

Published on Monday, December 26, 2005 by [OneWorld.net](#)

U.S. Opposes Litany of Global Treaties in 2005

by Haider Rizvi

UNITED NATIONS - Twenty-six years ago, the United Nations adopted a treaty that is often described by human rights experts as the international "Bill of Rights" for women.

Today that treaty has been endorsed by more than 170 nations. However, while the entire industrial world fully supports the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the United States is the only developed nation that continues to oppose it.

Opponents of U.S. ratification fear that it might affect U.S. policies, but most women's rights groups in the United States and abroad reject this notion.

"There is no good reason why the United States is not ratifying CEDAW," says Ritu Sharma, director of the Washington, D.C.-based Women's Edge Coalition, an umbrella group representing 180 non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

"It simply lacks the political will" to ratify the treaty, she adds.

Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, the treaty defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets an agenda for national action to end abuse of women's human rights.

But CEDAW is not the only international treaty that Washington is reluctant to sign on to.

Recently, when the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) voted to adopt a new treaty that protects cultural rights worldwide, the United States stood alone in its opposition.

The treaty allows nations to maintain, adopt, and implement policies they deem appropriate to protect the diversity of cultural expressions on their territory.

The U.S. rejected the treaty by arguing that it could have a chilling effect on the ongoing negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

"This convention invites abuse by enemies of democracy and free trade," U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told UNESCO members in a letter in October.

And just a few days ago when government leaders from around the world gathered in the Canadian city of Montreal to take further steps to curb global warming, once again the U. S. turned its back on the international community.

Despite strong persuasion efforts from other nations, the U.S. persisted in its refusal to embrace the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement setting targets for industrialized countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions.

Though responsible for some 35 percent of worldwide emissions, the U.S. pulled out of the treaty in 2001, saying that implementing it would gravely damage the national economy. Many treaty proponents argue, however, that transitioning the U.S. economy to emit fewer greenhouse gases would create jobs.

The Bush administration has also called the Kyoto treaty "deeply flawed" because it does not require developing nations to commit to emission reductions.

The list of U.N. treaties that Washington opposes goes on and on. U.S. leaders continue to reject the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on nuclear weapons, the Treaty Banning Antipersonnel Mines, a protocol to create a compliance regime for the Biological Weapons Convention, the Antiballistic Missile Treaty, the International Criminal Court treaty, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Washington is also not complying with the Chemical Weapons Commission and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and refused to let the U.N. Human Rights Commission conduct a probe into the alleged torture abuse of prisoners at Guantanamo and other detention centers.

While the vast majority of U.N. member-states support these treaties, U.S. opposition can almost always be expected whenever diplomatic talks are held to improve international agreements.

Currently, the U.S. is locked in a diplomatic fight with the rest of the international community over U.N. finances.

Bolton wants the U.N. to make administrative and management changes before the U.S. approves the U.N. biennial budget before the end of this year, a demand that top U.N. leaders and other diplomats have described as unreasonable.

"It's going to be tough," U.S. ambassador John Bolton told OneWorld in a recent conversation.

The current U.S. administration's propensity for isolationism in the arena of international affairs has not only angered its critics among the diplomatic community and civil society leaders, but also those who have been Washington's allies for a long time.

"It's clear, carefully balanced, and consistent with the principles of international law and fundamental human rights," Timothy Craddock, the British ambassador, said of the treaty on cultural diversity at the UNESCO meeting in October.



While giving reasons for voting in support of the treaty, he also added that his country and the European Union had indeed "agreed to disagree" with "one country"--meaning the United States.

Meanwhile, within the United States, rights activists like Sharma from the Women's Edge Coalition wonder why their country stands so alone.

"The U.S. wants to protect women's rights around the world, including in the Middle East. It is supposed to be human rights leader," she says. "But that rings a little hollow if it does not sign a women's rights treaty."

Copyright © 2005 OneWorld.net.

###

 Printer Friendly Version  E-Mail This Article

FAIR USE NOTICE

This site contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of environmental, political, human rights, economic, democracy, scientific, and social justice issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Common Dreams [NewsCenter](#)

A non-profit news service providing breaking news & views for the progressive community.

[Home](#) | [Newswire](#) | [Contacting Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Donate](#) | [Sign-Up](#) | [Archives](#)

© Copyrighted 1997-2005
www.commondreams.org