



Beyond the Headlines

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Dr. Esther Brimmer

Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations

US Priorities at the UN General Assembly

Allan Goodman: Just a word of welcome, we are glad to have the Women's Foreign Policy Group and Secretary Brimmer back at the Institute of International Education. We all heard a lot of speeches last week and especially from the Secretary General, and I was struck in almost every occasion that he spoke. He said, "we need you to support the United Nations." And you wouldn't think that in the 21st century, after so many wars and so many conflicts, you would need, again, to have the message that we need to support the UN. But it is everybody's work. We are very fortunate to have as our assistant secretary, someone who is committed to doing that and I know Pat will now formally introduce her.

Patricia Ellis: Yes. Thank you so much Allan, and welcome to everyone. We are so pleased to be back in New York again, back at IIE and to have Assistant Secretary of State Esther Brimmer. You have a real treat in store for you. We had her speak in Washington recently and had a wonderful presentation and discussion. We are so happy to be cosponsoring this event with IIE. We love coming here. It is a great setting, right across from the UN, and so thank you again for your hospitality.

Good afternoon and welcome to everyone. I am Patricia Ellis, President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We promote women's leadership and voices on pressing international issues of the day. Our discussion and presentation today is about US priorities at the General Assembly session, just following President Obama's speech last week, and of course the speeches of many heads of state and foreign ministers. So it is just an absolutely perfect time to be having this meeting. We really appreciate you taking the time. And I wanted to thank Assistant Secretary Brimmer for taking time out of her busy schedule. We know it is really busy with so many meetings up here. Just so you know, her position is that she leads the State Department's Bureau of International Organizations and their effort to advance US interests in international organizations, particularly in areas such as human rights, peacekeeping, food security, humanitarian relief and climate change.

We are extremely pleased by the turn out. This shows interest, a lot of people wanted to hear about you, hear your take on what went on, what the US priorities are and also about the president's speech. We are so glad to have so many diplomats with us here today and we work very closely with the women diplomats. I am just going to ask the diplomats to raise their hands and just tell us which country they are from and your title.

[Introductions of UN Ambassadors and DPRs of Moldova, Brazil, Macedonia, Latvia, and Estonia; the Consul General of Serbia; and representatives from the US Mission to the UN]

Ellis: It is now my privilege and pleasure to introduce Esther Brimmer, someone I have known for a really long time, who has had a very impressive career. I will just give you a few highlights in the interest of time. She was nominated by President Obama to the position of Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations in March 2009 and she was confirmed by the Senate that April. Before joining the State Department this time around she was deputy director and director of research at the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins SAIS in Washington. She previously had worked at

the State Department, two years in the State Department of Policy Planning. She also served the US delegation to the UN Commission on Human Rights. She was a Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. In another life she worked at the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Democratic Study Group at the US House of Representatives, and at McKinsey and Company—so a very diverse and impressive career that spans many sectors.

So after Assistant Secretary Brimmer speaks I am going to open it up with some questions and then we will go to the audience. Thank you all again for coming and thank you so much for joining us. *[Applause.]*

Esther Brimmer: Thank you very much. I would like to extend my thanks, especially to the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We greatly admire the work you do and we know the work well you do in Washington and I am delighted to meet with your membership here in New York. And a special thanks to IIE for hosting us again. As you know we are profoundly moved by the work you do and have done for decades for international education. There are many beneficiaries here around the table, and around the world. So it is very good to be back on these premises as well.

What I will do in my opening remarks, is just to highlight a couple points from the president's speech and then put those in the context of the work and priorities for the United States at the General Assembly. Because as all of you know, it is both the high-level week but all the work that we are going to be doing for the months to come in the General Assembly itself. So I will touch on some key priorities in these areas. I will also note how some of the work here in New York also connects with our work across the United Nations system as well. And that will definitely leave enough time for questions and discussion.

So as you know, in his remarks almost a week ago last Tuesday, the president gave his remarks talking about the implications of the attack on the US facility in Benghazi and the loss both of the US ambassador and his colleagues. But the point that he made was to put it in the context that an attack on civilized discourse is an attack on everybody. And that obviously here, as we are deeply embedded in the diplomatic community, you recognize that the importance of peaceful dialogue and the deliberate efforts to attack a diplomatic mission are truly profound. He talked about the responses to that, about recognizing that you do not retreat—that you engage—by trying to look at the importance of things such as freedom of speech and self determination. Returning to universal values to try and focus on the importance for real democracy and rule of law, of respecting rights of all people and the profound point that you do not disagree by shooting people in the streets or a violent demonstration, that what is important is ultimately the peaceful flow of ideas, and the peaceful exchange of ideas, and that, as he stressed, is the way to respond, not by constraining speech, but by more speech. Free speech is the answer to the attack on free speech. And so this is a theme that has been very profound in the US engagement in the United Nations system. For those of you who also follow events in Geneva know that even in 2009, when we first were on the Council, we worked with many others on a resolution on freedom of assembly and association. Again, at the Human Rights Council, which of course was going on at the same time as the high-level week just completed in Geneva last week, does important work again on freedom of association and assembly. We also note that many countries around the world have both expressed condolences, but also talked about needing to recommit to the values that animate all of us.

