**Russia Rejects Kerry’s Proposal for Quartet to Adopt U.S. Principles on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

December 28, 2016

By: Barak Ravid

Haaretz

http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.761803?utm\_campaign=trendemon-registration-exit-intent&ts=\_1483029608367

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov rejected U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry’s proposal that the Quartet – the United States, Russia, the UN and the European Union – adopt the principles he will present in his speech on the Israeli-Palestinian in Washington on Wednesday afternoon.

Haaretz has learned that Kerry raised the proposal in a telephone call to Lavrov on Tuesday night. It is unclear if Kerry suggested that after the Quartet’s announcements of support another resolution would be pushed in the UN Security Council to adopt the principles of the speech.

Senior officials in the State Department told the New York Times on Tuesday night that the Obama administration does not plan any further action in the Security Council that would be based on Kerry’s speech.

After the Lavrov-Kerry phone call, which was the 70th between the two since Kerry became secretary of state, the Russian foreign ministry issued an exceptional announcement, in which it detailed its contents.

According to the announcement, Lavrov stressed to Kerry that there is a need for conditions to conduct direct negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders, but stressed that internal American politics must not dictate them.

“Lavrov warned against the impact of the U.S. domestic agenda on the Middle East Quartet and the UN Security Council,” the ministry stated. “He spotlighted harmful attempts to use these platforms for the Democrats’ and Republicans’ bickering.”

Lavrov’s statement echoed some of the fears that have been voiced in recent days by the Prime Minister’s Office in Jerusalem that the Obama administration would likely make additional attempts to advance international steps on the Palestinian issue before Donald Trump becomes president on January 20.

Kerry is expected to deliver his speech at the State Department in Washington at 6 P.M. Israel time. Senior State Department officials told the New York Times that Kerry is expected to present a list of principles to solving core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to them, Kerry is expected to deal in his speech with questions like where to draw the borders of a future Palestinian state, which security arrangements need to be part of the permanent agreement, what Jerusalem’s status should be, and how to deal with mutual recognition of Israeli and Palestinian states.

The senior American officials noted that Kerry is also expected “to address some of the misleading critiques” that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has voiced against the Obama administration since the UN Security Council decision on the settlements. They say Kerry will stress that the American move in the Security Council was not unprecedented and that the decision not to veto the resolution “did not blindside Israel.”

Kerry is expected to present a list of similar instances from previous administrations that were handled the same way. Kerry is expected to stress in his speech that besides Israel’s position, there is “complete international consensus” against settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem.