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## UN Security Council committed to 2-state solution

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ALLISON HOFFMAN, JPost correspondent in NY , THE JERUSALEM POST

The United Nations Security Council unanimously endorsed a statement Monday calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state and pushing for Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations in Moscow this year under the auspices of the UN's Middle East Quartet.

The council, under Russia's leadership, also agreed that previous bilateral negotiations should be regarded as irreversible.

"The outcome reflects our common interest that talks resume as soon as possible," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters after the meeting.

He added that future talks between the Palestinians and the new Israeli government should be resumed "not from square one."

Israeli officials did not attend the Security Council meeting, citing an internal policy review by the new government ahead of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's scheduled meetings with US President Barack Obama next week in Washington.

Israeli UN envoy Gabriela Shalev added in a statement that Israel also objects to Security Council involvement in the peace process.

"This process should be bilateral and left to the parties themselves," Shalev said in a statement.

Lavrov said he did not believe the Security Council needed to wait until all party countries had formulated their own policies and then mediate *ex post facto*.

"We have made use of the prestige of the Security Council to lay out what the international community wants," Lavrov said. "This to a certain extent will play a role impacting the approach of those who have not yet adopted a policy."

Three of the Quartet countries - Britain, France and Russia - were represented at UN headquarters by their foreign ministers, while the US was represented by UN Ambassador Susan Rice, who holds cabinet rank.

Rice said at the Security Council session that the US was committed to speeding progress toward peace. She reiterated comments made last week by special US peace envoy George Mitchell, who said the Obama administration intends to integrate the Arab peace plan, which calls for a return to pre-1967 borders, into its approach.

Rice called on Israel to halt settlement growth, dismantle outposts and allow Palestinians freedom of movement, and repeated her call on the Palestinian Authority to rein in Hamas terrorists, asking Arab leaders to help.

"The United States cannot be left to do all the heavy lifting by itself, and other countries, including Jordan, must do all that they can to shore up our common efforts," Rice said.

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