Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Kelley Currie on Item 16: Economic and Social Repercussions of the Israeli Occupation on the Living Conditions of the Palestinian People

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AS DELIVERED

Remarks Before the Vote to Consider the Revision to Draft Resolution L-19:

Thank you, Madam President. The United States objects to this Council’s consideration of the proposed oral amendment. Under Rule 54 of the Council’s rules of procedure, amendments – whether they are called revisions or amendments – must be circulated to all members 24 hours in advance unless the Council decides otherwise. The United States objects to the Council deciding otherwise. The 24 hour rule exists for good reasons. It gives Council members an opportunity to review and consider the substance of proposed amendments. Member States should consider the consequences of disregarding this rule. Thank you. The United States repeats its objection to the consideration of this amendment. It was not properly notified. We have not even seen this amendment or its text yet. We only learned of its proposal this morning at 10 a.m. when we were walking into the chamber. We therefore object to the consideration of the substantive amendment to the report. Thank you.

Explanation of Vote Before the Vote to Consider the Revision to Draft Resolution L-19:

I would like to make a general statement, an explanation of our vote before the vote. The United States continues to object to the consideration of the proposed oral amendment. The rule for 24 hours notice exists for good reason. It gives Council Members – and I want to reiterate Council Members – the Member States who participate and were elected to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the opportunity to consider, seek guidance from capital, and otherwise form their position on the substance of a proposed amendment. Member States should seriously consider the consequences of allowing the suspension of the rules in order to consider this amendment, which we learned about at 10 a.m., that it might be possibly submitted and which we all just received the text of. It is a substantive change and we are concerned that if certain Member States or non-member entities, as it were, of this Council are permitted to violate its rules of procedure with impunity then the resulting chaos in this Council would be hard to imagine.

In the interest of transparency and good governance, this amendment should not be considered by the Council today. I also cannot help but notice that a number of Member States that typically are strong voices in this body in condemning terrorism by Hamas seem to be involved in the effort to move forward this last minute amendment. We are concerned that, in addition to undermining the transparency and accountability of the Economic and Social Council, that this deal – this amendment, this proposal – appears to have been concocted by unaccountable entities that are not Member States of the UN and are not members of the Economic and Social Council. Again, I reiterate, this undermines the integrity of the working methods of the Economic and Social Council and we therefore urge all Member States to reject such manipulations and stand up for the integrity of this body.

Finally, we note that the Palestinian delegation is poised to take up the presidency of the G77 in 2019. If today’s actions are indicative of the manner in which the delegation intends to carry out its presidency, we would encourage that grouping to reconsider its choice of leadership.

Madam President, I am sad that it falls upon the United States today to defend the integrity of the Economic and Social Council and its working methods, but since that is our duty today, we will take it up and we will defend the rights of Member States to be given proper notice of substantive changes to texts in this body. Particularly when they are Member States that are elected members of this body. And I would encourage all elected members of this body to stand up for their rights in this regard.

Finally, I would also note for the record that the Israeli delegation somehow managed to follow the rules of procedure and submit their amendment to the text 24 hours in advance. Yet, the authors of the text could not manage to do so. Thank you.

Explanation of Vote Before the Vote on Amendment L-27 Proposed by Israel:

Thank you, Madam President. This resolution makes no mentions of the actions of Hamas, which makes no effort to better the lives of the Palestinian people and in fact served to make such improvements impossible due to Hamas’ ongoing commitment to the destruction of the State of Israel. At the very least, ECOSOC should hold Hamas accountable for keeping prisoners. The United States once again calls on Hamas to return the Israeli Defense Forces soldiers, Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul, as well as Israeli civilians Avraham Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, to their families immediately. All Member States should be clear on where they stand regarding Hamas by voting in support of the amendment and the United States will vote in support of this amendment today. Thank You.

Explanation of Vote Before the Vote on the Resolution:

The United States is disappointed yet again at the presentation of a one-sided and biased resolution, which we cannot support. We remain very concerned about the decidedly anti-Israel bias that still exists within the United Nations’ Economic and Social Commission for West Asia. This prejudice is evident in this resolution, as well as in the accompanying report and its recommendations, which do nothing to advance the aspirations of the Palestinians and Israelis for a more secure peaceful and prosperous future together.

The resolution and the report are unbalanced, and unfairly single out Israel in a forum that is not intended to be politicized. This document only serves to inflame both sides of the conflict and complicate our shared goal of advancing Israeli and Palestinian peace.

The United States shares with many members of the international community the same goal of a lasting and comprehensive peace between Israel and the Palestinians. We believe a comprehensive agreement that ends the conflict can only be achieved through direct bilateral negotiations. Resolutions and reports – and frankly proceedings like these today – in ECOSOC are so consistently biased and counterproductive that they have no place in our discourse and only serve to delay the day in which we can celebrate peaceful co-existence between Israel and the Palestinians. Billions of dollars have been invested in Gaza over the past 70 years, yet as the report notes, still over half of the population lives below the poverty line. Instead of blaming Israel in resolution after resolution at the UN, perhaps ESCWA should be looking at the primary culprit: Hamas. Hamas must acknowledge that the existence of Israel is a permanent reality, and that the Palestinian Authority is the legitimate governing body in the Gaza strip. Hamas should stop diverting funds intended for infrastructure to purchasing weapons or other nefarious uses and instead work towards peace and the prosperity of its own citizens rather than nursing their sense of grievance and victimhood. The United States stands ready to help promote economic security. The United States will work with all parties to improve conditions and promote the cause of peace, but resolutions such as this do nothing to advance that goal. We have no choice but to vote against this resolution. Thank you.