The president also continued in his comments about the need to, quote, speak out forcefully against violence, extremism, and marginalizing those who use violence to impede on the discussion amongst other countries. He, of course talked about the important role of peaceful protests. Protest is an important part of democratic exchange, but it must be done peacefully.

He turned to a variety of different issues, in terms of the Middle East, Syria issues—and I will throw it back to those in a moment—but he also gave an opportunity to look back over the importance of

multilateral engagement. And if we think towards the end of his speech, he highlighted some important changes that have happened that we have done together over the past couple years. He talked about the fact that the war in Iraq is over. He talked about the transition in Afghanistan and that the war will end and US military troops will leave on time in 2014. The important corollary to keep in mind is that we recognize that even though the military phase, frankly, is over in Iraq and will soon be over in Afghanistan that we recognize that it will be a long-term, important United Nations presence in both of those countries. There are important special political missions in both countries that are aiding both the Iraqis and Afghans on the civilian side of continued transition. So that in many of these areas there is very much the sense of the multilateral cooperation is particularly important.

He cited the fact that al-Qaeda has been weakened. We recognize that one of the most important aspects in this has been the multilateral sanctions for dealing with some of the most difficult issues and the multilateral cooperation on counterterrorism issues.

He talked about the work together to lock down nuclear materials. As you know, that early on in his presidency in 2009 one of the major speeches he gave was in Prague on recommitting to a world without nuclear weapons which of course provides the context for the work on the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review, but also continues to animate work that we do with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] and the work that we do here. And I think it also compliments the work that the Secretary General is doing on countering terrorism.

The president also talked about the important role of economic prosperity, the world working in a variety of multilateral settings including our traditional international financial institutions, the importance of development, as well as the work in the G20 and elsewhere. He talked about the important development program, and as you know the United States had last year, the new development agenda both fuels growth and tries to break the cycle of dependency and feeds in to the important conversation about the Millennium [Development] Goals, which we might touch on as well. As you know, early on we recommitted the United States to the Millennium Development Goals and we see ourselves as actively part of the conversation now on completing the targets of 2015, the conversation on the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals and the conversation about sustainable development.

He talked also about the new partnerships to combat corruption and promote transparent governments. And again the US has been working on this—especially last year—as an initiative, and he talked about the role of equality, particularly gender equality through the Equal Futures Partnership. While he was up here in New York he also had the chance to visit the Clinton Global Initiative where he talked about combating human trafficking.

I think that that gives you sort of a context for looking at how the US is engaging with the UN system, since we are engaging in all three pillars of the UN's work. Peace and security, human rights and development are the related issues in all of this. So that I think it is also interesting to note—if you take even human trafficking as a good example—we think about peace and security. Of course the United Nations has been thinking about the security of these states, but more important, the new approach that has evolved in the recent years is thinking about security of the people as part of peace and security. So for human trafficking, the issue is understanding how you combat something that directly affects people. It is something that not only affects governments, but it affects people. Even when you look at our discussion of peace and security, and I think we should go through and define what we are talking about in terms of peacekeeping issues, one of the things that the United States talks about a lot in terms of reinforcing our bilateral needs here is the importance of the protection of civilians when we are talking about peacekeeping operations. The majority of peacekeeping operations have the protection of civilians as part of their mandate. So we are thinking about, even on peace and security issues, the impact on the individual areas.

Also if we look back over the past week on the peace and security front, that we both addressed thematic issues as well as some of the most difficult issues on the international agenda. We think about the meetings that looked at both Sudan and South Sudan, which looked at the important agreement last week which covered security, oil, financial, nationality and trade issues, which is an important development. And at other high-level meetings we looked at that.

In addition to the many things that were in the headlines about work on the Middle East—I think that I would just note in case you have not seen the headlines—the importance of the memorandum of understanding signed between the United States and the League of Arab States focused particularly on how to deepen the relationship between the United States and an important regional organization. We in IO [International Organizations] were particularly happy about that because one of the things that we have tried to look at is the importance of regional organizations and their relationship to the global body. And so we looked at, to try to think about how recognizing that there will be a variety of differences of views, but also recognizing that the Arab League has played an important role obviously on crucial issues in the Middle East. Also we would like to do more in terms of supporting humanitarian assistance. We have found a need and we think that it is a good area for further cooperation, so we will again look at the relationship. One of my fellow officers from IO handled the documents between the Secretary and the Secretary General of the Arab League during that particular process. Again we are trying to be more innovative about how we think about international organization relationships.

Some of the other issues that were questioned and are on the agenda for the high-level meetings are the meetings on the Sahel issues and looking at how to meet the humanitarian crisis, while looking at trying to deal with combative violence and instability in the Sahel region, particularly in Mali. And those are challenging issues on the agenda.

