

Submission No 11

4 Casula Street
Cowan Hills,
Qld. 4054
10 July 2002

ms. Grant Harrison,
Secretary,
Joint Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear ms. Harrison,

Thank you for your letter of 13 June concerning public hearings on Australia's activities at the UN following the Committee's June 2001 Report Australia's role in United Nations reform and inviting additional comments.

I informed Reges noble by telephone of my intention to make a few comments and to take the opportunity of congratulating the Committee on the excellent and comprehensive Report.

It appears that the United Nations is having trouble carrying out its objectives of preserving international peace and security and human rights, and of moving towards a culture of Peace, as wars and weapons and abuses of human rights continue to escalate worldwide.

2.

It is of great concern to me that Australia has joined the USA, the world's only super-power, in its so-called "war on terrorism", escalating militarism and the arms trade and diverting resources to war-making rather than carrying out criminal investigations and working through the United Nations. Civilian lives have been lost and their environment further destroyed, especially by the use of modern and illegal weaponry such as cluster bombs and depleted uranium in Afghanistan.

I am also concerned at the talk of Australia joining the USA in possible "pre-emptive strikes" against Iraq, with the stated purpose of removing the leader of that wretched country.

Australia seems to have done little in pressuring Israel to stop its illegal military occupation of Palestinian land and to adhere to UN resolutions. The Palestinian Authority has repeatedly called for UN intervention to stop the bloodshed and destruction so that everyone can get on with repairing their lives once again.

at the same time, the US still uses its power of Veto in the UN Security Council against the votes of other members.

3.

I am pleased that after all the effort put into development of the International Criminal Court, Australia eventually decided to ratify the Statute so that the Court may be established.

It would also be in the best long-term interests of Australia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on climate change before we are left out in the cold.

Australia could also become a better international citizen in complying with UN Conventions and Protocols on the treatment of asylum seekers.

We are all a part of the UN system, as individuals and through NGOs as well as by governments and we have a responsibility for upholding human rights in Australia. Being part of the UN Human Rights system means working with the international community instead of throwing up enormously costly barriers.

I would like to know if Australia has signed the Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by Land, Sea and Air, which is supplementary to the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime. The Protocol aims at identifying people smugglers while at the same time protecting refugees.

4.

I understand the Protocol came into existence in March 2001.

I am also interested in knowing if the Committee has any news on progress at the UN Department of Disarmament, in particular on development of a Registry of small arms and light weapons. I see this as an important part of a strategy of Preventive action, referred to in Chapter 6 of the Committee's 2001 Report.

I await with interest the Government agencies response to the Recommendations of the Committee's Report in particular, progress reports on structural and financial reforms of the UN. Incidentally, in my view, a UN Global Compact with Corporations will undermine the integrity of the UN and will give large corporations greater access to UN decision-making at the expense of NGOs. This is even more relevant with the corruption crisis in the corporate world continuing.

Finally, I agree with the Committee's conclusions on the general misunderstanding of the work and purpose of the UN. With this in mind I trust the government will provide the UNAA and UNYA (and other NGOs in Australia) with proper funding as

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a way of educating the community in this respect. (Recommendation 20) (and 21).

I await with interest the Government's response to the Recommendations of the Committee's June 2001 Report and I look forward to hearing the outcome of this year's public hearings.

Yours sincerely
(Ms.) ~~Ashley~~ Williams.