fight likely will be the subject of intense lobbying throughout the session.

5) **Afghanistan:** The Islamic countries will push for another resolution condemning the Soviet invasion. There also may be a call for an international conference on Afghanistan.

6) **North-South issues - Development issues:** The results of the 11th Special Session will be considered by the UNGA.

7) **Namibia:** Most of the action on this issue will be in the Security Council where there is escalating pressure for sanctions against South Africa.

8) Refugees: Refugees, and in particular, the plight of African refugees, will be on the agenda. More broadly, the General Assembly -- or the Third Committee -- may examine U.N. ability to cope with the refugee crisis. The U.S. is interested in having other countries assume greater responsibility for refugee resettlement, especially in the case of the Cubans and Haitians.

9) U.N. Reform: The only proposal in this area likely to receive serious consideration is a charter amendment (opposed by the U.S.) to increase the size of the Security Council.

10) Arms Control: The United States will push for an international investigation of alleged chemical warfare in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Laos.

11) Iran: Secretary Muskie will use the gathering of foreign ministers in the first weeks of the UNGA to discuss steps to secure the release of the hostages. No formal agenda item on Iran is currently contemplated in the UNGA or Security Council at this time.

Committees

The Assistant Secretary for International Organizations, Dick McCall, has been informed of your interest in serving on the Special Political Committee and has indicated he will make the appropriate arrangements. Some of the most controversial items (e.g., the Islamic Conference Resolution on Afghanistan, the ASEAN Resolution on Cambodia; some of the Mideast Resolutions) are not referred to any Committee but considered directly by the UNGA. The Special Political Committee handles most of the hot items not considered directly by Plenary. This year's agenda probably will include several Mideast resolutions, the annual, and highly contentious, "omnibus" anti-Israel resolution, peacekeeping operations, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), Cyprus, the Space Treaty, etc.

The other standing committees of the UNGA are:

The First Committee (Political and security including the regulations of armaments):

In spite of the broad description of jurisdiction, the First Committee deals almost exclusively with disarmament questions.

The Second Committee (Economic and financial):

The results of the Special Session will be referred to this committee as will be other issues in the North-South dialogue, development issues, and U.N. development assistance programs.

The Third Committee (Social, humanitarian and cultural):

This committee has a lengthy agenda which includes human rights questions, refugees, Cambodian relief, the report of the World Conference on the U.N. Decade for Women, and issues relating to aging, apartheid and discrimination.

The Fourth Committee (Decolonization and trusteeship):

This committee deals with the rather limited number of territories considered by the U.N. as non-self governing.

The Fifth Committee (Administration and budget):

This committee meets late in the session to consider expenditures proposed by the other committees and to draw up the U.N. budget.

The Sixth Committee (Legal affairs):

This committee's work is often highly technical, and includes issues of U.N. law as well as certain types of conventions (e.g., Convention on the Taking of Hostages).

Housing

A two bedroom apartment at Beekman Towers (overlooking the East River at 1st and 45th; two blocks from the U.N.) is leased for you and your family for the duration of the UNGA. Free parking is available in the U.N. garage.

Travel

The State Department will cover all Senatorial travel between Washington and New York.

Per Diem

Twenty five dollars a day, in addition to lodging.

Staff

Peter Galbraith, of the Committee staff, will be in New York for the duration of the UNGA. In addition, you will be able to call on the expertise of the United States' U.N. mission and various governmental agencies.

Report

At the end of the UNGA the Senators submit a report to the committee. (In the past, the report has been prepared jointly by the majority and minority Member. The resources of the Committee staff will be available to provide all necessary assistance in preparing the report.)