There were also meetings looking at Somalia as well and some of the important things. We really need to stop and think about where we are in Somalia. That, compared to over the past 20 years—but even a year ago sitting around this table we might have said it is impossible—the fact that they have had a transition there and a government, that just would not have been imagined before. It is outstanding. Again, there is the important role of AMISOM [African Union Mission in Somalia] and African Union troops supported by the United Nations support office. Again, each of these absolutely are unsolvable without engagement with multilateral diplomacy.

There was also, at least on peace and security issues, quite a lot of attention looking at Syria. As the Secretary has said many times, that clearly we are blocked in the Security Council when trying to deal with Syria, but that does not mean that there should not be important additional efforts by the international community to support the Syrian people. The Secretary announced \$30 million in additional humanitarian assistance that will go through UN institutions. That brings US support for humanitarian assistance in Syria to \$130 million, up from \$100 million last week, and we have now announced that as well. There is also an additional \$15 million to support the Syrian opposition—nonviolent support, nonlethal support—for the nonviolent opposition. That brings the total US assistance for the opposition to \$45 million, and the idea again is to look at other ways to work in these areas, which will probably include additional unilateral and bilateral sanctions and multilateral sanctions.

There is also important work on combating weapons of mass destruction. Clearly there has been important work in supporting the existing Security Council sanctions as well as the work at the IAEA, which of course was also meeting earlier in the month of September and important measures were taken there.

We also looked, with regards to peacekeeping issues, during a lot of the sessions as well. On the human rights front, here again there will be both the important work that we have done in Geneva and it will be part of our work in the third committee here in New York in these next several weeks and months to come. But just to recall that over all of the past three years we have been able to strengthen

the Human Rights Council, to compliment efforts both in the UN and the Human Rights Council. There was also a renewal of the Commission of Inquiry for Syria, which again is extremely important, and the Human Rights Council is one of the few parts of the UN structure that is meant to be out even while the Security Council is not able to do so. There have been numerous resolutions in that area as well.

We touched on, also, the work on development issues and the important work that we will continue the conversation on supporting the next steps of the Millennium Development Goals. Also this week, the high-level panel met, as one of the initiatives of the Secretary General, which is co-chaired by Liberia, Indonesia, the United Kingdom. And so that first session was held this past Tuesday and will be part of the high-level panel between now and next spring. It is part of the larger conversation on the next steps of the MDGs and people's perspectives on what they see as the directions there.

Other issues that have come up, we have talked about both the Israel and Palestinian status efforts. As you know the United States is a strong supporter of both of the Israel and Palestinian authority, encouraging them both to get back to direct negotiations and hence the efforts to go through the United Nations before direct negotiations, actually distracts us from the actual efforts required to achieve long-term peace.

We also talked a lot about UN reform, transparency and accountability issues, especially during many of the meetings this past week. And it is not just because we are the largest payer which is an important factor, but we want the institution to work well, to be able to bring some of the innovations we have seen in different parts of the UN system to scale. We are happy to talk about innovations that are being applied in one agency applied to other agencies. There has been some really interesting progress that will cause us to question how we will continue to do that.

Overall, I think it does represent the fact that it is high time to be working on this area. That the president, in each of his trips to the UN, has talked about both the right of responsibility of states and to care for this institution and to try to make it better and to try to overcome some of the historical obstacles to actually say how to make this institution fit for the 21st century. And indeed it is a good time to be working on multilateral diplomacy. If you step back, and you think about how we are talking about historic changes, the emergence or reemergence of new powers who want to take more responsibility on the international stage—that is a good thing—and many of them want to do it in the UN. That is a good thing too. Even when we think about, again, world historical changes and we think about the Arab Awakening. Again, we think that there is an important role for bilateral support, and we think that multilateral institutions will absolutely be viable as many people in that part of the world who are also looking for international support as they go through political transitions. So it is a good time to be working on multilateral diplomacy. It remains a central plan of the administration's foreign policy agenda and I look forward to our discussion.

Ellis: Okay, and thank you so much. [*Applause.*] I am going to lead off with some questions on Syria, Iran and things that have been in the news and the president's speech. So on Syria, the situation continues to worsen. There are just more and more refugees everyday—something like 300,000 refugees. But the big frustration for most people seems to be with the Security Council and because that is what people hear about, you know, the fact that there can be no action there. So what has been happening that is hopeful around the margins during the UN General Assembly session on both Syria and Iran where there might be some movement? You talked about the Human Rights Council, usually people do not think of that as a source of action, but there is this Commission of Inquiry. There are just comments every day, one would expect it as a neighboring country, but the Turkish Foreign Minister condemned the Security Council for inaction as many others have done. So, I am just wondering, what can the UN do diplomatically to make some progress on the issue of Syria? And then you could talk a little bit about Iran. Or is it going to have to happen in regional organizations or is it going to be a combination, but what kind—any kind—of hope to make progress or make a breakthrough on these issues?

