May 22, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Reid and Leader McConnell:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world’s largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector and region, urges the Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). While the United States has signed UNCLOS, its ratification by the Senate has been pending since 1994. Until the treaty is ratified, American business will not be able to access the largest of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) granted by UNCLOS, and the potential natural resources, shipping rights of way and national security stability UNCLOS would help provide.

Ratifying UNCLOS will also allow establishment by the U.S. of an EEZ in which the U.S. will exercise sovereign rights over living and non-living resources and the marine environment within 200 nautical miles of the coast, as well as shipping rights of way and greater national security stability. As a result, American companies from industries including offshore energy, maritime transportation and commerce, and fishing, would have access to an EEZ of 3.36 million square miles—an area bigger than the lower 48 states combined. Furthermore, under UNCLOS, the U.S. mining interest could negotiate exploration rights confident of their access to the largest unclaimed undersea mining bed areas with an estimated value of $1 Trillion dollars worth of manganese, copper, nickel, and cobalt.

Most important, UNCLOS codifies and strengthens freedoms of navigation and overflight that are essential to U.S. military mobility. The Navy and Coast Guard have testified that joining the Convention will strengthen the United States’ ability to defend these and other important maritime rights and will enhance U.S. national and homeland security efforts. Recent statements of support for accession from President Bush, National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England reinforce the important national security benefits that will accompany accession.

Currently, 155 nations are parties to UNCLOS. Despite bipartisan support, the United States remains the primary industrialized nation not a party to have ratified the treaty. The Chamber recommends that the Senate move expeditiously to consider and approve U.S. accession to the UNCLOS.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
R. Bruce Josten  
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

[Signature]
Gen. Jim Jones, USMC (Ret.)  
President and CEO  
U.S. Chamber Institute for 21st Century Energy