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H.E. Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017  
United States of America

25 June 2008

Dear Secretary-General,

I am writing to warmly thank you for speaking under the auspices of UNA-UK in London on your birthday this year.

We have had very positive feedback from attendees and have produced a DVD of the occasion.

On 13 June, Lord Hannay and you discussed the importance of countering the spread of the idea of establishing a 'League of Democracies' in parallel with the United Nations.

Lord Hannay asked me to transmit to you (attached) an exchange he initiated in the House of Lords on 24 June 2008 on this subject in follow-up to your conversation.

Best wishes,

Sam Daws

Sam Daws  
Executive Director

# House of Lords

**Tuesday, 24 June 2008.**

**The House met at half-past two: the LORD SPEAKER on the Woolsack.**

**Prayers—Read by the Lord Bishop of Exeter.**

## **International Organisations: Democracies**

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick** asked Her Majesty's Government:

What is their assessment of proposals to establish a league of democracies composed of all democratically ruled countries.

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, there have been a variety of proposals from think tanks and others for a league or other grouping of democracies. In assessing any such proposal, we would consider its aims and how it might complement existing multilateral organisations and democracy-based groupings, such as the Community of Democracies.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for that Answer, which would undoubtedly have done credit to the oracle at Delphi. Will he comment on the undesirability, rather soon after the ending of the Cold War, of systematising the divide in the world between democratic sheep and undemocratic goats, and on whether any of the large democracies of the developing world, such as India, Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa, are joining up for this journey? Does he agree that it would be better for this subject to be given a full airing this year rather than to find ourselves next year facing an American president who thought that it was a good idea?

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for the compliment that he paid me; I am grateful. As he is aware, the proposals are currently informal, but they are an interesting concept. Our Prime Minister believes that we need to look again at the range of international institutions and how they can be improved to meet the global challenges that we all face. The Government very much welcome the Question from the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, and the questions that will follow, as this is an important matter for debate and one that should be open to new suggestions and ideas; let a thousand flowers bloom.

**Lord Howell of Guildford:** My Lords, it will probably surprise the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, to hear that I strongly agree with him on this occasion. It is possibly worth pointing out to the think tanks and the creators of this idea that a perfectly good, transcontinental and multifaith network of either democracies or aspiring democracies exists throughout the world already; it is the Commonwealth. It contains more than six of the world's leading and most dynamic countries, and it is ready, provided we give it a bit more support than we

**24 Jun 2008 : Column 1330**

do today, to assume the mantle of being a good alliance of democratic voices in the world and helping to stabilise and create world peace.

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, I agree and disagree with the noble Lord. I agree that the Commonwealth is an excellent organisation; I remember reading his letter to that effect when this debate ran in the *Financial Times* about a month ago. I do not agree with him when he says that we do not treat the Commonwealth with sufficient seriousness.

**Lord Wallace of Saltaire:** My Lords, in this post-Blair Government, will the Government not admit that the idea of a league of democracies is very much a neo-conservative idea that is floating around Washington, with a number of undesirable undertones? It is the fag end of the regime change and forced democratisation ideas that led to the invasion of Iraq. Do the Government at least agree, and will they say in public, that our approach to multilateral international institutions should be inclusive rather than exclusive, and that attempting to build an exclusive group of countries to do some of what the United Nations has done before would be highly undesirable?

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, I cannot agree entirely with the noble Lord. These recent ideas have not been formally proposed by the United States—they are part of a broader policy debate taking place there as well as here. It is something that we should be pleased about. We would not want any multilateral organisations to undermine the United Nations because it clearly remains the most important international organisation. It is at the heart of the multilateral architecture. Its universal membership gives it an unparalleled political legitimacy.

**Lord Anderson of Swansea:** My Lords, is not part of the problem of a proposed league that there would almost certainly be a premier division, a first division and a second division; promotion and relegation; and perhaps even yellow and red cards? Who will decide on all those important matters? Surely it is a recipe for discord.

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, indeed, a lot of questions would need to be answered before it became policy, which can perhaps be summed up as: what are the aims, activities and criteria? My noble friend makes a good point.

**Lord Howe of Aberavon:** My Lords, does the Minister agree that there are several organisations—not just one—founded on democracy and that both the Commonwealth and the European Union have that same objective? The world already has sufficient organisations to shrink back from the idea that the Minister advanced that we want to see a thousand flowers grow. Would it not be better to continue nurturing and strengthening the flowers that already exist?

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, by “flowers” I meant ideas—ideas on foreign policy and how to get a better world. We have organisations that play a very important part

**24 Jun 2008 : Column 1331**

at present. I emphasise again that the United Nations is the most important of those. We would consider any form of proposals on the basis of those that have been put forward informally so far—but not, of course, by the US Administration. Currently the ideas have not been described in any detail.

**Lord Hylton:** My Lords, does the noble Lord agree that the Alliance of Civilisations, pioneered by Spain and Turkey, is a very good example in this field? Does this country belong to it—I hope it does—and will it recommend the practical projects of the alliance to other Commonwealth states?

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, I am afraid I did not hear the beginning of the noble Lord's question.

**Lord Hylton:** My Lords, it concerned the Alliance of Civilisations, pioneered by Spain and Turkey.

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, let me be frank. I have not heard of that organisation, but I do not think I am alone in that. I promise that I will find out about it and write to the noble Lord.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** My Lords, would this league of democracies include countries that had a legislature whose second Chamber was not elected?

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, as I said, the criteria are among the issues that we would want to look at carefully.

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch:** My Lords, is the noble Lord aware of a joke going round in Eurosceptic circles to the effect that the beloved European Union of the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, would fail to join itself because of its democratic deficit, which excludes its people from its law-making process?

**Lord Bach:** My Lords, I am glad that I am not a Eurosceptic because I do not see the joke.

Ingrid Hayden/NY/UNO

25/06/2008 01:28 PM

To Shadrack Venson/NY/UNO@UNHQ

cc

bcc

Subject Fw: Letter from Sam Daws to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Dear Shadrack, Grateful if the attached could be logged and distributed. cheers ingrid

----- Forwarded by Ingrid Hayden/NY/UNO on 25/06/2008 01:28 PM -----



lie@una.org.uk

25/06/2008 12:47 PM

To hayden@un.org

cc

Subject Letter from Sam Daws to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Dear Ingrid,

Firstly, it was great to meet you at the Royal Geographical Society on 13 June. We were delighted with the Secretary-General's speech, and the feedback from those who attended has been extremely positive. Thank you very much for all your help in the run-up to the event.

I am writing now to attach a letter to the Secretary-General from Sam Daws for further transmittal. I also attach a House of Lords discussion initiated by Lord Hannay about the 'League of Democracies' in follow-up to a conversation he had with the Secretary-General on 13 June.

With thanks and best wishes,

Veronica

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