Brimmer: Thank you for the questions and this is indeed one of the most important and most difficult issues on the international agenda. Clearly the United States thinks the Security Council should be able to act on this issue—we voted for a resolution three times. We think it is wrong that it was vetoed by the Russian Federation and China. We think that it should have been possible to make what was clearly the international support for the Syrian people, earlier—that this is has clearly been going on almost two years. You can really see the peace and security implications. We thought it would be an important role for the Security Council and for other portions of the UN system. At the immediate point we do not see an immediate role for it in the Security Council, but that said, there are other avenues to look at. The first one is to recognize that there continues to be an important effort from the United Nations through the role of the Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, who has taken on one of the most difficult jobs, but is trying to be able to listen to all parties both inside and outside of Syria and to try to find a way for the United States to draw its support to the Mission and the Secretary General's effort in that area.

I think as you have already identified, this is an enormous humanitarian crisis. There are thousands, and thousands, and thousands, and thousands of displaced people inside Syria and those who have crossed into neighboring states. The neighboring states have been extremely generous. Turkey is an excellent example that has opened their doors, kept their border open to try to be able to provide assistance to people who are desperately, desperately in need. We think it is important that we continue to support the humanitarian efforts. I just talked about the increase in US support. Unfortunately the humanitarian appeal, the consolidation of humanitarian appeal, is fairly undersubscribed and we would encourage member states and others to contribute to that effort because that is one of the few ways to support the humanitarian efforts in the country. We also think it is important to try to work with the opposition elements to try and help them—again, the nonviolent opposition—to try to come together and create a more unified voice moving forward and we will support that. As I have talked about, through funding, to try to help them with their logistics communication as they try to more helpfully express the needs of the Syrian people.

We also think that there are other mechanisms to this as well. The UN Human Rights Council, as I have mentioned—one of the goals that the United States had is to try to make the Human Rights Council a more agile body commenting on key issues. It has been able to do so in Cote d'Ivoire, in the case of Libya and the case of Syria. There were three special sessions on Syria that provided an opportunity for members of the international community to talk about their concerns about what is going on in Syria. That of course complimented the not one, but two General Assembly resolutions where, again, member states talked about the need to address this issue.

But in terms of the practical areas that come out of that both there is the Commission of Inquiry itself which has provided some of the best, impartial reports based on interviews to try to talk about the human rights situation in Syria—because Syrians will not let them in—but at least they will try to document that as well. That it is important work for them to follow. There has also been an important emphasis on accountability as well. Some of the nongovernmental organizations are working on trying to gather evidence for accountability so that people who—ultimately when there is a change—people who committed the crimes will be held responsible.

Ellis: What about on Iran? Has anything happened during the General Assembly session with other meetings, which might lead to some kind of a diplomatic breakthrough, because there was the speech by Netanyahu where he was drawing the “red line” for military action?

Brimmer: Well the President was quite clear about the importance of Iran living up to its international peace and security obligations. The Security Council has numerous resolutions on Iran to make those commitments. And in his own speech he talked about the need for them to actually reassure the international community about their nuclear program, so that we have highlighted and continue to highlight that as an important part of the work that we do here. We think that also being able to

implement and ensure compliance with these nations is an important part of the work that we do here as well, and that is reinforced both by additional sanctions we have seen that the United States has put on particularly in the energy area, and finally obviously our work also in Vienna, that the IAEA complements our view that you need to have a strong, unified stance against a country that is posing a challenge to peace and security.

Ellis: Okay, one last question and then we will open it up. In terms of President Obama's speech, he threw out the challenge and the importance of press freedom. And then there were speeches by a number of heads of state which challenged him on that, particularly from Egypt, from Yemen, and saying that they have to do it their way, there are new rules. How concerned is the administration about this type of reaction? We know they are speeches, but I am just wondering, in terms it was a direct response to this challenge. They did say that they are against violence and the protests and all that, but on the issue of freedom of the press, which was a centerpiece of the president's speech.

Brimmer: Well essentially they are doing exactly what we support, which is open dialogue, where you disagree with each other. That is what you want. That is what you want when someone has a different view—explain it and explain why you have the view and why you disagree with it. We actually think that recognizing this is a hard issue. Serious people are trying to look at it—to respect the view that different people have views. However we think that going back to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which we all signed and that are really crucial. And that being able to encourage the expression of a wide variety of views is a much healthier way to deal with disagreement—to allow countries and allow people within countries to explore their differences in a peaceful way. As the president said in his speech, in the era of the internet, of Twitter, of everything else that allows you to send information around quickly—the idea that you can somehow constrain speech is just obsolete. You no longer can do that. It is just not technically possible. There are so many ways to spread information, and that's a good thing. And so we think that having a lot of debates is important and we think that they are important debates even within the variety of communities. We know many national governments and certain national governments made statements last week that went in a different direction. We will note that you also had a statement—a joint-statement put out by the Organization of Islamic Conference, the European Union, the League of Arab States and the African Union, together—which was also talking about media freedom and freedom of speech. There is a really important debate going on now, a really important discussion about, how do you both embody respect and tolerance? I think that some of the work we have done, again in the Human Rights Council in Resolution 1618 and the General Assembly supporting tolerance and free speech are really important. I also had the opportunity earlier this year in Tunisia, as part of World Press Freedom Day, which is a UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization] event that the United States hosted last year, and I had the opportunity to go this year with the US delegation. And for the US delegation the topic was so important to UNESCO's work and it was particularly important because we wanted to reinforce the idea that the debate for media freedom, blogger freedom, that conversation, that is part of creating a healthy society.

