



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on January 26, 2012

Obama Calls for UN Reform Without Reduction in U.S. Funding

“The United Nations does extraordinary good around the world — feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, mending places that have been broken. But it also struggles to enforce its will, and to live up to the ideals of its founding. I believe that those imperfections are not a reason to walk away from this institution — they are a calling to redouble our efforts. The United Nations can either be a place where we bicker about outdated grievances, or forge common ground; a place where we focus on what drives us apart, or what brings us together; a place where we indulge tyranny, or a source of moral authority. In short, the United Nations can be an institution that is disconnected from what matters in the lives of our citizens, or it can be an indispensable factor in advancing the interests of the people we serve.”



With those words, President Barack Obama set the tone for the approach his administration would take toward the United Nations. In fairness, his predecessors have been equally obliging to a body that has accomplished little more than the gradual erosion of the sovereignty of its member states in the decades since its creation in 1945.

Currently, there are 193 member states in the United Nations. Over the last 10 years, those members, including the United States, have voted to increase the budget of the United Nations with very little accompanying obligation that the leadership of that embryonic global government account for the expenditure of those precious resources.

Of course, this lack of fiduciary oversight has a direct impact on the citizens of the United States. The budget of the United Nations is funded in substantial measure by American taxpayers; in fact, over 22 percent of the general budget of the UN comes from the (involuntary) contributions of U.S. taxpayers.

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While the existence of the UN — at least the participation of the United States in it — is absolutely unconstitutional, until the day when we disassociate ourselves from this international boondoggle, we should demand that there be an accounting of where the money is going and what measures are being employed to assure that malfeasance is being avoided.

To that end, President Obama has initiated a plan to require the United Nations not only to cut back on the spending, but to make a more thorough accounting as befits an organization with a biennial budget of over \$5 billion.



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A recent [report published by the Heritage Foundation](#) chronicles the White House's plan for "reform" of the United Nations:

After relatively flat growth during the 1990s, the U.N. regular budget increased 117 percent over the past six two-year budget cycles from \$2.49 billion at the end of the 1998-1999 biennium, to \$5.42 billion at the end of the recently concluded 2010-2011 biennium. This trend has been interrupted, for the moment, with the adoption of the \$5.15 billion 2012-2013 biennial budget that is 4.9 percent lower than the final expenditures for the 2010-2011 regular budget. As stated by the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, "The total budget of \$5.153 billion represents the first time in 14 years — and only the second time in the last 50 years — that the General Assembly has approved a regular budget level below the previous biennia's final appropriation."

At first blush, such parsimonious policies might seem praiseworthy. The reality, however, is much less impressive. The Obama administration's audit comes without the threat of a reduction in the American contribution to the UN's coffers.

Many observers reckon that the administration's abstemiousness is due less to a reduction in dedication to globalism than to running a preemptive end run around an anticipated Republican proposal to cut off funding unless the United Nations pulls back the curtains and lets the sunshine of inquiry illuminate the ends and means of its spending practices.

The differences between the President's plan and the imminent Republican requirements are described in [a Fox News story](#):

Unlike the Republican proposals, the administration's campaign, spearheaded by U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. for Management and Reform Joseph Torsella, explicitly rules out withholding of U.S. financial aid and counts on persuasion to propel its agenda of efficiency, transparency and openness. Whether U.N. bureaucrats and their developing world supporters will be impressed remains to be seen.

Again, the Heritage Foundation's analysis paints a portrait of a President more milquetoast in his determination to corral the wild and unaccountable spending at the UN than the rhetoric would indicate. The report claims:

During its first two years, the Obama Administration exhibited little interest in arresting growth in the U.N. regular budget, focusing instead on paying U.S. arrears and current obligations. Indeed, the final expenditure figure for the 2010-2011 U.N. regular budget was more than 14 percent higher than for the 2008-2009 budget, which was in line with the extraordinary budget increases seen in recent years.

Recently, however, as the Fox News piece reports, the White House has begun to take tenuous steps toward giving the appearance of demanding increased transparency from the United Nations.

In a speech delivered last September, Ambassador Torsella said:

For a decade now, the United Nations regular budget has grown dramatically, relentlessly, and exponentially.... This growth has significantly outpaced the growth of the budgets of almost all the Member States that comprise the UN. I am not drawing a comparison between the United Nations and the United States, but between the United Nations and the rest of the world....

The United States, therefore, calls for a comprehensive, department-by-department, line-by-line, review of this budget, with the aim of achieving...a real, meaningful, and sustainable reduction in



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expenses from the last biennium, and the first steps in a new course of fiscal restraint and prudence at the UN.

Not surprisingly, Torsella's address didn't go over very well with the burgeoning band of so-called developing nations which are slavering to sidle up to the bottomless trough of money that has always reliably flowed from Washington to the Third World.

In order to proclaim the specifics of the Obama administration's plan to reduce waste at the United Nations, [a letter was recently published](#) by the office of Ambassador Torsella. The document sets forth several suggestions (and that's all they are) for how to bring the United Nations under control. Here are a few of those points:

- Bring discipline and restraint to UN budgets;
- Shrink the bureaucracy and right-size the UN staff;
- Bring private sector sensibility to the UN;
- Reform the budget process;
- Increase transparency throughout the UN system;
- End peacekeeper misconduct; and
- Deploy the right people to the right place at the right time.

While all of the recommendations would undoubtedly impress the sector of the population that would be impressed by the inclusion of so many consulting keywords — “shrink,” “reform,” “transparency” — more astute advocates of constitutional liberty recognize that once again our elected leaders are drawing nigh unto extricating ourselves from this global governance morass while their hearts are far from it.

For example, consider the Heritage Foundation's comparison of the words of reform to the deeds thereof:

The budget “cut” was not, for the most part, reached through decisions to reduce the budget in a manner that would have a lasting impact on the budget — that is, permanently eliminating mandates, programs, or other activities that would lead to a lower baseline in future U.N. budget negotiations.

Finally, in order to understand who President Obama and Ambassador Torsella consider the last word in matters pertaining to the UN and the U.S. contribution to its ever-expanding encroachment into the sovereignty of the United States and the other member nations, one need only realize that Torsella did not make an accounting of the success of the administration's UN policy to the people's elected representatives in Congress, but rather [he dutifully reported to the cabal of insiders at the Council on Foreign Relations](#).



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