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UN Should Press on with New Human Rights Council Despite Reservations Voiced by US

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From Prof Ambler Moss.

Sir, Your editorial "Nay-saying at the UN" (March 10) quite rightly scolded the US for opposing the draft United Nations resolution to establish a new Human Rights Council. Carefully negotiated over many months, it has near-consensus support in the General Assembly. The new Council will be an immediate and huge improvement over the present Commission because of its provisions for secret-ballot election to membership and an annual review of each country's performance in the human rights area. But, you have reported, Washington officials say that if they do not get their way, ie a two-thirds majority rather than a simple majority for the election of members, the US will not join the Council and will withhold funding from it.

That should not deter the UN from proceeding. Let the world get on with its business. After all the US, once the leader in promoting international law and organisations for world governance, lately has a lamentable record of becoming more of an outlier (International Criminal Court, Inter-American Human Rights Convention, Kyoto protocol, many others), and even arguably an outlaw (UN Convention Against Torture, Geneva Conventions of 1949). Moreover, why is John Bolton, the US ambassador to the UN, so sure that the US would even be elected with a two-thirds majority, in the light of Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and a vice-president who publicly supports torture?

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