Ellis: Wonderful. Okay, well let's open it up for questions. Who wants to begin?

Question: My name is Judith Duncker. I am a professor of US foreign policy and international organizations so I am very, very thrilled to be here. I have two questions. One has to do with continuity and change. We are in the midst of a campaign and we are not sure where we will end up at the end of this. Do you perceive that there will be any substantive difference in foreign policy should we have a new president? That is my first question. My second question has to do with the president's speech. And as I viewed the speech one of the things that I felt was profoundly different in this speech is the fact that I believe for the first time in the history of the United Nations—and this is just my perception—I felt that the president was making a speech to an uncontrolled group of individuals. A group of individuals who were agitated regarding this video or whatever that was. And so I wondered if perhaps the notion of multilateralism has taken a new turn. That rather than having the ability to address and

work with heads of state, in an effort to affect international activities, now we have a group of individuals who are not at the table, but whose activities are profoundly affecting events. How do you perceive our nation handling this sort of issue? They are not at the table; however, their actions are affecting everything else.

Brimmer: Thank you for both questions, and starting with the first one, as you know, as a state appointed official I do not express a political view and I will not express one. I will note that there is an important element of bipartisan support for activities in the United Nations and most recently testified on Capitol Hill on peacekeeping in Africa. Again, we are having a very serious bipartisan conversation about the important, difficult issues in Sub-Saharan Africa and the several issues that are on the Security Council agenda. I think that is the spirit that most people have approaching these complex issues.

Turning to this question of non-state groups that is a very interesting evolution that I would say over the past decade, or longer, which is the reemergence of non-state groups as an important factor. They are both positive and negative. They are the blogger with the cell phone who is able to say, you know, "this is Tahrir Square." That is a non-state actor. It is the major foundation of corporations that are funding, say, for example, having the Gates Foundation be a major funder of the World Health Organization. That's great! There really is a positive effect. The negative factor is whether or not—think of actors on the Security Council agenda—and one of the things you think about and talk about are issues such as piracy and the return of piracy or other armed acts on the high sea. Things that you would think you would not see again in this century, those are non-state actors. Obviously after September 11th, again, thinking about the impact that non-state actors have had on security has been an important evolution. We now spend a lot of our time talking about actors that are not represented in the form of structured democracies. There are also important elements of regional organizations and other nontraditional groupings that have an effect in multilateral affairs. We think that is actually really interesting, and that international society is becoming much more diverse. You are seeing many more actors. It is part of the problem, but part of the solution too. So being more agile in responding to those is quite important and I am going to say two things. One, I am going to talk about one of my professors and diverge and regress here for a moment. [*Laughter.*] I was going to say one of the things that I thought was interesting back thousands of years ago when I did my own graduate work and I worked with Hedley Bull at Oxford, who talked about the new medievalism, which was the term for the return of actors before the consolidation of the state. I am not going to say whether or not this model fits. It is the idea that you have multiple, multiple actors and it is quite interesting and it changes the way you view the world over the past century. We think that that is quite powerful look at that as well. And then I will just say that in my own area, that when I came in as Assistant Secretary in the year 2009 one of the things we were trying to look at is how do we take a department, of course obviously the Department of State includes other diplomatic representatives of state. And one of the things that we tried to do just in our little corner of the world, we actually created a new office, which is the Office for Policy, Legal and Functional Organization which takes a nontraditional look at elements and causes people to think about coalitions, foundations, NGOs and other elements of civil society. But it is a really interesting question, and we have to try and be more agile in how we reach out to lots of groups that are hopefully part of the solution to all of these issues.

Ellis: Okay, any other questions? Well I will just jump in here while people are formulating their questions. We hear so many negative things, you know, that this is not resolved, that is not resolved. Can you tell us about the—you did reel off a number of things that took place during the General Assembly—what are some of these positive accomplishments that people should feel good about that we do not really hear that much about? You mentioned Sudan and things happened with food security and on so many different issues, but this does not get covered. So, can you give us some updates on what has happened?

Brimmer: Sure thing. Thank you. Indeed that important agreement that was decided again, between Sudan and South Sudan, and that agreement tends to look at a whole range of issues, including some of the oil issues and some of the difficult nationality issues between Sudan and South Sudan. And these

have been some of the really difficult issues because this is an extremely difficult conflict relationship both directly between Sudan and just looking at the UN engagement. There are three peacekeeping operations between the two countries, and as you have heard me say, Patricia, with the group, one third of all peacekeeping money goes to Sudan or South Sudan. It is a huge, huge commitment. And then if you look at personnel, that is also particularly significant. So that obviously from the UN point of view, working with the UN and continuing working with Sudan and South Sudan there is a lot of work to do. And the important work on nutrition, and I will highlight something that is interesting about this General Assembly is that I think many of the issues were important to the continuation of key themes. It was not just, oh you have a nice chat and you do not think about it again. Nutrition issues are very good examples. Many of you know that food security issues have been a major part of our engagement at multilateral affairs, working with many, many countries and many institutions, but one of the things that we highlight is looking at how you support nutrition in the early years, through the Scaling Up Nutrition event which is occurring each year at the General Assembly, again supporting those various food aid programs. The idea is to continue to support a part of long-term investment in food security, and that work continues as you actually have more work and that event highlights this as well.

