Danon Welcomes Selection of Former Portugal PM as New UN Chief

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Israel’s Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon welcomed on Wednesday the selection of former prime minister of Portugal Antonio Guterres as the next Secretary General of the UN.

Guterres is poised to replace Ban Ki-Moon as the next United Nations Secretary-General in January 2017. The Security Council is expected to formally recommend him to the 193-member General Assembly for election on Thursday.

Danon wished Guterres luck in his new position and said that “the State of Israel hopes, and expects, that the UN under his leadership will act in the spirit of its founding principles as a fair body able to differentiate between good and evil and will end its obsession with Israel.”

"I hope that this change in leadership will bring an end to the organization’s hostility towards the Jewish state,” he continued.

In his congratulatory statement, Danon also encouraged the Guterres to appoint a special envoy to combat antisemitism, and to accept on behalf of the United Nations, responsibility for ensuring the return of the remains of Lt. Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul held by Hamas, to Israel.

As the new Secretary General takes office, a number of organizational personnel changes are expected to follow.

Antonio Guterres was the socialist prime minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002. He also has experience serving at the UN as he was the International body’s High Commissioner for Refugees for 10 years, from June 2005 to December 2015.

The Security Council has been holding informal secret ballots since July in a bid to reach consensus on a candidate. Guterres has come out on top of all the polls.

The Security Council, presided this month by Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, will adopt a resolution, traditionally behind closed doors, recommending that the General Assembly appoint Guterres for a five-year term.  The resolution needs nine votes in favor and no vetoes to pass.

Thirteen people were nominated in the race to become the next UN chief.