

Statement by Ambassador Ron Prosor to the United Nations Security Council on “The situation in the Middle East and the Palestinian question”

Thank you, Mr. President.\* Let me also thank you for your able stewardship of the Security Council this month. I would like to begin by offering my Government’s condolences to the People and Government of Norway following last week’s appalling attacks in Oslo and Utoya. The victims of this tragedy remain in our thoughts and prayers.

I speak before this Council today as a proud representative of the Jewish state and the Jewish people – a people whose bond to the Land of Israel extends back 3,000 years. It is where we began and where we have been reborn, realizing the dreams of our forefathers to be a free people in our own land.

Our Nation seeks a lasting peace in which the Palestinians will have their own state, alongside— but not instead of – the Jewish State of Israel.

This morning I would like to share several observations about the Middle East Peace Process – which stands, yet again, at a critical juncture.

First, let me state clearly: unilateral actions will not bring peace to our region. Like a false idol, the Palestinian initiatives at the United Nations may be superficially attractive to some. Yet, they distract from the true path to peace.

Winston Churchill said that all the secrets of statecraft lie in history. On this question, history’s lessons are unmistakable: peace can only

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\* German presidency with Minister of State in the Foreign Office Dr. Werner Hoyer at the helm.

be achieved through bilateral negotiations that address the concerns of both sides.

This was the way of President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, the way of Prime Minister Rabin and King Hussein. It has been the framework for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians for the past two decades.

Only this month, we were again reminded that negotiations are the route to statehood when South Sudan proclaimed its independence and was accepted as the 193rd member state of the United Nations. It marked a new chapter in a long and difficult journey. Both South and North Sudan harbored serious frustrations. Major problems arose. Yet, the parties did not seek quick fixes or instant solutions. They sat together and negotiated, reaching a mutual agreement. This is why South Sudan was accepted by such a broad consensus in the international community.

It is no coincidence that we do not hear the same resounding enthusiasm for the Palestinian's march toward unilateralism at the United Nations. On the contrary, many in the international community are looking for ways to avoid this action.

Many have recognized that Palestinian attempts to create a state by bypassing negotiations are akin to picking out a chimney pot for one's house before laying its foundation. They see the potential consequences of mistrust and unmet expectations that could lead to violence.

It is evident that some Palestinian leaders understand this as well. Prime Minister Fayyad has spoken out against such a declaration. Just last week Nabil Amr, a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization Central Council and a former PA minister, called on the PA to delay its statehood bid.

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Palestinians like Mr. Fayyad and Mr. Amr see the practical reality before us. Like many others, they recognize that after September will be October and November and December. They know that this declaration will be in violation of the bilateral agreements that are the basis for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation – and will create expectations that can not be met.

Now is the time for the international community to tell the Palestinian leadership what it refuses to tell its own people: there are no shortcuts to statehood. You cannot bypass the only path to peace. The Palestinians will have to make compromises and make hard choices. They will have to get off the bandwagon of unilateralism – and back to the hard work of direct peacemaking.

Mr. President,

There are attempts to find a framework for re-launching the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. These efforts must be consistent, taking into consideration the vital interests of both sides.

Some of those who speak most loudly and clearly about the interests of Palestinians suddenly seem to lose their voice, hesitate, and mumble when it comes to discussing Israel's vital interests – its recognition as a Jewish state and its right to live within safe and secure borders.

Both of these issues – security and recognition of Israel as a Jewish state – are absolutely essential for ensuring the future of the State of Israel.

With regards to our security challenges, let me remind this Council that Hamas and Hezbollah have fired 12,000 rockets into Israel since we withdrew from Gaza and Southern Lebanon.

You do not have to be a rocket scientist to realize that if rockets fall on your cities, schools and citizens, your Government has a right to defend itself.

Our civilians face this reality every single day. No target is free from attack. Just this year, rockets have been launched at homes, synagogues, kindergartens – and even a bright yellow school bus, killing a 16-year old boy.

Without clear security arrangements, there is no guarantee that terrorists, arms and munitions would not flow into the West Bank in a future Palestinian state, as they are being smuggled into Gaza today.

One does not have to look too far to recognize Israel's existential security challenges. Let me point out that Israel's only international airport – named after David Ben-Gurion – lies within a few miles of the West Bank. It is shorter than the distance from where we are sitting right now and JFK [John F. Kennedy] or Newark Airports. It could be a target of constant rocket fire. One can only imagine the reaction if John F. Kennedy or Charles De Gaulle or Heathrow Airports were placed under a similar threat.

