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**Statement by Ambassador Patrick F. Kennedy
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Closing Statement of the Fifth Committee Main Session of the 76th UN General Assembly
December 23, 2021**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Despite the resurgence of COVID-19 in New York, which continues to disrupt and hybridize our working methods, we've once again proven our commitment to the work of this Committee and of the UN during this Main Session. By leveraging technology and the commitment of all delegations, we again made it possible to consider the critical items on our program of work using in-person and virtual meetings. Concluding before the 24th is a noteworthy accomplishment and should be applauded.

The United States extends its congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, on leading our Committee through its 76th session of work. We would also like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Fifth Committee bureau, as well as the Secretariat officials who shepherded our consultations.

While we celebrate the timeliness of today's plenary, we acknowledge that this session has not been without its challenges.

The Fifth Committee continues to struggle through the late introduction of documentation, including several reports of the Secretary-General and PBIs. These delays negatively impact the ability of the Committee to conclude in a timely manner. The U.S. is also concerned about the growing workload of the ACABQ, which further contributes to delays of our work. We would support a review of the operational arrangements and conditions of service to improve the Advisory Committee and its critical role to the Fifth Committee, and look forward to further discussions on this matter.

We were pleased to see the early adoption of the scale of assessments, program budget, and program planning this year, and thank all delegations for their hard work and reciprocal efforts to close these items quickly. At the same time, we are concerned that we could not reach an early consensus on what historically have been and should continue to be uncontroversial agenda items, such as CMP and Umoja. We strongly believe the Fifth Committee can find common ground and make difficult decisions based on consensus – a principle that must continue to guide our work. The growing tendency to fall back on skeletal resolutions, as we have seen this session, sets a worrisome precedent and must not become the norm.

On the oral amendment proposed by Israel: the U.S. stands with Israel in rejecting the unprecedented open-ended mandate of this Commission of Inquiry, which perpetuates a practice of unfairly singling out Israel in the UN. The United States will continue to oppose this COI and

look for opportunities in Geneva to revisit its mandate, which unfortunately was adopted while the United States did not have a seat on the Human Rights Council. The United States will work in Geneva, where the debate over this COI's mandate belongs, to persuade more Member States that it is inherently biased and an obstacle to the cause of peace. Israel can continue to count on the United States to do everything possible to shield it from discriminatory and unbalanced criticism, whether at the Human Rights Council or elsewhere in the UN system.

As we conclude this session of the Fifth Committee, I would also like to share a personal note. President Biden's nominee for Representative to the UN for Management and Reform, Ambassador Chris Lu, was recently confirmed by the U.S. Senate. He will soon assume my role at the U.S. Mission and he very much looks forward to engaging with all of you. As I depart, I sincerely say that it has been a pleasure to join in the critical work of this Committee.

We wish all of our colleagues a joyful remainder of the holiday season with best wishes for 2022. May you all get some well-deserved rest.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.