



UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD RECOMMENDS ADMISSION OF “PALESTINE”

The Purpose and Status of the Palestinian Application

At its October 5 meeting in Paris, the 58-member Executive Board of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) voted to recommend the seating of “Palestine” as a member of the organization. Voting for admission were 40 members, including 38 African, Asian, and Western Hemisphere states plus Belarus and Russia. . Voting against admission were the United States and 3 members of the EU: Germany, Latvia, and Romania. Abstaining were 14 states: 9 European states were joined by Japan and South Korea, two states that usually vote with the EU; Cote d’Ivoire, which often abstains on anti-Israel resolutions; and Barbados and St. Lucia, both newcomers to the group of states that do not engage in Israel-bashing. (for the full vote tally, see page 4).

With the approval of the Executive Board, the application now moves to the UNESCO General Conference scheduled to convene on October 27, where each of UNESCO’s 193 member states is represented. For the Palestinians to gain membership approval, a two-thirds majority of Conference members is necessary.

While refusing to enter into peace negotiations with Israel, the leadership of the Palestinian Authority continues to seek to impose its peace terms on Israel through international organizations, specifically the UN. With UN Security Council recognition of Palestinian statehood apparently blocked at this time, the PA leadership attempts to divert attention from its refusal to negotiate by campaigning for recognition as a state in other international bodies.

Possible Consequences of Palestinian membership in UNESCO

Palestinians have held Observer status at the UN and UNESCO since the mid-1970’s. Gaining membership in UNESCO will not have any direct consequences, although it would allow the Palestinian leadership to seek UNESCO World Heritage designation for sites of particular interest to the Palestinians. This would probably create further controversy since some of these sites are in East Jerusalem.

The move is significant as a part of the Palestinian Authority’s continuing effort to gain recognition as a “state” without entering into peace negotiations with Israel. “We need the issue of the state of Palestine to be resolved in the UN system,” said Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian envoy to the UN. “UNESCO,” Mr. Mansour said, “is one place where we can acquire our rightful place among the community of nations as a full member.”

UNESCO’s Mandate

UNESCO is not an organization subordinated to the United Nations. It is one of eighteen autonomous specialized agencies. It was established in November 1946 by 37 countries, in the belief that World War II had been a “war made possible by the denial of democratic principles of the dignity, equality, and mutual respect of men” rooted in ignorance and prejudice.

According to its official UN website, UNESCO works to safeguard peace and human development through its role as the international lead agency for education, the sciences, culture, and communications. UNESCO states that it works to:

Develop and promote universal principles and ideas, based on the need to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Recognize and safeguard diversity and human rights.

Promote empowerment and participation in the emerging knowledge society through universal access, capacity-building, and sharing of knowledge.

Some 600 non-governmental organizations maintain official relations with UNESCO and hundreds more collaborate on specific projects. Yet, despite the utopian spirit that declares its mission and activities as a “global vision of a culture of peace based upon observance of human rights, sustainable development, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty,” UNESCO has not played a significant role affecting international relations. All too often, the enemies of Israel have used, or sought to use UNESCO in the context of the international program to delegitimize the Jewish state.

U.S. Criticism of the Executive Board Vote

Criticism of the UNESCO vote has come from several quarters. The Obama administration believes that the Palestinian membership bid is “premature and undermining of the UN process set out in New York,” according to a senior administration official who was not authorized to speak publicly. “...That objective can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties.”

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggested that UNESCO should “think again” on plans to vote on Palestinian membership, noting that such a move could cause the United States to cut funds for the group. “I...would urge the governing body of UNESCO to think again before proceeding with the vote because the decision about status must be made in the United Nations and not in auxiliary groups that are subsidiary to the United Nations,” Clinton said.

The Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), issued a statement declaring, “It is deeply disappointing to see UNESCO, which has reformed itself in recent years, poised to support this dangerous Palestinian scheme. **The U.S must strongly oppose this move and make clear that any decision to upgrade the Palestinian mission’s status by UNESCO or any other UN entity will lead to a cutoff of U.S. funds to that entity...**” (Emphasis added).

Furthermore, U.S Representative Kay Granger (R.-Texas), who chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, said that Wednesday’s decision by UNESCO “**would put U.S funding of the organization in jeopardy... As chairwoman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, I will advocate for all funding to be cut off.**” (emphasis added). Granger’s statement cited U.S. law that bans funding of any institution that grants member state status to the Palestinians.

The Politics of the UN

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The Palestinian effort to manipulate the UN and its agencies to impose its demands on Israel has the full support of the “Group of 77 and China” (G77), an organization founded in 1964 to advance the economic interests of the “developing” countries. The G77 has long since become nothing other than a whip operation at the UN that seeks to mobilize the African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries against positions taken by the United States and most European countries, and, of course, against Israel. Its effectiveness in winning 40 votes among the 58 members of the UNESCO Executive Board is illustrated by the chart on the following page.

Votes Of The 58 Members Of UNESCO'S Executive Board on the Palestinian Authority's request for membership in UNESCO, October 5, 2011

Arab League	Yes	No	Abstain
Algeria	•		
Djibouti	•		
Egypt	•		
Kuwait	•		
Morocco	•		
Saudi Arabia	•		
Syria	•		
Tunisia	•		

African Group exclusive of A/L	Yes	No	Abstain
Burkina Faso	•		
Congo	•		
Cote d'Ivoire			•
Dem Rep of Congo	•		
Ghana	•		
Kenya	•		
Madagascar	•		
Niger	•		
Senegal	•		
Tanzania	•		
Zambia	•		
Zimbabwe	•		

Asian Group exclusive of A/L	Yes	No	Abstain
Bangladesh	•		
China	•		
India	•		
Japan			•
Kazakhstan	•		
Malaysia	•		
Mongolia	•		
Pakistan	•		
Philippines	•		
South Korea			•
Sri Lanka	•		
Uzbekistan	•		
Vietnam	•		

East European Group	Yes	No	Abstain
Belarus	•		
Poland			•
Russia	•		
Slovakia			•

Latin American & Caribbean Group	Yes	No	Abstain
Argentina	•		
Barbados			•
Chile	•		
Cuba	•		
El Salvador	•		
Grenada	•		
Haiti	•		
Peru	•		
St. Lucia			•
Venezuela	•		

West European and Others Group	Yes	No	Abstain
Belgium			•
Denmark			•
France			•
Germany		•	
Greece			•
Italy			•
Latvia		•	
Monaco			•
Romania		•	
Spain			•
United States		•	

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