



ISSUE BRIEF

OBAMA, THE U.N. AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION VEERS TO THE LEFT
ON ABORTION AT THE UNITED NATIONS

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From March 2 to March 13, 2009, the 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women ("CSW") met at U.N. Headquarters in New York City.

The topic of this year's session was "the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS." At the end of the session, as at the end of every session, the CSW issued its "Agreed Conclusions." The Agreed Conclusions contain many worthwhile and thoughtful recommendations pertaining to the care of patients with HIV/AIDS. Nonetheless, pro-abortion forces tried to politicize the Conclusions with a "reproductive rights" agenda, designed to promote an unrestricted right to abortion around the world. This is not surprising - it happens every year at the CSW. The most distressing development was the emergence of the United States as an active ally of the anti-life forces at CSW.

The United States, in giving unqualified consent to the Agreed Conclusions, signaled a significant change in national policy towards abortion at the international level, and a return to the pro-abortion policies of the administration of William J. Clinton. The Clinton administration had attempted to promote abortion through a series of U.N. conferences that were actually devoted to other topics, in particular, the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. President Obama's Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton, had served as the head of the U.S. delegation to the Beijing conference.

At CSW, the United States joined Agreed Conclusions affirming the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action without adding the explanation of position

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typically insisted upon by the George W. Bush administration, to wit: that such agreement did not constitute a reaffirmation of any language in those documents that can be interpreted as promoting the legalization or expansion of abortion.

The United States also agreed to the proposition that “ratification of CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), the Convention of the Rights of the Child (“CRC”), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (“CRPD”) constitute a legal and policy framework to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men,” even though the United States has not ratified any of these treaties. Treaty ratification is, of course, assigned by the Constitution to the Senate, not to the Administration, and the Senate has not considered ratification of these treaties. Further, the CRC and CEDAW treaties establish “interpretative committees,” which have been promoting a radical social agenda, including, *inter alia*, abortion, prostitution and the elimination of Mother’s Day. (The CRPD committee has had insufficient time to establish its track record, as CRPD was only prepared for possible ratification by states in March 2007.)

Reports from New York indicated that the United States sided with delegations from nations such as Canada and New Zealand to try to include a “comprehensive right to sexual and reproductive health services” in the Agreed Conclusions, language which pro-abortion groups have claimed, since the Cairo conference, are code words for “abortion rights.” However, the final document lacked the reference to “health services.”

If the first U.N. meeting during the Obama administration is any guide, we can expect the United States to join forces promoting abortion throughout the world.

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