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Subject: Abbas vows "no retreat" from Palestine U.N. bid (Reuters)

RAMALLAH, West Bank (Reuters) - President Mahmoud Abbas vowed "no retreat" from plans to seek full U.N. membership for a Palestinian state next week, despite a last minute diplomatic push from the United States and European Union to dissuade him.

"Going to the United Nations to request full membership for Palestine in the international organisation is an inevitable thing and there is no retreat from it," the official agency Wafa quoted Abbas as saying in an Egyptian TV interview on Wednesday.

"Despite the pressures exercised on us, Palestine will go to the United Nations on the 23rd of the current month to request full membership," he added. Abbas is scheduled to address the General Assembly on that day.

Washington wants the Palestinians to drop their plan to declare an independent state, arguing that Palestinian independence should be the result of peace talks with Israel.

The Palestinians say U.S.-backed peace talks are frozen, leaving them no choice but to take their case for a state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem to the United Nations. The territories were occupied by Israel in a 1967 war.

U.S. Middle East peace envoy David Hale and senior White House aide Dennis Ross, who met Israeli and Palestinian leaders last week, were due to meet Abbas on Thursday.

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton extended a Middle East trip on Wednesday to hold more talks aimed at averting the U.N. bid, EU officials said.

Israel is strongly opposed to the Palestinian U.N. bid, which it sees as an attempt to isolate it and undermine its own legitimacy. Washington says the move is unhelpful to its Middle East diplomacy and has pledged to use its Security Council veto to block the request for full membership.

Anticipating that outcome, Palestinian officials have indicated they could table a resolution in the General Assembly that would upgrade their status to a "non-member state" from an "entity".

Speaking about that option, Abbas cited benefits including the access it would give the Palestinians to the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

"This is what Israel and America do not want," he said.

The last round of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians broke down almost a year ago because of a dispute over the expansion of Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Abbas reiterated his previous conditions for a resumption of negotiations, including a complete halt to settlement building and terms of reference saying that the basis for the Palestinian state be the territories occupied in 1967.

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