



Tom Lantos

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 23, 2004

FOR INFORMATION CALL:
Lynne Weil (202) 225-6735

House Adopts Lantos Bill Supporting Democracy Caucus to Counteract Distortions in U.N. Decision-Making

Washington, DC – The House today overwhelmingly approved a bill by Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA) urging the development of a Democracy Caucus in the United Nations that would deprive non-democratic regimes of the opportunity to hijack the U.N. decision-making process.

“While I am a strong supporter of the United Nations, for too many years we have allowed the deliberations of the U.N. General Assembly, the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, and many other critical multilateral bodies to be polluted by the machinations of rogue regimes,” Lantos said. “The United States International Leadership Act of 2004 will require our Department of State to take effective measures to end this nonsense and to give our diplomats the tools they need to ensure that America once again punches at its weight class in New York.”

The bill, H.R. 4053, creates a Democracy Caucus across the U.N. system to support democratic forces, directs the U.S. president to use the country’s influence to reform United Nations rules so rogue regimes cannot gain leadership positions; and provides for appropriate training to make U.S. diplomats more effective in multilateral diplomacy.

Lantos noted that earlier this year, African nations made Sudan a member of the U.N. Human Rights Commission despite the brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing in Sudan’s Darfur region.

“It is outrageous that the government of a totalitarian regime currently engaged in the mass slaughter of its own citizens would be entrusted with protecting human rights elsewhere across the globe,” Lantos said.

Lantos pointed out that “despite the fact that the Cold War ended over ten years ago, spurring a new wave of democratization across much of the globe, authoritarian regimes still maintain a choke-hold on key decisions at the United Nations” by working through the Non-Aligned Movement to control caucuses that nominate candidate countries for leadership positions.

“Sudan’s accession to the Human Rights Commission was only the latest example of a broken system which favors rotten regimes,” Lantos said. “I, for one, am sick and tired of the world’s dictatorships making key decisions at the United Nations, shutting out the voices of democratic governments in the world.”

Lantos (D-CA), the ranking Democratic member of the House International Relations Committee, introduced the measure, which passed 365-56, with House Rules Committee Chairman David Dreier (R-CA).