Foreign Ministry Protests Countries That Voted for UNESCO Resolution

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More than a week after UNESCO’s executive board voted in favor of a resolution ignoring Jewish ties to the Temple Mount and Western Wall area, Foreign Ministry director-general Dore Gold wrote a letter to the 33 countries that voted for the resolution “registering Israel’s protest in the strongest terms.”

Gold’s letter came five days after Yesh Atid MK Yair Lapid penned a sharp letter of protest to UNESCO head Irina Bokova.

Among the 33 countries that voted for the resolution were a number of countries with whom Israel has close ties, such as China, Egypt, France, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, Spain and Vietnam.

Two other EU countries, Slovenia and Sweden also voted for the resolution, as did Argentina, with whom Israel expected there to be dramatic improvement of ties following last year’s elections.

Six countries voted against the resolution – Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the US – and 17 abstained.

In the letter sent to his colleagues, Gold called the resolution “outrageous” and said it is “part of a disturbing trend that seeks to deny the deep-rooted links between the Jewish people and the State of Israel, with their historic capital.”

Gold noted that the term “Temple Mount” was expunged from the text and replaced with only a reference to al-Aksa Mosque and al-Haram al-Sharif.

“Even the Western Wall, the Jewish people’s most sacred site after the Temple Mount, is referred to by UNESCO in quotation marks, as though it is not commonly accepted language, while clear preference is given to call it instead al-Buraq, recalling the Islamic tradition alone,” Gold wrote.

Gold noted that every aspect of Jewish tradition was presented in the resolution as fiction, referring to “Jewish fake graves,” and “so called Jewish ritual baths.

“Under Israeli administration, people of all faiths have been able to enjoy access to their holy places in Jerusalem for the first time in decades,” he wrote.

“Far from recognizing and supporting this vital principle of mutual respect between faiths and peoples, this resolution only serves to undermine it.”

Meanwhile, Bokova sent a letter of response to Lapid on Wednesday, distancing herself from the decision.

“This decision was made by the economic council and the management council of UNESCO, which are both management bodies, and was not made by me,” she wrote.

“I published a statement immediately after the council meeting ended where I said, ‘Jerusalem is a Holy Land of the three monotheistic religions, a place of dialogue for all Jewish, Christian and Muslim people. Nothing should be undertaken to alter its integrity and authenticity. It is a mosaic of cultures and peoples, whose history has shaped the history of all humanity. Only respect and dialogue can build the trust we need to move forward – this is the strength of UNESCO, for the benefit of all.’”

She also noted that she has said in the past the UNESCO must not be politicized.