Explanation of vote by Austria at the 30th Special Session of the Human Rights Council

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Both Israelis and Palestinians alike deserve respect for their human rights and have the right to live in peace and security. All sides must uphold international humanitarian and human rights law. Today’s special session unfortunately continues the regrettable practice of singling out Israel for criticism in the Human Rights Council by addressing only the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Austria deplores the loss of civilian lives, including children, on both sides, and welcomes the ceasefire.

We unequivocally condemn the firing of rockets by Hamas and other terrorist groups from Gaza into Israel and regret that the resolution presented today does not include any statement to this effect. The mandate of the proposed Commission of Inquiry covers all violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, and therefore, all acts relevant on both sides.

Nevertheless, the context in the preamble and the title of the special session clearly single out and target Israel, yet again. The selective approach contributes to hardening positions and weakens the Council’s important voice when calling for respect of human rights and humanitarian law.

Austria attaches great importance to the rule of law and compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law by states and non-state actors. Unfortunately, for all the reasons enumerated, therefore, we are not convinced that this resolution lends itself to enhancing respect for international law and human rights. Therefore, Austria will vote against this resolution…