

MATSUI URGES U.S. TO ENGAGE U.N. ON REFORM DEBATE

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Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) gave the following remarks on the floor of the House during the debate about how the United States participates in the effort to reform the United Nation.

[Click here to view the Congresswoman's floor statement on United Nations reform](#)

“Madam Speaker, the second Secretary-General of the U.N., Dag Hammarskjold, commented during his tenure that, ‘The UN was not created to take humanity to heaven but save it from hell.’ A keen observation on the fundamental tensions present in such a massive – and massively important – institution.

“The U.N. was built upon the very highest of ideals: support for human rights, peaceful resolution of conflict, and respect for international law and conventions.

“However, the reality of the U.N.’s composition – of one hundred and ninety-one member states, often with one hundred and ninety-one different national interests – has challenged these high ideals. We all know that.

“Many are examining how to meet those challenges and improve the weaknesses of the organization – the Secretary General’s report, the U. N. High Level Advisory Panel, the Volker Commission investigation, the Mitchell-Gingrich report. And each of them, in addition to the bill we are debating today, is circling around the same group

of reforms.

“But the central debate here on the House floor isn’t about what the reforms should be. Mr. Speaker, the debate here is how you sell them.

“There are 191 individual members of the organization that must agree on the reforms — sometimes unanimously — if we are to make the U.N. an even better organization than it already is.

“And this is where I diverge from some of my colleagues. I share the views of the eight former U.S. ambassadors to the U.N., I do not believe harsh, automatic penalties hold any chance of garnering support among the many nations needed to enact these reforms. I must note that their experience spans each of the past five presidencies — from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush.

“We should be heeding their sage advice.

“For this reason, I support the Lantos-Shays substitute, which would authorize the Secretary of State to withhold a portion of our U.N. dues at his or her discretion instead of the severe automatic penalties.

“We cannot advocate a policy of withdrawal from the world community on the one hand and ask for it to engage on the other. But H.R. 2745 will stir up exactly that resentment in its current form — resentment that will kill any hope for change.

“In closing Madam Speaker, the United Nations has a genuine opportunity to reform and with our leadership, the potential for great success.”

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