

“It’s not too late. That’s my message to Palestinian Authority President Abbas, who has announced his intention to seek unilateral Palestinian statehood at the United Nations this Friday. It’s not too late to abandon this reckless route, engage in direct negotiations with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, and choose the path to peace.

“For there is only one road to a peace agreement, and that is through direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians. This course forward is clearly outlined in the Oslo Peace Agreement, which states the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be resolved through direct, two-party negotiations. Anything outside of these direct talks, particularly this Palestinian appeal for U.N. recognition, is a dangerous digression from the known way forward.

“In addition to veering from the track toward two states, a status upgrade at this time would allow the Palestinians to pursue cases against Israel in international institutions such as the International Criminal Court. Such institutions could even be used to request advisory rulings on final-status issues, further circumventing two-party negotiations.

“The U.S. has also made significant investments in bolstering Palestinian security and economic prosperity all in an effort to enable the Palestinians to make the difficult concessions necessary to move toward peace. This appeal to the U.N and rejection of direct, two-party talks directly undermines considerable American efforts and investments in a peace deal.

“Abbas and the Palestinians need to come back to the negotiating table, and it is the U.S. that needs to lead them back and spearhead negotiations. As a true and steadfast friend to Israel, there has never been a more vital time for America to stand strong with our ally.

“With the excitement and hope of the Arab Spring has also come a great deal of uncertainty. Uncertainty about the strength of the relationship between Israel and Turkey. Uncertainty about the willingness of the Egyptians to hold true to their promises under the benchmark 1979 peace treaty. Uncertainty about the security of the Sinai. Uncertainty surrounding the speed with which Iran marches toward a nuclear bomb. And uncertainty about the number of rockets being

stockpiled by Hezbollah and Hamas aimed at the homes of Israeli citizens.

“But there is one thing that must be never uncertain: America’s support for Israel. A threat to Israel’s security or legitimacy is a threat to America, and we will not stand by and let Israel face these challenges alone. Upon her founding over six decades ago, the United States was the first nation to recognize Israel. And since that recognition, the special bond between Israel and the U.S. has only grown stronger on the bed rock of the mutual principles of freedom, justice and peace. Now is the time to stand with our old friend and lead the way to peace.

“It is moments like these that test our mettle. It is moments like these that are recorded in our history books. And it is moments like these where we must show our leadership. America must do everything in its power to end this perilous Palestinian bid for unilateral statehood and get direct negotiations between the two parties back on track. And President Abbas must know that there will be consequences for choosing the path of confrontation over that of negotiation. The course to unilateral recognition is not free.

“The Israeli-Palestinian peace process is at a pivotal crossroad. The Palestinians can choose to pursue the dead end track toward U.N. recognition or they can adjust their course, end their wrongheaded U.N. bid, and sit down at the negotiating table with Israel. The choice is theirs.

It’s not too late to choose the path toward peace.”