And then I will just take a moment on the Equal Futures Partnership, which was brought up last week at an event and many countries were involved with this as well, including the United States. The head of UN Women, Executive Director Michelle Bachelet, as well as the head of the World Bank, showing the type and range of support looking at deepening both the political participation and especially economic participation, and using the power of many to try to work on these issues. So these are all part of the positive mechanisms of the UN General Assembly.

Ellis: So the UN General Assembly is filled with meetings. Meetings, meetings, meetings that people hear about. [*Laughter.*] And there was a fair amount written about the fact that the president left. Could you tell us about Secretary Clinton's activities during the General Assembly session?

Brimmer: Well as I mentioned—first off during his engagements—highlights occur based on priorities. And part of what we do is meet with organizations all year, and so the high-level week is part of American diplomacy. The president is central to part of the American diplomacy, so a lot of it takes place while he is there and a lot of it he does on the phone. He has been deeply involved in these issues wherever he has to be. The secretary also is in strong support of multilateral diplomacy. So we are deeply thankful that she has already been willing to participate in events, go to sessions, go to places where secretaries of state may have not been before, again, to reinforce the importance of multilateral diplomacy and working with others on issues. So the secretary's schedule has had a mix of bilateral meetings with key leaders and conversations with important parts of the multilateral structure. I think a good example is just this morning several leaders were invited to the Forum of Small States. The Forum of Small States was created by Singapore two decades ago—the 20th anniversary. I believe it is up to 105 members today. So over half the membership of the United Nations is made up of countries smaller than ten million people, and so this is a multilateral body and not a regional body with a political reach where many countries, they are finding ways to share information in very practical, innovative ways to address the needs of their people. Secretary Clinton was invited to come and comment and to participate in this 20th anniversary celebration. And the secretary recognized that precisely because we want to work with more countries on innovation and very practical ways to help real people, it was very important that the United States be there. So she wanted to address the first level secretary of state. So these are the types of things that she is doing.

Ellis: Okay, excellent. So now we will take a few questions together if you do not mind.

Question: Gillian Sorenson. Some of us have worked hard to try to generate stronger public support for the United Nations, and a recent poll said that 80% of people support the United Nations in a general way. But that support is very quiet, in any case. I was shocked to hear that Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a congresswoman from Miami, put forward a bill, that you know very well, that in effect purposed to gut the UN, to withdraw most funding, get back many of our investments there and

something like 147 congressmen voted for that. That number, to me, is staggering. It was certainly not enough to pass the bill, but can you imagine members of Congress who have no sense of how important it is to engage with the rest of the world? So I, and other members, are wondering how we can galvanize or mobilize that larger majority, that quiet majority, to create support for the United Nations? I wish and ask that, I know that you do it all the time, but that the president speak more often about the UN. And not just for the General Assembly. And I have a particular question—it has been 60 years since a president addressed the United Nations in the inaugural speech. If he is reelected, I hope you would make a strong effort to... [*Laughter.*] So how could we do better?

Question: I am Connie Chen from Chen Planning. I advise international, specifically China, state-owned enterprises. My question is relating to Japan, China [*Inaudible.*] the violence down in—and the United States is part of it because they were involved with negotiating with—

Brimmer: I just want to say that I do not actually cover that particular issue. It is an extremely important issue, but I do not actually handle East Asia and the Pacific, it is specific to my colleagues.

Question: [*Inaudible.*] Certain policy decisions or what kind of thinking, it must have been talked about...

Brimmer: I could comment but it is not my direct responsibility. I will always let you know what I do and what I don't know.

Question: My name is Alyssa Anchelowitz from NYU. Can you please describe some of the reasons why there has been talk about UN reform like you had discussed earlier?

Brimmer: Okay, thank you. My apologies, again for not being the president. I do not want to comment on an area that I do not know in depth as well. So I will take up the point about public support of the United Nations and then on UN reform issues.