Lasting peace must be based on a demilitarized Palestinian state and an emphasis on education that promotes peace instead of hate, tolerance instead of violence, and mutual understanding instead of martyrdom.

Mr. President,

On the issue of the Jewish State, we must have clarity as well. For lasting peace to take hold, Israel's recognition of a future Palestinian state must be met with an equal acknowledgement that Israel is the Jewish State.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated openly and repeatedly that we will accept a Palestinian state, alongside a Jewish state. Yet,

the Palestinian leadership has not done the same. They will not tell their own people that they accept a Jewish State. Without such an acknowledgement, it will remain unclear whether the Palestinians' quest for statehood is part of an effort to end the conflict with Israel or a pretext to continue it.

Mr. President,

Palestinian leaders claim that they will be prepared for statehood by September 2011, parading this as a magic date before the international community.

We recognize the progress that the Palestinian Authority has made over the past two years with the assistance and cooperation of Israel and the international community. The West Bank economy is a bright spot in the midst of a global recession, growing by 10 percent in 2010. Yet, it is clear that much still needs to be done to create a functioning state that lives in peace with its neighbors.

Even the most basic condition for statehood does not exist. The Palestinian Authority does not maintain effective control of all its territory nor does it hold a monopoly on the use of force. The Hamas terrorist organization still maintains de facto control in Gaza.

Let me turn to my Palestinian colleague and ask a simple question.

Permanent Observer [Riyad] Mansour: On behalf of whom will you present a resolution in September? Mr. Abbas or Hamas? Will it be on behalf of both the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas terrorist organization, which advances a charter calling for the destruction of Israel and the murder of Jews?

Will it be on behalf of Akram Haniyeh – the PA's Chief Spokesman – or Ismail Haniyeh – the Hamas Prime Minister in Gaza who said recently (quote):

“When I say ‘the land of Palestine,’ I am not referring [only] to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem...I refer to Palestine from the [Mediterranean] Sea to the [Jordan] River, and from Rosh Hanikra to Rafah.”

Mr. Mansour: on these issues Israel and the international community must have clarity.

Whether the Palestinians bring forward a resolution in the General Assembly or by invoking the “Uniting for Peace” resolution it is clear that the Palestinians are not united and are far from united for peace.

There is much uncertainty about the future Palestinian government: its acceptance of the Quartet conditions, the peace process, control of its security forces, and many other questions. It will take at least until after the Palestinian elections next year before it is clear what Palestinian unity really means.

For Israel, this so-called unity has only brought continued impunity for the terrorists that fire rockets into our cities.

Mr. President,

Today’s debate is titled the “Situation in the Middle East”. The turmoil that is sweeping our region – from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea – has shown that there are many challenges facing the Middle East – most of which do not revolve around the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

In particular, the international community cannot allow the issue of Iran to fall under the radar screen. Iran remains the center of terrorism in our region, transferring arms to Hamas, Hezbollah and other terrorist groups in serial violation of numerous Security Council resolutions.

Iran continues to advance instability in the Middle East – from Syria to Bahrain to Morocco. Last month's panel of experts report made clear that Iran continues to pursue nuclear weapons capabilities, in complete disregard of the will of the international community. New information shows Iran's intention to install uranium centrifuges at its facility in Qom – a facility that was concealed for years from the IAEA. Such behavior does not just endanger the Middle East, or a specific group of countries. It endangers us all.

Mr. President,

We cannot underestimate the danger of long-range missiles and short-range missiles. The international community cannot stand by as this Ayatollah regime seeks to assemble a dangerous mix of extremist ideology, missile technology, and nuclear radiology.

Mr. President,

Israel is happy to have many friends around the world. As we are often reminded, true friends never shy from letting you know what they think.

Today I issue a call to the true friends of the Palestinians – to those who want to see them fulfill their national aspirations.

As they march down the path of unilateralism, the Palestinian's true friends will speak the simple truths. Direct negotiations cannot be bypassed. Peace cannot be imposed.

To the Palestinians I also issue a call. Take Israel's outstretched hand. Seize the opportunities before us to advance down the real road toward peace – a road of solutions not resolutions; dialogue not monologue; and direct negotiations not unilateral declarations.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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