

UN Wrap-Up 2008 – A Summary of 2008 at the UN
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“Across the world, in countries rich and poor, women are being beaten, trafficked, raped and killed. These human rights violations do more than harm individuals; they undermine the development, peace and security of entire societies... All of us – men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders – have a responsibility to help end violence against women. States must honour their commitments to prevent violence, bring perpetrators to justice and provide redress to victims. And each of us must speak out in our families, workplaces and communities, so that acts of violence against women cease.”

–Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Due to space constraints, this report covers only a small fraction of the work and accomplishments of the UN. Many links to web sites have been included so that LWV members can find further information.

Secretary General – In February 2008, during the UN Commission on the Status of Women Meeting, Secretary General Ban launched his campaign to end violence against women. The whole UN system is involved in this effort. For some background information on this violence see <http://www.un.org/women/endviolence/docs/VAW.pdf> and <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/launch/english/v.a.w-exeE-use.pdf>.

Climate Change – For a detailed overview report on some of the UN work on climate change, please see: <http://www.un.org/climatechange/pdfs/Acting%20on%20Climate%20Change.pdf>
To avoid confusion, here are some definitions of abbreviations that are used by the UN in regard to climate change:

- **IPCC** - *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*: They produce reports and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.
- **UNFCCC** - *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*: This treaty has been ratified by almost every country (192) in the world, including the United States.
- **Kyoto Protocol**: 184 parties have ratified this optional protocol to UNFCCC. The United States has not yet ratified it. This protocol sets binding targets for industrialized countries.
The meeting of parties next year will be COP 15 and CMP 5. See below.
- **COP** - *Conference on Parties to the Convention*, **CMP** - *Meeting of Parties*
- **REDD** - *Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries*
- **UNEP** - *The United Nations Environment Programme*

The last United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Poznań, Poland from December 1-12, 2008. The conference was considered an important half-way mark in the two-year negotiating process to reach a post-2012 climate change agreement in Copenhagen in 2009. (2012 is the year the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC ends.) Among the decisions made in

Poznań were agreements on technology transfer both for mitigation and for adaptation technologies.

The United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment. Some of their resources that might be helpful to League members may be found here: <http://www.unep.org/tools/default.asp?ct=clim>

General Assembly - Climate change, reform of the United Nations Security Council, and the global food crisis were top priorities for the General Assembly during its 62nd session, according to H.E. Srgjan Kerim, President of the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. (He is from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.) H.E. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann from the Republic of Nicaragua is President of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly which began in September 2008. When the 63rd session met in September it decided to focus on the following issues for the next year:

- Democratization of the United Nations, including evaluations of the work of the Security Council and of the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as revitalization of the General Assembly
- Financing for development to end hunger, poverty and lack of access to clean water and basic health services
- Climate change in a divided but ecologically interdependent world
- Achieving the goals of the United Nations Decade: "Water for Life" (2005-2015)
- Implementation of the Counter-Terrorism Strategy, with full respect for human rights
- Human security as a part of international peace and security, including disarmament and nuclear control

The General Assembly will also examine these issues from a gender perspective and will continue to consider issues relating to system-wide coherence, sustainable development and HIV/AIDS.

In December, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions on violence against women: Resolution 63/155 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women; and Resolution 63/156 on trafficking in women and girls.

As some League members know, the General assembly has six main committees that do much of the work of the General Assembly before bringing items to the full session. (It is something like the committees of the US Congress.) The six main committees are:

- First Committee (Disarmament and International Security Committee) is concerned with disarmament and related international security questions
- Second Committee (Economic and Financial Committee) is concerned with economic questions
- Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee) deals with social and humanitarian issues
- Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization Committee) deals with a variety of political subjects not dealt with by the First Committee, as well as with decolonization
- Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary Committee) deals with the administration and budget of the United Nations
- Sixth Committee (Legal Committee) deals with international legal matters

UN Peacekeepers –Sixty Year Anniversary – More than 2,400 United Nations peacekeepers from some 118 countries died while serving under the UN flag during the past 60 years. Today,

more than 110,000 men and women, in uniform and civilians, are serving in 20 peace operations managed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). Since 1948, 63 peacekeeping operations have been deployed by the United Nations, 17 in the past ten years. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of military personnel, as well as tens of thousands of UN police and other civilians, from more than 120 countries, have participated in UN operations.

Millennium Development Goals (MDG) - At the High-Level Event on the MDG, held in New York on September 25, 2008. Money was raised for the MDGs. Secretary Ban summed up the results this way. “The gathering exceeded our most optimistic expectations” and noted that it generated an estimated \$16 billion, including some \$1.6 billion to bolster food security, more than \$4.5 billion for education and \$3 billion to combat malaria. It was noted at the conference that both the current financial crisis and problems caused by climate change can endanger reaching the Millennium Development Goals. To see US commitments look at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/pdf/commitments/Commitments%20compilation%20ENGLISH.pdf> and search for United States.

In the 2008 report on the MDGs, Sha Zukang Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs says: “It is only in the past few years that MDG-related data for the period since 2000 have become available. Encouragingly, for many variables, the data show accelerated progress since that date. This suggests that the Millennium Declaration and related undertakings did make a difference to development accomplishments.” See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/The%20Millennium%20Development%20Goals%20Report%202008.pdf> Also, the following website allows you to look at goals by location or by goals: <http://www.mdgmonitor.org/>

Human Rights - The UN and the world celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted under the leadership of former League member and former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. For current information, see the website of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/WelcomePage.aspx>

US and UN Treaties - Watch for Senate action on The Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). A push by many organizations is afoot to have them ratified by the US Senate in 2009. The League supports these treaties. Some other UN treaties might also be considered.

In November, the General Assembly decided to establish the office of a **Special Representative to the Secretary-General On Violence Against Children**. This was in response to a special study and report on violence against children. See <http://www.violencestudy.org/r25>. To date, no appointment to this position has been made.

US Funding for UN – It is estimated that the US is \$1.5 billion to \$2.2 billion in debt to the UN. (Estimated because the US and the UN calculate the amount differently.) See <http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/issues/funding>.

Special Representatives of Secretary General -The Secretary General appoints many experts as special representatives to help him with his work. See a list at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/SRSG/table.htm> Note that the bottom of the list contains special representatives for particular issues, rather than for countries. Of special note are:

- Dr. Edward C. Luck as Special Representative on Proposals on Responsibility to Protect. Some long time League members might remember when Dr. Luck spoke at a LWVUS Convention.
- Two new Special Envoys on Climate Change: Festus Mogae, former President of Botswana; and Srgjan Kerim, former President of the United Nations General Assembly (sixty-second session), former Foreign Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- Radhika Coomaraswamy, appointed in a previous year, is the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict
- Yakın Ertürk also appointed in a previous year serves in the post formerly held by Dr. Coomaraswamy, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.