

US Calls for Ban on Drunk Diplomats at UN Meetings



U.S. ambassador at the United Nations, Joseph Torsella, censured his colleagues for excessive drinking during delicate budget meetings and debates which often turn into heated marathon sessions that run into the early hours of the morning.

In some instances drinking is an integral part of the negotiations – a social lubricant offered up to often an adversary's negotiating position, "but we're not talking about having a nip at the bar," Torsella said, adding that the delegates getting drunk most frequently are those representing developing countries known as the Group of 77.

"As for the conduct of negotiations, we make the modest proposal that the negotiation rooms should in future be an inebriation-free zone," he said. "While my government is truly grateful for the strategic opportunities presented by some recent practices, let's save the champagne for toasting the successful end of the session, and do some credit to the Fifth Committee's reputation in the process."

Diplomats who have participated in UN budget negotiations said it is not unusual to see delegates showing visible signs of having imbibed heavily.

Some envoys have turned up for talks "falling down drunk."

"On one occasion the note-taker who was meant to be recording the talks was so intoxicated he had to be replaced," said another.

But the comments have caused some controversy. "It is absolutely not the case that everyone at the talks is drunk. All the people doing the negotiating are sober," said a third diplomat.