On public support, indeed it is a very important point and the UN Foundation is extremely important in talking about the larger importance of multilateral diplomacy. And I think that, as you mentioned of course, that there is a withdrawal of support for the United Nations within the United States. The question is—when is that manifested? I think there has been extremely important work done over the past year and a half precisely, I think, in educating more people both in leadership positions and more broadly on the important work that the United Nations does in more places. There is also a void that strong views on the UN will happen no matter what is going on and the question is what can be done for the important work beyond that. I think also that some of the work, by the UN Foundation and others, has done included trying to talk very practically about some of the key work that the United Nations does. For example, one is, just to point out that earlier this year there was an important appeal held on Capitol Hill to talk about the UN's technical agencies and there were representatives of several of the technical agencies there—whether it was IAEA, whether it was the World Health Organization—which talked about the work that actually benefits Americans and people around the world everyday, which also enables you to talk about the specific work and then move to a larger conversation about the United Nations generally. Maybe you come and in and you are not familiar with the larger system. We can start to talk about the work that, let's say, that the World Health Organization does, and then let's say we talk about larger need for greater cooperation. I think that those are the very important types of ways of talking about getting the word out. As you know I have had the chance to talk around the country, again, you need to start out where people are, so when we are in New York we talk about protecting international property when we are out in California we talk about Asia and the Pacific Rim. We think about what is relevant. In Atlanta we talked about cooperation on international health efforts. And I think you see more relating to that. I also think that getting out in more ways, whether it's the web chats or whether it's finding different ways to reach different audiences who can benefit from particular

parts of our work, but it may not always link up with the UN system. So there is still, I think, a lot to do there, but there have been continued efforts to try and do more in that area as well.

And then specifically on UN reform efforts, I think a couple of things that I have seen clearly are about budget management reform issues in particular. One thing that I think is important is the many, many UN agencies have been working on implementing greater efforts and greater transparency. Again that allows for more insight to make sure that money is monitored as well. Any large organization, as the US knows very well, encourages transparency in a practical way. This is not a “gotcha idea,” this is how do we have proper oversight. So we now have more mechanisms in place. Audits are public and that allows for greater transparency.

We also think that it is important to continue, which has been taking way too long as you see, which is the software for greater management transparency started off so many years ago and has tried to improve that—trying to harmonize some of the accounting standards. That is taking a long time and should be moving along more quickly. But probably the most significant one has been in the past year, when you saw that for the first time in a decade and the second time in the life of the United Nations, the Secretary purposed a budget that was five percent below the previous budget. That is extremely important. We are all living in extremely difficult times. All of our national governments are having to be extremely careful in having to make reductions while trying to maintain high prevalence. We think that that has been a really important step by the Secretary General and we want to continue to support his efforts to maintain the reductions on the budget, while maintaining important programs. It's very hard to do.

Question: My other question is, in Secretary Clinton's efforts to meet with many other world leaders is there really a payoff on the Secretary of State trying to establish a formal personal connection with world leaders in terms of fostering better communication and more trust?

Brimmer: I would say that actually that is actually continuing the relationship, because of course she has traveled extensively, but also, as I have mentioned, that the diplomacy this week is actually complimenting our diplomacy around the year. So since the work this year has been able to be intensified by state-to-state conversations about issues you are already grappling with, and you are able to go one step farther and meet face-to-face. And everyone knows there is nothing like being able to have a further conversation because you are in the same room, which is why we think the UN high-level period is extremely important, but because it also compliments the longer-term efforts and initiatives that you are already working on.

Question: Yes. I am Sandy Thompson and I am the vice president of Global Girl Scouts of Girl Scouts USA and we have done quite a bit of work on the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals]. And I just wanted your opinion of what is working and what is not and what you are doing.

Brimmer: Indeed, we were talking about the important role of civil society and you are an excellent example there. The first thing to always keep in mind is that we think the actual Millennium Development Goals have been a remarkable effort to have a single set of objectives that member states were supporting, and how civil society can set some priorities which is an important feature. And if you look there have been some remarkable successes, to which a million people have been brought out of poverty. We do have important improvements on access to primary education, but then you still have to look at those areas that still need significantly more work. There are some MDGs where there has not been that type of progress. We also note that in many countries in conflict, little has been reached, and so thinking about the intersection of conflict and development and we talk about other ways to look into that, and then also looking at the shift in the nature of poverty. The MDGs have tried to focus specifically on the decreasing of poverty and I think there has been important progress made, particularly in countries that have become wealthier themselves. And so that one of the challenges will be that—maybe a generation ago we talked about poor countries and now you have significant poverty in countries that are becoming wealthier. So we have to think about how you think about that and how

you address that when looking at the next step in the MDGs. You may have to recognize that now middle income countries still have poverty, and that just saying poor countries, middle income and rich countries may not be a nuanced enough look at that. So that is an important aspect to look at.

Also, looking at some of the intersections of that, such as the movement of people and urbanization, again poverty is in different places. There is rural poverty and there is also urban poverty, which brings its own sets of challenges. And I think we also need to try to think how you recognize when progress is made and going back to speaking out about what is wrong is something we are trying to do more and talking about the results. We talked about the progress with the MDGs and we wish that we had come up with great knowledge in a report—but not in July—you know because I don't think that has good visibility and I think that is something we need to highlight to say against sometimes skeptical actors who think that nothing ever changes. And say, wait a minute we are still making important progress here and note what is actually happening. So we are trying think about how you think about more subtly the next steps in addressing poverty and then thinking about sustainability issues.

Question: I think the other thing that happens with the MDGs is, to your point, that it indicates to people about what the UN is doing and the role that we have played together. But I think that anything we do moving forward, if we can take that into consideration and get people to work within the United States as far as work with the UN—

Brimmer: And that is a very good point. Even if the person down the street does not understand the subject, the idea is that there is a set on which people have agreed and they have to do it, education, fighting hunger, things people could readily understand, was an important element.

