US celebrates withdrawal of UN Security Council resolution against peace plan

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After a rancorous UN Security Council debate Tuesday, during which every member nation except the United States and Israel distanced themselves from President Donald Trump’s peace plan, the White House celebrated the withdrawal of a resolution rejecting the proposal.

The administration reportedly put heavy pressure on critics to drop the measure, introduced by Indonesia and Tunisia, and diplomats gave up when it risked not having the necessary nine out of 15 votes to secure its passage and necessitate a US veto.

“By not putting forward a polarizing resolution, the United Nations Security Council demonstrated that the old way of doing things is over,” a senior Trump official told The Times of Israel.

“For the first time on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the Council was willing to think outside the conventional box, and not reflexively fall back on the calcified Palestinian position, which has only allowed the failed status quo to continue.”

Palestinian officials insist that they may still propose a resolution at the Security Council, possibly later this week. The text’s initial draft, which said the plan violated international law, had been softened to say it departs from accepted parameters of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

“The Palestinians’ inability to put forward a vote tonight shows the change that the international community has gone through in recent years,” Ron Prosor, a former Israeli ambassador to the UN, told The Times of Israel on Tuesday.

Two years ago, the Palestinians easily recruited many countries willing to vote in favor of a resolution condemning the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. The US vetoed the decision.

“This time they don’t have nine countries behind them,” Prosor said. “It shows that countries have different priorities now and they put their own interests first. Sure, they will probably go to the General Assembly where they have an automatic majority to pass a resolution, but the majority might not be as large as it was after the Jerusalem declaration.”

At Tuesday’s Security Council session, representatives of all 15 member states spoke, all of whom — except the Israeli and the American envoys — declared their respective support for the traditionally accepted parameters of an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord.

Some welcomed the American initiative, saying it injected a new impetus into the stalled peace process. Still, all made clear that their positions have not changed.

“Germany remains firmly committed to a negotiated two-state solution, based on 4 June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties, with Jerusalem as future capital of both states,” said Jürgen Schulz, Germany’s deputy ambassador to the UN.

The UK’s ambassador, Karen Pierce, said that Britain’s longstanding position have not changed: “We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees,” she said.

Breaking with past US administrations, the Trump plan envisions the creation of a Palestinian state in about 70 percent of the West Bank, a small handful of neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, most of Gaza and some areas of southern Israel — if the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state, disarm Hamas and other terror groups in the coastal enclave, and fulfill other conditions.

The plan also allows Israel to annex settlements, grants the Jewish state sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and overriding security control west of the Jordan River, and bars Palestinian refugees from settling in Israel.

The European members of the council all expressed their deep concern over Israel’s plan to apply sovereignty over large swaths of the West Bank.

“The annexation of any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, constitutes a breach of international law, undermines the viability of the two-state solution and challenges the prospects for just, comprehensive and lasting peace,” the Belgian foreign minister said, speaking on behalf of his own county, as well as Estonia, France Germany and Poland. “In line with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, we do not recognize Israel’s sovereignty over the territories occupied since 1967.”

The representatives of Indonesia, Tunisia, South Africa, Vietnam, China, Russia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the UK, and the Dominican Republic, in their respective statements likewise insisted that the basis for peace talks must remain the two-state solution leading to a Palestinian state on the 1967-lines, with mutually agreed swaps, and Jerusalem as shared capital of Palestine and Israel.

The senior Trump official said that Washington was “optimistic that countries are keeping an open mind with regard to our Vision for Peace, and are willing to have an honest and open discussion on it as a possible basis to restart negotiations for a realistic two-state solution. As we’ve said all along, our plan is the start of a process, not the end.”

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas firmly rejected the US plan before the Council on Tuesday, but said he would be willing to open negotiations with Israel under the patronage of the Quartet and on the basis of international resolutions.

The Quartet is composed of the US, Russia, the UN and the European Union.

“I came to all of you today to affirm the Palestinian position which rejects the American-Israeli deal,” Abbas said. “It legalized what is illegal: settlement building and confiscation and annexation of Palestinian lands. I affirm, here, that it is necessary that this deal or any part of it not be considered an international reference for negotiations.”