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Top Five Statements Obama Should Make to U.N.

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On September 25, President Obama will address the U.N. General Assembly. With anti-American protests continuing throughout the Islamic world and setbacks to key U.S. foreign policy goals, the President should deliver a strong, confident speech that reflects America's determination to defend its interests and serve as a constructive force for good.

President Obama should make clear where the U.S. should stand on the key issues that will be at the fore of the delegates' consideration. These are core challenges for advancing the causes of freedom, peace, and prosperity.

1. Affirm the Fundamental Principle of Freedom of Expression. The anti-American protests in the Middle East and North Africa are emblematic of the greater assault on human freedoms in those

regions. Around the world, free expression remains under assault from authoritarian governments fearful of the power of the Internet. From Russia to China to Cuba and throughout the Middle East, growing numbers of cyber activists are persecuted, tortured, and jailed.

It is expected that the President will use his platform at the U.N. to condemn an expression of free speech by an American citizen living in the United States—the posting on YouTube of a trailer to a film that has been seen by nobody. The President should not do that but rather affirm that the freedom of speech and expression is fundamental and not subject to repression on the basis of its hurting someone's feelings.

2. Make the Case for Economic Freedom. The lives and well-being of literally hundreds of millions of people around the world depend on America's ability to restart the engines of growth that have been so damaged by financial crisis, violence, and recession. The failure to finalize the Doha Round of trade talks is scandalous. Special interests impede economic reform and allow cronyism and mercantilism to stifle economic progress.

In particular, President Obama should renounce a failed theory of

economic progress that focuses on redistributing the world's economic assets rather than expanding them. He should call for a new era of economic liberalization to expand economic freedom around the globe and ensure that the opportunities of a globalized and interdependent world economy are available to all citizens.

Obama and other world leaders should find it intolerable that individuals such as Mohamed Bouazizi, whose economic martyrdom inspired revolutionary change in the Middle East, have no other recourse to the rule of law, no escape from the corruption of government officials, and no relief from arbitrary and oppressive regulations that prevent their very survival.

3. Reject the Palestinian Effort to Bolster Claims of Statehood. President Obama should stress that the U.S. supports a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that safeguards Israel's security and enables Palestinian statehood. But a Palestinian state cannot be created without negotiating a peace agreement with Israel.

Last year, the Obama Administration blocked Palestine's bid for full U.N. membership by threatening to use its Security Council veto. But the U.S. does not

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have veto power in other U.N. organizations. The Palestinians gained membership in the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Now they are seeking General Assembly recognition of “Palestine” as a state through an elevation in their U.N. General Assembly status to that of a “non-member state” permanent observer. If they are successful, the Palestinians could exploit U.N. recognition as a “non-member state” to demand membership in international organizations in a manner consistent with other non-U.N. member states.

President Obama should declare that he will continue to enforce U.S. laws that prohibit contributions to organizations that grant membership to the Palestinians, which has stalled their membership bids in other U.N. specialized agencies. If the U.S. eliminates or weakens these laws, it would encourage these organizations to admit the Palestinians.

4. Make the Case Against Iran. The Administration has done far too little to turn back Iran’s nuclear weapons program. It is time for the U.S. to show real leadership in stemming the Iranian threat. The President should use his address to the U.N. as an opportunity to warn that Iran’s continued failure to comply with its legal obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is a grave danger to international security, not just U.S. security.

Iran continues to flout U.N. Security Council resolutions calling for it to halt its uranium enrichment efforts and fully cooperate with inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency. The U.N. has ratcheted up sanctions on Iran, but sanctions alone will not end Iran’s illegal nuclear weapons program.

President Obama should urge the Security Council to authorize the use of force against Iran if it continues its nuclear defiance and warn that if the U.N. fails to act, the U.S. will take military action to prevent Iran from attaining a nuclear weapon.

5. Make the Case to Finish the Job in Afghanistan. On 9/11, America learned that Afghanistan had become the homeland of transnational terrorism. The world should not turn its back on the country while there remains a real possibility that it could happen again.

President Obama should explain the goals in Afghanistan, where the U.S. and other nations continue to fight Taliban insurgents. So far this year, Obama has limited most of his public remarks on the war to timelines for withdrawal rather than explaining U.S. objectives and demonstrating commitment to these goals.

The President should acknowledge the genuine risk of the Taliban re-establishing its power base in Afghanistan and facilitating the revival of al-Qaeda in the region

if the U.S. and NATO give up on the mission. Now, more than ever, President Obama should counter the Taliban’s narrative and demonstrate resolve and political will to complete the mission in Afghanistan.

Advance the Cause. These are the top messages that President Obama ought to deliver at the U.N. Even more important, the U.S. should follow through on achieving these objectives. Together, realizing these goals would do much to advance the causes of security, freedom, and prosperity in the world.

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