Question: I am Barbara Rochmann and I am with the New York County Lawyers Association and we work with the Commission on the State of Good Women, an NGO group and so forth and there has been a very strong sense of depression, almost, about what has happened lately at the UN in regards to women's issues—the failure to come up with some kind of conclusion after the commission work. So there is a feeling that women issues generally at the UN are being attacked more and are starting to fall back. Now can you comment on whether that perception is correct, or whether it is somewhat off-base?

Brimmer: I have a different view. I would say that you are actually seeing important steps within the UN system to support gender equality—women's rights—but gender equality generally. That is not to say that we should ignore efforts to pushback, efforts from a varieties of entities that are unhappy with greater progress of gender equality who will probably continue to resist at very different points and I think you already see that. But I think there is important progress to keep in mind. First, we actually think that the consolidation of four agencies into UN Women, we think that is actually really important and allows a much greater focus and much higher visibility towards gender equality issues, having the stature of a former president, Michelle Bachelet, using her expertise and energy for this. That is really important as well and will really help focus efforts within the UN system and the member states as well. I mean that is an important change which will help push forward in the UN system. I think what also is important, i mentioned, is the Equal Futures Partnerships, but that is only an example of efforts that makes several different types of actions. Going back to our conversation earlier, about the idea that you need to have national government, and the private sector, and foundations all being part of this conversation, we think that is interesting. We are seeing more of these types of partnerships that are bringing together major corporations, that recognize that societies that have rule of law and gender equality are probably the most stable and places where they want to invest and they see benefits as well. Those conversations happen with the same advocacy. I think that that has also lead to really very practical efforts on trying to deepen women's empowerment. And even within the big initiatives, we are talking about food security, again that the food security efforts have really focused particularly on women farmers, particularly important in Sub-Saharan Africa. So when I sit down and I talk to the heads of UN food agencies in Rome, that there, again, food and agricultural organization in their population include security efforts and they are working a lot and talking to people about how do you

empower women farmers both to grow, to get capital to invest, get infrastructure to get the product to the market. You know those are very practical components and we are seeing some very positive issues with gender equality. I also think that you are seeing important conversations, particularly with the help of very many nongovernmental organizations, with dialogues with men about changing society, because all of us need to be parts of social change. There are very creative things going on now than a few years ago. It is not all in one direction, but we want to look at those elements.

Question: Good afternoon, my name is Marissa Slate, and I'm here with the Attorney General's office, and my question relates to climate change. As we are now past the Rio +20, what do you consider to be coming on some of the challenges and developments to the geopolitical system?

[Two inaudible questions followed.]

Brimmer: Just quickly to say on climate change, that of course not only from Kyoto, but also following up from Copenhagen and Durbin that we hope that there were important elements, including national pledges and next steps on climate change. We are also looking at how you use follow-up from Rio +20 and we would support a General Assembly resolution, which would probably welcome the outcome document from Rio +20 as part of the work here at the General Assembly this fall. And we also think we want to try to include climate change as part of our own bilateral funding, as well, just to give you the picture of the initiatives of the multilateral work. I was out in the Pacific with the secretary at the Pacific Island Forum and then reaching out to different international bodies, and one of the things we're doing in that region is we opened an AID office that works with many of the Pacific Island countries and the funding there specifically targets mitigated effects of climate change. We are trying to look at multiple vehicles to address that. That is a quick snapshot of how we are trying to link what we are advocating multilaterally and some of our bilateral action.

Then the question looking at what the US should do. I think part of it is that the US really sees that the engagement with all three pillars of the UN system and we are looking in those areas trying to look at, in particular, the long-term structural change, and so we have tried to look at both—and this is why I think the development argument is particularly important to how you create prosperous societies with wealthy people over time. We have also looked at whether peace and security, human rights, and development, all of them, and say, well what's the current issue of the day? But also how you can strengthen the institutions. So on peace and security, not only are we talking about the actual violence—a mix of responses in the Sahel, a mix of responses down in South Sudan—how do you sharpen and improve mechanisms unique to the Security Council—peacekeeping and international sanctions. How do you make sure that they are all well crafted and work? And the Security Council needs to be well managed.

On human rights, we have talked about how you deal with immediate issues such as Syria or Libya but we also have said—how do you strengthen the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council? And similarly on development, we talked about again, how you get serious on the next steps on the MDGs, but also how do we work together on the institutions of development in terms of US policy and also complimenting the work internationally.

Then comes the question about support of democracy—and if I am answering your questions correctly—in terms of democracy, the president has been quite vocal about his support of the United States for the Arab Awakening, for trying to encourage the dialogue within countries as they address change. We will recognize the important role that the United Nations and other institutions play in providing the support for democratic transitions, election management, mediation and other classic tools of the UN.

Ellis: Okay, well we have come to the end of a wonderful program and thank you so much. *[Applause.]* Thank you all for coming and thank you for your good questions. We will see you next time, and thank you again, Allan.