MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 8, 1999

TO: David A. Harris

FROM: Felice D. Gaer

RE: United Nations Association Convention – calls on Israel to be part of a regional group

Attached is a resolution adopted by the UNA-USA 1999 Convention supporting Kofi Annan’s call for Israel to be admitted to a regional group.

It was adopted at the national convention’s plenary meeting this morning. As I explained, I was asked to be present to speak in favor of it, lobby other organizations and counter any possible criticism.

Some members of the public were skeptical, even negative on it in the hearings yesterday. That resulted in the Convention’s Substantive Issues Committee adding text referencing the need for peace in the region.

Leo Nevas should be congratulated for his role in advancing this resolution. Incidentally, it was the only resolution addressing the treatment of, or conditions affecting, any specific country. Other resolutions addressed financing, peacekeeping, human rights treaties, environmental matters, the ABM treaty and the multilateral agreement on investments.
INCLUSIVENESS OF U.N. REGIONAL GROUP SYSTEM
(Substantive Issues Committee Substitute)

Reaffirming that UNA-USA is deeply committed to strengthening support for the United Nations and supports fairness and responsibility in dealing with all Member States;

Noting with approval the recent statement of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan: "I believe that it is time to usher in a new era of relations between Israel and the United Nations... One way to write that new chapter would be to rectify an anomaly: Israel’s position as the only Member that is not a Member of one of the regional groups, which means it has no chance of being elected to serve an main organs such as the Security Council or the Economic and Social Council. This anomaly should be corrected. We must uphold the principle of equality of all the United Nations Member States";

Concerned that the "anomaly" described by the Secretary-General of Israel’s exclusion from any regional group violates the core principle of equality of treatment;

Observing that even pariah states under Security Council sanctions are not excluded from regional groups and that—while in political reality they may be effectively unelectable— they are not procedurally prevented from presenting their candidacies; and

Convinced that progress to achieve peace must be made by Israelis and Palestinians, based on the mutual recognition of the Oslo agreements, and by Israel and its several neighbors based on the frameworks for peace outlined in successive Security Council resolutions— but that exclusion from regional groups provides no incentive to achieve implementation of those resolutions, and instead tends to discredit the United Nations;

The 1999 UNA-USA National Convention therefore recommends to the UNA-USA Board of Directors that UNA-USA endorse and support the principles and recommendations so clearly stated by the Secretary-General and urge Members of the United Nations to swiftly ensure that every member state be assured access to a regional group for election purposes.