



The Association of the Bar of the City of New York

Office of the President

PRESIDENT

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April 14, 2005

The Honorable Joseph L. Bruno
New York State Senate
Room 909
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12247

Re: United Nations Consolidation Project

Dear Senator Bruno:

On behalf of The Association of the Bar of the City of New York, I write to respectfully urge that you do everything within your power to expedite the passage of legislation necessary for the renovation and consolidation of United Nations headquarters in New York City to proceed. This measure was introduced as Senate Bill No. S. 7772 in the last session, but we understand it has not yet been formally re-introduced in the current session.

A half century ago, the iconic United Nations headquarters buildings were designed by an international team of architects chaired by New Yorker Wallace Harrison, and including Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer. In 1999, a team of architects and engineers thoroughly examined the condition of U.N. headquarter complex, and reported that despite the high quality of the original construction, many building elements had deteriorated due to age, or no longer meet current standards of safety, communications and technology requirements and energy efficiency. The report concluded that “the current condition of the headquarters’ complex is unacceptable for continued use over the long term.” The federal General Accounting Office reviewed the U.N. report, agreed with the assessment of the conditions and status of the buildings, and determined the U.N.’s planning for the renovation of the complex was sound, prudent and professional.

Under the leadership of Senator Roy Goodman, the United Nations Development Corporation (UNDC) has proposed the construction of a new building south of the present campus to house U.N. secretariat during the renovation of the present secretariat building, including the removal of asbestos. After the renovation of the present secretariat building has been completed, the new “south” building will provide sufficient

space for the consolidation of U.N. offices presently spread around the east side of Manhattan.

The proposed UNDC project will have no impact upon the state or city taxpayers. Financing will be provided by bonds issued by UNDC. The debt service on those bonds will be funded by rents paid by tenants, including U.N. agencies located in UNDC buildings. Nor should any purported risk of default on those bonds be of any concern to local tax payers, as the law establishing the UNDC as a public benefit corporation expressly provides that bonds issued by UNDC “shall not be debts of the state or city of New York, and neither the state nor the city shall be liable thereon.” N.Y. Unconsol. Law § 9612 (McKinney 2005).

Recognizing the importance of this expansion project to our nation as a whole, the President and Congress of the United States have fully supported the proposal by authorizing a \$1.2 billion loan for the renovation of the U.N. headquarters buildings. The federal government is unequivocally committed to maintaining U.N. headquarters in New York, and indeed is presently constructing a major new building to house the Permanent Mission of the United States to the United Nations across First Avenue from U.N. headquarters.

Despite the flaws inherent in a world organization composed of 191 nations of widely disparate social and political cultures, the U.N. remains without question one of the central fora for maintaining international peace and security. The U.N. and its specialized agencies are at the forefront of dealing with critical problems of great concern to New Yorkers and the entire world, including combating infectious diseases such as AIDS, SARS and avian influenza, providing peacekeeping forces and humanitarian relief. It is a privilege and a responsibility for New York to serve as the host city for the United Nations.

Hosting the United Nations also happens to be to the great economic benefit of New York. A 1995 New York City study found that the U.N. headquarters, agencies, missions and consulates directly employed 16,400 people, and the extended U.N. system employed a total of 30,700 people, directly and indirectly, making it one of the twenty largest employers in the City. The study further found the U.N. headquarters, agencies, missions and consulates directly spent approximately \$1.5 billion in the New York City metropolitan area, and concluded that the total direct and indirect spending related to the U.N. extended system and its employees was \$3.3 billion in the economy of New York City in 1994. Moreover, the presence of the U.N. adds intangible but enormous prestige to New York City as a world capital city, and helps maintain our preeminence in business and finance. Indeed, the economic benefits of hosting the U.N. led the State of New York to create the UNDC in 1968. See N.Y. Unconsol. Law § 9602(c) (McKinney 2005) (“public purpose would be served and the interests of the state and city of New York and of the nation would be promoted by the coordinated development of [U.N.] facilities . . . [and] such coordinated development would stimulate private investment and participation in a comprehensive development program for the area, which may produce increased tax revenues”).

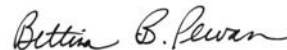
As part of the renovation plan, the surrounding community will gain an esplanade along the East River from 41st to 51st Streets. The Community Board, City

Councilwoman, Assemblyman, State Senator, and Congresswoman representing the neighborhoods surrounding the U.N. complex *all* support this legislation to allow the planning for the renovation and expansion project to proceed, including the community review provisions built into S. 7772. It is very much in the interest of the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as the region as a whole, that the U.N. headquarters buildings be as safe and secure as possible, including the safe removal of asbestos.

The understandable concerns of some Senators regarding problems inherent in such a large and complex multinational institution are being addressed by the responsible authorities. The Bloomberg Administration has moved aggressively and effectively to manage the problems involving diplomatic parking, and both the Mayor and the Governor fully support the proposed renovation project. Possible malfeasance by officials involved with the oil-for-food program is being thoroughly investigated by the commission headed by Paul Volcker, and by the responsible congressional committees. While many New Yorkers object to the policy views of some U.N. member states, maintaining United Nations headquarters in New York continually exposes U.N. delegates and staff to points of view prevalent here, in a way they would not be were the U.N. forced to relocate elsewhere.

For the reasons expressed above, the proposed expansion project should be recognized as the critical initiative it is. The Association urgently recommends that you and your colleagues in the Senate move forward expeditiously with this legislation, so that the UNDC may proceed with the United Nations consolidation project as soon and as effectively as possible.

Sincerely,



Bettina Plevan
President

cc: Hon. Martin Golden
Hon. Serphin R. Maltese
Hon. John J. Marchi
Hon. Frank Padavan