



Rt. Hon Jack Straw MP  
Secretary of State for Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

UN Association of the UK  
3 Whitehall Court  
London SW1A 2EL

T: +44 (0) 20 7766 3450  
F: +44 (0) 20 7930 5893  
E: [daws@una.org.uk](mailto:daws@una.org.uk)  
W: [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk)

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Dear Jack,

Re: Amendment of s.14 of the Representation of the People Act

I am writing as Chair of the United Nations Association of the UK on the issue of the voting rights of British citizens working abroad for the United Nations.

As I am sure you will be aware, many British citizens working abroad for international organisations currently become disenfranchised after fifteen years, both losing the right to vote in UK elections and at the same time generally being unable to acquire the right to vote in national Parliamentary elections in their country of residence. I understand that this issue has already been raised with the Ministry of Justice by British officials working for the European Commission and for the Council of Europe. The same considerations apply to British officials working for the United Nations and I know from my contact with them that they too feel strongly that this situation needs to be rectified.

We believe that British officials working for the United Nations have not emigrated with a view to becoming integrated in a foreign country and acquiring its citizenship but instead continue to retain a strong link with the United Kingdom despite their prolonged absence abroad. It is surely unreasonable that they should lose their right to vote in UK elections after fifteen years. We therefore wish to express our full support for the proposal of amending s.14 of the Representation of the People Act so as to extend it to include international civil servants as a group of persons who may retain the right to vote during their entire period of service without fulfilling the normal residence requirement. Such an amendment could be introduced in the Constitutional Reform Bill which is currently before Parliament. As a former Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary I am sure you understand this point of view. I hope you will feel able to take the necessary action.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick  
Chair, UNA-UK