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Palestinian envoy promises creative ideas to circumvent likely US veto for UN membership bid

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UNITED NATIONS — The Palestinians will employ new creative ideas to gain membership at the world body despite a U.S. threat to veto such an action, Palestinian U.N. observer Riyad Mansour disclosed Friday.

Mansour presented the Security Council president with a four page letter detailing Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories, and the two discussed several ideas to gain U.N. membership for his people.

“Are we giving up because there is one powerful country that has a veto power saying the Security Council should not be involved? We’re not giving up,” Mansour said, without referring to the United States by name. “So now we’re coming up with these new creative ideas.”

In September, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas took his people’s quest for independence to U.N. headquarters, sidestepping peace negotiating efforts that have foundered for nearly two decades.

The U.S. and Israel object to the move, insisting on a negotiated peace agreement first.

The admissions committee has already concluded its report on membership, but it appears the Palestinians do not have the votes to gain membership even without the U.S. veto.

The Israeli and U.S. missions to the U.N. did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Mansour said that while the Palestinian Authority has not decided on its next step, he held out the possibility of going to the U.N.’s 192-member General Assembly where the U.S. does not have veto power.

He also suggested the Palestinians could seek to join other U.N. agencies as they have with UNESCO, which admitted the Palestinians in October.

Another example of creative diplomacy occurred last month, Mansour said, when rather than seeking a formal presidential statement from the Security Council, diplomats from E.U. and other countries read statements directly to the press taking the U.S. to task over its intransigence in failing to condemn Israel for expanding settlements.

Mansour said the letter handed to Baso Sangqu, the U.N. Ambassador from South Africa which holds the Security Council presidency for the month of January, documents “crimes committed by the occupying authority against our people in the occupied territory, including the terrorist activities by the settlers against our civilian population.”

Mansour also confirmed U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was preparing to visit Palestinian government leaders in the West Bank city of Ramallah later this month or early next month, but the exact date had yet to be set.