

**STATEMENT OF NEW YORK STATE SENATOR MARTIN J. GOLDEN
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

“US Financial Involvement in Renovation of U.N. Headquarters”

Thursday, July 21, 2005

Chairman Coburn, members of the Subcommittee, and invited guests I am New York State Senator Martin J. Golden of Brooklyn, NY. On behalf of my New York State Senate Republican Majority colleagues, I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify and explain to the subcommittee members my efforts to put a stop to a crucial piece of New York State legislation necessary for the United Nations planned renovation and expansion.

Typically, a New York State Senator rarely engages in issues with International Organizations. But late in the fall of 2004, it was brought to my attention that a bill was poised for passage, in the New York State Senate which would eliminate a children's playground adjacent to the United Nations and swap it for another site, thereby allowing the United Nations renovation and expansion project to move forward.

Land swap deals that improve public space are fairly commonplace in New York State because they have community support and in some instances municipalities are required to get approval from the Legislature.

Supporters of the bill believe that the continued vitality of the United Nations site is important to the City of New York, the State and the world community. The intent of the bill is to foster an appropriate planning process with due deference to the need of the local community for parks and historic preservation.

I agree that the continued vitality of the United Nations site is important to the City of New York, the State and the world community. But I objected to rewarding the United Nations with taxpayer dollars and the privilege of expanding in New York because it is a mismanaged and deeply troubled organization.

United Nations leadership is responsible for the organizational mismanagement and the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of Secretary General Kofi Annan and his failure to implement a standard of accountability and transparency.

Under Mr. Annan's tenure, he presided over the shameful Oil-For-Food Program, in what appears to be the largest dollar-for-dollar humanitarian scandal in world history. I simply could not trust the United Nations under Mr. Annan's leadership with taxpayer dollars and will not support the Legislation to allow the privilege of expanding the United Nations in New York.

I believe that Mr. Annan's office should have been more forthcoming to inquires of Senators Sessions, Coleman and Coburn, as well as, inquiries from other Senators about the United Nations renovation and expansion proposal. Senator Sessions inquires where for the benefit of the American taxpayer who is responsible for the proposed \$1.2 billion loan and yearly operating costs.

Ultimately, this stonewalling is indicative of the mismanagement and potential for the United Nations to waste millions of taxpayer dollars on their renovation and expansion plans. The world's premiere developer Mr. Donald Trump estimates that the world body stands to waste hundreds of millions of dollars due to incompetence and theft. I value Mr. Trump's opinion and share his concerns.

When I first expressed my opposition to the United Nations expansion, Secretary General Kofi Annan probably had no idea where Bay Ridge Brooklyn was or for that matter who I am. He had no idea how seriously I take my oath of office to uphold the Constitution of the United States and State of NY.

Yet, this issue has brought me here before this subcommittee because expanding the United Nations under Mr. Annan's leadership is not reflective of New York's diverse population which is represented by a Majority of State Senators with conservative values.

Some New York State Senators had objections based on terrorism concerns like Senator Michael Balboni, of Long Island, who pointed out that the plan to upgrade the United Nations involves putting a 35-story building on top of what is listed as a major terrorist target -- the Queens Midtown Tunnel.

Every driver going through there would be burdened by whatever security precautions are put into place. Over 80,000 vehicles pass through the Queens-Midtown Tunnel daily. Restricting use of the tunnel is not just an inconvenience, but also an economic hardship.

Other State Senators, such as Serf Maltese of Queens, had deep philosophical objections towards the United Nations because of anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, human rights violations by United Nations staffers, unpaid parking tickets, and other issues.

An issue we all agreed upon was about the scandalous United Nations Oil-For-Food Program.

My opposition and the amount of negative publicity associated with getting the bill passed in the New York State Senate set off an intense lobbying effort.

Despite intense lobbying efforts, I told the people supporting New York State Senate passage of the Legislation that my request is simple: Kofi Annan must resign and a standard of accountability and transparency be instituted before I will support the bill.

The resignation of Kofi Annan would be the beginning of a systematic change to the management and oversight of the United Nations.

I understand that the United Nations generates tax revenues and adds to the international appeal of the City of New York. However, in my opinion I firmly believe that the United Nations will remain in New York City despite my staunch opposition to State Legislation, Kofi Annan's leadership, the use of taxpayer dollars and my philosophical objections towards the United Nations.

In my heart, I know that I made the right decision for the people in my Senate District, the City and State of New York, and for America.

Thank you for the courtesy of your time.