**Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East**

December 18, 2017

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New York City

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Thank you, Mr. President. In this meeting, I will not use Council’s time to address where a sovereign nation might decide to put its embassy, and why we have every right to do so. I will address a more appropriate and urgent concern.

This week marks the one-year anniversary of the passage of Resolution 2334. On that day, in this Council, in December 2016, the United States elected to abstain, allowing the measure to pass. Now it’s one year and a new administration later. Given the chance to vote again on Resolution 2334, I can say with complete confidence that the United States would vote “no.” We would exercise our veto power. The reasons why are very relevant to the cause of peace in the Middle East.

On the surface, Resolution 2334 described Israeli settlements as impediments to peace. Reasonable people can disagree about that, and in fact, over the years the United States has expressed criticism of Israeli settlement policies many times.

But in truth, it was Resolution 2334 itself that was an impediment to peace. This Security Council put the negotiations between Israelis and the Palestinians further out of reach by injecting itself, yet again, in between the two parties to the conflict. By misplacing the blame for the failure of peace efforts squarely on the Israeli settlements, the resolution gave a pass to Palestinian leaders who for many years rejected one peace proposal after another. It also gave them encouragement to avoid negotiations in the future. It refused to acknowledge the legacy of failed negotiations unrelated to settlements. And the Council passed judgment on issues that must be decided in direct negotiations between the parties.

If the United Nations’ history in the peace efforts proves anything, it is that talking in New York cannot take the place of face-to-face negotiations between the regional parties. It only sets back the cause of peace, not advance it.

As if to make this very point, Resolution 2334 demanded a halt to all Israeli settlement activity in East Jerusalem – even in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. This is something that no responsible person or country would ever expect Israel would do. And in this way, Resolution 2334 did what President Trump’s announcement on Jerusalem as the capital of Israel did not do: It prejudged issues that should be left in final status negotiations.

Given the chance today, the United States would veto Resolution 2334 for another reason. It gave new life to an ugly creation of the Human Rights Council: the database of companies operating in Jewish communities. This is an effort to create a blacklist, plain and simple. It is yet another obstacle to a negotiated peace. It is a stain on America’s conscience that we gave the so-called BDS movement momentum by allowing the passage of Resolution 2334.

To the United Nations’ shame, this has been a disproportionately hostile place for the Middle East’s most enduring democracy.

The United States refuses to accept the double standard that says we are not impartial when we stand by the will of the American people by moving our U.S. embassy, but somehow the United Nations is a neutral party when it consistently singles out Israel for condemnation.

For decades, Israel has withstood wave after wave of bias in the UN and its agencies. The United States has often stood beside Israel. We did not on December 23, 2016. We will not make that mistake again.

This week marks the one year anniversary of a significant setback for Middle East peace. But the United States has an undiminished commitment to helping bring about final status negotiations that will lead to lasting peace.

Our hand remains extended to both parties. We call on all countries that share this commitment to learn the hard lessons of the past and work to bring Israel and the Palestinian people in good faith to the peace table.

Thank you, very much.