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U.S. Retreating From UN System, New Report Finds

Bush Administration's Opting Out of Treaties Damages Global Leadership

Minneapolis – The U.S. is adopting fewer international treaties, opting out of previous treaty commitments, and often finds itself isolated among the international community on treaties that limit nuclear arms and protect workers, the environment, women and children, concludes a new report on the United Nations treaty system by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

The report, *The Treaty Database: A Monitor of U.S. Participation In Global Affairs* by IATP's Patricia Jurewicz and Kristin Dawkins, found that the Senate has ratified only 10 treaties since 2000. Of those 10, four of the treaties were actually signed during the Clinton Administration. Five of the six treaties passed by the Senate represented the interests of specific industries, with only one related to social development.

Perhaps most alarming, since 2000 the Bush Administration has dropped the U.S. government's support of at least five major UN treaties including the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty and the International Criminal Court. The Bush Administration's withdrawal from the ABM treaty in 2002 was the first time a major power has withdrawn from a nuclear treaty after it had become legally binding. North Korea opted out of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty in 2003, citing new U.S. aggression on nuclear weapons.

"This retreat from the UN system makes it much harder for the Bush Administration to lead at the international level," said Kristin Dawkins, IATP's Vice President of International Programs. "By pulling out of long-held treaties, the Bush Administration has actually weakened the international rule of law. It has set a dangerous precedent that other countries could follow in areas such as arms trade and nuclear weapons."

Of the 549 treaties reviewed for the report, the United States has ratified only 157, or 29%. Last week at the UN annual meeting countries from around the world took 101 treaty actions. The U.S. took none. Other key findings of the report include:

- The U.S. has ratified just 14 of the International Labor Organization's 162 active treaties, 12 of 38 environmental treaties, six of 21 human rights treaties, two of 12 treaties that address traffic in

persons, the first Geneva Convention but not the two related protocols, about half of 23 treaties protecting intellectual property, and all 13 treaties addressing international terrorism;

- Only two countries have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the United States and Somalia (which currently has no sitting government.)
- The U.S. has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, but 178 other countries and at least 15 U.S. states have supported it.
- Of the nuclear-capable states, China, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the U.S. have not ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

“International law creates a system of stability,” said Dawkins. “It helps to prevent wars between countries, limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction, address poverty and disease, and support basic human rights around the world. The UN treaty system offers a unique opportunity to help lift the standard of living for people worldwide and improve global stability and security.”

Repeated polls show the majority of Americans are in favor of the UN. The Program for International Policy Attitude (PIPA) has a variety of polling results showing that more than 70% of Americans have a positive view of the United Nations; they want the U.S. to be an active UN member and cooperate with other countries by working through the UN.

A PIPA poll released yesterday found that most Americans misunderstand President Bush’s foreign policy positions. Majorities of Bush supporters incorrectly assume that Bush favors the U.S. being part of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (69%), the International Criminal Court (66%), the treaty banning land mines (72%), and the Kyoto Treaty on global warming (51%).

While the report reviewed 549 treaties, it focused on 42 prominent treaties considered to be the most significant worldwide. The treaties are grouped by the categories: Law of Treaties, Labor, Human Rights, Environment and Sustainable Development, and Peace and Security. The report also explains the global treaty-making process, and how the U.S. approves a treaty.

The report creates an on line database of treaties that will be continually updated. Currently, UN treaties are deposited in a number of different international agencies that are very difficult to search and analyze.

The entire report, *The Treaty Database: A Monitor of U.S. Participation in Global Affairs*, can be read at: iatp.org.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy promotes resilient family farms, rural communities and ecosystems around the world through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.