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January 22, 2016

The Honorable Meenakshi Srinivasan  
Chair  
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
One Center Street, 9th Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

Re: United Nations Plaza Hotel Lobby and Ambassador Grill & Lounge

Dear Chair Srinivasan,

The Municipal Art Society writes in strong support of an expedited public hearing for the interior landmark designation of the United Nations Plaza Hotel Lobby and Ambassador Grill & Lounge located at One United Nations Plaza. Its current operators, Millennium Hotels and Resorts, have closed the restaurant and are now planning the demolition of this significant and intact example of New York City Late Modernism.

Designed by Pritzker Prize laureate Kevin Roche and his partner John Dinkeloo (Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo & Associates), the United Nations Plaza Hotel Lobby and Ambassador Grill & Lounge were conceived with the structures of the United Nations Plaza Hotel and Office Building as a single project. At its completion in 1975, the interior design was hailed as unprecedented in the hotel industry, breaking “every rule of the hotel-chain formula” according to New York *Times* architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable. Today, the unique use of mirrors, inset lighting, and trompe l’oeil skylights in the United Nations Plaza Hotel Lobby and Ambassador Grill & Lounge maintain a distinctiveness while showcasing Roche at his prime.

MAS urgently calls for immediate action by the Landmarks Preservation Commission to hold a hearing as these spaces are currently in danger of demolition. Millennium Hotels and Resorts, the hotel’s operators, have closed the Ambassador Grill & Lounge and have begun exploratory work, already removing parts of the metal paneled drop ceiling. We commend the Commission for its success in other interior landmark designations, such as the Plaza Hotel and the Four Seasons, and believe that similar action is necessary here.

Sincerely,

Tara Kelly  
Director, Preservation & Design