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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Falklands at UNGA 1988

As you know, on 17 November the UN General Assembly passed the Argentine Resolution on the Falklands by 109 votes in favour with 5 against and 37 abstentions. Last year's result was 114, 5, 36.

In general, the international community now seems increasingly to regard the debate as a largely irrelevant ritual. But we did make some impression, both in our pre-debate lobbying and during the debate itself, with our arguments about self-determination and evidence of responsible economic development in the Islands.

Belize, Gambia, Oman and Sri Lanka voted with us, as in previous years. The US again voted for the Resolution. There were no changes in EC member states' votes from previous years, although at one stage the FRG again seemed on the brink of voting for. Of the defections from the Argentine camp, Senegal was particularly welcome as it was a direct result of President Diouf's delight at his successful State visit to Britain.

We did have problems lobbying Middle Eastern States. The UAE indicated last year that they might be willing to move from an abstention to a vote against the Argentine Resolution this time, but did not do so. They told us that this was because of our vote on the the UN Resolution on the Occupied Territories on 3 November (in which we abstained, alone among the Twelve). They also said that they would review their position in next year's debate in the light of our reactions to Arab sensitivities on the Palestine issue. The Bahrainis told us that it was much harder for them to resist Argentine pressure to change their vote this year, but did in the end maintain their abstention. The Qataris moved - unhelpfully - from abstention to absence.

Overall however this was a reasonably satisfactory outcome. For the second year in succession we managed to reduce the Argentine vote.

I am copying this to the Private Secretaries of OD members and of Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever
R N Peirce
 (R N Peirce)
 Private Secretary

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