Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield on a UN Security Council Resolution Drafted by Brazil on the Situation in the Middle East

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Thank you, Mr. President.

Colleagues, as we meet, President Biden is in the region. His trip is a clear demonstration of the fact that the United States is actively engaging at the highest levels: to secure the release of hostages; to prevent the conflict from spreading; to stress the need to protect civilian lives; to address the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians in Gaza; and to demonstrate to the Israeli people that the United States stands with them in their time of sorrow and need.

We are on the ground, doing the hard work of diplomacy. And while we recognize Brazil’s desire to move this text forward, we believe we need to let that diplomacy play out, especially when Secretary-General Guterres, President Biden, Secretary Blinken, and regional actors are engaged in intensive dialogue on the very issues we are deliberating on today.

Yes, resolutions are important. And yes, this Council must speak out. But the actions we take must be informed by the facts on the ground and support direct diplomacy efforts that can save lives. The Council needs to get this right.

Colleagues, the United States is disappointed this resolution made no mention of Israel’s right of self-defense. Like every nation in the world, Israel has the inherent right of self-defense, as reflected in Article 51 of the UN Charter. Following previous terrorist attacks by groups such as al-Qaida and ISIS, this Council reaffirmed that right. This text should have done the same.

Though we could not support this resolution, going forward we will continue to work closely with all Council members on this pressing issue. Just as we will continue to reiterate the need to protect civilians including members of the media, humanitarian workers, and UN officials.

And when I talk about the protection of civilians, I mean all civilians. The United States is horrified and saddened by yesterday’s explosion at the Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza. We mourn this tragic, tragic loss of life.

On the humanitarian front, we are working with Israel, its neighbors, the United Nations, and other partners to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. It is critical that food, medicine, water, and fuel begin flowing into Gaza as soon as possible. Families, the elderly, and children are in dire need.

Let’s be clear: Hamas’ own actions have brought this on – this severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza. And Hamas has caused so much needless suffering, death, and destruction. Every Member State should condemn Hamas’ terrorism and cruelty. And every Member State should call on Hamas to cease its endless barrage of rockets against Israel. This is not complicated. It’s not controversial. This is the bare minimum.

Colleagues, at this difficult moment, let us all call for the protection of civilians and unequivocally condemn Hamas. Let us all affirm Israel’s right of self-defense and support the urgent diplomatic efforts underway. Let us stand with the UN and other partners as they work to alleviate the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians in Gaza. And let us all support equal measures of justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Thank you, Mr. President.