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Explanation of Vote at a UN Security Council Meeting on Palestinian Membership

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Ambassador Robert Wood
Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs
New York, New York
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Thank you, Madam President.

The United States has worked vigorously and with determination to support Palestinian statehood in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement that would permanently resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Since the attacks of October 7, President Biden has been clear that sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved through a two-state solution, with Israel's security guaranteed. There is no other path that guarantees Israel's security and future as a democratic Jewish state.

There is no other path that guarantees Palestinians can live in peace and with dignity in a state of their own. And there is no other path that leads to regional integration between Israel and all its Arab neighbors, including Saudi Arabia.

We also have long been clear that premature actions here in New York, even with the best intentions, will not achieve statehood for the Palestinian people.

As members of the Security Council, we have a special responsibility to ensure that our actions further the cause of international peace and security and are consistent with the requirements of the UN Charter.

As reflected in the report of the Admission Committee, there was not unanimity among Committee Members as to whether the applicant met the criteria for membership as set forth in Article 4 of the UN Charter.

For example, there are unresolved questions as to whether the applicant meets the criteria to be considered a State.

We have long called on the Palestinian Authority to undertake necessary reforms to help establish the attributes of readiness for statehood and note that Hamas – a terrorist organization – is currently exerting power and influence in Gaza, an integral part of the state envisioned in this resolution.

For these reasons, the United States voted “no” on this Security Council resolution.

Again, the United States continues to strongly support a two-state solution. This vote does not reflect opposition to Palestinian statehood, but instead is an acknowledgement that it will only come from direct negotiations between the parties.

A central focus of U.S. policy prior to the October 7 Hamas terrorist attacks was to promote normalization between Israel and its Arab neighbors and, as a critical element of a normalization package, generate tangible benefits in a political horizon for the Palestinian people.

This was based on the U.S. judgment that normalization is the most viable pathway to make progress on what had been an intractable situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

In the aftermath of October 7, conversations on potential normalization and a political horizon for the Palestinians that would lead to statehood and membership at the UN have continued. Hamas and its Iranian backers would probably prefer this effort not succeed, but we are determined to see it through.

It remains the U.S. view that the most expeditious path toward statehood for the Palestinian people is through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority with the support of the United States and other partners.

We believe this approach can tangibly advance Palestinian goals in a meaningful and enduring way.

We also believe, in light of Iran's unprecedented and outrageous actions over the last week, that Israel's neighbors would stand to benefit greatly from normalization.

The United States is committed to intensifying its engagement – with the Palestinians and the rest of the region – not only to address the current crisis in Gaza, but to advance a political settlement that will create a path to Palestinian statehood and membership in the United Nations.

The United States will continue to oppose unilateral measures that undermine the prospect of a two-state solution. This includes any actions that violate the principles that Secretary Blinken has emphasized for months, that Gaza cannot be a platform for terrorism, there should be no Israeli re-occupation of Gaza, and the size of Gaza's territory should not be reduced.

As we have said before, we believe a two-state solution coupled with these elements is the best way to achieve a durable peace in the region along with security for Israelis and Palestinians.

Thank you, Madam President.

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