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CMEP Responds to U.S. Veto of Settlements Resolution (February 18, 2011)



Churches for Middle East Peace profoundly regrets that the United States found it necessary today to veto the resolution in the United Nations Security Council calling for an end to Israeli construction in the Palestinian Territories and recognizing the urgency of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.

This veto undermines the moral authority of the United States in seeking to help end this conflict, which threatens the security of Israel, continues to deny Palestinians their right to self-determination, and undermines U.S. national interests in the region.

We believe that up to now negotiations to end this conflict have foundered not just because of differences over the issues involved, but because of deep fear and distrust on both sides. The positions of the parties on most issues such as borders, security, refugees and Jerusalem are not far apart. However, both sides need to be assured that any agreement for a just peace with security will be reliably executed in a reasonable timeframe. Each needs greater contact with the other at the human level and through civic organizations.

We call upon the United States to mount a major effort to help reduce fear and build trust among all involved in this conflict. This effort must necessarily include support from the Middle East Quartet, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, building on the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Palestinian Diaspora. Neighbors and powers in the region should be engaged no matter what their relations with Israel and consent to respect any negotiated agreements.

The President should make a well-prepared visit to the region, including Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring Syria, to help create strong regional support for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbors. In addition, despite the U.S. veto today, the President needs to make explicitly clear that the United States demands that all settlement activity cease, as well as all other unilateral actions that undermine the peace process.

Only the United States can take such a bold initiative. It would go a long way to restoring the leadership and moral authority of the United States that our member institutions and so many others here and in the Middle East, continue to hope and long for.